

THE
CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

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

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

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

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

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THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.



“THE FIRST MONTH OF THE YEAR.”

EXODUS xii. 2.

MAN'S division and reckoning of time have no significance for God. Even with the earthly people, as we may see from the above scripture, their true history began with redemption. Their past history was closed up in the death of the passover lamb; and now that they were under the efficacy of the precious blood they were to commence anew as God's redeemed. Their links with the past were to be broken, and they were to march out of the land of Egypt as God's pilgrim host, to journey to the land of their inheritance in Canaan. There were many sorrows and conflicts before them, but the end was already secured; for God had said, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people which are in Egypt . . . and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." God had thus undertaken for them because He had chosen them to be His people, and purposed to bless them. It is the same now with Christians, the heavenly people, for we read, "Whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." Nothing so establishes the soul as the

apprehension that God is working out the redemption of His people according to His eternal purposes of grace.

The true beginning of the year to us, then, is connected with our being brought under the value before God of the precious blood of Christ. For what is the meaning of that blood? It proclaims that the life of Christ was laid down under judgment; and it is thus the everlasting testimony to God's righteousness as against sin. The judgment was due to us, we were under it; but Christ has borne it, and, in bearing it, He took upon Himself and met the whole of our responsibility before God, and vindicated God's name and glory in the presence of the whole universe. All our past life therefore—our responsible life before we knew Christ as our Saviour—has gone in His death; indeed we did not live for God, we were dead in sins until we passed out of death into life. (John v. 24.) Suffer then for one moment the plain question, Can you, dear reader, take this ground of deliverance from the judgment of God through the death of Christ? Are you able in the grace of God to appropriate the death of Christ as your death, as having answered to all the claims which God had against you? Do you believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification? If you can answer "yea" to these questions, then your past sinful life has been closed up for ever in the cross of Christ, and you have commenced a new life in Him who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead.

Assuming then that God in His grace has put us upon the ground of redemption, according to His eternal purposes, we desire to call attention to the character of the life to be lived while passing through this world. It will be observed in Exodus xii.-xiii. that the feast of unleavened bread stands in intimate connection with the passover. "In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at even, ye shall eat unleavened bread, until the one and twentieth day at even." "Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, and in the seventh day shall be a feast unto the Lord." The apostle Paul explains the significance of this in application to ourselves. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. v. 7, 8.) In one word, God claims holy lives from His redeemed; holiness is to mark them during the whole of their sojourn in the wilderness. This is brought before us in every shape and form in the New Testament scriptures, and it is exceedingly important for the believer to remember it, and especially for the young believer who is in the full energy of his natural life, and who is, on this very account, more liable to the seductive influences of a defiling world.

It will be profitable, therefore, if we consider a little what is meant by holiness. There are two aspects of it, one negative and the other positive. By negative is meant that we are to guard ourselves from the pollutions of this scene, to keep ourselves, as James terms it, unspotted from the world; and by the positive we

understand the actual attainment of what is according to the mind and nature of God. The prohibition of the leaven (a type of evil) to the Israelites speaks of the former, and the command, for example, "Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy," as plainly speaks of the latter. The Old Testament is full of indications of the danger and means of defilement, and it is well for the Christian to consider these, that he may, in the power of the Spirit of God, so keep himself that the wicked one may not touch him through his temptations. In Numbers xix., for example, there is a very precise specification of the sources of uncleanness. Touching the dead, the presence of death in a tent, contact with a bone (relic of death), or with a grave—all these rendered an Israelite unclean. And if we interpret these things in connection with ourselves we shall perceive that causes of defilement surround us on every hand. Spiritual death, conversation with a sinner, the sudden call upon us in our homes of an unconverted man, the maxims and principles of the world (bones), or meeting with professors (graves), if we are not walking in the Spirit, will surely defile. It was only the blessed Lord who could touch the leper and be undefiled. If we have to do it, having sin in us, we shall soon discover that we have contracted a soil. Our vessels must be kept strictly closed (Numbers xix. 15), or uncleanness will penetrate through the avenues (eyes, ears, hearts, etc.) to the soul. All this will enable us to understand the word, "Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame." (Rev. xvi. 15.)

The power to avoid defilements lies in the cultivation of holiness in the positive aspect. In the Old Testament, as we have seen, Jehovah revealed Himself as the standard of holiness for His people, and the apostle Peter cites and enforces the lesson. In the New Testament Christ glorified is presented as the model of His people, and He, therefore, is the expression of holiness according to God. Two or three scriptures will make this very plain. The blessed Lord Himself said, in speaking to the Father concerning His own, "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth"—through the truth of what He now is as the glorified Man. This wrought into their souls would produce conformity to His likeness. Again, we find that God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son. (Romans viii. 29.) In Corinthians we read that "we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory [even] as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. iii. 18); and yet once more we read that when we see Christ, when He is manifested in glory, "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2.) Without attempting at this time to expound these scriptures, two or three points may be indicated: First, that nothing short of conformity to Christ is holiness according to God's thought; second, that it is by occupation with, meditation upon, contemplating Him or His glory, that we grow in His likeness; and thirdly, that we shall not be fully conformed to, or like Him, until we see Him as He is. A fourth may be added, which is, that the knowledge that we shall be like Him, according to

God's purpose, affords an energetic and constant motive to purify ourselves, even as He is pure. (See 1 John iii. 3.)

As we have already said, it is in the cultivation of this positive aspect of holiness that power is obtained—power to avoid the pollutions of the world, and power to grow daily in the likeness of our blessed Lord. The reason is plain, for the more our minds are absorbed in Christ, the more we enjoy intimacy with Him; the greater our delight in His glory, the more intensely we shall desire to please Him, and thus to avoid all and everything which would becloud our communion with Him and His love. "If ye love Me," He said to His disciples, "keep My commandments," and obedience is ever the pathway of holiness. We learn, moreover, that love, love to Christ—and love to Christ is ever produced by His love to us—is the mainspring of holiness. Yea, it is all heart-work, as indeed Paul teaches in one aspect, when he says, "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all . . . to the end He may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." (1 Thess. iii. 12, 13.) And it must not be forgotten that for the pursuit of holiness the heart *must be* engaged in it. We do not drift into any attainment; there must be real purpose of heart to reach the end desired. May it not then be well, as we stand upon the threshold of another year, to challenge ourselves as to whether we are commencing this new stage of our wilderness journey with this fixed object before us—to seek, by

the grace of God, growing measures of conformity to Christ every day, while awaiting His return? Nothing else is worth living for, and if we live for this there will be the unbounded enjoyment of the Lord's manifestation of Himself to our hearts.

It will be perceived, it may be added, in conclusion, that the possession of the indwelling Spirit has been assumed in the foregoing remarks. Whether on the negative or on the positive side of holiness, He is the only power for its attainment. The apostle thus says, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live," and in the same chapter (Romans viii.) he teaches that it is by the Spirit also we enjoy our heavenly relationships. Hence the need of constant solicitude, as He warns us in another epistle, of not grieving the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. It is then in having Christ Himself continually before us as our blessed Object (and for this He must possess our hearts), and in the maintenance of a walk in the power of the Holy Ghost, that holiness will be increasingly found. And we may be assured that in a day of licence, self-pleasing, and departure from the truth, no testimony will be so effective and powerful as that which springs from separation from evil and from devotedness to Christ.

"THE more Christ is objectively our portion and our occupation, the more shall we resemble Him subjectively."

RESURRECTION.

(Notes of a Lecture, Revised.)

THE subject which I desire to bring before you at this time is the basis or platform on which the power of God operates, viz., that of resurrection. I think that most people regard resurrection simply as a fact, but it is important to think of it as a platform. To give the idea of platform I would say that the *world* is the platform of *man's* activity—where man's power operates, where all the great battles, by means of which the course of kingdoms has been determined, have taken place, though freely acknowledging that the hand of Providence is above all these things. But God's platform is a moral one and immovable; and it is resurrection which is, in a sense, His glory. There it is that He sets forth Christ to us in justifying, delivering power. There are three points on which I purpose to dwell, viz. :—

1. The platform—what it is.
2. How God has arrived at it.
3. How we arrive at it.

I may begin by saying that it is quite impossible for man to apprehend God's platform, except by divine teaching. It is beyond man's ken, because it is resurrection. God's power works there, and to know God's power and its operations we must reach this platform.

Colossians ii. 12 is the first passage I would turn to—"Wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." Here we find the apostle speaking to

saints who had reached and occupied the platform of resurrection. But first of all we must see how we have to reach it.

It seems to me a senseless thing for the world to commemorate the resurrection of Christ, because the world knows nothing about resurrection—when Christ was raised He was not shown to the world again. Resurrection is not an event in the course of this world's history at all. I can understand the world commemorating Christ's birth, and even His death, by days, because birth and death come within the cognizance of man, but not resurrection.

I want to show you first how God has reached this platform, and that which He presents to us on it.

Before it could be reached two things had to be removed from before God. Resurrection necessarily refers to those who have died; it has no meaning otherwise. At the Lord's coming it is the *dead* who are raised; the *living* are *changed*. Hence to reach this platform God must deal with that which brought death in. Otherwise He would not be glorified. Hence resurrection means that what brought in death has been removed to God's glory, and this is the platform.

Two things had to be removed, viz., (1) sin and (2) the flesh, in order that God might reach the platform of resurrection; it was for this end that Christ died. They did not need to be removed for Christ's own resurrection, but they had to be removed before God could be glorified in our blessing and deliverance.

Flesh had to go, for the reason that there is no good in it. Moreover, it does not even *reflect* God's goodness. What characterizes a precious stone is that it reflects light; there is no light in itself. In like

manner the moon reflects light from the sun. But with the flesh the case is different. Not only has it no inherent goodness, but it is incapable of reflecting the goodness of God, for it cannot appreciate it. I think flesh may appreciate the mercy, and, in a certain sense, the power of God, but not His goodness. Hence Paul had to say, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." I quite admit there are unconverted people who are good, as men speak, but they have no sense of *God's* goodness. The Christian appreciates it, and becomes like a precious stone; he reflects it. There is no good in flesh, so it had to be removed. The only thing it was fit for was crucifixion, and crucifixion is connected in Scripture with flesh.

Now sin is more positive and merits death. The flesh was tainted by the serpent, and so the Son of man must be lifted up. The serpent turned man away from what light he had of God's goodness to do his own will. Hence sin merits death. Any creature which asserts its will brings in confusion, and hence sin merits death.

But God has now reached the platform of resurrection, sin and the flesh having been removed, to His glory, and death, His judgment, annulled. We see in 2 Cor. v. 14-16 that the whole order of things after the flesh was over for the apostle. Hence in verses 17-20 God has reached a ground suited to Himself, where all things are of Himself. Here it is the platform of reconciliation. By that I understand the removal of all that caused distance between God and man on *God's* side—sin and man's will. An illustration of reconciliation is given in Luke xv., when the father

kisses the prodigal—all distance was removed. This takes place on the platform of resurrection. It is there that God's power operates. I admit that resurrection is itself an expression of His power, but it is on the platform of resurrection that everything is carried out for His glory. This is seen in John xx., where the Lord is amid His disciples in His resurrection body. We need to apprehend this. Think of what it cost God to reach this platform—to remove sin and the flesh! Henceforth Christ is not known after the flesh—all that order is gone and a new platform now subsists. The platform is one of *peace*. It is otherwise with man's platform—the world. What is seen there is unrest. The nations remind me of dogs tied up. I have been told, by those who may be supposed to know the world, that the only way to keep peace is for nations to be fully armed and prepared for war, but I do not see much peace in that. God's platform is a platform of peace.

Now, God reached this platform very quickly. Our way to it is often tedious, but when once God came out to reach it, it was reached as in a moment. It was reached through the cross, where sin and flesh were removed, so that God's glory and power might be set forth in resurrection.

I want you to ponder the importance of our reaching this platform—to look at resurrection, not simply as a fact, but as a platform. When your soul reaches this platform you will get a sense of God's power. If there is one thing above another that souls need, it is experience of God's power. This is what would establish our souls in faith. It was this point which the Colossians had reached.

Now a word about what God sets forth on His platform. It is one single Person. We read in Matthew that many of the saints which slept arose after Christ's resurrection, but we hear nothing more of them. Christ *alone* is seen. He is declared Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. He is set forth on that platform in two lights.

1. As presenting God.
2. As having a link with man.

If we look at the Lord risen we behold His glory, and in beholding His glory we behold the glory of God, *i.e.*, God's effulgence in His face.

Had man remained as God made him he would have known something of God's goodness, but I do not think that he would have known much of God. But what we have now is the effulgence of God shining out in the face of Jesus. I now know God's righteousness, His holiness, His grace and His love, all in a sense tested, but displayed. God is effulgent, but only in the face of Jesus. It is there that His glory shines. His nature is made known and glorified. I think I understand the expression that has been used by another, "There is nothing like the cross"—there God has come out and there alone He is known. I would like to be occupied with the cross all my time down here, because there God is effulgent. Christ is now on the platform of resurrection, and in Him is revealed the full effulgence of God. It is good for our souls to be in that light—"God . . . hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6. See also 1 Peter ii. 9.) If your soul is in the brightness of that light you will reflect it, and you will become like a

precious stone. Precious stones are what garnish the Holy City.

My feeling, when I address a company like this, is that I never do my subject justice; but my desire is to suggest a thought to be pondered over.

Now the second point is that on this platform of resurrection we see Christ as Son of Man and Son of David, maintaining a link with man. Christ has still a body because He has become Son of Man, and thus He has a link with man, but not, of course, after the flesh. He has a link, too, with David, for we find at the close of Revelations that He says, "I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." This same blessed Person, who is the effulgence of God's glory, maintains a link with man in His resurrection body. I cannot conceive anything more wonderful. It was His body He showed to the disciples that they might identify Himself.

If you read the Gospels you will find these three titles again and again applied to Christ, "Son of God," "Son of Man," "Son of David," and they are witnessed in a special way in John xi. and xii. I think that the significance of the title "Son of Man" is that everything that was adverse to God—Satan, death, and every enemy—has been put under Him. The Son of Man subjugates everything. If you want a testimony to this read Psalm viii. God's ways are retributive, and if Satan corrupts man he must be put down *by* Man. When the seventy disciples returned to the Lord, rejoicing that even the demons were subject unto them through His name, the Lord says, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven." This takes place when the man-child of Rev. xii. is caught up to heaven. The man-child has been caught up, and the

only thing that causes the apparent delay is because the Church, the Bride, is not there yet. Satan has corrupted man, and will be put under the feet of man. To this the apostle refers in Romans xvi. 20, where he says, "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly."

Then we find that as Son of David Christ brings in the sure mercies of David. This is all on the platform of resurrection. (See Acts xiii. 34.) It would be in God's power to bless man temporally down here, but the result would be that all would be spoiled by sin and the flesh. But He works on the new platform of resurrection to set aside the power of sin and the flesh, and eventually to bring into the world the sure mercies of David in the Son of Man.

All these things are combined in Christ. Would that our souls were kept in that light! If it were so with us we should have little care or anxiety down here. If we are attached to this blessed Person, what a portion is ours! But I hope, please God, to look at that another time.

It is God's pleasure to identify us with Christ on the platform of resurrection, and it is most blessed and important for our souls to reach this platform; but we must in the first place apprehend it. I will tell you what will be the sign when man's platform—the world—is about to be set aside. It is when God begins to revive Israel. When Israel went to the wall Babylon came into prominence, and so when Jerusalem comes again into prominence Babylon will be set aside. The two cannot go on together; it must be either Jerusalem or Babylon. So, too, as to the heavenly city. The ecclesiastical Babylon, the harlot, has to make way for the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

F. E. R.

THE HEARTS AND OFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

NOTHING could be more touching than the appeal which God made to the hearts of His people Israel through the lips of the prophet Malachi, saying, "I have loved you, saith the Lord." (Chap. i. 2.) Nor could anything be more glaring than their sin in treating it with indifference. The declaration of the love of God towards His people was the means of revealing more clearly the wretchedness of their moral condition; for not only had they left their first love, but they had also completely lost the sense of His love towards themselves, for they even demanded a proof of it, saying, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" (Chap. i. 3.) Imagine an only son, whose happiness has been the constant study of a devoted father, demanding a proof of his love!

Jehovah in His great condescension claimed relationship with His people from the time when He sent Moses into Egypt to say to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, even my first-born." Speaking also through Jeremiah, He says, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." (xxxii. 3.) "Herein is love," says the apostle, "not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." (1 John iv. 10.) The word "herein" affords a magnificent answer to the "wherein" of unbelief; but no such answer, however, had been supplied in Malachi's day, nor could have been until the birth of Jesus had taken place in this world, and the work of redemption had been accomplished by means of His

death and resurrection. It is in connection with this that the love of God shines forth in all its might and matchlessness; and it is the enjoyment of it that constrains us to say, "We love Him, because He first loved us." The moral degradation of the people of God was so great in Malachi's day, that they practically disclaimed their relationship with Him when they said, "Wherein hast Thou loved us?" They also denied the Lord's right over them; and when charged by the prophet with despising His name, they treat him as a false witness, and the priests disdainfully demand, "Wherein have we despised Thy name?" (Chap. i. 6.)

God first appealed to the hearts of His people, and afterwards referred to their offerings. The latter might be taken as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual state. God has so ordered it that the offerings of His people should be regulated by their hearts. It is not to be supposed, therefore, that their offerings would be right in His estimation when their hearts were wrong. Neither is it said, "My son, give Me thy offering," but, "Give Me thine heart." And when the Lord gets possession of the heart, He will not fail to show His appreciation of the offering, "for God loveth a cheerful giver." But the Jewish people at this time were insulting God by offering "the blind and lame" of their herds and flocks for sacrifices upon their altars. They reserved the best they possessed for themselves, and brought the worst to God, as though anything were good enough for Him.

How different was their conduct from that of Abraham. This God-honoured and God-fearing man provided the best he possessed for his heavenly guests, and had the

joy of seeing them partake of his hospitality; and the manner in which he performed his service of love clearly showed that in his estimation nothing short of the best was good enough for God. It was in connection with this that Abraham was raised from the position of a servant to that of a friend, as a mark of divine approbation, and was taken into the Lord's confidence with respect to the destruction of the cities of the plain. Abraham was a cheerful giver, and as such was loved of God; and even when His people Israel had withheld from Him His dues, "He loved them notwithstanding all," but when His love failed to produce response in their hearts, His loss, as well as theirs, was great.

But, strange to say, while God was deeply conscious of it, they were not in the least. He had lost their hearts and offerings, and by robbing Him of His dues they had forfeited His blessing, that maketh rich, and to which He addeth no sorrow. They had not the heart to offer their best unto God, as was seen in the case of Abraham, neither had they a joy corresponding with that which filled the breast of the patriarch, as he stood and ministered to the Lord under the tree. God appeals to the heart, and pleads for possession thereof as One that has a right to it, and seeks to inspire with confidence to return to Him, as He said, "I am the Lord, I change not." (Chap. iii. 6.)

And has He any less right to our hearts than He had to the hearts of His people Israel? Yea, has He not even more right to ours than theirs, since the most distinguished person among that highly-favoured people could not adopt the language of Paul, "Who loved me, and gave Himself for me"? (Gal. ii.) And being

the objects of His love, it well becomes them to say in response thereto—

“Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my strength, my all.”

The last part of the book of Malachi contains the bright side of his ministry, and shows the happy effect of the word of God on the hearts of those who had felt its power and acknowledged its authority. It is said of them that “they feared the Lord, and spake often one to another”; and the Lord, beholding, responded with delight, “And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels.” (Chap. iii. 16, 17.)

Neither was the faithful prophet without encouragement in seeing the Lord in possession of the hearts of some of His people as the result of his ministry; and although but a feeble few, they were rendered capable of affording joy to the One they had grieved by their sins, by returning to Him and acknowledging His claims. And having engaged the affections of His people, He can freely invite them to bring their offerings into His house, assuring them that, if they did so, He would show His appreciation of the same by opening the windows of heaven and pouring out blessing upon them in such abundance that there would not be room to receive it.

As for the proud professor and those that still despised His name and slighted His love, they would be consumed like stubble by the fire of His wrath, and trodden down in the day of His anger. (Chap. iv. 13.)

It would be folly to suppose the history of God's earthly people in departing from Him is without a parallel in the professing church, and that the prophet's appeal has no voice to ourselves as Christians indi-

vidually. Although their sin was great in slighting His love and despising His name, the sin of the assembly is even greater in proportion to the love which has been lavished upon her, and which far exceeds anything that was known by His people of old. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." (Eph. v.) And as the One that loved her thus, He appears in all His dignity and holy jealousy in the midst of the candlesticks, and addresses the assembly at Ephesus as representing the assembly as a whole, and also at her best estate, and lays the charge against her: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love," calling upon her at the same time to "remember from whence she had fallen, and to repent, and do her first works." (Rev. ii. 4.)

It is evident, therefore, that the assembly on earth, as viewed by the Searcher of hearts, is in a fallen state, although partial recovery may always be hoped for, and the revival of the work of God in the hearts of His people will assuredly go on to the end. It would be equally as hopeless to look for the restoration of the assembly to her primitive state, as seen at Pentecost, as to look for the conversion of the whole world through the preaching of the gospel during the present dispensation of grace. This is no reason why God should not have pleasure in His people, or that we should be less desirous of a place among them that fear the Lord and think upon His name, "offering the sacrifice of praise continually," while heeding the exhortation to "keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for"—not the complete recovery of a fallen church in a ruined world, but—"the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." (Jude 21.)

SCRIPTURAL DELIVERANCE AND "THE CLEAN HEART."

It is to be feared that there are many who, though converted, are lacking in clear apprehension as to the full effects of redemption as bearing upon the question of acceptance. These have known forgiveness of sins, and it may be are assured of their final security through the work of Christ, but still connect acceptance with the thought of personal completeness and fitness, which tends to direct the minds of such towards the doctrine of "inward cleansing," or "the clean heart."

Where the spiritual state is real, this stage is accompanied by the deepest exercises, expressed in the most explicit and accurate way by the language of Scripture in Romans vii. 16. From this condition the following verses furnish the way of divine deliverance, preceded by three preliminary experiences, viz., first, the discovery that there are two natures in the believer, "If then I *do* that which I *would not*, I *consent* unto the law that it is good. Now then *it is no more I* that do it, *but sin* that dwelleth in me"; i.e., there are brought to light two distinctly opposite energies, one to the other, a relief, but not yet full clearance. Secondly, the conviction that "in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth *no good thing*," a conviction quite beyond and distinct from the admission and confession of positive sins. Thirdly, that I have *no strength*: "*How to perform* that which is good I find not." (v. 18.) This brings the distressed one to look *outward* for a

deliverer, there being consciously no good and no strength within. "O wretched man that I am! *who shall deliver me from this body of death?*"

The believer now learns that acceptance is not for God in what he personally is as to inward holiness or cleansing. In the effort to acquire "a clean heart" he has totally failed; acceptance for him now is wholly in what Christ is as estimated by God.

The knowledge of deliverance thus comes in the form of a discovery that the Christian is "in Christ" (Romans viii. 1), that the Christian is not viewed by God as being "in the flesh," though the flesh is surely in him; so that the apostle can say, as of a past condition, "*when we were in the flesh,*" and now the relief that such a new discovery necessarily brings with it is consciously experienced. From that time self and self-occupation, and the expectation of self-improvement, cease to have a prominent place in the thoughts, and the truly-delivered soul is freed from itself to turn in happy liberty to divine objects in heaven, or the interests of God on the earth. The believer discovers that he has "in Christ" what he cannot have or attain to in himself, and finds his rest and liberty in it.

But there still remains the tendency to the active energy of sin within. This is met by the divine injunction, "*Reckon ye therefore yourselves to be dead unto sin,*" not the attenuating dying, or death, of the nature sin, but the annulling (proper force of "destroyed," Romans vi. 6) of that dominating energy by the refusal of the vessel, the mortal body, which is to be accounted dead (Romans viii. 10) as far as obedience to the dictation of the evil nature goes,

otherwise it must be the obedient servant of sin. Of this it is needless to say the Spirit of God is the power. "If ye *through the Spirit* do mortify the deeds of *the body*, ye shall live," *i.e.*, live normally as a Christian. Instead of being now "servants to sin," such are "servants to righteousness unto holiness."

Thousands of Christians nowadays are straining every energy to attain to a condition represented as "the clean heart," which involves for them "sin dead" in them; but from Romans vii. 8 this is before God *an unconverted state*. "Without the law sin (was) dead," *i.e.*, there was no consciousness of its living energy as an evil thing before the commandment spoke aloud to the conscience; "but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." Sin becomes *then* a consciously existing energy, and the law pronounces the sentence of death in the conscience. Hence it is clear that the attainment of a condition in which sin in the believer is dead is not scriptural, and consequently no legitimate object of pursuit by the Christian.

The believer *has died* with Christ, but bears in mind that in that He (Christ) died, He died *unto* sin. Thus what was true of Christ as dead is to become true of the believer while living in the body by *accounting* himself to be "*dead* indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus"; made good practically by being non-responsive, as though a dead body, to the dominating effort of the evil nature, *which is dependent upon the body and its members by which to express itself*. In this light, chapter vi. 12, 13, 16, 19-22, and chapter xii. 1, possess peculiar interest and significance.

The vitally important truth of deliverance has, without doubt, been greatly obscured by ignoring the

plain teaching of Romans vi. and vii.; false human views of inward perfection, the clean heart or some modified form of personal holiness having taken its place, to the bewilderment of souls in the spiritual condition described in Romans vii. 15. The attraction towards such teaching lies mainly in the fact that it leads the way to and contributes towards *inward satisfaction with personal condition*, not with objective perfect standing before God "in Christ."

Honest souls cannot at any stage of their spiritual history admit having attained to what some are bold enough to assert they have attained, namely, "the clean heart." For it is not merely the possession of a divine nature, which is common to every real Christian, but an attainment of inward holiness in more or less perfection, that is insisted upon. If not scripturally cleared, such souls remain for life in the bondage of legal effort and unsatisfying pursuit of what can never be attained down here, allured by the pretentious claims of those who have never known the distress described in Romans vii., and who are really seeking to be endued with power consciously and permanently, rather than to be delivered from a condition of bondage and misery.

Scripture, simply and honestly searched, will be found to solve every spiritual difficulty, as well as to expose the merely human substitutes for divine teaching which so frequently obscure, or wholly displace, the clear light of truth contained in the Word of God. Scripture nowhere assumes or encourages the attainment of a fixed inward spiritual state of holiness or perfection; what it does encourage is that the believer should preserve a good conscience, *i.e.*, a conscience

untroubled by any overt acts which tend to grieve the Spirit of God, whereby he is sealed, and thus hinder communion.

One has well said, "who being dead yet speaketh," "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." Again, "He (the Christian) 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 self-same thing, in virtue of which he purifies himself as He is pure. . . . 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 short-coming, 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."*

It may be well to remark that the word *state* only occurs thrice in the New Testament, viz., Phil. ii. 19, 20, and Col. iv. 7. In the verses in Philippians it is "the things around," or "concerning," in the latter "the things against" me (Paul); in neither of these is the word directly expressive of inward state or condition attained or attainable. M. C. G.

* *Forgiveness and Liberty.* By J. N. D.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

2 PETER i. 19.

It is interesting to observe that the morning star is only mentioned three times in Scripture—here (for while translated “day-star” it is really the morning star) and in Rev. ii. and xxii. It would seem, moreover, that the order of mention is the order of apprehension. In Peter, for example, it is the morning star arising in our hearts. The contrast is, as the context shows, with prophecy, the light of prophecy, to which, the apostle says, the saints of that day did well to take heed, until the dawning of the day and the arising of the morning star in their hearts. It must not for one moment be supposed that he was setting aside the guidance of prophecy as to the events which would occur upon the earth; but, writing to Jewish believers, he reminds them of their heavenly portion, of which the possession of Christ in their hearts as the morning star was the pledge and the assurance. To be occupied with Him in this character, as the harbinger of the coming day, would deliver them from the apprehension of coming judgments, whether upon the Jews or upon the nations of the habitable world, and draw them into an attitude of the constant expectation of His return to receive them unto Himself before sharing with Him in the glories of His kingdom. The light of prophecy

may, as someone has said, drive us, but the expectation of the coming of Christ will draw us out of the world. To have Christ as the morning star, therefore, shedding His heavenly light upon our hearts, is of all importance. In Rev. ii. the promise to the overcomer in Thyatira, after the prospect of reigning with Christ, is, "I will give him the morning star." This is very remarkable from its very connection. We might have expected this promise to precede that of "power over the nations," etc. It must, however, be remembered that the promises to the overcomers are given in relation to their circumstances and moral condition. Jezebel was seeking power over the nations, and to rule them with a rod of iron; but the Lord says that this place and authority shall be given to those who should be faithful to Him in separation from Jezebel's teaching and influence; and then He adds the promise of the Morning Star as indicating their special privilege as belonging to the heavenly people, and as their solace and sustainment in the midst of all the darkness and corruption by which they were surrounded. Remark that He says, "I will give." When the Lord gives He brings into enjoyment with Himself of that which He gives, shares His own possession with those on whom He bestows the gift. How blessed then for the overcomer in Thyatira to be brought into communion with Himself in this character, and with all that it signifies! To enter into it would be to entrance us with His heavenly beauty, and to have the heart overflowing with joy in the prospect of His coming glory. We advance a stage further in the last mention of the term. "The testimony of Jesus Christ" has drawn to a close, but, ere adding His final warnings as

to its complete and solemn character, He presents Himself as the root and the offspring of David, the bright Morning Star (so it should be read). (Compare 2 Timothy ii. 8.) The addition of the term "bright" will be noticed, showing, we cannot doubt, that the time contemplated is the very eve of His return, when to the eyes of the eager watchers, those who have waited for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, He will appear as shining aloft in the heavens with intense brilliancy and beauty. The effect produced justifies this interpretation, for the immediate response is recorded, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." At last, in unhindered power, the Holy Spirit directs the attention of the bride to her coming Lord, and she becomes the willing vessel of the cry, Come. The reader can pursue for himself further meditation upon this blessed subject; and in the meantime he will, we are sure, unite in the expression of the earnest desire that we all may be more and more absorbed in the contemplation of Christ as the bright Morning Star.

II.

ROMANS ii. 7 ; 2 TIMOTHY i. 10.

IN both of these scriptures the word rendered "immortality" is really "incorruptibility"; and this, as often pointed out, involves resurrection. (See 1 Cor. xv. 52.) The difference is thus very great; for immortality signifies unending existence, whereas incorruptibility speaks rather of the nature of that which is deathless, that it is in its very character incorruptible. Both terms are applied in 1 Cor. xv. to the resurrection

body (*v.* 54); and both are used in contrast with the character of our present bodies—the bodies of our humiliation. These are corrupt, as death soon manifests, and they are mortal, liable inherently to death; but our resurrection bodies, being like the glorified body of our blessed Lord, are both incorruptible and immortal. Incorruptibility, therefore, is what will mark our bodies in man's new estate and condition, when, according to God's eternal counsels, he is conformed to the image of His beloved Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren; for it is in view of this that the apostle says, "We shall also bear the image of the heavenly." It is, in fact, the heavenly condition of the new order of which Christ, as the Second Man out of heaven, is the Leader and Head. So understanding the word, much light is thrown upon the two scriptures at the head of this note. It shows that when the apostle speaks in the Romans of those "who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and incorruptibility," that he is speaking of Christians, as indeed the gift of God to such of eternal life plainly teaches; and that in 2 Timothy the annulling of death, and bringing incorruptibility to light through the gospel, refer, in the first place, to what has been effected through the death of Christ, and displayed in His resurrection. This will be the more clearly apprehended if it be remembered that what prevails, what is seen in Christ risen and glorified, will ultimately prevail, and be manifested, in all His people.

BEZALEEL AND AHOLIAB AS PATTERN SERVANTS.

EXODUS xxxi.

IT is very remarkable to observe that the character of, and qualifications for, service are the same in all dispensations. The work to be done may vary; but, as the above chapter plainly shows, the service of Bezaleel and Aholiab proceeded upon the same lines as that of the apostle Paul. Both alike indeed were engaged with the house of God; and if Bezaleel and Aholiab were not exactly builders in the same sense as the apostle, they were yet all occupied with God's dwelling-place here upon earth. It cannot fail, therefore, of instruction and profit to consider how these godly men in the wilderness were fitted for the work to which God called them in connection with His sanctuary. And in a day of abounding activity, a day when the Lord's service is entered upon with a light heart, that is, with a very feeble impression of its seriousness and gravity, and with a very small equipment for the conflict which it involves, it is of all moment to understand what God's thoughts are concerning those whom He designates for His service and work.

In the first place, Bezaleel received a divine call: "See, I have called by name Bezaleel the son of Uri." In like manner Paul speaks, "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called

me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen," etc. It was impossible, therefore, for one or the other to doubt either as to the origin or the nature of his service. It is readily conceded that calls of this character were special and extraordinary; but, while admitting this to the full, it must be earnestly maintained that every servant now must be the subject of a divine call as distinct and as constraining as these pattern servants. True, it will be an inward one, and as such a secret between the Lord and the soul; but it will not, on this account, be any the less efficacious. It would be presumptuous in the extreme to embark upon any service without the overwhelming conviction that we had been called to it by the Lord. "I must go," said the only son of a rich merchant to his father, "and preach the gospel among the heathen." "My son," replied the father, "I cannot spare you; you are a comfort to me, and I want you at home. Stay, and I will sustain ten servants of the Lord to preach the gospel to the heathen." "Yes, father," said the son, "I would gladly remain if it were open to my choice; but the Lord has called *me* to go, so that I should not be free to abide at home if you were to send twenty in my stead."

Following upon the call we find the qualification: "I have filled him," saith the Lord, "with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship," etc. (v. 3.) In a similar way we find that the Lord Jesus qualified His disciples for their service. He established their hearts in the truth of His resurrection, He opened their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures,

appointed them to be witnesses of what they had seen and heard, and, having told them that He would send upon them the promise of His Father, He enjoined them to tarry in the city of Jerusalem until they should be endued with power from on high. (Luke xxiv. 36-49.) So was it also for their service while with Him during His earthly sojourn. If He sent them forth, He bestowed upon them the requisite "power and authority" for the execution of their mission. Their qualifications were as divinely given as their call. It is true that they were different vessels, different in character and capacity; but the Lord chose them in view of the work to which He would appoint them, and gave to each according to his several ability. Whether, therefore, it was Bezaleel and Aholiab or the twelve, or, it might be added, Paul, James, Timothy, or Titus, all alike received their qualifications entirely from the Lord.

This is a lesson which every servant of the Lord would do well to ponder; for it is scarcely too much to say that the majority of those who take the place of servants in Christendom seek their endowment for their work mainly from man. Professing in some cases to have been called to preach the word, and declaring in others that they have chosen this vocation, they devote themselves to the acquisition of human learning, to the development of their intellectual powers, and to the study of "the art of preaching," in order to fit themselves for their work. The result from the very outset is often dependence upon human power rather than upon the energy and power of the Holy Ghost; and the issue is either rationalism or ritualism

—the two great antagonistic forces which Satan employs to destroy the true character of Christianity. Nor let us forget that though we may have taken a place outside of these corruptions, we may be liable to the same temptations. There is not indeed a single evil in Christendom towards which we may not find the tendency in our own hearts. If, therefore, any of us look for power or acceptance from anything that is of man—from manner, learning, fervour, or eloquence—or if we study human methods of the presentation of the message given to us to deliver, we are at once off the ground of dependence upon the power of the Holy Spirit, because we are calling in to our aid that which has its source in man and natural abilities.

Two other things may be noted in connection with Bezaleel and Aholiab. They were to do *what* God had commanded Moses, and they were to do it *according* to all that He had commanded. (*vv.* 6-11.) We gather from this that they were not to be choosers of their own work, that they had to be absolutely at the Lord's disposal; and, secondly, that in doing what they were commanded they were not left to their own pleasure or discretion, but that they were to be governed by the word of God. These are two most important principles. There are many inducements to select our service, and even the place where we serve, but the moment we admit the principle of choice our eye is off the Lord. The question is very simple. It is not, Shall we do this or that? but it is, "Lord, what wilt Thou have us to do?" Even our blessed Lord, the perfect Servant that He was, took this ground when He said, "The Son can do nothing of [from] Him-

self, but what He seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." He even applies the same principle to what He said: "I have not spoken of [from] Myself; but the Father who sent Me, He gave Me commandment what I should say, and what I should speak." If, therefore, He only did and said what was given to Him of the Father to say and do, we cannot err if we seek grace to follow in His steps.

Nor is the second point less important. Bezaleel and Aholiab were under the authority of Moses, and every servant is under the authority and at the disposal of the Lord. His will is consequently our law, and His will is expressed in His word, and may be discerned without difficulty if we are living in His presence. It may often seem to us that the adoption of some human method in our service would add to its efficacy; but Scripture everywhere teaches that our true wisdom is in subjection to the will of our Lord. To human eyes no plan of taking Jericho could have been more foolish than that which Joshua adopted; but it was God's plan, and hence its complete success. So with these servants who were employed to make "the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, and the mercy-seat that is thereupon, and all the furniture of the tabernacle"—they were not at liberty to depart from the directions they received even in the smallest detail. All was to be done according as God had commanded. So was it also enjoined upon Joshua, "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." And the last chapter of Exodus abundantly teaches the same lesson. The tabernacle was finished, and when, at the Lord's command, Moses reared it up, it is said eight times over, "As the Lord commanded Moses." "So Moses finished the work." And God immediately endorsed, and expressed His delight in it, for "a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

Summing up what has been before us, it will be seen that the path of every servant is very exactly defined. The Lord distinctly calls everyone whom He deigns to employ, and of this call no servant should ever be in doubt. Secondly, if He call, He bestows the requisite qualifications. On Him alone, therefore, has the servant to wait for the needed grace, wisdom, and power. Independent of man, he is wholly and entirely cast upon the Lord. Thirdly, he must have the Lord's mind as to what he should do, and if he has not, he must sit at the Lord's feet until he receives direction. When Mary and Martha sent the message to the Lord that Lazarus was sick, He abode two days still in the place where He was. Pressing as the call was (and even the claim, the claim of affection), He would not respond until it was the Father's will that He should go. Adopting the same principle, our activities may indeed be limited, but what an increase in confidence in the Lord and consequent power would be gained! Fourthly, the servant must be wholly governed in his work by the Lord's word. As the apostle has written, "All Scripture is given by

inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." And the same apostle said, "Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things."

RESURRECTION.

II.

GOD IN CHRIST JESUS.

EPHESIANS i. 7-20.

I WAS speaking a little last week about the platform on which God has set Himself to accomplish the purposes of His love. It is important to apprehend this, though many might not enter into the thought just at once. It is difficult to some minds to grasp the idea of a moral basis or platform, whether on our side or on God's side. But it is true that there is a platform on which God acts on His side, and which we occupy on ours. As natural men, we have not as Gentiles any platform to stand upon with God; apart from the grace of God we stand simply as units or individuals. But in Colossians we find the saints, *i.e.*, Gentiles, spoken of as "risen with Christ," and that is a platform. No one would for a moment maintain that we are *actually* risen with Christ, but Scripture regards saints as on that platform. You do not really reach God till you reach Him there, for the simple reason that He presents Himself there only. He will not have to say to us as in this world.

I want to enlarge a little now on the light and character in which God shows Himself to us. I do

not wish to go into the point of the ground *we* occupy, but of the way in which *God* shows Himself.

The key to the first two chapters of Ephesians, I think, will be found in the use of the expression, "In Christ Jesus." The one chapter is a contrast to the other in regard of this. In chapter i. it is *God* in Christ Jesus who is before us. In chapter ii. we have what *we* are before God in Christ Jesus as the fruit of His power. But it is as wishing to show what God is toward us in Christ Jesus that I have taken up chapter i.

In looking into Scripture I see three platforms of God's dealings with men :—

1. Looking back, we see that God has taken up man on the platform of responsibility.

2. Looking at the future, we see God taking the platform of judgment, and man will have to meet Him there.

Both these platforms are necessary. It was needful in the past that God should take the platform of responsibility in His ways with man, in order to demonstrate man's state, and it will be needful in the future for Him to take the platform of judgment for His glory; for it is there that the question of good and evil must find its final solution.

3. Now resurrection is the platform of this moment, and it is of a totally different kind from those I have spoken of. God now presents Himself to us on this ground. I think many Christians hold God virtually at a distance, but if we desire to know Him intimately we must meet Him on this platform. We must accept that we are "risen with Him through faith of the operation of God, who raised Christ from the dead."

(Col. ii. 12.) What you find there is that you are associated with Christ, and consequently loved with the love wherewith He is loved. Christ cannot be known after the flesh, as the apostle Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians v., and hence, "If any man be in Christ there is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 16, 17.) The ground is entirely changed.

Now, looking for a moment at the platform of responsibility, I would enquire, What is the principle of it? It is a help to get hold of the principle of a thing, for often when you seize the principle you can see the form of the thing itself. Now the principle of the platform of responsibility is law, that is, requirement. God there required from man what was his duty to God. Man's duty to God was to love Him with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. The effect of this was to bring all on this platform under the curse of a broken law. We get the answer to it in grace in Galatians iv. 4, 5. Christ has redeemed from the curse of the law; but the effect of God's taking the platform of responsibility with man was, in the first instance, to bring everyone under the curse. Man was already subject to death, and law made matters, if possible, *worse* by bringing in the curse. Christ was made a curse—"As it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13)—in order that the curse might be removed.

Now the platform of judgment is marked by *reward*. This is its principle. It certainly is not there a question of grace nor requirement, but of reward. Every man receives the due reward of his deeds. (Matt. xvi. 27.)

I do not think anyone would care advisedly to meet God on either of these platforms. I would not like to accept the platform of responsibility, for it is not natural for me to love God with all my heart, nor my neighbour as myself. Indeed, I have often, as a Christian, to judge myself, which is a plain proof that I am not up to God's requirements, for to judge myself means that I have allowed something which is not suited even to God's law. On the other hand, I would not like to meet God in judgment, though I know we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, but that is to receive His estimate of the things done in the body—not their reward. No, I would not like to have to say to God on that ground.

Now the principle of the platform of resurrection is triumph, as seen in the glorious power of God, that brings life out of death. God entered into conflict with death and Satan's power, and triumphed in resurrection, so that they have been annulled for Him. It is enormously important to see that God occupies this platform, and that death, which was God's judgment and the secret of Satan's power, has been overcome; and the triumph of God is revealed in resurrection.

As an illustration of this I would remind you of the song of Moses when the Red Sea was passed. This song is really the celebration of God's triumph over death and Satan's power, for Pharaoh represents typically the power of the enemy, Satan; and the Red Sea represents the waters of death. "I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously," etc. With the destruction of death as God's judgment the enemy's power was destroyed. This is what Christ's resurrection imports.

But if we thus see God's power, it is important to apprehend that His power is at the disposal of His love. It was His *love* led Him to triumph. God's triumph in resurrection is the fruit of *His love*. The apostle prays (Eph. i. 20) that the greatness of God's power toward us who believe may be known by saints, for it has been put in exercise. "For His great love wherewith He loved us." You can understand that nothing originates in God's power, but everything originates in His love, for He is love; His power is an attribute. I would like, for myself, that everything I did should be the outcome of love.

Sin and flesh have been removed from under God's eye, and thus it is that God's power is displayed on the ground of resurrection. If you want a text to prove this I refer you to Romans viii. 3: "God having sent His own Son in likeness of flesh of sin, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: in order that the righteous requirement of the law should be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to flesh, but according to Spirit." (N.T.) By the righteous requirement of the law is meant the loving God with all the heart, and one's neighbour as oneself. This is fulfilled in us in a power outside of the flesh—the fruit of resurrection.

What God has condemned is never revived. Our old man is crucified, not revived; sin is not revived, nor the flesh. God never forgave *sin*; what He did was to remove it from under His eye by sacrifice; it is condemned—gone. Hence the triumph of God in resurrection in bringing life out of death. God's power is manifested towards us in order to carry out in us all the blessed purpose of His love; He works on the ground of resurrection to carry out His purpose of *love*.

In the passage I read from Ephesians i. you will find four thoughts:—

1. Redemption.
2. The knowledge of God's will.
3. Inheritance.
4. The Spirit as earnest of our inheritance.

God shows us here what He has done for us in Christ. It is in *Christ* that we get the light in which God presents Himself to us; this is a most important side of things. It is evidently *only* in Christ that God can present Himself on the platform of resurrection. Who else is risen but Christ? Now I want you to notice that each of these four points presents something outside the course of things down here, and for the reason that all are on the ground of resurrection. I believe that in the millennium God will put things on the resurrection platform. Death will be swallowed up in victory, and hence man will rightly look to be blessed here. But it is not so now. The only way in which the natural man can pretend to know God is through His providence, but providence is really a veil behind which God is hid. You may often see a wicked man prospering in the world. I do not pretend to understand God's providence, but I accept it. Job was stripped of all he had in the providence of God; and just so it may be with us. God knows how to turn all things to account; but providence is a veil, and the unconverted man cannot go beyond this veil.

But Christ, as forerunner, has gone within the veil. All that in which God presents Himself to us in Him is outside of His providence. To take (1) redemption, the forgiveness of sins. If we had these in God's

providence the mark of it would be that we were not subject to death. This will come out in the millennium, when death will be swallowed up in victory. We are subject to death now; but God reveals Himself in grace on the platform of resurrection in Christ Jesus, who has been raised again for our justification. What would be the use of telling a man of the world that I had forgiveness of sins? I could not prove it to him. He would most likely say he was as good as me, or think me most presumptuous. But it is good for me, because I am in the light of Christ Jesus, and I can testify that forgiveness is there in His name.

Next take the mystery of God's will. This is not for accomplishment in the present, but for the "dispensation of the fulness of times." Hence God's will refers to things entirely outside the course of the world. All things are to be gathered up in one in Christ. (v. 10.) That is not the present providential order of things. There is no mystery about God's will when displayed as there is about providence, but it is quite outside the present course of God's dealings.

Thus we have redemption—and that is a big word, for it goes on to the redemption of the body—and God has made known to us the mystery of His will.

The next point is the inheritance. Now we do not enter on the inheritance until Christ gets it. The inheritance has been purchased, but is not yet redeemed; and Christ will not take it up until it is redeemed, but He will redeem it. Would you *like* to have part in the purchased possession while it is in Satan's or men's hands? I do not want any part in it until Christ redeems it. He has purchased it, but not as yet redeemed it.

The fourth point is the earnest of the inheritance—the Spirit. Has the Spirit anything to do with the world, or the course of things down here? “Whom the world cannot receive,” the Lord said to the disciples. The world has no part in Him. He was never presented to the world as Christ was. His very presence here convicts the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment. He is here because Christ has been rejected, in order to support Christians, and to testify of Him. He came down from Christ in order to conduct the saints to where Christ is in heaven.

And He has another office, and that is to completely supersede the flesh in the believer. Hence the Spirit is in no possible sense connected with the world; for all that is in the world is made up of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Now the Spirit has come to set the flesh aside—that is to say, to set aside everything that has connected me with the course of things in the world. What can lust do for us save to suit us for the world? If there were no lust in me the world would not tempt me. But the Spirit is here to set aside this link, so that by the circumcision of Christ we put off the incubus of the flesh, that we may be free.

Thus it is that God presents Himself to us in Christ. Everything is perfect on *His* side. His triumph is divinely complete. I think Ephesians i. is full of interest, for it is there that the testimony of what God is in Christ comes out. In chapter ii. we get another side—the truth of what we are in Christ, quickened together with Him, raised up, and made to sit in the heavenlies.

It is important thus to see the platform on which

God's power acts. Everything of grace comes out in Christ with redemption. The mystery of God's will, the inheritance, and the Spirit.

One word more. If sin and the flesh are removed for God, then their power must go for you and me. They are removed from God's eye; but if I am to reach God on the platform of resurrection, then sin and flesh must go from my eye. I must learn what sin is, and what freedom from it is; and I must learn, too, what the flesh is, and what it is to have put off the body of it, and thus to be freed from its principle and rule. Many people seem content to put off details merely, but the *body* of the flesh must go.

I find myself on the resurrection platform, then, in company with Christ, and all saints outside of the whole course of this world, and every order of man here, and in the place where Christ leads the praises of His people. Then the next thing will be to come out as gifted by Him in testimony for Him in this world.

F. E. R.

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

THE Son of God is born in this world, but He finds no place here. The world is at home, or at least by its resources it finds a place in the inn; it becomes a kind of measure of man's place in and reception by the world; the Son of God finds none save in the manger. Is it for nothing that the Holy Ghost records this circumstance? No; there is no room for God, and that which is of God, in this world. So much the more perfect, therefore, is the love that brought Him down to earth. But He began in a manger and ended

on the cross, and along the way had not where to lay His head.

The Son of God—a child partaking in all the weakness and all the circumstances of human life, thus manifested—appears in the world.

But if God comes into this world, and if a manger receives Him in the nature He has taken in grace, the angels are occupied with the event on which depends the fate of the whole universe, and the accomplishment of all the counsels of God; for He has chosen weak things to confound things that are mighty. This poor Infant is the object of all the counsels of God, the Upholder and Heir of the whole creation, the Saviour of all who shall inherit glory and eternal life.

Some poor men who were faithfully performing their toilsome labours, afar from the restless activity of an ambitious and sinful world, receive the first tidings of the Lord's presence on earth. The God of Israel did not seek for the great among His people, but had respect to the poor of the flock. Two things here present themselves. The angel who comes to the shepherds of Judæa announces to them the fulfilment of the promises of God to Israel. The choir of angels celebrate in their heavenly chorus of praise all the real import of this wondrous event. "Unto you," says the heavenly messenger who visits the poor shepherds, "is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This was proclaiming good tidings to them and to all the people.

But in the birth of the Son of man, God manifest in the flesh, the accomplishment of the incarnation had far deeper importance than this. The fact that this poor Infant was there, disallowed and left (humanly

speaking) to His fate by the world, was (as understood by the heavenly intelligences, the multitude of the heavenly hosts, whose praises resounded at the angel's message to the shepherds) "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good pleasure [of God] in men." These few words embrace such widely-extended thoughts, that it is difficult to speak suitably of them in a work like this; but some remarks are necessary. First, it is deeply blessed to see that the thought of Jesus excludes all that could oppress the heart in the scene which surrounded His presence on earth. Sin, alas! was there. It was manifested by the position in which this wondrous Infant was found. But if sin had placed Him there, grace had placed Him there. Grace superabounds; and in thinking of Him blessing, grace, the mind of God respecting sin, that which God is, as manifested by the presence of Christ, absorb the mind and possess the heart, and are the heart's true relief in a world like this. We see grace alone; and sin does but magnify the fulness, the sovereignty, the perfection of that grace. God, in His glorious dealings, blots out the sin with respect to which He acts, and which He thus exhibits in all its deformity; but there is that which "much more aboundeth." Jesus, come in grace, fills the heart. It is the same thing in all the details of Christian life. It is the true source of moral power, of sanctification, and of joy.

We see next that there are three things brought out by the presence of Jesus born as a child on the earth. First, glory to God in the highest. The love of God, His wisdom, His power, not in creating a universe out of nothing, but in rising above the evil, and turning the effect of all the enemy's power into an

occasion of showing that this power was only impotence and folly in presence of that which may be called "the weakness of God," the fulfilment of His eternal counsels, the perfection of His ways where evil had come in, the manifestation of Himself amidst the evil in such a manner as to glorify Himself before the angels; in a word, God had so manifested Himself by the birth of Jesus that the hosts of heaven, long familiar with His power, could raise their chorus, "Glory to God in the highest"; and every voice unites in sounding forth those praises. What love like this! and God is love. What a purely divine thought, that God has become man! What supremacy of good over evil! What wisdom in drawing nigh to the heart of man and the heart of man back to Him! What fitness in addressing man! What maintenance of the holiness of God! What nearness to the heart of man, what participation in His wants, what experience of His condition! But beyond all, God above the evil in grace, and in that grace visiting this defiled world to make Himself known as He had never yet been known.

The second effect of the presence of Him who manifested God on the earth is that peace should be there. Rejected, His name should be an occasion of strife; but the heavenly choir are occupied with the fact of His presence, and with the result, when fully produced, of the consequences, wrapped up in the person of Him who was there (looked at in their proper fruits), and they celebrate these consequences. Manifested evil should disappear, His holy rule should banish all enmity and violence. Jesus, mighty in love, should reign, and impart the character in which He had come to the whole scene that should surround Him in the

world He came into, that it might be according to His heart who took delight therein. (Prov. viii. 31.) (See, as regards a smaller scale, Psalm lxxxv. 10, 11.)

The means of this redemption, the destruction of Satan's power, the reconciliation of man by faith, and of all things in heaven and earth with God, are not here pointed out. Everything depended on the person and presence of Him who is born. All was wrapped up in Him. The state of blessing was born in the birth of that Child.

Presented to the responsibility of man, man is unable to profit by it, and all fails. His position thereby becomes only so much the worse. But, grace and blessing being attached to the person of Him just born, all their consequences necessarily flow forth. After all, it was the intervention of God accomplishing the counsel of His love, the settled purpose of His good pleasure. And Jesus once there, the consequences could not fail; whatever interruption there might be to their fulfilment, Jesus was their surety. He was come into the world. He contained in His person, He was the expression of, all these consequences. The presence of the Son of God in the midst of sinners said to all spiritual intelligency, "Peace on the earth."

The third thing was the good pleasure—the affection of God in men. Nothing more simple, since Jesus was a man. He had not taken hold of angels. It was a glorious testimony that the affection, the good pleasure, of God was centred in this poor race, now afar from Him, but in which He was pleased to accomplish all His glorious counsels. So John i., "the life was the light of men."

In a word, it was the power of God present in grace in the person of the Son of God taking part in the nature, and interesting Himself in the lot, of a being who had departed from Him, and making him the sphere of the accomplishment of all His counsels, and of the manifestation of His grace and His nature to all His creatures. What a position for man! for it is indeed in man that all this is accomplished. The whole universe was to learn in man, and in what God therein was for man, that which God was in Himself, and the fruits of all His glorious counsels, as well as its complete rest in His presence, according to His nature of love. All this was implied in the birth of that Child of whom the world took no notice. Natural and marvellous subject of praise to the holy inhabitants of heaven, unto whom God had made it known! It was glory to God in the highest.

J. N. D.

A RECOVERED LETTER CONCERNING OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.

10, ASHGROVE, HARROGATE,
March 1st, 1883.

BELOVED FRIEND,

Since our return from a recent mission into Kent and Sussex I have had the brethren very much on my heart before the Lord. I feel the moment to be solemn and critical in the very highest degree. I have a conviction that our God will graciously bless and use the brethren, if only they walk in lowly dependence, earnest devotedness, and true separation of heart to Himself. But there are many hindrances

both to personal progress and also to freshness, unction, and spiritual power, in our public reunions.

Now I want all who really care for the interests of our Lord Jesus Christ to unite in earnest prayer to God that He will graciously manifest Himself in blessing and power in our midst; that He will remove every hindrance, every stumbling-block, every root of bitterness; that He will, by the ministry of His Spirit, lead the brethren into such a condition of soul that He can use them as His instruments in blessing to His beloved people throughout the various organizations of Christendom. I cannot but feel that we have signally failed in our responsibility to these latter.

We have not gone after them in the tender affections of the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ; and when they have looked at us—looked into our private life, and at our public assemblies—instead of being attracted, they have been stumbled, and repulsed.

True, they have the Bible in their hands, in their houses, and in their public congregations; and hence they are responsible to receive its holy teaching, and to bow down to its divine authority in all things. But does this in any wise touch our side of the question? Most certainly not. We profess to hold the most precious and glorious truths that ever fell on mortal ears. But how have these truths acted on the heart and conscience? How have they shown in our private life and in our public assemblies? Must we not own that we have sadly failed to meet the claim of the beloved lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ scattered on the dark mountains and desolate moors of Christendom, without spiritual instruction, not knowing the things which are freely given to them

of God? Alas! alas! we cannot deny it, and I feel persuaded that all this will have to be felt and owned in the presence of God, if we are ever to be used as His channels of blessing to the precious members of the body of Christ throughout the length and breadth of the professing Church. Let us then bow down before our God in true self-judgment and humiliation; let us earnestly cry to Him to revive His blessed work in our midst. May He graciously cause a deep, full, rich wave of spiritual blessing to roll over the whole Church of God, that so there may be an earnest, whole-hearted band of worshippers, watchers, and workers gathered out to wait for His Son from heaven. May I ask you, beloved friend, to pass this on to any praying souls you may know?

I am not printing this appeal, neither am I calling any public meeting. I want nothing which might wear the aspect of excitement, demonstration, or human effort, from which I increasingly shrink. I simply desire that this word of exhortation may pass from place to place and from heart to heart in the power of the Spirit of God, and I confidently await the result. Our God is the Hearer and Answerer of prayer—blessed for ever be His holy name!

I will only add, in conclusion, that never was the Church of God—the body of Christ—so dear to my heart, or the work of the gospel more profoundly interesting.

I count on your hearty fellowship in the object of this letter, and remain, my beloved friend,

Most affectionately yours in Christ,

C. H. M.

LETTERS CONCERNING THE EVANGELIST AND THE ASSEMBLY.

I.

DEAR BROTHER,

You invite communications as to the relation of the evangelist to the assembly. The discussion is likely to be of much profit, with the Lord's help.

I wish to speak from the side of the assembly's responsibility.

In how few meetings do the prayers rise beyond the local needs! What a contrast there often is between the hearty "Amens" if prayer is made for a well-known saint, and the chilling silence that creeps over the meeting if the work of a local evangelist is mentioned.

How many assemblies feel any responsibility to minister to the needs of such? How few show any really hearty labour and sympathy with the workers!

If there is prayer for the gospel, do not some brothers evince by their listlessness that they have no sympathy with it, and that to pray for evangelizing is, in their opinion, to drag down the meeting, and to manifest a very low state of things?

Is not assembly fellowship in gospel preaching to every creature often prevented by brothers who have their own opinion as to how matters should be worked, and who thrust that judgment upon the assembly without having had any experience in the work? How far is this to be looked upon as the deliberate judgment of a gathering?

In short, is it not often impossible to evangelize with the fellowship of the assembly, because the assembly has no fellowship in evangelizing?

How hard do those who object to notices work to supply their place by themselves personally inviting the unconverted to come to the preaching?

How many assemblies do not increase, and the younger brothers have little interest in the Lord's work, because they have no acquaintance with the Spirit's activity in the gospel?

I am putting these questions, Mr. Editor, for consideration. There are, thank God, many exceptions to what I have described; but is it putting the case too strongly to say that many assemblies have, in a great measure, lost sense of their responsibility in the gospel, and to the workers in that blessed service?

Your brother in Christ,

E. C—p.

II.

MY DEAR BROTHER IN THE LORD,

I am glad the subject of the relationship of the evangelist to the assembly has been brought forward for consideration. It is a most important subject, and the Word clearly shows that the evangelist is not only to be in fellowship with the assembly, but I think it also teaches that the assembly is responsible concerning the evangelist and his work. Acts xiii. 2, 4 shows the qualifications of the servant; from Acts xviii. 24-28 and Romans x. 15 we learn by whom they are sent; and in Proverbs xxiv. 27 we get the principle on which the work is to be carried out.

God forbid that one word should be said to discourage any of the Lord's servants whom He has qualified and commissioned. There are two things necessary for every servant—the word of Christ dwelling in them richly (Col. iii. 16), and the love of Christ constraining them. (2 Cor. v. 14.) According to Luke xxiv. 49 they were to tarry until they were endued with power from on high; and in John x. 9 they were to go in before they came out.

The only perfect Servant could say, "He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned." (Isa. l. 4.) If HE was the dependent Servant, how much more the best of servants to-day!

My desire is simply to turn to the word of God for a few examples of how His servants carried on the work at the beginning. And mark well where the work of God originated. It commenced from a *prayer meeting* (Acts i. 13); and the result was three thousand souls brought to the feet of the Lord Jesus. And when Peter and John, in the name of Jesus, proclaimed liberty and salvation to the lame man, the hatred of man's heart which came out against that name only cast them more upon God; so they had recourse to prayer, and God's power was so manifest that the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and filled with the Holy Ghost. They spake the word with all boldness (Acts iv. 31), and although Satan came in for the moment to try and spoil the work by deception, yet multitudes of men and women were added to the Lord. (Acts v. 14.) And when Stephen was martyred the people of God were scattered abroad, and, preaching the word, great numbers believed, and turned to the Lord. (Acts xi. 21.)

Then Peter, who had opened the door to the Jews, opened it also to the Gentiles, and while he spake the word unto them the Lord put His seal upon them (Acts x. 44); God gave His approval. And when Paul preached the word of the gospel in Antioch, many believed and glorified the Lord. (Acts xiii. 48.)

These few instances clearly prove the relationship of the evangelist to the assembly, while on the other hand we find the assembly watching over the work (Acts viii. 14) of the evangelist. The servants, moreover, were men so fitted by God, and filled by His power, that there was no need to try and create an interest, but the power of God came down and moved men and women to believe on the Son of God.

May the Lord of the harvest raise up many, filled with His word and with the Holy Ghost, who can handle both the happer* and the sickle, for truly the fields are white unto harvest.

Yours in Christ,
W. W.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

REV. ii. 14 ; iii. 20.

THERE is a very significant connection between these two scriptures. From the first we learn that in the assembly at Pergamos there were those that held the doctrine of Balaam; and from the second we gather that this evil leaven had so spread that it characterized the state of Thyatira. It is true that there were a few who maintained a holy separation

* Case for holding corn for sowing by hand.

from it, but Jezebel, who had adopted and publicly taught it, was allowed even by the angel of the assembly; and it was this fact which drew forth the solemn exposure of the evil, and the condemnation of those who tolerated it, from the Son of God, "who hath His eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass." (v. 11.) What, then, is the nature of these evils? Through the counsel of Balaam, finding that he could not curse Israel, God's people were seduced to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab, and in addition, being invited unto the sacrifices of their gods, "the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods." (Numbers xv. 1, 2; xxxi. 16.) Such were the actual sins of the children of Israel; and what spiritually answers to these will be the teaching of Balaam for Christians. It is clear from many scriptures that spiritual fornication is alliance with the world. The assembly is espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ (2 Cor. xi. 2); if therefore she is unfaithful to Christ, and courts the world's favour, she falls into this sin. "To eat things sacrificed to idols" is equally plain. By eating we understand appropriation, and consequently identification with the thing eaten (see 1 Cor. x. 16-21); and we thus gather that when the assembly identifies herself with the world in homage, for example, to its objects of admiration or veneration, she is really partaking of the things sacrificed to idols. If so, Christendom is full of this sin, for even so-called Christian edifices are turned, on every hand, into temples for the world's idols. Great warriors, poets, statesmen, and others have—apart even from the question whether they were Christians—their statues placed in buildings which claim to be the house of

God. But the evil may go deeper. If in our hearts we unite with the world in the incense offered to its great men, or to its objects of praise, we have to this extent the doctrine of Balaam. The means of deliverance are to be found in the words of the apostle (and in no other way), "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

II.

JOHN xiii. 30.

Of course it is, in the first place, the actual fact that it was night, to which John refers, when Judas, having received the sop, went out from the presence of his Lord. But in view of the solemn character of the moment, and of his awful moral condition—for Satan had then entered into him (*v.* 27)—there can be no manner of doubt that it was intended that we should be arrested by the moral significance of the statement. Jesus had said, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"; for in Him was life, and the life was the light of men. As such He surely sat at the Passover table in the midst of His disciples, and hence, when Judas turned his back upon Him and went out under the power of Satan, it was indeed night in his soul. He loved darkness rather than light, because his deeds were evil; for every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. The "spirit" of this scripture lies clearly in its spiritual teaching, and it thus conveys a very solemn admonition to all who have their faces turned away from Christ.

THE GENTLENESS OF CHRIST.

2 COR. X. 1.

As far as we know this expression is not found excepting in this scripture, but the characteristic with which it is linked—viz., meekness—explains it; and, moreover, the fact of the Lord's gentleness shines out in almost every page of the Gospels. It is good for our souls to meditate upon it, though we may be rebuked by the contrast it offers to our own hardness and unyieldingness. The apostle uses it as a ground of appeal to the Corinthians who had turned aside from his blessed teachings, and who, if they had not entirely rejected his apostolic authority, were yet allowing him to be displaced, both in their affections and as a teacher, by "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ." It was in such circumstances that Paul besought them by the meekness and gentleness of Christ. His enemies had alleged that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. Was it that the lineaments of his Master—His meekness and gentleness—had shone out through his ministry? And that it was this which had excited the opposition, not to say contempt, of these upholders of the first man, of what man glories in as man, and what exalts him before the eyes of men? We know not; but in any case it will be profitable for us to consider this beauteous trait of Christ.

It has been already remarked that it follows upon meekness, and meekness the Lord Himself connects with humility. (Matt. xi.). There is a difference in these moral graces, and yet it might almost be said that they are necessarily bound up together, that where one of them is found the others are sure to appear, at least in measure. Speaking not now of the Lord, for His will was as perfect as Himself, but of the Christian, it will not be disputed that true humility can only spring from brokenness of will; and that where the will has been practically set aside through discipline there also will be meekness, that patient unresistingness in the presence of evil which accepts every cup of sorrow and trial from the Lord's hand, and displays gentleness of spirit and demeanour towards all. This is that contrite and humble spirit with which God loves to dwell; or, as Peter says, that meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price.

If we understand this, as applied to believers, we shall comprehend more readily what Paul terms "the gentleness of Christ." His will was never broken (far be the thought!), because it was perfect. But, never exercising it, because He came to do the Father's will, He was always in complete submission to the Father. He lived by reason of the Father, never moved or acted excepting at the Father's word, and thus He ever did the things that pleased Him. He did nothing from Himself but what He saw the Father do; "for whatsoever things He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." Hence when in the presence of evil and of the overflowing of Satan's power, losing sight of the blind

and wicked instruments of the enemy, He could say, "The cup which My Father giveth Me, shall I not drink it?" He was gentleness itself in the face of unrestrained violence. So also when before the high priest and the Jewish council, and also before Pilate, His meekness and gentleness were conspicuous both in His attitude and in His words. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth. (See Matt. xxvii.)

Leaving the reader to trace out the same blessed features during His ministry, for they are "written large" by all the evangelists, we now desire to point out that what is seen in Christ should be exemplified by His people. The same apostle thus writes to the Philippians, "Let your moderation be known unto all men." This word "moderation" is the same as that which is translated "gentleness" in the passage under consideration; and this is really its true force. Another word has been suggested, namely, yieldingness; but yieldingness is only the expression of a gentle spirit. And in Philippians it is the outward conduct which is in view, and outward conduct or demeanour towards all, believers and unbelievers; for it says "to all men." The form then which gentleness would assume towards men would be that of never insisting on one's own opinions or fancied rights, but seeking with a chastened subduedness to retire and to take the lowest place in the presence of others, yielding everything to those around excepting where faithfulness

to God and to His Word requires firmness. And what a powerful motive is given for the cultivation of gentleness in the words, "The Lord is at hand"! In view of His coming we may well be content to leave everything that affects ourselves to the adjustment of that day.

If then the gentleness of Christ is to be reproduced in the believer, the question may profitably be considered: How is this to be effected? The hindrance to it is plainly in the character of the flesh in us, its impatience, impetuosity, its obstinacy and wilfulness. This much may be discerned even in the case of Peter, whose failures during his companionship with the Lord on earth may all be traced to the eager forwardness of the flesh, notwithstanding his ardent affection for his Lord. It is essential, therefore, before the gentleness of Christ can be displayed, that the character of the flesh should be experimentally learned; that discovering, if through painful discipline, there is no good thing in it, we may hail with gratitude the glad tidings of grace—that it has already come up before God for judgment in the cross of Christ, and has passed away from before His eye for ever. A new state will then be entered upon and enjoyed—the state of being "in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Thereupon there will be liberty for occupation with Christ, the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us; divine affections will be formed within us, so that seeking for ever growing intimacy with Christ, He, formed within us, will ever more distinctly be manifested through our walk and conduct.

In summing up the foregoing remarks all would admit that our wills are the difficulty in the matter of gentleness. It would, therefore, help to the removal of this obstacle if it were but seen and confessed that our wills are evil and nothing but evil. "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin," for the body governed by our own wills can produce nothing but sin. If Christ be in you—what a thought! If He be, surely we desire that He would take the entire control, and then His blessed will would govern us for His own pleasure. We shall then, moreover, delight in the One who has become the object of our hearts, and then, constrained by affection to seek the intimacy of His company, we shall be daily conformed to His likeness; and thus His own blessed moral traits, His meekness and gentleness, will be formed within us and revealed in our ways and conversation. But the words of the apostle must be recalled in this connection, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, *that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*"

RESURRECTION.

III.

THE GROUND OF APPROACH TO GOD.

COLOSSIANS ii. 8 to iii. 14.

THERE are two things between which it is important for Christians to distinguish. I refer to God's approach to man and man's approach to God. They are never confounded in Scripture, and the second is consequent upon the first. It is as we enter into the reality of God's approach to us that we desire to approach Him.

Now, for this we need to apprehend the platform of resurrection, as otherwise we cannot approach God according to His mind. The apostle speaks to the Colossians as being on that platform, and as having been quickened together with Christ. Hence in chap. iii. 1 he exhorts them—"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

It is necessary also to distinguish in our minds between the *fact* of resurrection and the *platform* of resurrection. The *fact* is a matter for faith—you believe in God who raised up Jesus our Lord. Now, in regard to ourselves, we are not yet raised as a fact, but we are said to be risen with Him. When we are raised as a fact we shall be caught up to heaven, and will not talk then about the platform of resurrection. But we are not yet risen as to fact, and hence we speak about the platform of resurrection as a ground to be occupied by the soul according to the import of Christ's resurrection. Now, to know Christianity in its true power we must occupy this platform. I do not deny that souls may be pious, and know a good deal, as even the Jews did, without reaching it; but they do not fully know Christianity. You may say that I am using the term in a wrong sense, but I do not think it is so.

I see revealed in Scripture certain things which are for God, and certain things which are for man. This can be discerned in Hebrews xii., where we find enumerated the things to which we have come. (vv. 22, 23.) These are Mount Zion, the city of the living God, heavenly Jerusalem, myriads of angels, the universal gathering, "and to the Church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." These are all

clearly for God. You get this idea conveyed in the term "firstborn," for it refers probably to the firstborn who were redeemed out of Egypt and were claimed by God. They were for *God*. The passage then goes on—"and to God the Judge of all." Then follow things which are for man—"spirits of just men made perfect, Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling." These refer to blessings on man's side.

Christianity consists in apprehending the things that are for God, and in the apprehension of these you get the consciousness of the things that are for man, and I use the word consciousness intentionally. In the line of divine teaching we learn what God has provided for Himself, for it is only in the first that there are things for God, that there can be anything for man; and God has approached man with a view to accomplish what is for Himself. The world broke with God entirely over Christ, and it is, in the presence of the Spirit, convicted of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Well, then, what is there for man? Nothing, save as God has come out to accomplish certain things for Himself and for His own glory. It is only in this way that there can be anything for man.

Now, in resurrection everything is for God. This is its import. Whatever of life God brings out of death is devoted to Himself—is for His glory. You will remember what the Lord said to Martha in John xi. 40—"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" The sickness of Lazarus was for God's glory, that his resurrection might be a witness to the Son of God on His way to the cross, that God might thus be glorified.

We get many blessings short of resurrection—forgiveness of sins, for example; and people accept these, but shirk the resurrection platform because everything that is on that is for *God*. I do not go there to know the forgiveness of sins, but to approach God as a priest.

The glory of God is a most important thought. It is His *distinctive* triumph. The idea in glory is distinction, and the glory of God is His *distinction*. We get the idea of distinction in the heavenly bodies—one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and so on. Glory as regards divine persons is distinctive; for instance, the glory of the Son is not exactly the glory of the Father. The glory of God is in His complete triumph over every evil, or rather, I should say, in the triumph of all that God is over the power of evil. Hence resurrection is for the glory of God, for it sets forth the triumph of God. And no attribute of God is compromised, but He is glorified in all His attributes. He is glorified in Christ's resurrection, and now are seen His love, His righteousness, His holiness, His power.

Man achieves the greatest glory chiefly by destruction. Men are much more dazzled by the victories of one who has effected destruction by war than by one who rules well in times of peace. The glory of God is very different from this. His glory is complete triumph over the power of evil, and this is set forth in resurrection. Death—the great enemy—is annulled in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. On the ground of resurrection God has a free hand, if I might so speak, to act in grace towards man without reference to evil, sin, the flesh, etc. He forgives freely, He can justify, redeem, and give the Holy Ghost. God can

act towards man on that platform apart from all that is in man. Man is justified by the faith of God.

Why has God thus approached man? Because He is accomplishing all for Himself. God is to be all in all, and He is working for His own glory. He has approached man on resurrection ground to accomplish what is according to His will. Everything that reaches this platform is devoted to God. God is the object.

In the process of course of God's dealings with the soul, I do not think that when man believes that he is really *conscious* of anything. No doubt consciousness will follow, but I doubt if it does so very quickly. I think it is some time before the believer becomes *conscious* of things, for this involves the *new man* being put on. Speaking humanly, I am as a man conscious of certain things, and consciousness is peculiarly individual. "No one knows the things of a man save the spirit of man that is in him." That is to say, I am conscious of my things, and no one else is.

Now the same thing is true, I suppose, in regard to the new man, though there the consciousness is intimately connected with the Spirit of God. I am conscious of certain things in the new man, but that is a different thing from faith. It is by *faith* I am justified, but this is hardly consciousness.

And who has the consciousness of forgiveness of sins? The Christian who has put on the new man. I believe there are *thousands* of Christians who have faith, but who have hardly the *consciousness* of forgiveness, because it is known in the new man. Well, I see this, that God has approached man in the testimony of forgiveness of sins, and in the gift of the Holy Ghost, in order that the believer may

be *conscious* of what is for God. For thus the work of the Holy Ghost goes on forming the Christian in the divine nature and bringing him into liberty.

In Romans viii. we see the Holy Ghost leading the believer into the consciousness of *what is for God*. In Romans v. we have had what is for *man*. But in Romans viii. the thought of sonship is brought in, and sonship is for God, and God has no higher thought in regard to any Christian. But there are many Christians who are not in the good of Romans viii., although they might be able to repeat the chapter word for word. But souls are often not in liberty lacking the formative work of the Spirit.

Next I come to the truth of the Church. The Church is for God. Of whom is the Church composed? It is composed of *all* the sons of God. They have the Spirit of sonship, and compose the Church of the first-born which are written in heaven. The Church is for *God*, although men may and will get the light of it; but if we look at it as the heavenly city we find that it is for God, for it has the glory of God, or if we look at it as the Church of the first-born it is a worshipping company for God. It is in this respect like the sons of Aaron, who had the service of the sanctuary, and had no inheritance amongst the people. They were set apart for God.

The mind of God is first apprehended in detail by faith. We must begin with this before we get consciousness. The Holy Ghost does not stop at the first step, but brings us by faith on to the resurrection platform. But to reach that I must be consciously free of that which has been removed for God. This is more than faith—it is deliverance.

First, we apprehend the calling to sonship; then we see that sons of God are priests because they are sons. We have this thought in Hebrews, where Christ is spoken of as priest because He is Son. So with us, for who could have full access to God save sons? None but those who know God's love could fully enjoy access. It is sonship which enables us to be priests, and as such only are we priests.

The next point is deliverance. We must be consciously free of that from which God is free in His approach to man. The tenth and eleventh verses of our chapter mean that we are to be consciously free from what God has removed. This brings us to the resurrection platform, where we can take part in true priestly service.

There is another work which the Spirit does, in which lies the secret of deliverance, and that is, the forming of the believer in the divine nature. But in Colossians ii. 12-15 we just have, "Ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God." This means that you enter into the light of God's purposes set forth in Christ's resurrection to put man in touch with heaven, outside of every order of man down here, philosophic, sentimental, or religious. We are entitled thus to be free from the power of the flesh, and although still in the world, to be free from its influences. That is the platform of resurrection, and when we reach that platform we are suited to be of the worshipping company.

Quickened together with Him is a further thought, and is the source of spiritual affections. It means that the love of God is effective in us. It is first shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, and nothing

can separate us from it—that is one side. But the other side is that we love God as having recognised the love of God and the obligation that flows from it. We love God and we love Christ, who has brought to us the light of love, and then we love the brethren. God is the supreme object of these spiritual affections.

But just to touch again on the three points that have been before us. We have, first, the apprehension of what is for God. It is here that we find the lack in souls in ability to distinguish between what is for God and what is for man. Second. The apprehension of the Church. The Holy Ghost leads us into the light of God's pleasure that we are risen with Christ, thus in touch with heaven, and frees us from what is of the earth. Third. The Spirit forms believers in divine affections, so that they should be a company "holy and without blame before Him in love."

Perhaps you say you cannot understand much about it. Well, I only suggest these things to you. The apostle says, "Set your mind on things above." If you are free from all that closes in death, then set your mind on things which are above. The energy of the Spirit is needed for this.

Christians are often greatly occupied about the earth and the things which are to happen there, and make a special study of prophecy in that way; but they never get the truth in this way. But set your mind on things in heaven, and then you will know all about the earth. It is what takes place in heaven that affects the earth. When the Church goes to heaven and Satan is cast out of heaven, that means a great deal for the earth. But I only say this by the way. Set your minds on things above, on that scene of unclouded bliss where Christ is.

People fail of the reality of Christianity, not of being Christians; but God does not get His portion in them. The priests were God's portion. May God give us discernment. If you apprehend what is for God, then you will get the consciousness of what is for man; and it is in the putting on of the new man that we get the consciousness of everything. F. E. R.

BALAAM AND ISRAEL.

BALAK sends for Balaam. The grand question in this touching scene is this, "Can Satan succeed in cursing the people of God so as to prevent their entrance into the land of promise?"*

It is not merely a question of redemption, and of the joy of redemption at the beginning of their course, but in the end when all their unfaithfulness has been manifested—their unfaithfulness even after the Lord

* It is of the highest interest to see the special character of this prophecy. It is God who, of His own will, interferes to take the part of His people against the enemy, and that even without their knowing it or asking for it. It is not, as almost all prophecies are, an appeal to the conscience of the people, accompanied by promises calculated to sustain the faith of the remnant in the midst of the gainsayers. The people know nothing about it; they are, perhaps, still murmuring in their tents (so beautiful in the eyes of him who had the vision of the Almighty) against the ways of God with them. It is God declaring His own thoughts and confounding the malice of Satan—the enemy He has to do with. That is the reason why this prophecy is so complete, presenting to us, in spirit, our whole portion (literally it is that of Israel, as in the fourth prophecy is evident), separation, justification, beauty in the eyes of God (all that corresponds with the presence of the Spirit of God), and the crown of glory in the coming of the star of Jacob—of Christ Himself—in glory.

has brought them to Himself. Can Satan succeed then? No.

When Moses in those same plains has to say, with regard to their conduct towards God, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (and, indeed, they had been excessively froward, a most stiff-necked people; do we not know this well?), God says by the mouth of Balaam, the involuntary witness of the truth, "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." What a testimony! What wonderful grace! What perfection in the ways of God! God sees aright; He makes no mistakes. He speaks the truth according to the perfectness of His infinite intelligence; and it is because it is infinite that He can see no iniquity in the redeemed people. How could He see any in those who are washed in the blood of the Lamb? Nor is it His mind to see it.

In His own dealings with the people He will see everything, take knowledge of everything; but with the accuser it is a question of righteousness. God only sees this, that, according to the counsels of His grace, He has given a ransom; the sins of His people have been atoned for. He could not in justice see those sins. The mouth of the accuser is therefore obliged to confess that there are none, and that there is no power of the enemy against Jacob. And the ground is clearly taught—according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and Israel, What hath God wrought? Not said of God, but of Israel; and not, What hath Israel wrought? but, What hath God wrought? Israel had the place, but the work was God's work. This is very perfect.

What is peculiarly blessed and comforting in this is, that God acts and judges from His own thoughts. From beginning to end He has had thoughts about us; He has done what was needed to reconcile all His ways in the accomplishment of them with eternal righteousness; but He has these thoughts and acts towards us according to them. It is these faith apprehends, accepts, and builds on. Hence joy and peace; while the presence of God in the midst of an accepted people to whom a new nature has been given, and His judging all these secures practically the holiness which He cannot dispense with, or judges departure from it, so as to vindicate His name. But here it is God acting, judging, in spite of all, according to His *own* thoughts.

Balaam was a sad character. Forced to see from afar off the blessing of God upon His people, when he is near, and actuated by his own heart and will, he sees nothing but the way of error, into which he wishes to drag them that they might forfeit that blessing (if this were possible), reasoning upon this ground, that the righteous God could not bless a sinful people. One cannot think of any iniquity worse than that.

J. N. D.

DIVINE LOVE, AND ITS PRACTICAL EFFECT.

THE practical effect of knowing God's love is to lead us to love. The apostle John delighted to speak of himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. And in his first epistle he says, "We love, because He first loved us." (N.T.) Here we see its practical effect in him, and the same should be true of every believer. Is it

not of immense importance to see that the effect of the revelation God has given of Himself is to produce the divine nature in us? And yet are we not all conscious in how small a measure this is attained? If there was one thing pressing upon the heart of the blessed Lord ere He left this world, it seemed to be the desire that His followers should love one another. He had loved His own; this is what had characterized Him, and now He desires that it should characterize them. And thus He says, "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Why is there so little love seen in us? It must be because we have failed in our apprehension of divine love. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Nothing at all to commend us to God; but what God did for us then commends His love. How wonderful to witness the whole world lying in wickedness, not one righteous, no, not one, and then to see God outside it all acting in love towards sinners, and all because of what He is in Himself. "God *so loved* the world."

It brings us back to God, and gives us to see what He is in Himself—that He is love; and not all the force of evil in man, though it could go the length of crucifying His Son, can ever alter what God is. It is no longer a question then of our commending ourselves to God; but He commends His love toward us. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; and when we believe in Christ, the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. When this is known and enjoyed in the soul, it must

have a practical effect. We love God, and we love one another. This must be the result if we are able to say "we have known and believed the love that God hath to us." And if we love one another, the love of God is perfected in us.

Can any of us rest satisfied until this is accomplished in us? Christ came down from heaven not only to save us from hell, but that those who had once been hateful and hating one another should be characterized henceforth by love to each other. Many accept Christ as a means of escape from hell, and nothing more. To them the Saviour is only a passport to a better world when they leave this. Is it any wonder such a theory has little or no effect upon their present conduct? But this is far from being the only evil resulting from such ideas. The world is totally unaffected by Christians of that stamp. How different the end set before us in the Word of God! If we study the epistles, we shall find they all, more or less, lead up to this—the reproduction of the divine nature in us.

Let us begin, then, and see from the different epistles how it is the *summum bonum*—the supreme good. In Romans, where we have the gospel of God presented, God's love is made known in order to produce love in us; and accordingly, when we come to chapter xiii. 8, we read, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another." It is here put in a very striking way, as what we owe to every man. Are we daily discharging this debt? In 1 Corinthians xiii. we get a fuller unfolding of love. Much has been said upon this wonderful chapter, and no attempt is made to expound it here. The passage in Romans is more individual and general, but here it is shown to be the

one thing that is needed to make things work smoothly amongst the children of God. Love is our measure, and without it we are nothing. There is one very peculiar and striking thing about it. The description is not so much of what love does, as what it does not do, showing that the very essence of love is self-abnegation and self-effacement. How easy comparatively it is to engage in active and even arduous service rather than to suffer, and yet the very first thing mentioned is, "Love *suffereth* long, and is kind." How little we like to suffer at the hands of others, and how prone we are to retaliate. Oh, how this humbles us, "Love *suffereth long*, and is kind!" Measured by this standard, how small our love is, and, consequently, how small we are!

If we turn to Galatians v. 22, we find the first fruit of the Spirit is *love*. All the other fruits grow out of that one. If that is lacking, the rest are only like artificial fruit tied on a tree—it never grew there. Where there is love there is no effort. The next on the list is *joy*. Our joy will ever be in proportion to our love. This is an unfailing principle. And so it is with the next, *peace*. If, in all we do and say and think, we are actuated by love, we shall enjoy a peace which nothing can disturb. This does not imply a servile agreement with everybody and everything; love may sometimes have to stand almost alone, because there is so little of it in the world; but should this trying position be experienced, the mind will be in perfect peace, if only love is allowed to govern. And this will bring in, too, next *long-suffering*. Love will often be misunderstood. Men, and even Christians, are so accustomed to be directed by

motives of self-interest and personal advantage, they misinterpret and misjudge the disinterestedness of love. And so there is need of long-suffering. This will lead to *gentleness*. If we confound gentleness with weakness we make a serious mistake. The great need of the hour is Christians who are *gentle*. It is love, and not social status, makes the true gentle man. It has been said of one of low degree that he was qualified to enter any society, and the reason was very simple—he loved everything, and “love doth not behave itself unseemly.” “Goodness”: love always seeks the welfare, and not the harm, of others. “Faith”: love believeth all things. And then follow “meekness, temperance,” and the apostle adds, “Against such there is no law.” You cannot put love under law; it is its own law. It worketh no ill, only good. And “love is of God.”

Now let us go on to Ephesians. In chapter i. 4 we read, “That we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” And in order to be this we are going to be conformed to the image of His Son. But is God’s thought merely that we should be loved by Him? If we turn on to chapter v. of the same epistle we shall find something further. “Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children; and *walk in love*, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour.” Christ covered us with His own acceptability, instead of leaving us exposed to what we justly deserved. This is precisely how we are to act. Instead of exposing the delinquencies of others, we are to seek to remove them, and our spirituality is discerned, not in condemnation, but in recovery. “Love covers the

multitude of sins." It does not make light of sin, but diminishes every opportunity of the contagion spreading. In this way "love covers the *multitude* of sins."

It is only as we attain to this love that we can edify one another. We cannot effect this by the mere statement of doctrines, however clearly presented. The reason our preaching has so little *effect* upon others is because we have been so little *affected* ourselves. The body can only edify itself in love. (Eph. iv. 16.)

To the Philippians the apostle Paul writes, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more"; to the Colossians he says, "Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." It completes all the rest, and without it there is a lack for which no combination of other qualities can atone. Writing to the Thessalonians, he speaks of their "work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope." Faith is always active; without works it is dead. It can accomplish much, for it knows a God with whom nothing is impossible—a God of ceaseless activity. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." And so faith works. But to be of much value it must be a labour of love. Love must be behind it all and in it all. It must be begun, continued, and ended in love. If we look for recognition or reward here we may be disappointed. The more it is a work of faith, the less, probably, will it be understood; but if at the same time it is a labour of love, we shall be sustained, for love is its own reward. Let us see to it that every work we undertake is a work of faith—that is, given to us by God, undertaken

for God, and done to God—and, in addition, that it is carried out in love, for the service of love is perfect freedom. And the patience of hope crowns all. For, as we have said, the work of faith may not always get its due here, but we wait for the time when everything will be valued at its true estimate. Further on we get the desire expressed: "The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all, even as we do toward you." (Chap. iii. 12.) How we see that again and again throughout the epistles the same thing is emphasized, showing us clearly enough that without love we are nothing. The apostle would have us increase and abound; and another apostle exhorts us to "love one another with a pure heart fervently." Must we not all say how little we know of this?

If we have learnt to love, there can be only one result—that is, *holiness*. There is a difference between holiness and righteousness. Holiness has more to do with nature; righteousness with acts. Righteousness is doing a thing because you know it to be right; holiness is doing right because you love to do it. Without love, therefore, it is impossible to be holy; and the more holy we are, the more we shall act simply from love. Holiness is often said to be by faith. This is only partly true. Really, holiness is by love. The way it works is: faith leads to love, and love to holiness. Lust is the very essence of sin; love, the essence of holiness. Lust is self-gratification—the desire to have; love forgets itself in its desire to benefit others—"it seeketh not her own."

Let us look at a few illustrations as to the practical effect of love. Take Moses as an example. He was on the mount enjoying communion with the Lord, and he received from His hand the two tables of stone; but when he came down he found the people dancing round the golden calf. We read, his "anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount," and he destroyed the golden calf, and made the children of Israel drink of the powder. But directly after he can say to them, "I will go up unto the Lord, peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." And he prayed, for the sake of these very people, that God would blot him out of His book. "Oh, this people," he says, "have sinned a great sin. Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written."

Paul had the same spirit. He could say, "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." (Rom. ix. 2, 3.) And again, to the Corinthian saints who had not shown much appreciation of him he writes, "Behold, the third time I am ready to come to you; and I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."

Why could these two devoted servants manifest a spirit so sublime? Because the love of God had touched their hearts. And this same love will produce similar results in us in proportion as we know it.

May the Lord give us to see that "the end of the

commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned"; and again, "This is His commandment, that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and *love one another*, as He gave us commandment."

R. E.

THE ASSEMBLY AND THE EVANGELIST.

AN evangelist is the servant of Christ, not of the assembly; but wherever he may be he is of the church himself. If there is no assembly gathered where he is there he is alone, but if there is an assembly he is of it. And the first thing in him is to gather to Christ. Say that I go to Galatia, and the Lord converts fifty, they are gathered to Christ, not to the assembly I had come from. An evangelist would be for the edifying of the body of Christ, inasmuch as he brings the souls in and adds them. How could you build a church up without people, without bricks (or scripturally, I should say, "stones")? I should in this connection be jealous of two things exceedingly: of a person separating himself in spirit from the saints, or of the assembly thinking his work was their affair. I think it is of great importance that the workman should be clearly Christ's servant; but if he works in any spirit of separation from the saints, I could not go with it. An evangelist may not necessarily gather to anything that was there but to Christ, with a full knowledge of redemption; and having Christ and a full knowledge of redemption, they could not go on with anything else.

J. N. D.

GUIDANCE.

“If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.”

EXODUS xxxiii. 15.

“I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go : I will guide thee with mine eye.”—PSALM xxxii. 8.

If Thy presence go not with me,
Carry me not hence, O Lord ;
Severed from Thee, precious Saviour,
What the joy can earth afford ?

Not the smoothest, sunniest path, Lord,
By the foot of man e'er trod
Would I take, unless, like Enoch,
I therein could walk with God.

Nor the richest, rarest gift, Lord,
That to man was ever given,
Would I have without Thy favour,
Blessed Lord of earth and heaven.

I would have Thy mind, Lord Jesus,
Lowly, meek, dependent One,
Who couldst always say, “My Father,
Not My will, but Thine, be done.”

Guide me then, Lord Jesus, guide me,
Lest I erring go astray,
Tempted by the world and Satan,
Wander from the narrow way.

Keep me near Thee, precious Saviour,
I would in Thy love abide,
Till I wake up with Thy likeness,
Gloriously satisfied.

M. S. S.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

GALATIANS v. 6.

IN going back to Judaism the Galatians were really going back to the ground of the first man; and hence the energetic language of the apostle in chapter i: "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The difficulty of every age is the same, viz., to maintain the truth that Christianity is wholly a new thing which displaces everything else; that it belongs to a new sphere, and is of a new order altogether; that the first man, who is of the earth earthy, is for ever set aside in the cross of Christ; and that it is the second Man out of heaven who is the Man of God's counsels, and the One to whom all the race, of which He is the Head, is to be conformed. (1 Cor. xv. 47-49.) To apprehend this will help the reader to understand the language of our scripture. Circumcision, etc., had to do with man in the flesh, and since this man has been removed from the eye of God in judgment, these fleshly distinctions could not now obtain; *in Christ Jesus* they could not avail anything, for in Him we pass into a new scene where everything has become new. (2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15.) What does avail, Paul says, is faith which worketh by love. That is, love is the divine nature, and as such is the soil in which faith thrives and grows, faith itself being as much of God

as love. The greater the activity of the divine nature in us—love—the greater will be the increase of our faith, which is the blessed fruit of the divine Spirit. (v. 22.) It is thus very significant that, in detailing the various characters of the fruit of the Spirit, love should be given as heading the list, as the root and ground of all the rest.

II.

ROMANS v. 9.

This expression "justified by His blood" is scarcely exactly rendered: it should be, we judge, "in virtue of His blood"; for, as chapter iv. 24, 25, shows, the resurrection of Christ was necessary for our justification. But the blood of Christ, as the all-powerful testimony to the righteousness of God, laid the foundation on which God could be "just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." We see no objection therefore to the statement that the blood of Christ was the "procuring cause" of our justification. Even in Egypt the blood upon the houses of the children of Israel, the witness before God that the judgment of death which lay upon His people had been borne by another, was the efficacious ground on which He acted to bring His people out, through the Red Sea, and to Himself. It secured, indeed, everything according to His purposes of grace for them, but still they were not set free, nor could they sing the song of redemption until they had passed through the waters of the Red Sea, wherein the whole power of the enemy was swallowed up and destroyed. In like manner the *source and ground* of our justification are

clearly given in chapter iii. (vv. 24–26); but it is not until we come to chapter iv. and v. that we find the *fact* of justification. Nothing could indeed be plainer, for we read that righteousness shall also be reckoned to us, “if we believe on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” As everything begins for God with the resurrection of His beloved Son, so also for the believer, for the moment he apprehends the resurrection of Christ he is brought into the light of another world, and he understands that the first man has gone for ever from the eye of God, and that Christ, the Second Man, is the object of His eternal counsels.

III

1 CORINTHIANS v. 7 ; 2 TIMOTHY ii. 21.

It is only in these two places that the word in question is found, and attention to its application will discover very precisely its force and meaning. In the first scripture it is accurately rendered, “purge out”—“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.” Sin had appeared and was tolerated in the midst of the saints at Corinth; this was the leaven of which the apostle speaks as leavening the whole lump. Hence he reminds them of their responsibility, and calls upon them to deal with the evil, to purge it out from the assembly, and to do this, as the last verse of the chapter shows, by putting away from among themselves

the wicked person who had committed the sin. In the second scripture the use of the word, while retaining its significance, is different. The apostle has been comparing, for Timothy's instruction, the outward state of Christianity (what we term Christendom) to a great house, in which "there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." This being the case, and the fact is patent to every spiritual person, what is the Lord's path for the godly? It is to *purge himself out* from among these vessels of dishonour; he cannot purge *them* out, nor can he get outside of that outward profession, which has become like this great house; and hence his resource, as here divinely taught, is to purge himself out. As another has paraphrased the word in a well-known translation, in order to give its full meaning, "If, therefore, one shall have purified from these *in separating himself from them*," etc. And the force of the word entirely justifies this paraphrase, so that there is no excuse whatever for remaining in association with the vessels of dishonour, and no possibility, as long as it is done, of being "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, [and] prepared unto every good work." We will not go further in this note except to call the reader's attention to the following exhortation, connected as it is with what precedes, "Flee also youthful lusts; but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart."

"Love is free when self is dead."

MUTUAL CONSIDERATION.

ROMANS xiv.—xv. 1-7.

IT is very evident that there were, in the early days of Christianity, many serious difficulties in the way of Christian fellowship. Some of the saints had been Jews and some had been Gentiles, and in both cases their former habits and teachings coloured their lives, and often hindered their full acceptance of the truth as it is in Jesus. Brought up as we have been in a land where the facts of redemption are common property, we have but little conception of the almost insuperable obstacles to fellowship which existed between Jew and Gentile in the Church of God. Questions of what might or might not be eaten, of sacred days which had in the past been held in reverence, were constantly arising; and it was to meet this state of things that the apostle was led of the Spirit to pen the scripture at the head of this paper. But let no one think that, together with the special features of the assembly at Rome, the need for this instruction has passed away. The principles here enunciated are of abiding importance; and there is scarcely an assembly of God's people in the world where their application is not required. Comprising, almost in every case, some with greater and some with less light, some with more liberty of soul than others, some in the enjoyment of deliverance, and some who are more or less in a state of legality, the necessity for consideration one for another never ceases.

Let us then trace out the various pleas which the apostle urges for this *mutual consideration*. One, he tells us, believes that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Well, shall these two dear believers fall out with one another on this account? No, says the apostle, for he that eateth must not despise the abstainer, nor must the one that does not eat judge him that eateth, for God has received him. The weak in the faith is to be received by the strong, and the strong by the weak, on the ground that both alike are debtors to grace. This principle shows us how very tender we should be in dealing with the scruples of a fellow-believer; and also how very slow we should be to judge one who allows himself a larger liberty than we are accustomed to permit to ourselves. Hence it is that the apostle passes on to maintain individual responsibility, so that no one may judge another man's servant. This is not to say, it must be carefully remembered, that we must not pronounce judgment upon unscriptural things, but only that we must refrain from condemning one another, either for the exercise of Christian liberty, or for refusing to do that which conscience, for want of fuller light, will not allow. In both instances alike they stand or fall to their own Master; and acting before God each shall be holden up, for God is able to make him to stand.

Another consideration follows in connection with the observance of days. As to this (and in saying so much we learn the tenderness of God for His people), let every man, Paul writes, be fully persuaded in his

own mind. The point is to maintain a good conscience, and doing this, whether in eating, or in the observance of days, it may be done unto the Lord. One might have a mistaken conviction, and yet if it is really carried out as unto and before the Lord, it would be so far acceptable to Him. From this the apostle takes occasion to widen his survey, and to affirm that we neither live to ourselves, nor die to ourselves, but that it is to the Lord we live and die; and, more than this, whether we live or die we are the Lord's. Blessed principle of fullest liberty, to have the Lord's yoke upon us in every detail of our lives! But to enter upon this supposes deliverance known and enjoyed, such deliverance as that which Paul speaks of concerning himself when he says, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Chap. viii. 2.) And the ground of it all lies in the death and resurrection of Christ to the end that He might be Lord both of the dead and living. He is, therefore, absolutely supreme; and in His supremacy He claims our subjection, and claims it in virtue of His love, and thus lays it upon our heart to do everything as unto Him. Doing this will not only draw us closer to Himself, but also closer one to another, inasmuch as He will thus become the bond of our fellowship, and so remove from our hearts even the tendency to judge one another.

Moreover, it is urged, the day of rectification has not yet arrived. The apostle thus proceeds: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment

seat of Christ."* To remember this would prevent our passing judgment upon one another, and make us willing to leave all such questions to be decided by the infallible Judge. It was in view of this that the apostle himself said, when judged by others, "It is a very small thing that I should be judged of you. . . . He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time." (1 Cor. iv. 3-5.) Whether thus, on the one side, when we are tempted to judge, or, on the other, when we are judged by our fellow-believers, we may well possess our souls in patience, in the assurance that we all alike shall be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, when everyone will receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Having thus laid the ground on which our mutual relationships should proceed, the apostle passes on to indicate our responsibility to care for, and to guard one another from occasions of stumbling or being ensnared. We may have full liberty, for example, to eat anything, for there is nothing unclean of itself; but if we persist in using our liberty before a brother who is not in the enjoyment of this liberty, and wound his conscience, or encourage him to violate it, we do not walk according to love. The importance of this principle cannot be over-estimated: and it is put in the strongest possible way when the apostle adds, "Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died"; and again, "For meat destroy not the work of God."

* It would seem that this should read the judgment seat of "God." It is true that all judgment is committed to the Son, but here it is simply the general affirmation of our personal accountability to God.

It is not the apostle's meaning that we can accomplish the destruction of a brother, but rather it is that, as far as we are concerned, we act by asserting our liberty in a way that would tend to damage him eternally. Now love to our brother, walking in love, would shelter him from every possible cause of offence, would consider his weakness and bear with it, and at the same time would seek his edification by leading him on as he might be able to bear it.

We are taught, also, that the kingdom of God is not meat or drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It is so easy to fall into externalism, and to lose sight of the state of our souls, and even be zealous for Christian liberty when our souls are withered up from want of divine nourishment. The truth is that if we cultivate the enjoyment of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, our hearts will overflow with love to our brethren, and then we should instinctively act with due regard for their weakness. As we read in this same epistle, "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law"; that is, as another has said, "By the conduct which flows from love the law is already fulfilled before its requirement is applied." In this state of soul, instead of claiming our liberty, or even asserting our judgment, we should be ever on the watch for the welfare of our brethren. Fuller light we may have, but, if we have, we shall show it in increasing humility and in seeking opportunities of serving one another in love. And "he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men." (v. 18.) What a motive to follow

after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another!

It is really marvellous to see the energy of the Spirit of God in dealing with this subject through the apostle. Again guarding the conscience of the weak, Paul says, "All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence." What then is the conclusion drawn? "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." If we were all but governed by this divine principle, the whole face of Christian fellowship would be changed. All harshness, censoriousness, and uncharitable judgments would be displaced by gentle forbearance, tender consideration, and bearing with one another in love. "Are we then never to exercise our undoubted liberty?" Yes, says the apostle, if you have faith, faith to use it, have it to thyself before God; use it in private, but not publicly, when its exercise might stumble a weak brother. It must, however, when maintained in private, be before God, and hence the apostle adds a caution. "Happy is he that condemneth [judgeth] not himself in that which he alloweth." Be sure that it is Christian liberty and exercised before God in faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin. Even liberty may degenerate into licence and indulgence, and will, when the conscience is not in exercise, and we are not acting in faith under the eye of God.

Lastly, the apostle draws the conclusion of the whole matter in the beginning of chapter xv.—a conclusion which needs to be earnestly pondered by us all. First

of all, they that are strong *ought* (the word is remarkable) to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please themselves; but everyone should strive to please his neighbour for his good to edification. Blessed principle! It involves the absence of all self-pleasing, and entire devotedness to Christ in ministry to His people in communion with His own heart. Hence it is that the example of Christ is introduced, both to encourage us to follow in His steps and to rebuke the selfishness which is so common even amongst the people of God. If He pleased not Himself, but endured everything—reproaches, shame, and persecution—in His lowly pathway, wherein He learned obedience by the things which He suffered, we shall best approve ourselves as His disciples by acting in the same spirit. Then, after pointing out the continuous application of the scripture cited, together with its object, the apostle prays that the God of patience and consolation may grant us to be like-minded one toward another, according to Christ Jesus: that we “may with one mind, [and] one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” How intensely the apostle desired to heal breaches in the assembly, and to secure displayed unity, that God might be glorified by oneness of heart in their praise and adoration! His final word, and surely after such arguments it is an irresistible one, is, “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” May we all lay this exhortation to heart, remembering that “the glory of God” is to determine the limits of our fellowship. It is simply that we are to maintain toward one another the attitude which Christ maintains towards ourselves.

PREPARATION FOR CONFLICT.

JOSH. v. ; ROM. iv. 23-25 ; COL. ii. 12.

CHRISTIANS are not all alive to the thought that the books of the Pentateuch set forth typically the path and experiences of a Christian. They are not mere history. In fact, there is no real history in Scripture ; that is, nothing that would be accounted such by man. The great bulk of the Old Testament is taken up by the dealings with and interventions of God on behalf of His people. In writing a history one would record the social, political, military, and commercial life of a people. The interventions of God on their behalf are not history. But if you take away the interventions of God from Scripture, you would have but little left.

Now these early books of the Bible show prophetically the Christian pathway, and God's dealings with him in it. The instruction which they give is not found anywhere else. The Gospels do not give us such instruction ; they give us the facts of Christ's ministry, etc. But in the early books of the Bible God's ways in His moral government are seen.

In Exodus, for example, we have two main thoughts ; namely :

1. God redeeming His people from Egypt ; and
2. His setting up His dwelling among them.

This is realized in the Christian. He is first redeemed, and then he is indwelt by the Spirit of God.

Turning to Numbers, we get there the exercises of the wilderness. The world is a wilderness to the

Christian, and in it he finds out the contrariety and perverseness of the flesh, but the grace of God. And there is another thing that he learns there; namely, God's ordering and provision for His people in the wilderness.

In Leviticus we get another important subject; namely, the manner and details of approach to God. Now the apostle tells us that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." (Rom. xv. 4.) I think many Christians fail to look at these early books of the Old Testament in this light; but these books are of great interest, as giving us the account of God's ways with His people.

My subject during these lectures has been the resurrection platform. It is on the platform of resurrection that God has approached man. "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day." (Luke xxiv. 46.) This is the resurrection platform where everything contrary to God has been removed in the death of Christ, so that God can freely approach man. It is not the platform of responsibility, nor of judgment; but it is the platform where God addresses Himself to man with a view to salvation.

Our chapter brings us to the land of promise; that is, to the side of Jordan westward, which is sometimes spoken of as "the other side Jordan." I want to take up the typical meaning of the circumstances we get in this chapter, rather than to speak about them in detail.

I would first of all like to say a few words about one point which has been previously before us, viz., our being risen together with Christ. Now this is a question

entirely of divine grace, and it is most important to understand this. It is through faith, and hence of grace, just as much as justification. What faith does is to apprehend the pleasure of God. In illustration of this you might call to mind how God spoke to Abraham of His purpose to bless Abraham by faith apprehended it. The same is seen in David when God spoke to him of raising up one to sit on his throne. David by faith apprehended it.

Now in the gospel we apprehend that it is God's pleasure to justify, through faith in Christ. We are saved in apprehending God's pleasure. I am not called to believe anything about myself. Justification of a man is not exactly the act of God, but it is His mind. The act of God was in raising Christ, and now man is justified in apprehending by faith God's act. "To whom it" (righteousness) "shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. iv. 24, 25.) I see that it is God's pleasure to justify, and in apprehending this I am justified.

Now in Colossians ii. 12 we have further: "In whom also ye are risen with Him, through faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." We are risen with Him thus by faith, the same principle by which we are justified. This is also God's pleasure, and we apprehend it. To be risen with Christ means that it is as much God's mind we should be with Him over Jordan as it is that we should be in the wilderness. But this is just what people fail to apprehend, and so, like the two and a half tribes, they settle down this side of Jordan. They are satisfied with justification,

it is enough for them; but the pleasure of God is for us to occupy heavenly ground with Christ Himself before. Over Jordan, that is, the side of Jordan westward, contemplates saints in the occupation, in their souls, of heavenly ground in association with Christ, though still here on earth. This is a difficult thing to many to take in. They understand much more quickly if one speaks to them of heaven or earth; but to speak of heavenly ground is puzzling, and one can only receive it as prepared by the grace of God to receive it. But it is none the less the mind and pleasure of God for us.

I might say this, that justification is our side, while risen with Christ is God's side. As justified I am cleared from every reproach connected with this world; but as risen I apprehend that it is God's pleasure to have me with Himself. To illustrate this, turn to John xx., and read verses 17 and 19. In verse 17 the Lord makes known the pleasure of God: "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and unto My God, and your God." That is, the disciples were associated with Himself as risen. And in verse 19 we find Jesus in the midst of a company gathered round Himself, morally outside of the world. Christ had just died out of the world, and now comes into their midst, saying to them, "Peace unto you." They were morally risen with Christ.

If you turn to the end of Luke you will find another thought, which I want to bring before you by way of contrast. Look at chapter xxiii. 43: "This day shalt thou be with Me in paradise." Paradise is a contrast to what I have spoken about, and the thief was to go straight to paradise. He did not occupy

heavenly ground down here, and the same would apply to anyone who might be converted on a death-bed. But then the most of us are left down here for a time, and it is important for us to know that it is God's mind that we are risen with Christ.

If you look at the exhortations of Scripture you find how little they make of this world. The fact is that we are justified before God to accept death to the world that we may apprehend His pleasure in being risen with Christ, to be with Him who died for us and was raised again. It is a great thing to apprehend the pleasure of God. Is such a thing really possible as that I should be associated with Christ? Yes, it is.

Now turn to our chapter (Josh. v.). It gives us the preparation for going up into the land, where we have to withstand the power of evil. We get this brought out in Ephesians vi. 13: "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand," etc. But it is not an easy thing to stand. This is the evil day, and the influences which are at work in the world are subtle and deadly. Israel had to fight with flesh and blood, things which they could see, but it is different now. You cannot see the deadly influences at work to-day, but they are all directed against the light and testimony of a glorified Christ. The god of this world blinds people, that they may not see the glory of Christ. (2 Cor. iv. 4.)

But you say, How are these to be met? Well, I will tell you a thought which I have. I doubt if you can meet them in a solitary way. One cannot meet them as a unit. What we need is the support of fellowship. The Lord was competent to meet these

powers of evil, but then He was the strong Man. He was able to bind the strong man. But I am weakness itself, and hence as a unit I am unequal to meet the powers of evil which are at work. Unity and fellowship are indispensable. There is nothing which affects me more painfully than to see the young exposed to the deadly influences of the world. We all, and they especially, want the support of unity.

In the place of conflict with the power of evil, therefore, saints are looked at as a company. God does not mean us to stand solitary. When the Ephesians were told to stand, I think the apostle was addressing the company; they were to take the armour to be able to stand. So it is with us, we have fellowship one with another, and thus are enabled to withstand the subtle influences down here. Those who are without this support are in danger of giving in and making terms. Unity and fellowship are the manner of the Spirit's support.

Now let us take up the points of our chapter.

1. In verse 1 we get the weakness of the Canaanites westward of Jordan. Their hearts melted.

2. Verses 2-9 give the circumcision of Israel. This was done when they were over Jordan, not in the wilderness.

3. Verses 10, 11 give the keeping of the Passover.

4. Verse 12 the manna ceases, and the old corn of the land is eaten.

5. The captain of the Lord's host appears to Joshua (verse 13), and this brings us back to verse 1. The people of Israel were to go against the Canaanites and to expel them. Thus the beginning and end of the chapter refer to the Canaanites being expelled, while

the rest of it is taken up with the preparation of Israel for conflict.

You or I might very naturally have supposed that Israel ought to have gone up at once when the hearts of the Canaanites melted. But that was not God's way. Natural powers are of no use for God's warfare; the flesh must be put off. Take, for example, a Christian who endeavours to meet an infidel in argument, that is with carnal weapons; he is likely to encounter defeat. The power of evil can only be met with divine weapons, and for this the flesh must go—all self-confidence and that kind of thing. The apostle warned the Colossians of this in speaking to them of philosophy and vain deceit. All that is of the flesh must be put off in fighting for God. All links which connect me with the world must be broken, all the moral links. You cannot fight flesh with flesh, and any effort to do so only exposes you to defeat. I think that has been commonly the case.

The next point is the passover. The flesh is distrusted (for you cannot actually get rid of it, but you can morally, by distrusting it), and now you come to the passover. We must be in communion with the death of Christ, with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Christ's death tests everything for the Christian. If things in the world are unsuitable to the death of Christ, they are unsuitable for the Christian. We find the Corinthians were allowing many things which were inconsistent with the death of Christ, and they had to purge out the old leaven.

The next point in the preparation of the people is the ceasing of the manna and the eating of the old corn of the land. Now the manna is, I judge, food for

the individual. It is grace for the wilderness—daily grace for daily need. It is the grace which enables me to go through the day down here. The gathering of it is individual and for the wilderness.

But the old corn of the land is the food of saints collectively. I want manna while I am down here for my individual path, but I eat the old corn of the land with the saints, and I do not want the manna then. The difficulty is that in our case the things overlap. We have not done with the manna as Israel had, we need it daily; but we have part too in the old corn of the land. The old corn of the land is heavenly food, heavenly sentiments, all that is the growth and produce, so to say, of the land. The manna is angels' food which comes down from heaven, but the old corn of the land is what is proper to heaven, and can only be tasted in the Christian circle. I speak of these things morally. It seems to me that many who come to the meeting hardly touch the assembly. We need divine preparation for the assembly. But if the assembly is realized in the Christian circle, it is a most blessed thing and a foretaste of heaven; the food of heaven is tasted upon earth.

Take John xx. for example. Were not the disciples happy? Do you think that there was any fear of the Jews when Christ was in the midst? None, it was all dissipated, for Christ was amongst them as the risen One who had proved Himself stronger than man. I believe they were supremely happy and full of affection for Christ and for one another—I do not mean natural affection, but heavenly.

Then the last point I call attention to in the chapter is the recognition of Christ in glory as the Captain of

the Lord's host with the drawn sword in His hand. It is He who leads in conflict against the powers of evil and their influences. Now are you going to stand, or to make terms? Suppose your purpose is to stand in the power of the truth. Well, I think you will stand if you apprehend the glory of the Lord, but if you fail in this, what will happen will be that you will remain under the influences of the glory of man—the glory of this world. And this is Babylonish. There is plenty of it, and it is attractive to man. The only antidote to it is to apprehend the glory of the Lord. (See 2 Cor. iii. 18.) I have lived now a good many years in this world, and it has not been for nothing. I know something of the power of the world system. Indeed, there are few who have active minds who are without desire for a little of the world's glory. But it is Babylon. It is confusion, for that is what Babylon means; and how could it be anything else when God has no place in it? It is the apprehension of the glory of the Lord which has delivered me. One word more. We must remember that all the glitter of this world is soon to be headed up in Antichrist. The great trinity of evil will be developed here in an open and public defiance of God. It is a great thing to be preserved now from elements which are working up to this. But there is but one antidote, "beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face."

The Lord give us to take up things in this order. Then you will be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Returning to what I said earlier, resurrection with Christ is as much God's mind in regard to saints, as it is His mind that we are justified.

F. E. R.

PHILIP THE EVANGELIST.

IN Acts xxi. 8 Philip is called "Philip the evangelist," and therefore we are justified in taking him as a sample of an evangelist according to God, and may expect to find helpful principles as to gospel work in the brief record of this honoured servant of Christ given in the Acts of the Apostles.

The name Philip means "a lover of horses"; but the grace which won his heart, and the preciousness which he found in Christ as Saviour, made him long that others should taste the same grace, so that instead of a "lover of horses" he became a lover of souls. Blessed change! He is first mentioned in Acts vi., where, owing to the need for some to care for the distribution of help among the widows, seven men were to be chosen by the saints, and set apart by the apostles for this work.

Three qualities were to mark those who were selected. Firstly, an "honest report"; secondly, "full of the Holy Ghost"; and thirdly, "wisdom." (Acts vi. 3.) And while it is only said that Stephen was full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, yet, I think, we may conclude that the remaining six answered, in their measure, to that which was required by the apostles. And therefore in considering Philip's personal character we may justly say that he was a man of honest report, controlled by the Spirit of God, and marked by wisdom.

Being of honest report is, then, the first characteristic of Philip, and that would, no doubt, be a wide expression, covering his business or domestic life, as well as what he was amongst the Lord's people. Fidelity in temporal things is an essential quality of a servant of Christ. "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" (Luke xvi. 11, 12.) As to temporal things, they are committed to us as stewards, and an unfaithful steward is not the one to whom the Spirit of God will minister the true heavenly riches, which are the proper portion of the saints; hence "of honest report" is found before "full of the Holy Ghost." I would press this especially upon young brethren, as much dishonour has been brought on the Lord's name through the mistaken zeal of those who neglect their domestic or business duties in order to distribute tracts or preach the gospel.

In Israel the Levites were maintained by the tithes of the common people; and if we take the Levites to represent that which we are as the Lord's servants, and the common people that which we are in our domestic and business life, we see how much depends on being faithful in the home and business circles. Going on with God in daily life, the soul gets formed, so that, instead of the family and business being a hindrance, they can be used of the Lord to make His servants more efficient in His work, as in the discipline of every-day life they learn more of His grace and faithfulness.

The second characteristic of a true servant will be that he is energized by the Holy Ghost. It is often a long and difficult lesson to learn, that the *only power* for the Lord's work is *the power of the Spirit of God*. The helplessness that hangs upon God for all that is needed is that which brings strength to a servant of Christ. Natural eloquence, mental ability, fleshly means, may appeal to the intelligence of man, and crown the preacher with outward success; but the only power to reach the heart and conscience, the only power to effect anything for God, is the power of the Spirit of God. What one has, or is, as a man in the flesh, *if relied upon*, can only hinder the work of God. Peter and John, being "unlearned and ignorant men," did not hinder God working through them mightily; and Saul of Tarsus having been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel did not help of itself; he could say, "For He that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles." (Gal. ii. 8.) It was the same power in both, and there is no other power.

The Spirit is here to exalt Christ, and He acts on the ground that man in the flesh has been judicially removed from under the eye of God at the cross. And therefore to seek to bring the first man, or anything connected with that man, into the Lord's service is to hinder the Spirit of God. There is a sphere where natural powers have their legitimate place. A student uses his natural intelligence in studying for his examinations; a labourer uses his physical strength in his daily toil; and both can be used for the glory of God. But in the Lord's work—in spiritual things—

the only power is that of the Spirit of God, and His power is all-sufficient.

The third quality mentioned in Acts vi. is "wisdom." And everyone who in any measure deals with souls, must feel the need of divine wisdom, so that the right message may be given at the right time. Two things are essential to this, viz., "the word of God and prayer." In Isaiah l. 4 we read, "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned." Thus the Spirit of Christ would speak in the prophet, and how divinely we see it carried out in the life of our blessed Lord, as He dealt with needy souls, bringing the suited word home to heart and conscience, so as to meet the conditions of those to whom He spoke. And do not we need to have our ears divinely opened to hear as learners, so that as we study the Word it may be living and operative in our own souls, and that we may rightly divide that Word of truth? How many a soul has been damaged through the misuse of such passages as John v. 24, infinitely precious in their own connections, but wrested out of their connections and applied to souls where the real need is forgiveness of sins, not eternal life. A sort of mental peace may be attained, but a soul thus mentally brought to peace cannot grow. The foundation of forgiveness, justification, and peace, as in Rom. iii., iv., v., has not been laid, and the work of the Spirit in that soul is therefore hindered through the lack of spiritual intelligence in the evangelist. It is of vital importance to study each part of Scripture in its own divine setting, and, as

another has said, the Spirit of God can put it together as a whole in the soul. The word of God is that which furnishes the man of God throughly unto every good work, and patient study is the only way to become acquainted with the truth which God has given us in His word.

In addition then to the servant being formed by, and intelligent in the Word, there is the need of dependence on God in prayer. We find in James i. 5: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth liberally, and upbraideth not." The word of God and prayer is the divine order. God speaks to us first in His word; and as we read it, and get to know in any little measure the purposes of His love, it brings us to our knees in intelligent prayer—that spirit of dependence which was found in perfection in the Lord Jesus as a man down here, and which was found in great measure also in the apostle Paul, and others who *laboured* in prayer night and day. If we were more in prayer in connection with our feeble service for the Lord, laying hold of God for souls, we should be better able, in the power of the Spirit, to lay hold of souls for God.

The last thing we may consider in Acts vi. is that Philip had the confidence of his brethren. This is seen in their choice of him as one of the seven set apart to care for the widows.

The glory of Christ is the object God would have before each labourer; but it is in the assembly, which is His body, that Christ is to be displayed—*morally* now, as in Colossians iii. 10-15; actually by-and-by, as in Ephesians i. 22, 23. Therefore we may say that the assembly is not only the place from which the

evangelist starts, but it is that also in view of which he works.

In John xx. the Lord had gathered His own around Himself, a new company, in a new place and relationship; and from Himself in the midst of that company He sent His disciples into the world, as the Father had sent Him into the world. He came from the scene of divine affection; and now, having brought His disciples into the circle of divine affections here (the assembly), He sent them forth with the administration of forgiveness of sins, into a world which lay under death and judgment, the Spirit given, as the Spirit of life, to sustain them in it.

So also in Ephesians iv. we find the Evangelist is a gift to the church, equally with the Pastor and Teacher, and therefore, I repeat, the assembly is the starting point, and the assembly, in a sense, is also the goal; for the evangelist labours not merely that souls may be saved from wrath, but in view of the body in which Christ is to be displayed.

Therefore, instead of evangelists and teachers labouring on different lines, and with diverse ends in view, they labour, according to God, for one common object, being all alike given "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. iv. 12, 13.)

Hence, while it is quite true that the servant is responsible to his Master as to how and where he works, yet he also is responsible not to compromise that fellowship in which he is with the saints. And

while each servant is individually under the control of the Lord, yet he cannot act as a unit, but has to weigh how, where, and with whom he labours, so as not to compromise the assembly from whence he comes. Thus, when Philip is labouring in Samaria, he evidently kept in fellowship with the assembly at Jerusalem from which he came, nor does he question the right of the apostles to send Peter and John to the scene of his labours; and it has been noticed before by others that Peter, in Acts xi., does not question the right of the assembly to require an explanation as to the manner in which he laboured in the case of Cornelius. Paul and Barnabas too, in Acts xiii. 1-4, start from Antioch commended by their brethren, and in Acts xiv. 26 they return, giving an account of their labours. And when again starting from Antioch on another missionary tour, in Acts xv. 36-41, we find Paul and Silas are "recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God." But, as we may gather from the silence of Scripture, Barnabas and Mark sailed to Cyprus without that fellowship which cheered the others on their way. And it is not difficult to discern from the subsequent history which of the two were in the line of the Spirit of God.

L. H. F.

(To be continued, D.V.)

WHAT was then the life of this Jesus, the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief? A life of activity in obscurity, causing the love of God to penetrate the most hidden corners of society, wherever needs were greatest.

J. N. D.

THE ASSEMBLY AND THE EVANGELIST.

To the Editor of the "Christian Friend."

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

One of your correspondents has suggested a Saturday evening meeting as a means of promoting fellowship between the assembly and the evangelist, the latter to mention the service that he expects to undertake through the ensuing week.

Upon the face of it, this would exclude all mention of much that an evangelist is called to do. Could Philip, for instance, have informed the brethren in Samaria beforehand of his journey into the desert?

But a more serious objection to this plan lies in the fact that, if an evangelist made it his practice to lay his work before his brethren, for a certainty there would be the expression of divers opinions, and the tendering of sundry advice. And is it not often the case that those who are loudest in saying how *they* think that things should be done are the ones who have had the least experience in the work of winning souls?

The evangelist could hardly help being influenced, and perhaps fettered, by such opinions and advice, and it is not difficult to see what unhappy results *might* ensue from the proposed plan.

On the other hand, is it not true that an evangelist who is quietly *doing* the work the Lord has given him, *without expecting* to receive attention from his brethren, almost invariably *does* receive the hearty and thorough fellowship that is so desirable?

I think those who are most active in the work of the gospel will agree with me when I say that the Lord's people, on the whole, are thoroughly in sympathy with the preachers of the glad tidings, and that, when there is friction between them and an evangelist, it is often due to the latter placing his service before the fellowship.

Surely, in days like these, when there is so little real

fellowship, everything that tends to promote it should be fostered, even at the cost of abstaining from things which are perfectly right.

This may not always be possible. There were legally-minded saints in Jerusalem, long ago, who even criticized the actions of the apostle Paul. (Acts xxi. 20-22.) But it has been pointed out that he was so desirous of avoiding anything like a breach of fellowship, that he took considerable pains to satisfy their prejudices.

Perhaps a *little* less legality on the part of some, and a *little* more grace on the part of the evangelist, would go a long way towards producing such sweet accord that it would never occur to us to raise the question of how fellowship can be best promoted between an assembly and an evangelist.

Yours in our Lord,

H. P. B.

Feb., 1898.

“THE relation of the assembly to the evangelist” was, in early days, of the happiest kind. There was neither jar nor friction, but, on the other hand, full and hearty fellowship. And if so then, why not now?

If we look, for instance, first at the work of Philip in Samaria (see Acts viii.), we find Peter and John going down from the parent assembly at Jerusalem, and throwing themselves most heartily into the work, adding to and developing it according to their measure as apostles. A happy seal was thus placed upon the evangelistic work of Philip, and a spiritual link was formed between Jerusalem and Samaria.

Again, if we turn to the mission of Peter to the company of Gentiles, with Cornelius (Acts x., xi.), we find that, after explanation given by him and the immediate breaking down of national prejudices, the assembly at Jerusalem glorified God, saying, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.” How happy the fellowship!

Again, when they which were scattered abroad, upon the persecution that arose about Stephen, “. . . spake to the Grecians, the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord.” Accordingly, Barnabas was sent down from Jerusalem, and—dear, warm-hearted servant of God as he was—he “was glad,” and freely contributed to the gracious work of the Lord in

Antioch by words as confirmatory as they were genuine and simple.

Then off he went to seek for Saul, and, no doubt, stirred the soul of that devoted man by the tidings he bore; for we find that "when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch." A grand moral origin for the name "*Christians*"! "The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch." What fellowship!

Lastly, in chapter xiii., we have the journey of Saul and Barnabas throughout Cyprus and over a good deal of Asia Minor. (A famous Asiatic mission was this, and sealed with abundant fruit.) Well, when they were come back to Antioch, they gathered the Church together (no doubt the Church was delighted to come), and rehearsed all that God had done with them, and "how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles"; and, again, in the next chapter, "they declared the conversion of the Gentiles, and caused great joy unto all the brethren."

That will be a good point at which to stop—"great joy unto all the brethren."

What happy relations between the evangelists and all the brethren! Ah, those bright early days!

How the rich tide of God's saving grace flowed on! How its sweetness and charm caused the critics not only to "glorify God," but also to "hold their peace." (Chap. xi. 18.)

What grand reversals of thought and feeling! What divine victories!

How was friction prevented? By the principle and practice of *partnership*. The work was one, the profit mutual, the joy common. It was a service of *fellowship*. "Master and servant" did not exist in their work, saving the Lord and the vessels He deigned to use. Otherwise it was a *responsibility of common interests*; and the evangelist, while gladly acting in harmony with the assembly, was responsible to the Lord. He "served the Lord with all humility of mind, and many tears." (Acts xx. 19.)

And the same Lord may still be served thus to-day; and, spite of eighteen centuries of failure, the fellowship of the assembly may still be granted and enjoyed.

“THEY SHALL SEE HIS FACE.”

“*His visage . . . so marred, more than any.*”—ISA. lii. 14.

HERE on this earth my Saviour had no home,
 Rejected and despised of men was He ;
 They hid their faces from that peerless One—
 God's Well-beloved from all eternity ;
 Stricken, smitten of God, they deemed Him there,
 And saw no beauty in His face so fair.

They crucified Him, but earth could not hold
 God's chosen One ; He triumphed e'en in death,
 And entered heaven for us. With joy untold
 We, His redeemed ones, see Him now by faith,
 And are transformed into His image there,
 While we behold His glorious face so fair.

But oh ! what joy these hearts of ours shall know,
 When His glad words of welcome greet our ear ;
 When with unhindered praise these lips o'erflow,
 And we His likeness bear, in God's own sphere ;
 When, *as He is*, we see our Saviour there,
 And gaze with rapture on His face so fair !

* * *

SCRIPTURE NOTE.

LUKE x. 17-19.

THE mission of the seventy follows upon, as that of the twelve preceded, the transfiguration ; and it brings out very distinctly the rejection of the Lord in the midst of Israel, and the consequent postponement of the establishment of the kingdom which had “come nigh” to His people in His own glorious Person, and in the power displayed through the seventy as His messengers. They returned to their Master with joy,

saying, "Lord, even the devils are subject to us through Thy name." This gave occasion to the Lord to reveal that the power He had delegated to them was but an earnest of the final expulsion of Satan from heaven (see Revelation xii.) and his complete overthrow; and, moreover, He, in anticipation of this, invested them with power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. But they were not to rejoice in that the spirits were subject unto them, but they were to rejoice rather because their names were written in heaven. A twofold application may be made from this instruction. The first is the obvious one—and one which is characteristic of this Gospel—that heavenly things could only be revealed consequent upon the rejection of Christ, and that to have part in these, through the sovereignty of grace, was to enjoy a portion far transcending that of being messengers of the kingdom, and, as such, depositaries of the powers of the world to come. It is, in fact, that better thing which God has provided for believers of this period, and which will be possessed by those who are identified with Christ in His rejection. The second lesson is that it is a far higher thing to be the objects of God's sovereign grace, to be linked with His eternal purposes, than to be the vessels of His power in service. And yet how the servant is tempted to rejoice when he is taken up as a channel for the power of the Holy Ghost! But we may learn from these words of our blessed Lord *that the time when a servant is most used is the time when he should be most hidden*; and it will be so in proportion as he is impressed with the magnitude of the grace which chose him in Christ before the foundation of the world. This may, and should, fill his heart with overflowing joy in the presence of God.

ONLY.

PSALM lxii.

THE word "only" is the characteristic of this Psalm. The first verse should read, "My soul waiteth only upon God," and the word is repeated in verses 2, 5, 6. It needs to be weighed, meditated upon in the presence of God, for the soul can never be at rest until its blessed significance is apprehended. The Psalm opens with the soul in difficulties, surrounded by enemies; but it has learnt the lesson that salvation (deliverance) can only come from God. Hence the Psalmist waits only upon Him. There are few who have not known what it is, in the stress of conflicts or temptations, to turn to human means of succour, and thus to lose the blessedness of waiting only upon God. The fact is that until we have come to the end of ourselves and of man, and have found out by experience the vanity of all human help, and are shut up to God alone, we never reach this blessed place of entire dependence. When reached, in ever so small a measure, we pass into a new circle, outside of man, and where the presence of God is our home.

The moment the attitude is taken in verse 1 the soul is filled with confidence, and thus proceeds: "He only is my rock and my salvation; He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved." Surveying all the dangers around, together with the enmity of man and the activity of Satan, there is rest in God, and conse-

quent freedom from fear or apprehension while passing through the wilderness. Doubtless we have here the path and experience of the Lord Himself; but this makes it all the more valuable and instructive for His people, inasmuch as He was the first to tread the path of faith in all its completeness and perfection. (Heb. xii. 2.) The three things He had especially to encounter, indeed, while enduring the cross and despising the shame, are specified in verses 3, 4—hatred, envy, and hypocrisy. If the accounts of the apprehension, trial, and condemnation of our blessed Lord are examined, these three things will be found in distinct relief. And every believer who runs the same race, "looking off" unto Jesus, must reckon upon the same forms of opposition.

It might seem at first as if verses 5-7 were but a repetition of verses 1, 2, but a closer examination will show that it is not so. The soul is waiting only upon God in verse 1, and in verse 5 it is encouragement to maintain, to continue in it, together with the declaration that it has no expectation except from God. In one word, it is the expression of absolute dependence, combined with the activity of faith, in the assurance that they that wait on the Lord shall never be confounded. May we not also hear this appeal to wait only upon God? Nay, is it not addressed to us by the same Spirit? If these lines are read by tried, burdened, sorrowful, or perplexed souls, let them take the unspeakable comfort which the Lord would minister to them through His own experiences; for we know that He is not One who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He has been tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin.

The next verse (6th) appears to give the reason or the ground of the appeal or the encouragement in the preceding one; the same in language as verse 2, with the omission of the word "greatly." And this omission is significant, as it shows an advance—if such a word may be ventured where all is perfect—upon verse 2. Now, following upon the re-statement that "He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence," the Psalmist (for while the path of the Lord Himself is foreshadowed, David was, in the first place, the vessel of these experiences) is able with absolute confidence to say, without any qualification whatever, "I shall not be moved." Hence we regard verse 7 as experience rather than the language of faith; that is, that David had realized now that God was his salvation and his glory, that the rock of his strength and his refuge was in God. He knew it before, but now he had appropriated what he knew, and thus was in the present enjoyment of what had been wrought out in his soul through his trials.

The personal experience of the Psalm ends with verse 7; and now, the lesson learnt, the Psalmist is at leisure to think of others. And what is the one thing he desires to communicate to the people of God? It is simply, "Trust in Him at all times." If simple, however, how far-reaching and inclusive! At *all* times—in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in joy, in deprivation and in abundance, in dark days as well as in sunshine, yea, always—at all times trust in the Lord. What a perfect example of this is seen in our blessed Lord on the cross, when He endured

the hiding of the face of His God. "O my God," he said, "I cry in the daytime, but Thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But Thou art holy, O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." At such a moment he would justify his God. Let us, then, learn the precious lesson that God may be trusted, implicitly trusted, in all circumstances and in all seasons, and then we shall be kept in perfect peace with our minds stayed on Him.

But, it may be felt, it is easy to write and to read these words; the test lies in our daily experience. It is true; and the Lord, knowing this, has added, "Ye people pour out your heart before Him"; for He well knew that this is the way of reaching confidence in God. It is the same instruction in Philippians, where the apostle says, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." It is indeed the all-efficacious antidote to fear and despondency to empty our hearts before God, and to do it continually—during the day as well as at our stated seasons of prayer. It was said by one of old that prayerful ejaculations in our daily lives are the "arrows of God's deliverance." And so they are; and on this account let us give the most earnest heed to the exhortation to pour out our hearts before God.

As an encouragement to do so, the Psalmist says God is a refuge for us. He himself had found Him to be so, and what He had been for David He would be

for all His people. Two things may be noted in connection with the introduction of this word "us." First, that the believer who is in communion with the heart of God about His people merges his individuality into theirs. Whatever he learns, and whatever he receives, are for the whole company, because he is in full identification with them. As we read of our blessed Lord, "Both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Secondly, none of us can teach others what we have not ourselves learned. The Psalmist, we mean, could not have said God is a refuge for us if he had not in his own experience made the discovery for himself. True that it may be written so in the word of God; but before we can carry this blessed truth to troubled souls we must have "set to our seal" that it is so. Then we can speak with power in the Holy Ghost because we have verified the sure word of God for ourselves.

In the proclamation, "God is a refuge for us," the goal has been reached, and hence man, and man's power, disappear. Trusting in God and hidden under His protection, men, whether of low or high degree, are a lie, and, truly estimated, are altogether lighter than vanity. Moreover, the soul thus resting in God can warn the oppressor and the wealthy of the insecurity of their confidence, and then cries in the hearing of all that, as it hath been adequately testified, power belongeth unto God. For the Christian the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost are the twofold witness of this, and he wants no other. "Also," the Psalm

concludes, "unto Thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy: for Thou renderest to every man according to his works." As will be observed, mercy here belongs to the *Lord*, not Jehovah but the Lord; and this is because the time contemplated is when the Lord will come forth in mercy to His poor, down-trodden people, and deliver them from the hands of those that oppress them by rendering to their enemies according to their works. (See Luke i. 68-75.)

LIVING STONES.

1 PETER ii. 1-10.

THE teaching of this chapter is undoubtedly founded on the Father's revelation to Peter recorded in Matthew xvi. The point of this epistle is the Church as the subject of God's moral government down here, coming in between the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow. Hence the Christians to whom Peter wrote were a suffering people. They are, however, exhorted to recognize human institutions, rulers, kings, and other dignities as being ordained of God. (Chapter ii. 12-17.)

The portion which I read unfolds the spiritual privileges to which they were entitled. I say entitled, because they had hardly entered on them yet. But the epistle was written that they might do so. There is nothing as to which we are so slow as entering upon our spiritual privileges, and this cannot be brought about by any amount of lecturing. It requires much exercise and a measure of self-abnegation. When we fail as men down here, we lose everything of this

world, and there is nothing left to us but the "calling of God." Hence, if the calling of God is the only thing left, it is of all importance that we should enter into it not simply mentally, not as a creed, but to be built up in our privileges as well as to know them.

It is the object of Scripture to make known to us what we have by the work of God. No one can know what new birth is until he has it, what it is to be "born of God" until it is a fact; and no one knows what the new man is until he is formed in it. We need to be built up in order to apprehend our spiritual privileges. It is well to be intelligent about God's work in us, but this work precedes our apprehension of privilege. When you are created in Christ, then you understand something about new creation.

Peter's first epistle gives us the spiritual house subject to God's moral government. But it is not my object to go into this thought. I want to make clear the spiritual privileges of the saints. In previous lectures I have been presenting the platform of resurrection, and this is a point of great moment. There can be but little progress until it is accepted. Christians who remain in the place of men in the flesh upon earth make no progress. God's calling and new creation are outside it all. "All things are of God." (2 Cor. v. 17, 18.) The same thing is true in regard to the new man, he belongs to another creation (Eph. iv. 24): "which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." The old man belongs to this creation, but the new man belongs to new creation, and new creation brings you on to resurrection ground.

The points we have here are taken from Matt. xvi.; 2 Peter is connected with Matt. xvii., for Peter there

presses the certainty of the kingdom, and alludes in confirmation of it to the vision on the Mount of Transfiguration, saying that they "were eye-witnesses of His majesty," etc. (See 2 Peter i. 16, 18). This confirms the kingdom. But 1 Peter is connected with Matthew xvi., where we have the Father's revelation to Peter as the result of Peter confessing Christ as the Son of the living God. The Lord then says to Peter, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona," and adds, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church." (See Matt. xvi. 13-20.) Now this thought is in mind in the chapter before us. I know the word that Peter uses for stone differs from that used in Matthew xvi., but the thought is, I judge, the same. Peter apprehended the import of the revelation when he wrote this epistle, though I do not think he did at the time he received it. This is shown by what follows (Matt. xvi. 21-23), where we find Peter rebuking the Lord when He speaks of His sufferings, and the Lord has to say to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan."

But I only allude to this in passing. The point is that 1 Peter ii. is connected with the Father's revelation to Peter of Christ as the Son of the living God. That confession was the rock on which the Church was to be built, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it. It is therefore most important.

Now Peter's confession represents Christ as outside of everything here. It was not Christ after the flesh. I believe this to be the force of the word "living." Everything here was under the power of death save Christ. The Lord was about to go into death, but He was outside of it as the Son of the living God. Hence the Lord tells Peter that the gates of hell should not

prevail against what was built on the confession. So here Peter says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone . . . you also as living stones." (v. 4.) It is a wonderful thing that there has been a Man here who entered into death and yet was the Son of the living God. The living God is not affected by death, and here was His Son who was, so to say, of another generation than of man. He was according to and of God, and hence outside of death and Satan's power.

Early in the chapter (v. 2) the apostle recognizes those He is addressing as babes who were to desire the sincere milk of the Word that they might grow thereby up to salvation. You must add the last three words to the text; they ought to be there. The saints were to grow and to be built up. We do not get faith in this chapter as in chapter i. We get here, first, "growth," and then, second, "built up." We all begin with faith, the pleasure of God is apprehended. Man is justified by faith, for it is the pleasure of God to justify man. The mind of God is unchanging, and faith enters into it. The same thing is true of saints being risen together with Christ. This is the pleasure of God, and it is apprehended by faith. The two thoughts are not similar. Justification clears one from every reproach connected with what I am in by nature, the world and the flesh for example. Risen with Christ means that God views me now on a new platform in association with Christ. This is His mind.

But in this chapter we first get growth. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." In the first chapter the saints are viewed as called, redeemed, begotten again; but here we are to grow. The first thing here is the

knowledge of the Lord, that He is gracious. I do not think people would confess Christ as Lord unless they had tasted His grace. All will confess Him Lord by-and-by when they cannot help it, but no one could do it now but in the sense of His grace.

The point is that you grow to the consciousness of salvation so that it is available to you down here. I think consciousness may be illustrated by a child. A newly-born infant is not much conscious of anything, but as it grows it becomes conscious of all around. A newly-born child is not conscious of its mother's love, but the child grows up into the consciousness of the affections in which it is placed. In the same way the Christian grows, so that he becomes conscious of what he has believed. He has the justification of life.

The next verses (4, 5) bring Christ before us in a different character. "To whom coming, as unto a living stone," etc. I want to dwell on this a little. I think "to whom coming" is a further step. It is a movement of the soul. You come to Him as the living stone, as the Son of the living God, as in Matthew xvi. The soul apprehends Christ as the living stone, and as such He is disallowed indeed of men, but with God chosen and precious.

Death is the extreme expression of man's disallowance. There are marks of disallowance short of it, and these came out in the Lord's pathway on earth. He had no place with men; they despised Him, sought to stone Him, and so on. The Lord was Himself conscious of it, as seen in the parable of the husbandmen. (Matt. xxi. 33.) This spirit of disallowance came out clearly enough before the Lord's

death, but death was the extreme mark of it. We see the same thing with regard to the prophets; the Jews showed their disallowance of Jeremiah, for example, in many ways, in imprisonments, etc., but if they wanted to express fully their disallowance of a prophet they killed him. This mark they stamped upon the Lord.

On the other hand, He is chosen of God and precious, and the mark and proof of this was resurrection. It was just as true before His death that He was elect of God and precious, but resurrection expressed it, "declared Him to be the Son of God with power . . . by the resurrection from the dead." (Rom. i. 4.) "Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." (Rom. vi. 4.) Christ was the living stone the moment He became man, but resurrection expresses it. Now you have the platform of resurrection. He is disallowed of men, but chosen of God and precious, and this shown by resurrection. This is important for us. We have to come to Him in this light. What part, then, have I with men? I am disallowed of man if I come to Christ as the living stone. If Christ has been crucified, so have I. If He is dead, so am I. It is only right that the Christian should enter in mind into what Christ suffered in fact. We may not have to enter into it actually, but we should do so in mind. When the Lord Jesus was on earth He never led His disciples to look for any portion but His own. "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (John xv. 20.) So in Hebrews xiii. 12, "Jesus . . . suffered without the gate." Then follows, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without

the camp, bearing His reproach." Hence I am content to be disallowed of men. I do not want honour here, nor recognition, nor to be inconsistent with the death of Christ. We are in the fellowship of Christ's death. We ought to be conscious of being disallowed of men. It is not pleasant, and naturally one would shrink from it; but the Christian must accept it.

But if disallowed of men, we are chosen of God and precious. God takes out of death that which is precious in His eyes, and as risen together with Christ we are agreeable to God. Resurrection is the pleasure of God. It is of His power, but His power is the servant of His love. We are risen with Christ, we are viewed as elect. This connection is apparent in Colossians ii. 12, iii. 1, and iii. 12. Christ is first apprehended as the elect and precious one, and then we understand that the saints as risen with Him are viewed too "as the elect of God, holy and beloved." This is the reality of the resurrection platform.

Christ is the living stone, disallowed of men. He was man to perfection, presented man perfectly to God, but He also presented God to man. He is the only declaration of God we have. We must come to Him in that light. "But that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." (Luke xvi. 15.) Naturally one shrinks from being disallowed of men. It is disagreeable to one's spirit; still, it was Christ's place, and therefore it must be ours. There is antagonism of mind between man and Christ, and Christ is the perfect expression of God. Are we to have man or God? If we are to have God we must be apart from man, for God and man have come to an issue in

regard of Christ, and we must accept the issue. You cannot go on with God and with man.

Now we get the effect. "Ye also as living stones are built up." We have here a generation entirely outside of man. Those born of God must be of a different generation to those born of man. If I am a living stone I am of the generation which is born of God. The effect of that is that I disallow myself as well as man.

The next step is that "you are built up a spiritual house." The privileges which belonged to a special family in Israel in an outward way now belong to all Christians in a spiritual sense. Aaron and his house was typical of Christ and the Church. We are "built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The house would have been of no use without the priesthood in Israel, and so it is now. The presence of God in the house of God down here can only be apprehended spiritually, that is, by those who are priests. The reason of this is found in the first and second chapters of 1 Corinthians. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual judgeth [discerns] all things." The glory of God in the midst of Israel was seen by everyone without any spirituality; but now you need to be delivered from the natural in order to apprehend the spiritual. God is here, and there is approach to Him. This is seen in Eph. ii. 2-22, "For through Him we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Jew and Gentile are builded together for a habitation

of God by the Spirit. Hence Christians are to be lowly and meek, because they are where God dwells. (See Eph. iv. 2 and 3, etc.)

I think Peter was assuring Jewish Christians that they had lost nothing by faith in Christ. Outwardly they had lost everything; they were scattered, and had lost the Temple and priesthood, but the apostle shows them that what they had lost outwardly they had more than gained spiritually. They were a spiritual house as Christians, and as a holy priesthood could offer up spiritual sacrifices. The Jews could not properly offer sacrifices now. But these spiritual sacrifices are "the fruit of our lips." God does not want carnal sacrifices. He has had one sacrifice before Him which is enough for Him. Christians then need to be built up in the sense of these privileges.

But besides these privileges they had others also, which in figure belonged not exclusively to the priesthood, but to the nation of Israel. (See verses 6-10.) Priesthood was connected with the house of God and with approach to God, but the nation was a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and so on. It is not here a question of sacrifices, but of collective testimony in the world. This is to be fulfilled in the Church: "to show forth the praises, excellencies, of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvellous light."

Israel failed as a peculiar people, and now it is Christians who are a peculiar people. This is God's way of testimony to man. The Church is the vessel of God's testimony in this world. It is in the light of the Lord.

The passage is to my mind beautiful and complete.

Christ is the Living Stone, the Corner Stone, but a Stone of stumbling, a Rock of offence. There seems to be a reiteration here of the word "stone." The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. It is a stone of stumbling to those who stumble at the Word, being disobedient, "to which also they have been appointed." That is, they have been appointed to stumble over the stone because they were disobedient. They were not appointed to disobedience.

It is important to apprehend the platform of resurrection and to be conscious of being risen with Christ. You are thus built up. God has provided thus not only for His own service, but for testimony down here. May He give us to see His mind, and may His pleasure be fulfilled in us. We shall have great gain if it is so.

F. E. R.

THE TIME OF SORROW.

It is astonishing what progress a soul sometimes makes in a time of sorrow. It has been much more with God; for, indeed, that alone helps us to make progress. There is much more confidence, quietness, absence of the moving of the will; much more walking with and dependence on Him, more intimacy with Him, and independence of circumstances—a great deal less *between* us and Him—and then all the blessedness that is in Him comes to act upon the soul and reflect in it; and, oh, how sweet that is! What a difference it does make in the Christian, who, perhaps, was blameless in his walk in general previously!

J. N. D.

NOTE ON EARTHQUAKES.

IN connection with the outpouring of the seventh vial upon the earth, Rev. xvi. 18 speaks of a "great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, such an earthquake, so great." May it be gathered from these words that *before* men were upon the earth, there had been such an earthquake? Can the "without form and void" condition of the earth in Genesis i. 2 be explained by the previous occurrence of such a catastrophe? The words *tohu* and *bohu* used in the verse referred to are found also in Isaiah xlv. 18, and show that such was not the original condition of creation; and in Isaiah xxv. 11, as also in Jer. iv. 23, the same words are employed as descriptive of judgment executed. That earthquakes are significant of judgment in its last development, is seen by their being also the outcome of the opening of the sixth seal and the sounding of the sixth trumpet, when God ariseth to shake terribly the earth. (Rev. vi. 14; xi. 13. See also Matt. xxiv. 7.) In Zech. xiii. there is an earthquake preceding the judgment consequent upon the return of the Lord Jesus to this earth, when His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives. In this case He is, at the same time, manifesting Himself as the Saviour and Defender of those who in man's day of rebellion and apostasy have been true to His name. These two facts—the shaking of that which is of the earth, earthy, and the remaining of that which is heavenly, and which cannot be moved—appear to be always involved in the occurrence of earthquakes.

At Sinai, in Exodus xix., the whole mount quaked greatly at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth, when, amid the myriads of angels, there went a fiery law for His people Israel. The mount then quaked, because the Lord was manifesting Himself in connection with that which was only for the while, and would be done away. There is no quaking in that which remains.

There was an earthquake when, in 1 Samuel xiv., Jonathan and his armour-bearer overthrew the garrison of the Philistines. Jehovah was not ashamed thus to attest the faith and courage of those who were not afraid to own Him in the midst of universal cowardice and defection. In Psalm xviii. David also speaks of an earthquake in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. Here, again, the Lord was showing Himself strong in behalf of those whose heart was perfect towards Him. In 1 Kings xix. it is by the incidence of an earthquake, among other tokens of the Lord's presence with His servant, that Elijah is made sensible of the power of the Lord whom he served, although he heard the voice of the Lord only in the still, small voice. For to such a one it is, "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

Judgment on the presumptuous, and encouragement for all who would stand for Jehovah, is evidenced in the earthquake mentioned by both Amos and Zechariah, which took place in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. There never has been the day wherein the Lord's people have had any cause to believe that He is unmindful of them; nor will it be so in the coming days of which the times of Saul and David, Ahab and Elijah, Uzziah

and Azariah were a shadow. Although God bears long as to His own elect, in due time He will avenge them speedily. The Lord will not forsake His people for His name's sake, because it has pleased Him to make us His people.

In connection with the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus the earth quaked and the rocks rent (Matt. xxvii. 51), surely in token of the judgment which God was then and there announcing upon the world which had rejected His Son. A great earthquake had also followed upon the resurrection of Christ (Matt. xxviii. 2), which would seem to be, as it were, a second testimony to the revolution that had been effected in the history of creation—the birth-pangs of the new order, as that in chapter xxvii. had been the death-throes of the old. This latter earthquake is in the sacred narrative associated with the appearance of the angel of the Lord. The service of angels has apparently to do with the world as it now is, rather than with the world to come, through which Christians have to pass with God's earthly people, rather than with those who have in Christ been made partakers of the heavenly calling.

The remaining instances of earthquakes that I note are those given in Acts iv. 15 and xvi. 26. On each of these occasions the Lord Himself was pleased to signify by external tokens His presence and approval of the testimony which His servants were bearing in His name. The Lord Jesus was speaking from heaven. It was His voice, not breaking the cedars of Lebanon, nor dividing the flames of fire, but giving strength and encouragement to His witnesses, and blessing His servants with palpable tokens of His love and care.

He hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," so that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid what man shall do to me."

W. C. C.-B.-C.

PHILIP THE EVANGELIST.

(Continued from p. 107.)

TURNING to Acts viii. 4, 5, we see that Philip was identified with a rejected Christ; he was one of those whom the persecution had scattered abroad, and this would indicate his being consciously in the fellowship of the Lord's death—that which is set forth morally in the Lord's Table (1 Cor. x.); that which is, according to God, the common bond of Christian fellowship, and to which, as gathered to the Lord's name, we give expression in coming together to break bread each first day of the week.

The One whom we confess as Lord has passed out of this scene by death, the "disallowed indeed of men." And it is therefore incumbent on everyone naming the name of the Lord to depart from iniquity or unrighteousness. And, I judge, unrighteousness in 2 Tim. ii. has an ecclesiastical bearing primarily, although doubtless wider in its application. And any religious system of men which acts as if Christ were honoured and accepted in the world is without doubt unrighteousness, a denial indeed of the truth of Christianity, and an excuse for unfaithfulness to Christ. The so-called servant receiving honour from a world which has refused his Master? Imagine a servant being "*enthroned*" where his master was "*crucified*"! It is

unrighteousness, and from unrighteousness the servant of the Lord must depart. The death of Christ has cut His people off from this scene, and from every system of religion which in principle denies His rejection here; so that to depart from iniquity, and purge oneself from vessels to dishonour, is the only way to become a vessel sanctified and meet for the Master's use. It is one thing to be a mere instrument, and quite another to be a vessel meet for His use.

A man being used of God by no means proves that either his position or methods of working are right. It is often argued that a man being used is sufficient proof that one can rightly identify oneself with him; but God could make a dumb ass speak with man's voice to rebuke Balaam, and God is sovereign, and can use any instrument He pleases. But He desires vessels meet for His use. And such a vessel carries in itself, and is formed by the truth it is used to convey to others. Therefore, as has often been said, what *we are* is of much more importance than what *we do*. God would by the Spirit form the vessel to carry the gift which may have been bestowed; and thus in 1 Corinthians xii. we have the gifts set in the assembly, in chapter xiii. the vessel formed in the divine nature (love), and in chapter xiv. we have instructions as to the proper exercise of the gifts.

If, then, the servant has to depart from iniquity, and purge himself from vessels to dishonour, there is another important word of instruction in 2 Timothy ii., viz., "Lay hands suddenly on no man." That is, as I understand it, identify yourself suddenly with no man; and in the Lord's works how manifestly inconsistent with all divine principles it is to seek the help and countenance

of those, even though they may be Christians, who are still identified with that from which we have separated as unrighteousness. To do so is not only to compromise ourselves as the Lord's servants, but also to compromise the fellowship in which we are.

In order to be crowned the servant must strive lawfully; fidelity, not success, will gain the Master's "Well done" at the end. Many argue that "the servant must have liberty of conscience," which is true, but is there not a danger of putting conscience instead of Scripture? Conscience is not a *guide*, not even, indeed, a good guard, unless governed by the word of God. And one would also venture to suggest that there is such a thing found in Scripture as godly subjection to those who are over us in the Lord. (Heb. xiii. 17.) Independency of action is diametrically opposed to every principle of Christianity.

Turning again to Acts viii., we find Philip preaching with spiritual intelligence. To the Samaritans, who were not exactly Gentiles, but, according to John iv. 25, were looking for the Messiah, he preaches *Christ*; while to the Gentile eunuch, who had no link whatever with the Lord as Messiah, he preaches *Jesus*. This bears out that which we have already noticed as to the need of spiritual wisdom, in order to give the suited message to those with whom we speak.

We may notice also how Philip is sustained by divine power in Samaria, and that many of Satan's captives are set free; this reminds us of the "young men" in 1 John ii., who, through having the word of God abiding in them, overcame the wicked one.

Passing on to verse 26, we see the obedience of a true servant of the Lord. He has been used for doing

a great work in Samaria, but Philip realizes that he has not been left down here to do great things, but to be for his Lord's pleasure; he is not guided by circumstances, but by the Lord. The mighty work in Samaria is abandoned, and Philip, at the bidding of his Lord, is found in a desert. Being in the path of obedience, the Spirit is free to use him; for if the power of the Spirit is the only power for the Lord's work, it is only in the path of obedience that that power can be realized. Being in that path, the Spirit says to Philip, "Go, join thyself to this chariot"; and not only is Philip in the path of obedience, and in the power of the Holy Ghost, but he is also in the energy of divine affection. This has been connected by another with Luke xv., where the father *ran* to meet the prodigal; here the servant, in unison with the heart of God, *runs* to carry the glad tidings of salvation to the thirsty soul.

Do we, beloved brethren, know what it is to run after souls for Christ?

We may say, "The gospel is preached, let them come and hear it"; or, "God can save and bring them in without us." But what saith the Scripture? "How shall they preach, except they be *sent*?" as it is written, How beautiful are the *feet* of them that preach the gospel of peace, and *bring* glad tidings of good things." (Rom. x. 15.) See also Matthew xxii. 9: "*Go ye* therefore into the highways." Again, Acts xxvi. 17: "Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, *unto whom I now send thee.*" Trace through the Scriptures where you please, you find the abiding principle is that the evangelist goes to the people with the glad tidings; hence his *feet* are

described as beautiful. To confine our preaching to the rooms in which we meet to break bread would be foreign to the whole teaching of Scripture; and not only so, but would give a sort of ecclesiastical sanctity to the building, thus dragging Christianity down to the level of Judaism.

On the other hand, the servant has not only to consider the character and associations of those with whom he labours, but also the character and moral associations of the *buildings* into which *he invites* sinners to come and hear him. Lack of godly care as to this might not only lead to the servant himself being identified with evil, but also to his compromising his fellowship with the saints. If we make the winning of souls our object, we are in danger of forgetting what is due to the Lord, and what is due to the saints.

But if the Lord Himself is the object before our souls, that assembly which is so dear to His heart will be dear to us; and the one who knows anything of that circle where divine affections glow, and where Christ in the midst of the priestly company declares the Father's name, will not fail to exercise godly care in his service, so that the Levite may indeed minister to the priest, that thus the Lord may have His proper portion.

Returning to our chapter, we may notice three other points in Philip's ministry. Firstly, "He opened his mouth." This may appear of little moment, yet I think it has a practical lesson for us, if we connect it with Nehemiah viii. 8 and 1 Cor. xiv. 9. "They read in the book, in the law of God, distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading": "Except ye utter words easy to be under-

stood, how shall it be known what is spoken?" Eloquence is surely not needed, nor finely-pointed sentences; yet, from the two passages quoted, we see that the servant is responsible to speak *distinctly* and *simply*. However precious the truth ministered may be, it cannot be for edification, if those ministered to can neither hear or understand what is said.

The second point is, he "preached unto him Jesus"; not doctrines or theories, but a living, loving, personal Saviour. Philip has no difficulty about his text; he has learned that Christ is the spirit of Scripture, and therefore from the passage the eunuch was reading he preaches Jesus, the theme of the glad tidings of God. The eunuch, having no doubt previously experienced God's sovereign power in new birth, is prepared to receive the Saviour preached to him, and desires, too, to be identified with the death of Him whose life had been taken from the earth, and is therefore brought by Philip, through baptism, into the Christian circle.

The last point in the chapter is that Philip is displaced by the one he preaches, so that when he is caught away by the Spirit his convert can go on his way rejoicing without him; even as the two disciples of John the Baptist, who heard John speak and followed Jesus.

One other glimpse we get of Philip in Acts xxi. 8, 9, where he is seen in the home circle entertaining the Lord's people, from which we may gather that the home was not neglected by this much-used servant of Christ. His daughters too we find are amongst the Lord's people.

In thus taking up Philip's history to illustrate certain

principles in connection with the gospel, we must remember that much of what we have illustrated did not come out in Scripture until after Paul's conversion, the administration of the gospel being committed to him, as well as that of the mystery. And Paul's gospel starts with Christ in glory, and involves the end before God of man in the flesh. When this is apprehended in the soul the servant is of necessity cast upon the power of the Spirit, as that alone which can affect anything for God.

It is a day of bustle and excitement, and there is ever a danger of our being affected by the character of things around. We need to be more with God to know increasingly what quiet waiting upon Him is, so as to avoid being carried away by the stream of mere fleshly activity in the Lord's work. L. H. F.

YOUNG CHRISTIANS.

If Christ have taken a strong hold [on their hearts] the path is simple, and the young may be saved many a pang. If Christ's, they will surely learn the world is nothing, and its friendship enmity with God. But it is better, and happier, to learn it in the blessed company of Christ than in regrets on a dying bed, or a heart repentant at loss and unfaithfulness. I do not expect young Christians to have learned everything, but the Lord expects them to be faithful to the light they have got. "And to him that hath shall more be given." J. N. D.

FAITH AND SIGHT.

“I go to prepare a place for you.”—JOHN xiv. 2.

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.”—JOHN xv. 18.

One place on earth Thou givest me,
 One place in heaven is mine,
 Yet (such Thy love's deep mystery)
 Each place, O Lord, is THINE ;
 Thy place—the OUTCAST—mine must be,
 Since mine's th' ACCEPTED place in Thee.

From earth hoarse murm'rings come to me—

“No place 'mongst us for HIM”—
 Now hid in soothing minstrelsy,
 Now loud with rapturous din,
 As laughing wave, or billows roar,
 Each bears this burden to the shore.

But other sounds are wafted nigh,
 Joy's music* strikes my ear,
 Faith lists—the Father's house on high

Thence the ascription clear :
 “Name above every name be Thine
 Who stooped to death in love divine.”

And though I see a homeless band,
 Strangers to earthly joy,
 'Gainst whom fierce darts on every hand
 Fall, fitted to destroy, †
 Around them trackless wilderness,
 “Great”—“terrible”—in barrenness—

* Luke xv. 25. (“Music” is a word only once used in the Greek New Testament, as to the joy over the prodigal in the Father's house.)

† See Ephesians vi. 16 ; Deut. viii. 15.

Yet hosts angelic hover there
 To soothe each aching brow,*
 Each proving thus the Father's care
 Known to them hourly now!
 And bright faith's vision doth arise—
 "GOD'S REST" †—unseen by mortal eyes.

Thus Faith and Sight appeal to me,
 Eternity and Time!
 Faith hears th' eternal symphony
 Midst this world's varying chime.
 Oh, sovereign grace, that mine should be
 HIS PLACE ON EARTH, who died for me!

H. C. A.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MATTHEW xxv. 24-30.

IN interpreting Scripture the first thing to ascertain is, what is the mind of the Spirit; and, secondly, what is its present application. Many an unprofitable discussion would be spared if these principles were borne in mind. Thus, to refer at once to the question received concerning the parable of the talents, it is to travel wholly outside of the object of the parable to enquire whether the unprofitable servant was, or was not, a saved man (the same remark applies to Luke xii. 45, 46), because it deals simply with the responsibility of servants and their faithfulness or unfaithfulness as such. At the same time, if the question be urged, it is inconceivable that a servant, however unfaithful, if a saved soul, could be cast into

* See Heb. i. 14; xiii. 2.

† Heb. iv. 9.

outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, or could have his portion with unbelievers. But it is objected that no one, unless converted, could be really a servant. This is true, only it must be remembered that God takes us all up on the ground of our profession. Every preacher therefore in Christendom, as well as everyone who undertakes any responsibility in connection with the house of God, will be treated as a servant, and be reckoned with as such at the Lord's appearing. (Compare 1 Cor. iii. 12-17.) It is on this account that the apostle bids us to purge ourselves out from among the vessels of dishonour in 2 Tim. ii. Recollecting this, we may well be led to searchings of heart, and to look for grace to use whatever the Lord has entrusted to us, whether gift or anything else, for His service, in view of the reckoning of that day when He will appraise our stewardship according to His own perfect standard of infallible knowledge. Oh that each one of us may earnestly crave for the commendation, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," in that day.

II.

PSALM xxxii. 8.

A BETTER translation of the last clause of this verse is, "I will counsel thee with Mine eye upon thee" (R. V.). This is given in two other well-known versions, with slight verbal differences. The sense is exceedingly beautiful, inasmuch as it represents God, interested in all that concerns His people, looking down upon them, to guard and to guide them in His paths. How blessed! And with what confidence we may repose in His watchful care!

THE CONTROVERSY AT ANTIOCH.

GALATIANS ii. 11-21.

FROM the very outset the greatest difficulties which Christianity had to encounter sprang up from within. As the apostle prophesied at a later date, "I know this . . . that of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts xx. 29, 30.) So was it at Antioch at the particular moment of which our scripture speaks; and, strange to say, it was Peter the apostle, who had received so many marks of his Lord's favour, who had been admitted to special intimacies, and who had been restored by His tender grace after his grievous fall, who headed, or at least sanctioned, a party in the Church of God. The facts are very simple. In the reception of Cornelius Peter had been taught the mind of God as to Gentile believers, that he was not to call those whom God had cleansed unclean. And he had not forgotten the lesson, for when he first went to Antioch he mixed with the Gentile believers freely, and ate with them on the ground of a common fellowship. But when "certain came from James," from Jerusalem, he yielded to their Jewish prejudices, "and separated himself, fearing them of the circumcision." Himself a Jew by birth, and desiring to stand well with the Jewish party, he, in a moment of weakness, identified himself with their feelings, and made a schism in the assembly. The effect was disastrous upon the other Jews, and even Barnabas was carried away by their dissimulation.

Such was the state of things at Antioch with which Paul had to contend; and, as far as appears in the narrative, Paul stood alone, and had not a single helper in the conflict. And indeed there must have been, even for him, many temptations to avoid controversy with Peter. The place that Peter had occupied among the twelve, the halo which would surround him in the eyes of many of the saints from his personal acquaintance with the Lord during His earthly sojourn, and throughout the forty days after the resurrection, as well as the danger of making a lasting breach in the assembly, might well have appealed to the apostle to be silent. But it was a question of fidelity to the truth of God, and if Paul had declined to speak, and to speak decidedly, he would have been unfaithful to the commission he had received from his risen and glorified Lord. It was, therefore, a momentous epoch in the Church of God, a moment in which the whole truth of grace depended, at least in Antioch, on the action of one man. If Paul had surrendered on the point raised, if he had followed in the footsteps of Peter and Barnabas, Judaism would have resumed its place of privilege and supremacy, and ritualism would have been once more enthroned by the leaders among the saints.

Even the casual reader of the narrative will perceive as much as this; but the real question, concealed behind the action of the Jewish leaders, was a far deeper one. The question really brought up was between the first man, who is of the earth earthy, and the second Man out of heaven. Not only was Peter undermining the full and complete work effected by the death and resurrection of Christ, but also, when he separated

himself from the Gentile saints, he resuscitated and went back to the ground of the first man. The law did take knowledge of man in the flesh; it was God's standard for him, and thus it both tested and exposed him; but "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Romans viii. 3, 4.) The man in the flesh, therefore, has passed away for ever from the eye of God under judgment in the cross of Christ. Like the fig tree cursed by our blessed Lord, he has been declared to be fruitless for ever; and as such, judged and hateful, he has been displaced for ever by the second Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. When Peter therefore refused to eat with the Gentile saints, he revived the man that God had for ever judged, and thereby put himself in opposition to the true character of Christianity.

This will be clearly seen if we now follow the argument of the apostle when he withstood Peter to the face, "because he was to be blamed."* First of all, he charged inconsistency upon him, reminding him that he had been living "after the manner of the Gentiles," and hence that it was utterly inconsistent to turn round now and compel "the Gentiles to live as do the Jews." This explains his words, "When I saw they walked not uprightly according to the truth of

* "Blamed" is a far too lenient word. It means at least "condemned," and some maintain that it is still stronger—"convicted of evil."

the gospel." Secondly, he urges that the works of the law for justification had been for ever set aside for Jews, as well as for Gentiles, in that they had believed in Jesus Christ, that, says the apostle, "we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." (v. 16.) In the next place he makes the application of this blessed truth to Peter's conduct. "If," he says, "while we seek to be justified by ["in" actually] Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners [as would be the case if, as Peter maintained, it was wrong to eat with the Gentiles], is therefore Christ the minister of sin [as your conduct would make Him out to be]? God forbid." Another thing he presses home upon the conscience of Peter. You, Paul says in effect, are building again the things which you once destroyed when you formerly ate with the Gentiles, and in so doing you have made yourself a transgressor. Paul's argument, as is evident, was both irresistible and unanswerable.

Lastly, the apostle passes away from Peter, and goes to the root of the matter in taking up the question of the means of his own deliverance from the law. "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Another statement of the apostle may be connected with this: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." (Romans vii. 4.) These two statements must be combined to reach the truth of our scripture. The commandment which [was ordained] to life he had found to be unto death; it had brought

death into and upon his conscience, and through grace he had acknowledged that death lay upon him as God's just judgment. But the same mighty grace had opened his eyes to another thing: if through the law he was dead, he was dead to the law, for the law only has dominion over a man as long as he liveth; and, moreover, he was dead to the law that he might live unto God. But how was this blessed object to be attained? The next verse unfolds this divine secret, and to this the most earnest attention is invited.

Let it then be well observed that the apostle says, "I am crucified with Christ." Through the grace of God, Paul saw that he had been associated with the death of Christ, *and through faith in the power of the Holy Ghost he appropriated it.* The consequence was that the man whom the law convicted as a transgressor, and into whose conscience it had brought death, had gone for ever in judgment both from the eye of God and for Paul—otherwise he would not have said, "I am crucified with Christ." Yea, he had become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that he might "be to Another," even to Him who is raised from the dead, that he should bring forth fruit unto God. *That* man, Paul in the flesh, the sinner, had gone in death: what then remained? This he tells us as he proceeds, "Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Another Man, even Christ, had come in; the old had gone for ever, and the new Man had taken his place, and it was He who henceforward lived in Paul. Such was God's way of deliverance for Paul from his old status as a transgressor, and such is God's way of deliverance for every sinner. There is no other way; and this way, if the happy goal of

liberty is to be reached, must be trodden. in the experience of the soul. The journey *must be* made from Adam to Christ, and the way from the one to the other lies through death accepted and morally known by the soul.

There is yet another thing to complete this blessed instruction. The verse concludes, "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." In the words of another, "The Christ who was the source of this life, who was his life, was its object also. It is this which always characterises the life of Christ in us; He Himself is its object—He alone. The fact that it is by dying for us in love that He—who was capable of it, the Son of God—has given us, thus freed from sin, this life as our own, being ever before the mind, in our eyes He is clothed with the love He has thus shown us. We live by faith of the Son of God, who has loved us and given Himself for us." Thus, to repeat a well-known phrase, That which is presented to us as the object of faith becomes in us the power of life; and hence the energy of the display of life, of Christ, through us will depend upon the activity of faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost, in Christ as the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us. Christ is thus formed in us; and God presents to our hearts the mightiest possible motive to a life of devotedness in the object of our faith, in the expression by His beloved Son of the love which passeth knowledge in His death upon the cross. Well might Paul remind the Galatians that he did not frustrate the grace of God; for he had shown beyond all question that if the law, any bit of it, were needed for righteousness, Christ had died in vain.

THE DAYS OF THE WEEK.

THERE are certain divisions of time obvious to all—natural divisions, as days and years—in connection with the two great lights God has set in the heavens (see Genesis i. 16); but there is another period of time—the week—of which we know nothing, save by the Word of God. From that we learn that “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day” (Exodus xx. 11)—six days of work followed by one of rest. And so important is this, that the week—a period of toil closing with a day of rest—becomes a divine institution, dimly recognized by Noah in the ark, also by the giving of the manna in Exodus xvi., but definitely established under the law, God calling the Sabbath His holy day (Isaiah lviii. 13), and giving it as a sign between Israel and Himself. (Exodus xxxi. 13.)

So that the week has to do with work and rest—God’s work and God’s rest. But soon sin entered in, and death by sin. Adam, the responsible head of the first creation, fell, and all connected with him was irretrievably ruined—“in Adam all die” (1 Cor. xv. 22); and God’s rest being broken, He becomes a worker again (John v. 17), and in various ways, in grace and government, at sundry times and in divers manners, till He closed up the history of the first man and of the first creation by the mission of His Son, who spoke the words and did the works His Father gave Him to do, ending His perfect work and life of

devotedness to God and man in death, dying on the accursed tree, under the judgment due to sin, as the Lamb of God.

It seems significant that His work ended on the sixth day, which was the day on which God wrought His greatest works (Genesis i. 24-31), pronouncing all very good. On the sixth day all the blessed life-work of our Lord terminated, but especially the work which was before Him all through—the sacrifice of Himself, the drinking of the cup—in fact, all that was accomplished for God and for man eternally in the cross; so that He could utter that victor cry, "It is finished," a divine proclamation concerning His own work that it was very good. "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work. . . . It is finished." Thus creation-work ends on the sixth day, and redemption-work also, and everything in connection with the first man ends in death. Moreover, the Sabbath, spent by our Lord in the tomb, gives no deliverance or light or cheer. A new order of things has to be ushered in and established. Resurrection, life out of death, a death not alleviated, but which has exerted all its power, but on One who could not be holden of it, who has annulled it, who death by dying slew. That One has risen—the Lord of life, the First-begotten from the dead, the First-born of many brethren, the beginning of the creation of God. The old one so gone, no longer reckoned, but the one which succeeds is called *the* creation of God. It was grand to see David, after jeoparding his life in the valley of Elah, come up triumphant, carrying the trophies of his victory. But what was that to that which we see! We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the

angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour. He did not *risk* His life. He, knowing all that was before Him, *laid* it down. He endured the cross, He drank the cup, He finished the work to the satisfaction of the God who gave it Him to do, and to His eternal glory.

And when did this marvellous event, the resurrection, take place? On the *first* day of the week. The new order commences on that day. Look at the account given in John xx. of "the active grace of Christ risen," as another has so happily expressed it. See Him passing from one to another, to individuals first, to comfort their hearts, to lighten their darkness; and then, at the close of it, "in the midst" of the gathered ones—gathered, not intelligently, but instinctively, as sheep huddled together at the alarm of danger, their very fears, sorrows, perplexities, together with the news of some having seen Him, drawing them together. What a meeting! Jesus in the midst. And He speaks *peace* to them. He spoke it before He suffered, but He has made it now by the blood of the cross, and because they are so slow to take it in He repeats it. Then saith Jesus to them again, "Peace be unto you." Then were the disciples glad. The sight and words of the risen Christ dispel their darkness and their fears.

And that is *our* day, the Church's day, the eighth day, the morrow after the Sabbath. (Lev. xxiii.)

Resurrection ushers in the new order on that day—the first day of the week; and thus we find the disciples (Acts xx. 7) on *that* day coming together to break bread, and Paul waiting to be present. No other day would have been like it, for it is the Lord's day

(Rev. i. 10); and 1 Cor. xvi. 2 unmistakably confirms all this.

What grace, what favour, bestowed on us to be able still to gather on the first day of the week—the resurrection day—to remember Him, to show forth His death, He in the midst. Oh to enter into it more by the power of the Spirit, to praise, to worship, to adore! Let us watch that we are not drawn together by mere duty, or by our necessities; but rather that, as a holy priesthood, we are found offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, seeking, according to His will and word, to prepare a place where He can have His way in a world that has rejected Him, a spot in the midst of His own where His heart will be gladdened, where He will have a portion as well as give one. “Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.”

J. G. D.

REMARKS ON THE PRESENT TIMES.

THIS is a time of trial for the beloved brethren who are gathered to the name and for the name of the Lord Jesus, because the pretensions and the energy of man are highly manifested. It is not an easy thing to be content with being simply what we are in reality before God. Times of “revival” reveal the thoughts of many hearts; but to learn in a day of grace to abide in peace, and know that God is God, is completely above the education of the flesh.

The spirit of the age affects many Christians, who labour to restore the “old things” for the service of God, instead of being broken before Him by the feeling of their own fall. I do not at all doubt their sincerity,

but I fear that they have not judged themselves, that they know not the actual state of the ruin that surrounds them ; so that they cannot have an adequate confidence only in the living God, as in the God of all resources, in the midst of this scene where man has failed in everything.

We ought never to be afraid of the whole truth. To confess openly what we are in presence of what God is, such is always the path of peace and of blessing. If it be thus when even two or three only are found before God, there will not be disappointments nor fallen hopes. If the wells dug in the days of Abraham have been filled and stopped up with earth, we have nevertheless to do with a God who can make water issue out of the rock, even when struck, and cause it to flow in the parched desert to refresh His people, thirsty and fatigued.

I do not envy the labour of those who dig canals in the sand for the streams which after all may take another course.

The active ways of God, in all times of blessing, consist in reproducing the glories of the work of the Lord Jesus. The darker the long night of apostasy becomes, the more distinctly the light of life shines. The word to the remnant is, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts." He is the only gathering-point. Men make among themselves confederations, having many things in view ; but the communion of saints cannot be known unless every line converge on this living centre. The Holy Spirit does not gather the saints around simple views, true as they may be, on what the Church is, on what it has been, or on what it may be on the earth. He gathers them always around

this blessed Person who is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. "Where two or three are gathered together unto My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) We are certain that Satan and the flesh will seek to resist this work and this way of the Lord, or to overthrow them.

We have need to be guarded from boasting, as is the case in these days; we need to be kept peaceful in the presence of God: there is so much independence and self-will almost everywhere. "We shall do great things," is the most unbecoming cry that can be heard at this time, when the light has made evident how little has been done.

God has made us know His truth as that which delivers us: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This liberty is not that of the flesh, because it penetrates our hearts with all the reality of a separation well known to God, who is holy. Thus one gets straight into his position with one's heart broken and humbled. If anyone talks of separation from evil without being humbled about it, let him beware lest his position be simply that which at all times has formed sects, and has also produced heterodoxy in doctrine.

As to our service, we have seen our precious Lord and Master in profound abasement wash the feet of His disciples, giving Himself as an example—to whom? To us assuredly. Now I know no service at the present time which is worthy of Him and agreeable to Him if not done in humiliation. This is not the time to speak of a place for ourselves. If the Church of God, so dear to Christ, is in this world dishonoured, dispersed, ignorant, and afflicted, he who

has the mind of Christ will always take the lowest place. The true service of love will seek to give according to the wants of, and will never think to put shame on, the objects of the Master's love, because of their necessity.

The men taught of God for His service come forth from a place of strength where they have learnt their own weakness and their own nothingness. They find that Jesus is everything in the presence of God; and Jesus is everything for them in all and through all. Such persons in the hand of the Holy Spirit are real helps for the children of God; they will not contend for a place of distinction or authority among the scattered flock. Communion of man with God with respect to the Church is shown by a frank disposition to be nothing in it, and thus one will be happy in one's heart in spending and being spent.

In our personal remembrances we have lessons to learn with fear and trembling. May the thoughts of power never occupy our hearts too much. "Power belongeth unto God." For about twenty years there has been a time of excitement, men seeking power everywhere and crossing seas to find it. Many thought of the Church; but it was rather the Church in power. They have felt and said that the power was lost; how regain it? From that they became occupied anew with earthly things, as if they could work deliverance here below.

Many recollect how at that time Satan could put man forward, and the result has been the same everywhere. Whatever the form that such efforts adopted in those days of confusion and excitement, they were invariably agreed to let all go on perceiving their

deception (for all failed in their objects, and the results were only sects). There were mortal marks of hostility against the Lord Jesus; or if His name were left untarnished, they prepared nevertheless the way for the terrible result of annulling the presence of the Holy Spirit, who alone can glorify Jesus.

The Great Shepherd will not forget the labour done in His name with a happy heart for His dear sheep, poor and necessitous. An unfading crown of glory, and abundant praise in the day of His appearing, will be the portion of those who meanwhile act thus. God will own all that He can own, and none will lose His recompense. I am not surprised at the disappointments which have followed all the efforts men have made in the Church to introduce some formal system of ministry, authority, or government. God cannot allow men to come and arrange the ground on which in these days He is pleased to find and bless His saints. We know very well what is the path of the flesh, which is completely indifferent about the fall of the Church; it is to occupy a place among men where God has not granted it.

There is a great instruction in the conduct of Zerubbabel related in the Book of Ezra (iii.) The son and heir of David takes his place with a remnant returning from captivity. He is content to labour in Jerusalem without a throne, without a crown. In building the altar of the Lord and the house of God, he simply served God in his own generation. Heir of the place that Solomon had formerly occupied in the days of prosperity and glory, he speaks neither of his birth nor of his own rights; yet is he faithful in all the path of separation, the grief, and the struggles he is

obliged to pass through. May the Lord render us more and more peaceful and confiding in Himself in these days of trial. "When I am weak, then am I strong," is a lesson Paul had to learn by a very humiliating process. If we speak of *our testimony on the earth*, it will soon be evident that it is all nothing but weakness, and, like the seed which is lost by the wayside, the testimony will end all the same for our shame. But if the living God has by us on the earth a testimony to His own glory, then the feeling of weakness will only draw us more directly to the place of power. An apostle with a thorn in his flesh learns the sufficiency of the grace of Christ. A little remnant is gathered and assembled, having nothing in which it can boast in the flesh; but it is thus that it is suited to remain faithful to the name of Jesus when that which seemed to be something before men has failed.

Neither anger nor prudence nor pretensions of man can do anything in the state of confusion in which the Church is now. I freely confess that I have no hope in the efforts that some are making to insure themselves an ecclesiastical position. In an earthquake, when the house is undermined from its foundations, it matters little for a man to see how he can make his dwelling agreeable. We shall find it better for us to remain where we are set by the first discovery of the ruin of things in the hands of men, and with our faces in the dust. Such is the place that belongs to us of right, and after all it is the place of blessing. In the Apocalypse John learns the actual state of the Churches falling at the feet of Christ. He was afterwards taken to heaven in order that thence he might later on see the judgments on the earth; but

evil in the Church can never be well known save when one is humbled at the feet of Jesus.

I have read of a time when several gathered together in such a grief of spirit that for a long time they could not utter a single word; but the floor of the meeting-room was moistened with their tears. Were the Lord to grant us still such meetings it would be wise to frequent these houses of tears. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy." (Ps. cxxvi. 5.) It is not only for an earthly remnant that that is true, but it is also written for us. I should willingly make a long journey to join persons thus afflicted, but I should not take a single step with a view of receiving, at the hands of the most excellent of men, power to overthrow all to-day, and to reconstitute to-morrow.

All that we can do is to walk with vigilance, but peacefully, thinking of the interests of the Lord Jesus; as to ourselves having nothing to gain and nothing to lose. The path of peace, the place of testimony, is to seek to please God. We need to be very watchful over ourselves, lest, after having been preserved from the corruptions of the age by very precious truths made known to us in our weakness, we should be caught in the net of presumption, or launch out into insubordination—a thing that God never can own or tolerate. "Using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." (N.T.) The word of God is the same to-day as ever. All that has happened has not changed His purpose, which is to glorify the Lord Jesus. If we are humbled before Him, all that belongs to the glory of Christ will be to us of great moment. And what do we wish more?

J. N. D.

"ECCLESIASTICISM" IS DESTRUCTIVE OF LIGHT AND LIFE.

No believer but will admit that there are two things necessary for man—light and life—and that they are only found in God. I have no doubt that what is termed "ecclesiasticism" is destructive of *both*, even after the good of them has been partly laid hold of in the soul. Darkness is man's natural *condition* Godward (John i. 4, 5), and death is his *state*. Man having lost through sin his unique place toward God, these are the results as to us. All that man ever needed before sin came in was found in God, and all that man needs now that sin *has* entered is still found in God alone. This last is made known in the gospel. It is "the gospel of the blessed God" which has come to us. In this gospel God Himself is made known, He is made known as supreme, with resources in Himself and resources for and on behalf of man, spite of all that Satan has done.

Light is the revelation of God in this dark scene, and no one can know Him but by the gospel. Were there no gospel, it were a plain proof that Satan had triumphed. God prepares man for the reception of light through giving to him to taste the misery of darkness. Then the light of God is gladly welcomed, and becomes the life of the soul; *i.e.*, the knowledge of God becomes that in which the soul *lives*. We have "passed from death unto life." Moreover, God Himself takes up His abode in the believer by the Spirit, to effectuate in him what is of Himself, and so we "grow

in grace, and in the knowledge of God." It is an immense triumph of God that He should find His habitation now *in man*, when we consider what man was, with all his affections astray and away from *God*. (Romans iii. 9-18.) His presence abides by the Spirit's dwelling in us, and the man who once walked according to "the course of this world," and "according to the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," may be henceforth seen under the control of the Holy Ghost, that is, of God by His Spirit.

Now it is this last, the Spirit, that "ecclesiasticism" robs Christian men of, as to their enjoyment of it in their own souls. Thence (the Spirit ignored) the return again to the regions of darkness and to the gates of death is both easy and rapid, and is or will be the experience of the soul while under the influence of "ecclesiasticism."

A word as to what "ecclesiasticism" is. It is that which has shaken hands with the world, and yet assumes to be a collective light here for God, and it is that which does not hear the *Spirit's* voice. Its *history* we have in Rev. ii. and iii. It is an "*ism*," tacked on to the *ἐκκλησία* of God—a parasite—a vampire which surely draws away all the vitality of that on which it feeds. To destroy life is its object, and to keep only the dead *form* bereft of it. (2 Tim. iii. 15.) Not that it triumphs in this, but this is its object. We see how far we have got on the road to it in the address to Sardis: "Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art *dead*." It is even that "ecclesiasticism" has found a home on earth ("where Christ found none"), from the address to Pergamos.

Where are we? It is His own sideward of reproach, "I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is." He "who walketh in the midst of the candlesticks" then and now sees the light going, and His word is addressed to him who is of the *εκκλησια* of God in the midst of "ecclesiasticism." "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches."

"Ecclesiasticism" will go on without "hearing." After the Spirit and the bride have gone, having unitedly said "COME," to Him to whom she belongs, and for whom the Spirit is now on earth, it will be spued out of Christ's mouth as no longer having anything in it, save what is utterly repulsive to Him.

But for us, with the light of the candlestick well-nigh gone (Rev. ii. and iii.), with life well-nigh become *death*, with Christ outside of "*ecclesiasticism*," for He is outside already *morally*, can a Christian yet contentedly remain of that which the Spirit here condemns? In "*ecclesiasticism*" the first man is allowed. Let this be noted, for state will be found consequently: "Thou knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." (Rev. iii. 17.) And is it any wonder that this is so where the first man reigns, and where He who should be *in the midst* is outside? "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." Reader, is He as far as you are concerned *waiting there yet*, waiting there to fill your heart? He says, "If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." The day is well-nigh over—the Spirit's day, the day of known and enjoyed life and light, which were introduced by His coming and ministry. How much of

this supping with Him, this *supping with Christ*, while the shades of night so swiftly descend, do *we*, do *I* know? And, oh, if I know anything of it, how empty are all the "isms" then of men!

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." (Heb. xiii. 8.) H. C. A.

WISDOM'S WARNINGS AND FAMILY CIRCLES.

IN reading the Book of Proverbs, we become familiar with the expression, "My son"; and the frequency with which it occurs shows the importance of the relationship it implies. Relationship in the Christian sense of the word did not exist until Christ had died and risen again. After His ascension to heaven the Spirit was given to believers, and hence we read, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 6.) The calling of the Christian also is *heavenly*, whereas the bearing of the book referred to is *earthly*, showing at the same time that true happiness can never be possessed apart from "the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom." (Chap. i. 7.)

Relationship, according to the Book of Proverbs, is expressed by wisdom and her sons, who form a kind of family circle to which we are introduced, in order to receive instruction from wisdom's lips and profit by her communications. Wisdom warns her sons individually, and appeals to them most affectionately, in view of the difficulties and dangers which beset them. And foreseeing the evils around,

she carefully instructs them as to their path through a scene where foes and snares abound. The importance of this is evident from the fact that a moment's hesitation or unwatchfulness on their part might afford the enemy an opportunity of ensnaring them for a lifetime.

Wisdom's warnings are frequently accompanied with words of encouragement, such as, for example, "In vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." A bird in the tree above with the snare on the ground is like a Christian walking in the Spirit, he is safe for the time being; but wisdom's children have need to be kept aloft after having been carried thither, and not only should they "pray without ceasing," but also should watch with diligence the movements of the enemy; for Satan is not altogether ignorant of our propensities, neither ought we to be ignorant of his devices. Mark how crafty the fowler is, and how carefully he spreads his net, and conceals himself so as to be neither seen nor heard! And not content with taking captive such as were seeking their portion below, he seeks to decoy even those that are on the wing.

Satan knows the tendency of our hearts towards the world, and what the things are which charmed us most in our unconverted days, and the weaknesses we are still liable to; and his constant study is to seek to overthrow "those that go right on their ways," to entangle their feet, and to bring them back again into bondage. Satan has recourse to the things we were once enslaved in to bring us down from the high position to which wisdom has elevated us, as her children, to the level of the world again. And when temptation

is yielded to, and the unseen hand of the enemy has enclosed us in his net, dearly indeed have we to pay for the self-gratification which occasioned our fall. On the other hand, when prayer has been offered up by us, and the words of the Psalmist appropriated, "Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe," the needed grace has been given, and the promised aid supplied. Then, instead of reaping the fruit of our folly in the snare of Satan, we are kept in the sense of His presence, and participate in that peace which the Lord never withholds from them that walk *with* Him and cleave *to* Him. May we know more of its preciousness and power, according to His own words, "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." (John xiv. 27.)

The things which characterize the world are described in the Epistle of John as being "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." All these are at Satan's disposal, and afford him material in abundance for the accomplishment of his dark designs and means by which he allures and deceives many precious souls. "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His." (2 Tim. ii. 19.)

Let us now, then, turn our attention for a moment to another family as presented in Exodus xxix., and in connection with which the wisdom of God is strikingly displayed. It is to a *priestly* family we are introduced this time, with Aaron the high priest as its representative and head, and with whom his sons are identified. The former is a type of Christ and was anointed *alone*, and afterwards his sons were anointed *with* him; and thus they were consecrated to God with blood upon the tip of their right ear, the thumb of their right hand,

and the great toe of their right foot. They are a beautiful type of the Church in association with Christ according to the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where Christ is seen in resurrection and in company with His own, as the Head of a heavenly family and the Leader of their praises. Such is the position of all true Christians as being redeemed by the blood of Christ and anointed with the Holy Ghost, and set apart with their risen Head to offer sacrifice and render acceptable service unto God. (1 Peter ii. 5.) Their responsibility as individuals is shown in another scripture: "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk, even as He walked." (1 John ii. 6.) The ear turned to God to receive the communications of His mind as made known in His Word, the hand to work for Him while it is called day, and the foot to walk with Him and run in the way of His commandments.

Every Christian is entitled to a place in the family circle composed of wisdom and her children, and also to a share of that joy which she produces in the hearts of those that obey her voice. But when we find ourselves in the family circle of Hebrews ii., and which we saw in figure in Aaron and his sons, we are in a new sphere and upon resurrection ground. The Church is in relationship with Christ as the heavenly One, and is composed of those who are said to be dead with Him and also risen with Him, and therefore we read, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." (1 Cor. xv.) And the more we enter into the truth of our identification with Christ as risen with Him, the more familiar we shall become with the things that are above and the scene to which

we belong. The Spirit of God will engage Himself in our behalf to this end. And then the things of the world will have but little hold on our hearts, so that the enemy will be the less likely to ensnare us in his ways. Then, as our hearts rise higher and higher, we shall be enabled to sing in truthfulness :

“O worldly pomp and glory,
Your charms are spread in vain,
I've heard a sweeter story,
I've found a truer gain.”

H. H.

THE ASSEMBLY AND THE EVANGELIST.

To the Editor of the "Christian Friend."

DEAR MR. EDITOR,

The letters in your April number upon the assembly and evangelist have produced in me the desire to add a word. Both of these letters, I believe, have touched the proper chord.

It is not Saturday night arrangements or any other thing of the kind that can promote free action between the assembly and evangelists, but that true large-heartedness which will everywhere characterize a work of the Holy Ghost. The *entente cordiale* will then be freely kept up. I think both letters admirable.

Recent events, I think, have shown that even in evangelization we need to be kept from going down to worldly ways and means ; but I believe that we cannot be too careful to allow free play to God's action. "There are diversities of operations," and I have no doubt that in Christendom many committees and centres have hampered the work of evangelists by prescribing rules and regulations which cut the wings of the one who finds himself in active service : just as (to take a human analogy) the red-tape regulations of the War Office have often hampered generals in the field.

Should we expect exactly the same kind of preaching in London as in some village, say, in Sicily or South

Italy, or in a mud hut on the Nile? The work of God is the same, but must not the means be adapted to circumstances? Catholics are nearly always converted through reading the Scriptures.

I shall never forget a grave discussion made by some very true-hearted brethren in a city in England upon work in a far-off country where they had never been. A man was present amongst them who had been there engaged in fairly active service, and his feeling was much that of Hannibal at the court of Antiochus the Great, when a refugee from the Romans. A Greek philosopher came over to Antioch and read a treatise on *war* before the court; many after the reading, which had been much applauded, asked Hannibal (who was *incognito*) what he thought of it. The great Punic commander replied that he had heard great nonsense during his life, but never such rubbish as this!

So might some committee theorize upon evangelization, whilst the evangelist himself knows what it is.

The true remedy for any want of fellowship has been shown clearly by H. P. B. and J. W. S., and, thank God, the distrust and fear that has often come to hinder His blessed work is surely in great measure cleared away, and will be more and more diminished as each servant goes on quietly with his own work, and the assembly, recognizing that which is of God, is led out in further praise and in prayer for those who are actually in the field.

I think that evangelization does not consist *merely* in preaching, but in spreading the excellent name of Christ in various ways amongst those who have not yet received Him.

Forward, everyone who is led on in this glorious battle! May J. W. S.'s wish be fully granted (his last clause); and if I might add a word to it, I should say, Let the excellency of the name of Christ on the one hand, and the need of souls on the other, be the bond between assembly and evangelist.

Believe me, dear Mr. Editor,

Yours, with true esteem,

E. L. B.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

ROMANS viii. 11.

A WHOLE system of erroneous teaching has been built up upon a perverted interpretation of this scripture. Contending that the quickening of our mortal bodies, by (rather, "by reason of") His Spirit that dwelleth in us, has a present application, it is affirmed that our bodies may be now animated with resurrection life in such a way as to expel, where there is faith, all disease. The question therefore is, whether there be any foundation in the passage for this contention. The answer, clear and unequivocal, is threefold. First, it should be observed that it is the full answer to the cry in chapter vii. 24 (which we give in another translation to make the point more distinct), "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death?" (N. T.) That this refers to the actual body is undoubted, and for the reason that the man who uttered the sorrowful plaint had been made to feel that death lay upon him and in him—in his mortal body. When we reach chapter viii. 11, we learn that it is not only a spiritual deliverance which has been reached in verse 2, as based upon the judgment which has been passed, once and for all, in the cross of Christ upon the man in the flesh, but that also the time is coming when the mortal body, which had been the seat and the instrument of all the "affections and lusts" over which the man in chapter vii. mourned, will share

in that blessed deliverance in resurrection. Secondly, the quickening of the mortal body is explicitly connected with, and given as a consequence of, the resurrection of Christ. Twice in the passage is His resurrection adduced as the certain ground of the blessed assurance as to our bodies. Lastly, the word "quicken" has the frequent sense of raising. In this very epistle we read of "God who quickeneth the dead" (chapter iv. 17), and in John v. 21 it is twice employed to denote resurrection. (See also 1 Cor. xv. 22-36.) There cannot be, therefore, a shade of doubt upon the accepted meaning of our scripture—that the quickening of our mortal bodies refers to the time when death shall be swallowed up in victory, when the Lord comes to raise the dead in Christ, and to change the living, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.

II.

MICAH vi. 5-8.

It is quite true that some well-known names have contended that in *vv.* 6-8 we have the preservation of an actual dialogue between Balak and Balaam. In their view God's people are exhorted, in *v.* 5, to "remember"—as indeed is the case—"what Balak king of Moab consulted," that is, the questions he asked; and these, it is affirmed, are given in *vv.* 6, 7; and then, that in *v.* 8 Balaam's answer is recorded—"What Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal." It is hardly necessary to say that we can in no wise accept this interpretation. In the beginning of the chapter "the Lord hath a controversy with His people, and will plead with Israel";

and He proceeds by the mouth of the prophet to appeal to them in the most touching manner: "O My people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me." Then He reminds them, in order to enforce His entreaty, that He had brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed him out of the house of servants; that He had sent before Him Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; and, furthermore, that He had rescued His people from the designs of Balak by the answers which He had caused Balaam to give. All this was brought to the recollection of His people, that they might know the righteousness of the Lord—that they might learn that if they had been unfaithful He could not deny Himself, that He was still faithful to His word. In response to this it is, according to our interpretation, Israel enquires, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?" etc. (*vv.* 6, 7.) They had wandered so far away as to have forgotten the path of return; and it is in reply to their questions that the prophet says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Thereby the lesson is taught—a lesson valuable at all times and in all dispensations, that no rites or sacrifices, even if divinely instituted, are of any avail without a right state of heart before God. In substance, indeed, it is the answer of Samuel to Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Samuel xv. 22.)

THE CORN OF WHEAT.

JOHN xii. 24.

It is very evident that chapters xi. and xii. of this Gospel go together, and form a distinct section in the presentation of the Person of the Son of God. They contain, in fact, God's threefold testimony to His beloved Son: first, as Son of God in the raising of Lazarus (xi. 4); second, as the King of Israel (xii. 13); and, lastly, as the Son of man. (v. 23.) Man, even His own people, had rejected Him, but God had provided that there should be an ample testimony to Christ in every character in which He was presented. We may remind ourselves, moreover, that if the Father has committed all judgment to the Son, it is "in order that" all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father"; and hence—solemn thought—"He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him." (Chapter v. 22, 23.)

The occasion on which our blessed Lord used the figure of the corn of wheat is both interesting and significant. There were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast; and, having heard of His fame, they desired to see Jesus. What their motive might have been is not here the question; but, whatever it was, Andrew and Philip tell Jesus what the strangers desired. In reply to the communication of the two disciples, the Lord took the opportunity of unfolding the character of the pathway

to His future glory in this world, when as Son of man, according to the teaching of Psalm viii., all things will be put under His feet. "The hour is come," He said, "that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

It will be observed that no further mention is made of the Greeks. As Gentiles they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise. Proselytes they might have been; but, even so, they could have no connection with Christ while in this world, except indeed they had come as the centurion or the woman of Canaan, as having no claim, and casting themselves in their need upon His goodness and mercy. They had no right whatever to the promises; and hence it was that Jesus, the corn of wheat, must die and rise again for the introduction of a new order of things, in which, through grace, they could have part and be in subjection to Christ as the Son of man. It is difficult for many Christians to comprehend this fundamental truth—that Christ, by His death and resurrection, has terminated the old order and commenced a new, an order begun and established in His own resurrection; for He is the Beginning, the First-born from the dead. It is in that, and the scene in which it is found, that our characteristic blessings are found; even as the apostle has written, "If any man be in Christ, [there is] a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.)

In our scripture it is quite true that the Lord refers to His future glory in this world as Son of man; but the point to be observed is that the pathway to it lay of necessity through death. Man, as man, could have no links with Christ; man, as man, had to be judged in the cross, had to disappear from the eye of God, after having come up before Him for judgment, before the Second Man could take His place according to the counsels of God, as Head over all things to the Church. It is an immense deliverance to the soul to perceive this blessed truth—that the first man has gone in judgment, that he has been totally displaced by the Second Man out of heaven, and that now there is only the Second Man before the eye of God, and that He is forming a new race of His own order to be in association with Him for ever, a race every member of which shall be conformed to His own image, that He might be the First-born among many brethren.

Having laid this down, we may be permitted to widen our survey, and to point out that Christ had to pass, was under the necessity of passing, through death to secure everything purposed for Him and His own in the counsels of God. The principle is here in this scripture: "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." If in His own blessed perfection He had departed to the Father by any other way than the cross, He had gone alone, Himself still the Object of the complacent delight of the Father, for He was, and must be, ever in the Father's bosom; but still He must die if He were to have companions. It could only be if He died that the corn of wheat would

bear much fruit; for apart from the cross, God could not have been glorified concerning all that man was and had done. It lies indeed upon every page of Scripture that everything—God's glory, the exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God as Lord, with the name which is above every name, power over all flesh, universal supremacy, Head of His body the Church, redemption with all its unfathomed treasures, all the glories indeed which will encircle His head throughout eternity—that all these were secured through His death. It is no wonder, therefore, that He has provided that His death should ever be remembered, that as often as His people eat the bread and drink the cup they show His death until He come.

But there is another thing to which the Lord calls our attention in this scripture. If it is true that He passed through death to secure all for God and for His people, we also must pass through death in order to enjoy what He has obtained. Hence the moment He had spoken of the necessity of the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying if it would bring forth fruit, He proceeded to say, "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Everyone will understand that if the characteristic blessings of Christianity are heavenly, or, to put it into even more simple language, that if heaven, the Father's house, is to be our eternal home, we must die to enter upon our full enjoyment, that it can only be after death, or after the Lord's coming, that we shall enter upon the possession of all the blessedness connected with our being for ever with the Lord.

Another thing, however, is here taught, viz., that it is possible for the believer to pass through death now in spirit or morally, and thus to anticipate the life of heaven, by living there, in the power of the Spirit and through faith, while in this world. If the Lord's language be carefully examined, it will be seen that it bears this construction. He thus says, "He that loveth his life shall lose it." There are two senses in which the word "life" may be used—either to indicate existence, or that in which we live, that in which we find our life. This latter—the moral sense—is that conveyed in the Lord's words. They will mean, therefore, that if a man clings to his life here—to what makes up his life, to his enjoyments and gratifications—he will lose it, just as the prodigal found in the far country. On the other hand, he that hateth his life in this world—the one who, having found his attractions and treasure in Christ outside of this world, accepts death upon, surrenders, the pleasures and the enjoyments of the natural man—he will keep it unto life eternal, because he has already begun to live this life eternal, even while upon the earth.

This truth is so important that we may illustrate it from another scripture. In chapter vi. we read "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." (v. 54.) Calling attention only to the first part of the verse, it may be remarked that the simple meaning of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man—without going further at this time—is the appropriation of His death, making it our own. Now if we thus accept, in the power of the Spirit, the death

of Christ, and thus the judgment that fell upon Him as our judgment, it ends morally our responsible life before God, and we pass into a sphere which is outside of this world, where eternal life is known and enjoyed. All our true blessings indeed are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, and it is abundantly clear that if we would enter upon their enjoyment we must pass into the region where they are found. What then—for this is the whole question—is the pathway into this region? It is death, the death of Christ appropriated by the believer, which he accepts as his righteous due, though Christ bore its judgment in his stead; and he thus finds that death frees him from the world, and is the way of life. This Gospel is full of this blessed truth, and hence we read also in chapter v. that the believer has passed out of death into life.

Naturally, however, we shrink from death; and the Lord, knowing this as we could never know it, has, in His tender grace, supplied the power and the encouragement to tread this path of life. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." First He holds Himself before our hearts as the One who has passed through death into His present place of exaltation and glory, and He invites us to follow Him. And to bring us under all the attractions of His grace and love, He pledges His sure and faithful word that where He is, there shall also His servant be. It was in verification of His promise that He said to the Father in chapter xvii, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast

given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." With such a prospect, ineffable in its glory, with Himself as the Centre of it all, death is not only robbed of its terror (whether morally or actually considered), but it even becomes invested with a spiritual charm, because it is the means of introducing us into the place where He is who loved us and gave Himself for us, and where, as glorified with Him, we shall find our joy for ever.

There is yet more, for He adds, "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honour." Devotedness to the Son, proved at all cost by following Him through death into the place where He is, calls forth the joy of the Father's heart and the expression of His approbation. He will thus put honour upon the follower of His beloved Son, upon the affection that cannot rest anywhere except in the presence of its absorbing Object. What unutterable blessings thus lie beyond death, and beckon us onward to their enjoyment, seeking to allure us to anticipate our actual departure from this world by following our blessed Lord through death to the place where He dwells! May He so absorb our hearts with Himself that it may be impossible for us to rest in the scene where He is not, and that we may be constrained, while waiting for His return, to live constantly in His presence!

"That way is upward still
 Where life and glory are;
 Our rest's above, in perfect love,
 The glory we shall share."

GRACE AND GLORY.

“ANOTHER point I want to dwell upon is the intimate connection between grace and glory. If you turn to Romans v. 2, you will see it there: ‘By whom also’—that is, by the Lord Jesus Christ—‘we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.’ In the passage I read to-night it says, ‘For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.’ The teaching of grace leads us to look for the appearing of the glory. The connection is this, that grace fits you for glory; you are thus fitted for glory at the very outset, but the more you become acquainted with the grace of God, the more perfectly you are at home, as it were, in the thought of the glory of God. I could not understand what it is to have part in the glory of God if I did not see that I stand in grace, and apprehend the connection of grace with the glory of God. The glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ is, as I understand it, the full display in their result of the purposes of God’s grace; God’s purposes of grace are His glory. The glory of a man is that which he cherishes in his inmost heart, and in a certain sense it is that which God cherishes; so that the glory of God is that in which the heart of God delights and will display itself, and this is in the purposes of His grace;

and everything looks forward to the full display of this. These purposes dawned very early in Scripture. The first real expression of the purposes of God's grace was in the promises that He made to Abraham. He engaged Himself in blessing to Abraham, and said, 'In thee shall all the nations of the earth be blessed'; it was the beginning of the revelation of God's purposes of grace. No doubt you get a hint of grace in the judgment on the serpent, that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent. The seed of the woman was the Son of God, and the Son of God was the vessel of grace, and was to bruise the head of the serpent. But the first distinct intimation of God's purposes of grace came out, as I said, in the promise to Abraham. Now, when all is displayed in its full result, when all these purposes are accomplished in Christ (for all are centred and will be accomplished in Him), the great display of them will be the glory of God, and that is what I understand we rejoice in hope of, and so we can look for it. And the more I come under the influence of divine grace, the more ready I am for the display of the glory—I look for the glory, for after all the glory is akin to the grace that I know. It is of immense importance to connect together grace and glory. Do you remember an expression in the Psalms, 'To see Thy power and Thy glory, so as I have seen Thee in the sanctuary'? If we know God in the sanctuary, that is, in the blessed secret of His grace, nothing will content us except the hope of God's glory. The thought is a positive delight to me that the more I am acquainted with the grace of God, the closer I am really brought to the glory. The same holds good, too, in regard of Christ; the more I become

acquainted with grace, the more I am in the light of the glory of the Lord. That is the connection in which the two things stand here, that where the heart is established in grace, the natural outlook is, 'Looking for that blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' When all comes to light, when the blessed display of grace comes to pass, then will be the glory of God's grace, and we shall find ourselves perfectly at home in it; the glory comes in to the delight of the soul, because, as I said before, God's glory is the accomplishment and display of all the purposes of His grace, and so of Himself. In the beginning of Stephen's address before the council in Acts vii. he says, 'The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham.' The God of glory refers to His appearing to him in the way of promise, 'but gave him none inheritance'; that is, He gave him a blessed revelation of His own purpose, which the promise was. It was the God of glory; and then at the close of the address Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; everything was accomplished and pledged in the One who was in the glory of God; he apprehended the greatness of divine grace, he was deeply conscious of standing in the grace of God, that there was nothing between him and God, that he was free of every bit of pressure in the presence of God, and he 'looked up steadfastly into heaven.'

"The impression which I would like to leave is of the intimate connection between grace and glory, and that the better your acquaintance with grace, the more you are prepared for the display of glory." F. E. R.

WHAT WE FIND WHERE THERE IS THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE LORD'S PRESENCE.

PSALM cxiv.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

I THINK that we have two remarkable illustrations of what we find where there is the sense of the Lord's presence, in the Word. The first is when the Lord took His place in the midst of the redeemed *earthly people*. The second is when He took His place in the midst of the ransomed *heavenly company*; and both are full of interest. I refer you for the first to this Psalm cxiv., which I have read. For the other I would ask you to read John xx. from verse 19.

The first thing I draw your attention to in the psalm is that the Lord's presence subdues all natural restlessness, and the second is that it causes to flee all merely natural greatness and strength; and both of these must be effected first in us before we can get the good of THE LORD'S PRESENCE.

We read that when Israel came out of Egypt "Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion." God took His place among them; that is, when Israel went out, *God went in*. Here we see that to get the *good* of God's presence at any time (mind, I do not say His presence, but the *good* of His presence) there must be separation from the world, of which Egypt is the type. God never took up His place with them until then, and if not, He did not make His presence felt. Now He does. Let me ask, "Have we all turned our backs to the world?"

The first thing then you realize, beloved friends, when you have the consciousness that you are in His presence, is that human restlessness and strength are *nowhere*. These, so natural to man, are both subdued. "The sea saw it, and fled." The sea was conscious of the presence of its Creator. But I must press that these things are to be known by us *individually*. It is the necessary consequence of entering into His presence. Then the strength and stability of nature is also touched. "The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills as lambs." He subdues and refuses everything in us which is not of His Spirit. If this is not so in us we shall be of little use to others, and then, if there is activity, we shall be great hinderers of the saints and of the Spirit.

Moses made everything of the Lord's presence, and so should we. It works individually first—it subdues *me*. It works also in the assembly, and it puts the first man in his right place there, that is, OUTSIDE. Moses said, "If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence." But you may say the Lord's presence is always with us, both individually and collectively. Yes, my friend, this is true in one sense, but many a time it is also true of saints that "their eyes were holden that they did not know Him." You are very much like your forerunners in this matter. I will tell you that if there is no subduing power known to *you*, YOU do not know Him at that moment, nor are you at all in the good of His presence, because *this* is its first effect—it subdues.

Now the fact that *the Lord is there* is POWER; I mean when the fact is made a living substance in my soul. Tell me what can resist it. His presence? That is

God Himself. The most restless it subdues; the mountains' strength is as nothing, though "they cannot be moved"—it removes them. Nothing can stand before it. The wilderness becomes for His people "a standing water," and the dry ground becomes water-springs. It meets all the needs of the saints:

But it also works *for the saints*. It subdues the enemy. I see that when the people are in the hands of God and all *human* power and strength gone, then the enemy must flee. He shows his back and not his face. Why is this? Ah, it is because there is nothing left that he can work upon. There is nothing left but GOD, and then, of course, he must flee. If there were more of the effect of the Lord's presence seen in us, we should see far more of the *back* of the enemy than we see of his *face*. He cannot stand before GOD, and whenever God *can* He puts *Himself* to meet the foe. Alas! there is oftentimes something that He has to correct in *us*, and then He may, as He did with Job, use the enemy to do it. But what a wonderful thing that the Lord's presence may be so good to me that the enemy has to flee. Oh, the joy of living in such a day as this! *Individually* it is what we have in 1 John—"He keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not"; and *collectively* it is the assembly—"The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The blessed Lord Himself illustrates the saint when alone. He is with God (tempted in the wilderness). And he illustrates the saint in the company—*i.e.*, in the assembly, where He is occupied with the Father. (Heb. ii.) Remember it, and may I ever remember it. The enemy will flee from the LORD'S presence, but not from me! If I con-

front him I shall find that he is more than a match for me. There is only one way to be strong—"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of HIS might." Allow yourself to disappear, and allow the LORD to come to the front, and you will be astonished at what you will see.

Now then, if the first man is gone out, is refused, and if in the energy of the Holy Spirit he is thus *continuously dealt with*, I am free for the Lord to occupy me. With what do you think the LORD desires to occupy the saints—the sanctified—His own—the new creation company? He desires to occupy them with what He—blessed and exalted MAN—Head of the new race—knows as MAN, of the Father now, so that *they* may be led also into it! They are His brethren, and HE has made them what they are. He is not ashamed of them. "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto Thee." What name will He declare? Read the last verse of John xvii., and you have the answer. He declared the Father's name as He knew it when with them a Man on earth. He now declares the Father's name as He knows it *now*—as HE knows it—a Man in the glory of God!

Beloved friends, is it not important that we should listen to Him? Who could make this known but Himself? for there is no other man there. I feel that *I* could not presume to unfold to you what you can only learn in the Lord's presence; namely, what we find there. You must be there yourself to know what it is. But I have not the least bit of doubt that you will find that it is, first, *exclusive*. I think that then you will find that it is also *inclusive*; namely, that, in

the grace of God, *you* are included in all that belongs to Christ, as the risen and exalted MAN, and that "as He is, so are we in this world." And what is *included* in God's present thought of Him as the One who glorified God? If *you* can put a limit to that, and only then, the finite could measure the Infinite. Though I cannot unfold then what we find when consciously in the presence of Christ, I think saints can say with Dr. Watts (though not in the way *he* applied it)—

*"I have been there, and still would go,
'Tis like a heaven below."*

May we *all* know more of what it is, both as individuals and in the assembly, so that we may say with Him, in spite of all our earthly distractions, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage." May this be our experience yet more and more!

H. C. A.

BEING "WASHED," AND FEET WASHING.*

LET us follow the instruction of the chapter a little further. Peter, looking upon the scene in a natural way, had first of all refused to allow the Lord to wash his feet; but on hearing that the washing was with a view to having part with Him, he exclaims with his usual fervency of spirit, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This gives occasion to the Lord to make the important statement of verse 10, "He that is washed [bathed] needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." It is evident that

* This paper is an extract from a published address, entitled *Loved unto the End.*

the figure used is that of a person who has bathed, and in walking from the bath has defiled his feet with the dust of the floor. He does not need to return to the bath; he only requires that his feet should be washed, to be "clean every whit."

Let us seek in the first place to understand what is meant by "he that is washed." It has sometimes been taken as the cleansing of the blood, but this has no warrant in the scripture. It is expressly cleansing *by water*, and where we find this in Scripture it seems to me to be a figure of passing into a wholly new order of things, and of being made suitable for it. The priests were washed in the day of their consecration. (Exodus xxix. 4.) It was a ceremony indicative of the fact that they were set apart for this special service; it was their introduction to a new order of life; and was expressive of the fact that they were introduced to it in a way that rendered them suitable for it. Scripture speaks of the "washing of regeneration" (Titus iii. 5), where the thought is evidently that of introduction to a totally new order of things; and Paul says to the Corinthians, "Ye are washed"—enforcing thereby the fact that they had been brought out of everything that constituted their former life. Now, how had the disciples been "washed"? May we not learn something as to it from John xv. 3? "Now ye are clean *through the word which I have spoken unto you.*" The word of Christ had wrought in power in their hearts, and they had been introduced by it to an entirely new order of things. No doubt the new birth is essential to this, and the "washing" involves the thought of the death of Christ, and is, so to speak, the application of His death as that which separates us from the world and

from ourselves as in the flesh; but it evidently includes the knowledge of Christ by His word. "Ye are clean *through the word which I have spoken unto you.*" Christ had made Himself known, by His word, in the hearts of the disciples. His word expressed Himself, and the knowledge of Himself had freed their hearts from everything that was of the world. It was a great thing for a few fishermen to be found in complete superiority to all the political, social, and religious influences that were around them. They were delivered from the whole current of things and opinions that prevailed in the world. They were brought outside it all—morally purified from it all—by the knowledge of Christ. "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," are words which express the heart-feelings of the company thus "washed" and "clean." They had, if I may so say, the moral cleansing of a new Object. The knowledge of that blessed Person had delivered them from the thoughts of men, and from the motives and principles of the world. The "expulsive power" of the knowledge of Christ had displaced other things, and by the knowledge of Him they entered into an entirely new world. They were "washed."

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." The cleansing of the whole moral being, in the way of which I have spoken, is a divine operation that is never repeated, but there is continual need for the feet to be washed. It is the point of contact with this present scene which is the point of danger, and we cannot avoid this so long as we are in the world. The very thought of this may well move our affections deeply when we consider that it necessitates the untiring and devoted

service of the One who loves "unto the end." It furnishes Him with opportunity to give continual expression to His love. But for this ministry of divine love our contact with the world, and our susceptibility to the influences of this present scene, would have the effect of permanently withdrawing our hearts from *part with Christ* in the circle of divine affections. Little do we know how the blessed Lord longs to have our hearts in company with Himself in that wondrous circle. May He be graciously pleased to draw us near to Himself, and give our hearts a deeper sense of His love!

The question may be asked, "*How* does the Lord wash our feet?" I cannot say much about it, but it seems to me that the washing of the feet partakes of the same nature as the washing all over. It is of the same character, though with a more limited range according to the present need. I believe our feet are washed by a fresh presentation of Christ to our affections. He brings Himself and His love before our hearts, and thus He displaces the dust of the world. It is a distinct service—the special service of His love while we are in the world. If our hearts are really touched by this I am sure we shall count more upon the Lord for His service, and we shall look more to Him for it. No doubt this service of love is for all "His own," but we ought to be exercised as to whether we have been in a condition to get the good of it. One must be consciously of "His own," and have the world as a judged thing, before he can realize the good of this precious service of divine love. There must also be a response—a looking for the service. I am afraid we are often like Peter; we will not allow the Lord to wash

our feet. We give Him no opportunity of doing so. Do we not often read the Word and pray without turning *to the Lord* for His present and personal ministry of love?

Christ loves His own which are in the world, and He washes their feet. If we have part with Him we shall love His own, and we shall wash their feet. Those who taste the joys of that circle of divine affections cannot help longing that others should have their feet cleansed from the dust of the world, that they might enjoy their true portion according to the thoughts of divine love. It is as our own feet are washed that we become instrumental in washing the feet of our brethren. If my feet are not washed my heart is more or less under the power and influence of things here, and if I speak of these things I put a little more dust on my brother's feet. But if my feet have been washed the love of Christ and of the Father are known in my heart—I am in the circle of divine affections—and I naturally speak of the things that are in that circle. If I am enabled to bring these things before my brother's heart I wash his feet. It is not by telling him of his faults that I wash his feet. If he has sinned, or been overtaken in a fault, I must go to other scriptures to know how to treat him. This chapter does not suppose any actual sin or fault, though I am convinced that if our feet are not washed we are in the greatest danger of falling into sin; if the dust accumulates on our feet it will undoubtedly result in sin. We must know the thoughts of divine love to understand this precious service of Christ, and I shall be thankful if the Lord uses His word to-night to lead us a little more into those thoughts.

MARY THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD.

WERE it not that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, one might almost fear to touch upon the subject of this "highly favoured . . . and blessed among women." Another reason has operated, perhaps, to hinder many believers from the study of her privileges and character, and that is the sinful idolatry of which she has been made the object by so many millions of professed Christians. The antidote to this tendency—so grieving to the Spirit of God, and so dishonouring to the Lord Himself—is to be found in the consideration of the notices of this elect vessel which are preserved in the Gospel. This is the task which we have been led to undertake, in the hope that we may understand more fully, as taught of the Holy Spirit, the marvellous grace of God in singling out this poor woman for this unspeakable honour; and also the fruits of that grace as displayed in her simple and unwavering confidence in the Lord, and in her devoted and humble life.

It may be remarked that it is only in the Gospels of Luke and John that Mary's words and actions are described; she is seen and mentioned in Matthew, and with many details in connection with the birth of Jesus into this world, but beyond this the record is silent. Joseph, indeed, in this Gospel is the more prominent, for it was through him that the genealogy of Jesus, as the Son of David, was reckoned. (Chap. i. 16, 20.) Still it was Mary who had been chosen and prepared of God for the ineffable privilege of

becoming the vessel of the introduction of Jesus into the midst of Israel, the One who should save His people from their sins; for, as the evangelist writes, "All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." This prophecy fulfilled, and the Child born, the bright rays of His glory could not but throw Mary into the shade; and, consequently, in the very next chapter, it is said five times over, "The young Child and His mother," *not*, The mother and her Child. How could it be otherwise, if He that was born was no less than Emmanuel—God with His people? This fact duly appreciated would have quenched for ever the desire to exalt Mary above her Son; as the Lord Himself taught, in another way, when an admiring hearer exclaimed, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and the paps which Thou hast sucked"; for He replied, "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." (Luke xi. 27, 28.) It was not the woman, highly favoured as she was, but the woman's Seed who was to bruise the serpent's head, the One in whom all God's counsels were to be unfolded and accomplished. It is He therefore, God's beloved Son, and not Mary, who is to fill the hearts of God's people with praise and adoration.

THE MISSION OF GABRIEL TO MARY.

When we come to the Gospel of Luke, Mary is the prominent figure in the account of the Nativity. Of Joseph's exercises there is no mention; it is only said

that Mary was "a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary." (Chap. i. 27.) It was to her, dwelling at Nazareth,* that the angel Gabriel was sent from God. Sitting in the house, as is clear from the words, "The angel *came in* unto her"—she received the salutation, "Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Gabriel, who stood in the presence of God (see *v.* 19), was in the divine secret concerning the chosen virgin; and, as is evident from the nature of his greeting, he appreciates the immense favour, together with her exaltation amongst women, which God in His grace had bestowed upon her. His words, indeed, did but express his own delight in communion with the thoughts of God.

But Mary, when she saw the angel, who doubtless appeared in human form (see chap. xxiv. 4), "was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." That is, she reasoned inwardly as to the nature of Gabriel's words, what was their "aim and meaning." We can understand this if we recall her character and position. She was a pious, God-fearing woman, and, whatever her genealogy, would seem to have been in lowly circumstances. Meekness, humility, and faith were manifestly the features of her spiritual life, and she might there-

* Matthew does not mention that Joseph and Mary were inhabitants of Nazareth before the birth of Jesus: his object is to show the fulfilment of prophecy in the birth of the King of the Jews at Bethlehem, and afterwards he tells us that, having returned from Egypt, Joseph "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth," etc. The two records supplement one another, each containing what was necessary for the special object in view.

fore well be troubled at the saying she had heard, and reason, not with the natural mind as the offspring of doubt, but rather as springing from perplexity of soul, concerning the significance of the angel's address. With divinely-given insight into Mary's feelings, Gabriel first of all calms her mind, and then, in preparation for the marvellous communication he was sent to make, assures her that she has found favour with God.* We say "in preparation" for Gabriel's message, for until the soul is at peace and in liberty divine things cannot be communicated. (Compare Daniel x. 19.)

And what a message it was that Gabriel was sent to deliver! "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end." (*vv.* 31-33.)

It does not fall within our object to expatiate upon the ineffable mystery of the incarnation of our blessed Lord and Saviour, or to call attention to the several titles and glories with which He is here invested, inasmuch as it is Mary herself who is the subject of our meditations. This much, however, may be

* Commenting upon verse 28, another has observed that "the expressions 'found favour' and 'highly favoured' have not at all the same meaning. Personally she had found favour, so that she was not to fear; but God had sovereignly bestowed on her this grace, this immense favour, of being the mother of the Lord. In this she was the object of God's sovereign favour." It may be added that finding favour with God refers to Mary's spiritual state, while being highly favoured speaks rather of her being God's chosen vessel for the birth of Jesus. But the two things are assuredly connected.

said, that the glory of His Person is surely contained in the name JESUS, meaning, as it does, Jehovah the Saviour; and, secondly, that all the titles given relate to the earth and to His exaltation in the earth as the Son of the Highest, and as the Son of David, who should exercise everlasting sovereignty over the house of Jacob. It is as Heir to the royal rights of David, but David's Lord as well as David's Son, that He is here presented. And let not the reader forget that all these promises await their fulfilment, and that they will be infallibly accomplished by the power of God according to His eternal counsels. The kings of the earth may set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed; but, notwithstanding all the raging of the nations and of their monarchs, God has set in His immutable purposes His King upon His holy hill of Zion; and He will reign until He hath put all enemies under His feet.

When God promised a son to Abraham, Sarah laughed within herself, doubting, not knowing the almighty power of the Promiser. Zacharias had also the difficulty of unbelief when he received from Gabriel the announcement that his wife Elisabeth should bear him a son. Mary replied to the angel, "How shall this be?" But although what was promised must be outside of the order of nature, it was not, as in the cases adduced, distrust that prompted her question. This is seen from the fact that Gabriel is permitted to give a full and complete answer to her enquiry, an answer which reveals two things, the miraculous conception of our blessed Lord, and that the Child so born should be called the Son

of God, the Son of God as born into this world, according to the second Psalm.* But to strengthen her divinely-given faith, which already existed, Gabriel was commissioned to inform her of God's grace also to her cousin Elisabeth, "for," said he, giving thus the unchanging basis of all belief, "with God nothing shall be impossible." God were not God if this were not so; and hence, too, as the Lord Himself taught, "All things are possible to him that believeth." It was this lesson which Mary had now learnt in her inmost soul, as shown by her response, "Behold the handmaid" (the bondsmaid) "of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

And not only had Mary now learnt that with God nothing was or would be impossible, but also, made willing by divine grace, she offered herself, surely only in the power of the Holy Ghost, for the accomplishment of His blessed will, and without any reservation. In all the range of Scripture there is no instance of a more exalted faith nor of a more complete submission. She could not be blind to the possible consequences in this world, and indeed we learn from Matthew that she became the object of suspicion and exercise even to Joseph. But faith never reasons and is never perplexed; it simply counts upon God, in the confidence that if He call to any service, or to walk in any path, He will both guide and sustain, whatever the trial or persecution involved. The calm of a soul which reposes in the will of God is unspeakable, and this was the inheritance of Mary at this moment. The favour bestowed upon her was infinite, and not

* It is important to distinguish between this title and His eternal Sonship, of which John, for example, speaks in his Gospel.

less was the grace which enabled her to accept it with a meek and quiet spirit. In this respect, too, as well as in that of her being the chosen vessel for the birth of Jesus, all generations will call her blessed.

(To be continued.)

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

MATTHEW v. 42.

It is especially important, in the consideration of this scripture, to remember the apostolic word, that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." To attempt to act literally according to this precept is, in our judgment, to miss altogether its blessed teachings of grace. In this discourse the Lord proclaims, as another has written, "the great essential principles which were to serve as moral foundations for His kingdom, and to characterize those who were to have part in it. The first sixteen verses of chap. v. contain the enunciation of these principles, as well as the character and position of the sons of the kingdom." And then, after contrasting the teaching "by them of old time" with His own authoritative precepts, the Lord proceeds to point out that the true subjects of His kingdom must be the exponents of His own heart of grace. In all dispensations, indeed, the believer is to express God as revealed in that particular period, and so in the coming kingdom which Christ will establish in glory, on His appearing, His followers will have to represent Himself as they have received and known Him. They will have to act toward others

as He has acted toward them. Grace, therefore, will have to govern their attitude toward all; and thus He says, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away." This does not mean, if the principles we have laid down be correct, that (if we make the application to ourselves) we are to give to everyone what he may choose to ask, or to lend whatsoever he may desire to borrow, but rather that we must be always in a giving state, ever ready to give, and never be weary of giving, so that when a case of real need comes before us we may enjoy the privilege of meeting it, and thus be givers even as God Himself is a giver. We are not thereby exempted, it may be added, from the responsibility of our stewardship—the responsibility of acting as God would have us act as before Him, and for His glory. But we are to beware of restricted hearts; and inasmuch as we have freely received, we are to give freely. If the soul be established in *grace*, there will be no difficulty in the understanding of the mind of God in this scripture.

II.

MATTHEW vi. 2, 5, 16.

It is very evident on the surface that when the Lord says of the "hypocrites" that "they have their reward," He means that they attain the object they have in view in their religious display before the eyes of men, that they, in a word, succeed in acquiring the praise of others. The following note will explain this very exactly: "'Have' is compounded with a preposition, which gives it the force of having all they have to expect, they have the whole of it already. . . . It is expressed in English by laying

the stress on 'have.' Perhaps one might say 'have got' in the same sense." This is very solemn, because it teaches that if we are tempted to seek the admiration, the honour, or the praise of men, we may be allowed to gain it; but in that case we have nothing more to expect, inasmuch as we cannot then have God's favour and blessing. What the Lord is indeed here enforcing is that, whether in giving alms, in praying, or in fasting, it must all be done in secret before the eye of God, for, if not, none of these things will be of any avail before Him. And to encourage His disciples to this He says, "And thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee."* We need to remind ourselves of this instruction, for what is more frequently seen than the publication of the names of the donors of alms, or even private prayers presented before the eyes of others? How beautiful the words which the Lord uses of prayer! "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door" (shut out all else, even the nearest and the dearest), "pray to thy Father who is in secret" (for it is *in secret* that He is to be found and that His presence is to be realized); "and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee." Yea, if His eye alone, His favour alone, be sought, the end desired will be most assuredly realized. It will be readily perceived that all this applies to individual and private prayer; and yet even where two or three are gathered together in the Lord's name to pray, it is necessary to remember that we must address alone the ear of God, that we must pray to Him, and not to those who are present.

* The word "openly," in the *Authorized Version* has, as we might expect, no sufficient authority.

THE ENERGY OF THE HOLY GHOST.

ACTS iv. 31-33.

It must be very evident, even to the uninstructed believer, that the state of things described in this scripture is no longer existent; and it is also certain, from the Word of God itself, that it will never again be reproduced in this world. For a brief moment the Spirit of God had full sway over the hearts of His people, and the consequence was that the Lord's expressed desire for the displayed oneness of His people (John xvii. 20, 21) was entirely realized. But in the very next chapter Satan is seen to have found an entrance among the saints of God, and the dark cloud of sin and judgment overshadowed the assembly. True that the Holy Spirit still wrought with marvellous energy through chosen vessels; but from the first moment of failure the tides of blessing began to recede, and never from that day to this have they reached the high-water mark of our chapter. There have undoubtedly, as the annals of the Church abundantly testify, been flows as well as ebbs; nevertheless, it cannot be contested that the signs of the Spirit's power have become fewer ever since Pentecostal days. While admitting this without reserve, it is a consolation to remember that the principles of the Spirit's working, the conditions for the manifestation of His activities, remain the same; and we can, therefore, gather for our edification most important lessons from these early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

We may then call attention, first of all, to the fact that the power of the Spirit came into the midst of this company in answer to prayer. Peter, with John, filled with the Holy Ghost, had boldly testified before the Sanhedrim of the resurrection of Christ, whom they had crucified, declared their guilt in setting at naught the Stone, which had in resurrection become the Head of the corner; and, moreover, the apostles courageously refused compliance, fearless of the threatening of the authorities, with the command "not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus." Avowing their responsibility to God, they said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Being let go, they went to their own company, and gave the account of what had taken place. With one accord they turned to God in prayer, committed the whole matter to Him, and besought Him to give the answer to the threatenings of men in increased power in testimony, and in healing, and "that signs and wonders may be done by [through] the name of Thy holy Child Jesus." The blessing sought came immediately, and "the place was shaken where they were assembled together." There are many divine reasons why there will not be now similar exhibitions of miraculous "signs and wonders"; but let us not for one moment doubt that, if prepared for its exercise, there might be power as real as in this remarkable instance. And there would be, and this continuously, if we could be found with one accord waiting, if any company could thus perseveringly wait, upon God. The first beginnings of spiritual power are seen in the increased realization of absolute dependence, and this again will express itself in continuing instant

in prayer. In such a case the Lord will work as surely through these waiting saints as through the Pentecostal company.

Condition of soul was the first thing vouchsafed—“They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.” This is an abiding principle in God’s ways with His people; and consequently their only concern should be to be in a state in which they can be used, vessels unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master’s use, prepared unto every good work. We may well challenge ourselves as to whether this has been our chief concern, whether oftentimes service and activity have not come before our fitness, our state; and whether, because we have been accustomed to a line of service, we have not frequently gone on, assuming that our condition was suitable. Why, the men of the world have periodical examinations of their machinery in factories to discover defects and to ascertain if it is fitted for its work. So should it be (and we are sure that it is so with the majority) with the Lord’s vessels, so that nothing may be allowed to impair their efficiency when called upon to be ready at His bidding. The gain, moreover, is immense when it is perceived that the right state can only be formed in the Spirit, and that He is the only power for service. The temptation abounds on every hand because the practice is so common to depend upon human means, human influences, the help and countenance of the world in some shape or other, that we grieve the Holy Spirit and limit His energy. That He is the only qualification and power for the Lord’s work is an accepted doctrine; but in practice, as may be everywhere seen,

the doctrine is sadly overlooked, if not denied. We have much need, therefore, to weigh the statement that this company were all filled with the Holy Ghost, as the divine response to their prayers.

The next thing to be observed is that, as a consequence of being thus filled, they spake the word of God with boldness. There is the same connection in 2 Timothy, though it is the other side of the subject. Timothy was timid, and had evidently been shrinking from the cross connected with the testimony; but Paul reminded him that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear [cowardice]; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." To be controlled by the Holy Spirit is, in other words, to be empowered for service. There may be a natural courage in facing difficulties; but when the servant is governed by the Holy Ghost, be he naturally the most timid of men, he will, superior to fear, dare any difficulty or danger. It has thus often been the case that timid women and children have made the most undaunted of martyrs. Courage begotten of the fulness of the indwelling Spirit quails indeed before no foe, and the reason is that the enemy is then measured not by the resources of the vessel, but rather by the omnipotence of Him who deigns to commission and to employ it. The lesson is then learnt which was taught to Joshua, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua i. 9.) If we would, therefore, be divinely wise, as well as divinely qualified for whatever the Lord gives us to do, we shall seek

it all, and seek it alone, in the power of the Holy Ghost. There is no truth more plainly taught in the Scriptures, and none in practice more readily forgotten.

Unity, unity in manifestation, is the next effect produced: "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul"; and thus, as already remarked, the Lord's desire for His people, that they all might be one, was for the moment answered. Blessed spectacle, we might well say, surrounded as we are, on every side, with schisms, divisions, and schools of opinion. And it is good to consider it, even though we are rebuked and humbled by our failure. Nor does the sorrow spring solely, nor even chiefly, from the divisions of Christendom, but it is caused most of all from the state of those who profess to have received the light of the mystery of the one body of Christ. The root, then, of all discords in the Church of God is the lack of the Spirit's power. Where He works unhinderedly in any company of saints, because ungrieved, there must be unity—unity in feeling, unity in thought and judgment, and unity in display. (See 1 Cor. i. 10, Ephes. iv. 1-3, Philippians ii. 1-4, &c.) When once we apprehend this we shall be humbled to the dust at the occurrence of the least difference or strife amongst our fellow-believers; and if we ourselves should be in any wise at variance with our brethren, we shall spare no pains to effect a reconciliation, in order that we may not be obstacles to the blessed activities of the Holy Spirit. Let it, then, be again earnestly affirmed that the lack of enjoyed unity in any company is due to the absence of the power of the Holy Ghost.

Following upon unity there is fellowship, here of a special kind, but the principle remains. For if the hearts of these Pentecostal saints had been so drawn out in love one towards another that self had practically disappeared (for "neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own"), it could only be the consequence of their common enjoyment of the love of Christ. As the Lord Himself said: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 34, 35.) And where is it that we learn the character of the Lord's love to His own? It is, as repeated again and again in Scripture, in His death; and hence it is that, as often remarked, the Lord's Supper is the ground of Christian fellowship. There are thus four elements in the fellowship of saints: the Lord Himself is its bond, His supper is its ground, the Holy Ghost is the power for its enjoyment, and love one to another is its expression. The question may be put whether it may still be realized? The Lord's own words quoted above show that it may be entered into in a very simple way. We say a "simple way"; but let it not be forgotten that there are two indispensable conditions for its enjoyment—first, that we possess an ungrieved Spirit, and secondly, that we love one another fervently, for it is love that knits us together (Colossians ii. 2), and which, in its expression, becomes our testimony in the world. Meeting and breaking bread together is not necessarily fellowship, for its home circle is the light, as God is in the light; and the atmosphere of that circle is love and nothing but love. (See 1 John i. 7 and iv. 11, 12.)

Two other things are mentioned. The first is that with great power the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and the second is that great grace was upon them all—two things of immense importance. From the first we learn that the power seen in the apostles' testimony was connected with, we might say, the result of the state of the assembly. To seek special servants, and to have special prayer meetings for the gospel, may be excellent things; but while God may sovereignly use His word for the moment, the *continuous* power of the testimony will ever depend upon the state of God's people whence it proceeds. We read accordingly in Acts ix. that the assemblies, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied. By the words, "and great grace was upon them all," we understand that God's favour manifestly rested upon His people, and in such a way that those outside could acknowledge it. (See chapter v. 13.) What varied and what searching instruction is thus conveyed to us! And how we need, in a day like this, to ponder upon it in the presence of God! May the opened ear and heart be vouchsafed to us, that we may attentively listen to the voice of this divine record!

FORGIVENESS OF SINS.

"I WRITE to you, children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John ii. 12, N.T.), is language addressed to the whole family of God, whether little children, young men, or fathers; and it is of all importance to be divinely established in this fundamental truth of Christianity, as without the

knowledge of forgiveness of sins one cannot be said to have started on the Christian course at all.

It is, therefore, with the desire to draw the attention of young believers, or those who may be anxious, to a few of the salient points in Scripture, in connection with the forgiveness of sins, that these few lines are written, although one is conscious that in doing so one can do little more than put together in a simple way for the young that which has been written and spoken of much more fully by others.

The first thing we may consider, and that which is the foundation of all, is **THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD**, as described in Romans iii. 25, 26, where, speaking of the Lord Jesus, the apostle writes, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Here we have the divine basis upon which God can bestow pardon upon all who believe in the Lord Jesus. From Romans i. 18 to chapter iii. 20 man's condition before God is developed. The Gentiles had sunk lower than the brute creation; the philosophers who condemned others practised the same things themselves; and the Jews, who had an outward link with Jehovah, and special privileges as His people, had behaved so inconsistently that the name of God was blasphemed amongst the Gentiles through them. Thus the Spirit of God sums up not only what man has done, but what man is before God; the law being introduced that every mouth might be stopped, and the whole world be under judgment to God.

On the ground of responsibility all was lost; man had been weighed in the balances and found wanting, and death, as the judgment of God, lay upon him. But now God acts in sovereign grace from His own side—coming into this world of ruin and sin and death as a Saviour-God, not demanding anything from man, but drawing near in the fullest grace to those who were sunk in sin and misery. Therefore it becomes a divine necessity that God, acting in grace towards such a world, must declare His righteousness; and this He has done in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom He has set forth a Mercy-seat—a Mercy-seat established in blood—the witness of death accomplished, of a life poured out under the judgment of God. This grace is exercised, not through judgment stayed, but through judgment executed. Death as the judgment of God lay upon man. Christ as man has been in death, and thus, in laying down His spotless, unforfeited life, He ended in death for God the life to which, *in us*, sin attached. In Christ made sin God condemned sin in the flesh, so that, as another has said, “The man under judgment has gone in judgment.” Every question of righteousness has been divinely settled in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the history of man in the flesh ended, sin removed from under the eye of God, and the sins of believers borne and put away. Thus God’s righteousness has been declared in the passing by of the sins of Old Testament saints, and in the justification now of all who believe in Jesus; and not only so, but in the very depths of death itself all the love of the heart of God has been revealed. None can challenge the absolute righteousness of God’s grace. The full judgment due

to man has been borne by Man, and the heart of God told out at the very moment when that judgment was borne. Thus the death of our blessed Lord is the divine basis upon which God can justify, and that too through which all His counsels can be carried out.

Having, therefore, seen God's character vindicated, and His love revealed in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may now consider a second important truth, which we find in Romans iv., namely, **THE POWER OF GOD** as displayed in **RESURRECTION**. Speaking of righteousness being imputed to Abraham, the apostle adds, in verses 24 and 25, that it was not written for his sake alone, "but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

We see, then, in Romans iv. that the point is not death, but resurrection; and resurrection, as has often been said, is the great demonstration of the power of God, of complete victory over every enemy. Christ, the seed of the woman, has bruised the serpent's head in death, has through death annulled him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. The battle-field has been swept of every foe, and Christ stands in resurrection glory in all the triumphs of victory. And here in Romans iv. He is presented as having been set there by God. The One who went into death for the glory of God has been brought out of death by the power of God. The God who delivered Him for our offences has raised Him for our justification. Could proof be greater of how completely the righteous claims of

God were met in death by the Lord Jesus? Therefore the Spirit of God, in Romans iv., presents the *God of resurrection* as the Object of faith, the God in whom Abraham believed; for if God has closed the history of man after the flesh in death, He has begun a new order of things in divine power in resurrection in Christ, the Man of His pleasure. Thank God! there is a Man out of death, and that Man the One "who was delivered for our offences," "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree," the One upon whom Jehovah hath laid the iniquity of us all. If we look back in simple faith and see Christ charged with our offences on the cross, there bearing all the judgment due to us, it is our privilege and joy now to see Him raised by God for our justification, and to know that, if He is clear of death and judgment, He is clear on our account as the Representative of His people.

Death and judgment never lay upon Him personally; but taking our place in grace, He was in death and under judgment, therefore His clearance is ours. He was raised *for our justification*. Justification is a legal term, and has the sense of clearance; and while of course including the thought of forgiveness, it goes further. The question in Romans viii. 33, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" has its divine answer in "It is God that justifieth." We are cleared from every charge in the clearance of Christ.

On the cross Christ was charged with all that we could be charged with; there all the sins of His people were borne; there all that we were morally as children of Adam was judicially ended in death.

But now Christ is clear of death and judgment; and the measure of His clearance is the measure of the clearance of every believer; and it is not merely that God has now nothing against us, but that righteousness is reckoned to us—Christ is made unto us righteousness. It is not *in us*, but *in Christ* that the truth of justification is set forth. We can never understand justification by looking at ourselves, or at one another; it is apprehended on the principle of faith, that is, faith in contrast to works. Not that there is any intrinsic value in faith, but faith lays hold of God in that which He has accomplished; and we see by faith that God, in the putting forth of His power in raising Christ from the dead, has displayed *in Christ*, thus raised, the measure of *our* justification, our clearance from every charge, as well as, we may add, our deliverance from every foe.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Rom. v. 1.) God, acting in divine righteousness, is for us, having removed, in the death of Christ, everything that was against us. Peace with God is the necessary consequence of apprehending Him thus by faith in that which He has done for His own glory and our blessing. And as it rests entirely upon what God has wrought through Christ, it is a settled, abiding peace, unaffected by feelings, experience, or anything in us. Moreover, it is “*through Jesus Christ our Lord.*” All the grace of God is administered through Christ our Lord. As in the famine in Egypt all who came to Pharaoh were told to “go unto Joseph,” so now all who come to God must come through the Lord Jesus. “For there is none other name under heaven given among men,

whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) So too in Acts xiii. 38, 39, we find the apostle, having spoken of the death and resurrection of Christ, proclaims that "*through* this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and *by Him* all that believe are justified from all things." And in Romans v. we find that blessing after blessing is described as coming to us "through," "by," or "in" Christ Jesus. He has fought the fight, He has gained the victory, He has glorified God; and now, as raised and glorified, all the blessings which God has for man, as the result of Christ's victory, are administered by God through Christ as Lord.

The last point I would notice, in concluding, is the condition upon which forgiveness of sins can be known and enjoyed. We have already seen that the death of Christ is the righteous basis upon which God can bestow it, and that the resurrection of Christ is the great display of His power, and of victory over every enemy. As also that through Christ as Lord all blessings are administered. And so far all is on God's side. But many have not the joy of forgiveness through not apprehending that which Psalm xxxii. would teach, from which Rom. iv. 6, 7, 8, is quoted. In Romans iv. we have the principle of justification by faith established in Abraham; and in David we have an example of one who got blessing on that principle. And David's own words in Psalm xxxii. are quoted to prove it. Turning back then to the Psalm, we see that, in order to be in the joy of forgiveness, there must be *confession to God*. It cannot be too strongly pressed that we must get forgiveness *from God*, if we are to be really established in grace before Him.

One has little doubt that the lack of spiritual

growth in many souls is due to the fact that they have never been alone with God about their sins. They have, it may be, been aroused at a gospel meeting, and have confessed *to the preacher* what sinners they feel themselves to be, and have trusted too in the finished work of Christ, and will assuredly never perish; they may even have the knowledge of forgiveness through some precious verse of Scripture. But it is one thing to get the knowledge of forgiveness from a text of Scripture, and quite another to be in the presence of God in confession, and to receive, it may be, the same text as the word of His mouth.

We see therefore in the Psalm that so long as David kept silent God's hand was pressing upon him, in order that the silence might be broken by confession; and when at length that silence is broken, in verse 5, we see it is with God he has to do. "I acknowledged my sin *unto Thee*, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions *unto the Lord*; and *Thou* forgavest the iniquity of my sin." The result, therefore, of his being with God in confession, and getting pardon from God, is that he has the joy of forgiveness, and is in the sense of the favour of the One who has pardoned him.

Again, if we turn to 1 John i. 9 we read, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Taking our place in confession before God, telling out all that our consciences take cognizance of as sinful, He pardons, and not only so, but cleanses us from all unrighteousness—the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, which witnesses of death accomplished, being the righteous ground upon which He can do so. And this

ninth verse is an abstract statement of wide application, which would embrace those coming as sinners to God through Christ at the first, upon whom He bestows His eternal forgiveness as a Saviour-God. And also if, alas! we fail and grieve Him after our conversion, upon taking our place before Him in self-judgment and confession we receive His pardon, not now as sinners coming to the Saviour, but as those who are, through grace, in relationship with Him. To quote from another, "If it is our first coming to God, it is forgiveness, it is in the full and absolute sense. I am forgiven with God: He remembers my sins no more. If it is subsequent failure honesty of heart always confesses; then it is forgiveness as regards the government of God, and the present condition and relationship of my soul with Him."

We live in superficial days, in which, alas! shallow conversions are by no means uncommon; and the great need is for souls to *get to God*, like the Thessalonians, who "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." Let us remember that "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

We would do well to ask our own hearts, Have we stopped short, contented with a mere mental peace, or have we been BROUGHT TO GOD? L. H. F.

I KNOW well how few know deliverance; but it is a great thing to know that I, a poor worm, should be before God and the Father in the same acceptance and favour that Christ is, loved even as He is loved. But it is the greatness of infinite love.

MARY'S VISIT TO ELIZABETH.

WHENEVER there is a work of grace in souls they are drawn together in the bonds of divine love. So was it with Mary and Elizabeth. Gabriel had revealed to Mary that God had also visited her cousin Elizabeth, and with the sense of what was to be accomplished through herself, whether she understood or not the full import of the communication she had received, she had been made to feel that there was one friend to whom she could pour out her soul. Accordingly she "arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth."

Burdened with her tidings—tidings which told, moreover, of God's faithfulness to His word, and of His unquenchable love to His people—it could not be otherwise than that she should go "in haste." And what thoughts would fill her adoring heart as she sped on her mission! As one of the holy women of Judah, she well knew the scriptures that spake of the coming King and the glory of His kingdom. Such scriptures, for example, as, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when

the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem" (Isaiah lii. 7-9); or again, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee." (Zechariah ix. 9.) The very words the angel had employed could not fail to remind her of these glorious predictions, and to cause her heart to overflow with praise in that she, a humble virgin, should be connected with their fulfilment.

That her visit to Elizabeth was of the Lord is seen from the greeting she received—a greeting, moreover, which must have, in a remarkable manner, confirmed her faith. As soon as Elizabeth heard the salutation of her kinswoman she was reminded of her own condition, and at the same time, filled with the Holy Ghost, she was inspired to proclaim the blessedness of the one whom the Lord had so distinguished by His grace. "She spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

Before considering Mary's response to Elizabeth, a few observations may be made upon these remarkable words. It will be at once observed that Elizabeth, as "filled with the Holy Ghost," is in entire communion with the mind of God as to Mary. Gabriel had said to her, "Blessed art thou among women," and Elizabeth

now says, "Blessed art thou among women," adding, "and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." With her eyes opened by the power of God, she saw as God saw, and pronounces His own estimate upon the one He had chosen for this singular favour. As filled with the Spirit, moreover, she in meekness and humility acknowledged the exaltation of Mary by the grace of God. "And whence," she proceeded, "is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" Herself the object of the divine favour, she yet took the lowest place before the one who was to become the mother of her Lord.

Let the instruction sink deeply into our hearts, that when the Spirit of God is working in souls all envy, strife, and jealousy are banished. Love then flows out unhinderedly, and humility is the fruit of love. Then, after describing the effect upon her of Mary's salutation, she proclaimed a third character of blessedness. Mary was blessed as the object of God's sovereign favour, she was blessed as the vessel for the incarnation of our Lord, and she was blessed on account of her faith—faith which surmounted all obstacles, and reposed upon the almighty power of God. Like Abraham, she staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but "found strength in faith," giving glory to God. She had thus unflinchingly laid hold of God's word, unhesitatingly concluding that what He had promised He would certainly perform. She honoured God in this way, and now she was met with a divine assurance, through the lips of Elizabeth, that there should be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.

THE MAGNIFICAT.*

Let these words of Mary be given in their entirety, that the reader may perceive more fully their divine meaning and beauty :—

“ My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden :
For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me
blessed.
For He that is mighty hath done to me great things ;
And holy is His name.
And His mercy is on them that fear Him
From generation to generation.
He hath shewed strength with His arm ;
He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their
hearts.
He hath put down the mighty from their seats,
And exalted them of low degree.
He hath filled the hungry with good things ;
And the rich He hath sent empty away.
He hath holpen His servant Israel,
In remembrance of His mercy ;
As He spake to our fathers,
To Abraham, and to his seed for ever.”

It has been said by a well-known writer that “ it is remarkable that we are not told that Mary was full of the Holy Ghost. It appears to me,” the writer proceeds, “ that this is an honourable distinction for her. The Holy Ghost visited Elizabeth and Zacharias in an exceptional manner. But, although we cannot doubt that Mary was under the influence of the Spirit of

* This is a name which was attached to Mary's utterance in the early age of the Church—from the Latin word to magnify.

God, it was a more inward effect, more connected with her own faith, with her piety, with the more habitual relations of her heart with God (that were formed by this faith, and by this piety), and which consequently expressed itself more as her own sentiments. It is thankfulness for the grace conferred on her, the lowly one, and that in connection with the hopes and blessing of Israel." These remarks will help us in our consideration of this striking song of praise—a song which has been well described as "the proper celebration of Israel's joy in the gift of Christ." For while it is the utterance of the feelings which had been produced in Mary's heart by the Holy Ghost, and feelings which were suited and responsive to the distinguishing grace bestowed upon her, Mary herself was lost, so to speak, in her being a type of Israel. (See verse 54.)

As may be seen at a glance, the song is Jewish in its character; that is, it does not go beyond Abraham and his seed. In this respect it has often been compared with that of Hannah, for she also, without going back as Mary did to God's promises to Abraham, surveys the whole of His dealings with His people, and triumphantly anticipates their complete deliverance, through Jehovah's intervention, as she says, "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to pieces; out of heaven He shall thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and He shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His Anointed." Mary, on the other hand, regards the deliverance as already effected—effected in the One who was about to be born—and thus she says that "God has holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance

of His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever."

Two things will not fail to arrest the attention in Mary's song. First, that she ascribes everything to God; and that, taking the place of nothingness, she celebrates His grace. Concerning these points we cannot refrain from citing the following words, "She acknowledges God her Saviour in the grace that has filled her with such joy; whilst, at the same time, she owns her utter littleness. For whatever might be the holiness of the instrument that God might employ—and that was found really in Mary—yet she was only great so long as she hid herself, for then God was everything. By making something of herself she would have lost her place; but this she did not. God kept her, in order that His grace might be fully manifested." May we all give heed to this blessed instruction, inasmuch as it is impossible that grace can have its full sway in our souls if we are not in our true place of nothingness before God.

Entering into these thoughts, the reader will readily understand the language of this song of praise. Whenever there is a real work of the Spirit of God in the souls of His people, their hearts ascend to the source whence their blessing has come. So with Mary; her first thought is the Lord who had visited her with such ineffable grace. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Her individuality was merged for the moment, under the mighty action of the Holy Ghost, in Israel, and thus she rejoices in Israel's God and Saviour. It is true that she speaks of herself in the next verse, and says that God has regarded the low estate of His hand-

maiden (bondswoman), and that all generations will henceforth call her blessed; but even so it is only as the chosen instrument of the blessing which was coming upon Israel. It was the thought of Israel's salvation out of their low estate which filled her soul when she said, "He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name." For she immediately adds, "And His mercy is on them that fear Him from generation to generation," showing, moreover, that it was God's elect Israel that occupied her mind—the Israel that Balaam was constrained to speak of when he said God did not behold iniquity in Jacob nor see perverseness in Israel—the Israel, in a word, of God's purpose and according to His thoughts.

The next three verses set forth the principles of God's actings in grace, and the condition of soul requisite for its reception. The proud in the imagination of their hearts, the mighty on their thrones, and the rich, the self-sufficient, cannot stand before a holy God in judgment. It is to the poor that the gospel is ever preached; and thus it is those of low degree whom God exalts, and the hungry whom He fills with good things. The Lord Himself proclaimed the same lesson when He said, "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh . . ."; and then, turning to the other side, "Woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep." (Luke vi. 20-26.) Far and wide let these solemn words run—encouragement and comfort to the poor, the suffering, and

afflicted people of God, and as loud warnings to those who are seeking their satisfaction and exaltation in this world.

Mary concludes her song with the language already referred to, "He hath holpen His servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy; as He spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever." Faith is the "substantiating" of things hoped for, and Mary at this moment, dreary as were the spaces that Israel would have to traverse before these words were fulfilled, surveyed the accomplishment of all God's purposes of grace for His earthly people. Indeed, everything was both secured and established in the person of Him who was about to be born into this world, even as the angels in their praises say in the next chapter, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will [pleasure or delight] in men."

For three months Mary continued with her aged* kinswoman, and then returned to her own house. Scripture draws the veil over the communings of these holy women; but we may be sure that they were helpers of one another's faith and joy in the Lord. The visit ended, Mary went back to her home, "to follow humbly her own path, that the purposes of God may be accomplished." Meanwhile, that home was the one spot on earth that attracted and centred the attention of heaven.

It is only in loving one another that believers realize and express their unity; for then their hearts are knit together in love.

* She, with her husband, was well stricken in years.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

“IN connection with your interesting annotation on Micah vi., in the current number of your magazine, I send you a note from Dr. P——’s *Minor Prophets*, which I think explains the words ‘from Shittim to Gilgal,’ which is one of the difficulties of the passage, and on which you do not touch.

““*From Shittim to Gilgal.*” The words are separated by the Hebrew accent from what went before. It is then probably said in concise energy for “Remember too from Shittim to Gilgal”; *i.e.*, all the great works of God *from Shittim*, the last encampment of Israel out of the promised land, where they so sinned in Baal-Peor, *unto Gilgal*, the first in the promised land, which they entered by miracle, where the ark rested amid the victories given them, where the covenant was renewed, and the reproach of Egypt rolled away. “Remember all, from your own deep sin and rebellion to the deep mercy of God, that ye may know the *righteousnesses* of Jehovah.”’

“The connection of Balaam with Gilgal, as in the punctuation of our version, is inexplicable, as he never had to do with that place. The revisers evidently understood it in this way too, although in *our* new translation it is not clear.

“Ever yours affectionately in Christ,

“C. E. H. W.”

II.

"I am sending you a few thoughts on the children in Isaiah vii. The cavils of an open sceptic led me to look closely into the difficulty, with this result:—

"It seems to me that verses 13, 14, 15 must be taken together, that they are not spoken to Ahaz (though he may have heard them as one of the house of David), and they do not refer to the circumstances of that time. The wicked king Ahaz has rejected God's gracious offer of a sign, under the pious pretext it would be tempting God. Jehovah then turns from him, and speaks to the *house of David*. He goes beyond the present trouble, really a small matter, and gives in that and the two following chapters a magnificent promise of the coming of Immanuel, and what He would accomplish in due time. I think this is clear from the language. Verse 11 is spoken to Ahaz — 'Ask thee.' He refuses. Then the house of David is addressed, verses 13 and 14, '*Ye, you, ye, you,*' in the plural. In verses 16 and 17 Ahaz is again addressed, '*Thou, thee, thy,*' singular. Thus verses 16 and 17 contain a different prophecy to verses 13, 14, 15; and 'the child,' verse 16, is not the same as 'the son' of verse 14.

"I would suggest that 'the child,' verse 16, is either Shear-jashub, who was with Isaiah at the time, and may have been an infant, or else Maher-shalal-hash-baz, chapter viii., whose remarkable birth had to do with the then present crisis.

"This explanation seems to me to meet the difficulty. I have not seen it elsewhere, and should be glad to know your thoughts on it.

J. G. D."

III.

PSALM lxxviii. 18.

An authoritative interpretation of the first part of this scripture is given by the apostle in Ephesians iv. There can be no doubt, therefore, that it applies to the exaltation of Christ at the right hand of God, and the apostle explicitly identifies the One who ascended with Him who descended into the lower parts of the earth. One difference, however, should be noted. In the Psalm it is given in our translation, "Thou hast received gifts for men." In Ephesians it is, "He . . . gave gifts unto men," and verse 11 explains the meaning of this. In fact, the rendering of the Psalm is inaccurate, though translators seldom agree in what they propose to substitute. The Revised Version, for example, has "among [instead of "for"] men," another gives "on account of man," and a third "in the Man." If the last be adopted (and we think it should be), it refers to the fact that Christ as Man glorified received the gifts from the Father to bestow for the perfecting of the saints. The second affords a very intelligible significance, but the rendering of the Revised Version is hopelessly confused. Taking, then, the one we prefer, we learn that through His death the Lord triumphed over the whole of Satan's power (compare Hebrews ii. 14, 15; 2 Timothy i. 10), and thus that, when He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive (led that captive which had held men in captivity), and that having received the gifts in Himself as the Man of God's purpose, He gave them unto men, and consequently apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are the tokens of His victory, as well as evidence of His love to and care for the

assembly. It may be also observed that the apostle only takes the part of scripture which could be applied to Christ and the Church. The last clause, "Yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell [among] them," or, as one translator has it, "That the Lord God might have a dwelling," obviously has Israel in view. The names of God here used—Jah Elohim—show us this; and we thus learn that the Psalm looks onward, prophetically, to the time when, after all their rebelliousness, Israel will be restored in blessing under the reign of their glorious Messiah, and when Jehovah Elohim will once more, and in a more perfect way, dwell in their midst in the temple which "the Man whose name is the branch" shall build. (Zechariah vi. 12, 13.) How wonderful is the Word of God! And what fulness of divine wisdom and glory does it contain!

THE SCRIPTURES.

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

J. N. D.

THE FATHER'S LOVE.

"For the Father Himself loveth you."—JOHN xvi. 27.

O GOD, our Father, we are Thine ;
 Thou gav'st Thy Son that we
 Might, in the circle of Thy love,
 Adore and worship Thee.

E'en worship Thee in Spirit now,
 And sing Thy praises here ;
 Christ leads, Himself, our song of praise,
 Which greets Thine holy ear.

He, too, Thy Name to us declares,
 E'en His "compassions" here ;
 Within the "Holiest of all"
 The Father's love we share.

Blest love divine the Father's is,
 An ocean without bound ;
 In this vast ocean, Lord, with Thee
 The Father's praise we sound.

Oh, blessed Lord ! 't is ours with Thee
 To share the Father's love
 Through time and all "eternity,"
 E'en here and heaven above.

S. L.

To be content with the lowest place, if God has given it us, is the same renunciation of self as to labour in the highest: the secret of each is that Christ is everything and ourselves nothing.

NEW WINE AND OLD BOTTLES.

GALATIANS ii.-iv.

FROM the testimony of the Lord Himself we learn that "no man also having drunk old wine straightway desireth new: for he saith, The old is better." The reason is that the "old" suits the taste of man as man better than the new; and the consequence is that from the days of the apostles until the present moment the attempt has been made to adulterate the new wine of grace by putting it into the old bottles of legality and Judaism. All the corruptions of Christendom, certainly the Galatian state of things which everywhere prevails, may be traced back to this instrumental means. The natural heart of man does not love grace, because grace makes everything of God and nothing of man. As the apostle has written, "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Paul had proclaimed this gospel to the Galatians, and he had declared that the man who had sinned had come up before God for judgment in the death of Christ, and had disappeared from His eye for ever. But no sooner had the apostle departed to other fields of service than teachers of another sort appeared and sought to deny this foundation truth by the revival of Judaism; and thus, turning to another gospel, they perverted the gospel of Christ. To add to the difficulty, certain who "came from James" obtained such

influence over Peter that he was tempted to follow in the same path, as also Barnabas and "the other Jews," so that the whole truth of Christianity was endangered by their unfaithfulness.

To meet these corrupting tendencies, Paul, under the powerful action of the Holy Ghost, was roused to expose and to protest with intense energy against the teaching and practice which were subverting the foundations which he had laid in the souls of these believers. Or, to recur to the illustration of the old bottles, he took them up one by one and broke them before their eyes. In a series of rapid contrasts, he points out that the new wine of grace cannot be confined in the old bottles, that the new thing which God had brought to light in the resurrection of Christ, for the accomplishment of His eternal purposes, had for ever displaced the old, and that therefore to revive the old was to destroy the new. We shall do well to lay this instruction to heart; for it is not only in the open and avowed Judaism of Christendom that the same evils may be seen, but the tendencies, out of which these have sprung, may be discovered in our own hearts. We propose, therefore, without going into the details of the apostle's argument, to point out what the old bottles were among the Galatian saints, and how the apostle dealt with them, that these believers amongst whom he had laboured might be delivered from them, and still retain the truth of the grace of God in all its lustre and purity.

The first contrast drawn by Paul may be perceived in his controversy with Peter. In ceasing to eat with

the Gentiles, and confining himself to those "of the circumcision," Peter was not only unfaithful to the light he had formerly received from God (Acts x. 28), but he was also going back to the ground of the first man, and thus denying Christianity. For to maintain the superiority of the Jew, and to imply that he possessed a particular sanctity and peculiar privileges, was really to revive the man in the flesh, and to ignore the blessed fact, as Paul afterwards points out, that in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (creation). Hence it was that the apostle met this retrogression on the part of Peter with such uncompromising sternness, and declared that, as far as he himself was concerned, he through the law was dead to the law that he might live unto God; that he was crucified with Christ, and consequently that he was no longer a Jew, inasmuch as all that he was, as to his former status, had gone from *his* eyes, as well as from before God, in the cross of Christ. Almost with vehemence he thus broke the old bottle which Peter and those with him were dangling before the saints, and tempting them to revive the man who had for ever been dealt with in the death of the Lord Jesus. He thus breaks out with the cry, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" To learn the blessed significance of this aspect of the death of Christ is to find deliverance from all that is of the man here, and to discover the pathway to the sphere of the new man, "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian,

Scythian, bond nor free : but Christ is all [everything], and in all." (Colossians ii. 11.)

If this truth be apprehended the key is possessed to all the subsequent argument of the apostle. It will not, therefore, be necessary to explain the character of each of his contrasts, as it will suffice to indicate them and to point out their general bearing upon our subject. It may be seen, then, that the next contrast is between the Spirit and the flesh. There is ever-abiding and absolute antagonism between these, as Paul shows in chapter v. And yet—and this is the remarkable feature of the case—these Galatians were really reviving the flesh by their acceptance of Jewish teachings, and, at the same time, getting off the ground of Christianity. Paul leads them back to Abraham instead of Moses, to justification by, or on the principle of, faith, instead of works, to the promises, to grace instead of law. So then, he says, "They which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham"; and also, "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (vv. 9-14.) He had before said that "if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain"; and now he, in reply to his own question, "Is the law then against the promises of God?" says, "If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe." Seeking to revive the distinctions of Judaism, these Galatian saints were altogether abandoning grace, and

the truth of the Holy Spirit, and Christ was "become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." (Chap. v. 4.) This is a solemn word, and one which needs to be weighed by all who are treading in the footsteps of the Galatians.

There are several more contrasts to which attention may be called before adding some words of application. "The heir [Paul explains], as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all"; and he adds, "Even so we (Jews), when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world" (and it was to this bondage the Galatians were returning). But now, since God had sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, they had received the adoption of sons. And because they were sons, God had sent forth the Spirit of His Son into their hearts, crying, Abba, Father. They were therefore no longer servants (bondsmen), but sons; and if sons, heirs of God through Christ. What folly, therefore, to renounce their sonship, together with its liberty, privileges, and prospects, and to become again entangled with the yoke of bondage! Then, moreover, he contrasts the two covenants, the new and the old; Jerusalem above, which is our mother, with Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children; and lastly Isaac with Ishmael. In every possible way the apostle thus exposed the foolishness of turning back to the old forms, and the legal system, of Judaism; and as he does so, he proclaims, with no uncertain tones, that to combine the two, Judaism and

Christianity, is to destroy the latter. The old bottles must not on this account be preserved on any pretext whatever, but must be wholly and entirely refused, if the truth of grace is to be maintained in the soul and in testimony.

In order to resist the constant wiles of Satan in these directions, it is important to see that the antidote to the danger is found in the cross of Christ, and in what has been there effected for God. It has already been adverted to, but it may once more be stated, that a more distinct impression may be left upon our souls. Judaism, the law and its rites, were of God, divinely ordained, but ordained as His standard for, the expression of His claims upon, man in the flesh. Hence Paul teaches us that he "had not known sin, but by the law." Being God's standard, it became man's test, and it proved him to be a sinner and a transgressor, to be both guilty and lost, for under law all had sinned and come short of the glory of God. On the ground of law then man's condition was hopeless—he was lost; but what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. Both the man, who had been demonstrated to be lost under the law, and his sins, have been dealt with in the death of Christ, who bore all the judgment that lay upon us to the satisfaction of God, yea, glorified Him in all that He is by His one sacrifice. It is in Christ therefore—Christ risen and glorified, the Second Man out of heaven, the Only Man before the eye of God that all our hope lies; and hence if we turn back to law in any of its

specious forms, we in reality turn our backs upon Christ, the Man of God's purpose, and recognize the first man who is of the earth earthy, who has disappeared for God under His just judgment. This was the conflict waged in Galatia, and which needs to be waged everywhere to-day. The question is simple. Is it law or grace? Is it Adam or Christ? Let us hear then the words of the apostle: "Ye are all the children [sons] of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

DEAD AND RISEN WITH CHRIST.

I BEGIN by stating that no one is in power for Christ here who does not come from Him at the other side of Jordan.

I do not mean that each one really knows all that is involved in having crossed over, that is, that they have so fully entered into what it is to have died with Christ experimentally, that they are severed from everything in this scene by His death; but I say that when we are established in grace, and are not only in peace with God but in deliverance, knowing that we are in Christ before Him, "the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus" making me "free from the law of sin and death," we begin to realize that this world is a wilderness, and that our life is not here.

Now this is a great moment in our history. Nothing

here can conduce to our life in Christ: it is only by the Spirit we can enjoy it, or enjoy Him where He is. I admit it is very faintly and feebly we do so as a rule, but if it is so precious and valuable when we know it even a little, how much more so when we know it in its fulness. At any rate I think it is of deep moment that each of us should experience that we have died to things here, and that we are alive to His things in His life. There is no other road to heaven but through the wilderness, and when we have learned by the Spirit of God dwelling in us that He is our life in the sphere where He now is, it is our joy and strength to taste even a little that things here are closed to us; but being severed by association with Himself from a scene where He is not, we enter a scene where everything is according to Him, and though we have to resume the links here, we do so as knowing something of the scene beyond, which is properly ours through His grace.

First, as is typified in the Red Sea, we are freed from the judgment of God on us, and rejoice in the Saviour raised from the dead. Then we begin our journey according to God's appointment. There is nothing for us in the wilderness but Marah and manna; Marah—bitter water. We are free of the judgment of death, but we have to accept death, we are still in the mortal body, the body of death, and we have to learn in our connection with this world that we have no living link with it; but death becomes sweet to us because Christ has gone through it, and as we are dependent on Him, we receive of His grace, and walk here according to His pleasure. But often it is a long and painful exercise before we learn (as in Numbers xxi.) that all is ruin here and in us also, but

that as risen with Christ our life is with Him outside of it all, and the Holy Ghost is in us; then the one thought is not how to get on in the world which has become to us the wilderness, *but how to live with Christ outside it.* We learn, as in the Epistle to the Colossians, that we have "died with Christ from the rudiments of the world," the reproach of Egypt is rolled off "in putting off the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ"—then, as risen with Him, we are over Jordan; and a new scene, the sphere of His life, opens before us, it is then we know Him as Head, and are able to carry out His pleasure in relation to His interests here. We do not enjoy union till we know Him as Head, hence, as I said at the beginning, no one is in power until he knows that he is over Jordan with Christ: he has to return here, for he has to work here, but he gets his support and his direction from the Lord where He is.

Now, as we are in service for the Lord, we find it is only as we walk practically "bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus," that the life of Jesus is manifested here. God, in His discipline, allows trials to help to cut us off from attractions here, that we might be efficient servants for Him. "We who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh." This is more our daily path here; our enjoyment with Christ over Jordan is in the Spirit; the former is more connected with our walk.

The Lord give us all to realize more the blessedness of being with Him where He is! We lose nothing by being severed from present things, which only the mortal man could enjoy, for we are brought into the

things which Christ enjoys, which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." J. B. S.

BEGINNING, CONTINUING, FINISHING.

THERE are four cases of beginning recorded in the Gospel of Luke that I would dwell on for a little. The first is in chapter xv. 14: "He began to be in want"—the experience sooner or later of every sinner. Whether it ever ceases or continues eternally depends on whether he yields to the goodness of God that leads him to repentance. His resources are exhausted, his sinful pleasures have been only for a season, he has come to his wits' end—friends, goods, character, all gone, and as far as he is concerned there is no hope; he is on the down-grade, and with accelerating velocity he will be landed in eternal doom, where he will want and want for ever. How blessed to be arrested in time by the voice of mercy, to hear the call, even to the vilest prodigal, "Return," "Come unto Me," and to find the arm of love and almighty power stretched out to deliver. Let him only arise, and with a contrite heart return to his Father, he will receive more than he dare ask or think, and find *God for him*, and a place for him in the Father's heart and in the Father's house. This blessed parable does not tell us how all this is accomplished in righteousness; we turn elsewhere to learn that—how Christ suffered, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God, and how the

forgiveness of sins and eternal blessing are for *His* sake and in Him. "He began to be in want," a blessed beginning when it casts us on the boundless love and infinite resources of the God of all grace. Sometimes it is the result of the operation of His own moral laws that produce the result—what we sow we reap; and sometimes it is the more direct intervention in love of His own hand, stripping, bringing low, as illustrated by these striking lines:—

"Dear Lord, I thankfully kiss the hand
 That gently stripped me bare,
 And laid me on Thy tender breast,
 To lose my sorrow there :
 'T was anguish when earth's cup was spilled,
 But now with Thee 't is overfilled ;
 For, Jesus, Thou art *more* to me
 Than all earth's brimming cups could be.

"What grace ! to show a soul so vile
 Thy more than mother's care,
 And lead through wreck of earth's poor joys
 Thy joys with Thee to share.
 What grace ! that Thou to such hast given
 The foretaste now of feast in heaven :
 The foretaste even now to me,
 More than a thousand worlds could be."

The second case of beginning is in verse 24: "They began to be merry." Oh, what words! "*They.*" Who? The Father and the prodigal; and the joy of the latter, real as it is, is but a small thing compared with that of the Father. "It is the father's joy to bless." "The Lord thy God . . . is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy." (Zeph. iii. 17.) The whole parable is spoken to show this: first the joy of the finder of the lost sheep, next that of the finder of the money, then that of the Father expressed by

His running, embracing, kissing. Heaven looks on, "joy in heaven" in the presence of the angels. But oh, the fellowship! Rejoice with me! Let us make merry and be glad! Endless, eternal joy!

The third case is in chapter vii. 15: "He that was dead sat up, and *began to speak*." Not the cry that betokens life or distress or need, but *to speak* words articulate, and to be understood. Thank God, when this begins in the history of the soul, when words are first spoken *to* Jesus, words that He loves to hear ("Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice." Cant. ii. 14); not merely the cry of distress, but words of praise, thanksgiving, and worship from an overwhelming sense of His love and goodness. And then words *for* Jesus in His honour and in His praise, like those of the dying malefactor, "This Man hath done nothing amiss"; and, lastly, words of Jesus, as the aged saint who spoke "*of Him*" to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

Dear reader, have you made this beginning? Has your mouth been opened to show forth His praise? Have *you* "begun to speak"?

The fourth beginning is in chapter xiv. 30: "This man began to build." Here is surely a step in advance. But how does this apply to the saints of God now? I think the First Epistle to the Corinthians will show us. In chapter iii. we read of "God's building"—of the one foundation, Jesus Christ; no other can be laid; and in verse 12, "If any man build on this foundation." Chapter xiv. helps us again; there the saints are exhorted to desire spiritual gifts, especially to prophesy. (*v.* 1.) The explanation of that is given in verse 3 as speaking to edification,

exhortation, and comfort—edification or *building* up; and while this *may* be applied to individuals, as exhortation and comfort clearly are, yet the prominent desire of the Spirit, through the apostle, is that the Church—the Assembly—may be built up. (vv. 4, 5, 12.) It is *in* the Assembly, and *for* the Assembly, these gifts are to be exercised. It is solemn work—“Let every man take heed *how* he buildeth” (1 Cor. iii. 12)—but work dear to the heart of Christ.

I might also refer to the building, in Ezra and Nehemiah, of the house of God and the wall of the city. Sad work! for it is repairing ruins—weeping and shouting for joy mingling; the circumstances around most difficult; powerful enemies outside, and traitors and faint-hearted ones within. Yet on they toiled, those noble bands, sustained by the word and Spirit of God. I cannot enlarge on it, but would briefly refer to Nehemiah iii. The keynote of the chapter is “repair.” The workmen are priests, goldsmiths, apothecaries, rulers, and even women, the daughters of some. Each did what he could, everyone over against his house. Love and devotedness made them willing, and the work had been preceded by weeping, mourning, fasting, and prayer. It was for the Lord’s house and the city of God. Again I appeal to the reader. Do you know anything of all this? Have you begun to build? have you begun to repair?

Now a verse as to *continuing*. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts ii. 42.) It is very sure we cannot *continue* till we have first *begun*, and here we have four more things in which we

have to begin and then to continue. I need hardly say the Church (so-called) has departed from the faith (1 Tim. iv. 1), has not continued in the goodness of God. All the confusion of Christendom, with all its pretentious boasting, is an awful substitute for that which the Spirit produced as recorded in Acts ii. and iv. The fine gold soon became dim. Man cannot hold a blessing, and being in honour never abides. But, thank God, in the darkest day He abides faithful, and ever invites those who tremble at His word to return to Him. And has He not of late been, in restoring grace, leading some back "to the place where the tent had been at the beginning, and to the place of the altar made there at the first"? (Gen. xiii. 3, 4.) He has set before us an "open door," and we can return unto Him and keep His word. We have to continue in all things we have learned and been assured of, knowing of whom we have learned them. (2 Tim. iii. 14.) Divine certainty is still possible to the humble soul. That we might know the certainty of the words of truth, excellent things in counsels and knowledge have been written to us. (Prov. xxii. 21.) But we must not continue in sin or in that which is contrary to the Word of God. Cease to do evil. Cease to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge. (Prov. xix. 27.) It is as imperative, and as much an act of obedience, to purge ourselves and to separate from vessels to dishonour, as to follow and gather with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Much exercise and prayerful waiting upon God are needed; but to the upright ariseth light in the darkness. There *is* a way of truth, though it may be

evil spoken of, and abandoned by many. Let us hold fast what we have received. Continue steadfastly in the faith—in the Son—in the things we have been assured of, in love, and *then*, and *not otherwise*, shall we *finish* our course with joy.

Whether the last will be our happy lot, and the Master's "Well done" by-and-by, depends upon how we begin and how we continue.

J. G. D.

MARY AT BETHLEHEM.

IF God is sovereign in His purposes, His sovereignty is no less displayed in His selection of instrumentalities for their fulfilment. More than seven hundred years before the birth of Christ the prophet Micah had said in the name of Jehovah, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me, that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." That this was regarded as a prediction of the birth-place of the Messiah, is shown from the fact that it was quoted by the chief priests and scribes in answer to Herod's question where Christ should be born. But Mary's home was at Nazareth in Galilee, and the time was drawing near for the birth of her holy Child; and lo, "it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world [the "habitable world"—the Roman empire] should be taxed." The effect of this decree was that Joseph (together with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child), was compelled, because he was of the

house and lineage of David, to go up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. Little did the Roman emperor know what would be the consequence of the thought which had come into his mind. As a writer has remarked, "This act only accomplishes the marvellous purpose of God, causing the Saviour-king to be born in the village where, according to the testimony of God, that event was to take place." And what is so remarkable is, that though the decree was issued, and Joseph and Mary, doubtless with many others, repaired to their city to be enregistered, it would yet appear that the census was not actually made until some time afterwards, "when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." How admirable the wisdom of God, and the perfection of His ways! Joseph must take Mary his wife to Bethlehem, and God constrains the emperor to set the machinery of his empire in motion that Joseph may be compelled to go. What a proof it is that God still holds the reins of government in His hands, and that He turns the hearts of men whithersoever He will! The Christian believes and knows it; and he thus rests in peace in the midst of all the busy activities of men, and amid all the confusion, turbulence, and strife which prevail on every hand.

It was while Joseph and Mary were at Bethlehem that Mary "brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn." (*v.* 7.) It is no part of our object to consider the Incarnation at this time: we are rather concerned with the personal history of Mary. We venture,

however, to offer the reflections of another upon this stupendous event, upon this mystery of mysteries: "The Son of God is born in this world, but He finds no place there. The world is at home, or at least by its resources it finds a place, in the inn; it becomes a kind of measure of man's place in, and reception by, the world; the Son of God finds none, save in the manger. Is it for nothing that the Holy Ghost records this circumstance? No! There is no room for God, and that which is of God, in this world. So much the more perfect, therefore, is the love that brought Him down to earth. But He began in a manger, and ended on the cross, and along the way He had not where to lay His head." So it was; and surely, as believers, we are constrained to bow with reverence and adoration in the presence of our God, as we contemplate the manner in which He became "God manifest in flesh," and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. And while thus prostrate before Him, let us remember that to effect the gracious purposes of His love, to redeem His people, whether Israel or the Church, entailed upon Him rejection in life and the cross in death. That Child who lay in the manger was "the object of all the counsels of God, the Upholder and Heir of all creation, the Saviour of all who shall inherit glory and eternal life." It is no wonder, consequently, that Mary was hidden through all this time; not a word is recorded of what she felt, thought, or said, for in truth she was unseen behind the glory of her Child.

MARY AND THE SHEPHERDS.

If we refer to these pious men, who were elected of God to receive the announcement of the birth of "a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," it is only because of their connection with Mary's history. It was not with the great of the earth that God was at this moment concerned; but it was with His poor and afflicted people, amongst whom these shepherds were numbered. Divine communications can only be received by those whose hearts have been divinely prepared; and hence we may be confident that these humble men were amongst those that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (See *v.* 38.) Thus it was to these, as they were keeping watch over their flock by night, that the angel was sent to carry them good tidings of great joy, which should be to all (the) people; and to certify their faith a sign was given unto them: "Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." No sooner had he delivered his message than "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men" (good pleasure in men).

Leaving the devout reader to meditate upon these words, words which tell at least that all God's purposes of blessing for His people Israel were already realized in the Person of His beloved Son, we must follow the shepherds. With simple faith, without a question as to the truth of what they had heard, they said one to another, "Let us now go even to Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which

the Lord hath made known to us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger." What a sight it was that greeted their eyes! They might not have comprehended the full import of what they saw, or the glory of the Child. Still they saw Him, and, it cannot be doubted, with adoring hearts. Not a word is recorded of anything they or Mary or Joseph said. Is it because they were feasting their eyes upon the Saviour, Christ the Lord, as He lay there in the manger? And yet they must have spoken, for after the statement made concerning their testimony "about the country," and the effect it produced, it is said that "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." Combining this with the last clause of verse 57, we gather that Mary was a quiet, meditative, reflective soul. Chosen for such a mission, and with such a charge, it could scarcely be otherwise. With even the feeblest sense of the character of her Child she must have been awed in the presence of God, and speech would be almost incongruous. Man would like to know more of her thoughts as she gazed upon the face of that wondrous Child, the One of whom Isaiah prophesied and said, "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace"; but great as was the favour bestowed upon Mary, it was not she, but her Son, who was the object of heaven, the object of God's counsels, and the One in whom the glory of God would be upheld, vindicated, and made good even in this world. We can, however, admire the beautiful traits of her character which were so conspicuous in her pious and godly demeanour.

(To be continued, D. V.)

I.

PERSONAL.

IF the ways and life of Christ do not come out, then, whatever may be the assumption of Christianity, it is pretty clear that *there is not much of Christ within*. I enjoy Christ within only just in so far as Christ comes out.

COLLECTIVE.

THE only place where I join the company of heaven and breathe on earth its atmosphere is in the "*holiest of all*." This company is that of the *sanctified*, and the atmosphere is that of *love*. (Heb. ii.) H. C. A.

II.

PERSONAL.

CHRIST comes to you now *whenever you have time and room for Him*. His LOVE draws Him to you. Nothing satisfies LOVE but the company of its object. "We will come unto *him*, and make our abode with him." Because you cannot go to Him in heaven, He comes to you on earth. (John xiv. 23.)

COLLECTIVE.

CHRIST comes to the company of those on earth who have closed the door on the first man (that is on *themselves*). (See John xx. 19-26.) God has done with that man, and *if we have not*, God will not give us the conscious joy of the Man of His delight. "I will not leave you [the company] orphans: I will come to you." (John xiv. 18.) He comes to that company whenever

He can, and whenever they thus make room for Him. *Nothing* can separate the Lord from the individual saint, nor from the company of His own. Love breaks through every barrier. (See Cant. viii. 6, 7.) But it is one thing to know this (as is said "by faith"), and quite another to have the *present joy* of His presence. The first is totally worthless without the second, just as my life, both as an individual and as one of a company, is worthless *without Christ* in known presence. Oh, the miserable "FORM" of godliness!"

H. C. A.

"NEVER."

THE Greek language employs at times a double negative, greatly intensifying the force of the expression used; and when the matter asserted involves a question of duration, the addition of a phrase significant of eternity takes away from such duration all limit whatever.

There are some six places in the New Testament where we get the negative with a term of eternity attached, in five of which the negative is doubled. The places are Mark iii. 29; John iv. 14; viii. 51; x. 28; xi. 26; xiii. 8. Passing by the last of these, we may look at the other five; and we shall, I believe, be led thereby to adore afresh the gracious Spirit who wrote these things for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.

In Mark iii. 29 we read, "He that shall speak injuriously against the Holy Spirit *to eternity has no forgiveness*, but lies under the guilt of an everlasting sin" (Greek). The attribution to Satan of the works of Christ

involved those who made it in eternal sin—sin from the judgment of which there was no escape. The strengthening of the negative here adds intensity to the awful fact. But in the four passages which are now to be cited the negation is the strongest that language can make it; and the reading of these texts shows how determined, so to speak, the blessed Spirit is to give us, in the clearest, fullest terms, the truth, just as it was stated by the Lord Jesus Himself, of the believer's absolute and eternal acceptance in Him. If anything is stated more positively than the judgment and misery of the lost, it is the security and blessing of the saved. There is, perhaps, no stronger term in the whole Greek language than this double negative with an adjunct expressing eternity, whereby God has been pleased to declare the irrefragable, the indefeasible, privileges of life and blessing for all who believe.

John iv. 14 says, "Whosoever drinks of the water that I shall give him *shall never thirst for ever.*" One might perhaps show the exact force of the expression used thus—"shall not, no, he shall not thirst for ever." The drinking and the fresh, full satisfaction from the ceaseless, boundless supply continue for ever and ever.

John viii. 51 has it, "If a man keep My word, he shall never see death"—"he shall not, no, he shall not see death for ever." Such is the power of the word of Christ received, retained, and observed; it conveys to the receiver, and effects in him its own object, with vigour which even eternity does not diminish. "The words which I speak unto you," says the Lord, "they are spirit and they are life." Whosoever has been laid hold of by them must, through their operation within him, have life co-existent with the

words by which he has been laid hold. They impart to him their own character.

In John x. 28 we have, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish"—"they shall not, they shall not, perish for ever." The acquisition of eternal life, as given by the Second Man, the quickening Spirit, is accompanied with the complete impossibility of perishing. This is a life which never wanes, never decays. He who imparts it is Himself its source and supply. That which He gives must, alike with that which He speaks, be in correspondence with Himself. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

So once more in John xi. 26, "Everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die"—"never, never die."

Thus are these words of the Lord Jesus Christ presented to us like His "verily, verily," a duplicated witness, a confirmation with an oath of the acceptance and security of all to whom they refer. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift."

W. G. C-B-C.

FRAGMENT.

I HAVE been thinking of one of the joys of heaven, after Christ—and it will be His joy seeing of the fruit of the travail of His soul and being satisfied—seeing all the saints perfect according to the mind and heart of God Himself, and His who has sought and saved them. What satisfaction and joy that will be! Truly it is what one's heart desires now. Then it will be perfectly satisfied, and Christ glorified in it; and this, thank God, will surely be.

J. N. D.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

2 CORINTHIANS i. 9, 10.

WHEN the context is considered there cannot be much doubt, we judge, that the apostle in this scripture refers to actual bodily death. The trouble (or rather, tribulation) that came upon him in Asia, whether through the disturbances at Ephesus or elsewhere, had, humanly speaking, endangered his life; as he says, "insomuch that we despaired even of life." And he accepted this "sentence of death" in himself; as far as human probabilities were concerned there was no prospect of his recovery. But God had His object in this discipline of His beloved servant; and this is unfolded to us by the apostle, when he says, looking back upon his trial, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." Through despairing even of life, Paul was led away from all fears and probabilities to put his confidence in the God of resurrection; and reaching that immovable foundation, God responded to His servant's faith, and delivered him from so great a death, and continued to deliver him, and, thus encouraged, he was enabled to add, "in whom we trust that He will yet deliver." It was deliverance all along the line, past, present, and future, now that he had learned the mighty power of a God of resurrection. The lesson is obvious; and it is that a believer, when God so purposes, is entirely outside the action of

natural law. God holds him in His own hand; and his continuance in this life therefore depends entirely upon the divine will. It may be observed, in conclusion, that no one ever realized the unity of the saints, or more completely identified himself with them, than the apostle. Even in this personal experience he assured himself of the interest of the saints in what he was passing through; and he thus expressed his conviction that they had been helping together by prayer for him, and that they would also unite in thanksgivings on his behalf. This was the outcome of his intense affections for the saints.

II.

2 THESSALONIANS i. 8.

IT is as plain as possible in the original that two classes are here indicated who will suffer the vengeance spoken of; that is, those who know not God form one class, and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ the other. This makes the judgment of the living all the more solemn, because so widely comprehensive; only it must be remembered, speaking generally, that Christendom will be the sphere of its exercise. Those who know not God may mark out those who were too indifferent to heed the gospel; while they that obey not the gospel will be those who were more positively the rejecters of Christ. But a common doom will be their portion. (Compare Zeph. i. 6.) A similar obscurity in the translation may be found in Revelation xx. 4. As it stands, we read, "The souls of them which were beheaded for the

witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast," etc. The last "which" should read "those who had not worshipped," etc., introducing a second class, in addition to those who had been martyred, who will be added to the first resurrection. In other words, of the faithful remnant on the earth, between the rapture of the saints and the appearing of Christ, there will be two classes—those who will have been martyred, and those who at all cost will have maintained fidelity to Christ—who will live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

III.

1 JOHN ii. 24.

IT has often been pointed out that the three words, "abide," "remain," and "continue," are really the translation of the same word in the Greek. And sometimes even a fourth is employed as the equivalent—"dwell." The translators evidently sought after variety of expression rather than fidelity to the original. Still there is not much difference in the meaning, although, in our judgment, "abide" best conveys the mind of the Spirit. So reading it, we are introduced in this scripture into a marvellous circle of blessing. If what the children (babes) had heard from the beginning should abide in them, they would, John says, abide in the Son and in the Father. And this, he adds, is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life. That is, the enjoyment of eternal life is bound up with abiding in the Son and in the Father.

TYPICAL TEACHINGS.

My soul has known the altar,
 My feet the laver pure ;
 The transfer to the scapegoat,
 Returns on me no more.

That I with joy may enter,
 Within the golden shrine,
 To know His own acceptance,
 God reckons now as mine.

“Thus shall he come”; one only way
 Thy holy word has planned ;
 The Victim's death, the Victim's blood,
 The claims of truth demand.

Within the curtained partings,
 On golden floor I stand,
 Accepted in acceptance
 Of God-accepted (or exalted) Man.

A priceless gem of beauty,
 In linen white I'm dressed,
 A stone of brilliant lustre,
 Upon the High Priest's breast.

I enter, and I die not,
 For I have died before ;
 The altar and the ashes
 Remember sin no more.

The claims of golden cherubim,
 The holy claims of God,
 Before and on the golden ark
 Are met by sprinkled blood.

The cloud of incense rising
Tells me of His delight
In Him in whom He sees me
Unspotted in the light.

And thus within the holiest,
The holiest of all,
I learn (while owning all of grace),
I learn my heavenly call.

O, blessed holy nearness !
In Christ's own beauty graced,
Not what I was, but what I am,
All former state effaced.

One of the many children,
Foreknown in ages past,
Love brings to find its own delight,
Long as the ages last.

One of the many brethren,
The pearl in silver rim,
Assembly of the first-born,
The goodly pearl to Him.

O, blessed happy nearness !
My soul is filled with praise,
That on His face unveiled
I now with joy may gaze.

Here thou dost find thy pleasure,
Here thou dost find thy rest,
Surrounded now by children,
Through Christ so richly blessed. I. C. S.

THE FATHER'S WILL.

JOHN vi. 37-40.

IN one respect the connection of this scripture recalls the end of Matthew xi. There, it will be remembered, when Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum had really rejected Christ, He finds His resource and consolation in the sovereignty of grace. Turning away from those who repented not, notwithstanding the mighty works which He had wrought before their eyes, "at that time" He answered and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight." So here, there is the same contrast between the breakdown of man and the steadfast, immutable will of the Father. In verse 36 Jesus said to those about Him, "Ye also have seen Me, and believe not," and immediately He proceeded to add, "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." Man, the responsible man, may fail, as he has ever done; but God's purposes will be surely accomplished. The knowledge of this, if indeed held in the soul in the power of the Holy Ghost, will afford continual joy to our hearts, and will impart to us, through grace, both strength and stability; for thereby our feet are set upon a rock, the rock of God's power and love, which has been established in righteousness in and through the death of His beloved Son.

Examined closely, it will be seen that there are

three different aspects of the Father's will presented in this scripture for our consideration. The first of these is contained in verses 37, 38. Those to whom Jesus had been speaking had seen Him and believed not. Was His mission then to be fruitless? Far from it, for "all that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me." He was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world; the Light shone for all, and yet, as we here learn, only those who had been given Him by the Father would come to Him. And even to do this they were dependent upon divine teaching and divine power. They must first be taught of God, must hear and learn of the Father (*v.* 45), and must be drawn of the Father (*v.* 44); and then, and then alone, would they come to His blessed feet. All such, and only such, will surely come to Him, and thereupon we learn the first aspect, here given, of the Father's will. "Him," says the Lord, "that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." All these had been given to the Son in a past eternity, the Son came down from heaven, becoming Man, to be the Servant of the Father's will; and thus when those who had heard and learned of the Father came to Him it was His meat to do His Father's will in receiving them. As the perfect Servant He is hidden, so to speak, behind the Father's will (and every true servant delights to be out of sight and to magnify his Master); but we know full well what joy it was to His own heart to receive all who came to Him. The point here, however, is that He, though the Son, is seen as the will-less One, in perfect communion with the Father's heart, waiting to receive everyone that

should come; and it is to encourage such that He puts it in this way, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." Blessed assurance! One that should pacify the fears of every trembling soul who is beginning to turn his eyes with longing hope to Him who, as glorified, is now seated at God's right hand. If the riches of the Father's heart are displayed in His eternal gift to the Son, no less are the depths of the Son's heart revealed in the assurance that none that come to Him will ever be cast out, because for the realization of the Father's counsels it was necessary that He should give His flesh for the life of the world. (v. 51.)

The second aspect of the Father's will is next presented: "And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which He hath given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." It will be thus seen that the Father's will covers, so to speak, the whole history of those whom He has given to Christ. This is surely what we might expect; and, in order to understand it a little more fully, attention may be called to what is involved in coming to Christ. It is not simply coming to Him, as, for example, by prayer to receive relief from our burdens and distresses; but it is, having accepted the judgment of death which lay upon us, and which He bore, we by the appropriation of His death pass to His side and remain there in His company. Like the two disciples who heard John in the fulness of his heart say, "Behold the Lamb of God," we are drawn to follow Him to the place where He dwells, and there we *abide*. Henceforward that place is our home. Those then who have come to Him

are committed to His keeping by the Father's will. Accordingly in chapter xvii., in consonance with what we find here, Jesus, speaking to His Father, says, "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, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." How blessed to know that amid the snares, pitfalls, and dangers of the path, we are committed to the safe-keeping of the Son, and that He is accomplishing the Father's will in keeping us securely! And there is yet more, for He adds, "But should raise it up at the last day." This, the resurrection of our bodies, will then be the work of the Son (see chap. v. 28, 29) for the accomplishment of the Father's will, for it will be in resurrection that we shall be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.

In verse 40 the Lord gives a complete summary of the Father's will in connection with the presentation of Himself as the object of faith. His will, as expressed in the previous verse, concerns the Son and His work in regard to those whom the Father had given Him; here it is rather the Father's will in respect of the believer, revealing the object of His eternal counsels in his blessedness, a blessedness into which he should be introduced in resurrection at the last day. There is great emphasis and solemnity in the repetition of the words, "This is the will of Him that sent Me," as also the revelation of the Father's heart in the accomplishment of the work which His beloved Son came to do. The believer, moreover, is

thus placed upon a rock—the immutability of the eternal and divine will in regard to all his expectations and hopes. There are three things in this short statement to be considered. The first is the doorway into eternal life, which is seeing the Son and believing on Him. By “seeing” we understand discernment; that is to say, it means that the eyes have been divinely opened, like those of the blind man in chapter ix., to perceive that Jesus of Nazareth, the Man Christ Jesus, is the Son—the Son of God. (Compare 1 John iv. 15.) It was not everyone who came into contact with the Son in human form, for the carnal eye saw nothing but a lowly Man, but it was he who received the testimony that Jesus was indeed and in truth God’s Son. This is evident from the following words, “and believeth on Him.” The testimony, therefore, was received, and was effectual in the heart; the soul bowed to the testimony and accepted Him so presented as the Sent One of the Father. Wherever this was the case a divine link had been formed between the soul and the Son, and also the Father as revealed in and through the Son; and, moreover, entrance upon the possession of eternal life was secured.

This brings us to the statement of the second thing found in this verse; viz., that it is the Father’s will that everyone who received Jesus as the Sent One of the Father should have eternal life. This will be readily apprehended if we remind ourselves that “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.” (Chap. xvii. 2.) It is the fundamental truth of this gospel that the Father is revealed in the Son; and hence the Lord said to Philip, “He that hath seen Me

hath seen the Father." Knowing the Son, therefore, is to know the Father; and as John has written in his epistle, "If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. *And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.*" (1 John ii. 24, 25.) That is, as we understand it, "continuing" or abiding in the Son and in the Father will be the enjoyment of eternal life. But for this there is another condition, as the Lord Himself points out, when He says, "Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life. (vi. 54.) There must be the appropriation of His death, if we would morally pass out of this world into that sphere where eternal life has its home, and where alone it can be enjoyed. This sphere is, in one word, the circle of divine affections—that circle which the Lord revealed to His disciples when He said to them through Mary, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." This makes it clear also that the realization and enjoyment of eternal life may begin now, as indeed is everywhere taught in this gospel. It is indeed the only proper life of those who, believing in the Son, are associated with Him in His own relationship before the Father; and hence to enter upon and to maintain it there must be the constant appropriation of the death of Christ.

Lastly, and this is the third thing, the Lord says, "And I will raise him up at the last day." This has already been referred to in connection with the previous verse; but a few more words are necessary to explain its repetition. Eternal life does not belong to this world; its home is in heaven, in the Father's

house, and consequently its full enjoyment, according to the thoughts of God, is future. The apostle Paul generally thus speaks of it, and thus more than once speaks of the "hope of eternal life." Resurrection (if dead before the Lord's return) must then come in to introduce us actually into that blessed circle of divine affections in the Father's house. Even now, possessed of the springing well, we may, through the energy of the Holy Ghost, enter upon and enjoy in our measure the bliss of eternal life; but for the realization of it according to the Father's counsels, we must wait until the Lord Jesus Christ returns as Saviour and changes our bodies of humiliation, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself. All this is included in the Father's will, and this blessed will is accomplished in and through His beloved Son. The result is that all His brethren, conformed to His own image, will surround Him as the first-born throughout the ages of eternity. There in the Father's house, sharing His glory, and thus one, even as the Father and the Son are one, they will also, being with Him where He is, behold the glory which the Father has given to Him; for, as He said, in addressing the Father, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." Well might we say:—

“Oh what a home! But such His love
 That He must bring us there,
 To fill that home, to be with Him,
 And all His glory share,
 The Father's house, the Father's heart,
 All that the Son is given
 Made ours—the objects of His love,
 And He, our joy in heaven.”

THE GOSPEL.

EXODUS xv. 12 ; JOHN vii. 37, 38 ; ACTS vii. 55.

THE gospel, the good tidings from God, sets forth that by the work of Christ the believer is delivered from the judgment of God which rests on everyone in this world, so that there is peace with God. Next, that the Holy Ghost is given that the believer should be here in this world without any lack, never thirsting—but more, out of his belly should flow rivers of living water. And, thirdly, that by the Holy Ghost he could anticipate his portion with Christ in glory. First, like Israel in Egypt, everyone in the world is involved in the judgment of God. As the blood of the lamb sheltered Israel from judgment, so now everyone believing that the blood of Christ is before the eye of God is sheltered from the judgment; but as Israel was oppressed by Pharaoh and the Egyptians after they were sheltered from the judgment, so is the believer oppressed by the power of Satan and the flesh, for there is no peace until he appropriates the death and resurrection of Christ typified by the passage through the Red Sea. The only way out of death, which is the judgment on man, is by the death of Christ. God made the way for Israel through the Red Sea, and God gave them the light to see the way; and when they had walked through it, they not only knew that they were out of it, but they could sing, “The Lord hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” Now there is peace with God. When you believe that God raised Christ from the

dead you are justified by faith, and then you know that you have peace with God. Next, believing on Christ risen, you come to Him, and you receive the Holy Ghost. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us"—you are in the power of God. Who can describe the magnificence of the grace of God, made free from all that is against you, and now in the Spirit fully according to God! Vividly, by the Holy Ghost, you can see Christ in the glory of God. When the glory was departing from Israel, Ezekiel saw it, and in the brightest spot there was the figure of a Man. Though the wickedness of man was driving away the glory from the earth, yet, in the grace of God, there would be a Man in the glory. From that day the glory did not return to the earth until it came to the shepherds in Luke ii., to announce the good tidings of great joy. "This day is born to you a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

J. B. S.

DEMAND AND SUPPLY.

(*Revised Notes.*)

Acrs ii. 14-47.

THERE are various lights in which it is possible to look at the Scriptures. For instance, one might look at the Old Testament as a book of types and shadows, while the New Testament gives you the substance; or, again, one might look at the Old Testament as the book of demand while the New Testament is the book of supply. All that is demanded in the Old Testament—and every type and shadow *was* in principle a demand—is answered in the New Testament, hence the latter is the supply. The one is in

that way the contrast to the other; and I might take up this thought in all kinds of connection and prove it to you. But I confine myself to two or three points of what I have called DEMAND in the Old Testament, of which you get the SUPPLY in the New. The particular points that are before me are very simple: the first is righteousness, the second resurrection, the third is the Spirit, and the fourth the kingdom.

Now it is not difficult to see that these things were demanded in the Old Testament; and the demand lay in the necessities of the purpose of God. The demand was not from man; in the New Testament you find the answer to all. If you take up the Scriptures in that way you will see increasingly the interest that attaches to them.

I hope to show you how the apostle Peter in this chapter gives the answer to every demand that came out in the Old Testament; and the secret of this was in that the kingdom had been established, and that is a point of the greatest moment to every one of us. If we have not an apprehension of the kingdom the defect is serious; but, on the other hand, "we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." We receive an immovable kingdom, a *moral* kingdom, and the result is that we serve God acceptably and with godly fear. I am now looking at the kingdom in that light, that is, not dispensationally, but morally, and in its effect upon the saints.

Now the testimony of both Peter and Paul is undoubtedly of the kingdom. You find comparatively little about the Church in the Acts, but you get the testimony of the kingdom; the book begins with it

and closes with it. It speaks of Paul in the last chapter as "preaching the kingdom of God." No doubt he took the truth of the kingdom from Peter, though with more light, and all through we find that he preached the kingdom of God. Now in this chapter we have the establishment of the kingdom, and the effect of it. One point of moment is this, whatever is of God's establishment never grows old; the kingdom of God does not grow old. What is presented to us in this chapter remains in full force *unimpaired*; it is not affected by the ruin of the Church or the state of Christendom. The truth of the exaltation of Christ, and of the presence of the Holy Ghost here, remains unimpaired, it cannot be affected by anything; and if you go back to these two facts they will still have their proper effect upon you. We have only to come face to face with them for this end.

I do not think that anyone could serve God with reverence and with godly fear who did not apprehend the kingdom; that is the moral sway of God. And the sway of God must be in GRACE; there is no other possible on the part of God with reference to fallen man. It would be possible, of course, for God to judge man, or destroy him; but the *sway* of God over man, sinful as he is, must be in GRACE—any other would be impossible. We are accustomed to far different things in the world; for instance, in this land the rule is one of law, and those who infringe the law of the land have to suffer the penalty of their offence; but in the kingdom of God there is the sway of GRACE—not law. There is no imputation of sin in grace. Supposing one fails, grace comes in to show the point of departure—that is the way it works. Should there be will at work

there may be need of discipline; but *there is no imputation*. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

Now I want to make clear the difference between demand and supply. As regards the first point, viz., righteousness. From the beginning to the end of the Old Testament you will find the demand for righteousness. I do not now speak of righteousness in a practical sense, but I refer to the righteousness of God. The law, though witnessing God's righteousness, was a demand for human righteousness; but in general what marks the Old Testament is the demand for divine righteousness, a demand which was not supplied in Old Testament times. Every sacrifice that was offered to God was in a sense a demand for righteousness; had there been the answer they would not have continued to be offered. In Old Testament times there was not revealed the forgiveness of sins. God saw everything before Him, but there was no such thing revealed as righteousness for man. As I said before, the character of every sacrifice offered to God was a demand for divine righteousness.

Now in the New Testament we find the supply—the blood of JESUS; the great answer to the requirement of the Old Testament is the blood of JESUS; God has set Him forth a mercy-seat through faith in HIS BLOOD, and in this is declared His righteousness, we have the righteousness of God revealed! It is now no longer a question of sacrifices having a typical force, but of righteousness revealed for faith. As I said, the demand for righteousness is in the Old Testament, so that in result there might be forgiveness of sins, and when you come to the New the demand is answered.

Now the next point of which I spoke was *resurrection*. You get the demand for resurrection in the Old Testament—Psalm xvi. is a demand for resurrection, and not resurrection as a mere act of divine power, but resurrection as that which was the suited answer to a certain course down here in which God was glorified. “Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption”—undoubtedly that was a foreshadowing of what would come to pass, and thus a demand for resurrection to life. God might have raised men for judgment, but there would have been no life in that. In the New Testament the demand for resurrection is SUPPLIED—One went into death who could not be holden of death; and the reason of that was His own perfection. Psalm xvi. is the setting forth of the moral perfection of a Man here upon earth, and if He went into death resurrection became a moral necessity. Now you have in Christ the answer to this. He was of course the exception to the universal rule of death in regard to man, but He went into death. Man *must* die, and he will see corruption; but One has been into death who could not be holden of death—“This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.” He was raised again from the dead in testimony of the power of God.

Now you will, I think, admit that you find the principle of demand and supply in regard to resurrection as to righteousness; there was in the Old Testament the demand for resurrection to set man outside the realm and power of death, and in the New Testament Christ is raised from the dead, for He could not be holden of it.

Now the coming of the Holy Ghost is referred to similarly in the Old Testament, in the nature of a demand. There was no pouring out of the Spirit there; He did come in power upon men, and influenced them. The prophets, for instance, came under the influence of the Holy Ghost, but there was no pouring out of the Spirit. It was foreshadowed there, and was thus in the nature of a demand; it was something to take place in the ways of God, and in the Acts "when the day of Pentecost was fully come," etc., the supply was furnished. The demand in the Old Testament for the Spirit is instanced in the anointing of the leper, then again in the two wave loaves presented fifty days after the sheaf of first-fruits. All these implied a demand for the Spirit, and in the Acts you get not only the fulfilment of the shadow, but the promise of the Father, of which the Lord Jesus Himself had spoken to the disciples. They were to wait at Jerusalem until "they were endued with power from on high," and in one sense, when that had come to pass, there was nothing beyond it.

Now I think it will be admitted that to speak of the Old Testament as a book of demand is just, and that in the New Testament you have the supply. Righteousness is established, resurrection has come to pass, and the Holy Ghost is poured out.

I come now to the kingdom, on which I desired to speak more particularly. There are two points which come out in the Old Testament with regard to the kingdom; the one is that Jehovah dwells in Zion, and the other is that the kingdom is Jehovah's. David reigned in Zion, but that was not the kingdom of God properly; and Solomon, David's son, reigned in

Jerusalem, but, whatever these might be in the way of types as regards David, or David's Son, it was not the kingdom of God. But how was Jehovah to dwell in Zion? In all that had come to pass in the Old Testament times, in the setting up of the tabernacle, or the building of the temple, there was not realized the idea of Jehovah dwelling in Zion. Then again, how was David's kingdom to be the kingdom of Jehovah? How this can be is the enigma that the Lord proposed to the Jews when they came tempting Him—how could David's Lord be David's Son? And the truth of the matter is, that David's Lord is David's Son, and David's Son, on the other hand, is David's Lord; it is because David's Lord has become David's Son that Jehovah can dwell in Zion. Christ is the root *and* offspring of David, and thus while He sits on the throne of His father David the kingdom is Jehovah's.

Now that is part of what I have called the demand of the Old Testament—a demand for Jehovah's kingdom, and for Jehovah to dwell in Zion; a demand which was not fulfilled in Old Testament times, nor is fully realized yet. But one part *is* fulfilled, and that is, the kingdom is JEHOVAH'S: I could not speak of Jehovah dwelling as yet in Zion; in this the Old Testament looks forward to the millennium, but in the New Testament we find everything in principle fulfilled. Righteousness revealed in the blood of JESUS; resurrection come to pass, because of the moral perfection in which Christ went into death, and the Spirit poured out; then, too, the kingdom is established in the fact of Christ being set as Lord at the right hand of God, and the Spirit being down here.

Now just put these two things together—the demand

and the supply. I want you to study the Old Testament in that light, to see what was necessary for the glory of God, and to apprehend not only the demand, but the supply in the presence of Christ at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost down here. I desire that you might see the effect of the kingdom of God in its application to us; for though the kingdom is not yet manifest, and is spoken of as in mystery, yet, for all that, the kingdom subsists, and the witnesses to it are CHRIST at the right hand of God, and the SPIRIT down here—that is what was announced on the day of Pentecost.

What I want to make clear is that the KINGDOM of God is a REALITY; it is not in word, but in POWER. People fail, I think, to apprehend that—Christendom does not apprehend the kingdom of God in what I might call its *moral force*. The kingdom of God is likened to a mustard tree, conspicuous in the eyes of men, but I do not see power in that thought; what I see there is corruption, not power. Shelter there may be, perhaps, but not power. But in the kingdom of God, in its moral characteristics, POWER is present—Christ is at the right hand of God in the place of supreme authority, and GRACE reigning there—the One who is SUPREME in the kingdom is the very One who died for our sins. Christ at the right hand of God is the witness that God's righteousness is declared, and in going to Him, I am conscious of going to the One who has established righteousness, I approach boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

Now the effect of grace reigning is that we even dare to look at righteousness—we do not shrink from

this. There never was a man in the world who could look at righteousness until he knew grace. You never saw a man as such walk in self-judgment, and it is only as I learn that in the righteousness of God I am justified, that I can touch righteousness; I disallow what God has disallowed, and now being made free from sin, and having become a servant to God, I have my fruit unto holiness. A man who is in the *pursuit* of righteousness—who is seeking to maintain his own righteousness, cannot maintain it; but a Christian who is under grace can walk in self-judgment, and the sway of grace through righteousness leads to eternal life, and all is “through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The gain of the kingdom is *immense*—God has no other attitude towards us than GRACE. Then you are taught by grace—the grace of God “hath appeared, . . . teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” A soul that is under the sway of grace accepts the teaching of grace, and it is taught to look for that blessed hope “and the appearing of the glory of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” The kingdom is very great gain.

But I return to the thought that the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. There is supreme authority at the right hand of God, but there is also power equal to that authority down here, and that is the Holy Ghost; so that the kingdom of God is not eating or drinking, but “righteousness, peace, and joy in [the power of] the Holy Ghost,” and it is important to see the mighty power that is maintaining righteousness, peace, and joy in a scene of sin and restlessness, of death and of sorrow. There is no *peace* in a world

of sin and death, and death *must* bring sorrow in its train, but in contrast to all that, the kingdom of God is righteousness, peace, and JOY in the power of the Holy Ghost; so that the kingdom is not in word, but in POWER. The kingdom of God is established in the soul of the believer in the power of the Holy Ghost; and righteousness, peace, and joy are the characteristics of the kingdom. It is an immense mercy in the midst of this world of turmoil to enjoy peace; to be delivered, too, from the sway of sin in the knowledge of righteousness, and in the midst of a scene of sorrow to know JOY that will never fail you. The greatest force in the world could not bring this about. For this you need a power completely superior to every pressure here upon earth. For the establishment of the kingdom you must have supreme authority at the right hand of God—authority in grace too. There may, of course, be a measure of discipline connected with it, but, at the same time, it is authority acting in GRACE; and with that, divine power here upon earth—a power commensurate with the authority that is at the right hand of God.

I thank God for the grace in which His Word has made one's soul acquainted with principles which otherwise one could not have known anything of—such as righteousness, and love, and grace. Do you think a man of the world, or even a philosopher, knows anything at all about such principles? Why, he would scoff at the idea of peace, or goodness, of righteousness, and of love as of God. The plan on which he goes is to take the best of what he can find here intellectually, and to make the most of that. But the truth of God makes known to me beautiful,

holy principles which I never could have known apart from God. Nothing that is in the world can touch these things; they are established in power superior to every force that is here, and thus the kingdom of God is maintained.

Now I just call attention to one or two verses in this chapter (Acts ii. 40-43); and what I would say is that these principles *remain unimpaired*. The demand for separation—"Save yourselves from this untoward generation"—is as urgent as ever it was. But you may say, Is not the world a Christian world? I admit that, but for all that there is an "untoward generation," and hence the demand for separation morally is as forcible as ever it was; one cannot go on in the life of this world, we are separated from it by the waters of baptism. I no more have part in the Christianity of this world than in Judaism, or even in heathenism; the principles of these things find their place in the Christianity of to-day, and baptism separates me from them; I am identified with the death of Christ, and accept the obligation to separation from all that is of the world down here. I could not stop in these things to help them; the principle is, "Save yourselves from this untoward generation." If we look around and see a generation governed by the principles of this world, it is to us an untoward generation. If you are governed by the love of Christ, you will be content to be identified with His death.

There is another point that I would like to bring before you from verse 42, "They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." What I point out is that

all these things are unimpaired. We have not got living apostles to-day, but for all that we can continue in the apostles' doctrine; and do not take that second-hand—take it *first*-hand. The great systems on earth would have you take it second-hand, but that means the ignoring of the Spirit of truth. Then those who believed did not accept the doctrine and refuse the apostles; they continued in their fellowship, so as to be not only in the light of the truth, but in the fellowship of those who ministered the truth. So we, too, have to see to it that being in the light of the truth, we are also in the fellowship that is formed on the truth. This scripture leaves no room for those who would accept the doctrine, but not have the fellowship, though reproach may be connected with this.

Then, as to the coming together of saints, two things are mentioned, the breaking of bread, and prayers; these two things are recognized as special occasion of our coming together. The doctrine of the apostles, and their fellowship, have not reference exactly to our coming together; the first is not a question of meeting at all; and the second, though a question of fellowship, does not speak of coming together—we continue in the doctrine and fellowship always, but we come together to break bread, and in prayers. Both these are collective; and then we read “fear came upon every soul.”

. Peter was the great apostle of the kingdom; he was the first to announce it. The burden of his testimony was Christ at the right hand of God, and the Holy Ghost come here; and the benefits and effect of the Spirit's presence were for those who apprehended these things. Those who received the kingdom were in

peace and in power. Then they accepted separation, and, having accepted it, they went on in the doctrine of the apostles and in the fellowship formed on the truth, and at the same time in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. I should not care for a fellowship based upon unity of mind and judgment, such as would be required by some particular system of doctrine or interpretation. Of course unity of mind and judgment is important, but any basis of fellowship apart from the acceptance of the apostles' doctrine would be too narrow. What one looks for now is a fellowship in which there is not resistance of the truth. It may be that every soul is not in the full light of it, but it is not refused. I doubt if all the three thousand who believed were in the full light of the apostles' doctrine, but at the same time it was there.

Now I would again press that every great principle in this chapter remains unimpaired. The Holy Ghost is here, and the kingdom established, and I know of no reason why we should not have all that properly lies in the establishment of the kingdom of God. The point is to get back to first principles—not to be governed by what is around, and not to be confusing these principles with what is around, but to get back in soul to what was from the beginning, and for this you must begin with separation.

F. E. R.

“KNOWING we are nothing is the place of blessing, for then God is everything; and it is also the place of strength, for then Christ can put forth His strength.”

THE HOLY GHOST ON EARTH.

THE Holy Ghost is as really present on earth to-day as Christ Himself was. And we must remember that He is here for two distinct objects.

First, He is here to bring men into all the good of what appertains to Christ in glory, and which is commonly called Christianity.

Second, He is here for the proper maintenance of those earthly relationships which were formed of God, and *which have never been set aside*. These I think are three.

First, man as a creature in relation to God.

Second, the earthly relations of the family Godward and to one another.

Third, God's government of the world.

I think that the Spirit of God maintains in us the proper balance and line of conduct suited to all these last three, which I think are all summed up in one word—"responsibility"; and that He also is here to lead us into all the good of our heavenly relation, which may be also all summed up in one word—"privilege," and there could not be the slightest friction between the two. Ephesians i.-vi. gives them all.

H. C. A.

"It is a time to be entirely heavenly, for the earth is far from God, and daily its darkness closes in; but we belong to the light, and await another day."

CHRISTIAN RESPONSIBILITY.

RESPONSIBILITY is a wholesome word, it is a check to the licence of the flesh which would take advantage of the superabounding grace of our God. Responsibility flows from existing and known relationships, or from the place God has set us in in the Church, or in the world of the ungodly. We are set in the Church and have responsibilities with regard to that, and the greatness of the privilege but serves to increase the responsibility. We are set in the world to be "the salt of the earth," and "lights in the world." We are to show forth the virtues of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light. (1 Peter ii. 9.) God having shone into our hearts, the light is to shine out (2 Cor. iv. 6); having drunk in the living waters, they are to flow out of us. (John vii. 37-39.) Salt preserves what is of God, light is to attract those that sit in darkness, and the rivers of living water are for those who are thirsting for what they fail to find in a world away from God.

The greatness of the grace only shows the greatness of the responsibility. Responsibility is the moral obligation resting on the Christian because of the exceeding grace of God bestowed upon him. There is nothing legal in this, but the natural consequence of the privilege we are set in by God.

We will look at our responsibility *worldward*. This is surely very great, whether we think of the gospel preacher or the individual Christian. We cannot join in with Cain, and say, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

No, we cannot without loss ignore our vast responsibilities with regard to the world in that way. God commands us to "shine as lights in the world," and to "hold forth the word of life," and we dare not ignore our responsibility. They are the commands of divine love; and a loving obedience is to be yielded to them. It is for our God and Father to command; it is ours to cheerfully obey.

The demoniac was sent home to tell what the Lord had done for him, and had mercy on him. He was to be the exponent, the living exemplification, of the mercy of the Lord. They were to see in him an expression of the Lord's power and goodness. He simply obeyed and went, and the hearts that had desired the departure of the deliverer were made ready by his willing, faithful testimony to long for His return. (Luke viii.) The woman of Samaria in the same way went to the men of the city, and said, "*Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*" She went in the instinct of love, and without a command, and made the Saviour known.

It is of the very essence of Christianity that our hearts should be set a-longing for others; and may it not be rightly said that, if our hearts are not so longing for the salvation of our fellow-men, love, real love, is on the wane with us, however great our gifts may be? In heart we are not in company with the greatest of all evangelists and teachers, who wept over guilty Jerusalem, prayed for His murderers, and saved the dying robber in the hour of His greatest anguish on Calvary.

It is really no question of gift (though, thank God, there are special evangelistic gifts), but of heart—of

love, the instincts of which are to have compassion on the misery of others, and seek their blessing. To say, I am not responsible to tell of Christ to the lost because I am not gifted as an evangelist, is like a man on a wharf witnessing the struggles of a man in the water, and will not throw the rope that lies at his feet to the drowning man, on the plea that he has not been appointed by the Government to save drowning men. Every right-minded person would cry shame on such a one, and say the wretch had denied the very instincts of his manhood.

And is it not of the very essence, the spirit of Christianity, that leads to deep concern for the salvation of the lost? And is it too much to say that an assembly that loses sight of this ignores a very great part of its responsibility? An unevangelical assembly has certainly to a very great extent put its light under a "bushel," and in some way there is an awful stoppage of the "rivers of living water"; or in other words, *the Holy Ghost has been hindered in one of His most precious activities*. This is intensely solemn, especially when we consider that it may be in connection with a large amount of intellectual acquaintance with the truth of God.

It is of the very nature of love to think of others. "Selfishness likes to be served; love delights to serve." We see this last exemplified to perfection in the blessed Lord. "God is love," and He gave His Son. We are born of God, and have the Spirit, and the outgoings of our hearts should be Godlike—they should go out for others.

I repeat, it is not so much a question of gift, but of heart, and love governing the heart, and allowing the

blessed Spirit of God to be active, as the Saviour was, in a world lost and ruined. He delights in glorifying the ascended Saviour by leading sinners to put their trust in Him, and in this He deigns to use the hearts and tongues of the saints of God; but, alas, what strange inconsistency to find them indifferent to the very instincts and longings He has created and begotten in their hearts!

A poor wretch, half dead, was taken from a floating wreck at sea, and brought and laid upon the deck of another vessel. The people gathered round him, and when first he spoke, he said in a voice of great earnestness, "*There is another man! there is another man!*" Having been saved himself, he thought of the other poor sailor left behind, and desired his deliverance also. A boat was sent in search of the other man, who was found and brought on board, and we may rest assured that there was not a single individual on board that ship who was not intensely interested in the rescue of the "other man." The captive maid (2 Kings v.) yearned over the condition of her mistress' husband, until the yearning gave expression to itself in the words, "*Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.*" The lepers outside of famished Samaria said, "*We do not well: this is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: . . . now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household.*" (2 Kings vii. 9.)

So it ever is; with the salvation we receive, a desire is created in our hearts for the salvation of others, and sad it is when that desire is on the wane; it is a sure sign of awful declension, whether we speak of individuals or of an assembly. It is of the very instinct

of divine love to be concerned about the welfare of others. Can we measure the distance between the eternal glory and the depths of Calvary's woe? That was the distance that divine love travelled to seek and to save that which was lost. And if His love is filling and controlling our hearts, shall we not be concerned about a lost world around us? Can we coolly let them drift on to eternal woe, on the plea that we are not gifted, or that it is not our line or testimony? Every believer has the Spirit, and out of him should "flow rivers of living water," not for his own satisfaction, but as a reproduction of Christ in the world, and for the eternal good of others.

An assembly of Christians that is not imbued with the evangelical spirit is like a family in a lighthouse. The light is lit, and they are sitting around enjoying the light for themselves. Much is said about the beauty and excellence of the light, and how good it is to be in the presence of such a light. The qualities and nature of the light are fully discussed, until there is but little more to be said on the subject; but, alas! the shutters are closed; not a ray of that light falls upon the dark ocean around. The sailors, unwarned of the rocks and quicksands, are soon driven by the tempest upon them, and are lost. The people in the lighthouse have betrayed the trust reposed in them, and while professing to enjoy the light for themselves, have forgotten their solemn responsibility as to others. They were set in the lighthouse, not to selfishly enjoy the light for themselves, but that the light might shine out for the benefit of others. "*Shine ye as lights in the world,*" is the solemn word for every Christian and every assembly of Christians.

A New Zealand girl was brought over to England to be educated. She became a true Christian. When she was about to return, some of her playmates endeavoured to dissuade her. They said, "Why go back to New Zealand? You are accustomed to England. You love its shady lanes and cloven fields. It suits your health. Besides, you may be shipwrecked on the ocean. You may be killed and eaten by your own people—everybody will have forgotten you." "*What!*" she said, "*do you think that I could keep the good news to myself? Do you think I could be content with having got pardon and peace and eternal life for myself, and not go and tell my dear father and mother how they may get it too? I would go if I had to swim there!*"

Oh, saints of God, may we be awakened from our lethargy and sinful indifference, so that our hearts and hands shall be reaching forth continually after the lost. *Let the shutters be thrown wide open.* May we cease to selfishly enjoy the light for ourselves; may it shed itself upon the moral darkness about us, so that many a benighted soul shall be attracted by it, and led to the blessed Saviour. Then we shall "eat the meat that ye know not of," spoken of by the Saviour in John iv. May our hearts be set on the Lord in glory, and desire Him before all else; and may our hearts go out in deepest longing to "a world of sinners lost," which is lying all about us. Amen. E. A.

DEATH faced is death overcome, because the light of resurrection has already illumined our souls.

BEARING INFIRMITIES.

MATTHEW viii. 17 ; ROMANS xv. 1.

NOTHING is more continually taught in the Scriptures than that Christ is a model and an example for His people, and hence that the one object and aim of the believer should be to express Christ in His walk and ways. This is illustrated in a most striking way in the case of the apostle Paul, who was, perhaps, the closest approximation to the example of his Lord that the world has ever seen. As led of the Holy Ghost, indeed, he was enabled to say that to him to live was Christ; and his one earnest expectation and hope was that Christ might be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death. It is quite true that no individual believer is an adequate vessel for the display of Christ, that for this all the members of His body are requisite; but still nothing short of this object should be before our minds. (See 2 Cor. iv. 10.) The two passages at the head of this paper bring this subject before us in one aspect, and it is to this that we invite the reader's most earnest attention; for the consideration of any feature of the blessed Lord's life is not only profitable to our souls, but it also begets in us an intense desire to learn more of His perfections, and to be found more constantly in His company. And then it is that we enter upon the experience of the bride when she said, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste; He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love."

We learn, then, from our first scripture, that Christ took the infirmities and bore the sicknesses of His people when He was down here upon the earth. In one word, in all their affliction He was afflicted. Strictly speaking, in the passage in Matthew the Lord is seen taking away the sicknesses and the infirmities of His people; but if the passage in Isaiah is consulted of which this act is said to be the fulfilment, it will be seen that He first took these burdens upon His own shoulders. This, indeed, was ever His blessed way. In His own tender grace and unutterable compassion, He went down *in spirit* under the load of the sorrow of those who sought His aid; then He bore it up upon His own heart before God, and finally took it away. Thus, when they brought unto Him one that was deaf and had an impediment in his speech, after He had taken him apart, etc., looking up to heaven, He "groaned" under the burden of the man's infirmity, and then said, "Ephphatha, that is, Be opened." (Mark vii.) So it was in all His blessed pathway through this world: He was the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, because He entered into the condition of those with whom He came into contact. Truly He was the great Burden-bearer, as, indeed, His tears over impenitent Jerusalem and on His way to the grave of Lazarus abundantly testify. Who can thus consider Him, in these expressions of His sympathy and love, without being deeply touched? Here was One, at least, ever full of unspeakable compassions, incessantly yearning over the burdened hearts of those around, and never chilled in His ministry of love by the lack of response. The springs of His action were above and within—in doing the will of Him who had sent Him, and in gratifying His

own affections. Blessed Lord, well might we be ashamed as we meditate upon Thee; and yet, knowing what we are, Thou dost speak to each one of us, and say, even as to this, Follow Me. May we, by Thy grace, be enabled to cry, Draw us, and we will run after Thee in this Thy service of grace and sympathy.

If now we consider the present service of our blessed Lord as the Great High Priest we shall discover the same principle as its basis. We are told that He is not one that cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and the reason given is that He has been tempted in all points like as we are apart from sin. This we understand to mean that, inasmuch as He has made personal experience of our trials—trials resulting from our infirmities—He is able to enter into our feelings and to sympathise with us in them. The meaning of sympathy is to feel with—not for, that is pity, but *with*—and thus in a very profound sense the Lord still enters into and bears our infirmities. There is not a single sorrow or trouble arising from these which He therefore does not behold, and which does not call out, and that instantly, the loving sympathy of His heart. It is on account of this that, knowing our need, He is able to maintain us in His priestly intercession before God, and to secure for us the needed mercy and grace when we come boldly to the throne of grace. Oh! how blessed it is then to appropriate Christ in His priestly character. He said Himself, “He that eateth Me shall live by Me,” and we may thus be encouraged to appropriate Him, for He is before God as our Representative. It will comfort our hearts and lighten our heaviest burdens to do so. Then, instead of sinking down under our

circumstances, as Peter was sinking into the sea, we shall find that His strong hand of support is under and around us, lifting us above our trials and filling our lips with thanksgivings and praise.

What has been before us will prepare us for the apostle's statement that we who are strong should bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves; and it will be at once noticed that he connects the admonition with the example of Christ, for, after he has exhorted us to please our neighbours for good to edification, he adds, "For even Christ pleased not Himself." In like manner, writing to the Galatians, he says, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." The law of His life was, as we have seen, to be a Burden-bearer, and we are also to charge ourselves with the sorrows and the infirmities of our fellow-believers, and indeed, as we may receive grace, with the difficulties and sorrows of all with whom we may come into contact in our daily lives. This is the gist of our subject, that the believer is to be the expression of Christ in this world, first in the circle of our fellowship, then in our homes, and finally in the world. What a mission! But, alas! we are so often tempted to expect from, instead of giving to, others, to be receivers instead of givers. Before God we may be receivers, and up to the full measure of our capacity, and we must be receivers from Him if we are to give, even as the Lord taught when He said, "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." It would change the whole current of our lives if we entered into this and under-

stood that it is to this we are called, namely, to become channels of grace, sympathy, and succour to those around.

We, then, that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves, because this was "the law of Christ" when He was here upon the earth. And the force of the word *ought* should be observed. This may be illustrated from a similar use of the word by the apostle John. He says, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we *ought* also to love one another." That is, we are under the obligation of righteousness to act one towards another as God has acted towards us; and, similarly, it would not be righteous, since Christ has borne, and still sympathises with us in, our infirmities, if we did not also bear the infirmities of the weak. Let these blessed words be, then, engraven upon our hearts, and, that it might be so, may Christ Himself, in all His tender grace and sympathy, be ever before our souls, in order that, the affections of our hearts being thus drawn out to Him and nourished, it may become a delight to us to walk in His footsteps. It should be added that, the more we are conformed to His image by beholding His glory, the more this blessed trait of His life upon earth with which we have been occupied will be produced in us and expressed. It is also true that if the life of Jesus, in any aspect, is to be manifested in our bodies, there must be the constant application of His death to ourselves. The secret of living Christ is indeed the continuous appropriation of His death. May His love—for there is no other sufficient power for it—constrain us to this, and may He reign so supremely in our hearts that we may never be happy unless treading in His own steps.

GRACE—THE LAW OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

ZECHARIAH vi. 10-13; HEBREWS ii. 6-10, and iv. 13-16.

(Revised.)

MY reason for speaking on a previous occasion of the kingdom was the very great practical effect on each one of us of a proper apprehension of its existence. I noticed that the apostle Paul is found at the end of the Acts "preaching the kingdom of God." It was evidently an important subject of the apostle's testimony. It began with Peter, and Paul takes up the theme, no doubt with fuller light. I referred also to the two great features of the kingdom—Christ exalted and glorified, not yet seated on His own throne, but made Lord and Christ at the right hand of God, and the Spirit down here; that is, a power equivalent to the authority at the right hand of God. Now I feel sure that if you do not understand that, you do not understand the kingdom, for the kingdom is a *spiritual* kingdom; and though it has the features of a kingdom, it is not yet manifested. That it is a spiritual kingdom is proved by the fact of its being maintained by the power of the Holy Ghost down here. You could not have the authority of the Lord maintained down here except by the power of the Holy Ghost—"No man can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Ghost"—you have *no sense* of the authority of the Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost. To understand the kingdom we must of necessity have the Lordship of Christ before us as a reality, and to that end it is maintained not only in word, but *in power*.

Now there are three points in reference to the kingdom that I want to bring before you. First, the LAW of the kingdom; and when I say law I do not use the word in a technical and limited sense, but meaning by it the principle of the kingdom, in the same way that one speaks of the "laws of nature," law in the sense of rule or principle. Then the second point is how that law is maintained, so that it should be efficient in regard of us, for it must be maintained in some way. And my third point is the application of the law of the kingdom to us, how it is intended to affect saints. I think that you will get help from the consideration of these things—not directly from what I say, but it may arouse the question in your minds—and you will find that there is great practical benefit to be derived from the kingdom. But I come to my first point: *the law of the kingdom*.

In the hand of man the kingdom has become a great mustard tree, and the principle of the kingdom is law, and I use the word now in its limited and technical sense; men have availed themselves of the kingdom, and have adapted it to the world. Kings and queens profess to rule "by the grace of God," but in their hands the principle of the kingdom could not be grace; this is not possible, for they could not govern on that principle in the existing state of things, and so if man takes up the kingdom, the principle must of necessity be law: no other principle is possible in the world. The kingdom in the hand of man has thus been falsified, in that a principle has been introduced absolutely foreign to the thought of God. Now the simple principle of the kingdom *is grace*, and a verse will prove this to you: "As sin hath reigned unto

death, even so might GRACE reign through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." The kingdom in the divine thought of it is the REIGN of GRACE. You get the same thought expressed in the scripture I read in Hebrews iv.: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need"; that is, grace is *enthroned*, and that is the thought of the kingdom according to God. I have no doubt whatever that when the kingdom is set up manifestly, when Christ has come to take up the government here, the kingdom will have that character. The law was given by the disposition of angels, but the world to come is put under the Son of man, because the foundation of the world to come is in redemption; so in that day grace will reign through righteousness unto eternal life. We antedate that time and apprehend that the principle of the kingdom is grace.

The kingdom being founded on righteousness, sin is not imputed; hence we are not under law, but under grace, and so we can "come boldly to the throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." It is a wonderful thing to find *mercy* and *grace*. I have experienced this for myself, and have seen it in its application to others. Saints are sometimes brought into very great straits; their way almost shut up, they come into extremity; but though they may be put thus through trial and sorrow for their good, yet mercy and grace come in, for they are not under law, but under grace. But you cannot come to the throne of grace with self-assertion; you must come in lowliness, and then you will "find mercy and grace to help." And grace REIGNS unto

eternal life. I do not think that the idea in that is to put eternal life off to the future: it is the end in view; grace must result in eternal life, as sin resulted in death. It is sometimes said that eternal life is generally future in Paul's writings; but Paul does not, I judge, intend to present eternal life in the future, but in a *moral* sense. For instance, he speaks of our having our fruit unto holiness, and "the *end* everlasting life"—that does not put it off to the future; and so, too, in writing to Timothy he says: "Lay hold on eternal life," and again to the Galatians, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The reaping-time is NOW: you reap eternal life of the Spirit. Well, my first point is that the law of the kingdom is GRACE, and I would say, Get your eye off what men have made of the kingdom of God, and bear in mind that the principle of the kingdom according to God is GRACE.

The next point is a little difficult to make clear, but I trust the Lord may give me grace to convey to you what is before me. It is how the principle of the kingdom is practically maintained. Now I do not doubt for a moment that this is by PRIESTHOOD, and I do not see how it could be maintained otherwise. We could not be maintained in the liberty of grace apart from priesthood. The first mention of priesthood in the Old Testament was when Abraham was returning from the slaughter of the kings; Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God, met him, and brought forth bread and wine. At any rate we get in that incident the idea of support and of joy ministered to Abraham, the man of God, and it was after the

slaughter of the enemies. It was the expression of the divine mind in regard of Abraham; it was the pleasure of God to minister to Abraham, in whom the people of God were foreseen.

Now in looking at the passage in Zechariah vi. 11, etc., we pass on to the future. Joshua, the high priest, who was crowned, was not the Branch; he simply represented the Branch. Of Him we read that He sits and rules upon His throne; He is King upon the throne of David. There are two very distinct thoughts in the passage: one is that He is *King*, He "shall sit and rule upon His throne"; and the other, "He shall be a *Priest* upon His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both"—that is, the establishment of peace is dependent upon the throne and the priesthood. In the millennium, the throne and the priesthood will be combined in CHRIST. He is a Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Then the people of God will have the counsel of peace, and they will experience too the support and refreshment that the Lord will bring forth to them. He will fulfil the type of Moses and Aaron, who, on the day of the consecration, came out of the tabernacle and blessed the people. As yet Christ is not seated upon His throne: "We see not yet all things put under Him, but we see *Jesus* . . . crowned with glory and honour." In Psalm cx. He is called to sit on the right hand of God: "Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool"; but that is not His own throne, and this prophecy is not *literally* fulfilled until He takes His throne; but it shows what is proper to Him, and He will yet have it; but for the moment He is a

Priest at the right hand of God. For us the Son of man is crowned with glory and honour at the right hand of God, and is a Priest there; but you cannot yet get priesthood exercised after the Melchisedec character, because Christ is not yet a King upon His throne.

Now, for the application of priesthood to us, we may look at the end of Hebrews iv. Christ has passed through the heavens—a figure taken, no doubt, from the high priest on the day of atonement, for, as we have seen, Christ is not yet upon His throne. It is evident that the object of the priesthood of Christ is that GRACE may be available to us, that we may come "boldly" to the throne of grace, to find grace for daily need. We do not come there for the assuring of our hearts that we are forgiven our sins—that is not the idea of it; but it is available for saints in their course down here. There are two forms of pressure under which we come, *weakness* within and *pressure* from without; there are few people who do not know something of both. As conscious of weakness, we need, not just bread and wine, but grace and mercy: grace in regard of weakness within, and mercy in regard to pressure without. If people are callous and indifferent or hard, they do not get the experience of grace; but if, on the other hand, they are lowly, they experience both grace and mercy. It is not the thought of God that we should be shut up in extremity, but that we should obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Priesthood stands in contrast to mediatorship. In the provision of a Mediator, God has bridged the distance between Himself and man; that was the

thought of grace. God had to be glorified, righteousness to be secured, and God to be revealed, and all that has been effected; but, with all that, the thought of grace was to bridge the distance between God and man, and that in a *moral* sense. Now in the Mediator this is effected; we find "there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus," and in the fact of the one Mediator, and of His having given Himself a ransom for all, the distance between God and man has been annulled on God's side. In the Mediator, God has brought Himself close to man, so that the testimony of the gospel goes out to man; God can approach man thus. He would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; He can approach man thus, because the infinite distance between Himself and man has been removed in the Mediator and in His work. God presents Himself now to man as a "*Saviour-God.*"

But the distance had also to be bridged on man's side, as to his sense of things; approach to God had to be secured practically, and what makes it practical is the PRIEST. Priesthood is essential to us, that in our minds the distance between *man* and God might be abolished; and you do not understand this except as you enter into the reality of priesthood. I feel sure we do not appreciate the place that priesthood fills in the divine economy; we see the testimony of God going out world-wide, because the distance between *God* and *man* has been bridged in the Mediator; but saints are not so sensible of how the distance is gone between *man* and God, bridged through the Priest. The Priest is Representative of His people; that is clear: He does not represent God, but the people of

God. He "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Aaron was representative of Israel, and now Christ is Representative of the true people of God, and our righteousness is perfect, for our Representative is our righteousness. So, though we are a poor infirm people on earth, we are represented by One who is not infirm or imperfect. Nothing can in any way interfere with our righteousness—*He* is our righteousness; righteousness is eternally secured, and so "we have access into this grace wherein we stand."

But the One who is our Representative in the presence of God is One who can feel with us in our weakness and infirmity here; that is a great point to get hold of; and thus it is we learn how the distance is gone between ourselves and God: the righteous One is our righteousness in the presence of God, and sympathises with us in our infirmities. Now, you will admit that this is a different thought from that of the Mediator; the Mediator is not for the people of God; the Mediator has to say on the part of God to the unconverted; the Mediator is between God and men, and its application is universal—He gave Himself a ransom for all—but the Priest is not for the unconverted, but is Representative of the people of God—that is, of the converted. He is before the face of God for them, and sympathises with them in the pressure under which they are.

It is most wonderful to think that a divine Person is our Representative in the presence of God, and at the same time able, as a Man, to sympathise with us in our weakness and infirmity down here. It has been said that priesthood is for the prevention of failure—to help us in our pressure. Now, that is

a great point, and we must all acknowledge how much we miss from not having a more real sense of the Priest. He is at the right hand of God interceding for us, for His people.

Now, you have the sense that you can come boldly to the throne of GRACE, that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. I do not want to go to God for this or that to improve my circumstances or gratify me as to things down here, but as a suppliant for grace and mercy. Deeply conscious of weakness within and of pressure without—it may be pressure of circumstances, or of ill-health, or of bereavement—I am in circumstances where I need mercy and grace to help in time of need. Well, if you have the sense of the Priest, and of His sympathy, you will come boldly to the throne of grace. I lay stress on the word BOLDLY.

Priesthood is the divinely-ordained way that grace might be in the ascendant in the hearts of the saints, that they should be conscious of and use the throne of GRACE, and I do not think that in any other way people could be conscious that the way is open to God.

I want you to follow the distinction I have drawn between the Mediator and the Priest; there can be no failure in God's approach to man in the Mediator, but in the question of our approach to God there may be much failure to appropriate the Priest. We cannot fail to see how everything has been falsified in Christendom: they have set up a priesthood in imitation of Judaism, for when failure comes in, men will go back to a former dispensation. The Galatians were going back to law and circumcision; and Christendom

in the same way has gone back to a priesthood after the flesh, which I should repudiate emphatically. The truth is that the king and the priest must go together, and I do not care for any priest who is not also king. In Christ we find the King and the Priest and the Prophet all combined; He who is Priest at the right hand of God is both Lord and Christ.

I come now to my third point: why we are placed under grace down here. It is that we might have our senses exercised to discern between good and evil. You can carry out righteousness only in the presence of grace. You could not walk in self-judgment except as in the sense of grace, that is, that sin is not imputed; *then* it is that I can judge sin in myself, and that is the first principle of righteousness in a Christian. If my mind is assaulted by evil—evil thought or evil conception—I have to humble myself that I should have allowed myself to be thus overcome, even for a moment; but in so doing I judge myself; I do not remain there. It is in the very fact of my being under grace that I have ability thus to judge myself. If “clouds have dimmed my sight,” having judged myself, I find out that Christ is as bright to me as ever—“Towards me as e'er Thou 'rt bright.” And the result of all that is, you have your senses exercised to discern between good and evil. Did you ever judge yourself before you were converted? No, you could not; unconverted people could have no clear sense of good and evil, because they do not judge themselves in regard to *God*; they may judge themselves by their fellows, but not in the light of GOD; they do not think of judging the thoughts and intents of their hearts. Many brought up in the light of Christianity

are straightforward and honourable in regard to their fellow-men, but they do not judge THEMSELVES; and that is the first principle of righteousness.

Well, the result of being under grace is that, having your senses exercised to discern between good and evil, it produces the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and that leads to fruit unto holiness. There is the practice of righteousness and advance in holiness, and righteousness and holiness are the characteristics of the new man. The new man is created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth; for you could not get righteousness and holiness apart from truth: it all comes out in the light of the blessed revelation of God; it is there that you reach righteousness and holiness.

Now all this is consequent upon the Priest. Little as I understand it, I bless God for the divine ordering and appointment in the Priest.

My desire is that you may not take up divine things as amateurs; it is not in that way that we come into the reality of them. You have to go into things with purpose of heart, and then you learn something of the value of the Priest, and see the blessed grace that is leading you in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. And righteousness always goes in the direction of holiness, and the end is eternal life. You come to that which is truth in Jesus, "the having put off the old man . . . and put on the new."

May God give us to know better the principles of the kingdom, and how it is maintained, and what we gain from the fact of our being placed under GRACE, and having a throne of grace where we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

F. E. R.

WHAT SAINTS WILL BE CAUGHT UP ON THE LORD'S RETURN?

It is clear to me that any doctrine which would divert from unity, or make any favoured class among the saints who compose the Church of God, cannot be the teaching of Scripture, or according to the mind of Christ. We read that He died to "gather together in one the children of God which were scattered abroad." (John xi. 52.) The saints of this period are those who have believed on the Son of the Father through the word of the apostles. (John xvii. 20.) The feeblest apprehension of the grace of God has come to the weakest believer through the word of the apostles, as we have it now written in the Scriptures (see Luke i. 1, 2), and the desire of the Lord for those who have believed through the apostles' word is, "That they *all* may be *one*, as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." The Lord here embraces *all* believers in *the unity of the divine love and nature*, which exists in the relationship of the Father and the Son. It is not here a unity of mutual agreement, but of nature: "as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." Nor is this the simple unity of Godhead, which would be impossible for the creature, but of *relationship* as it exists between the persons of the Godhead—the Father and the Son, who had become man, and here speaks as man. In this unity the Lord embraces *all* believers of this period, for it is clear that if anyone's faith is not founded on apostolic teaching as set forth in Scripture he cannot be regarded

as a believer ; he cannot be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It cannot, therefore, be of the Lord to teach that there should be some caught up into heavenly relationships when He comes, and some left behind ; for those who believe after the rapture of the Church are only brought into earthly relationship to Christ. They will not know the privilege of those words of heavenly relationship, "As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." That professors will be left behind to perish there can be no doubt ; but we are speaking of Christians in whom there is divine workmanship, those created in Christ Jesus.

That there are among Christians degrees of apprehension of the grace of God, and of their relationship to the Father and to Christ, is most true. John speaks of fathers, young men, and little children ; Paul speaks of babes, who need milk, and of perfect or full-grown Christians, who apprehend what perfection in Christ means and involves for them. But John makes no distinction in declaring to all to whom he wrote the fulness of apostolic knowledge : "That which *we* have seen and heard declare we unto *you*, that *ye also* may have fellowship *with us*." And, then, he shows that the apostolic fellowship was with the Father and the Son. (1 John i. 3.) Paul, in the Epistle to the Philippians, while exhorting the perfect or full-grown Christians to be like-minded with himself, adds, "Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule" (literally "keep rank"). Nor does he merely say : "Be followers of me," but "Be followers *together* of me." There is the same object for the weak and immature believer as for the

full-grown Christian, for the apostle and for the Philippians. It could not be less with those under Christ as Captain of their salvation, than it was with Moses of old, the leader of Israel, who said to Pharaoh, "We will go with our young and with our old." Can it possibly be that the Lord will leave behind some who have the work of His God and Father in their souls, sealed with His Spirit, when He comes? Who is to be caught up, if only those who have walked faithfully are caught up? Who is going to be bold enough to class himself among them? It may be said, "The Lord knows"; but the rapture ceases to be the hope of the soul, because it is not regarded as of grace, but as of faithfulness. In 2 Corinthians i. the apostle will not make a distinction between the Corinthians and himself. He recognizes the work of God in them as in himself: he, a faithful apostle, and they, unfaithful saints. "Now He that establisheth *us with you* in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God." He looks at God's workmanship in the souls of the Corinthians (whom he had regarded as carnal and babes in Christ). In them it was encumbered with the flesh (as Lazarus was with grave-clothes before he was loosed), while in Paul the flesh was reckoned as crucified with Christ, so that practically in him the work of God was seen without encumbrance; and certainly the rapture will disencumber entirely the work of God in the saints from the rubbish of the flesh when Christ puts forth His conforming power.

What strikes me greatly as to this question is, that those who make a division in the unity of the flock of Christ at the rapture have no adequate sense of the *work of God* in souls. They are framing their theory

according to the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of the saints. That will all be settled at the judgment-seat of Christ, and perfectly estimated by Him. Our reward in *the kingdom* will depend upon His estimate: "Be thou over ten cities"; "Be thou over five." There is such a thing as being counted worthy of *the kingdom* for which we suffer, but there is no such thought as being counted worthy of being saved, or of being in heaven and enjoying heavenly relationship. All that is of pure grace—"to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved." For heaven, all is *God's workmanship*, not our works or faithfulness, His new creation in Christ. All this new creation must be with Christ in heaven, or something would be wanting for the setting forth of God's glory in Christ. Christ Himself said that He would securely keep in His own hand the sheep which belong to Him.

It is further stated that only those who look for the Lord will partake in the rapture. The verse in Hebrews ix. 28 does not certainly state this. It distinguishes Christians among the Hebrews by one of the great characteristics of God's ancient people; viz., the expectation of Messiah, and they would not be disappointed: He would appear to them for salvation (compare Isaiah xxv. 9), having settled the question of sin at His first appearing. (Hebrews ix. 26.) That this proper expectation has waned is true, but the Spirit of God could not speak of *the waning* as characteristic of the saints, but *the expectation*. Christ sees what we cannot see. He sees the work which God has wrought in the souls of believers in order to produce affection for Christ, a going out of heart to Him; and if anyone does not love Christ, he is not under

the power of Christ's love: he is not a Christian. Affection for Christ must link itself with Christ, and so with desire for Him, which He knows and sees, though the soul may be unintelligent as to His coming; it may only look to be with Him by means of death, but the gracious Lord knows how to estimate affection, though it be ignorant, and He interprets it according to His own perception. Mary Magdalene sought the Lord in death, instead of expecting to see Him risen, according to His word. It was ignorance, but she was the first to be given to see Him.

What I look for is the revival of affections to Christ as the Bridegroom, so that we may have more heart for Him; and then doubtless we shall intelligently wait for Him. But it would be sad to have intelligence as to the rapture, and but little desire to be with Him.

T. H. R.

“THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.”

LUKE xxii. ; 1 COR. xi.

WE shall NEVER forget the Lord! This is certain, and it is because of the Holy Ghost who is in us, and who ever testifies of Him. His name both here and in heaven is, and will ever be, “as ointment poured forth.” But He has chosen in an especial way to connect the remembrance of Himself *now* (that is, while we are on earth) with this one simple act: the “breaking of bread.”

We get something deeply affecting to us in this. We remember HIM, and cannot help it, but it is His LOVE that is specially before us when it is His death. And this, *His death*, is before us in the breaking of bread:

"This is My body which is given for you. . . . This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you." We have reached Him and His love, and in His LOVE we have reached the relation in which now and to all eternity we are with Him.

Human love as formed of God is great, and it may even be so great as to go on to death. "Love is strong as death." But death comes in, and it is of no avail then. Here is a love that is stronger than death. For death His death, in infinite love, is before us, and still we know His love. The judgment of God was met in infinite LOVE, and it was exhausted. When it is a question of not only exhausting, but of going *beyond*, the judgment of God, it is only the love of Christ that can do that. This is before us in the breaking of bread.

We remember HIM. As we break bread, His love, expressed in death and *going beyond it*, comes before us, but we do not gather together to *show the Lord's death*. We do show it, but we gather together to "do this in remembrance" of HIM. He is more to us than anything that He has done, and in the breaking of bread He is pleased to remind us of the greatness of LOVE—HIS love. But if His love was what He manifested, of necessity *He* is greater than *it*! "This do in remembrance of ME." May our hearts give the glad response that He can accept, the only one that is becoming in us to give. It is the way to be led on to know Him better: He joins the company. "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee." (Heb. ii.) And in listening to Him, do we not learn more?

GLEANINGS.

THERE is more room in Christ, in God, in heaven, to give me rest and peace and joy, than in the whole universe to disquiet, trouble, and grieve me; but the Holy Ghost alone can fill me with it. G. V. W.

To give up what Thou wouldst have me to be without, and take up what Thou wouldst have me to be in, or upon me, be this through grace my service to Thyself, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

G. V. W.

Let the thought of grace and His perfect love come in between you and all your thoughts, and you will find His hand sweet, though it smite you, and Christ, your eternal portion, sweet, in a way you never knew before.

J. N. D.

We must take courage, and hold the Head that holds us up. His strength is made perfect in weakness. Christ will be a sure friend, and, even if we begin to sink in the water, will stretch out His hand and lift us up. It is sweet to have His hand in any case, even if our failing foot has led Him to stretch it out.

J. N. D.

SCRIPTURE NOTES.

I.

JOHN v. 30.

It is undoubted, at least in our judgment, that when the Lord says, "As I hear, I judge," He refers to hearing, not from man, but from the Father. The last word of the previous verse is really "judgment," and not "damnation." It is necessary to observe this to understand the connection. Thereupon, after speaking of the resurrection of judgment (and this must bring in what is said in verse 27), He proceeds, "I can of Mine own self do nothing," that is even in executing judgment as the Son of man; as we also read in verse 19, "The Son can do nothing of [or from] Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." Then He adds, as explaining this, "As I hear, I judge." Invested thus with authority to judge all who will be brought before the great white throne, all the unconverted dead of every age and dispensation, He will act in communion with, and in dependence upon, the Father. Every sentence He passes will be the expression of the mind of God, for the very reason that as He hears, He will judge. What follows will justify this interpretation, for He says, "My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent Me." In the judgment, therefore, He will do the will of God, just as He did it in every step of His pathway upon the earth.

II.

JOHN vi. 54 ; 1 COR. x. 16.

“Is there any difference in the significance of these two scriptures. If so, what is it?”

There is, we think, a very marked distinction. To take the last first, the cup of blessing which we bless, and the bread which we break, express our identification and fellowship with *the death of Christ in this world*. In the act of partaking we avow that we are in fellowship with the One who, as far as this world is concerned, is dead. We thus take our place as associated with Him in death, and as thus outside of man and man's world. True it is that through His death we, as associated with Him in it, pass on to new ground—resurrection ground, but we confine ourselves here to the aspect presented in 1 Cor. x. Passing now to John vi., the first thing to be noted is that after *v. 53* the eating and drinking are *continuous*. In 1 Cor. x. it is an act, though repeated whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, whereas in John it is something to be maintained—something which goes on in the soul—in order to the enjoyment of eternal life. What we have then in John is the constant appropriation of the death of Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost; and thus abidingly identified with it, we are morally (in spirit and in life) outside of this world, and brought into that blessed circle of divine affections where eternal life is known and enjoyed. This will be more fully perceived if connected with verse 40. In Corinthians, then, the eating and drinking speak of what we are in

this world as in fellowship with the death of Christ; in John it is rather the condition for the enjoyment of eternal life.

III.

ACTS vi. 1; xi. 20, etc.

A difference is intended between the terms "Grecians" and "Greeks" in the Authorised Translation. By "Grecians" are meant Greek-speaking Jews, or, to use the technical term, Hellenists, in contradistinction to the Jews who spoke Hebrew. Thus, in Acts vi. 1, the Hellenists (those whose ordinary language was Greek) murmured against their brethren who used the Hebrew, because they thought that there was favouritism in "the daily ministration." There was always a tendency on the part of the Hebrew-speaking Jews to look down upon their brethren who were not acquainted with, or who did not use, the sacred tongue. The same class is indicated in Acts xiii.; but it is now known to be a mistaken reading: it should be "Greeks," and not "Grecians." This term "Greeks" is apparently employed in two senses: first to describe their nationality, that is, that they belonged to the Greek people; and secondly in a general way to express the nations, Gentiles, in contrast with Jews. Acts xx. 21, 1 Corinthians i. 23, 24, etc., may be adduced as examples of this. A little attention to the context will soon enable the reader to detect the special signification of these words, and thus to understand whether Jews or Gentiles are in the mind of the writer. The Syrophenician woman was probably a Gentile rather than of the Greek nation.

IV.

REVELATION xxii. 14.

There is scarcely a doubt that this passage should read, as in the *Revised Version*, "Blessed are they that have washed their robes," etc., but it may certainly be questioned whether the explanatory addition, "in the blood of the Lamb," which is found in some versions, conveys the mind of the Spirit of God. It is quite true that we read in chapter vii. : "These are they which . . . have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; and at first sight this might seem to govern the interpretation of chapter xxii. 14. A closer examination of the passage, however, leads to another conclusion. There are two actions mentioned: "They have washed their robes," and "they made them white." It is quite possible that the second action expresses the effect of the first; still the words, "in the blood of the Lamb," follow the second. What we have to ascertain, then, is the force of these words. Let it be said at once that the phrase, "in the blood of the Lamb," has the meaning of "in the virtue" or "in the power of the blood of the Lamb," and it is often so rendered in the *New Translation*. (See, for example, Rom. v. 9.) Accepting this as the true significance of the words, we shall read that this multitude, which no man could number, had washed their robes, and made them white *in virtue* of the blood of Christ. By this we understand that they, being under the efficacy of His precious blood, and rejoicing in its cleansing efficacy as to the guilt of

their sins, had, moreover, washed their robes and made them white, had gone on to maintain holiness of walk and conduct through constant self-judgment and the application of the Word. Our reason for this conclusion is twofold: First, that robes or garments always represent, when used symbolically in the Old Testament scriptures, a man's habits and surroundings; and, secondly, that they were washed with *water*, never with blood. Thus, after the leper had been sprinkled with the blood of the bird which had been killed, he was to wash his clothes . . . and wash himself in water that he might be clean. (See also Lev. xv. for numerous illustrations of washing the clothes of a defiled person in water.) When, therefore, we read, "Blessed are they that have washed their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city," we understand it of practical meetness for heaven, in a word, of holiness, and as thus agreeing with the Scripture, "Holiness [or "sanctification"], without which no man shall see the Lord." This is of great moment, for while insisting, and vehemently insisting, when necessary, that none who are not under the value of the blood of Christ before God can follow after holiness, it is an essential of the Christian faith to press earnestly upon all who claim to be on the ground of the death of Christ that sanctification or holiness is that to which we are called (1 Thess. iv. 7); and hence it was the apostle's desire for the Thessalonian believers that the very God of peace might sanctify them wholly, and that their whole spirit and soul and body might be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“THE END OF ALL THINGS IS AT HAND.”

1 PETER iv. 7, 8.

It may be well questioned whether we are as deeply conscious of the instability of things around and of the approaching end as were the early Christians. At the close of the year, or of any other period of time, we may be impressed with it; but it is very doubtful if we live daily with the thought that all things are rapidly heading up for the Lord's interposition in power to establish His kingdom. The fact and the teaching of Scripture we are acquainted with, for the subject is often dwelt upon in conversation and in the ministry of the Word; and yet, somehow or another, we relapse into counting upon the continuance of all things as they have been from the beginning of the creation. The effect is that we cease to be actively looking for the return of our blessed Lord and Saviour, that we lose our pilgrim character, and contract the colour of the scene through which we are passing. There are few, we trust, who would dispute this, for on every hand the sad spectacle is seen of Christians with their hearts upon advancement, acquisition, and aggrandisement in this world, so that to be worldly is no longer a reproach even amongst Christians. A brief consideration therefore of the attitude and conduct of the early saints in regard to these things may be used to recall us to the reality of our departure and declension.

It is true that Peter writes to the “sojourners of

the dispersion," that is, to the believing Jews who were scattered through various provinces of Asia Minor. But they were Christians, and their very circumstances did but help to portray, to bring out into relief, the two characteristics that attach to all Christians, namely, that they were strangers and pilgrims. (See chapter ii. 11.) They were strangers because, as with ourselves, they had here no continuing city, inasmuch as their home was on high; and they were pilgrims, or sojourners, because they were on their journey to the home for which they waited, and into which they would be introduced on the Lord's return. Such being their character, it was, as long as they were true to it, an encouragement to be reminded that the end of all things was at hand. It helped them to gird up the loins of their mind, to be sober, and to hope to the end for the grace that was to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chapter i. 13.) In the next epistle likewise, speaking of the coming of the day of the Lord, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein be burned up, he presses upon them in view of these things, with great solemnity, the question, What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

The same sense of the uncertainty of the continuance of the present system of things is very markedly expressed in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is more there in contrast with the unchanging Christ, but it is still there, and again and again pressed home upon those to whom the epistle was addressed. "They [the

heavens] shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment: and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.” Again, in another aspect, the apostle writes, “Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (chapter x. 36, 37); and again he recalls them to God’s promise, “Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” There is indeed scarcely an epistle in which Paul does not bring before us the speedy coming of our Lord, and as preparatory to the pouring out of the wrath to come upon this poor world. Even then it was the “last days,” and John can write, “Little children, it is the last time”—“hour” is the word he uses, albeit he may signify a period; still it shows the light in which he regarded the day in which he lived. Whether Peter therefore, Paul, or John, the testimony is the same, that the end of all things is at hand. Unless, then, we have the sense of this in our souls, if our walk and conduct be not governed by this conviction, we are not, in so far, in communion with the mind of the Spirit of God.

Let us then enquire what should be the moral influence of this knowledge upon our souls. To answer the question we will not, on this occasion, travel beyond the scripture at the head of this paper. Peter then says, “Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer,” or, as it really is, prayers. By “sober” is meant that quietness and gravity of mind, that solemnity of feeling, which is produced by the Spirit

of God in the hearts of those who enter into the character of the approaching end of all things. It is, on the other side, a mind freed from the intoxicating influences of this scene, and thus marked by an absence of all levity, and by the possession of that subduedness and reverence which flow from walking before God in the sense of the shortness of the present period, and of the coming judgments. The Lord's own words may be cited in the same connection: "Take heed to yourselves," He said to His disciples, "lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. . . . Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." And it will be noticed that the Lord, even as Peter, presses constant prayer upon His disciples. In Peter it is "prayers," showing, we cannot doubt, that he had the united prayers of the saints in his mind. How much need to remember his exhortation! Valuable as teaching or exhortation are in their respective places, in the prospect of the end of all things, if realized in the soul, prayers would be felt by all to be more suitable. It would be so if the end of life were before us, and much more will it be so in the contemplation of the dissolution of all things. We may well ask ourselves if we *watch* sufficiently unto prayers, watch against every hindrance to our being together for this end, and watch to lay hold of every opportunity for pouring out our hearts together in the presence of God.

One other thing the apostle emphasizes: "And above

all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins." This exhortation clearly reveals that he has the saints in their mutual relationships in view, that he thinks of them as a company called out of the world, and indeed not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world. And the Lord also before His departure enjoined His disciples to love one another as He had loved them. Likewise the apostle desires that beyond everything they should be distinguished by mutual fervent love. This shows that Peter, no less than John, had drunk in, and lived in, the remembrance of his Lord's exhortations before He departed to the Father, and that he was now led of the Spirit to write to his fellow-pilgrims, and to press them home upon their hearts, in view of the end of all things, on the ground, as he says, that love shall cover the multitude of sins. God's love has "covered" the multitude of our sins, and that same love, acting through us in the power of the Spirit, will cover the sins of our brethren. In the absence of the manifestation of brotherly love, and when our hearts are chilled, instead of the love which is not easily provoked, which imputeth no evil, which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things (1 Cor. xiii.), we become suspicious, harsh, and censorious; and then envy and strife springing up, there follow confusion and every evil work. Let us then lay to heart this injunction of the apostle's, and especially now that so many premonitions of the end of all things are appearing on every hand, so that we may be marked by this fervent love, and thus be ever striving after unity and its expression in the circle of our fellowship.

THE KINGDOM—A TEST AND A REWARD.

(Revised.)

THE more you look into the truth, the more you see what an important place the kingdom has; it is the sense of it that has led me to Luke's Gospel to-night, where the Lord says, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," and in the light of that He exhorts the disciples to "sell that they have, and give alms, to provide themselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not"; that was the gain the Lord contemplated for them; and, as far as I understand it, the kingdom is great gain.

I need hardly stop to explain that I speak of the kingdom *morally*, not dispensationally; in fact I do not think that in its present form it is properly a dispensation, for it is a *mystery*, not a thing manifest as yet. Neither do I speak of what the kingdom has become in the hand of man, of what man has made of it. You see it as a great mustard tree in the world, or may look at it as three measures of meal which have been leavened—that is, a limited sphere in the world which has become permeated with a sort of Christian doctrine, but it is not of that that I am speaking. Neither do I speak of the government entrusted to man, nor yet even of God's moral government, for that always has been, but I speak of the kingdom entirely in a MORAL point of view, and of that we read, "It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," therefore the kingdom is very great gain. One can see that it is great gain to be under the sway of grace, to be conscious that you are heard of God, that you have

approach to the throne of grace, so that you gain mercy, and grace to help in time of need. God is not indifferent to the cry of His people. It may be that you do not get the answer just at the time you ask; often people look for that, and are disappointed because they have not received it; but you may believe that God is not indifferent to you, and be encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace. To know that "sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace," must be a great comfort to the heart of any Christian. It is the fact of being under grace that leads us to the practice of righteousness, in the way of self-judgment.

Now there are two ways in which I wish to speak of the kingdom—as a TEST and as a REWARD. I think the kingdom is presented in both these lights. The kingdom is presented clearly in the shape of a test; you are to *seek* first the kingdom of God. So too in the passage I read in 2 Thess., you *suffer* for the kingdom of God, and in the Epistle to the Ephesians, you *fight* for it; the kingdom is thus a test for faith, you seek it, you suffer for it, and you fight for it. But then you come to the reward; you are accounted worthy of the kingdom for which you suffer, that is, you get the privilege of reigning with Christ. When Christ takes the kingdom and reigns, when He comes again in power, then the part of the saints will be that they will be accounted worthy of the kingdom for which they have suffered. And even in the present we have great gain in the kingdom.

Now the kingdom is a test of what you are pursuing. I ask, what are you pursuing? Do you seek the kingdom of God? or, on the other hand, are you helping

on the course of this world? People take up as a necessity a business, or a profession, or what not; but they may be taking it up in such a way as to be helping on the glory of man. I think a Christian needs to be exercised in regard of this, for seeking the kingdom of God is a very different thing from seeking the glory of man. The kingdom of God is in contrast to the glory of the world; the world is Babylonish; the principle of Babylon is that man is exalted, that man is to have a name. Not only did men set to work to build a tower—that is, a memorial—but a city, and the idea of a city is imperial rule; that has been the character of Babylon. It means, in principle, the glory of man, whether it be the ecclesiastical Babylon or the civil Babylon; in this day men have taken up Christianity and used it to confer glory on man. If you think of the Pope, and of the glory that he has acquired by Christianity, or of the head of a Christian State, you will soon see that Christianity has been used to confer glory on man, and a name; things are falsified in that way. I think that it is of all moment that we should be alive to the existing state of things, and that all will eventually be headed up in the antichrist.

Now, in contrast to this, we have the kingdom of God, and it is a great safeguard; it is not meat nor drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and these are no small gain in the midst of a world of unrest, and sorrow, and sin; and it is great gain in that it preserves you from what is ruling in this world, that is, the glory of man. But it is a test, for it raises the question of what you are pursuing, whether helping on the course of the world or pursuing in peace the kingdom of God.

Now I want to show you the effect of the kingdom of God upon us—how you are affected by being under the sway of grace; this comes out in the teaching of grace. A verse in Titus wonderfully describes the teaching of grace; it works in this way, that we live “soberly, righteously, and piously in the present age.” You are separated from the spirit and principle of the age. The age is the contrast to these principles; you could not say that man is marked by sobriety, or righteousness, or piety! But the heart, under the sway of grace, is taught that “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” Now, is that not RIGHT, morally wholesome? As regards sobriety, it is a great thing to get away from inflated notions of oneself. Man is accustomed to think much of himself, and of men, but it is inflation, and it is a great thing to get away from this, that is, to live *soberly*—to judge of things not by appearance, but in a sober estimate of myself first, and then of all around me. Grace does not make a radical of a man; it helps a man to estimate things by what they are in the light of truth. Thus we have sobriety.

Then as to *righteously*. First you walk in self-judgment down here, that is, the application of righteousness to ourselves. It is impossible to carry out righteousness in regard to anyone else, if I do not first in myself, in the way of self-judgment. I judge the motives and springs of things in myself. There are springs of evil in every one of us, but there is no reason why evil should break out in you, if you walk in self-judgment. I quite admit the importance of walking righteously in regard of one's

neighbour; we are to "owe no man anything, but to love one another"; but if you are to maintain righteousness in the world, you must begin at home. That is what the presence of the Holy Ghost calls for in a Christian. Sin is not allowed; we do not walk in sin, but in the judgment of sin—that is the path of the Christian.

Now righteousness undoubtedly separates you from the course of the world. Any man who is accustomed to walk in self-judgment is practically separated from the world, for it is impossible for him to go on with those who do not walk in self-judgment; there is that distance between him and the unconverted man. The unconverted man is not exercised as regards holiness, and he could not be pursuing it, because he does not carry out righteousness, and that is the true way to holiness. He might not break out into anything gross, but he is not concerned with regard to holiness, and it is impossible for the Christian to go on with those who are not pursuing holiness, "without which no man can see the Lord."

But further, we have piety. I think that piety means the sense of God's care in regard of every necessity of this life, so that one is not governed by mere worldly prudence or forethought. Confidence in the care and goodness of God is what I understand by piety. Faith carries me into God's things, piety brings God into my things. Now that is the effect of being under the sway of grace. My course and ways are not ordered according to human prudence, but in confidence on God. As the apostle says to Timothy, "Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who

is the Saviour of all men, specially of those who believe." Seek the kingdom of God, and the effect will be greatly to separate you from the spirit and principle of the age in which you are, because your mind is governed by principles different from those which rule in the world—by sobriety, and righteousness, and piety; and these things do not contribute to the glory of man. If a man is to have part in the glory of the world, there must be a considerable amount of self-confidence with him—he must not be too morally punctilious; and he cannot be pious, because he must be governed by the principles, and maxims, and spirit of this world, and they have nothing to do with denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; but in having done this you find yourself against the current of this world, and it brings you to suffering, and a Christian must be prepared to suffer loss in this world. It is a question of the glory of this moment, or of the glory of the LORD; and if you have glory with men, you will not have glory with the Lord.

Now where grace has its true effect you are "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ"—you are waiting for the glory. Grace leads to GLORY—it is the divinely-appointed way to glory; but you will not have part in the glory of the Lord if you are pursuing the glory of man, and therefore the kingdom becomes a test to each one of us. But there is the other side to it; you will be accounted worthy of the kingdom for which you suffer. In early days Christians suffered much more than we do. These Thessalonians had suffered in a very real

way for the kingdom of God; when they had turned from idols they found themselves separated from all that was accounted religious. The Jews, the religious people, had turned to be persecutors of all who took the ground of being under grace, and the Gentiles had suffered like things of their own countrymen; but then they were accounted worthy of the kingdom for which they had suffered.

Now I think you will admit that grace has a very great effect upon us. I feel the great importance of righteousness; grace reigns through righteousness. It is of great moment in connection with the authority of the Lord. Under grace we are not afraid to touch the question of righteousness, because we know that there is no imputation of sin; we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, and therefore we can afford to walk in righteousness. I do not think I should be concerned about righteousness, unless I knew that I had the forgiveness of sins. And grace reigns "unto eternal life"—you are going in that direction. I will tell you how that works; if you recognize the obligation to righteousness the Spirit is free, and is a well of water springing up unto eternal life. The great point is that the Spirit should be free, and for that there must be the acceptance of the obligation to righteousness. To have righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, you must learn that the Spirit will not tolerate the flesh; but with many of us the Spirit is occupied against the flesh, but in self-judgment the Spirit is free in you to spring up to eternal life. You must walk in self-judgment; you cannot conceive a greater delusion than the idea of holiness as held by some to-day; the only way to holiness is in self-

judgment. They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, because they do not walk in self-judgment; and they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting—and that does not refer to the future, you reap it NOW, in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit of God, being free, leads us into the light of the Father and the Son, into the sphere and region of divine life, and there it is that we reap life everlasting. It is into the sphere of divine love, where the love of the Father and of the Son is known and enjoyed, that the Spirit leads the heart of the Christian, and there it is that you get the reality of eternal life.

Now one word more. As you go on you will find that it was the *Father* who brought you into the kingdom, and that is a very important point to apprehend. Many have thought that they got into the kingdom by faith in the gospel, and that is true, too; but when you get more light you apprehend that the Father brought you into it. That is a great comfort to me—to see that everything originated with the Father; if it had originated with me, I should have little comfort, but I can have confidence, knowing that everything originated with the FATHER—as you read in Colossians, “Giving thanks to the FATHER, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” It has been the work of the Father to translate you into the kingdom of the Son of His love. The Father has brought you there that you might be in the light of the Son of HIS love, that your pathway down here might be directed and

governed by Him. And if you walk in the light of the Lord, you cannot go far wrong in this world. It is a great thing to get away from man, and from the regard of man, so that you are not looking for direction to this one, or to that one; and to be conscious too that your pathway down here is not in yourself—it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps, but in the light of the Son of the Father's love. We get guidance and direction from there, where He is—from above. And he, too, is your Shepherd.

And there is a *reward*. You will sit down with all the worthies of the Old Testament at the table of Christ, in His kingdom. They all will have their part in the glory of the kingdom; everything that has been of God will be gathered up in heaven, and every worthy will be there—Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob—and you will sit down with them, and Christ Himself will be the minister of our joys there, and we shall reign with Him. Christians who seek to reign now can have very little knowledge of what it is to be under the sway of grace; they want to hold to the world, and yet with a certain amount of piety. If your heart is under the sway of grace, it will certainly have the effect of separating you from the scene of Babylonish glory. I do not think we can be too simple in our ways in this world in the avoidance of show or anything of the sort, living soberly, and righteously, and piously. You do not want to sail as close to the wind as possible, but to value what is of God; and that can only be as the heart is under the sway of grace. And then we are like men who wait for their Lord; the great thing is faithfulness to the Lord in the time of His absence, the confession of His

name. But the Lord is going to return, and the point is that when He comes and knocks, we might open to Him immediately. The coming of the Lord is bound up with the thought of the kingdom, and it is a great thing on our part to be watching and faithful, looking for the blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. The glory of man is in appearance, but the glory of God is moral; it is the effulgence of what God Himself is morally, the shining forth of His wisdom, and holiness, and love in the accomplishment of His counsels. The glory of man is glitter and tinsel; it may be very good tinsel, but tinsel it is, and the characteristic of all here is that it degenerates. Solomon says, in regard to everything under the sun, "*all is vanity*"; it degenerates, but the glory of GOD will never degenerate.

May God give us grace to see the gain of the kingdom, that is the thing I would press. It is a gift on the part of the Father. If the Father has brought you to the kingdom, it is because the kingdom is great gain, but at the same time it is a test to each of us. We must be prepared to suffer for it. If you stand for it, you have to take to you the whole armour of God, and the sword of the Spirit, and you fight for the kingdom; and though apparently you suffer, often you gain the victory. It is a curious thing that where saints suffer for the kingdom, they often gain the victory morally. You see this with the Lord Himself—it was in death that He gained the victory over the enemy; and so it is often true, that in suffering for a thing you gain the victory. May God give us to see the reality of these things, and separate us more from the course of things in this world, and from the glory of man.

F. E. R.

MARY IN THE TEMPLE.

THE godly and devout character of Mary and Joseph is testified to by their careful attention, in every particular, to the Word of God. Both in respect of the circumcision of the Holy Child Jesus, and in Mary's own purification, they were found in exact obedience to the prescriptions of the law (see Leviticus xiii.), as likewise in the presentation of Jesus to the Lord, "as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord." Forty days were to elapse before Mary could thus appear in the temple at Jerusalem; and it was during this time that the visit of the wise men from the east, as recorded by Matthew, must have occurred. In that scene, as in the visit of the shepherds, Mary is in the background, and we may surely say that she was there willingly. In communion with God's mind, at least in her measure, she would delight in the recognition of the coming glory of the One who was "born King of the Jews"; and she would in no wise be astonished when she saw them fall down and worship Him, or when they opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. It was her joy that she had been the chosen vessel of His birth; but she had thenceforward to learn that to be in relationship and identification with God's Anointed would entail upon her the persecution of the god of this world. The moment God's Man-child was born,

the dragon (Satan), who had been waiting for the event, sought to devour Him. Mary, with Joseph, as well as Jesus, became the object of the enmity of the wicked king; but sheltered by divine protection and guidance, when they had to flee into Egypt, and again, after they had returned to the land of Israel, into Galilee to their former home, they enjoyed the inestimable honour and privilege of ministering to Him who was no less than the Son of God.

Recalling these incidents to connect the narrative, we may now consider the scene in the temple. Malachi had written, "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple," and lo! He had come—"when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law." Jerusalem that day was pursuing her course, her people were buying and selling, attending to their household duties and their daily avocations; their Idumean king, blood-thirsty and cruel, miserable and unhappy, but blinding his subjects with his munificence and the splendour of his edifices, was bent as ever upon the gratification of his evil lusts; and all alike were in ignorance of the wondrous fact that God had visited His people, that the glorious Messiah of whom the prophets had sung, and whose kingdom should extend throughout the earth (see Psalm lxxii.), was already in their midst, and being carried into the sacred precincts of the temple.

But God, whatever the attitude and unbelief of the nation, always secured the acknowledgment of His beloved Son, in whatever character He was presented. So in this instance He had prepared the hearts of a few, those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem,

to welcome His Christ; and of these, two had been chosen to behold Him at this time with their eyes. Mary and Joseph had trodden the streets of the city with their precious charge, as any other humble Jewish saints might have done in similar circumstances, and they had entered unobserved and unnoticed into the sacred enclosure, knowing nothing of what God had been doing. But, as the evangelist writes, "There was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon: and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came by the Spirit into the temple." Here then was one, and one under the complete control of the Holy Ghost, whom God had called and qualified to receive His Son, when Mary and Joseph brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him after the custom of the law.

This wondrous scene may well and profitably occupy our attention before proceeding with our subject; and as we consider it may we remember that we are standing upon holy ground. We read that Simeon "took" Jesus up in his arms; it should be "received Him into his arms"; and every reverent soul will at once perceive that this is the more suitable, as, indeed, it is the correct word. He received Him into his arms, we may be sure, from the hands of Mary. What a sight! That pious and devoted mother handing her Child into the arms of the aged Simeon, and Simeon to have the inestimable privilege of receiving into his arms that Child in whom all the counsels of God were to be established and perfected!

And who was that Child? He was the Word become flesh, of whom it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the WORD WAS GOD." (John i. 1.) He was "the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn of every creature: 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 ["in"] Him all things consist."* He was the One in whom "all the fulness was pleased to dwell" (Col. i. 15-19); He was the "Son whom God hath appointed the Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds . . . the brightness of [the] glory, and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." (Hebrews i. 2, 3.) On the other hand, as born into this world, He was the Seed of the woman, the Seed of Abraham, and the Son of David. All these glories, and many more, for He was a Divine Person who had deigned to become flesh, circle around, and shine out from that Holy Babe whom Mary gave into the arms of Simeon. Let us gaze to the full, and reverently, upon this divine mystery; for the more we gaze, the more will our hearts be bowed with adoration in the presence of God's unspeakable gift, before such unfathomable grace and such knowledge-surpassing love.

* There are three prepositions here used, the force of which may be given in the words of one competent to speak upon this subject. He says, "Ἐν, in the power of whose Person. He was the One whose intrinsic power characterized the creation. It exists as His creature; διά, the instrumental power, εἰς, 'for.' Thus ἐν, διά, εἰς the characteristic power, active instrument, and end."

Simeon stood before God with THIS CHILD in his arms; and with an overflowing heart he blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." All his desires were satisfied, every link with earth was broken as soon as he possessed God's salvation, and he was ready to depart in peace. Like Moses also, yea, beyond the experience of Moses when he stood on Pisgah and saw the land which God had provided for His people, Simeon, with the Holy Child in his arms, was at the centre of God's counsels, and thence he looked onward to the time when the Gentiles would be brought into the light, and when Christ would be the glory of His people Israel.

Joseph and the Child's mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of Him, as well they might, for here we only know in part; it is only gradually we acquire and come into the power of the truth we profess to acknowledge. Two things follow. To be associated with Christ in this world brings both blessing and sorrow, and this is here exemplified in Mary. Simeon had "blessed" God, and now he blessed them—Joseph and Mary; and then, addressing Mary, he said, "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." God thus in tender grace, through His servant Simeon, prepared Mary for her Child's path of sorrow and rejection. And who can doubt

that it was chiefly when she stood by the cross of Jesus, and beheld His sorrow, that the sword pierced through her own soul also? How merciful it is in the ways of God that it is only gradually we approach our sorrows, and that we find when they come upon us that they are "lustred with His love"! Mary would never forget these words, but "pondering them in her heart," she would be constantly laying them out before God in her meditations and prayers. But if through her life she had to live under the shadow of the cross, she would find, we may be assured, ample compensation and sustainment in the company of her Son. There would be much she would not understand, but she would certainly rest in the knowledge that Jesus, Jehovah the Saviour, was with her, and hence that, in all the earth, there was no one endowed with such an unspeakable privilege and blessing. For His sake, and from love to Him, she would be enabled to survey the future, and to leave it all in the hands of Him who had chosen her for the path.

The poverty of Joseph and Mary is incidentally seen in the sacrifice they brought in connection with the presentation of Jesus. In Leviticus we read, concerning the law of purifying for a woman who has borne a child: "If she be not able to bring a lamb [for a burnt offering], then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean." (Chapter xii. 8.) Mary was "not able" to bring a lamb; and the Spirit of God thus calls our attention to the fact that our Lord was born in the circumstances of humble life, that His "mind"

was, from the outset, yea, before He came to earth, to humble Himself. What mother would not, if she could, surround her child with every comfort and even luxury? But all was ordered by divine wisdom, and as we consider not only the circumstances of our Lord's birth, but the pathway of Him who had not where to lay His head, we are only the more impressed with His unspeakable grace.

The rites of the temple, together with Simeon's prophetic utterances, were ended, and when Joseph and Mary "had performed all things according to the law of the Lord," they left the temple, went down the steps, and through the temple gates with their precious charge, and "they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth," where they pursued their daily avocations, possessed of a divine secret which no one in Nazareth knew but themselves.

GOD KNOWN AND GOD UNKNOWN.

GOD could not be known in Old Testament times. He had not come out, and man could not go in. *Now*, God is revealed in three Persons, and this could not be true until the Son had come. The Son declares the Father, and the declaration is made good in us by the indwelling of the Spirit. God is known. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent." Without the three, it is clear that *God* cannot be known, since He has been pleased to make Himself known in *this* way. We are shut up to these Three.

H. C. A.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

I.

A CORRESPONDENT in the other hemisphere, writing in appreciation of an article which appeared in the July number, suggests the possibility of a mistake in the interpretation of a scripture. He says, "May I put a query to you on a little point in the article in question? You say:

'The Child so born should be called the Son of God, the Son of God as born into this world, according to the second Psalm.'

"I quite see that the Lord is called Son of God in respect of His humanity, according to Luke ii. 35, as well as with regard to the Godhead, as in John iii. and other places. But my difficulty is in regard to your reference to the second Psalm. The Holy Ghost, in Acts xiii. 33, instructs us that this relates to resurrection, while by your article it relates to His birth into the world as Son of the Virgin Possibly you may see fit to make some little reply in your magazine."

Answer. Our correspondent's difficulty springs from a misconception of the translators of our Bible. Acts xiii. 33 should read, "In that He raised up Jesus," not, "In that He raised up Jesus *again*." Omitting the word "again," "raised up" refers to the birth of Jesus into this world and His entry upon His mission, just as, for example, we read in verse 22 that God "raised up" unto His people "David to be their king." (See also verse 23.) This interpretation is rendered more certain by verse 34, where the apostle proceeds to speak of the resurrection of Christ. We are therefore compelled to adhere to the view expressed in the article; but there is another scripture which speaks of the resurrection of Christ in its bearing upon His being the Son of God. In Romans i. 4 it is

said that God's "Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, 'was' declared [to be] the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." We trust that our correspondent's difficulty will be removed by this reply, and we heartily thank him for his letter.

II.

Another correspondent enquires as to the force of the last clause of Hebrews x. 9, "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." The context, in connection with chapters viii. and ix., makes it very plain that by the "first" the Spirit of God refers to the whole Jewish system which was established together with the first covenant (see chapter viii. 13), and which has been displaced by the system of grace established according to God's purposes in and through the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus in chapter viii. the new covenant displaces the old; in chapter ix., on "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle," etc., we have another, "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man," which sets aside the first; and "better sacrifices," displacing those of bulls and goats—the blood of Christ in all its excellency instead of that of Jewish sacrifices, the one sacrifice of Christ with its eternal efficacy instead of the yearly recurring sacrifices which could never take away sins. Generally speaking, therefore, the "first" signifies Judaism, and the "second" Christianity, understanding by this term the whole system of grace, revealed and established in Christ, which goes on to the consummation of all God's purposes in new creation. Every feature of this system is "new," and will remain "new" for ever. It could not grow old. The "first" is old, and has disappeared; the "second" abides eternally.