

SCRIPTURE TRUTH.

FIRST ANNUAL VOLUME.

==== Edited by ====

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“Thy Word is Truth.”

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Scripture Truth.

THE title of our magazine will be sufficient evidence that we wholeheartedly accept the Scriptures as given by inspiration of God, and as such we hold that they have authority to bind the conscience, and are the final court of appeal in every question of doctrine and conduct.

They are replete with comfort for the saints of God, and are all-sufficient for correction and instruction in the way of righteousness; so that by them the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

The Scriptures will always be prized by the children of God, not only because they come from God, but because they speak of Christ, and indeed it is only as this is seen, and Christ is loved, that they are understood.

We shall endeavour, as time and space permit, to draw out from the Scriptures the things concerning Christ, believing that the surest way of preservation from the seductive movements, doctrines, and spirits that abound, is occupation with that which is good; "for who is he that shall harm you, if ye

be followers of that which is good."

All good is centred in, and flows from Christ; and it is as He is paramount in the lives of His people, that they are happy themselves and useful to others.

Then Christianity becomes a reality—no longer visionary, but practical; no longer mere doctrine for the mind (important as that is), but power in the life.

We have a link—an imperishable link—with all who love this living Lord and Saviour in sincerity and truth. In His name we greet you.

May we seek earnestly to build ourselves up in our most holy faith, to pray in the Holy Ghost, and to keep ourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

Now unto Him that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

The Scriptures of Truth.

We cannot be reminded too frequently and too emphatically of the authority of Scripture, and of the relation in which every Christian stands to the word of God.

According to the Scriptures, Christ died, and according to the Scriptures, Christ rose again, and *all* divine truth which is necessary and salutary for us, is taught by the Spirit through the prophetic and apostolic word.

The Scriptures are above every age: for they were written by the Eternal Spirit; and our wisdom is to receive

Scripture teaching with absolute child-like faith, and to receive it according to its own method, not mixing it up with the enticing words of human wisdom, and the thoughts and terminology of the schools.

The Scriptures reveal Christ, and they judge everything that prevents our walking by faith in Him. Solemn and stern are their voice, but the blessed result to those who tremble at the word of God, is that they are directed to look off unto Jesus, who is the way of life to the wise, and thus they are kept from the evil that is in the world.

(EXTRACTED).

On Philippians II. and III.

(H. NUNNERLEY.)

Going down and pressing up.

Phil. ii. 3, 5-8.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Phil. iii. 7-10.

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.

THE secret of peace among Christians is found in Phil. ii., and the secret of progress in Phil. iii.

If strife and vainglory disturbed the peaceful circle at Philippi, Paul directed their thoughts to Christ in humiliation; or if earthly greatness attracted them, he turned them to Christ in glory.

In these two chapters there are two mountain peaks with the valley of death between.

How graphically the apostle brings before them in chap. ii. the *mind* which was in Christ Jesus. He begins with the lofty height whence Christ came. Subsisting ever in the *form* of God, He thought it not robbery to be equal with God. Seraphim veiled their faces as they cried one to another, "Holy! Holy! Holy!" Angel and archangel did homage to Him as Lord and Master; their honour, as their joy, was to do His bidding. His dwelling was in light unapproachable—a light too bright for mortal sight. Very God in form and substance.

The first step in His downward pathway was to lay aside the *form of God*. The next to take upon Him the form of a servant; but His Person was unchanged. A monarch does not cease to be the same mighty potentate when his robes of State and throne of dignity are laid aside. Christ did not cease to be *what He was before* when He *became flesh* and dwelt among us.

In days like these, when His *Manhood* is exalted at the expense of His *Godhead*, we cannot insist too much on His deity, or dwell too fully on the incommunicable glory of His Person. Mighty in power, and wonderful in working, He—who in the form of a servant became a real, true, blessed man, made of a woman—was, is, and ever will be, "God over all, blessed for ever!"

Scripture constantly reminds us of this. The smitten Shepherd is Jehovah's fellow. The betrayed Saviour, crucified in weakness, is the great I AM. The lowly Man, who sat wearied on Sychar's well, is the "Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not, neither is weary." The Man whose days were shortened, and strength weakened, is the same whose years have no end. He who carries the lambs in His bosom, has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand. He who slept in the storm could still that storm with a word. The Person is one, though varied in His circumstances, form, and condition. Jesus and Jehovah are one in essence and being.

Going downward, and passing by all angelic beings, He took the form of man—a lower grade of creation than angels. He emptied Himself, and became the dependent One. He who had been accustomed to command, now stooped to obey. Never was obedience

like His! His meat was to do the Father's will. His life was lived on account of the Father. In a world where everybody sought to go up, He sought to go down.

He was meek and lowly in heart. He lived a life of constant dependence, unflinching obedience, perfect confidence, and unbroken trust. He knew the blessedness of the man who trusteth in the Lord. His ear was open morning by morning to hear as a learner. He could wait two days before going to the grave of Lazarus; but having got the commandment, all the enmity, hatred, and murderous plans of the Jews could not stop Him.

This is the Man whose mind is to be in us. This is the corrective for strife and vainglory, and the secret of practical unity. We have no height from which to descend, no reputation to lay aside, no stoop to make. It ill becomes us then to seek to go up where *He* went down.

The self-emptied One not only became the dependent One, but also the humbled One. What a mighty stoop this was! a stoop expressing more fully the mind which was in Him. The law had said that obedience to its precepts would ensure to the obedient one, continuance of life; then death could not claim Him. He had a right to live, for He had magnified the law and perfectly shown what a man should be for God. He had neither inherent nor contracted sin. He could have rightly claimed when His life on earth was finished, a convoy of angels to carry Him back to the heights of glory. Instead, He chose the way of death, for obedience lay there.

What a death! A cross between two malefactors. He, the only one who needed not to taste death, voluntarily descended into the lower parts of the earth, and endured a malefactor's cross with all its shame and ignominy. What a pathway! Lower and lower, down and down, less and less, until He reached the deepest and darkest point of degradation.

Disobedience brought Adam into death.

Obedience brought Christ into death.

Disobedience in Eden grasped at the highest.

Obedience brought the high and lofty One down to the lowest.

Going down is not pleasant to nature. Giving up, and giving way, is that to which we are all averse. It is only as Christ fills the vision of our souls, and the Dove which rested upon Him in His earthly pathway controls, that peace, unity, and likemindedness will form and mould a company of saints. They all kept rank in David's day, because all were of one heart to make David king.

PHILIPPIANS III. presents Christ Jesus once more in the place from whence He came. He left the mountain top to come down, has passed through the valley of death, and has now ascended again.

He is the same Person, but how changed His circumstances from those which were His when here! He is still a Man, but Man set in the highest dignity. He is no longer in degradation. The humbled One is now the exalted One. The shameful cross, and the borrowed tomb, have been exchanged for the glorious throne of the Majesty on High. The despised Nazarene now bears a name to which beings heavenly, earthly, and infernal must bow. None humbled himself as He. None has been exalted as He. The glorious height, where the emptying began, has welcomed Him back again; the Man Christ Jesus is Lord of all.

He still retains a servant's form, and is as truly and really a man as in the days of His flesh, but man in new accompaniments of being. Weakness and weariness over, He is the same Jesus in a glorious spiritual body. He that descended is the same also that ascended. No change in the Person. A Man is in the glory of God, and yet Himself is the God of

Glory. Paul calls Him "My Lord," and esteemed the knowledge of Him to be the very highest knowledge; so the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus was that upon which his whole being was set.

Paul could not empty himself, but he could strip himself. One after another the rags of self-righteousness were cast on the dust heap. Forgetting the things that were behind, he pressed on toward the mark, the prize of the high calling of God. Christ Jesus had laid hold of him, he longed to lay hold of Christ Jesus; to grasp all that for which he had been apprehended.

If the descent carried his blessed Master to a self-sacrificing death, Paul was willing to travel that road, if he could but be in company with Him. If the ascent carried Christ into a scene of glory, Paul would gladly part with everything that would bind him to earth and the flesh, in order to join his Master there. He could weep for those whose minds were set on earthly things, for his was engrossed with things of heaven.

Devoted servant of a once humbled and now exalted Lord, his word to us is "Follow me." His conversation was in heaven, his living links were there.

It was from thence he looked for his Lord, as Saviour, so that in every way he might be perfectly like his Master, in a body fashioned like to His glorious body.

May we learn from him how to go downwards, and how to press upwards. How to tread Christ's pathway here, and seek Him in glory there. How to follow in humiliation, and reach Him in exaltation. Thus, and thus only, shall we be free from strife, vainglory, and earthly-mindedness, and walk in peace with one another.

Let us remember, Christ in humiliation is our Exemplar.

Christ in exaltation is to be our Magnet.

The glorified One would produce in us the gracious traits of the once humbled One.

The true Christian is an anomaly, he must go down and go up at the same time, nor can be exalted but as he humbles himself.

"O patient, spotless One! our hearts in meekness train,
To bear Thy yoke, and learn of Thee, that we may rest obtain.
O fix our earnest gaze so wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That, with Thy beauty occupied, we elsewhere none may see."

Papers on Service.

(EXTRACTED).

EVERY Christian is the bondsman of Jesus Christ; simply accept that, and it will be a great help to you. Has Christ the right to you? to all yours? Yes, you are His slave. Paul delights to call himself bond-slave. People in their natural amiability talk of the emancipation of slaves, but they carry it much further, they emancipate themselves. There is a very great claim connected with being a slave. Your master has full right over you. All yours belongs to the Lord. If you are a slave you cannot claim anything for yourself. Well, this is a great principle to get hold of, and you do not understand service until you do.

Very often we act as if we thought we were volunteers, that we may serve or not, just as we please. Not at all! You are slaves and have no option.

If you are a slave, you have no right to do anything but at the dictation of your master. "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body." He has bought us (therefore He is the Saviour of the body in that sense), and you ought to be glad that He has; the more you dwell on it, the more pleased you will be to be His slave. We ought to be able to answer all who ask, why do you do so and so? I am doing it righteously, I am Christ's bondsman to do His pleasure; not

what I like, but what He likes. To establish this turn to 1 Cor. vii. 22, 23. "He that is called in the Lord, being a servant (slave), is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant. Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men."

You should be glad that you are a slave, because He is such a wonderful Master. It is here believers fail. They do not start with the fact, that they have a Master, who has a full right over their

whole life. It is not what you think you can spare Him. If you are honestly and fairly in His hands as His slave, you may be quite certain He will take much better care of you, than you could take of yourself.

People talk of fidelity, but do they begin with fidelity to Christ? If you are not right with Christ, you will be feeble elsewhere. If you are not right at the top, how can you be right anywhere else?

BE not so anxious to give out, that you never take in. Be not in so much hurry *to do*, that you forget *to be*. This is the haste that makes no speed. Old Nat had a large wood pile before him, and he sawed very hard to make that pile smaller. His saw needed sharpening and re-setting so badly, that it was dreadful work to make it go at all. An honest neighbour stepped up to him, and said, "Nat, why don't you get that saw sharpened? If you got that put to rights, you would do a great deal more than you are doing." "Now then," replied Nat, "don't you come bothering here, I have quite enough to do to saw that pile of wood, without stopping to sharpen my saw."

It is needless to point the moral of that anecdote; take note of it, and in future act accordingly. It is a waste of time, not an economy of it, to dispense with study, private prayer, and due preparation for your work.

Those who serve the Lord have more cause to pray and read their Bibles, than any other people in the world.

GOING through the famous factory of Sevres the other day, I noticed an artist painting a very beautiful vase. I looked at him, but he did not look at me; his eyes were better engaged than in staring at a stranger.

There were several persons at my heels, and they all looked at him, and made various observations, yet the worker's eye never moved from his work. He had to paint the picture on

It was a very wet day the last time I was at Cologne, and I occupied a room in the hotel, which presented me with a highly picturesque view of the public pump. There was nothing else to see, and it rained so hard that I could not shift my quarters; so I sat and wrote letters, and glanced at the old pump.

People came with pails for water, and one came with a barrel on his back, and filled it. In the course of an hour that individual came several times; indeed, he came almost as often as all the others put together, and always filled up his vessel. I rightly concluded that he was a seller of water, and supplied other people, hence he came oftener and had a larger vessel than any one else.

And that is precisely our condition. Having to carry the living water to others, we must go oftener to the well; and we must go with more capacious vessels than the general run of Christians. Look then, ye who would be Christ's servants, to your personal piety, and draw largely from the source and spring of all good.

that vase, and what benefit would he get from noticing us, or from our noticing him? He kept to his work. We would fain see such concentration and abstraction in every man who has the Lord's work to do. "This one thing I do." Some frown, some smile, but this one thing I do. Some think they could do it better, but this one thing I do. How they could do it may be their business, but it certainly is not mine.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 1.—The Necessity of a Revelation.

IT is late in the history of the world to be going into the question of the origin of a Book, which began to be written about four thousand years ago, and the writing of which extended over half that time; but late or early, the question seems with some people to be still undecided, and open to debate; and certainly the antiquity of the dispute does not in the least lessen its importance, neither does it tend to diminish the ardour of the combatants, nor the interest of the onlookers.

It is a question which no thoughtful person will ever relegate to a secondary place in man's pursuit of knowledge, for the tremendous claim made by the Book itself, causes the question of its title to that claim, to take the precedence of all others. Nor are men really able to treat the question with indifference. The sang-froid which characterises some who profess to have settled the matter in favour of thick darkness, as opposed to a revelation from God, bears the stamp of being only skin-deep, and not the outcome of honest conviction.

It scarcely needs to be asserted that the leaders of the world bear the Book no goodwill, but rather the opposite, and therefore has it been subjected to ceaseless hostility, and to a criticism more fierce than that which has fallen to the lot of any other writings. It has been, and is, more fervently loved, and more intensely hated, than all the rest of the world's books put together; and the strange thing about its history is, that the house of its supposed friends is the place where it has been most sorely wounded. Those who have been foremost in their protestations of zeal in the service of its Author have shown themselves to be its worst enemies, and in their custody it had to remain for ages "a prisoner in bonds." How it survived the persecutions to which it

was exposed, is almost as great a miracle as is the way in which it was given to man.

Thank God, the days of its incarceration are over, and it is free to tread its pathway of blessing throughout the wide world. In the days of Luther a moral resurrection took place through the grace of God. The German monk who eventually shook the throne of the proud bishop of Rome, saw in the dim cloister, through its sacred page, a light above the brightness of the sun; and when his voice arose heralding in the ears of men, the life-giving words of the dusty roll, the wheel of the papal chariot became scotched for ever, the powers of darkness were alarmed, and hell stood aghast before the boldness of this daring man. The power of God made itself felt, and the tiara trembled on the brow of him who trafficked in the souls of men, as he saw the hope of his gains vanishing from before his eyes. Men began to speak their minds more openly, the priestly bondage under which they had groaned was no longer discussed in whispers, and even kings began to breathe more freely, for the epistle of the apostle to the Romans now clung at the throat of the Italian prelate. Such is the power of this most wonderful Book.

It declares itself to be of heavenly origin: the very words of the living God, breathed into the hearts and minds of His servants, and penned by them as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. No other communications on earth make such claim to universal homage. The writers dive away back into the past eternity, before sun, planet, or attendant satellite gleamed forth upon the brow of heaven; and bring to light the secret counsels of the eternal Father. It shows us those counsels worked out in time by the eternal Son, in the power of the eternal Spirit; until the final

result of all the activities of the triune God, bursts upon our vision in a new heaven and a new earth, crowned with the glory of the tabernacle of God, in the midst of redeemed creation, in which righteousness shall dwell for ever.

It tells us of the beginning of all things, of the fall of the devil, of the fall of man, of God's gracious dealings with the latter when fallen, of the love of God, of the death of Christ, of His resurrection, of His session at the right hand of God, of His coming again, and of the subjugation of everything to Himself.

It leads the heart and mind into things unseen, and regales the soul with unutterable delights in the sanctuary of eternal love. It opens up before our vision the blackness of darkness, the God-forsaken region of despair, where ceaselessly rage the tempests of almighty wrath. It brings to light the corrupt God-hating heart of fallen man, and the infinite and holy love of a Saviour-God. It guides us to the fountain of all good; and shows us, but brings us not nigh, the source of evil. It describes the ceaseless conflict between these two opposing forces adown the black history of a fallen world, until the day in which the battle is brought to a conclusion by the triumph of good; and the heavens and the earth are purified from the presence of evil, which finds its place, with the Devil who brought it into existence, in the lake of fire, the eternal abode of that "liar" and "murderer."

It declares that God is love. Creation presents Him as infinite in wisdom and power, but we see evil rampant around us, and man beneath its merciless hoof. There are traces of His goodness everywhere; and in the midst of its unutterable woes, gladness of heart visits the most unfortunate. But the fact that the griefs of the human race are so freely interspersed with innumerable joys, only makes the puzzle of man's existence all the more intricate and difficult of solution. If it were all evil one would be in measure justified

in attributing the creation to the caprice of a demon, and were it all good the aspersion of the true character of God would be unpardonable; but to find these two principles everywhere, and mixed together in a struggling and hopeless mêlée, with evil ever apparently triumphant, is bewildering to the finite mind.

The woes of the human race are beyond the possibility of exaggeration, and seem to rise up at every turn as a witness against the notion of infinite goodness; for if God be all powerful, how is it that for so many millenniums His creature has been left in this corner of His creation to welter unpitied in his wretchedness? Can the Creator be indifferent to the woes of His creature? Who can tell us? Is there no voice from Him?

I am certain if there is no revelation from God, there is no God. But the whole universe around me bears witness to the reality of a Creator, and although the visible things do not contain the secret of the nature of Him who brought them into existence, there is enough of evidence borne by them, to convince every intelligent being that He, without whom a sparrow cannot fall to the ground, could not leave His poor creature without some ray of light as to how he stands with respect to His holy and righteous will.

The idea of a universe such as surrounds us, without a Creator, is to me unthinkable; and that man should be brought forth to fall a prey to his wretched lusts, and to grope his weary and painful way to the grave in suffocating gloom, squabbling with his fellows about questions upon which none can boast of having one ray of light, and which never can be solved, is just as unthinkable. I find myself so formed that I am unable to get away from the idea of a Creator, and One with whom I have to do; I am also impressed with the fact that my Maker is beneficent, for of this I see abundant traces on every hand; and I am sure of this also that He has not left man in any clime without witness as to His

beneficence. I have tried to get away from the thought of a Being with whom I had to do, and I have not been able; I have done my best to get out of my mind the conviction that He has spoken, and in this I have been likewise unsuccessful. Where, and how, He has spoken, is another matter, but spoken He has, of this I am convinced.

Man must have some light, and God will give it to him, even though he is certain to be unfaithful to it. Without testimony I am sure God will never leave him. I am not at present saying from whence such thoughts came to me; I am only speaking of the way I seem to be impressed as I look around me, and meditate upon that which I see taking place on the earth. We would be worse off than the beasts had we no light from God, for they are not burdened with the terror of having to do with Him, and we are. The question is not, Has God spoken? but, How?

I shall be told at once that it is not by the Bible. But I must ask, Why not by the Bible? Shall I be met with the stereotyped objection that it is full of contradictions, and is altogether wrong as to the plan of the universe; that it makes it geocentric, and has spoken of the earth as a plain. It has done nothing of the kind. It is so carefully written, that its statements never jar upon the mind of the most advanced scientist, nor do they cause the most illiterate to move in the direction of astronomical discovery. But may I ask, what impression does the universe convey to the mind of the ordinary mortal, as he looks abroad into the starry night from his cottage door? Will he not conceive of the earth as a flat plain, and the dome of heaven as a hemisphere, resting upon the rim of the earth? Could He who is infinite in wisdom have made the visible things no other way? The truth is that the heavens and the earth are so ordered that moral impressions are conveyed to the mind. Everything away from earth is upward and above man, and man is made to look upward to God who has His dwelling-place in the heavens. The

Bible has a way of its own, by which it leaves these impressions undisturbed. If it gave other impressions, and taught the Newtonian theory, we might with some show of reason conclude that the God of creation is not the God of the Bible. I am not attempting to prove by this, that the Bible owes its origin to the Creator, I am only showing, that if the Bible leaves undisturbed the impression that creation itself gives to the naked eye of the ordinary observer, that is no proof against the divine origin of the Scriptures.

There are many other objections advanced by the infidel mind of man, but they are all equally worthless, and have been disposed of again and again. Man naturally hates the light, and this is why the Bible is ever the great object of attack. But though man may, and does, hate the light, it has come into this dark world for the salvation of his immortal soul. What other light has he which shows him God fully declared? He is of few days and full of sorrow, and in the end has to submit to death, and where it will land him he knows not. It is a foe fronted with terror, blind to the sight of misery, deaf to all entreaties, and dumb with regard to where it conducts its victim. It has been in the world for nigh six thousand years, and men know as little about it to-day, as they did at the beginning. Men hope it will lead to something better than the present life, but what proof have we that the region into which it leads, is not more replete with horrors than is the one out of which it conducts us? Were it an angel of light sent to escort us into a scene of joy and endless tranquility, would its aspect be so full of terrors, or its weapon so dreaded? Surely not. We need some light from God, for death gives us no reason to suppose that, however bad it may be here, it is any better beyond. A beneficent Creator will not leave His creature without testimony. A revelation is a necessity both for His glory and our blessing; and this revelation we gratefully recognise in the Scriptures.

(To be continued).

The Joys of the Man of Sorrows.

(J. C. TRENCH.)

"Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me, where-with the Lord has afflicted me in the day of His fierce anger!"—(Lam. i. 12.)

IT is precious for us, as we think of the Lord Jesus in the midst of contempt and rejection while here on earth, to learn somewhat of those things which gave deep joy to His heart, and which sustained Him in that pathway. Let us look at a few of them.

1st. Doing the Father's Will.

"Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God."—(Psalm xl. 7-8.)

"I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."—(John vi. 38.)

"I do always those things that please Him."—(John viii. 29.)

Here was the motive that led Him to leave His glorious heavenly abode, and become a homeless Stranger in this sinful world, and to suffer, bleed and die. He *delighted* to do the Father's will.

2nd. Seeking and Saving the Lost.

In carrying out the will of God, our blessed Saviour found special joy in seeking and saving lost sinners. When, at 30 years of age, He emerged from His long retirement in the humble domestic circle of Nazareth, and entered upon His public service and testimony, He at once identified Himself with the movement so distinctly "of heaven," evidenced in that wonderful revival in the land, which led to multitudes of convicted sinners wending their way from every quarter down to Jordan, to hear the preaching of John the Baptist, calling them to repentance, and declaring the knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins.

Mark well, this was the Lord's first appearance to the world; and this, His first public act, is in the highest degree significant, as intentionally demonstrating in what direction lay His interests and His sympathies. Not with the mighty, the wise, and the noble, not with the self-righteous and the self-satisfied, but with the poor, the broken-hearted, the captive of sin, the blind

and the bruised, as His first sermon, given us in the next chapter (Luke iv.) expressly declares.

And how magnificent is the joyful outburst of responsive delight with which the Father, from the opened heaven, acclaims Him, as He beholds Him thus engaged; while at the same moment the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, and the voice is heard, "Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Luke iii. 22).

Later on, when publicans and sinners, attracted by His grace, drew near to hear Him, and the Pharisees taunted Him, saying, "this man receiveth sinners," we are permitted to hear His defence.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? and when he hath found it, he layeth it upon his shoulder, rejoicing" (Luke xv. 4-5).

He was the Shepherd, who, finding His sheep, layeth it upon His shoulders rejoicing; nor does He rejoice alone, for, when He cometh home, He calleth His friends and His neighbours together, saying unto them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost."

And do we not remember what Jesus said to His disciples, when they found Him without food after His interview with the poor outcast at the well of Sychar? "Master, eat," they say to Him; to which He replied, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." How these precious words let us into a little of the deep sweet joy He had in bringing salvation and living water to one unhappy soul!

Reader, are you altogether a stranger to such joys?

3rd. Revealing the Father.

But it was not only in the seeking and the saving of the lost, that He found joy, but also in that which is

connected with their subsequent spiritual enlargement and growth.

In one of the darkest periods of His earthly pathway, when His dear servant John the Baptist, wearied with long imprisonment, had begun to doubt Him, as shewn in the question sent to Him, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"; when cities where most of His mighty works were done, repented not; when He was denounced as a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans and sinners; when all things looked dark and forbidding and sorrows pressed hard on His loving heart; could He then find any joy? Hark!

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that 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."

"All things are delivered to Me of My Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal Him."

And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see." (*Luke x. 21-23*).

Now what was it that gave Him joy in that dark hour?

There was, on the one hand, the intimacy and communion in which He Himself ever walked with His Father, which no adverse influence could touch; and, on the other, the joy of knowing that the gracious work of bringing others—the "babes"—into this intimacy was unhindered—a work in which He and His Father were one. Babes, if they know but little else, "know the Father," and this is, after all, to know very much. But, mark, Jesus rejoiced that these blessed things were revealed to babes, while the wise and prudent of this world remained in darkness as to them. And He rejoices still that you and I should know His Father as our Father, and His God as our God, and that we should nestle closely in His bosom. What a sweet and peaceful retreat amid the storms and stress of this poor world! Reader, do you know anything of this joy, which Jesus knew to the full?

4th. Seeking a Bride for Himself.

But, if it were possible, the Lord has still a deeper joy in finding the treasure, which lay hid in the field (*i.e.*, the world), "which," to quote the passage, when he "hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field" (*Math. xiii. 44*). This treasure, which the Lord saw hid in the world, was the Church, which is formed of all His redeemed ones since the day of Pentecost, and baptized by one Spirit into one body. It is to Him a treasure so great, that, for the joy of securing it, He shed His life's blood, and bought the field; and, as the next parable indicates, the Church was to Him as the pearl of great price was to the merchantman, who, to secure it, went and sold all that he had and bought it. So the blessed Lord has not only bought the world for the sake of the treasure, but He has redeemed us to Himself by His blood, that He might win the Church for Himself for ever.

And fast the moments are speeding us on to the time, when His chiefest joy will no longer be a prospective one, but He shall come to claim His Church, which is His Bride, for she, next to His Father, has the deepest place in His heart. Long before time began to run its course—before all worlds—the Father gave the Church to Jesus, as the great expression of His love to Him. She is the object of the purposes and counsels of God from all eternity, and is destined to be for the delight and glory of Christ forever and forever.

When the rebellion of Adam's race culminated in the murder of the Son of God, proving its hopelessness and resulting in its condemnation, God began, by the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven at Pentecost, to form the Church, gathering those who form it, out of the world by the gospel, and uniting them to the exalted Christ as their Head.

It is of the Church, made up of every redeemed one, that it is written:

"Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (*Eph. v. 25-27*)

He has been nourishing and cherishing her, as His own body, throughout her sad and lengthened history, but soon He will come—the day of His patience over: and with a shout of joy—the glad enrapturing shout of hope fulfilled—He will descend from heaven and claim her as His Bride. Then, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised, and the living, changed into His likeness, shall meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17); and He will take the Church into her destined place in the Father's house in heavenly glory, to be for ever with the Lord. Hallelujah! May God stir up His saints to more fully realise the love and longing of the Lord for them, so that, when He says, "Surely I come quickly," the glad response of their hearts may be "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

5th. The World to come.

Hebrews xii. 2, speaks of yet another joy:

"Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

This, I judge, embraces all that the Lord Jesus was to enter upon as the result of His resurrection from the dead, and His being exalted as Man to the right hand of God, to become the centre of the universe—all that which the assembly of the first-born ones, the spirits of just men made perfect (Old Testament saints), the angelic hosts, restored Israel, and the universal gathering (Hebrews xii. 22, 23), will, each in their respective ways and

spheres, contribute to, in the "dispensation of the fulness of times," when everything in heaven and earth will be headed up in the Lord Jesus Christ. But who could limit "the joy that was set before Him?" May it not look on further still to the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and where God shall be all in all?

6th. The Rewarding of His Servants.

But the Lord will have yet a further joy in rewarding those, who have been faithful to Him in His absence. After the rapture of the saints, there will be the manifestation in glory of all, and "every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour" "whether it has been good or bad" (I. Cor. iii. 8-15; II. Cor. v., 10); and glad shall we all be to see burned up everything which did not meet with His approval. But all that has been the result of love to Him will stand, even though it be but a "cup of cold water" given for His dear Name's sake, and we may be sure that the reward at the loving hands of our blessed Master—who always magnified, beyond recognition, the little service of His poor disciples—will altogether exceed our highest expectations.

Happy indeed will it be for those who are privileged to hear from His lips the inspiring words, "Well done, good and faithful servant: . . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." . . . (Math. xxv., 21). It is the Lord's own joy that the servant is called to enter.

May each dear servant be found at his post, seeking more earnestly to live to Him, until that bright day when we shall hear His shout calling us Home.

"Lead me, O Shepherd with the stricken side,
And wounded palm,
Beside Thy waters calm.

My soul is weary by the sorrowing tide
Of sin's dark sea:
Lead me along with Thee.

Lift me afar from passion's fevered cry,
And bid depart
The pride that blinds my heart.

And let me learn, as at Thy feet I lie,
With shame contest,
Thy songs of quiet rest."

"Full Assurance."

(EDWARD CROSS).

Its Significance as found in the New Testament.

THE places in which this expression occurs are, Hebrews vii, 11, "full assurance of hope;" x., 22, "full assurance of faith;" Col. ii., 2, "full assurance of understanding;" and 1 Thes., i., 5, "with much assurance."

The true meaning of the word "*plerophoria*," translated "full assurance," is bringing the matter to its fullness or completeness.

It is found only in the New Testament, and in patristic writings. It is not in the language of common life. The thing represented by it having no place in the world, the world has no need of the term: but with the coming of the gospel a new light is presented to faith, and a new term is provided to express it. A cognate word in a verbal form "*plerophoreo*" occurs also in the following passages, which we shall consider in the order in which they occur, placing in italics the words which are equivalent in the authorised version.

LUKE I., 1.—"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are *most surely believed* among us." Here is a most important statement, made by one who was a contemporary of the events which he records, and who, speaking in the name of others, who were eye-witnesses of these things informs us that they were "*most surely or fully believed* among them." It is the fashion to-day to throw doubt on all that rests accredited to the authority of Scripture, as though its testimony was insufficient; but, apart altogether from the fact of its being "*divinely inspired*," no testimony could be of a higher order than that of men who were "*eyewitnesses*" of the facts and "*ministers of the word*," and who, having no worldly object to gain thereby, but contrariwise standing to lose all they had, even life itself, being opposed, as they were, both by Jewish bigotry and by Pagan hate, still

saw enough in what passed before their own eyes, to hand down to us in this incontrovertible manner, the statement that these things were "*most surely believed*" among them.

ROMANS IV., 24.—The same word is used of Abraham who was "*fully persuaded* that what God had promised He was able also to perform." In this fact he found strength in faith and thereby "*gave glory to God*." True, the promise was a mighty one,—as the stars of Heaven for multitude, "*so shall thy seed be*." And how was this to be accomplished? By what power was it to be effectuated? The forces of nature were dead; all human hope had failed, as a river dried up from its source. What then remains for him? The promise of God and His power—power that could '*quicken the dead, and call things that are not as though they were*.' This was the "*full assurance*" of his soul: by this he gave "*glory to GOD*:" and therefore, the comment of the Spirit upon it runs, "*it was imputed to him for righteousness*."

ROM., XIV., 5.—Similarly when questions of doubtful disputations arise, and one man is weak in the faith, while another is of a different cast of mind, the strong is apt to despise the weak: the weaker to judge the stronger. Thus will works in both, and God is left out by them. In such matters, and there are many such, where there is no explicit scripture for definite direction, each should let the other alone to the exercise of his own judgment before God, and not meddle in what he could not settle for another's conscience. How naturally we fall to meddling in matters other than our own! how anxious we are to press our views on other people! and after all, what should we gain if we succeeded? We should but falsify our own position, by assuming an authority we do not possess, and we

should ruin the conscience of our weaker brother by coming between his soul and God. How simple and how perfect is the Scripture, and how completely it settles all such cases: "Let every man be *fully persuaded* in his own mind."

2 TIMOTHY, iv., 5.—Again, in view of the evil days depicted by the Apostle, when teachers and taught would forsake the truth and turn aside to fables, Timothy is exhorted to that sobriety and watchfulness of mind, which refuses every false influence; to endure afflictions; to do the work of an evangelist; and so, as our word here used again imports, to "*make full proof* of his ministry" *i.e.*, to fill it up to the full measure, and there can be nothing more important, or more encouraging than this. The tendency is when things get slack to get slack with them. You play a losing game and you have no heart for it. You have no back to support you, no future to attract you. But here it is all the reverse. God is the first and the last of everything. Christ has died and risen again, and is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, waiting to take to Himself His great power and reign. And so the Apostle encourages Timothy to the greater energy, as there was the greater need; and is there not a voice in this to the servant of God to-day to cheer, and to encourage him to trust and not be afraid; but to continue according to the grace given, to serve the Lord in all humility and faith, seeking to "*fill up to the full measure*" the ministry allotted to him, however small and inconspicuous that service may be?

II. TIMOTHY, iv., 17.—So under circumstances of exceptional trial, the Apostle tells us that the Lord stood by him, and strengthened him, so that through him the preaching should be *fully made*, using the same word as before (II. Timothy, v., 5), as though to encourage him thereby; and thus the last testimony he left behind was as complete in itself, as that of his happiest and most favoured days.

How perfect is the Scripture! how

encouraging for the child of faith! and how fully it maintains the glory of God with undiminished lustre from the beginning to the end.

The consideration of the foregoing Scriptures will enable us more intelligently to apprehend the force of the word, which forms the heading of this article, and which occurs as follows:

HEBREWS vi., 11.—Here the Apostle urges on them to show "diligence to the *full assurance* of hope to the end." He earnestly desired this on their behalf. It is one thing to enter on a course; it is another thing to pursue it patiently to the finish. The path of faith demands constant exercise of soul. To the slothful it is strewn with difficulties; but the way of the righteous is raised up like a causeway above them all. The danger for the Hebrews was, lest, like their fathers of old, through an evil heart of unbelief, they should depart from the living God, instead of holding the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end. But seeing that God had promised, there was sufficient security in His word, backed up by His oath, to give not merely a hope, but the "*full assurance* of hope" right through to the consummation of it.

HEBREWS x., 22.—But more than that, not only was the journey through the wilderness thus provided for right into the Promised Land, but the way into the very holiest of all—the sanctuary of God's immediate presence, is opened now for faith, as will Heaven itself be in fact by-and-bye, by the blood of Jesus. In Judaism a perpetual round of sacrifices was kept up, which could never put away sin, nor perfect the conscience, nor give the offerer a righteous title to draw near into the presence of God. The veil remained, a lasting sign that the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest. God had not yet appeared in the glory of His grace to man: man had as yet no title to approach the glory of the divine presence.

But now in language alike simple and magnificent, positive and consequential, and in which a title and a command is

given to every child of faith, the contrast between Judaism and Christianity is strikingly set forth in the words with which the Apostle concludes his argument, "having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an high priest over the house of God: (1st), Let us draw near with a true heart in *full assurance* of faith . . . ; (2nd), Let us hold fast the profession of our hope—[A.V. reads "faith"]—without wavering; for He is faithful that promised; and (3rd), Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works . . . and so much the more as ye see the day approaching."

COLOSSIANS ii., 2.—The ministry of Paul had a twofold character: he was minister of the gospel, Col., i., 23, and he was also minister of the church, Col., i., 25. To this latter ministry belongs the mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations, but is now made manifest to the saints, with all the wealth of the glory of it among the Gentiles—Christ in them the hope of glory. This is the completion of the word of God, (v. 25); the top stone of the revelation, in its most extensive and far-reaching results; the climax of the purposes of God in the creation first, and in the final reconciliation of all things to Himself by Christ.

The glories of Christ are wonderfully set forth in this epistle—His glories as Creator; and His glories as Redeemer. As to the first, He is:

1st, The true image of the invisible God.

2nd, He takes precedence of every creature.

3rd, As Creator He gives its character to creation.

4th, He is the active instrument in creating it, as well as,

5th, The end for which it was created.

6th, He is before all things.

7th, By Him they all subsist together.

But there is the power of death to deal with, and, either He must annul it, or, as we should say, humanly speaking, be annulled by it. But having annulled it, He is, in this new sphere, where "there is no more death," (Rev., xxi., 4),

1st, Head of the body, the church.

2nd, As the beginning of it, He takes precedence there too, as before in creation, that in all things He might have the first place.

3rd, All the fullness is pleased to dwell in Him.

4th, He is the maker of peace by the blood of His cross.

5th, He is the Reconciler, restoring everything into right relationship with God.

6th, He is the fulfiller of the word of God, giving it its whole scope and the fulness of all that was expressed or implied in it.

7th, He is the true wealth of the glory of the mystery among the nations, "which is Christ in them the hope of glory."

Plainly this is a subject of indeterminate scope, of boundless extent. Who can understand it? It is beyond all human thought: outside the range of all human conception: and the mind lies prostrate at its portals, waiting for a guide to introduce into the contemplation of the mysteries within. No wonder, then, that the Apostle tells us of the great combat he had for them, "that their hearts might be encouraged, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the *full assurance of understanding*, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." Thus, while the problem is the greatest that can engage the mind of man, we are encouraged to address ourselves to it in humble dependence on the Spirit of God, in the knowledge that His desire for us in respect of it, is that we should reach out intelligently to all riches of the *full assurance of understanding* to the full knowledge of the mystery of God.

I. THESSALONIANS, i., 5.—It is very interesting to note the power and freshness of the Gospel, and the reciprocity of affection between the apostle Paul and his beloved converts at Thessalonica, coming out as it does in such a salient manner in this Epistle.

The full import of the Cross is not the subject of his preaching at Thessalonica.* Here he has to do with Jews and Pagans pure and proper; and we learn the effect of his preaching amongst them, how they “turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus, our deliverer from the coming wrath”; for indeed, as he says, “our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.”

COLOSSIANS iv., 12.—We have already noted the great conflict which Paul had for the saints, so now we find a similar conflict on the part of Epaphras, his “dear fellow-servant,” who was one of themselves, and perhaps also among the first of those who preached the gospel there, that they might stand perfect, (*i.e.*, in the maturity of full growth in Christian manhood), and “FULLY ASSURED,”† in freedom and disenthralment from doubts and misgivings, in everything connected with

the complete will of God, ranging as that will does over the vast sphere of all created things, with a view to His good pleasure, according to the wisdom that forecast it all to the glory of the “Kingdom of His dear Son.”

Into the full assurance and the fellowship of this we are called according to the invitation of His infinite love. And how, in view of all this, ought we to be stirred, as were Paul and Epaphras, to labour fervently with renewed, or perhaps newly awakened energy in prayers, for ourselves and for one another, that we might more intelligently apprehend and stand firmly without wavering in that for which we have by divine grace been apprehended.

These are the passages in the New Testament in which this word is used; and in a day when everything is called in question by the presumptuous meddlesomeness that can disturb everything and can settle nothing, it is well to know objectively, and to enjoy subjectively, in the undisturbed repose of our souls, the *full assurance* which God has in His mercy provided as the heirloom of His people here.

† *The Authorised Version translates “complete,” margin “filled;” but the best authorities seem agreed that our word should be used here also, and translate accordingly “fully assured.”*

* *For further notes on this, see the expository paper on I. Thessalonians in this issue.*

Effective Service.

(F. B. HOLE).

CHRISTIANS are always affected, more or less, by the prevailing spirit of the world which surrounds them. In the days of primitive Christianity this was illustrated by the Corinthians, who, dwelling in a city noted for its luxury and license, soon had these evils springing up in their midst. (See I Cor., iv., 8, and v., 1). One of the most striking features of the day is its general shallowness, and lack of that force and serious purpose which deep conviction gives; and nowhere are these sad features more painfully pro-

nounced, than in the bosom of the Church of God.

Brethren, we shall not fail in our pathway of testimony upon earth because of lack of knowledge, but rather because, though knowing much, we are not utterly possessed by it, and hence feel so little. We resemble some broad but shallow lake, rather than a well of small circumference, but deep. IT IS THE MAN OF DEPTH AND FEELING WHO IS EFFECTIVE IN THE SERVICE OF GOD.

As an illustration of a man who

powerfully affected his fellows, take Ezra. Failure and trespass began to appear in the shattered remnant of Israel, that returned from Babylon, and the old sin of intercourse with the people of the land threatened again to ruin them. It was an emergency indeed. Ezra called together no committee; he laid no elaborate plans for reforming this abuse; he just FELT things before God, and as they affected God. He so felt things that he rent his clothes, plucked off his hair, and sat down astonished, until, realizing the full extent of things, he fell on his knees, and commenced a memorable prayer of confession, by saying "*O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee, my God.*"—Ezra ix., 3-6.

Then as Ezra was himself moved, others were moved with him (v. 4). Indeed, as the work of God in repentance and confession deepened in him, so the power of God radiated forth through him, until "there assembled unto him out of Israel, a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore." (Ch. x., 1.) In result there was a national cleansing from their false associations, and the plague was stayed.

What a contrast between the noisy and ineffective machinery of man's making, and the quiet ease and grace

of a heaven-sent movement. But that movement works through a man who feels things with God.

Jonah illustrates another phase of the same thing. He was one of the most effective preachers of antiquity. Though addressing a people of great wickedness, and carrying a message of judgment—always an unpopular one—yet his simple words produced astonishing results. To a man, the Ninevites sought the face of God, and turned from their evil way. (JONAH III., 5-9).

Why such extraordinary power with the message? Was it not because the man who cried "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown," came up to his mission, fresh from an overthrow himself? Jonah learnt experimentally what it meant to be overthrown by God. When, in the belly of the fish, all God's billows and waves passed over him, the agony of it must have burnt into his soul in a way never to be effaced. When therefore this man preaches an overthrow, there is a power, a pungency, a heaven-born velocity about his words, that is otherwise unknown.

Brethren in Christ, it were better for us to master well one lesson in the school of God than to acquaint ourselves with much in a superficial way.

"Creation."

No. 1. Introductory.

(S. L. JACOB).

GOD alone is Creator, we are, and shall always be, His creatures; notwithstanding the nearer and more blessed links formed by redemption. Moreover we have special links with the particular creation of which Adam was made head. The Holy Scriptures begin with describing this creation, and in the closing book of Revelation when God takes up His rights, it is as the Creator that He is manifested and worshipped.

The allusions to God as Creator, and

to His creatorial works, are very frequent in Scripture, and often most strongly emphasised. For examples of this, read Isaiah xl. and the last five Psalms. These foreshadow the day when every created thing will burst into praise, and not till then will the purpose of this creation be fulfilled.

Seeing that these things cannot be gainsaid, and that even Redemption is based upon God's right as Creator (for only He who created can have the right to redeem), we do well to consider:

- (1) God's object in this creation ;
- (2) Our proper attitude towards God as Creator, and towards creation in general ; and
- (3) How God's object will be fulfilled.

God's Object in this creation.

God's object is very clear: He created all things, and He did this for His own pleasure (Rev. iv. 11). To remember this will be a great help.

It is generally assumed that all creation, animate and inanimate, over which man has dominion, was intended for man's benefit only, but this is a mistake. For man's benefit indeed all these things were created, but only subordinately to their being for God's pleasure. God must come first, and be pre-eminent in everything. The olive tree's fatness is that whereby God and man are honoured, and the juice of the vine is that which cheereth God and man" (Jud. ix. 9-13).

But how can God have pleasure in creation? God is a Spirit, He dwells in the light which none can approach unto; none hath seen nor can see Him, and to Him belong honour and power everlasting. Matter, as such, cannot please Him. He delighteth not in the strength of the horse, He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man" (Ps. cxlvii. 10). He takes pleasure in spiritual things, or in that which serves spiritual ends. Therefore, if He has pleasure in creation, it is because creation is made subservient to such ends.

Every diligent student of the Scriptures is aware that these writings are full of pictures, that they abound in types and shadows, in parables and allegories, in visions and revelations, in figures and metaphors. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Prov. xxv. 2). In very truth there is, comparatively speaking, little else in Scripture. What is Ps. lxxviii? It is history, but that history is a parable (see verse 2) illustrating the administration of the kingdom of the heavens (Matt. xiii. 35). And so also all history divinely recorded is a par-

able, for "these things happened unto them for types: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world (ages) are come" (1 Cor. x. 11).

What mean the colours, the materials, the arrangements, the measurements of the tabernacle and of the temple? Is the attention to be concentrated on the things themselves and their material beauty, or on the spiritual significance only? Surely the latter.

Every word of God is full of spirit and life, and through these material types He would communicate spiritual things to us.

It is true that, "that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; afterward that which is spiritual;" but it is equally true that God had always the spiritual before Him, and the natural was only the means of reaching the spiritual.

That man's conception of God must be poor indeed, who thinks that it was when the first Adam fell, that He planned the last Adam. God ever had the last Adam before Him, and though the first Adam preceded the last in order of manifestation, yet the last was ever the first in the mind, and thought, and purpose of God. It will be evident then, that God must have made all things which are visible, for the express purpose of illustrating the invisible and spiritual world.

The heathen have no direct revelation from God, yet it is written, "Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom. i. 19, 20).

And if this be true of the heathen in their darkness, how much more is it true of us who have the key of all knowledge in Christ. If the heathen should see the invisible in the visible, and through them learn God's power and Godhead, what wealth of illustra-

tion must there be stored up in creation for those who have the anointed eye to see aright.

To this agrees Psalm xxix., where it is written, "In His temple every whit of it uttereth glory" (see margin). For those who are in the sanctuary, the secret of God's presence, the whole created world speaks of the glory of God, it displays His character, for the subject of the psalm is the majesty of God as seen in nature.

In the case of Job it is remarkable that though Elihu, God's messenger, spoke to him about the finding of a ransom and of deliverance from the pit, yet God spoke about creation, (this being His special testimony to men in that day), and when He had finished, then Job said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job xlii. 5-6). What caused this? Evidently the setting forth of the invisible God in that which He created, for there is a spiritual teaching behind the descriptions of created animals or things, shewing that God was above all, and able to bring low and abase even the mighty and the proud (Job xl. 12-14).

God often alludes to the animal world as having a voice for man. The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib: "but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Is. i. 3). See also Jer. viii. 7.

How constantly our Lord turned to created things to illustrate spiritual things. The sparrows, the lilies, the corn of the earth, and the fish of the sea were all pressed into His ministry—and never man spoke like this Man. To Him everything spoke of the ways of God, His Father, and He would have us to listen to these myriad voices which minister such comfort to the anointed ear.

Our proper attitude towards God as Creator and towards creation.

God must have sovereign rights over all creation, and the creature

can never be independent of the Creator. In the 104th psalm (the psalm of true science), the Lord is clearly set forth as the Creator and sustainer of all things in life. "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God." "These all wait upon Thee: that Thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That Thou givest them they gather: Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face, they are troubled: Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created: and Thou renewest the face of the earth." He who does these things is the living God, the Preserver (N.T.) of all men, and especially of those who believe (I. Tim., iv. 10).

Whatever else therefore may come in, we must ever remember that all that man has, is the gift of God, and he is responsible to God, because He is Creator and Preserver. This responsibility can never be set aside; do what man will, it must remain; and woe be to him who refuses it, or allows any man, or anything, to come between God and his soul. On the other hand, no man, be he heathen or otherwise, ever seeks God in vain (Heb. xi. 6). Well would it be for men, did they know no more, to take up the cry "But now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand" (Is. lxiv. 8).

But as Christians, we have also other relationships with God. We have been redeemed from our fallen condition, and can enter into the old relationships in a way impossible to those who have not received the full revelation of God in Christ. We do not make light of God as Creator, because we know Him as Redeemer; on the contrary, we delightedly own His claims; and if we suffer according to the will of God, we commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator. (Pet. iv. 19).

But we are part of creation, we are in touch with it all day long, it is in a myriad ways before us every

moment. What should be our attitude towards it? In the early centuries of the history of the Church on earth, the idea was most prevalent that matter was more or less evil, and the more the Christian could abstract himself from all created things, the better. This was the era of the ascetics. Monasteries and nunneries abounded. Numbers of Christians lived in deserts and in caves; and the greater the austerities that were endured, the greater the supposed sanctity that was imparted. This was, however, but the presentation of flesh to God, and was of no value, but rather very hurtful (Col. ii. 20).

Now, the swing of the pendulum has gone far in the other direction. It is a grossly material age, inventions of all sorts minister to the delight of the flesh and of the eye; the mind of man is exalted; his wants and desires are many. There is a constant hustle of work or pleasure seeking, very little time for quiet meditation, and little dwelling in the presence chamber of God, where the voice of Christ can be plainly heard.

Now the believer's true attitude towards creation is very different from either of these ideas. He should be characterised by godliness (or piety), and his attitude should be that set forth in the 1st Epistle to Timothy, where he is exhorted to have love out of a pure heart, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned; to continue in prayers, thanksgiving, and intercessions for all men; whilst the woman is to be modestly apparelled, and to show good works.

There is nothing ascetic about the real Christian, he is marked by cheerfulness. He accepts God's mercies without fear, whether His mercies in the marriage state, or in created things. He knows that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer. For the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof, and God has given us richly all things to enjoy. If, however, he knows how to abound, he knows also how to be abased; having food and raiment he is content. He does

not love money, but is ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up a good foundation against the time to come, in order to lay hold on that which is really life. Therefore he finds his enjoyment in the activities of love rather than in self-indulgence.

There is a wonderful unity, yet marvellous diversity in creation. With men a multitude of things are produced to the same pattern, but all God's works are diverse. This is true of all created things, from a grain of sand to the mighty orbs that glitter in space; though there may be a family likeness, there are no duplicates. The physical world in this respect is also figurative of the spiritual. There are "diversities of gifts," there are "differences of administrations," there are "diversities of operations," but "the same Spirit, . . . the same Lord, . . . the same God which worketh all in all" (I. Cor., xii. 4, 5, 6).

It would be well if Christians learnt this lesson, for then would cease the effort to force all into the same mould; there would be the glad recognition of the varied workings of God for the good of the "one body;" and that beautiful unity in diversity, which is the product of the eternal wisdom of God, would not be marred by the folly of men.

The great relationships of life which God has ordained in connection with this creation, are full of instruction. These are three in number: Parent and child, husband and wife, brother and brother; typifying for us the divine relationships that exist between—(1) God the Father and all those who are His sons by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. iii. 26); (2) Christ, the Bridegroom, and the Church which is His body (Eph. v. 32); and (3) "those whom the Lord is "not ashamed to call brethren" (Hebrews ii. 11).

It was evidently God's intention that the spirit of these family relationships should be maintained in the Church; but, alas! how men have failed in this; instead of oneness maintained in the

meekness and gentleness of Christ, Christians have become divided into a number of hostile camps; and instead of a family full of love, covering, for the Father's name sake, the frailties and failures of others, there seems often a positive delight in exposing and exaggerating these, and a desire and determination to be rid of some for whom we should be prepared to lay down our lives (1 John iii. 16), simply because they cannot pronounce our shibboleth, or work according to our methods.

Now a Christian must be trained in the family, if he is to be of use in the Church; "for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" (1 Tim. iii. 5). (Note the change to the gentler word when the Church is in question).

The ignoring of this most important principle has wrought much disaster in the Church; men whose houses are disorderly, have brought ruin and trouble into the midst of the Church by attempting, in that more important sphere, a rule for which failure in their own houses had proved their incompetency.

How God's object in creation will be fulfilled.

God cannot fail. His purpose to have pleasure in all creation must therefore be fulfilled; all things must accomplish the spiritual ends for which they were created, and these spiritual ends are that they may speak, by way of illustration, of God and His ways in Christ.

The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; but it will be delivered out of the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God; for the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God (Romans viii. 19-22).

The animal creation is in pain and grief by reason of sin, and God sees its suffering and counts its sighs, as looking forward to the day of redemption and glory that is coming.

But the whole creation is involved in the ruin, inanimate as well as animate, and the whole is to share in the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Liberty is freedom to do the will of God. Glory is the display of God in character and ways; and creation is looked upon by God as longing (though of course not intelligently so), for the time when it will all fulfil God's pleasure, and delight His heart, by shewing forth His ways in a manner that it cannot do now, blotted and marred as it is by sin.

Then will Psalm 148 be literally fulfilled. Sun, moon, stars and waters, fire and hail, snow and vapours, mountains and hills, fruitful trees and all cedars, as well as animate creation, even to the smallest insect, will all tell forth the praises of God in that manner for which they were originally created; and the Creator will then reach for the first time His desired object in every single thing that He has created.

This will all be brought about by and through Christ. He is the Creator for "by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist (or subsist)" (Col. i. 16-17).

But sin having marred all creation, He who is the Creator has become the Reconciler (Col. i. 20). By the blood of His cross peace has been made—on this is based the effectuation of reconciliation, now, in respect to Christians (who are already reconciled), and, by and bye, in respect to all things both in earth and heaven.

Then will God find His pleasure in all creation, and all things will fulfil His will. This passage agrees, therefore, with the others we have been considering before. Eph. i. 9, 10, is also on the same lines. The whole universe is to share in the blessings of reconciliation as typified by the tabernacle, first sprinkled with blood and then

anointed with oil.

Then will all that God hath spoken by the mouth of His holy prophets since the world began find fulfilment, and He will have the satisfaction of all His desires in all creation. Israel will be a righteous people keeping the truth, the nations will all be blessed under the gracious sway of Christ carried out through the heavenly city above, and Jerusalem on the earth, and every heart will throb with delight to see Christ exalted and God glorified by everybody and everything which God has made.

Then when this creation has served its purpose it shall be set aside, for it is written,

“Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: They 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” (Heb. i. 10-12).

Then will all creation be altered to suit the new condition of the eternal state; for there will then be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness; and for that a new pictorial, which we cannot understand now, will be required. So the present will be burnt up, and all will take new shape for the ages upon ages yet to come. The Church, however, will abide in its glorious connection with Christ; will ever be inexpressibly near and dear to His heart; and will have the first place in all the glories displayed in creation in that day, as well as intimate and secret relations with Christ that no created intelligence will share.

In the meantime may we learn how to pass through this world as sent into it, yet preserved from its evil influences; abiding in Christ, dwelling in the sanctuary, yet able to shed the radiance of Christ in all the paths in which we tread and on all we meet; and, being in Christ's secret, may everything have a voice to us speaking of God's glory and of His ways in Christ.

The Word of God.

(EXTRACTED).

SCRIPTURE, which is the Word of God, is His gift, the revelation of spiritual truth in a written record. The language of Scripture accordingly is perfectly unique; it possesses an indescribable something which is not found in any other writings; the Spirit, who seeth all things in their depth and reality, and who knoweth the end from the beginning, speaks here in a way so profound and comprehensive, that the wisdom and experience of all ages cannot exhaust His meaning, and yet with such simplicity and definiteness, that all childlike hearts find guidance and consolation in their daily path of duty and trial. . . .

“It is written” should be in the heart of every Christian. “It is written” should decide every controversy, settle every doubt, and overcome every difficulty. . . .

All tampering with Scripture as the sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice, and all tampering with conscience as bound by that rule, is a guilty resistance of the authority of Christ, and a perilous thing to our own welfare.

“The pride of the Pharaohs is fallen; the empire of Cæsar is gone; the avalanches that Napoleon hurled upon Europe have melted away, *but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.* Every day proves how transient is the noblest monument that man can build, and how enduring is the least word that God has spoken. Tradition has dug many a grave for the Bible; intolerance has lit many a fagot for it; many a Judas has betrayed it with a kiss; many a Peter has denied it with an oath; many a Demas hath forsaken it, but the word of God still abides.” . . .

Replies to Scripture Questions.

(J. A. TRENCH).

"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 5.

What is the meaning of "water" in the above verse, and figuratively in Scripture?

WATER is the symbol of the word of God applied to the soul, in power, by the Spirit of God. A reference to other Scriptures will prove this.

Compare the expression we are considering in John iii. 5, "born of water," with James i. 18, where we read, "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth;" and with 1 Pet. i. 23, which runs, "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Then turn to Eph. v. 26, where we find the water definitely identified with the word in the expression, "The washing of water by the word."

Water purifies; hence by the use of the symbol more is conveyed than if it had been simply said "born of the word." It includes the effect produced, as well as the instrumentality used of God in this, the beginning of all His ways with us in grace.

In the types water has as large a place as the blood. Both flowed from the pierced side of the Lord Jesus in death.

"One of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water." John xix. 34.

This is the historic order, and in it the blood comes first, as the basis of everything for God's glory and our blessing. In the order of application to us, as John in his Epistle (chap. v., 6) gives it, the water comes first: "This is He that came by water and blood . . . and it is the Spirit that beareth witness." The Spirit it is who applies the word to the conscience, by which mighty operation of sovereign grace we are born absolutely anew. The effect in us is the conviction of sins; and when faith rests on the testimony of the Spirit to the value of the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin,

He (the Spirit) can take up His dwelling-place in us to be the power of the enjoyment of all that we have been brought into by the water and the blood: and the Christian position is then complete.

But fastening our attention on the water, it is important to see that there is a double application of what it represents, as in John xiii., 10:—

"He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

There is first, as we have seen, being "born of water and of the Spirit"; this answers to the first washing mentioned in John xiii. 10, and as it is the communication of a new life and nature, cannot be repeated: we are "clean every whit." Nor is this by any change in the character of the flesh in us: "that which is born of the flesh is flesh," and there can be no purification of it. The word applied by the Spirit to our souls, carries with it the sentence of death upon all that is of the flesh. God could do nothing with it but end it in judgment, Gen., vi., 13—a judgment He carried out for faith in the death of His Son, Rom., viii., 3. Thus the water was found where the blood was, in His death. It is on the one hand, the end of the flesh in total condemnation, and on the other, the introduction of a life in which we can live to God and enjoy Him for ever.

But we have to pass with this life through a defiling world, where all that meets the senses tends to hinder communion with Him who is our life. Hence the need of the second application of the word, symbolized by the Lord's touching service to His disciples, (John, xiii.). He girded Himself with the towel, and pouring water into a basin, He began to wash their feet, and wipe them with the towel

wherewith He was girded. It was, as Jesus tells Peter, that we might have "part with Him" when He is gone, that is, as having departed out of the world to the Father, (v., 1.). We have to go through the world out of which He has had to depart, and therein lies all our need: liable to contract defilement at every step, or at least that which would bring moral distance between our souls and Him, He knows how to apply His word to bring back the soul to the enjoyment of His presence, in His ever faithful and un failing love, that there may not be even a shade of reserve between us and Him. That first action of His word by which we were clean every whit in the divine nature could never be repeated, *this* is needed continually. Nor does He leave us to apply it to ourselves—(if I wash thee not)—though He may use any of us who have learned in the school of His grace, in this privileged service to others (v., 14.).

It is of interest, as helping to bring out the distinction all the more clearly, that the Lord employs two different words in this 10th verse according to their clearly defined usage in the

Greek version of the Old Testament. "He that is washed" (or 'bathed'), as applicable to the whole person, is the word *louo*, used of the washing of the priests on the day of their consecration, Exod., xxix., 4. "Needeth not save to wash (*niplo*) his feet" is that used for the washing of their hands and their feet in the laver at the tabernacle door, every time they went into the sanctuary, Exod., xxx., 18-21. And the words are never interchanged. But, in noting this, we must remember the difference between preparation for priestly entering into the holy places, as in the Old Testament, and this wonderful service of the Lord for us, that we may have the constant enjoyment of His presence as having gone to the Father.

May our hearts be more deeply affected by the love that would not leave a spot on our feet; and may we yield ourselves up to the searching action of His word upon us, when it is needed that He should apply it, rather than be content to walk at a distance from Him, clinging to something that maintains that distance, to His dishonour and our own incalculable loss.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER)

Introduction.

SOMEWHERE in America there exists a copy of the famous "Declaration of Independence," in which the words appear to be flung down upon the parchment in the most haphazard fashion. No order is at first discernible, and one gets the impression, upon viewing the document, that some accident must have happened to the printing-machine that produced it. Instead of running on smoothly in straight lines, the sentences seem to be thrown about anyhow, and the result is most perplexing.

On further inspection, however, it begins to dawn upon one that underlying all the apparent disorder, there is some design. And suddenly that

design stands out before the eye with startling clearness, and one sees that one is looking at a portrait of George Washington!

The words and sentences serve to form the familiar lineaments of his face. The arrangement, at first so mystifying, is now seen to have been adopted in order that Washington himself might appear in the midst of the historic "Declaration" with which his name is so closely connected.

In reading the Minor Prophets one often finds similar cause for perplexity in the way that narrative, appeal, promise, and threat are often thrown together without any apparent order.

Yet, on closer examination, one is convinced that there is a line running through each prophecy. Indeed it must be so, for these testimonies are Divine. Where then shall we find a clue to the maze?

The object of these papers is to answer this question by showing that Christ is the theme of these twelve wonderful books. "To Him give all the prophets witness." Just as the face of Washington looks out from the old document which we have described, so the face of Christ looks out at us from the chapters of these old-time prophecies. He is to be found in the little read pages of Joel and Zephaniah, as well as in the better known passages of Isaiah and Daniel. It should be our constant object, in reading the Scriptures, to see how Christ is presented in its different parts.

I cannot forbear to transcribe here the glowing words of one who not long ago finished his course of service on earth. Says he:

"The truth is that the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, is the constant object of the Holy Ghost where He speaks of any object or office supremely excellent, no matter what its shape or nature. If it be a great priest, prophet, or king; if it be a saviour, conqueror, or judge, always the One whom the Holy Ghost contemplates from beginning to end is Christ; and it will be the same with our interpretation, where the Holy Ghost identifies our spiritual affections with Christ, and forms our minds according to God's

purposes and ways. Thus, in fact, the Spirit of Christ is characteristic of the Christian. Surely he of all men ought to be the first to see this running through the written word. So, among the apostles, we find constantly in Paul—but, indeed, it belongs to the New Testament generally—this quickness of scent in the fear of the Lord, which sees Christ everywhere."

We do not, of course, find *Christianity* in the prophets, but we find *Christ* there. And we need this "quickness of scent" which perceives Him everywhere. We shall then delight to trace Him in His past humiliation and His coming glory, and to study Him, though in other connections than those in which we know Him. With that which belongs to His present session at the right hand of God, with the Church, His Body, and the heavenly relationships in which we are set as members thereof, prophecy has nothing to do. But its central object is that same blessed One, who has endeared Himself to us, and who has unveiled to us the heart of God.

The reader, then, will not expect to find, in the papers that follow, any detailed exposition of the minor prophets. Able pens have already made such available.

On the other hand, to show how *Christ* is presented in the various prophecies, will surely be no small help in the exegesis of these twelve books. And it is *this* which the writer has in view, and for which he seeks grace and help from God.

Obadiah:

The vision of Obadiah. Thus said the Lord God concerning Edom; . . . The pride of thine heart deceived thee, thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high; that saith in his heart, Who shall bring me down to the ground?

Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord. . . . All the men of thy confederacy have brought thee even to the border: the men that were at peace with thee have deceived thee, and prevailed against thee. *Obadiah, 1, 3, 4, 7.*

WHAT leads up to the special presentation of Christ which Obadiah has been inspired to give us, is the fact that God's unsparing judgment had been

declared against Edom. Jeremiah had already announced this, and from the 49th chapter of the book which bears his name the first half-dozen verses of our prophet are quoted.

Edom, with all its pride, was to be brought low. Though exalted as the eagle, and dwelling among the stars, God Himself would abase that boastful nation; He would destroy its wise men, and shatter to atoms the confederacy, by means of which it hoped to secure prominence and permanence in the earth.

All this had been foretold by Jeremiah, and is now re-iterated and emphasized by Obadiah.

Has this old-time message no voice for the men of to-day? After all, Edom is but a sample of the world at large, just as a block of coal taken at random from the pit, shows the quality of all that remains in the mine.

Did human pride ever reach a higher level than in this twentieth century? Has confederacy ever been more sought after than to-day? Think for a moment of the world as it lies around us. Think of the onward march of civilization; of the achievements of science; of the spread of knowledge. How men boast of all this! Of a truth they say in their hearts, "Who shall bring me down to the ground?" Do they not exalt themselves as the eagle, and set their nest among the stars?

Consider, too, how the principle of confederacy is emphasized in the world to-day. There are treaties and alliances binding the nations together. There are trusts and combines amongst capitalists and manufacturers, unions and associations among their workmen. There are societies for this object and for that.

All this was found, in germ, amongst the Edomites. They had their men of learning, their doughty warriors, their fortified cities. They had adopted also the principle of confederacy, and had allied themselves with other nations, to make common cause against God and His people.

No doubt the prophecy looks on to the last days, when Edom shall re-appear and shall have a leading place in the great confederacy of nations, which, in alliance with the resuscitated Assyrian, will come up against Jerusalem.

Some of the nations which form this great hostile alliance are mentioned in Psalm lxxxiii., and Edom is given the first place in the list. "They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. For they have consulted together with one

consent: they are confederate against Thee; the tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites," etc.

Now read verses 10 to 14:—

For thy violence against thy brother Jacob sorrow shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. *v. 10.*

In the day that thou stoodest on the other side . . . and foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them . . . thou shouldst not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity . . . *v. 11, 13.*

Neither shouldst thou have stood in the crossway to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldst thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. *v. 14.*

Here Obadiah brings forward another trait which marked Edom, and he does so, it appears, in order to introduce the testimony of Christ. This trait, already hinted at in the quotation from Psalm lxxxiii., was a rancorous hatred against the people of God. "Thy violence against thy brother Jacob" is declared to be the special reason why Edom should be covered with shame and be cut off for ever. A remnant from Egypt, Assyria and other nations will be spared to enjoy the blessing of Christ's supremacy, but none from Edom. "There shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau" (ver. 18).

Edom, or Esau, it must be remembered was Jacob's brother. For this reason the Edomite was to be treated with special regard by the Israelite, and was to have certain privileges in connection with "the congregation of Jehovah," which were not accorded to other Gentiles. "Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother . . . The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of Jehovah in their third generation" (Deut. xxiii., 7, 8).

But from the beginning Edom had shown spite and ill-will against Israel, both nationally and individually. When the Israelites required to pass through the land of Edom to reach Canaan, permission to do so was peremptorily refused. Moses sent a most conciliatory message, undertaking to damage neither fields or vineyards, and to pay for the

very water which they should drink. But "Edom refused to give Israel passage through his border," and thus shewed himself even at that early date to be an implacable and spiteful enemy. (Num. xx., 14-18).

Another instance of this perpetual hatred is seen in the conduct of Doeg, an Edomite in the service of Saul. David, the Lord's anointed, had not yet come to the throne. Hunted and threatened, he fled to Ahimelech the priest, who treated him kindly and supplied him with bread. But the treacherous eyes of the Edomite witnessed the transaction, and he lost no time in informing Saul, and thus procuring the death of eighty-five men of the priestly family.

"I knew it!" cried David, when he was told of the cruel deed, "I knew it that day when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul" (I. Samuel, xxii., 22).

Obadiah mentions yet another instance of this unbrotherly hate on the part of Edom. He refers to the day of Jerusalem's capture, when the children of Judah were carried off into Babylonian bondage. "In the day that thou stoodest on the other side," he says, ". . . foreigners entered into his gates and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them" (verse 11). Then comes a terrible exposure of the Edomites' conduct. They had rejoiced over the downfall of the children of Judah, had laid hands on their substance, had stood in the crossway to cut off any straggling fugitives, and had actually given up to the cruel Babylonians those that had escaped.

It is in this connection that we find the footsteps of Christ, as we read between the lines of Obadiah's solemn charge. We see, in studying Hosea, how Christ took the place of the true Israel before God. He was the Son, called out of Egypt. And in grace He identified Himself with the remnant that feared God, entering into their sorrows, feeling the bitter smart of all their woes, suffering because of their afflictions, groaning under the burdens which

weighed so heavily upon them. This is quite a different thought from that of His atoning sufferings. No doubt He made atonement for Israel as well as for us. But we do not get His atoning sufferings in Obadiah. Nor is it merely His suffering for righteousness' sake. In a very real way (and after a manner that endears Him to our hearts as we trace Him there), He took upon Himself the afflictions and oppressions under which His people groaned, and felt the cruel pangs thereof in His own spirit.

And so, if we compare Obadiah with the close of Luke's gospel (chap. xxiii.) we have no difficulty in finding Christ in the narration of His people's sufferings at the Edomites' hand. Herod was the cruel prince of Edomite blood, whose hatred flamed up against the One who had in grace come to His people as their deliverer. From the hour of His birth the Edomite had sought to slay Him, and when the final scenes were enacted, so soon to reach their culminating point upon Calvary, the Edomite was there to add fresh pangs to the sufferings of that Holy One.

Edom, according to Obadiah's prophecy, made himself one with the Gentile oppressors. So, we read, Herod and Pilate, the Edomite and the Roman, were made friends together in their enmity to Christ.

Edom "rejoiced over the children of Judah," and "spoke proudly in the day of distress." And Herod, when he saw Jesus, and felt that He was in his power, "was exceeding glad," and, with his men of war, "set Him at naught, and mocked Him."

Edom stood in the gate of Jerusalem in the day of Judah's affliction, to look on their calamity with triumph. Even so it is significantly stated of Herod the Edomite in the day of Christ's affliction: "himself also was at Jerusalem at that time." He was upon the scene, to add gall and wormwood to the already full cup of the afflicted Sufferer.

Worst of all, Edom "delivered up those of his that did remain." And the evangelist narrates of Jesus, how Herod

“sent Him again to Pilate.” There you read the malice of the Edomite!

In the last days, when Edom and the confederate nations come up against the chosen people, it will be a comfort indeed to those that are godly, to have the sympathy and support of Him, who has Himself felt the bitterness of the Edomite’s hatred. They will have Him as the support and stay of their troubled hearts, and He who knows so well what every phase of their affliction means, having gone through it all Himself in grace, will be able in a wonderful way to minister solace and strength to them.

For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen; as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee. . . . v. 16.

Not only Edom, however, but all the nations are guilty of enmity to Christ; all have arrayed themselves against Him, whether personally, in the days of His flesh, or as represented by Israel. And, therefore, in verses 15, 16, all the nations come into view for judgment, not so much for their sins, but for the way they have acted towards Christ—Christ in His Jewish brethren. The whole of the great world system is going to come under judgment, with its pride, its confederacies, and its hatred of Christ.

But upon Mount Zion there shall be deliverance, and there shall be holiness . . . v. 17.

. . . And saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s. v. 21

But there is salvation and blessing in store for the house of Jacob, and God will make it evident in that day that it is all connected with Mount Zion. “Upon Mount Zion shall be deliverance.” Besides this, rule will be established over the world, and this too, in connection with the mountain that God has been pleased to choose, for “saviours shall come up on Mount Zion to judge * the mount of Esau; and the kingdom shall be Jehovah’s.”

Mount Zion brings before us the great principle upon which God will act in blessing for the earth when the day for it arrives. It is the spot upon which He set His choice (Ps. cxxxii. 13) when everything committed to the hands of

men had broken down. It speaks of Christ, risen from among the dead, the One in whom all God’s purposes of blessing for men, are made good. We Christians are already come to Mount Zion in a spiritual sense, as we are told in Heb. xii., and we get the benefit of the two things connected, in Obadiah, with the literal Mount Zion, namely, deliverance and rule.

Deliverance from the power of the world and earthly things, is enjoyed as the soul is established in that which Zion typifies. It is realised when we get consciously on to the ground of God’s purpose, and see how everything finds its foundation and centre in Christ.

We come under His blessed rule, too. He brings the light of God’s world to bear upon us, and that light governs us as we see it shining in His face. The glory that is to irradiate the universe, beams already in the face of Christ; the blessing that is going to be shed abroad through the whole scene, is even now brought to light in Him, for the present joy of those who are His.

The “saviours” of verse 21 are doubtless those who will carry the influences of Zion far and wide. Raised up for the purpose, they will be appointed in connection with the administration of Jehovah’s kingdom to go north, south, east and west, and spread abroad the beneficence that abounds in that holy mountain.

The prophecy belongs to a future time, but, thank God, there are those who answer to these “saviours” in our day. There are those whose eyes have been opened to see the glories that shine in the face of Christ. And as these glories are written in their hearts by the Spirit, they are able to preach Christ Jesus for the enlightening of others, that thither other hearts too may turn. Their ministry ever draws to Christ Himself, and tends to move our souls off the line of human responsibility, and establish them on the line of God’s purpose. No small service this, to render to the saints of God. Would that we could help one another more in this way.

Obadiah's object was akin to this. His name means "servant of the Lord," and it was his privilege to render a very real service to those who lived in his day, by exposing the true character of man's world as represented by Edom, and by leading the hearts of God's people, to that bright world which He will yet bring in, of which Zion will be the centre, where Edom will have no place, but where Christ will be supreme.

Obadiah, it is true, deals with the earthly part of that world of blessing. We Christians, have our portion in the heavenly part thereof, and enjoy a

relationship, and a knowledge of God, that far transcends that of Israel. But the earthly side is in great measure typical of the heavenly side, and though we must not look in Obadiah for Christianity, we can find in his short prophecy that which brings Christ before our hearts, first in His sorrow and humiliation, then in His glory, as the true Zion, in whom all God's blessing is made secure according to His eternal purpose.

* This word is not to "judge" in the sense of pronouncing sentence, or punishing, but in the sense of ruling, governing.

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

Preliminary Remarks.

(EDWARD CROSS).

IT is very appropriate that the section of "Scripture Truth" more especially devoted to the exposition of Scripture, should commence with the study of the Epistles to the Thessalonians. They are generally regarded as being the earliest written records of Christianity; as they are undoubtedly the earliest of the Apostles' writings; and they present to us the freest, simplest, and most objective form in which the fundamental truths connected with the Kingdom of God, and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ are set forth.

It is intended that the simple and direct exposition of Scripture shall form a prominent feature of this periodical; and all interested in the matter are earnestly besought to help in prayer that the Lord may vouchsafe in abundant measure the spirit of grace and wisdom to writers and readers alike; so that what is put forth may be for the glory of His name in the unfolding of the truth, and for the blessing and edification of many of His dear children. To this end the subject must be approached by both writer and reader with becoming reverence, and in the full sense of dependence on the Holy Spirit; not with the object of merely furnishing our

minds with knowledge, but with the desire that our souls may be so informed by the truth, that we may be enabled thereby to walk worthy of Him "who has called us unto His kingdom and glory."

Important at all times, it was never more so than now, that the Christian should address himself, in dependence on the Spirit, to the direct and serious study of the Scriptures. It is to be deplored that the people of God generally are far too lax on this point. The Scriptures are not systematically taught in the family at home; neither are they read in private, and studied with the seriousness that is due to them. On the importance of this much stress is laid in the Scriptures themselves, as may be seen in such passages as Deut. iv. 9, 10; vi. 7; Ps. i. 2; xvii. 4; cxix.; etc. Timothy had evidently been trained after this good old fashion to which the apostle so approvingly refers in II Tim., iii., 15. For the furtherance of this study of Scripture in a serious and systematic manner may the Lord give grace, and deign to make it profitable to both writer and reader alike.

Thessalonica was situated on the Thermaic Gulf of the Ægæan Sea. It was rebuilt and enlarged by Cassan-

der, who named it after his wife Thessalonica, a sister of Alexander the Great. Since that time it has played an important part in history, both ancient and modern, and under the corrupted name of Salonika, it is still, next to Constantinople, the most important town of European Turkey. It has been from early times, and still is, a great resort of Jews, as may be seen by the fact that with a population of 70,000, 10,000 are professing Christians of the Greek Church, while 35,000 are Jews, possessing 36 synagogues, and carrying on the chief trade of the city. Possibly this was a factor in determining the Apostle to pass on through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica, where he could address himself to a considerable number of his own countrymen with the glad tidings of which he was the messenger; according to what he says elsewhere, "to the Jew first and also to the Greek."--Rom. i., 16.

Of the character of his preaching there we are not left in doubt. In Acts xvii., 1-13, we have many interesting details as to his visit to that city. During his stay there, he devoted three Sabbaths in a special way in reasoning out of the Scriptures with the Jews in their Synagogue, opening and laying down: 1st, that Christ must needs have suffered; and 2nd, risen up from among the dead; and 3rd, that Jesus, whom he preached to them, was the Christ, the true Messiah, who was to fulfill their hopes of the coming kingdom.

We are not to suppose that Paul's stay at Thessalonica was confined to the three weeks mentioned above, nor that his preaching was to the Jews only. From 1. Thess., i., 9, and ii., 4-11, we gather that many of his converts were Gentiles, and that he must have stayed in the place for some considerable time. But keeping in mind the three leading facts of Acts xvii. 3 will help us better to understand the principal features of what will come before us in detail in the two Epistles to the Thessalonians. In style these epistles are simpler in language and less involved in thought than his later epistles. The great truths of the gospel, however really

they may be implied here, are not argued out either from a methodical or a polemical point of view, as they are in the Epistles to the Romans or Galatians. He does not here speak of the doctrine of righteousness, or of justification by faith, or of the believers part as identified with the death of Christ, or of the cross from a judicial point of view; but on the other hand he lays stress on the sufferings of Christ, the triumph of His resurrection, and the hope of His coming again.

This was important at the start of Christianity. We must remember that the gospel had to satisfy the just hopes of the thoughtful Jew, as well as to bring the light of mercy to the Gentile in the establishment of a kingdom which would be the glory of the one, and the blessing of both. The full bearing of the cross of Christ in the settlement of divine righteousness so that grace might reign unto eternal life, as also the special heavenly hopes of the Church were to be brought out in due course in his later epistles; but they are not the subject matter here. Of course there is nothing contrary to or inconsistent with them: it could not be so, where all is under the inspiration and direction of the Spirit of God. But whether or not the Apostle's own mind was as yet fully in the light of them, as appears in his later epistles, he is not here led of the Spirit to unfold them as he does elsewhere.

"There is a time for every purpose under heaven," the wise man tells us (Ecc. iii. 1.); and it was as timely to address to the Thessalonians the epistle written to them, as it would have been untimely to address to them the Epistle to the Ephesians, or that to the Colossians. There is neither confusion nor contradiction in Scripture between the heavenly purposes of God for the ages, and the governmental principles on which order will be established in the universe. Each is a hand-maiden with the other in their respective spheres for the accomplishment of the great problem of the glory of God, and His good pleasure founded and built upon a basis that cannot be moved.

The object of the Apostle at Thessalonica was to preach Christ to the Jew first and also to the Greek; to meet their difficulties in regard to the sufferings of Christ and His resurrection; and to prove to them that these things did not militate against the claims of Jesus to be their Messiah. Such being his object, the opposition to him, as was natural, arose from the Jews themselves. Later on, in Romans and Galatians, his object was to unfold the great doctrines of the cross, the nature of life in Christ, and as a consequence, "deliverance from this present evil age." To this the opposition arose from the ranks of Judaizing Christians. In Ephesians and Colossians he unfolds the hidden counsels of God from eternity: and the "great mystery" of Christ and the Church: with the reconciliation of all things to God; and as his subject increases in greatness so does the opposition to it. It is no longer a wrestling with flesh and blood, but with all the powers imaginable that can be ranged against it, with wicked spirits in the heavenlies. (Eph. vi. 12).

EDITORS' NOTE: Readers are invited to send us, in the FIRST week of each month, BRIEF expository comments on any or all of the separate verses contained in the portion to be considered the following month. Comments considered helpful, will be published, as far as space permits. This will constitute a kind of Bible Reading by post, which we trust may be profitable to contributors and readers alike. The portion to be considered in the February issue is Chapter I. of the Epistle.

No foe can cross the protecting circle of the Everlasting Arm.

Why should I start at the plough of my Lord that maketh deep furrows in my soul? I know that He is no idle Husbandman, He purposeth a crop.

A Christian is the world's Bible. In many cases a revised version is much needed.

It takes more time and patience for God to fit us to receive blessing, than it does for Him to bestow it.

An unbroken career of prosperity might result in abundant leafage; but there would be little fruit, if the Divine Husbandman, with infinite wisdom and foresight did not trim and prune the branch.

Although the 1. Epistle to the Thess. is rather practical than doctrinal, and does not therefore lend itself to the analysis of an ordered treatise developed on lines of thought in a consequential way, yet we may in a general way perhaps divide it into two main parts—chapters i.-iii. being of a more personal kind, in which the Apostle pours out his feelings towards them in his joy at the good tidings that Timothy brought him of their state; and chapters iv.-v., being exhortations to them prompted by the love that was so fervently desirous of their furtherance in the faith, and their fullest blessing (Chapter v. 23).—In this latter section is given a special revelation as to the rapture of the Church, in order to comfort the hearts of those who feared that their departed brethren would not share in the glories of the kingdom for which they looked.

We shall now address ourselves to the consideration of the epistle in detail.

(To be continued).

God pours into those who pour out. When any soul comes to the conclusion that he or she is full, and begins to button up the garment and hold it there, it is gone.

Attachment to Christ is the only secret of detachment from the world.

THE GOSPEL.—Every child knows the meaning of the word Gospel, but no saint in the sanctuary knows *all* its music.

A little child will simply and affectionately tell you that the word Gospel mean's God's spell, good news, glad tidings; and the child is etymologically correct. But etymology is only a little latch which we lift, in order that we may pass through the portal into the infinite reaches of divine love.

The Lord and His Disciples.

(J. T. MAWSON).

No. 1.—Power and Grace.

OUR attention is often arrested by the very remarkable contrasts brought together in the Scriptures, things that according to the reckoning of men could have no affinity, are found to run together and enhance the greatness and beauty of each.

An instance of this is seen in connection with the Lord and His disciples on the glorious resurrection day. His death had scattered them, for it had been told in the prophetic word, that at the smiting of the Shepherd the sheep would be scattered. But the power of God had brought again from the dead that great Shepherd of the sheep, and the news of this stupendous fact had spread amongst the sorely perplexed and brokenhearted flock.

How busy were those Galilean women that day, "the King's business required haste," and in the Gospel of the King it is recorded that "they departed *quickly* from the sepulchre with fear and great joy, and *did run* to bring His disciples word." —MATTHEW XXVIII, 8.

On the evening of that day they were gathered together, the last of them drawn to that blessed tryst from distant Emmaus by the Lord's personal service to them; and being thus gathered, two things commanded their thoughts and filled them with wonder: (1) The Lord is risen indeed, and (2) hath appeared to Simon. Nothing could be of greater moment to them than the first, for it was the manifestation of their Lord's victorious power, and was the confirmation of all things which He had spoken to them. And though they did not understand at the time, what the results of this glorious resurrection were, yet it must have opened a new world to their souls, and shewn them that what, in their eyes, had been weakness and defeat had become the veritable triumph of God.

But how could they meet the risen Lord? had they not forsaken Him in the midst of His exceeding sorrow, and might He not in consequence discard them for others more faithful and worthy? They might have thought so, and gone to hide themselves from Him for very shame, but—He had "appeared to Simon."

They do not say He hath appeared unto the Magdalene; they knew that her eyes had been the first to look upon Him, but there was nothing remarkable about His appearing to her, for she—devoted heart—had stood bereaved without the empty tomb, weeping out her sorrow, because she knew not where her beloved Lord lay. The world was a wilderness night where no comfort shone because the Lord was gone. It was no surprise to them, or to us, that since He was risen, He should appear to Mary.

But to Simon! who had abandoned his Master, and had proved the veriest coward in the presence of the scorning of a servant maid; who had denied his Lord with oaths and curses—that He should appear to Simon filled them with wonder.

So the two marvels are linked together by them, and in the Holy Spirit's record for us.

HIS MIGHTY POWER had brought Him from the grave.

HIS TENDER GRACIOUS LOVE had carried Him even to Simon.

It was this Lord who stood in the midst of them; the powers of darkness had been smitten before Him, and the failure of His followers had not changed Him. He was all-sufficient for every foe without, and for every failure within. No wonder then that it is recorded that the joy of seeing Him was so overwhelming, that they could scarcely

believe. But their doubts were speedily removed, they saw the Lord, and it is also our privilege to see Him—their Lord and ours—who had risen indeed, and appeared unto Simon.

We need Him as much as they did, for the malignity of the devil is not one whit less now than then, and we have to mourn failure and sin as terrible as Simon's, for the Church has not kept His Word, and has often denied His Name. But Christ remains unchanged, and every purpose of God, with every hope of His people, hangs alone upon Him.

How blessed then to know that this same Lord is in the midst of His saints to-day!

Days of stress and trial they are, in the which the devil is seeking to stamp out all testimony for God, both as to the true word of the Gospel, and in the lives and unity of His own.

But He abides. If His pilgrim people are treading a wilderness journey in the which they are conscious of fierce opposition, of their individual needs, and much failure, He says to them, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," so that they may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me."—HEBREWS XIII, 5-6.

Or if His servants go forth to spread His gospel according to His own command, He says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end" (MATTHEW XXVIII, 20), so that while they feel their

weakness, they have no cause for discouragement.

Or if His saints gather together because they love His name, desiring only to please Him, He says, "Where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst"—(MATT. XVIII, 20).

Having Him, we have an infinite and eternal sufficiency, what need for ought beside? Having Him, we can well dispense with wealth, power, eloquence, wisdom of men, and all the things that attract and charm the unregenerate mind and heart; for in Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is the power and wisdom of God. He is full of grace. He is our Shepherd and Bishop, our Master and Lord. We must cleave to Him alone. He is our rallying point and our support.

To rely upon our fellow Christians, or to turn to men, whom we deem to be spiritual, for help and support, as some would have us do, would be as futile as it would have been for John to have leaned upon Simon in the hour of trial, but we may all (as John did) lean upon the Lord (JOHN XIII, 23), and He faileth not.

If we fail, there is restoring grace with Him, and He knows how to apply the balm to hearts broken by a sense of sin, even as when He appeared to Simon. Well may we then lift up our heads, and take courage, having hearts made glad by the sense of what He is.

SECOND-HAND godliness is a poor affair—we want that which leans upon God alone. We see too many Christians depending one upon another, like houses "run up" by "jerry builders," which are so slenderly built that if you pulled down the last one in the row, all would follow. Be not a "lean-to" of this kind, but steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

One cannot honour Christ in one's walk, and at the same time walk with those who dishonour Him.

No child of God can live on past experience; yesterday's manna will not feed him to-day. God comes with fresh supplies of grace, but the heart must be open to receive them.

If our life is all in public, it will be a frothy, vapoury, ineffectual existence, but if we hold high converse with God in secret, we shall have power in that which is good.

The gentleness of Christ is the comeliest ornament that a Christian can wear.

Divine Facts.

(H. D. R. JAMESON).

"Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." I. Tim. iv., 15.

THERE is nothing by which men are so deeply moved, or so profoundly affected, as by the simple conviction of great divine facts. Theories may interest the mind, and that interest may suffice to hold the attention for a time; but mere theories accomplish nothing that abides. That, on the other hand, which is used in bringing to pass mighty results, which are eternal in their character, is the simple naked truth of God, in its own solitary grandeur and magnificence: the outlining to men of divine facts of utmost simplicity but tremendous import. Let us, without following out the detail, look at some of the greatest of these briefly and earnestly.

1st. God is.

Seek to get hold of, and to be taken hold of by, that greatest of all verities, the fact that "*God is*"—that God *lives* to-day. Satan well knows the profound effect of this as a fact accepted and present to the soul, and therefore his constant effort is to obscure and occupy the mind with a thousand trifles of a changing world, in order that God be denied His rightful place in the heart as a *living reality*.

The Bible commences with the words, "In the beginning God . . ." In this simple but majestic way are we introduced, in the very first sentence of the Book, to the great reality of the existence of God.

In Hebrews it is laid down as a first essential that, if any would come to God, he "*must believe that He is*" (Ch. xi. 6): and it is worthy of remark that this epistle especially emphasises the great fact that God is the "*Living God*."

Four times over is that striking expression repeated, twice in connection

with the present time and twice in connection with the future; (ch. iii., 12; ix., 14; x., 31; xii., 22); twice is it linked in warning with the fate of the apostate, and twice on the other hand with the blessing of the believer. In each connection what is prominent is the fact that *He lives*.

All creation bears witness to Him. Every blade of grass and tiny drop of dew, every mountain peak and verdant valley, each shining star in the heavens and each mighty planet as it ceaselessly travels its vast appointed orbit, bears mute but eloquent testimony to the fact that *God is*.

There is mighty inward witness, too, for man has been, of divine intent, so formed and so constituted, that he cannot get away from the secret conviction in his inmost soul, that *God is*. Man is not like an animal; when he was created the Lord God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul"—a being with a capacity to know, enjoy, and have to do with the *living God*.

Eternal; immortal, invisible, dwelling in unapproachable light, infinite in holiness, righteousness, power and love, all seeing, all present, and almighty—*God is*.

2nd. God has Spoken.

This is the second great fact which demands the attention of men, for God is not only an all powerful and eternal Being, of whose existence we must take account as a tremendous fact, but He has spoken to men, and in the Scripture of Truth these divine communications make their universal appeal.

In times past God spake by the prophets; then, such is the wonder of divine grace, He deigned to enter

manhood, and, in the deepest, fullest, and most final way, He spake in the Son: Who Himself is the Word of God, the exact expression of the Divine Being. But what we here consider is the inspired record of the whole testimony of God, the Book in which He has addressed Himself, and does address Himself, to men to-day—the Bible.

The Bible comes to us directly from God. In 2 Tim., iii. 16, we read that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and again in 2 Peter, i. 21, that "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

If the Bible be not a direct revelation from God to men, then it stands utterly discredited in that which is fundamental to its possession of any authority over the consciences of men. But if it be, in deed and truth, inspired, as it claims to be, from cover to cover—"all scripture"—and inspired not only as to the truths contained, but as to its very words, its numerals, and more, its very letters (for the whole argument in Galatians iii. hangs on the inspiration of the letter 's' in a word quoted from Gen. xxii., 18), then with what reverent attention and unique interest should we receive these divine communications!

3rd. The Incarnation.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." . . . "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John i. 1 and 14.)

From out a myriad worlds this tiny planet in God's vast universe is chosen to be the theatre for the display of all that God is in the might of His victory over the powers of evil;—from out unnumbered hosts of higher intelligences *man* is chosen for this high purpose; and into the very world in which we live and move, a world moreover of sin and rebellion against God, the mighty Inhabiter of Eternity, the High and Lofty One, is born a Babel! Oh,

marvellous fact! the mighty Creator on whose uttered word hang countless worlds, come in matchless grace into manhood, into the condition of His lost and fallen creature.

We do not dwell here on the wonders of that life, its purpose as regards man, and as regards the wider question of good and evil and the glory of God, nor on the infinite perfections that shone in Him who was very God yet very man, but concentrate our attention on the great *fact* of incarnation, for this world has been in deed and in truth visited by the Son of God!

4th. "Christ died."

We pass not on to the stupendous results which flow from Christ's death, but tarry to think of the verity itself. That simple fact of mighty import contained in two words of Romans, v., 6, "Christ died"!

I point you back to the moment at which this occurred. In the long history of this world, from the time when in far back ages "its deep foundations on nothingness were laid," to the time when, at the conclusion of all God's ways, the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and all these things shall be dissolved—in all the history of time no moment has presented issues so vast as that moment of time in which Christ died. Nay, more, in all the history of eternity (if the word history can be applied to so limitless a conception) no instant has been pregnant with results so tremendous as that instant in which Christ died!

The Death of Christ! What words can picture that scene of scenes—the thronging hosts of darkness there gathered in hostile array, and the measureless hatred that would crucify infinite Love; the horror of great darkness that gathered about the soul of the suffering Man of Sorrows, and the uttermost distance and abandonment of the forsaken One; the storms of almighty wrath that beat upon the open bosom of the great Substitute and Sin-bearer, and the fathomless depths of

those waters of death into which the Saviour descended; the heights to which sin there rose in its onslaught on the very Highest, and the higher heights of all conquering Love; the infinite perfections of the Crucified, and the glory of God shining in the darkness of Calvary in splendour without a parallel—every divine attribute supremely glorified: infinite Righteousness, Holiness, Wisdom and Power alike resplendent in that scene of unmeasured Love, where perfect goodness gains its supreme and everlasting triumph over evil, and where all that is infinite finds its eternal centre. Oh! the mysteries, the heights and the depths of the death of Christ! The ages of eternity will not suffice to exhaust the deep meaning of these two words "Christ died." My soul, ponder! wonder! and adore!

5th. Christ is Risen.

He has been here, and the world around about us has been actually traversed by His blessed feet; but, look as you may, He is not here to-day. Somewhere in Palestine is a place, which the wise providence of God has prevented our actually locating: there is His grave—the very spot in which His holy body was laid; but if we could look in yonder grave to-day we should find that He is not there.

Where, then, is He? The 3rd chapter of 1st Peter gives reply in words that tell us of "the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who is *gone into heaven*, and is on the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." He is *there!* We need to lay hold of the FACT that Christ is risen. He is not a "spirit," as many conceive of Him, but a real living Man seated at this very moment in heavenly splendour in the glory of God, and having in His hands and feet the marks of earth-given wounds.

6th. The Holy Ghost is here.

We do not dwell on the results which flow from the presence of so

wonderful a Person, but invite attention to the bare fact itself, that here on earth to-day the third Person in the divine Trinity, God the Holy Ghost, *is present* and is dwelling (John xiv. 16-17). In Old Testament days He did not dwell on the earth, though He exercised influences over men here, but at Pentecost He came Himself to take up His abode on earth, in and with the Christian company. *He is here.* To theorise on the matter, however correctly, will not affect us, but if we ponder the truth itself we cannot but be moved by a fact so immense.

7th. Christ is coming again.

The last statement of the inspired volume is "Surely I come quickly"—a clear and positive declaration. Here and in many another passage of Holy Writ is distinctly brought before us the fact that Christ is coming again.

The doctrine of the second coming of Christ is accepted by multitudes of Christians to-day, but doctrine alone does not affect men. What we need to get hold of is the fact itself, the immense fact, that He, who has been here, is coming again.

Just as the instant came when Christ was born in Bethlehem and Micah's prophecy written 700 years before was fulfilled; just as the appointed hour came round when Christ should become a sacrifice for sin, and Christ died, thus fulfilling Scripture; and just as the third day, long foretold, at last dawned, when Christ arose, according to the Scriptures, so the day is actually fixed in God's account, and the very moment is appointed and fast drawing near, when this last great prophecy will be fulfilled and Christ will—COME. We never were nearer to that instant than we are now.

Oh, may the Lord awaken us from all that is merely theoretical, and give us to take sober account of these immense facts, thus shall we be divinely and profoundly affected in heart, life and ways.

Papers on Service.

("AN ALL-ROUND MINISTRY.")

The Condition of Men.

YOU will not attempt to teach a tiger the virtues of vegetarianism; but you might as hopefully attempt that task as try to convince an unregenerate man of the truths revealed by God concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment to come. These spiritual truths are repugnant to carnal men, and the carnal mind cannot receive the things of God. Gospel truth is diametrically opposed to fallen nature; and if I have not a power much stronger than that which lies in moral suasion, or in my own explanations and arguments, I have undertaken a task in which I am sure of defeat. Except the Lord endow us with power from on high, our labour must be in vain, and our hopes must end in disappointment.

The Servant's Need.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" We are weak, exceedingly weak, every one of us. If there is one weaker than the rest, and knows that he is so, let him not be at all cast down about that: for the best man, if he knows what he is, knows that he is out of his depth in this sacred calling. Well, if you are out of your depth, it does not matter whether the sea is forty feet or a full mile deep. If the sea is only a fathom deep, you will drown if you be not upborne; and if it be altogether unfathomable, you cannot be more than drowned. The weakest man is not, in this business, really any weaker than the strongest man, since the whole affair is quite beyond us, and we must work miracles by divine power, or else be total failures. If, therefore, omnipotence be not within hail, and if the miracle-working power is not within us, then the sooner we give up the better. Wherefore should we undertake what we have not the power to perform? Supernatural work needs

supernatural power; and if you have it not, do not attempt to do the work alone, lest, like Samson, when his locks were shorn, you should become the jest of the Philistines.

This supernatural force is the power of the Holy Ghost, the power of God Himself. It is a wonderful thing that He should work His marvels of grace through men. It is strange that, instead of speaking, and saying with His own lips, "Let there be light," He speaks the illuminating word by our lips! Do you not marvel at this, and that He should treasure His gospel in these poor earthen vessels, and accomplish these miracles by messengers who are themselves so utterly unable to help Him in the essential parts of His heavenly work? Turn your wonder into adoration, and blend with your adoration a fervent cry for Divine power. O Lord, work by us to the praise of Thy glory!

Do your own work.

Charles the Twelfth of Sweden had his secretary sitting by his side, writing from dictation, when a bomb-shell fell through the roof into the next room. The secretary, in alarm, dropped his pen, upon which the king exclaimed, "What are you doing?" The poor man faltered, "Ah, Sire, the bomb!" The king's answer was: "What has the bomb to do with what I am telling you?"

You will say that the secretary's life was in danger. Yes, but you are safe in any case, for by your side is the Master, whom you serve, and no evil can befall you. Watch on, work on, leave the times and seasons with God. If He has made you a preacher of Gospel, or given you service of any kind, you must attend to His work; you must continue to deliver your message even though the earth be removed, and the mountains cast into the depths of the sea.

The Perfections of Jesus.

(J. T. MAWSON).

Prophet, Priest and King.

"Whatsoever things are lovely . . . think on these things."

WE waste no time when thinking of Jesus, for every thought of Him yields present delight and is of eternal value. All the wisdom that the minds of men can evolve will pass like smoke, but every Holy Ghost given thought of Him will abide as a priceless possession for ever. It is the understanding of Him which "is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her, and happy is everyone that retaineth her."—Proverbs iii. 14-18.

To the anointed eye, and opened ear, and devoted heart the Bible is full of Jesus and His beauty. He shines forth in the Old Testament through type and shadow, and no types are of greater interest and instruction than those in connection with the tabernacle in Israel.

The tabernacle in its largest interpretation is figurative of the wide universe of God, when everything in it will be subject to His will. It sets forth that vast realm in which His glory will be displayed in and by Christ; this is the meaning of the expression translated in the authorised version "a worldly sanctuary."—Heb. ix. 1.

There were three parts to it: the courtyard, the holy place, and the holy of holies; in this latter God dwelt in the midst of His people, and as nothing unsuitable to God could be allowed to abide in His dwelling-place, the things which He commanded should be there must typify that which is delightful to Himself. These things are enumerated for us in Hebrews ix. 4:—

The golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with pure gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.

The Ark of the Covenant was a type of Christ, it was made of an imperishable wood and overlaid with gold, the former speaking of His spotless and incorruptible humanity, the latter of the Divinity of His Person. He was here on earth "God manifest in the flesh," very God yet perfect Man. This incarnation is a great mystery which the mind of man cannot fathom, but faith accepts it as the revelation of God, and, like the wise men from the east, bows down in adoration before the glory of the Person thus presented to us. In this ark were the three things referred to in our verse, and to them we will direct our attention.

The golden pot that had manna.

The manna was that with which God fed His people in the wilderness. It conspicated their complete dependence upon Him; but He was a God who never failed them, and this "corn of Heaven" fell for their needs throughout those forty years. They wearied of it and cried in rebellion against the Giver: "Our souls loathe this light bread" (Numbers xxi., 5). But God said of that which they despised "Take a pot, and put an omer full of manna therein, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept for your generations. As the Lord commanded Moses, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony to be kept" (Ex. xvi., 33-34). It was as though God said "That manna is precious to Me, the people may despise it, but it shall be preserved in My dwellingplace for ever."

But its preciousness lay in the fact that it typified Christ: that which was the food of men entirely dependent upon God, prefigured Him who came down from Heaven to live a life of complete dependence, and to tread the road of perfect obedience to God's will. This was man's true place Godward, and Jesus came to stand where all

beside had fallen before the tempter's power.

Though He was the Lord of Glory He was born in Bethlehem of Judea and laid in a manger; and the external lowliness of His birth was but the sign of that inward lowliness of heart which was perfect in Him. From that lowly advent to His glorious departure He was always dependent upon God, for He could say "I was cast upon Thee from the womb!" The devil brought all his wiles to bear upon Him, but Jesus stood firm in that dependence, and refused to look in any other direction than upward to God for all His need.

That life of dependence was also one of obedience. His ear was wakened morning by morning by His Father's voice; He listened as the learner to His Father's instructions, and went forth to fulfil His words, and do His works, no more and no less; this was His very life, His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

The people saw His works and had to say "He hath done all things well." His enemies heard His words, and were compelled to confess "Never man spake like this Man." But did He take the praise of it to Himself? Nay, He said "The words are my Father's words, and I do the works of Him that sent me." He was the Man without pride, the Bread of God come down from heaven to give life unto the world.

But while all this was manifested before the eyes of men, there was that which they could not see. They beheld a Man Who refused the path of ease and chose the path of sorrows, Who refused to receive the preferments of the rich, or popularity with the poor; they could not understand Him, and hated Him in consequence. Even His disciples rebuked Him for it, but they did not know the motive and spring of that blessed life. *He lived on account of His Father.* His only motive in life was to please His Father, every throb of His heart was true to the One who sent Him. He was controlled and

governed by His Father's joy, His Father's will. He was always one in mind and heart and purpose with His Father who sent Him. Thus He filled the infinite heart of God with satisfaction, while there shone forth from Him the glory of that grace which can fill with joy the heart of every creature beneath the sun.

But just as Israel loathed the manna, so men loathed the 'Sent One of God.' "He was despised and rejected of men, and when they saw Him there was no beauty that they should desire Him." And He had to say "Mine enemies speak evil of Me, when shall He die and His name perish" (Psalm xli.) They wished to see and hear of Him no more, and a shameful cross was the end of that life, as far as men were concerned.

But God hath highly exalted Him. The precious manna has been placed in the golden pot, and put in the very dwelling of God. Not one thought, or word, or deed, or motion of the soul of that blessed humbled Man will ever be forgotten. The glory of that life shall fill eternity with its fragrance. Its imperishable beauty is now enthroned at the right hand of God, for He is there, and what He was, He is, and ever shall be.

But His exaltation has not *increased* His worth, for that were impossible. The Father's throne is the only suited place for Him; and as He was here, so He ever will be there, the joy of God's heart, and the wonder and joy of all the redeemed.

It was while here on earth in this lowly pathway, which led only to the cross, that He was the great prophet of God. He always delighted to speak of Himself as "sent," and as the Sent One He fully declared the One whom mortal eye has never seen. He did this in all His words and works, and the revelation of God could not be more complete. It will abide for ever; but as imperishable and eternal as the nature of God thus revealed, will be the perfections of Jesus as the Revealer of that nature.

Aaron's Rod that budded.

There had been rebellion in Israel, and God instructed Moses to take the rods of the princes, one rod for each tribe, saying to him :—

"Thou shalt lay them up in the tabernacle of the congregation before the testimony, where I will meet with you. And it shall come to pass that the man's rod, whom I shall choose, shall blossom; and I will make to cease from me the murmurings of the children of Israel, whereby they murmur against you." (Numbers xvii. 4-5.)

Twelve dry staves were placed there as the sun went down; but when the morning dawned "the rod of Aaron for the house of Levi was budded, and brought forth blossoms, and yielded almonds."

The almond is figurative of resurrection, and in the blossoming of the high priest's rod we have a striking type of the priestly office of the Lord Jesus, exercised in the power of resurrection. He could not be a priest on earth (Heb. viii. 4), but having been raised from the dead, He has entered into the presence of God there to appear for His saints. This is His present position and service, the doctrine of which is unfolded for us in the Hebrew Epistle.

The chief result of the budding of Aaron's rod was the removal of the murmurings of the people (verse 10). There is unmeasured comfort for us in this, for we are compassed with infirmity; all kinds of opposition confronts us in the path of faith; and there is also the chastening hand of God upon us, that we may be partakers of His holiness. In the midst of these things we should certainly become discouraged and murmur and repine, had we not an High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and Who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. In the power of infinite and quenchless love He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and His mighty intercession cannot fail. And though we see Him not with mortal eye, yet we know His sympathetic heart, for He

made it known on earth; His tears were mingled with those of the weeping sisters by the grave of Lazarus, and He is just the same to-day, and we may prove as they did that His love is greater than the greatest sorrow that we can feel.

It is written "whoso offereth praise glorifieth God," and He has redeemed us, that we might praise Him in the new song. The devil knows this, and uses every effort to make murmuring take the place of singing, so that God may be dishonoured instead of glorified. But Jesus is our great High Priest that we might not fail in this way, and the resources of His grace are inexhaustable. He lives that we might draw largely upon these resources, so that the path of complete dependence upon God may be to us the path of great joy; and thus the very circumstances that the devil would use to make us murmur, become the cause for sweetest praise, for they turn us to Christ, and are the means of enabling us to experience His grace and sympathy, as we could not otherwise do. We have a most instructive example of this in the case of Paul, who was greatly tested by the thorn in the flesh; but to him the Lord could say "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness; and Paul's response to this was "most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities" (II. Cor. xii., 9). He was more than a conqueror through Him that loved him.

But the Lord Jesus also fulfils His priestly services towards us because we are sons of God. God is "bringing many sons to glory"; they are so precious to Him, and such is their dignity, that He could not commit them to the care of an archangel; there is only one Person great enough and competent for this charge, even the One who is so constantly spoken of in the Hebrew epistle as Jesus. In obedience to the will of God, and to carry out His plan with regard to His people, He has become the Captain of our salvation; and "such an High Priest became us, who is holy,

harmless, and undefiled, separate from sinners; made higher than the heavens;" and Who is able to save to the uttermost all "that come unto God by Him." (Hebrews vii. 25, 26). He cannot break down or fail in this service to God's blood-bought sons; His mercy, faithfulness, and power are all engaged to bring them safely home, because they belong to God; and it is His delight, as the Servant of God's pleasure, to do God's will with regard to them.

A little child wanders from its home, and is in danger of being hurt in the crowded thoroughfare, but a dear friend of that child's mother sees it standing all bewildered amid the whirling traffic. He takes it in charge and because it is hungry he feeds it, because it is tired he carries it, and at length bears it through all the dangers of the street to the mother's arms. That means much to that child, but who can tell how the *mother* will appreciate such a service!

So it is; the heart of our great High Priest is full of compassion; He feeds, and carries, and cares for us,

"His watchful eye shall keep
Each pilgrim soul amongst the thousands
of God's sheep."

until at last we reach the home of our God. We shall praise Him for ever for this service of infinite love to us, but if it has meant so much to us, *what will it have meant to God? How will He appreciate it?* Every beloved child brought safely home, in spite of all the wiles of the foe; brought home too, with songs of gladness, instead of voice of murmuring. We may be sure that God will never forget this. The rod that budded shall be associated with the pot of manna, and laid up before Him for ever. The faithfulness of Jesus, in accomplishing God's will as the High Priest of His people, will never be out of God's memory, and it shall shine in imperishable glory to the utmost bounds of the universe of God.

The Tables of Stone.

God brought Israel out of Egypt to be a kingdom for Himself, in the which

His will should be maintained and His righteous character manifested; and this will and character was embodied in the ten commandments. The first tables were broken e'er ever they reached the camp of Israel, for the people had already violated the laws they contained. But God, in mercy, said to Moses:

"Hew thee two tables like unto the first, and come up unto Me in the mount and make thee an ark of wood. And I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou breakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark." (Deut. x. 1-2.)

The tables of stone foreshadow the time when the once-rejected Nazarene shall have dominion to the ends of the earth. This is evidenced by the fact that they alone were placed in the ark when the temple of Solomon was built (1. Kings viii. 9). The temple glory is the glory of the millennial kingdom, while that of the tabernacle sets forth what is eternal.

Those commandments were broken by Israel, but when the true King comes they will be kept throughout His far-stretching domain; He will administrate according to them for the glory of God. The first request of the kingdom prayer is that God's will shall be done on earth, and this prayer shall receive an abundant answer, for God will have everything that He has introduced perfectly fulfilled.

Jesus was "born King of the Jews," but He did not at once take up the sceptre of government, for "His own received Him not;" and since those laws had been broken by those to whom God gave them, He, as the true Israelite, must keep them.

The law was maintained inviolate in His heart, it was His meditation day and night, He saw the glorious things in it, He fulfilled and magnified it, for He was the One Who loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and His neighbour as Himself. He shewed the way of righteousness for all His subjects, by being completely subject Himself, and by that subjection has proved His right, as well as His competency, to

rule. But righteousness is not the only quality that the Lord as King possesses. He presented Himself to His people as meek and compassionate: to Him the blind and the lame came in the temple, and as their King He healed them; all evil fled before His blessed touch, and so glad were the children made by His presence that they could not refrain from singing, "Hosanna to the Son of David." It was this King that was despised and crucified.

But He is coming again; His enemies shall lick the dust; all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him. He will arise with healing in His wings, and deliver the needy when they cry; He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. For one glorious millennium this poor sin-riven earth shall be at rest, righteousness shall flourish, all shall know the Lord, and peace shall cover men as a garment. But all this will be because of the greatness of the King, in whose heart the law of God is enshrined.

The kingdom will be right because the King is righteous. He will administrate on God's behalf, and govern His people as a Shepherd, and maintain them in the ways and will of God by the power of His priestly grace—for He will be a Priest upon His throne (Zech. vi. 13)—so that not only will that law have been carried out by one perfect Man, but it will also be maintained and administered by that Man in

a wide-stretching kingdom for the eternal glory of God. No one but Jesus, in whom infinite perfections dwell, could carry this out; and when He has done this, then shall He give up that kingdom to God.

But though that reign of 1000 years shall come to an end, the glory of the King will not be forgotten. The tables of stone are placed with the rod that budded, and the pot of manna, in the dwelling-place of God; and when this creation has served its purpose, and been folded up as a garment and set aside, the perfections of Jesus, as Prophet, Priest, and King—the full, making-known of God in all His ways with men—shall be the eternal glory of the new heavens and the new earth.

Meantime while these perfections are hidden from the eyes of the world, believers have boldness to go right in to the presence of God where they for ever shine; for the precious all-atoning blood is there upon the Mercy Seat, and that blood is their title to be there (Hebrews x., 19-22). There in the very presence of God they may feed upon Christ as the manna; be maintained by Him as the rod that budded; and have Him for a Pattern as the tables of stone; and as their souls enter into the glories of Christ which yield such delight to God, they are able to use the golden censer—which is symbolical of worship—and pour forth their hearts in adoration before the God whom Christ has fully declared.

From out the gloom of sin's dark night,
And direful fear of wrath to come,
Our souls have passed, drawn by a light
Above the brightness of the sun.

Where rolled death's billows, brightly
shone
That light of love with fervent flame;
Now throned amid the glory, Lord,
Thy love for us is still the same.

Within our souls there riseth up
A love responsive unto Thine;
We long to see Thee in that place,
Where all Thy glories shine.

No breath of time shall ever quench,
This holy flame of love to Thee,
For that which Thine own hand hath lit,
Shall burn eternally.

Faith never goes home with an empty
basket.

As you pamper the flesh you hamper
the Spirit.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES ROYD).

No. 2.—The Fall.

NO other book has ever received a similar amount of attention at the hand of friend and foe. The contentions concerning its sayings have been continuous, cruel, and sanguinary. Hell has stormed at it, earth has hallooed after it, and fires have been kindled with the parchments upon which it was written; but its lovers have succoured it, sheltered it, cherished it, studied its pages, imbibed its life-giving utterances, and with the precious volume clasped within their trembling hands, and its heavenly truths engraven upon their hearts, they have passed away from earth into the presence of Him of whom it speaks. It has been loved with all the love of the human heart under the influence of heaven, and it has been hated with all the hatred of the soul under the influence of the abyss of evil. On its account men have ever been ready to kill, or to be killed. The world will not have it, and yet it remains in it. The more it has been persecuted, the more it has multiplied and grown.

In defence of its sayings the hearts' blood of thousands has been freely poured forth. Its followers have been counted the offscourings of the earth, and have been murdered without mercy. They have been reckoned by the world as sheep for the slaughter, cast out among the unclean, the lawless and the transgressors; hunted among mountains, dens, and caves of the earth, and slaughtered wherever they were found. But when the world was finished with them, God came out and wrote their epitaph, and it reads thus: "Of whom the world was not worthy."

Like Him of whom it testifies it finds itself in a world hostile to its teachings, and therefore is it despised and rejected of men; but like Him it passes onward in its unostentatious pathway of mercy, 'Doing good, and healing all oppressed of the devil, for God is with it.' Into

an evil world it has come, but were the world not evil it would have no mission here. Had man remained as God made him such a revelation would have been unnecessary, for when he was made he had all the light needful to maintain him in the relationship in which he was placed with his Maker. But fallen man must have light beyond what was required for an innocent creation, if ever he is to be recovered for God.

But the wiselings of to-day will not believe that man is fallen. If he is not fallen he must be as God made him, and if he is as God made him I fail to see how he can be improved. Yet those who contend against the truth of the fall, are the people who are loudest in their demands for such legislation as will enable them to set about improving the race. Could I be led to believe that God made man as he is, I would have to discard the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and substitute in His place an evil being. It is impossible to entertain the idea of a Creator, and have any other thought than that everything created by Him has been created for His pleasure. And indeed this is just what Scripture teaches: "For Thy pleasure they are, and were created," (Rev. iv. 11). Therefore if there has been no fall, and men are as He made them, and consequently just in the condition in which He takes delight, and if He takes delight in them as I see them, what kind of a Being is He? Men make things in which they can take delight, and by which they may be served, and no man will intentionally and premeditatedly make anything that will be a grief to his heart. And I am sure the Creator will not. Therefore He must be understood by the state, the moral state, in which His creature is created.

Now the heavens are said in Scripture to declare the glory of God (Ps.

xix.), but the earth never. Looking upward at the heavens with our natural eyes everything appears to us in the most perfect order. There is no confusion there, no conflict between the heavenly bodies, everything moves in the most perfect harmony together; there is no trespass committed by one inhabitant of the blue expanse against its neighbour; there is no noise of contending forces; one spirit seems to permeate the vast heavenly host, and all is peace. But when we turn to earth it is hell let loose. A pandemonium of discord jars upon the ear. Violence and corruption are seen everywhere. Scenes of horror fill the vision, and groans of despair grate upon the ear. Hatred, falsehood, outrage, murder, and suicide, stalk naked through the land. Pestilence, famine, hunger, nakedness, and death, cause the shriek of anguish to drown the revelry of gladsome day, and rend the bosom of the black-browed night. And I am told man is not fallen!

We are told that man is just as he should be at the present moment of his history, but that he will not ever be thus. He is struggling upward, and the goal is within measurable distance. Is it? From my observation of the progress things are making I should say he is struggling downward, and making very rapid progress in his descent. That men are better educated than they were a century ago is not in question. Possibly the poor eat better, and are better clothed also; but that men are more moral, that they love one another better, that they are more law-abiding, that they are less selfish, that they are more faithful in their relations of life, and that they are more to be trusted than they were a century ago, I do not believe. Take away the steam engine and the dynamo-electric machine; dispense with railway, telegraph, and telephone, and with all the trappings of the present century civilisation, and have a good look at society, and you will find little to boast in above the savage.

We are told that nobody believes

the Genesis account of the fall. One often wonders what kind of company these Bible critics keep. I think I might safely undertake to find some thousands of people who have never questioned it; and these are not men who readily take things for granted. It is asserted that the offence committed by Adam in the garden of Eden was of too trivial a nature to entail such consequences. But this seems to me to be a very superficial and foolish kind of reasoning. I fail to see that it could have made any real difference what test it might have pleased God to apply to man. The gravity of man's offence is not to be estimated by the intrinsic value of the article purloined; there was nothing in that at all. He might have eaten of that tree as well as of any other had it not been forbidden. The interdiction against eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil ought not have been difficult for Adam to observe; it was not a heavy rent to pay for such a large estate. He was the vice-regent of God upon earth, made so by his indulgent Creator, and the tree which was forbidden to him was the witness that the earth and the fulness thereof were the Lord's, and that Adam was not sole proprietor. The tree became a test of his loyalty to his Creator. The tribute demanded from him was a mere bagatelle, but this very fact made his transgression all the more inexcusable.

Had the toll demanded from the creature been a heavy tax upon his resources, compassion for the rebel would have been more pardonable, but the trivial tax upon such enormous wealth brought to light the hidden secret of the rebel's heart, and the creature is manifested in his attempt to grasp Divinity itself. This was the bait which the arch deceiver of mankind dangled before the eyes of his victim, and which tempted him to transgress the commandment. Why should he have desired to be on equality with God? He should have had confidence enough in the goodness of his Creator to have enabled him to refuse such a bait.

But I need not waste words in bringing the gravity of the offence of Adam into light; the reader knows his own natural heart well enough to be conscious of the fact that, if he were able to bring its desires about, no one would occupy the throne of the universe but himself. In this world every man seeks to get all the power into his own hands, and had he the throne of the world it would not satisfy him, he would want the throne of the universe also. This suggestion instilled into the heart of Adam by the devil will reach its culmination in the "man of sin," who will allow no one to worship any god but himself. He will take the place of God upon earth, and will put to death all who resist his blasphemous pretensions (ii. Thess. ii. and Rev. xiii.)

But in spite of man's denial that he is in a fallen condition, and in spite of his claim to be something, he is really ashamed to come out in the truth of his condition. We shelter ourselves from the inquisitiveness of our neighbours, and resent every attempt made by them to scrutinize our affairs. It may be nothing but idle curiosity prompts them to get near to us, but it is not because we know this that we so strongly resent their advances, and determine to hold them at arm's length. Were we certain they could not find anything discreditable about us, we should not be so upset by their unmannered curiosity. Were everything that could be known about us creditable to us, we would be glad to be manifested before the assembled universe. But we shrink from exposure because we are unfit to be seen as we really are. This is very strange, especially as we know that others are no better than ourselves. They shrink from our penetrating gaze as timidly as we do from theirs.

But the knowledge of this does not help us, or make us bolder, for each of us has got his own secrets, of which he is rightly ashamed. Like Ham we are ready to sneer at the nakedness of our neighbour, but we are all very careful, when in our senses, not to babble into the ear of the world the secrets of our

own guilty lives. My neighbour does not know me as I know myself, and I am determined that he shall remain in his ignorance. We keep our respective distances. I do not pry into the thoughts of his heart, and I expect the same consideration from him. This is all "fig leaves." We are very pleased to find that people do not walk about in their naked hideousness; and should one of us expose himself in his moral degradation, we feel it to be an offence against all that is becoming, and insulting to society. Each person is at liberty to *think* whatever he pleases, and he may *do* what he pleases, as long as it does not injure his neighbour, but he must be careful that it does not get abroad. He must wear the "fig leaves," or become ostracised from society.

Some of these haters of the Bible cannot understand any intelligent person continuing to believe in the fall of man as it is taught in Genesis. We are told that the legend was in existence as oral tradition long before Genesis was written. How it could be otherwise I am at a loss to know, and were it otherwise the fact would go far to prove it mere fiction. That the human race could be ignorant of the fall until Moses wrote the account of it is inconceivable. It was bound to travel with the posterity of Adam down the centuries. No doubt it would lose nothing by the telling in its travels, and therefore is it found in distorted forms in various countries, but in Genesis we have it in its simple naked truth.

We are told by some that it is scarcely alluded to in the Old Testament writings. Why should it be? Where was the need for constant repetition? It is referred to however, but had I found it very frequently referred to by the prophets, it would greatly have depended upon the setting in which I found it, whether my suspicion as to the writers' faith in it would not have been aroused. Indeed it is seldom referred to in the New Testament, and when it is referred to, it is not hard to see the writer takes it for granted that those to whom he writes do not question the

fact. It has no need to be proven in a world like this.

The difficulty with the philosophers of the world seems to lie in the fact that, whether man be fallen or not, his moral state is far from being satisfactory. As a general thing God is either altogether left out, as regards the theories of these men, or everything is God, whether it be man, bird, beast, reptile, or sponge. A God who is objective to His creation, neither of them confess. The evolutionists have got the whole creation upon a ladder whose top and bottom are both alike enveloped in impenetrable gloom. What he came from and what he is to arrive at are wrapt in obscurity. They think man is advancing toward a perfect state, but what that state is to be they know not. Some of us are quite certain that man is retrograding. That those who call themselves Christians are on the down-grade, no one will question who reads the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, and believes it to be a true account of the state of things in the Church at the beginning.

That men in these Islands are better governed than they were in the middle ages goes without saying, but if the crowd were let loose to-day, who would not tremble for the consequences? The deeds of the French revolution, if not worse, would be repeated. I fail therefore to see how men are better morally. I may be told that the fact that good laws exist is in itself a proof of a better moral state. I cannot accept it, for men do not make laws for themselves but for their fellows. Those who make them are often found guilty of breaking them. The lustre of the world is artificial; what is natural is corrupt. Under an apparently well ordered community smoulders a veritable hell of horrible rebellion, and this the powers that be will learn one of these days.

Those who think they see God in everything, are, in their own imagina-

tion, themselves God; and the fall is the incarnation of God in nature, so they tell us. This mysterious Power, which is themselves and the sponge, and all that lies between in the way of life, is finding expression in the universe, and they tell us that it is only as we read Him in the universe that we can know anything about Him. God, we are told, can only know His own capabilities as He is confronted by opposing forces, therefore He creates the forces that He may become known to Himself. If I could so degrade myself as to accept such a horrible idea, I would be very much interested to know what He thinks of Himself, when He sees Himself in the universe! Is this great mysterious Power contemplating Himself in the battle field, where men, who know not why they are pitted against one another, maim and murder until their feet slip in the hot red heart-blood of friend and foe? I wonder what the "god" of these men's imagination thinks of himself as he looks at the violence and corruption which fill the earth, and at nature foaming at the mouth and "red in tooth and claw with ravin"!

How strange it is that man will have anything as a god, rather than the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The reason, surely, is that if I confess Him, I must myself go down in the dust in His presence, and confess myself to be a poor, fallen, unworthy sinner, dependent upon His mercy and grace for my salvation. Pride has no place in the presence of the true God, and therefore must the proud heart of man be ever in deadly hostility to Him. Blessed be His name, He can so work in His grace in our hearts that we are made to acknowledge the truth of the Book which discovers us to ourselves, and, turning to Him in the judgment of ourselves, to leave the decision of our eternal welfare in His own hands.

How may Christ become a living reality to the soul?

ON several occasions recently questions akin to the above have been put to us by young men. The questions are a cause of thanksgiving, for they denote a yearning of soul after the Lord and His things, akin perhaps to that which possessed the heart of David when he cried, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God." (Psalm, xlii., 1, 2.)

We might quote from such letters of enquiry did our space permit; letters which whilst giving, as we have said, cause for thanksgiving, yet also bring sad thoughts, for we find that some are inclined to question whether after all there is reality in Christianity, and whether the acceptance of Christ does make any difference in the life. The superficiality and increased worldliness of many who profess Christ, and the terribly deadening effect of the widely spreading "new theology" doctrines will account for much of this, but it behoves all those who love the Lord in sincerity and truth to look to their ways.

In this connection we venture to quote from a contemporary magazine the words of one who seems to have touched the spring of things. He writes:—

"Eyes are fixed upon each one of us who names the name of Christ. They are eager eyes, hungry eyes, the eyes of imprisoned

and perishing souls; and while those observers may make no comment, they are asking within themselves: 'Does it make any difference in one's life?'

"What answer do they get to that question as they regard your life and mine? What are they reading day by day, and what conclusion are they reaching? The answer will be found in the answer to that other question: 'Unto whom are we living—unto self or unto Him?'

"Living unto Him is the normal, and hence the happy and fruitful life for 'them that live.' The believer is 'in Christ.' His interests are where Christ is, at the right hand of God.

"To live for self, to go on in the old ways, to be making provision for that 'old man' with whom God could do nothing—and whose corrupted nature brought the Prince of Life under the power of death, even the shameful death of the cross—to seek gratification among the perishing things of a dying world, is to them 'that live' an utterly abnormal existence, which can yield only disappointment and loss of peace in this life, and of rewards in that which is to come. Moreover, abiding in Christ is the condition of fruit-bearing (John xv., 4, 5); and even if it were possible for a living one to find gratification, sustenance, and occasional pleasure in a dying creation, the consciousness of the waste and unprofitableness of such a life would rob it of all real joy."

So much for those who are established in the knowledge of the Lord. We will seek now to help those whose desire is expressed in our title, and in order to do so as effectively as possible, we offer reply to the question raised in the words of several contributors.

Answer (1).

The historical fact of Christ—that He lived and died—is generally admitted to-day.

Speculation and argument as to the nature of His Person, and the value of His life and death, are as numerous and contradictory as ever, but few persons doubt that He was actually on earth.

An historical personage, however, great as he may be, does not in any way affect my heart or draw out my affections. I may admire his life—as it is recorded for me—and even try to imitate it, but there the matter ends.

With Christ, however, it is different. There have been thousands who have laid down their

lives for Him, and at this moment there are tons of thousands who love Him more than all beside.

The reasons for this are simply that He *lives* and that He *loves*. Cæsar is dead, Mahomet is dead, Napoleon is dead, but Jesus *lives*.

This is the great fact to lay hold of if we wish Christ to become a reality to our souls. Christianity does not consist in a creed, nor a collection of sayings, but in a Person known and loved, Whose present influence is seen in the transformed lives of men regenerate.

It is wonderful to consider that in the world to-day there are living numbers of men

(W. B. WESTCOTT).

and women whose lives are controlled and whose ways are ordered by a Person they have never seen! This would be entirely visionary and sentimental if such people were not assured by evidence completely trustworthy that this Person is Real, and Living and Mighty.

This knowledge they have gained from the Book that speaks so fully of Him, and which has been interpreted to them by the Holy Spirit, whose mission is to make Him known.

How then is the Lord Jesus Christ to become a reality to me? In the same way in which many a heart in heathen lands has learned His preciousness. They believed the report of His greatness, His love, and the value of His precious blood, and thus their hearts were won. Never had such news fallen upon their ears before, and the wonder of it filled their souls. Let us in these favoured lands—upon which the sun of the gospel never sets—sit down and meditate, as though the truth were new to us, upon the life and death, the resurrection and the glory of the One Who died for us.

One sentence in itself would be sufficient to amaze, to captivate, to thrill the heart.

Listen! . . . "The Son of God, Who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Eternity itself will not give time enough to enter fully into the meaning of these wondrous words. Say them to yourself—if you would have Christ become a reality to your soul—as you walk along the street, as you stand behind the counter, or in the shipyard or the factory. And ever bear in mind that He loves His own to the end, and that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—*yesterday*, when He died for you, *to-day*, as He lives for you, and *to-morrow*, when He comes to take you to be with Himself for ever.

"Who is this *me*?" said Martin Luther, referring to the text above-quoted; "Christ delivered Himself up for *me*; yes, for me, who am such a wretched and miserable sinner. Say '*me*' with all thy might, print this pronoun '*me*,' '*me*.'—for the word is written for thee—

print this pronoun indelibly on thy heart, and thou hast the Gospel of Christ."

If I would have Christ to be a reality to me I must be assured that I am a reality to Him—in other words that He takes a personal interest in me—in my salvation, in my pathway, in my service.

To reason thus will not fill me with a sense of my own importance, but will cause my heart to overflow with praise to the One Who, though so great and glorious, condescended to notice, to love, to die for, even me.

Very helpful, too, will it be to form the habit of taking the Lord Jesus Christ into my confidence about everything that interests me. Nothing is too minute to tell Him of, and no one is so true, so wise, so loving.

Needless, perhaps, to say, I cannot company with Christ, and realise His presence, apart from the Holy Spirit. Therefore is it of all importance not to grieve the One Who dwells within me. If I sin, a shadow falls at once upon my spirit, and the Lord withdraws. Confession, then, is a necessity if I would be restored, for it is written "without holiness shall no man see the Lord."

Neglect of prayer, hasty and careless reading of the Scriptures, slothfulness or undue activity in service, a sectarian or bitter spirit, indulgence in some harmful habit, worldliness—these are some of the things that make Christ alien to the heart He fain would fill. And yet—

"Still sweet 'tis to discover, if clouds have dimmed my sight,
When passed, Eternal Lover, towards me,
as e'er, Thou'rt bright."

One thing must be emphasised as a '*sine qua non*' in connection with our question.

I *must* be much *alone* with Christ, if He is to become a reality to me. Service, the communion of saints, the general meetings for prayer or worship—none of these can be substituted for the quiet hour in which the Lord Himself speaks to me as no one else can do.

Answer (2).

(W. BRAMWELL DICK).

Let us open our Bibles at Acts vii., where we read of a man to whom Christ was a living reality. Stephen had trusted Christ, he had preached Christ, and now he was about to die for Christ's sake. Surrounded by his enemies who clamoured for his blood, they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel (ch. vi. 15), though he did not know it. With no uncertain sound he presented the truth till they winced and winced again. The critical moment arrived, every man took stone in hand to hurl at God's honoured servant, but for an instant they were held in check, while he "full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold I see the Heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God"

(ch. vii. 55-56.) What a sight! Is it any wonder that, after that, he kneeled down and prayed for his foes; and while they might claim that they murdered him, the Holy Ghost records—"he fell asleep." Thus it was with one who died. Now let us see how it worked out in one who lived.

Witness of Stephen's death was a young man called Saul. He had seen how, with Christ as a living reality, one of His servants could die, soon he was to learn how, with Christ as a living reality, he should live. Arrested by a light which blinded him to this world ever after, he heard a Voice that dulled his ears to every sound of earth; he saw the face on which Stephen gazed, and at that moment the citadel of his life was captured, his heart was won, and

his experience has been well expressed in the familiar lines:—

"I have heard the voice of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have seen the face of Jesus,
And my heart is satisfied."

From that day the Lord Jesus Christ was everything to him. Probably the world labelled him a monomaniac; he was a man of one idea. His desire was to live Christ (Philippians i. 21); to preach Christ (Galatians i. 15-16); and that in his converts Christ might be formed (Gal. iv. 19). Thirty years after conversion, after experiencing vicissitudes and trials such as no other servant of Christ ever had, stripped of everything in which as a natural man he might have boasted, incarcerated in a Roman prison, he wrote to the Philippians, "To live is Christ" (i. 21); to depart is to be "with Christ" (i. 23); in Ch. iii. he reviewed the past and wrote, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (v. 7). Contemplating the present, we find him pressing on that he might know Christ (iii. 8-9-10); while looking on the future he told them he was looking for Christ (v. 20-21).

Here we have a sample man to whom Christ was a living reality. Right across his history from conversion to martyrdom may be written CHRIST, for in him Christ was expressed. In looking, then, at his career, we have the answer to our query. The Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God, the mighty Conqueror of Calvary, the Rejected of earth, the Accepted in Heaven, the once Thorn-crowned, now crowned with glory and honour, led him captive; the great love that led Him to die for the chief of sinners, filled and thrilled his whole being. He whom God had enthroned in glory, Paul enthroned in his heart; he surrendered every crvice of it, he gave him the key of his whole future existence; and he brooked not for a single moment any

one or anything that threatened to rival Christ's place in his affections.

Someone may remark; "But he was an apostle." He was; we are now considering, however, his experience not as an apostle, but as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is open to every true Christian who reads those pages. Christ, then, will become to us a living reality, as we get to know Him where He now is; as we realise that He who fills the throne of God, and will shortly occupy the throne of the Universe, claims the throne of our hearts; and as we unreservedly place ourselves under His blessed rule.

This is not accomplished by a series of pious resolutions, nor by a process of lopping off or giving up; it is gained when we "swing the heart's door widely open," and "bid Him enter." Then everything unsuited to Him is displaced; He fills and He satisfies. Then, whether the maid in the kitchen or the mistress in the drawing room, the tradesman at the bench or the employer in the office, the obscure tract distributor or the better known Gospel preacher, in any and every sphere, Christ is a living reality, and we become living "epistles known and read of all men." (II. Cor. iii. 2.)

Shall we bend our knees, close our eyes, and conscious that no eye but His is upon us, and that no ear but His hears us, say:—

"Just as I am—Thy love, I own,
Has broken every barrier down:
Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

"Just as I am—of that free love
The breadth, length, depth and height
to prove,
Here for a season, then above,
O, Lamb of God, I come!"

"Just as I am—by Thee set free,
That Thou mayest now become to me,
A living, bright reality:
O, Lamb of God, I come!"

(To be continued by other contributors in our next issue.)

Never was there a lock of soul-trouble yet, but what there was a key to open it in the word of God. For our pain, here is an anodyne; for our darkness, a lamp; for our loneliness, a Friend.

A cripple on the right road is surer of the prize than a racer on the wrong.

Holiness is practical orthodoxy, and should walk hand-in-hand with doctrinal orthodoxy.

The great guardian principle of all conduct in the Church of God is personal responsibility to the Lord. No guidance of another can ever come in between an individual's conscience and God. In Popery this individual conscience is taken away.

Your testimony now is to be enjoying Christ for yourself, and not to be looking at your testimony to the saints. As you enjoy Christ for yourself, saints will find it out, and that will be your testimony to them.

There is always energy in the Spirit. He is the untiring Servant of the Lord's glory, and if we are led by Him "dull sloth" and lethargy will be cast aside. We are exhorted to walk in the Spirit, not rest, or sit still, but "walk." The Spirit would move us onward and upward toward the goal, with the love of Christ holding the soul in its almighty grasp.

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS AND OTHERS).

Comments preceded by the letter (R.) are communicated by our readers; those furnished by the contributors mainly responsible for this series of papers are preceded in each instance by their initials; whilst editorial comments are distinguished thus—(ED.).

Chapter 1.

Verse 1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(ED.)—Of the three here mentioned the *writer* of the epistle is Paul. This is evidenced by verse 18 of chapter ii., where he says "Even I, Paul," and by what follows; but, rendering honour to whom honour is due, Paul associates with himself, in the letter, the two who had been associated with him in the actual preaching of Christ which had brought these Thessalonians into blessing (see Acts xvii., where Silas is evidently the person Paul speaks of as Silvanus), and in later service towards them (see Chap. iii. 2 and compare I. Cor. i. 19, "The Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus").

Silas was a prophet, diligent in his service, and one of the "chief men among the brethren" (Acts xv. 32, 34, and 22), whilst Timothy, who is mentioned *last* in order of the three—for there is always a beautiful fitness in the inspired writings—was evidently much younger both in the faith and in years (Acts xvi. 1; I. Tim. i. 2 and iv. 22).

(E.C.)—It is significant that here there is no mention of Paul's apostleship, which is so distinctly asserted in the opening verses of other epistles, such as those to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians, etc. Enquiry as to the reason for this leads us to note, briefly, the purpose of this epistle, and the state of those addressed.

The occasion for the writing of the epistle was the good tidings brought by Timothy, whom Paul had sent to enquire as to their state, knowing the

affliction they were called upon to endure for the gospel's sake (ch. iii. 6). He was greatly comforted by what he heard, and out of a full heart he writes to encourage them, as well as also to perfect that which was still lacking in their faith (ch. iii. 10),—though this he does rather from a moral and practical point of view than from one doctrinal and instructional. Not that the great truths unfolded elsewhere in his later epistles are ignored here; but their discussion is not yet called for. The epistle is not marked so much by depth of thought, profound reasoning, defence of the truth questioned or attacked, or by the revelation of hidden heavenly and eternal mysteries; but rather by the warmth of affection, and the burning desire of labouring love, the simplicity and exuberance of expression proceeding from a heart overflowing with a fresh and fervid spirit towards his newly converted children in the faith. Soon he will have occasion for words of authority and rebuke; but here we have only words of comfort, exhortation, and instruction, opening out as they do with thankfulness and prayer, and sealed at the close with "an holy kiss." Therefore we have no mention here of his apostleship. It is as unnecessary as it would be inappropriate. Elsewhere he will use the authority of that title. Here it would be out of place.

So, too, he does not speak of his apostleship to the Philippians, "Inasmuch as both in his bonds and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel they were all participators of his grace": nor again in writing to Philemon, his "dearly beloved brother and fellow-labourer without whose mind he would do nothing": there too it would be out of place; and in this epistle the pres-

sure of authority is not needed, but rather the consolation and exhortation of sympathetic love.

(E.C.)—His address is "to the assembly of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." They alone are so addressed. The Corinthians are addressed as "the assembly of God," etc. It was intended to emphasise that fact in contrast to what was merely human, and the repetition of the word "God" is characteristic of I. Cor. "The assemblies of Galatia" are addressed as the aggregate of those so associated in that province. Elsewhere Paul writes "to the saints," etc. thus giving them their personal calling and character. Here he writes "to the assembly of the Thessalonians," which is distinguished from other assemblies in that place as being "in God the Father" in opposition to what was pagan, and "in the Lord Jesus Christ" in contrast to the unbelieving Jews. They are thus set at once in the fullest measure of revealed grace in God the Father and in the direct consciousness of individual responsibility to the Lord Jesus Christ (compare I. John ii. 22). This starts, if I may so say, their christian career.

(E.D.)—"In God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ." Here, in the first verse of the first apostolic letter to the youngest of the churches addressed in Scripture, is the full revelation of God in Christianity; and though those addressed were only babes in Christ, they were in the same glorious light as the most experienced saint of God. They needed, undoubtedly, to be instructed in the truth of these relationships in which the Gospel had placed them, and this truth is most blessedly unfolded in John's epistle, but they needed no further revelation, for they were in the full shining of "God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ;" all is wrapped up in this—the divine nature and eternal life, though these things are not the subject of the epistle.

(I.C.T.)—This is the only church spoken of as "in God the Father."

They were babes in Christ, and it is of such that the apostle John writes in I. John ii. 13—"I write unto you little children because ye *know the Father.*"

(R.)—"Grace be unto you and peace." The ordinary Greek salutation is almost equivalent to the word "grace," while "peace" is the ordinary Hebrew greeting. Taken by the Holy Spirit into the service of God, the words are greatly enlarged and deepened in meaning. Grace expresses God's attitude towards men: peace, the result to all who receive that grace in Christ. Thus they sum up the Gospel, and are used by the Apostle in all his epistles.

(R.)—What is very noticeable in this chapter is the number of couplets and triplets of words and expressions which occur there, and indeed throughout the epistle. This may possibly be in view of adequate testimony, which these young converts required to strengthen and support their faith, for "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established," and "a threefold cord is not easily broken" (II. Cor. xiii. 1; Matt. xviii. 16; Eccl. iv. 12). Thus, for example, notice verse 1: Paul, Silvanus and Timotheus; verse 3, work of faith, labour of love, patience of hope; verse 5, in power, in the Holy Ghost, in much assurance; verse 6, in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost; verse 8, Macedonia, Achaia, in every place; ii., 3, not of deceit, uncleanness or guile; ii., 10, holily, justly and unblameably; ii., 11, exhorted, comforted, charged; ii., 19, hope, joy, crown of rejoicing; iii., 2, brother, minister of God, fellow-labourer; iv., 16, shout, voice of archangel, trump of God; v., 23, spirit, soul and body; etc., etc.

Verse 2. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers;

(E.C.)—At once his heart bursts out in thanksgiving and in prayers for them all. Mark the fulness and overflowing of his spiritual affections on their behalf. How beautiful to contemplate! How lovely to dwell upon! Here is the thing as it ought to be. Here are the true pulsations of the Spirit of God.

Love, the great power that begets; love, the true nurse that cherishes the offspring that is begotten of it. And is it not the same Spirit in the Gospel that begets to-day? Is it not the same Spirit in the assembly that cherishes that which is begotten? How earnestly therefore should we seek to cultivate this love, which is the greatest, the mightiest power of all.

(R.)—"For You All," Christians differ in attainment, but there is always something of Christ in each, and hence always something for which to thank God.

Verse 3. Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;

(E.C.)—Rightly too, as we can understand, the opening chapter of this prefatorial epistle, if I may so call it, of Christian truth begins with the essential principles and characteristics of Christian life, the *faith, hope, and love*, which are its intrinsic qualities, the spring and power of the work, labour and patience in which it is expressed.

Christianity is not a pastime. The Son of God did not become incarnate merely to make us happy. He is our life, not merely a relief—a life energized by His own Spirit to the glory of God. We see it at once in these Thessalonian saints in its nature and in its fruit—the true expression of vital Christianity here on earth:—in *faith* that rises above the visible, and takes hold of God, above all circumstances, and addresses itself to its allotted task with a single eye to His glory:—in *hope* that seizes the invisible, and realises the promises, so that, with the future present to its view, it endures patiently the trials of the way, knowing that the exercise which is but for a moment will issue in eternal glory:—in *love* which is the potent spring of all blessedness, the very nature of God Himself, the almighty never-failing power of all good. This is the practical character of Christian life. This is the subject matter before us in the epistle. Other epistles will treat of the doctrines of Christianity; this treats of the characteristics of Christian life.

(E.D.)—That faith, love and hope are the innermost springs of vital Christianity is evident from I. Cor. xiii. 13, "Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love."

(E.C.)—Observe the contrast in Rev. ii., where the Lord speaks to the Ephesians, saying, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience . . . nevertheless I have against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent . . ." Work was there, labour was there, and patience was there—the outward form and habit abode, but the secret springs of life had failed—they had left their first love. Declension had set in, and declension of a most serious kind, involving, if not repented of, the removal of their candlestick as being no longer a proper testimony for God, and issuing in a long line of increasing corruption, until every vestige of Christianity is lost in the final apostacy, and the whole scene is swept by the devastating judgments of God. What a finale! And what a contrast to the freshness and beauty of this opening picture of Christian life at Thessalonica! How it should affect us! What serious reflections in us it should produce! And how earnestly should we seek grace and mercy from the Lord to enable us to walk humbly before Him, duly cultivating the springs of Christian life in our souls, so that we may escape the corruption that is in the world through lust! (Compare Ps. i.; 2, Pet. i., 1-11).

(R.)—Here we have that acceptable work which faith produces and prompts; labour which is the product of love, not of legal bondage; and patience born not of mere resignation to the inevitable, but of confidence in ultimate triumph.

Verse 4. Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God.

(E.C.)—These fruits of grace amongst them (verse 3) were an evident proof of their election of God.

(R.)—The word here used for "knowing" intimates that his knowledge came not by revelation, nor by intuition, but from observation; hence

the rest of the chapter recounts what led Paul to conclude that these Thessalonians were among the elect of God.

Verse 5. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance: as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

(E.C.)—This tells not of the subject of the preaching, but of the manner of it, and the effect on them. Mark also the redundancy of expression in the threefold way in which it is expressed. In the exuberance of his feelings his language is moulded in the same spirit. They received the Word of God objectively *in power*, instrumentally *in the Holy Spirit*, and subjectively *in much assurance*. Moreover, this testimony rendered to them in word was confirmed by the lives of those who had brought it to them in their midst.

Verse 6. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost:

(J.C.T.)—They became followers of the apostles, and of the Lord. To the Corinthian believers the apostle wrote:—"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (I. Cor. xi. 1.) We shall make no mistake if we follow the apostles *as* they followed Christ.

(R.)—The reception of the Word brought them into "much affliction"—that was the outward result, but it also brought them into much "joy of the Holy Ghost"—that was the blessed inward result.

(J.C.T.)—Peter and John "rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name." There, too, we see joy and affliction going together.

(R.)—Contrast with this Matt. xiii. 20-21, where again we have the same three things associated, viz., the "reception of the word," "joy," and "affliction." There the "word" is not really received in faith, so the "joy" is only superficial, and "affliction" is not patiently endured, but overwhelms.

Verse 7. So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

Verse 8. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing.

(E.D.)—Connect this with the last clause of the preceding verse. A joyful Christian is a good example.

(R.)—The word "ensamples" may be better translated "models." These Thessalonians were "models to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia." No other company of saints is thus spoken of in Scripture. To the Philippians, Paul and Timothy were models (ch. iii. 17); Timothy was exhorted to be a model of the believers (I. Tim. iv. 12; see also Tit. ii. 7, model of good works); the elders were to be models to the flock (I. Peter v. 3); but the Thessalonians alone, simply as saints, are spoken of as models to all around.

(E.C.)—These Thessalonian believers had become witnesses themselves, in their own lives and conduct, of the emancipating and uplifting power of the Gospel in such wise that there was no further need for others to speak anything. And this is as it should be. Here is the true and visible effect of the Gospel, bringing the saving light of God to souls, and enabling them, as saved and in the liberty and power of salvation known and enjoyed, to serve Him gladly in word and work. Here was the effect of the word of life seen in the Christian lives of those who had received it. Would that it were so seen amongst believers to-day. Let us pray earnestly that it be so.

(J.C.T.)—First, the practical life—"ensamples to all that believe," then, "sounded out the word of the Lord." It is a great thing when testimony flows out of the practical life.

(R.)—"The word of the Lord" is the message from the Lord, which is delivered with His authority, and made effective by His power.

(E.D.)—Macedonia (now part of Turkey) was their own province,—there first is their witness rendered; then Achaia (the adjoining province, corresponding approximately to Greece); then more widely still. This is ever the order in Scripture, we must first be faithful in that which lies nearest at

hand, then widen out. It is thus in the words of the risen Lord to His disciples, "Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both (1) in Jerusalem, (2) and in all Judea, (3) and in Samaria, (4) and unto the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 8). The sphere of witness ever widens, but it begins at home.

Verse 9. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

(R.)—The first clause of this verse shows that not only had the remarkable religious movement at Thessalonica influenced believers elsewhere (verse 7), but it had become a matter of general report, "a new thing" (Acts xvii., 21), of sufficient interest to give a zest to conversation even among men for whom the story had little significance.

Then is stated their deliberate turn to God from idols. Note the order, it is *to God from idols*; the motive in this conversion was not that they were repelled by the grossness of their idols, but that they were attracted by the grace and character of God.

(J.C.T.)—The order is important. Having got God, they could afford to drop idols. We must have the good, to enable us to drop the evil.

(R.)—"Living and true" is in contrast to "idols," which are both dead and false.

(E.C.)—The power of idolatry was broken—the world worship of false gods, dead images of its own passions and fears.

(R.)—The word used for "to serve" signifies to discharge the duties of the purchased slave, to which there were no limitations either in the kind of service, or in the time of its performance. The whole life of the Christian

is to be lived in obedience to the will of God.

Verse 10. And to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.

(ED.)—The second advent of the Lord Jesus occupies a prominent place in this epistle, and is mentioned in every chapter. It is to be the bright hope of the Christian, whether newly converted as were the Thessalonian believers, or long on the way as were the assemblies addressed in the last chapter of Revelation (verses 16-20).

(ED.)—"Raised." Here is the cardinal truth of the gospel, and the demonstration of the mighty power of God.

"From the Dead." In these words is enshrined the wondrous story of Calvary, where shines in all its splendour, its infinite depths and heights, the love of God, which, known and enjoyed, forms the hidden spring of the Christian's glad service of the living and true God.

(J.C.T.)—Mark then what lay before them, and filled up their future: "*Wrath.*" The coming wrath! But what a contrast now. They were waiting not for wrath, but for God's Son from heaven, even *Jesus*; Who, having borne all the judgment Himself in His own body on the cross, had taken out of their future all wrath, and filled it instead with *Himself*! Blessed exchange! And this He has done for us. We wait not for death, or judgment, but for Him!

Their Past— Idolatry.

Their Present—Serving the living and true God.

Their Future—The coming of God's Son from Heaven—Jesus, their hope and ours!

EDITORS' NOTE: Readers are invited to send us, in the FIRST week of each month, *brief* expository comments on any or all of the separate verses contained in the portion to be considered the following month. Comments considered helpful, will be published, as far as space permits. Questions are also invited as to the meaning of any verse or part of a verse, on which special comment is desired. The portion to be considered in the March issue is Chapter II. of the Epistle.

Does God Care?

(A. J. POLLOCK).

IT DID NOT LOOK LIKE IT:

The accepted man, Abel, murdered in jealous hate by the refused man, Cain. It seemed for the moment, to be a sorry price to pay as the cost of God's acceptance, though this latter was by virtue of his offering, type of our standing in God's favour through the excellency of Christ's offering. Abel was murdered, and this only hurried him into the everlasting peace of God's presence. Was his usefulness on earth then cut short? Nay, he has preached longer than any preacher ever known. For one thing he began earlier than any; he was the first to die, and he being "dead yet speaketh" (Heb. xi. 4). His lips are more eloquent in death than they could have been in life. Ask Abel, "Does God care?" What answer will he give? There is only one possible answer, earnest and emphatic.

IT DID NOT LOOK LIKE IT:

The rough spoken lord of Egypt made it impossible for Jacob's sons to return for corn, unless Benjamin was with them. The old man, bereaved of his loved wife, Rachel, and her firstborn, Joseph, clung with passionate affection to Benjamin, the sole link with that particular past. When at last he was compelled to part with him, he gave vent to his grief, "Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me" (Gen. xlii. 36). Were they against him? He could not see far enough. Little did he think that the shadow of dreaded bereavement resting on his spirit, was in reality but the breaking of the clouds. Instead of losing Benjamin he was about to regain Joseph, and in regaining Joseph, every pinch of want would be a thing of the past, as he lived in the land of Joseph's providing, and received of his bounty, even though all the rest of the earth was

famine stricken. Ask Jacob, "Does God care?" Hear him say to Joseph for answer, "I had not thought to see thy face: and, lo! God hath showed me also thy seed." (Gen. xlviii. 11).

IT DID NOT LOOK LIKE IT:

The children of Israel groaning under bitter bondage, smarting under the whip of the cruel taskmaster, their would-be deliverer doing nothing more heroic for forty long years than keeping the flock of his father-in-law at the back-side of the desert. And when he made his first effort to gain release for his oppressed countrymen, it was only to make their plight still worse, as the word went forth that no more straw was to be given to the people, and yet the tale of the bricks was not to be diminished. When the people murdered against Moses, they did not look far enough. Could they have seen what lay before them, how differently they would have viewed things! To the question of "Does God care?" the song on the Red Sea's banks gives triumphant answer.

IT DID NOT LOOK LIKE IT:

God's anointed hunted like a partridge on the mountains, a king without a throne; at best a motley crew around him in the cave of Adullam, those distressed, in debt, discontented, all with their lives in their hands. It was a rough experience, and patience and endurance were sorely tried; yet tribulation taught David happier lessons than the prosperity of the throne. Those years of tribulation produced the Psalms, which have comforted the saints of God well nigh three thousand years. When Doeg, the Edomite, tells Saul that David had come to the house of Ahimelech, hear the answer of David's heart to the question "Does God care?" "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually" (Psalm lii. 1); when the Ziphims come and say to Saul,

"Doth not David hide himself with us?" his response is, "Behold God is mine helper: the Lord is with them that uphold my soul" (Psalm liv. 4); and when he flees from Saul in the cave, he can sing, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise" (Psalm lvii. 7). So it ever is. God does care, spite of appearances to the contrary.

IT DID NOT LOOK LIKE IT:

What a scene of imposing splendour! princes, governors, captains, judges, treasurers, counsellors, sheriffs, and rulers all going one way. But three men stood against the swiftly flowing tide.

How easily might the three Hebrew children have asked in doubt "Does God care?" Would it not be well to submit, and bow to the image of gold? But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had but one thought. To bow to God? yes! to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's golden image? never! The king, full of fury, commanded the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than its wont. What must the feelings of the three Hebrew children have been as the most mighty men in the army bound them in their coats, their hosen, their hats, and their other garments? But God was sufficient even for a pass like this. The fiery flames with their scorching breath destroyed the mighty men, whilst they burned the bonds of those devoted youths, and set them free to walk where never mortal man had walked before, upon a pavement of molten fire, without the smell of fire upon them, not a hair of their head singed, and in the best of company, that of the Son of God. The inside of the furnace was better far than the outside. Not victims, but victors were they! delivered by their God; the king's word changed, and his decree altered into giving universal respect to a God who could so act—this was the unexpected result of their faithfulness and constancy. God cared! And what will He not do for us if we stand true to Him?

IT DID NOT LOOK LIKE IT:

At the end of a faithful course, after years of evangelising and planting churches, the apostle Paul had to say, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (II. Tim. 1-15). "I suffer trouble, as an evildoer, even unto bonds" (chap. ii. 9). "Demus hath forsaken me—only Luke is with me" (chap. iv. 10). What a contrast! he, who had been in the forefront of the fight, to be forsaken and alone! Yet when he writes, a prisoner, from Rome, with martyrdom before him, he can say to his beloved Philippians, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4); and, as we read the epistle, we can note the long vigorous stride the aged spiritual athlete takes as he exultingly cries, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (chap. iii. 14).

Should this not encourage us? Are we forsaken, left alone, isolated? Then is the time to lean upon the Lord Himself. We may with grief see the multitude turn away, but like Paul we may unmoved press on. In whatever circumstances we are, He is sufficient for us. To have His company, and His smile, is essential. Nothing else is.

Scripture teems with illustrations of how God cares, and how shortsighted man is in looking at events happening to him. Yet with such a wealth of illustration, how little we are prepared to bring God into our calculations; how we leave Him out, thus losing both in peace of mind and steadiness of purpose.

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. viii. 31). "We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us" (Rom. viii. 37).

Surely we need never raise the question, "Does God care?" but henceforth calmly rest in the abiding sense of His ceaseless and untiring love.

Replies to Scripture Questions.

(J. A. TRENCH).

"Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness." Luke xvi., 9.

What is the meaning of the Parable of the unjust steward and unrighteous mammon?

MAN is set forth in the unjust steward, who, failing at every aspect of his responsibility, has been proved to be no exception to the rule, when entrusted with the stewardship of his lord's goods. He wasted them, and must lose his position as steward. But the goods lie over in his hands for the present; and the point of the parable is the prudent, if unscrupulous, use he makes of this his opportunity, in view of the future.

There were these debtors of his lord's; he will reduce his master's claim upon them, by half in one case, by a fifth in another, and so make friends of them for his own prospective advantage, when put out of the stewardship. "And the lord"—mark, not the Lord Jesus, but the lord of the steward in the parable—"commended the unjust steward because he had done wisely [or rather "prudently," a word more suited to worldly wisdom]: for the children of this world are in their generation more prudent than the children of light." So much for the parable; now for the application. (v. 9.) "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail (that is, when ye die) they may receive you,—or rather, for it is a common usage of Luke's (see ch. xii., 20, a. v.; vi., 38, 44; xxiii., 31)—ye may be received into everlasting habitations."

But why is it called "the mammon of unrighteousness"? Because all accumulation of property in one man's hand, more than in another's, belongs to man's fallen state in this world since sin entered into it—a condition of unrighteousness. Hence in verse 11 the Lord speaks of it as "unrighteous mammon." But can what is thus solemnly characterised be possibly fit to be turned to profitable account by the Christian? It can; he can use it in view of where he looks to find his eternal home. It is "that which is least" (ver. 9-10) in the estimate of God. But how many have found the possession of wealth the most crucial test. Only by all the grace revealed in chap. xv. can any of us know "how to abound"—("to be abased" is not so testing)—and be faithful in it. Possessions here wind themselves round the heart, and give man a false place amongst his fellows, ministering to his pride, and shutting out God. Hence (ver. 13), it is impossible to make both God and mammon the object of the heart—impossible to make the best of both worlds; either one or the other, but not both. Grace teaches us to sacrifice the one in view of the other, the present in full view of the eternal.

"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"? And herein lies what is so important as to possessious here, in the moral bearing of the parable. They are not our own. They are "that which is another Man's"—the Master's goods, according to the parable, which happen to lie over in our hands e'er our stewardship has been finally taken away. If looked upon as our own we might be tempted to spend them upon ourselves, or hoard them up—heaping treasure together in the last days, as James v. 3, says. But seen to be wholly "another man's," we can afford to be liberal in our use of them, and to lavish them on every interest of His, in view of that scene where we shall receive our own things. All we have here is His then, to be used in view of eternity; our own things lie there with Him, where we look to be received, when our earthly course is closed. It is only by such an estimate of money, to speak plainly, that we can be delivered from the influence of what governs so powerfully the heart of man.

Not that in any way faithfulness here, gives, or enters into, a title to be received there. This is found alone in the grace that receiveth sinners, and first has to seek them (chap. xv., 4-10), that there might be any to be received (verses 11-24). And what a reception! But the same grace thus known and bestowed, produces a character suited to itself in the objects of the grace: that having been faithful in that which was Another's, we may receive our own things in His blessed presence for ever. It is to be observed that, so far from any condoning of the steward's dishonesty, he is given the title of "the unjust steward" (verse 8); and that when verses 10-12 apply the instruction of the parable to the disciples, it is not prudence but faithfulness in the disposal of earthly things that the Lord commends.

I conclude by noting that the connexion of the Lord's teaching in these chapters xiv.-xvi. is very apparent, not only as we have seen in the revelation of grace, and its objects and effects; but also in the unbelief that in chapter xiv. refuses the invitation of grace and is exemplified in chapter xv. in the unbroken, self-righteous, elder son, who is able to pretend that he never "transgressed at any time thy commandment," because in fact he had reduced its righteous claims, like the unjust steward, in order to prosper, it may be, in this world, as the rich man in the last parable in chapter xvi., but only to find his end in a hell of torments. It is the same character of proud unbelief that runs all through.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 2—Habakkuk.

A bright outlook in a day of discouragement.

Ch. I. ver. 1-4.

The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see.

O, Lord, how long shall I cry, and thou wilt not hear! even cry out unto thee of violence, and thou wilt not save.

Why dost thou shew me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? for spoiling and violence are before me: and there are that raise up strife and contention.

Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth: for the wicked doth compass about the righteous; therefore wrong judgment proceedeth.

HABAKKUK was a man who keenly felt the state of things amongst the people of God in his day. Looking around he saw deeds of violence; strife and contention abounded where peace should have reigned. The wicked seemed ever to have the upper hand, and made the righteous groan under their injustice.

It was difficult for the prophet to understand why God should not put an end to such a condition of things. Why did He not intervene in power, for the destruction of evil doers, and the salvation of those that put their trust in Him? How long would He refrain from hearing the cry of His distressed saints? Was there to be no unravelling of the tangled skein of iniquity? no escape from its meshes for those that loved righteousness?

Habakkuk's perplexity led him to cry to Jehovah, to get into His presence, and enquire of Him concerning the things over which he mourned. As a result, he got a wonderful view of the day of Christ, and learnt what God's path for His people was, until that day should come. In this way he was let into the secret of how to be an overcomer in an age which to sight and sense was dark indeed, but which to faith was bright with the golden light of promises that fixed heart and hope upon One that was yet to come.

How close a parallel exists between the days when Habakkuk lived, and the

days in which our lot is cast! As we look around, do we not see even in the circle that professes Christ's name, much to cause us deepest grief? What of the love of money, the love of pleasure, and other forms of worldliness in which so many Christians are entangled? What of the general coldness of heart and indifference to the claims of Christ? What of the abominable anti-Christian doctrines now proclaimed from the house-top by men who once gave promise of better things? What of the bickerings and strife, the divisions and heart-burnings amongst those who should be found walking in peace and unity? A thousand other things might be mentioned, any one of them enough to make the tears start from our eyes, and to prostrate us before God, crying "O Lord, how long."

If we feel these things we shall be prepared to learn, as Habakkuk did, what the path is that God would have His people pursue. And our hearts will be held spellbound in anticipation of the bright day when Christ will be manifested, and when earth's age-long blight will be removed, and the whole scene filled with that which is of God.

Ch. I. ver. 5, 6, 9, 11 and 13.

Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you.

For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs.

They shall come all for violence: their faces shall sup up as the east wind, and they shall gather the captivity as the sand.

Then shall his mind change, and he shall pass over, and offend, imputing this his power unto his god.

Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?

In His answer to the prophet's cry, Jehovah first calls attention to His own work. "Behold ye among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvellously, for I will work a work in your days." This is the passage quoted by Paul when preaching Christ at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 41), and his use of it shows that something further was in the mind of God, when He uttered the words, than His dealings in judgment by means of the Chaldeans. It is in Christ that these wonderful words find their fulfilment. He is the One that God ever has in view, whatever work He puts His hand to.

Thus when God calls upon Habakkuk to have regard to His work, we may be sure that it is Christ that He has before Him. The way He takes may not be easy to trace; the evidence of His hand being at work may not be clear (save to him who has an opened eye), but all the time God is working, and always with Christ as His great object. If He works in a sinner's heart, it is that the sinner might be brought to Christ. If He works in the souls of His people, it is that Christ should have a greater place in their affections, and that He should be formed in them. And if He works upon the wider arena of the world's history, it is all with the same great end in view, the introduction of Christ, as the One to whom supremacy must belong.

The grand climax of God's work is not yet reached. It was still further off in Habakkuk's day than it is in ours; but the contemplation of it must have been rest to his heart, especially when God went on to tell him, that He would bring the Chaldeans up against the children of Judah to carry them into captivity, and to be God's scourge upon them because of their wickedness. For before this work of God could be brought to its culminating point, two things must happen; first, His people must be humbled and taught to walk in His ways; second, the nations must fill up their cup of iniquity, and thus become ripe for judgment.

Of course the atonement of Christ was also necessary, but that is not the subject here. The prophecy, though having a reference to what was immediate, without doubt looks on to the future, when the church will have been taken out of this world (I. Thess. iv. 16, 17), and God will begin to work in the scattered children of Jacob to bring them to repentance, and finally into the promised land again. Then they will cry out to Jehovah, as they see the prevalence of evil and the power of the wicked one. They will wonder that God should allow the oppressor to tread them down, but they will learn that they are being chastened in view of their ultimate blessing; that the iniquity of the nations having risen to a head, they are ripe for judgment; and that God is about to bring to pass that for which He has wrought through all the ages—a universe filled and ruled by Christ.

Ch. II. ver. 1, 2, 3 and 14.

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reproved.

And the Lord answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Habakkuk was consumed with grief for his people, as he contemplated the cruel oppressions of the Chaldean enemy. But his heart had caught a glimpse of a brighter day, so he says "I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me."

And as he looked out upon the horizon of God's future, he saw a wonderful vision of what was to come. The day of its fulfilment was yet far distant, but he was to record the vision, so that in reading it, men might run. That is, I suppose, they were to run, in their affections, from the evil world they saw around them to the bright world of which Habakkuk spoke. Thus they were to hasten towards it,

while actually they were to wait for it. Rather let us say they were to wait for Him. For guided by the inspired quotation of this passage in *HEB.* x. 37, we find Christ here also. It is He that shall come and will come, and will not tarry. The glory that Habakkuk saw, all shines forth from Him. He is the sun whose beams will illumine the whole realm of God, and it is for Himself that every heart that "loves His appearing" waits.

Ch. II. ver. 4.

Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith.

For this, faith must be in exercise. There was, in our prophet's day, as in ours, an unbelieving generation, who would not believe in the work that God was doing, even though it was told them. On the other hand, there were "the just," and these would find food for their faith in the vision given to Habakkuk. Faith would make it all so real to them, that their hearts would be connected by faith with the age to come; and this would be, as it were, life to them. They would live, by their faith in that glorious time that was promised, though all around seemed to contradict their hopes.

How happy thus to be able

"To look beyond the long dark night
And hail the coming day."

In Christianity, brighter and better hopes are the portion of God's saints. Their outlook is a heavenly one, and their destiny is the Father's house. We do not get Christianity unfolded in the Minor Prophets, nor the hopes that belong distinctively to Christians. But He is there, to whom we belong, though in other relationships than those in which we know Him. Here in Habakkuk He is seen to be the object around which all the earthly hopes of the people of God centre, as they long for the promised day of the kingdom—the day when Christ, as the promised King, shall come, and take to Himself His great power, and reign.

Ch. III. ver. 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11 and 13.

O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.

God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.

Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.

The mountains saw thee, and they trembled: the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high.

The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of thy glittering spear.

Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed; thou woundedest the head out of the house of the wicked, by discovering the foundation unto the neck. Selah.

The prophecy of Habakkuk ends with what is really a psalm of praise, magnificent in its description of the inauguration of that day. What gives rise to it is a desire on the prophet's part that the work of God should prosper. The enemy's handywork was, alas, only too visible on all sides. But Habakkuk's soul had been established in the truth that God was working, and would work, for the accomplishment of His own purpose, and he now prays that that work may come into prominence: "O Lord, revive Thy work in the midst of the years."

In accordance with this the prophet is carried on, in spirit, to the great day on which his hopes were fixed. He saw the intervention of God for His people, and the utter overthrow of their adversaries. Had sea and mountains, sun and moon, been made subservient to God's ways with Israel in the past? Even so shall it be in the future, when pestilence and fire, and other forms of judgment shall announce the advent of Jehovah's day.

Ch. III. ver. 17, 18 and 19.

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls:

Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

The Lord God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds' feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places. To the chief singer on my stringed instruments.

This was enough for Habakkuk. His soul had dropped its anchor in

the calm haven of God's sure promise, and he could rejoice in the Lord. Everything around might seem to wax worse and worse; the fig tree might not blossom, nor the vines bear fruit; the olive trees might be barren, and the fields yield no crops; flocks and herds might be cut off from the fold and from the stalls; outward prosperity might all be a thing of the past; the power of evil might be in the ascendant, and those who fear the Lord a small and weak remnant. But the prophet's eye was not upon things of this sort. From all the failure and discouragement he looked away to the day of God's triumph, and his heart beat with gladness. He could joy in the God of his salvation. His portion was in "high places," and he could walk there already by faith. His feet were like those of the hind, able to spring forward from this age of darkness and gloom into the age of glory and joy.

Can we not do the same? We are not dependent for our joy upon environment. Things in the Church,

as well as in the world, may be as bad as they can be; defection after defection may take place; "they of Asia" who turned aside from Paul, may be followed by thousands who care little for his doctrine; Christianity, as publicly professed, may be shorn of its glory as a heavenly thing, and its robes besmirched with the filth and mire of earth. But God's purpose remains firm, and Christ is the One who is going to bring it all into accomplishment. Then let our eye be fixed upon Him. No failure or breakdown can ever intrude into that scene of which He is the centre. He makes our feet like those of the hind. We spring, as it were, from the midst of all that surrounds us, right into that other world, where, in its heavenly part we shall dwell with Him, as sons before the Father's face. These are "high places" indeed, and He makes our feet to walk therein, even now. We are privileged to explore the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

A Futile Labour.

The rat which set to work to gnaw a file supposed himself to be making good progress, as he saw a pile of white dust slowly increasing under his labour. But when he found that he had used up his teeth and made no impression on the file at all, it put a different complexion on the operation.

It is even so with the Scripture of Truth, the cavillers and scholars will wear out their critical teeth in the attempt to destroy it, but when their little day is over and their vaunted intelligence has perished, the word of God will remain unimpaired in strength, not one jot or tittle of His word shall fail.

Holiness consisteth not in a cowl or coat of black. When God purifies the heart by faith, the market is sacred as well as the sanctuary.

Troubles.

A black cloud makes a traveller mend his pace, and mind his home; whereas a fair day and a pleasant way waste his time, and that stealeth away his affections in the prospect of the country. However others may think of it, yet I take it as a mercy, that many times some troubles do conceal my comforts; for I perceive if I should find too much friendship in my inn, in my pilgrimage, I should soon forget my Father's house and my heritage.

Ruminating upon trouble is bitter work. Children fill their mouths with bitterness when they rebelliously chew the pill which they ought obediently to have swallowed.

I would rather walk in the dark, holding to the word of my God, than trust in the light of the brightest day that ever dawned.

"Creation."

(S. L. JACOB).

No. 2.—God's Preface.

GOD has given to us a wonderful Book, the most human of all books, with the individuality of each human penman strongly seen in his writings, yet it is altogether divine, and bears the impress of God as its Author on every page.

But how can we be sure that this Book is God's Book? Well, there is no rival in the field, that is something. To exalt the Koran, the Vedas or other ancient writings to the level of the Holy Scriptures is but an evidence of ignorance.

When from a distant lighthouse we see a lamp of 100,000 candle power flashing its light across the sea, we own the cleverness of the inventor; but when we see the mighty sun, and realise a little what it is, and what it does, we feel that only the Almighty mind and hand could have produced it.

So as we learn how great the Book is, how marvellous the Person Who is its theme, and how unspeakable are the results that it effects, we are compelled to own that mere scepticism is born of ignorance.

Christians need no apologetics, but we do need to have the glories of revelation unfolded to us by the Holy Ghost, for as one glory after another is unveiled before our wondering gaze, faith is strengthened, and the mists of unbelief are dispelled.

An insight into the purpose of God, and into the testimony which He has given beforehand of that which is to be displayed in a future day, helps to this end. God had planned all that He is accomplishing, and these plans were all recorded centuries ago; not necessarily in such a manner as to be discovered by the careless: God's plans are not for them, but for those who seek understanding as silver, and search for her as for hid treasures (Prov. ii. 4); these are richly repaid for their toil. God does nothing without revealing

His secret to His servants the prophets (Amos. iii. 7); and there is no failure with Him. The apparent failures we see all through the Word, have only been allowed in order to enhance the greatness of the display of God; for God is surely and steadily carrying out His plan absolutely undisturbed by anything either man or the devil may do. He has never had more than one thought, which is to reveal Himself to men in and by Christ; as has been well said, "God has spoken but one word, and that word is Christ."

The Book of Genesis.

Let us now turn to the beginning, for the beginnings of things are always important, for what is not begun well is not likely to end well, and we could have no confidence in that, the commencement of which was not good. Some conceive of redemption as if it were a mere afterthought, a remedy for the fall, and the healing of a terrible breach, but that is far from a true conception. Out of that which has been allowed to come in by the way, God designed to produce, by redemption, a brighter glory and a greater good than ever existed before the fall. On the very forepart of God's Book is that which tells us of God's plan, prepared beforehand, perfect in its inception, as it will be perfect in its accomplishment. This must be the case because God is the architect and constructor of the whole edifice. Nevertheless, God's judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out, save as He is pleased to reveal them, and Himself.

Genesis comes naturally as the first book of the Bible, and forms a prelude to the whole. Whether it was actually the first to be written, or not, matters nothing. In its own distinctive subject no other place befits it except the one which has been given to it (by doubtless divine arrangement) with the con-

sent of all. It is well called the seed plot of the Bible, and what we see in its inception in Genesis is seen to be worked out in full in the book of Revelation; so that the latter is the complement of the former.

This book of Genesis consists of a preface or introduction, *i.e.*, chapters i. and ii. 1-3 (which for convenience sake we will henceforth call the first chapter, the chapters here being badly divided) and ten portions of unequal lengths all commencing with the word "generations." The opening verses of these ten divisions are as follow: Chap. ii. 4; v. 1; vi. 9; x. 1; xi. 10; xi. 27; xxv. 12; xxv. 19; xxxvi. 1; xxxvii. 2.

The word "generations" is not used here as generally in human language, for we are told "these are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens." We do not in ordinary language speak of the generations of the heavens and of the earth, or of such things. Once when musing on the subject we said to ourselves, it must mean "histories," and turning to the late J. N. Darby's New Translation we found in the text (chap. ii. 4) the word "histories," and in the margin "Heb. Genealogies," and in chap. v. 1 in the text "generations," and in the margin "or history." This proves that others have had the same thought.

A perusal of the passages themselves will make it evident that in all the cases mentioned, unless it were the first, what goes *before* is never in question but always what comes *after*; we may therefore be sure that the first case also follows the same rule, *i.e.*, it deals with the *subsequent* history, and is not a recapitulation of that which *precedes*.

Matthew i., which begins "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ," is no exception. It has been thought that because genealogies follow, therefore genealogies are the generation, but this is not so; the whole Gospel of Matthew is the book of the generation

of Jesus Christ, *i.e.*, of those who are of His generation, or seed; while the genealogies recorded are given to show that Jesus Christ was the rightful King, and to connect the New Testament with the Old; and then the Gospel goes on to show how Ps. xxii. 30 is fulfilled, where it is written, "a seed shall serve Him: it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation."

We find then that the greater part of the book of Genesis consists of ten histories of deep import, and in these ten histories God is giving us the great principles which cover the whole period from the creation of man to the end of the millennial day; not principles of good only, but of good and evil, both worked out experimentally, to the end; but before these histories begin, there is a short portion dealing with the creation of all things visible (not so large in scope as Col. i. 16). This small portion is an introduction or preface to these histories. This preface is really a preface to the whole of God's work, and contains in it prophetically a wondrous panorama of all God's dealings, both with the whole world, and also with an individual soul (for the latter is only the former in miniature), beginning from the fall, and ending with the Sabbath of God's rest, and the triumph of good over evil. If this be so, what grandeur does it impart to these Holy Scriptures, and what an insight into God's plans. What solid ground does it give for the feet of those who rest on the immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, as we see the vast plan being worked out, and how Christ is magnified before our souls, for He it is who will carry out every jot and tittle of all the plans and purposes of God.

We believe we shall have no difficulty in proving these things, but at the same time we are painfully conscious that we cannot do justice to the subject, for it is so vast, and our knowledge of it so small. Nevertheless the theme has been one of great spiritual enjoyment to us for a long period, and we hope to be able to say enough, by way of suggestion, rather than of explanation, to

make the subject profitable to our readers.

General Principles.

In a former article on creation we sought to show that God being what He is, and His ways being as described in Scripture, it is impossible that He should form, or speak of material things except to teach us spiritual and moral things.

We do not now propose to go over this ground again, we will accept it as proven, and we will proceed to enquire into the purpose of this opening preface to God's Book, which must necessarily have the deepest significance.

Certain principles may be here enunciated, which are of great help in reading the language of symbols, and in the understanding of the ways of God; these are three, as follows:—

(1) The language of symbols is most definite and distinct, and we have no more right to change the current meaning of a symbol to suit our preconceived ideas, than to change the meaning of a word for the same cause; yet many, otherwise reverent, often play fast and loose with symbolic meanings to suit their own views. This is altogether irreverent, and shews lack of confidence in God, and in God's Book. A flagrant example of this is seen in the use of the symbol 'heaven.' Throughout the whole of Scripture this most distinctly means corruption and evil, yet because of the general unwillingness to accept this when the kingdom of Heaven is in question (Matt. xiii. and Luke xiii.) the symbol is made to mean what is excellent and good, and the mysteries of the kingdom unfolded by the Lord, are therefore entirely falsified. But we must not condemn others, for who has been faultless in this matter?

(2) God never begins with that which shall be, which will abide and is perfect and according to His purpose; but always with something inferior, in order that we may learn by way of contrast—the only way

indeed in which finite beings can learn—because thus only can we be trained for the high destiny which God has for us as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ in the inheritance. This principle is unfolded in I Cor. xv. 46, where it is written, "Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual." This principle is of immense value; see also Jer. xviii., 4.

(3) When God has brought in anything, albeit it is temporary and provisional, He does not set it aside until He has thoroughly tested and proved it, and found it wanting; then it must make way for that which will abide. This is shown in Heb. viii. 7-13, where it is written "For if that first (the word covenant is not in the original) had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." . . . And again, "In that he saith a new, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."

Now bearing these things in mind let us ask the purport of this first chapter. It is generally supposed that it describes God (after the original act of creation) as writing upon a blank, and furnishing it with what is good, and that a perfect state of things is portrayed at each stage. We venture to suggest that on the contrary, we see the introduction of good into a scene of evil, without eliminating the evil, and in consequence it is the conflict of good and evil which is portrayed, with the ultimate triumph of the good. The second verse brings into view a fallen world with God at work for blessing, overcoming evil with good. That is, God is not presenting to us here a perfect world which has since fallen, but the world we now live in, the evil foreseen and provided for, and triumph assured. When we see this we then begin to understand how vastly better is God's thought than our preconceived ideas. We now proceed to prove the above statement.

(To be continued).

A Friend Indeed.

WHILE distributing gospel book-lets in a village on the North-umberland coast, I handed one to an old fisherman. He read the title, "A Friend in need is a Friend indeed," and his face brightened into a smile as he added, "Yes, and the best Friend is Jesus."

We were at home with each other at once, and he was soon telling me that he had known the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour for more than forty years; he had passed through stormy seas during that period, he said, but the Lord had never failed him.

As the tears began to roll down his weather-tanned cheeks, I judged that he had a story to tell, and so asked him about the storms.

He said: We had four sons and we lost them all in two years. They were 28, 26, 24, and 21 years old, but they were all the Lord's, and we shall meet them again.

When the last of them came to die, his mother and I were sorely troubled, and he said to me, "Father, you and mother look very down, what's wrong with you?"

"Why," I said, "my boy, we don't like the thought of losing you; it's that that makes us down."

"But," he replied, "you're not going to lose me, Dad. I belong to Jesus, and I'm going home, and you'll come soon, and we'll all be united again; but give me the hymn-book, and I'll sing a hymn to cheer you a bit."

"You're too weak to sing, my boy," I said. But he at once replied, "Give me the book and let me try."

And so the book was given to him, and he opened to that sweet hymn, and began to sing,

*"Jesus, Lover of my soul,
Let me to Thy bosom fly."*

He got through the first verse of it, and then found that what his father had said, was true, he was too weak to sing.

So he handed the book back again, and said, "You sing the next verse, father, and I'll wave my hand to the tune."

With halting notes the father sang,

*"Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee."*

And while the father sang, the dying lad, with a glad light upon his wan face, waved his hand to the tune, but ere the father had finished the verse, that feeble hand fell, and the ransomed spirit rose to be with the One who had gilded his bed of death with light.

My tears fell with those of the bereaved father, and as we shook hands and separated, I could not help feeling, perhaps as never before, how good it was to know the best of Friends, whose love could drive the fear of death from the heart of the dying lad, and make him sing upon the borderland; and whose grace and love could also sustain the bereaved hearts left behind, so that they could say, "The best Friend is Jesus. He has never failed us."

Across the will of Nature, leads on the path of God;
Not where the flesh delighteth, the feet of Jesus trod.
Oh, bliss to leave behind us the fetters of the slave,
To leave *ourselves* behind us, the grave-clothes and the grave!

Should hap the path be narrow, and steep and rough and lone,
If crags and tangles cross it, Praise God! we will go on!
Scarce seen, scarce heard, unreckoned, despised, defamed, unknown,
Or heard but by our singing; ON, Christian! EVER ON!

"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."

The Fear of God.

(EDITORS).

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. ix. 10).

WE are impressed by the great need of the fear of God when dealing with divine things. No one can rightly either minister the Truth or receive it who is not walking in this fear. To traffic in the things of God without it is disastrous, and the man who attempts it can only miss his way, and wander into the bog of error, where, lured on by the will-o'-th'-wisp of human thought, he is in danger of becoming enshrouded at last in the outer darkness of total apostasy.

"There is no fear of God before their eyes" is the Divine declaration as to man in his natural state, and this lies at the root of all his folly; but this awful condition is not only seen in notoriously profane and Godless men, but it is painfully prominent in many who pose as ministers of righteousness. They have laid rude hands upon the precious Truth that proceeded from the Father, which was fully declared by the Son in Manhood, and which is now unfolded to the subject heart by the Holy Ghost. With glib and impious lips they have dared to deny these great verities and to proclaim in their stead God-dishonouring doctrines, pernicious things, profane and vain babblings, the doctrines of devils.

These things "eat as doth a canker," they spread like leaven, and the authority of the Word has been weakened thereby in the souls of many.

Saints of God, have we taken sufficiently to heart the fact of this open and blatant apostasy? has it caused us to grieve in secret, and driven us to our knees in prayer, that God in His great mercy would revive in the hearts of His people the fear of the Lord, and a holy reverence for the Scriptures?

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and by it we depart from

the paths of folly; it clears away the fogs and mists that gather about the soul; it delivers from that fatal colour-blindness which cannot discern between truth and error; by it things become sharply defined and set in their right relations, and as a ship is held in its course by the helm, so the soul is kept by the fear of God in the track of eternal truth, and that irrespective of the thoughts of men, for when God—the LIVING GOD—is a reality, men and the things of time shrink into their proper insignificance.

In the fear of God we shall be reverent listeners to His word; it will be to us as the candle of the Lord searching our inward parts, and bringing us to heart-renunciation of everything that would lead from God. By that word our souls shall live, and in the light of it our feet will discover straight paths. We shall be in subjection to the Holy Spirit, so that we may know the Divine interpretation instead of leaning on our own understanding, while our souls will be filled with adoration, because of the holy privilege afforded us of having to say to these things at all.

Malachi's days were days of great departure from the truth, but in the midst of all the darkness that enshrouded the mass, there were those of whom God signified His especial approval—these "feared the Lord and thought upon His Name," and they were accounted of the Lord of Hosts as His "special treasure" (Malachi iii. 16, 17, margin).

That was at the end of the last dispensation; we are now evidently near the end of the present day of grace; "wherefore . . . let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

The Unchanging One.

(JAMES BOYD).

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."—Heb. xiii. 8.

HOW cheering, refreshing, and establishing it is to be brought into contact with One who is infinite in goodness, grace, righteousness, holiness, and love; and who never can be different to that which, at our earliest introduction to Him, we found Him to be: One upon whom the lapse of ages leaves no mark of change! Such is Jesus, the subject of this epistle, in which the old order, like a dissolving view, melts from before our vision, leaving to fill the scene that which is new and eternal, radiant with the glory of God.

And how often has the passage at the head of this paper spoken peace to the soul disquieted by the capricious and changeful nature of the selfish principles of the fallen creature, who no longer ago than yesterday may have been brimming over with evidences of most tender affection, and to-day may, in spirit and deportment, have become as cold, cutting, and severe as the January east wind. It has ministered comfort, consolation, and encouragement to thousands perplexed and weary with the ever varying condition of things with which we are compassed in this world of restlessness, confusion, envy and falsehood. It presents to the shipwrecked and hopeless mariner an island of peace in the midst of a turbulent and treacherous ocean. It is a shelter for the battered and toil-worn wayfarer, alone and lost in the pathless and storm swept wilderness. It is an invulnerable citadel, into which the besieged and war-broken may retreat, and thus escape the anguish which is invariably the lot of those who foolishly trust their happiness to the vicissitudes of a world in rebellion against God and agitated by the fell destroyer of the human race.

How good it is to be brought to the knowledge of this changeless Jesus! He came into this world, which was

without moral foundations, that man should have a firm rock upon which he might plant the foot of faith, and be assured that amid the crash of everything that seems stable in the universe, it could not be shaken. He came to illuminate the benighted vision with the gracious light of God, and to warm into life the cold dead human heart with the holy love of God. See Him at the well of Sychar, and hear Him speak of the gift of God to a poor sinful creature, for whom no one else had a word of comfort. There He is the Giver of the living water, which alone can give satisfaction to the thirsty soul. See Him in the house of Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii.), the Creditor in the midst of His debtors, speaking only of forgiveness.

See Him at the grave of Lazarus, the Resurrection and the Life, mingling tears of sympathy with those of the two bereaved women, before His almighty voice awoke the echoes of the dull domain of death and Hades, and called back the dead man to life. See Him amid a multitude of publicans and sinners, and hearken to the words of grace which proceed out of His lips, until you hear the throbbing of the heart of God, as He enfolds in the arms of His immortal love a prodigal come back from the far country, naked except for those rags which bore witness of his rebellious and disgraceful career. See Him in the temple and synagogue, and in the streets and lanes of the city, and hear Him tell in the ear of devil-deceived men and woman the grace and love of God.

See how He feels for the diseased, the demon-possessed, the blind, and the broken-hearted, until you learn what those mean who say: "*Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.*" See Him amid the gloom of Golgotha, dying for the ungodly, and praying for

His murderers; and as you contemplate Him, "stricken, smitten of God and afflicted," may you be able to say: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii.). And then think of Him as *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. Oh, the deep, deep blessedness of knowing Him—learning Him in His pathway down here, and knowing that He is just the same blessed, living, lowly, gracious Saviour now that He is on the Father's throne. May both reader and writer get to know Him better every day of our pilgrim journey through this world, until we see Him face to face in courts of light.

But consider the setting of this short, simple, peace imparting sentence. In verse 7 we are exhorted to remember them who had (not *have*) the rule over us, who spoke to us the word of God. They have gone from our midst. Their voices are no longer heard amongst us ministering the living Word, but we are to call them to mind; and considering the issue of their conversation we are to imitate their faith. Then in verse 9 we are warned against those who would introduce divers and strange doctrines. Between that needful exhortation and this very wholesome warning we have the brilliant and comforting truth shining like a silver star: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Whether it be the Gospel to the world or ministry to the saints, Christ must ever be the subject (Rom. xvi. 25; Acts xxviii. 31). He is the living Word, the spirit of all Scripture. It was Christ the apostles preached and taught, and there is nothing else for saint or sinner to-day; and *He never changes*. John, writing to the babes, says, "Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning" (I John ii. 24). The devil brings in novelties, and the human mind loves them and revels in them. And just because men love them, they flatter themselves that they are parts of the

truth, but alas, they are but "sporting themselves with their own deceivings." That which turns away the heart from Christ is a snare of the devil. We are told we must not hold too obstinately to old forms, but must advance with the times; but the whole truth has come to light in Jesus, and there is no change in Him.

It is affirmed by men of science that signs of decay are visible in some of the heavenly bodies. The sun seems to be giving evidence that he has passed the meridian of his years; the moon is a defunct world, and the earth is in the sear and yellow leaf. This is just what Scripture tells us in those remarkable words which were addressed to Jesus, when in the sorrow of His soul He drew near to the gates of death, stricken for the transgression of believing sinners: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands: they 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" (Ps. cii. 25-27; Heb. i. 10-12). Peter tells us that the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, the elements melting with fervent heat, and that the earth also and all the works that are therein shall be burned up, but that we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness (II. Peter iii.).

The nature of the change which will pass over the universe has not been revealed to us, we do not need to know it. We are confident however of this, that He who built it at the beginning to serve His purpose, and Who in infinite wisdom allowed the enemy to defile it with the stain of sin, is able to cleanse it from the presence of that which is so hateful to Him and so ruinous to the creature, and to fill it with light and blessing, and make it the abode of righteousness. To accomplish this, and to set man in new and eternal relationships with God, He laid down His life. The Creator is the Redeemer. He who stooped down to

know what human weakness was, and who had His days shortened, is the same One who then, as now, was upholding all things by the word of His power. What creature mind could compass such a thought? No man knoweth the Son.

But not only must the material universe undergo a change, a much greater change must pass over man himself. The old order no longer occupies us; angels, Moses, Aaron, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, the covenant—in a word, the whole earthly order disappears before the face of Jesus, and we are exhorted to abandon the shadow for the substance, types which pass away for realities which abide for ever. And for this state of things a change must take place upon *us*. We are heirs of a kingdom which cannot be moved; but except a man be born again he shall never see it (John iii.). Man must have a new nature, as born of God, or perish for ever.

The wonderful thing about man is that *he can be changed*. I do not for a moment doubt that God, who knew the end from the beginning, and had His counsels formed with regard to all His works before He put in operation His creative power, so made man that he could be changed in the whole principle of his being. We are not told anything about angels to lead us to suppose such beings capable of being changed. Some of them have fallen away from God, and an opportunity of salvation does not seem to be granted to them. *Man* is the creature chosen of God in whom His workmanship of grace is to be displayed. What He has wrought as a Saviour will be brought to light in ransomed *human beings*.

And what a change He is capable of making in His rebellious and ruined creature! Hear what He says to the headstrong, intractable Simon Peter:—“When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not” (John xxi.

18). And what made that change? Age? Never. As to nature it is ever true: “*The child is father of the man.*” That change was wrought in Peter in the school of God, and by Him who Himself changes not.

And consider the insolent overbearing Saul of Tarsus; that proud, self-righteous, Christ-hating Pharisee. Wolfish in his nature, and getting the first taste of blood at the martyrdom of Stephen, he ever after seeks to satiate his ravenous appetite with the slaughter of the sheep of Jesus, until met on the highway of his merciless career by Him before whose subduing power nothing is able to stand. What meekness, gentleness, patience, tenderness, and lowliness were wrought in this striking subject of the grace of God! What ceaseless solicitude for the salvation of the lost! What care for the flock of Christ! What devotedness to that holy Name once so hated and persecuted by him! And this wonderful change effected by Him who is *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever!*

And has not the reader, as well as the writer, come under the changing influence of this changeless Person? From that throat, which was once *an open sepulchre* is exhaled the perfume of immortal love. That *mouth*, once “*full of cursing and bitterness*” is now replete with blessing. That *tongue*, long accustomed to “*deceit*,” now spreads abroad the word of truth and life. Those *lips*, which once concealed the deadly “*poison of asps*,” are now pregnant with life-imparting grace. Those *feet*, once “*swift to shed blood*,” now “*shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*,” run joyfully in the pathways of mercy. A new power, that of the Holy Spirit, has taken possession of the earthen vessel, the members have become instruments of righteousness, the will of God is done, and the soul finds eternal rest. The glory of the Lord, with all its life-giving and attractive power, shines full upon our hitherto benighted hearts, and we become *changed* into the same image (II. Cor. iii.).

One more change will complete our blessing, and place us beyond the need of change for ever. I refer to the change which shall pass upon our mortal bodies. We look for the Saviour from heaven "who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body." Then we shall be like the Lord and with Him for ever in those

"bright and blessed scenes
Where sin can never come;
Whose sight my longing spirit weans
From earth, where yet I roam.
Like Jesus in that place
Of light and love supreme,
Once Man of Sorrows, full of grace,
Heaven's blest and endless theme.
Like Him! O grace supreme!
Like Him before Thy face;
Like Him, to know that glory beam
Unhindered, face to face."

"Your Own Salvation."

(J. T. MAWSON)

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."—Phil. ii. 12, 13.

WE were sitting in a room where played a little baby-boy; he had just begun to walk and talk, and was putting his new found powers to the test. As he tremblingly ran from one chair to another, we heard him say to himself, "Mind the fender, C." A careful mother had warned him of the danger that lurked just there, and he was now repeating her warning to himself, and so working out his own salvation in respect to it.

God has warned us, in His word, as to where the dangers lie, and as we keep His word in mind, and are obedient to it, we too work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. "Concerning the works of men, by the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Ps. xvii. 4).

But not only are we preserved from danger by the wholesome fear of it, but also by the attraction of something greater and better than the temptation presented. In ancient Greek mythology we read of the Sirens, beautiful in voice, but malignant in soul. They lived by the sea, and sang their sweetest songs as the ships sailed by, in order to lure the mariners to destruction on their treacherous shore.

When the Argonauts set sail for Pontus in search of the Golden Fleece, they knew that they must pass this point of danger, and that they might not be turned from their purpose by

the seductive songs of the Sirens, they induced Orpheus, the greatest poet and singer of those mythical times, to accompany them.

Every day of that voyage he poured forth his most enchanting strains in the ears of those sailors, so that when they came to the point of danger the Sirens sang in vain, the Argonauts passed them with contempt—for the charm of the inferior music had been broken by the sweeter strains that filled their ears.

It is thus that God works in His grace. Christ is presented to us in all that wonderful charm that has won our hearts, and with the eye and heart filled with His surpassing beauty, our souls are proof against the false glamour which only attracts to destroy. The same holy Word of God which warns us of danger around, also unveils for us the excellencies of Christ.

But this passage is often used as though it meant work *for* salvation. This is altogether wrong, for Scripture cannot contradict itself, and there we read, "By grace are ye saved . . . *not of works*, lest any man should boast" (Eph. ii. 7, 8).

The passage supposes that there is that within—life, nature and power—by the exercise of which we are preserved in the path of God's pleasure; and this is only found in those who have been saved by the grace of God.

When in the Transvaal, we went down into one of the gold mines there, and saw the quartz being worked out from the bowels of the earth; then presently we saw the bars of yellow metal all ready for shipment for the English mint. The gold was there in the mine first of all, but it had to be worked out to be of profit to the owners. So it is with us who believe, there must be exercise, and diligence, and work, so that that which God has placed within us may be worked out for His praise and glory.

But only a gold mine can produce gold, you would work in vain for it in any other mine. And so it is only the truly saved person who can work out salvation.

But there is still a point of greatest

importance in the passage, which must not be overlooked; "it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." We have no power in ourselves naturally (a great deal of the disappointment in the lives of Christians is because this is overlooked), but God works in both the will and the energy. As some mighty electric-dynamo supplies the factory with the force needful for the production of that for which it was erected, so God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, works in us His will and way, so that we may follow the Lord wholly, and give pleasure to Him who has bought us at so great a cost.

Our place is to obey Him, to yield ourselves to Him alone, having no confidence in the flesh.

Missionary Hymn.

(WILLIAM H. WESTCOTT.)

Tune—723 Bristol Tune Book.

FATHER, in days gone by
Thy people sought Thy face,
Longing that souls might be
Reached by Thy saving grace.
Thou gav'st the answer then,
In blessing far and near;
Saving the souls of men
From sin and guilt and fear.
Father, save!

Bowing together here,—
Thy people of to-day,—
Thou dost, in Jesu's name,
Drive unbelief away.
Faith's holy confidence
Is resting now on Thee;
O Thou that hearest prayer,
We would Thy blessing see.
Father, save!

Think of those distant lands,
Where lived Thy saints of old;
Let Naaman's leprous home
Again of grace be told.
Let Israel's captive souls
Hear of Thy gospel free;
And Zion's hills resound
With songs of liberty.
Father, save!

Let Egypt's ebbing grace,
As tidal waters turn;
Nor let her rulers now
Thy gracious dealing spurn:
Let Pharaoh's starving land
Again her Joseph see,
In Jesus Who has died,
And risen again to Thee.
Father, save!

Down Eden's valleys, Lord,
Let living waters flow:
And Adam's fallen race
Thy full salvation know;
And 'midst the thorny woes,
Euphrates knows so well,
May those who know its balm
The Saviour's mercy tell.
Father, save!

And, oh! not there alone,
But far across the wave,
How China's plaint awakes,
The prayer that Thou wilt save!
Her millions passing on,
Approach a fearful end;
O God! stretch forth Thine hands,
And mighty blessing send!
Father, save!

But how the heart grows faint,
And then o'erflows in grief,
Thinking of India's sons,
So long without relief;
While Afric's weary hosts,
Down-trodden and oppressed,
Seem silently to stand,
Yearning for heavenly rest.
Father, save!

Let all our hearts arise,
Alive with heavenly glow;
Moved by Thy Spirit, Lord,
With love's deep stream to flow;
And if in foreign lands,
Or this, Thou bid'st us roam,
Oh! for Thy mighty power,
To call Thy wanderers home.
Father, save!

The Mystery of God.

(J. ALFRED TRENCH).

INTRODUCTORY.

WHAT a complete revolution was involved in the ways of God, when, by divine inspiration, the prophecy of Caiaphas was recorded, "that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 51, 52). Nothing of the kind had ever been intimated in Old Testament Scriptures. It announced the close of the special exclusive relationship of the nation of Israel to God which had been maintained for long centuries. Of them He could say, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth" (Amos iii. 2).

The accomplishment of the purposes of God as to that nation was most surely before the Lord Jesus as one object of His death, even as Caiaphas (not of himself) had prophesied. But there was another object nearer and dearer to His heart; and I desire to raise the question as to how far this object has been laid hold of by us in the faith of our souls. If we have rested on His death for our sins, and know anything of the deliverance He has wrought for us by that death, from sin, and from the law which was the strength of sin, and from the world, there is nothing that should touch our hearts more deeply than the knowledge that the blessed Lord died that the children of God, hitherto scattered, with no consciousness of their relationship to Him, or to one another, should be in that condition no longer, but gathered together in one on earth.

"One Flock."

There were children of God then, owned in their relationship by God, but awaiting the revelation of this great fact, for any enjoyment of it. They were of the Jews and of the Gentiles, but had no sense of the family bond. Nay, by God's own institutions they of

the Jews were separated from those of the Gentiles by a middle wall of partition—the law of commandments contained in ordinances—that acted both to keep them at a distance from God and from each other. We learn how real the barrier was, and how impossible for even those that were of God to be one while it existed, from the very remarkable steps that were taken by God to induce Peter to carry to the Gentile, Cornelius, words whereby he might be saved, so that he might be consciously brought on to the ground of accomplished redemption, albeit he had already evidently been born again, and manifested many a fruit of the work of grace in him.

But there were divine forces preparing the way for such a drawing together of those who had been the subjects of God's mighty operation in grace. John x. teaches us that the Lord Jesus had entered into the sheepfold of Judaism as the Shepherd of the sheep; not to shepherd them more directly than heretofore amid the mass of the people, but that they might hear His voice calling His own sheep by name, to lead them all out of the fold, Himself going before them as their guarantee for the path, and forming the attractive object for their hearts as they followed Him.

But not only so, in verse 16 He says: "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice: and there shall be one flock (no longer fold), one Shepherd" (N.T.). By His own voice heard in the inmost soul of Gentile as well as Jew, a precious link was formed between each sheep and Christ Himself; and thus His flock was constituted in all the blessing that He had been opening out for those who entered in by Christ as the door (v. 9-15), which blessing is founded

on His laying down His life for the sheep.

If there was no actual relationship between the sheep, there was between each of them and Christ in the most real way. They had heard, and hear His voice as it still speaks through His word; He knew them each one, as none other could; He had loved them with a love that gave Himself for them, and they had but to follow Him. He would impart to them eternal life, and none should ever catch them from His hand; they were the Father's gift to Him, and His Father's hand was also laid upon them to secure them to Him: there could be no perishing of the life within, and no force without could separate them from that all-powerful grasp, for the Father and Son are one. What a Shepherd! and how blessed to be of His flock! But "the mystery" was not yet.

One Family.

But more than this was involved in the relationship of children. There was a family that God had formed for Himself. When the Creator of the world came into it, it knew Him not; when He came to His own special circle of Israel, it received Him not; but to as many as received Him God gave the right to become children of God, "even to them that believed on His name; which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i., 12, 13). By the death of Christ, as one cherished object of it to Him, these were to be gathered together in one, in relationship with each other, as with Him.

John xvii. helps us to enter a little into the deep place this oneness of the family of God had in the heart of the Son; there we are allowed to draw near, and hear Him pour out all His hitherto untold desires for them, into His Father's ear. This oneness comes out in three aspects of it. (1) The Son had kept those whom the Father had given Him out of the world in the Father's name, while He was with them: in

leaving them He commits them to the Father to keep in that same blessed name of Father, of which He had been the full revelation—"Holy Father keep them in Thy name which Thou hast given me (as it must be read), that they may be *one as we*" (ver. 11, 12). What a thought! They were to be one among themselves, in heart and mind and object, even as the Father and the Son were one, in an identity of interest He had just expressed in the words—"All mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine."

We may see how, for a brief moment, in the power of the Spirit and of the grace that was upon them all in the early chapters of Acts, this oneness was realised, when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that aught of the things he possessed was his own" (v. 32). It was a lovely expression of what grace by the power of God could produce. But it did not last.

(2) The Lord then gives another character to the oneness that He sought for us.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word;

That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they may also be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (verses 20, 21).

Here we all are expressly brought in, as those who have believed through the Apostolic word. "One *in Us*"—this oneness then was to be brought about as we each one abode in the Son and in the Father, enjoying fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, which is the essential privilege of the life we have been brought into (see I. John i. 3, ii. 24). For what is fellowship with the Father but to have common thoughts with Him about His beloved Son, as He presents Him to us as the object of His own delight; and what is fellowship with the Son, but having communion of thought with Him about the Father, whom He has

made known to us? Oh, if we knew and had but walked in the power of such communion, we should then have had no other thoughts but what we shared in this communion, and so have been kept in oneness with each other; then the world might have seen and believed that the Father sent the Son.

Well may we hide our faces in shame as we look upon the scattering of the family of God that began so early and has been ever increasing, and own in sorrow of heart before Him—all the deeper because of the grace of the Son that makes no allusion to it to the Father—how complete our failure has been, and how we have each contributed to it. No wonder the world is sceptical.

(3) But all is not told yet. The Lord passes on in His unfathomable love to present us before the Father in a character of oneness that nothing can disrupt, where no failure is possible, and which He can speak of as “perfect” for the first time. It is the oneness of the given glory of Christ—“And the glory which Thou hast given Me I have given them, that they may be one, *even as We are one*: I in them”—Christ to be displayed in us as perfectly as the Father in the Son—“and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know”—if too late for it to believe, and enter into the blessing—“that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me” (verses 22, 23). Thus in spite of the work of the enemy, and the heart-breaking collapse of faithfulness in us, our blessed Lord will see of the travail of His soul in His heavenly people, as well as His earthly. He will be able to display us perfect in one in His glory to the astonished world. But who could conceive His adding to this that the world should know, when it sees us in that glory, that we have been loved of the Father, even as Jesus was loved when He was here.

One Assembly.

But all this was anticipative: “the hour was come” for the heart of the

Lord, and He was claiming the consequences of it for Himself and for those given Him out of the world. The full truth of the relationship into which they had been brought would only burst upon the disciples, when, from a Risen Christ, they received that wonderful message through dear Mary of Magdala, “Go to My brethren” (now first owned as such) “and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.” It was the wonderful fulfilment of the first clause of Psalm xxii. 22, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren.” The Sanctifier and the sanctified ones were “all of one” (as set forth in the reality of the Lord’s Manhood in resurrection), “for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. ii. 11).

And now the second part of Psalm xxii. 22, was to be fulfilled—“In the midst of the congregation (or ‘assembly,’ as the Holy Spirit interprets in quoting the verse in Heb. ii.) will I sing praise unto Thee.” For the same day at evening, being ‘the first day of the week,’ came Jesus, and “stood *in the midst*” of them (John xx. 19).⁴ He had walked alone as man, in blessed relationship with God and the Father. This relationship found its first full expression down here in Him; but now, as the fruit of the work accomplished when the precious seed of corn fell into the ground and died, He was no longer alone; but was able to declare the full association of His own with Himself, in all He was about to enter into as the ascended Man—His Father was their Father, His God was their God—and He could lead them, too, in the song of praise, a song which was His own first, as He came out of the darkness and sorrow, but which is now also suited to us whom He has brought into the light and joy into which He has entered.

As regards what is individual, nothing could go beyond the blessedness of this present, heavenly association with Christ, which is doctrinally opened out to us in the teaching of the Epistles, especially of Paul and John, and of which the Holy Ghost has come to be the power of our

enjoyment. And as we have seen, it involves our relationship with one another as brethren, that the divine love wherewith we are loved may be expressed in our ways with one another.

But we have not yet exhausted the fulness of the resources of that love, nor touched upon the subject which forms the heading to this paper, viz., "The Mystery." That was still "hid in God," and we must now seek grace, and the power of the Spirit of God, to enter into that which can only be known by *revelation*.

This is really the force of "mystery." It does not mean what is mysterious, for there is nothing of this when it is known. But it is that into which we need to be initiated by divine revelation and teaching. There will be no such initiation needed, for instance, when the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together. The Kingdom as such does not enter into the mystery, is not the subject of it.

The first intimation of a corporate relationship in which the saints were to be formed (while as to accomplishment it was yet future), is found in Matt. xvi., where, in answer to a direct revelation from the Father, Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

This confession involved the complete triumph of the One whose glory Peter thus confessed, over him that had the power of death—a triumph evidenced and proved by His resurrection.

The Lord also revealed to Peter, that upon the rock of the glory of His Person, thus confessed, He would build His assembly, nor could all the power of Satan prevail against this divine work. Peter was proved by his faith to be already a living stone, ready to be put in its place when the building should begin. In I. Peter ii. this privilege is made good to all, who by faith come to the living Stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious. These are, as living stones, being built up a spiritual house,

and are ever growing, as Paul puts it in Eph. ii., by this divine workmanship to a holy temple in the Lord—a structure yet to come out in a new heaven and new earth as the Tabernacle of God, the eternal habitation of the brightest manifestation of the glory of God.

The building began at Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down upon all who were His, and God thus took up His abode even from the first in the dwelling formed for Him.

But this aspect of the assembly formed no part of the mystery. The blessed thought and purpose of the heart of God, to take up His dwelling place among a redeemed people, had not been hid from other ages. He brought it out when He delivered Israel from the power of Pharaoh (figure of the prince of this world), who held them captive, and the first full type of redemption is presented not only in the blood on the door posts of their houses for God's eye in Egypt, but in the death and resurrection of Christ as shadowed forth in the Red Sea.

If it is not certain that it comes so early into the song of Moses and Israel as verse 2 of Ex. xv., we find it fully in verse 17, where it becomes a revelation. "Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance, the place, O Lord, which Thou hast made for Thee to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established." (See also ch. xxix. verses 42 and 46.) This was a material sanctuary; His dwelling place is now a spiritual house, the one the shadowing forth of the other; though a material sanctuary will have its place again on the millennial earth.

But "the mystery" was still unrevealed. Yet it was brought about by that to which we have already referred, viz., the advent of another Divine Person, the Spirit, given from the glory of Christ, to dwell in and with us; but revelation was needed to bring us into heart intelligence of what had taken place.

(To be continued).

Papers on Service.

(SELECTED.).

The Evangelist.

THERE are vacancies in the heart of Christ, and the evangelist is gifted to go out and seek the lost ones to fill these vacancies. He starts from that heart, knowing what a shelter it is. He knows how it loves and cares for them, and so he goes out to seek the lost and bring them there. He is like his Master who came to seek and save the lost, and he knows the delight of heaven over one repentant soul.

A happy and blessed path is his. Himself a gift from the Lord to men, he must be qualified by the Holy Ghost for his work. As God's herald he takes his stand in the world, and announces the good news of salvation to sinners, for *all* who will receive it.

It is not a partial amnesty that he is commissioned to promulgate, nor is it a mere pardon, however graciously conceded, that he is sent to declare. He speaks of pardon, but of justification also. He speaks of deliverance from wrath, but he speaks of everlasting blessedness likewise. The threshold of hell shall never be crossed by those who give heed to, and rest in what he proclaims; and he is empowered to tell that the door of heaven has been opened to receive all who believe. The wrath of God is averted, because His Son has endured it for sinners; and the favour of God can be enjoyed, because those who believe are now accepted in the Beloved.

In the day of Israel's deliverance the words of the prophet will be fulfilled: "Beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good" (Isa. lii. 7). But beautiful even now, not only upon the mountains, but on earth, in valley, plain, hill or city, on shore or at sea, is the proclamation of the gospel of peace, till the Lord shall descend into the air, and this day of salvation shall close.

Conditions Necessary for Power.

AMONG these conditions I notice, first, a *simplicity of heart*. The Lord pours most into those who are most empty of self. Those who have least of their own shall have most of God's. The Lord cares little what the vessel is, whether golden or earthen, so long as it is clean, and disengaged from other uses. Only then is the cup prepared to receive the living water. If there was something in it before, it would adulterate the pure water of life; or if what was there before was very pure, it would, at least, occupy some of the room which the Lord seeks for His own grace.

The Lord therefore empties us, that we may be clear from prejudice, self-sufficiency, and foregone conclusions as to what His truth ought to be. He would have us like children, who believe what their father tells them.

We must lay aside all pretence of wisdom. Some men are too self-sufficient for God to use. If God were to bless them largely they would talk in Wolsey's style of "Ego et rex meus" (I and my king); but the Lord will have none of it. That straight-backed upstart letter "I" must bow itself down into its lower-case shape, and just look like a little pot hook (*i*) of a thing, and be nothing more. Oh! to be rid of self! Oh! to quit every pretence of wisdom!

We need, and may the Lord give to us, great humility of mind! It ought not to be an extraordinary thing for us to accept what God says. It ought not to take much humility for such poor creatures as we are to sit at the feet of Jesus. We ought to look upon it as an elevation of mind for our spirit to lie prostrate before infinite wisdom. Assuredly this is needful to the reception of power from God.

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter II. 1-12.

1 For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance into unto you, that it was not in vain :

2 But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile :

4 But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak ; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts.

5 For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness ; God is witness :

6 Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ.

7 But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children :

8 So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us.

9 For ye remember, brethren, our labour and travail : for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

10 Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe :

11 As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as father doth his children,

12 That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

BEFORE passing to the consideration of the second chapter, let us look once again, briefly, at the closing verses of the preceding chapter, for these give a certain scope and setting to the whole epistle :

"... how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God ;

And to wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

The state of the pagan world in general, as of the Thessalonians in particular, is depicted here, and more fully described in Rom. i., as sunk in idolatry, addicted to the worship of those who are described in Deut. xxxii. 17-21 as "no gods."

How the anger of God was provoked against them on this account, and His wrath stirred up against them to their destruction, is fully set forth as a warning to Israel by Moses in the book of Deuteronomy—*cf.* ch. iv. 14-28, vii. 23-26, xi. 16-17, xii. 29-31, *et al.* And terrible were the denunciations made to them should they forsake the worship and service of the Lord God, and, reverting to the idolatry out of which Abram had been called (Josh. xxiv. 2), follow the example of the surrounding nations.

They were thus, both of them, Israel and the nations alike, amenable to the wrath of God ; nor was there the possi-

bility of escape, when once His hand in the fury of His anger was lifted up. "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them. I will spend mine arrows upon them," etc. (Deut. xxxii. 21-23).

These words are addressed to Israel, but their echo is heard among the nations around. How blessed amidst the rolling of such thunders to hear the gospel sound, telling of "Jesus, our Deliverer,"—Deliverer of every believer, Jew and Gentile alike—"our Deliverer from the coming wrath," a wrath as certainly coming as the fact of it had already been made known (*cf.* Eph. v. 6, Col. iii. 6).

"Ye turned to God from idols," denotes rather the general idea of their conversion than its specifically Christian character ; they turned from the idols they had served to the God whom Paul preached to them—to serve Him whose true character is the "living and veritable God," and to wait for His Son from the heavens, even Jesus, our Deliverer from the coming wrath already announced.

He is the living God, in contrast to dead idols—"no gods" who have no life in them. "Behold ye are worse

than nothing and your work is of nought" (Is. xli. 24, margin). Such is the idol in itself: the worship of it is rank corruption.

He is the true, the veritable God, in contrast to what is merely specious and shadowy (*cf.* Jer. x. 10., I. John v. 20).

"To wait for His Son from heaven." This was their hope, and this hope, the coming of the Lord, characterizes the epistle. It has been well said that "hope is the keynote of this epistle, as joy is of the Epistle to the Philippians" (Ellicott). In every chapter the coming of the Lord is set forth. In one aspect or another of it, it is the characteristic hope of the Christian. Thus it is presented:

In ch. i. 10 in connection with the deliverance to be brought about at that day.

In ch. ii. 19 with the joyful reunion of the saints and those who have laboured amongst them.

In ch. iii. 13 with the present sanctifying effects produced by the consequences of the responsibility that will be then manifested.

In ch. iv. 14-17 with the rapture of the saints and their coming again with the Lord at His return.

In ch. v. 2 with "the day of the Lord" and the judgment that will then come, as already pronounced, upon the world.

And in ch. v. 23 with his desire that the saints should be preserved blameless in view of that day, fraught as it is with so many mighty issues.

Chapter 2.

IN the preceding chapter, Paul dwells thankfully on the fruits the gospel had produced in those whom he addresses; in this chapter he discusses seriously, in the full sense of the responsibility attaching to it, his own conduct as a servant of God in their midst.

There he spoke of their faith, hope and love, the essential and internal elements of Christian life, evidenced in its reality by the work and patience and labour that accompanied them; and also of the external evidence of the power of the gospel over them, seen by all as they turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven. Here he speaks of the boldness, the uprightness, the faithfulness, the considerateness, the tenderness, the untiring and unselfish devotedness of his ministry amongst them; able as he is (happy man!) to call them and God to witness how holily and justly, and unblameably he, with his fellow labourers, had behaved themselves among them that believe, at once manifesting the gentleness of a nursing mother, and ministering the wise counsel and instruction of a devoted father amongst his children. It is a

beautiful and grateful picture to study; and as the mind dwells upon it, it is refreshed from the springs of spiritual life that come bursting up from their source, with all the instinct of holy affections as yet unrestrained by the coldness or defilements of this nether world.

Why is it that we do not get more ministry from the epistles to the Thessalonians? Why is it that much of what we do get is of a merely doctrinal kind, where doctrine, as such, has so little place? Is it that the affections of life amongst those who believe are so little developed, or have become so atrophied for want of being properly nourished, that we are but little capable of appreciating that which, by contrast with the highest gifts, the apostle calls the "more excellent way?" (I. Cor. xii. 31). Or is it that we are more occupied with the ordering and administration of our relationships than with the fulfilment of them?—that our heads have got beyond our hearts, and both beyond our feet? Let us take heed to the word, "these things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

We notice here, as before, the same fervency, the same superlative style, his

thought amplified in triplets, as though words could scarce express the overflowings of his feelings. Tense and short he can be when the occasion requires—"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached let him be accursed: As we said before, so say I now again, . . . let him be accursed" (Gal. i. 9, 10). One word of sharp and extreme animadversion is there enough, and he will not use a second, even though he use it twice. But here, how different! words are piled up to give vent, as it were, to the feelings with which his heart is charged towards his beloved children in the faith.

Doctrine is no doubt necessary in its place, and the full understanding of all the glorious purposes of God for the ages, as revealed in the Scriptures, is of the utmost importance for the proper and intelligent enjoyment of the Christian; but here we have the spring that vitalizes all the rest,—without which these vast and far-reaching truths, given for the glory of God and for the blessing of His people as in a land flowing with milk and honey, become as barren as the steppes of Tartary, as arid as the sands of the Sahara desert. Made known for the glory of God, the Giver, and for the blessing of man, the receiver, they are oftentimes taken up by the mind of man for his own glory, and they thus fail in the purpose of their revelation, whether for God or man. Life we must have, whatever else we have: and life, divine and spiritual life, has its spring and expression in love and the holy affections that flow from it. Doctrine must surely be maintained at the height of the revelation as given of God: but the soul must be nourished in the affections that give it life and unction.

Verses 1-2.

He designs to encourage them to patience and constancy in the sufferings through which they were passing; but he does not exhort them to travel a road by which he himself had not gone. He does not drive them. And so likewise

Paul can speak of his own sufferings, and the shameful treatment to which he and his fellow labourers were subjected at Philippi, and how "we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."

Verses 3-8.

It is most interesting, and affords instruction worthy of the most serious consideration, to note the profoundly serious way in which he regards the trust of the gospel committed to him by God, always associating with himself in this service to the Thessalonians his fellow-labourers, Silvanus and Timotheus. How bright the saving light of the gospel thus appears as first sent forth into this poor dark world! What a message to carry, and what messengers to carry it! Here the curtain rises on a new scene where the God of Heaven proclaims the supremacy of good in a world lying in the wicked one; this gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes.

He charges the saints at Thessalonica that they should walk worthy of God, who had called them to His own kingdom and glory; but first he vindicates his title to give such a charge to others.

Mark well the things that were absent from this exhortation and then note that which characterized it. It was free from deceit, uncleanness, guile: they spake "not as pleasing men but God, which trieth our hearts": they used no flattery nor pretext of covetousness: and this was not said lightly, God was their witness: nor did they seek glory of any human source, though as apostles of Christ they might have clothed themselves with the weight and consideration of their commission. No such object commanded them, no such desire impelled them. If not, what then? What motives did govern these honoured servants of God? What motives should govern and characterize His beloved servants to-day? The answer is beautiful and before us. First, **fidelity to Him** whose servants they were, "not as pleasing men but God which trieth our

hearts"; and second, tenderness and love towards those whom they were sent to serve. And what exquisite refinement and depth of feeling is evidenced in their manner of behaviour towards them! Gentle as a nursing mother with her own children, desirous of imparting not the gospel of God only but their very selves, because they had become so dear to them.

Verse 9.

Nor does any false modesty prevent his calling to their minds how they had laboured and wrought night and day so as not to be chargeable to them in the way of monetary expense, while preaching to them the free grace of God. On this point Paul is more than ordinarily emphatic. In one place he calls it his *reward* that in preaching the Gospel he would make it without charge (I Cor. ix. 18). Elsewhere he says that as the truth of Christ is in him no man shall stop him of this *boasting* (II Cor. xi. 10), and of this we have proof in his closing address to the elders at Ephesus, in these memorable words:—"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts xx. 33-35). What a man! What a servant! What an exponent in his own life and ways, of

the gospel that he had received from God! of the gospel which he preached to others.

Verses 10-12.

What forceful eloquence therefore in his words where he calls them and God to witness "how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe;" and how touching his appeal to their own personal knowledge—"how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father," taking individual interest in every separate child in the family. that they should walk *worthy of God*—the God who had called them to His own "kingdom and glory."

In Eph. iv. 1 he exhorts them to all lowliness (mark the word *all*, for it is forgotten), meekness, longsuffering, and the like, as he beseeches them to walk *worthy of the vocation* wherewith they were called.

In Col. 1. 9, 10; his constant prayer and desire for them was that they might be filled (mark the word *filled*) with the complete knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that they might walk worthy of the Lord.

Here he dwells on the testimony of a holy, righteous, and blameless life in the sight of others, even as "the kingdom of God is . . . righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men" (Rom. xiv. 17-18).

Additional Notes by Readers.

Verse 1.

The apostle recognised these Thessalonian converts as "brethren," the new relationship formed in Christianity. Paul himself was a Jew, these one-time idolaters were Gentiles, but now in Christ Jesus they were all one.

Verse 2.

In this epistle God is present to faith as the *living and true* God. To such a

God had these Thessalonians turned. Hence we can understand the way the apostle links every movement of saints and servants directly with Him, for everything connected with the apostle's work arose from the activities in grace of the living and true God. Thus: bold in our God; gospel of God; allowed of God; God, which trieth our hearts; God is witness; God, who hath

called you ; and so through the whole epistle.

BOLD IN OUR GOD.—This boldness was not mere natural courage, but the calm fearlessness that comes of consciousness of the presence of God.

Verse 3.

OUR EXHORTATION.—On those who were persuaded of the truth of what Paul preached (Acts xvii. 2, 5), the missionaries had urged certain practical considerations ; this is here described as "our exhortation."

IS NOT OF DECEIT (ERROR).—They had not themselves been carried away by any wiles of error, neither had they sought to mislead others by such wiles (Eph. iv. 14). They had not been deceived, neither were they deceivers ; see II. Tim. iii. 13, where the word is used which is translated in this verse "deceit," but which is usually and more correctly translated "error."

NOR OF UNCLEANNESS.—Compare the description of the false teachers in II. Pet. ii. 18, where sensuality and error are again associated (see also Jude 4). Corinth and Thessalonica were both cities wherein gross vice was consecrated to the service of religion. Christianity, Paul declared, did not share the character of the old religion. Compare Chap. iv. 7.

NOR IN GUILT.—The preceding words deny a wrong source and a wrong motive ; this denies a wrong method. The meaning of the word is best seen from its first New Testament occurrence (Matt. xxvi. 4), where it is translated "subtlety."

Verse 4.

Here the choice is between pleasing God and pleasing men, and the Lord Jesus Himself is the pattern : He always did the things that were pleasing to His Father (John viii. 29).

In Romans xv. 1 and 2, and in I Cor.

x. 33 (which is to be interpreted by verse 24 of the chapter), the choice is between pleasing ourselves and pleasing others. Here again Christ is the pattern : He pleased not Himself (Rom. xv. 3. See also Phil. ii. 4, 5).

Verse 5.

The glad tidings were their own commendation ; they did not require flattering words to be added to them, or anything which was merely human.

A CLOKE, that is—a pretence, something assumed to mislead others as to one's real motives. The word is well illustrated in Acts xxvii. 30, where it is translated "colour."

GOD IS WITNESS. Concerning flattery, which is of the tongue, he appealed to his readers ; concerning covetousness, which is of the heart, he appealed to God.

Verse 7.

GENTLE.—Note the contrast with the false apostles of II. Cor. xi. 13, 20.

Verse 9.

NIGHT AND DAY. It is very interesting to note that the almost invariable Old Testament formula is "day and night," whilst in the gospels and epistles the order is usually reversed—night and day. Why is this ? May it not run with the trend of the periods, the one towards darkness, the other towards light ? "The darkness is *passing* and the true light already shines" (I John ii. 8, N.T.).

Verse 10.

AND GOD ALSO. Always God is the Judge. This is a bold appeal—from the world that knew little of them to the Church that knew more, and, finally, to God who knows all. Compare with this I Cor. iv. 3, 4, where again the apostle appeals from man's day, *i.e.*, the world, to "you," *i.e.*, the saints, from the saints to his conscience, from his conscience to his Lord.

Qualities of a True Servant.

(J. WILSON SMITH).

I. Thess. ii. 1-12 (Quoted on Page 76).

THE first twelve verses of this chapter give us twelve qualities of a true servant of Christ, and should be pondered carefully.

1.

The apostle invokes the witness of the saints to the character of his service among them, and a better witness he could not have called. He says ye "know . . . that it was not in vain;" that went without saying, since they themselves were the fruit of his labours—the standing proof of the God-given ministry they had received through him. Yet he only says that his entrance among them was "not in vain." He blows no high-sounding trumpet, nor does he tabulate splendid results. He might have done so, but he simply says that it was "not in vain;" and in such an expression we have the first sign of a true servant of Christ, we mark his deep and genuine spirit of HUMILITY.

2.

They knew, he affirms, the suffering and insults which befell him in his labours at Philippi, even as we know that the inner prison of that city was the cradle of the Church in Europe, and that the stripes and prayers of the apostle and his fellow labourer there were the seed of the great harvest of that continent.

They knew his adversities, but they saw that such things did not deter him in the glorious work to which he had been called. Thus their own sufferings were endured by their father in Christ. The gospel which he preached, and which they believed, met with opposition; but this was to him no hindrance to his labour in it. He was bold in his God to preach it. Here we see his COURAGE.

3.

"Deceit" may well stamp the pleading of the serpent; "uncleanness" that of the servant of unrighteousness and

the seeker of reward like Balaam; and "guile" the ways of the Pharisee, for all such may become angels of light and masters of vile deception; but this man of God used no such artifices. He had the gospel of God for his subject; and, with such a subject, he could not but be true. His exhortation was marked by PURITY.

4.

A sacred trust was this, indeed, committed not to cherub, or seraph, or heavenly being, but to mortal man, so that he should be the channel through which waters so pure should flow to all around him. Never was trust more sacred, or privilege more exalted. And, as under this charge, this servant had the pleasure of God before him. Oh! how easy to tickle the ears of men and to preach smooth things; to pare down the gospel to human ideas or wishes; to put darkness for light and light for darkness; to please men by a denial of sin and eternal punishment, and the holiness of God and the atoning death of our Lord Jesus Christ! How easy to flatter fallen man into the belief that he needs no "new birth," no repentance, that he can save himself, that Heaven and Hell are mere ideas; that God is only merciful and that "judgment to come" is a fable! How pleasing is such flattery to men. Yes, but such a falsification of the revealed mind of God must bring judgment upon its authors. Such a man was not Paul. He was marked in his preaching by FIDELITY TO THE TRUTH.

5.

Flattering words are the very worst words anyone can use. May we avoid all flattery. In this case Paul appealed to their knowledge of facts. They knew full well that he never flattered; but then might he not have coveted? He did not, and in this secret matter, where, perhaps, no human eye could

see, he calls God to witness. In all this we learn his SINCERITY.

6.

This was the proof that he did not covet. As an apostle of Christ he might have been burdensome, he might surely have enjoyed the carnal help of those to whom he carried spiritual blessing; but he made no such claim; "neither of you, nor yet of others," sought he that pecuniary gain to himself which he might have had as being an apostle. In this we see his CONTENTMENT.

7.

Here we have the opposite of covetousness. A nurse or a mother cherishing her children gives a beautiful idea of care and solicitude for others. Nought here of the "thief" whose object is gain, the "hireling" who serves for pay, or the "wolf" that scatters the flock (John x), but the gentleness of the mother, the charming tenderness, the faithful love, the restoring touch, the absence of force and violence and the cruel sword. No proud anathema or distant frown, but the love that bears and forbears and that uses towel and water (John xiii.). May God grant us all more true GENTLENESS.

8.

To impart the gospel is no small privilege, for imparting is more than preaching; but the imparting of the soul, the life, for those to whom you preach! who of us knows anything of this? It is death for the sake of others. The preaching that proceeds merely from the brain may be very clear, but it is utterly powerless. The whole soul must be in the labour—the very life, so to say, must be communicated! Oh! it must be heart work. Yes, heart work! Call it a human effort if you please, but the man who preaches from the heart is just the man who knows best that the merely human element is useless. But it is "out of the belly" that true living waters must flow (John vii. 38), else they are but "ice-floes." Here we find the servant's AFFECTIONATE DESIRE.

9.

Their memories could bear witness to the incessant toil of this servant of Christ. His object was to preach the gospel, and that without charge on any but himself. This involved manual labour night and day. He found no work excessive, no drudgery painful, so long as he could make known freely, and without the monetary assistance of any, the precious ministry committed to him. It need hardly be added that in such extraordinary devotion we read the invaluable lesson of LABORIOUSNESS.

10.

To such a manner of life they were witnesses, for it was lived in their presence; but God, too, who seeth in secret, was a witness of the hidden springs of the life of His dear servant.

Time would fail to dwell on the holiness, justice, and unblameableness which should lie behind all Christian service and testimony. Without them all outward activity is in vain. No life is so really beautiful as one marked by these qualities. Everyone should be known by his GODLY BEHAVIOUR.

11.

They knew this fatherly care. Everyone of them had been counselled and advised by the apostle separately, tenderly, not merely from the platform, but one by one in such a way that none of them could fail to see a solicitude for his welfare that found its source in the warm affections of a father. Thus we see the working of FATHERLY SOLICITUDE.

12.

This is the aim of the service of the true servant of God. The call was of God, but the instrument was the servant. The objective was, first the kingdom, and then the glory; and with no object short of this the labourer toiled; and, in view of this, he pressed on them a life, and course of conduct, that should be worthy of God. Here we have a MINISTRY RIGHTLY AIMED.

Hebrews xiii. 15 and 16.

THE sacrifices mentioned in the Old Testament, of whatsoever character they were, pointed only and altogether to the *one* sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is recorded that "once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself," and that He offered "one sacrifice for sins" (Heb. ix. 26, and x. 12).

When the efficacy of this sacrifice is duly appreciated, the soul becomes settled in the fact that there is no more sacrifice for sin necessary or required. To think otherwise were indeed to detract from the infinite value of Christ's one offering.

The thought that something propitiatory is still necessary to be offered by us to the Deity is natural to men, and this thought is the cause of all the idolatry in the world, and Christians are not by any means free from it.

It is in the epistle to the Hebrews that the eternally subsisting value of the death of Christ is unfolded, and it is in the last chapter of this epistle when all questions of atonement and sacrifice for sin are seen to have been settled by the one offering of Jesus Christ, that the response from the believer's heart for the blessings received is stated. This response is spoken of as "sacrifice."

The sacrifices that the Christian is privileged to offer are twofold, one towards God and the other towards men, reminding us of the law—of the two tables of stone, one of which spoke of man's duty towards God, and the other of his duty to his fellows (Ex. xx). That law was utterly broken by men in every point of it, but now on the ground of accomplished redemption, the Christian has become possessed of a power to do that which was impossible under law, and in this new power he can

make use of the resources of grace stored up in the Lord for him.

The first exhortation runs:—

"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name."—Heb. xiii. 15.

This is the result of the great benefits we realize and enjoy, secured for us through the *one* sacrifice of Christ.

We see the thought graphically expressed in the case of the one leper who returned to give glory to God; ten were cleansed but only one came back to the Blessor (Luke xvii. 15). Many Christians to-day are, like the nine, occupied with the forms and ceremonies of cleansing, and do not realize that they have been cleansed once for all, by the blood of Christ, from *all* their sins and iniquities. It is our privilege to be like the tenth, giving the sacrifice of praise, the wellings over of peace and joy in believing, to God.

This is to be the *continual* sacrifice of all Christians.

Praise should ever occupy the lips of God's people. What blessed fruit from *lips* which aforesaid gave expression to words full of bitterness!

God having had His portion from His people, and they being now free from self-occupation, they are able to look upon this world in the mind of God and act towards it accordingly.

"But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased"—Heb. xiii. 16.

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Ghost, and went about doing good; and we, being anointed by the same Power, are in our measure to follow in His steps.

As the Lord has blessed us we should seek to communicate to others, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus when He said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The apostle John speaks of this obligation when he says: "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" James equally presses the matter when he says: "If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them 'Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled'; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?" (I John iii. 17, James ii. 15, 16).

We see now the character of the sacrifices which can be rendered by us and are so well-pleasing to God.

Dear Christians, are we so occupied?—giving to God His due meed of praise and thanksgiving, and bestowing upon men (especially those who are of the household of faith) those temporal blessings and mercies which are in the power of our hand to minister.

There is nothing legal about this, it is the outflow of the divine nature, and it is thus God would have His people occupied in this world while waiting for the glory so soon to be revealed.

What a cure these simple truths would be for *ennui* and idleness. Carrying out these apostolic directions, the body of each Christian would become a living sacrifice, and we should thus prove in the actuality of our lives the perfect and acceptable will of God—not exhibiting a dead, lifeless faith, but becoming living exponents of the grace of our God day by day.

The apostle Paul fully realised this character of service when he said, in writing the epistle which of all others unfolds practical Christianity, viz., that

Do not imagine that the choicest blessings are placed upon some high shelf, so that you will have to grow tall or climb high to reach them; they are placed within the reach of the lowly, and if you would have them you must stoop.

to the Philippians, that he was ready to be poured out as a libation on the *sacrifice* and service of their faith, willing to do them every spiritual good, and communicate to them of all those eternal things of which he had been divinely appointed an apostle and minister; and concurrently he similarly commended the gifts and ministrations of the Philippians, stating that they were an odour of a sweet savour, an *acceptable sacrifice*, agreeable to God (Phil. ii. 17, and iv. 18).

May the Lord graciously put His people in the line of these things, that they may render intelligent service, and be able to rightly apportion what is due to God, and what is due to man, that they may be kept free from thinking that anything they can do, is or can be of any propitiatory value, all that side of things having been for ever settled by the ONE OFFERING of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In conclusion we see that all these sacrifices are to be freely offered of a ready mind, not of constraint or of necessity; it says in the first place "let us offer," and in the second place, let us "forget not" to do these things, being assured that with both the one and the other of these sacrifices God is well pleased.

We know God is infinitely pleased, yea, glorified, by the sacrifice which His Son has offered to Him, and which indeed is the only basis upon which He can accept any sacrifice from us.

Indeed we cannot properly touch these things at all if our minds and hearts are not in the enjoyment of that perfect clearance before God, which flows from the *redemption* work which the Lord Jesus Christ has Himself wrought for all who believe on Him.

If we are clear upon the fact that good works are not the cause or means of salvation, let us be equally clear upon the truth that they are the necessary fruit of it.

Men of faith are not idle men.

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ. (H. NUNNERLEY.)

THE death of Christ! Who can rightly set forth its virtues or define its all-embracing scope? In it, God's love has been fully declared; by it, His nature glorified. Calvary is thus the centre of the moral universe; it stands between two eternities; the outcome of purpose and counsel before the world began, its stupendous and far-reaching effects shall continue throughout eternal ages.

It is the burden of the Old Testament. Genesis to Malachi teem with references to it in type and shadow, sacrifice and offering, prophecy and psalm. The facts recorded in the New Testament confirm the predictions of the Old, and so perfectly answer to them in every detail, that atonement becomes interwoven with every part of Scripture.

Christ's sacrificial work was foreshadowed in Abel's firstling, the blood-sprinkled lintel and door-post in Egypt, and by every bullock, lamb, and ram offered in connection with the Mosaic ritual. Christ was prophetically announced as the Sin-bearer in Isa. liii. 6, for God laid "upon Him the iniquity of us all"; as the Forsaken One of God in Ps. xxii. 1; and the Man against whom Jehovah's sword awoke (Zech. xiii. 7). These and many other Scriptures point to His death as *vicarious* in its character.

He did die as a martyr at the hands of man, for by wicked hands they crucified and slew Him (Acts ii. 23); but this was not atonement, it only demonstrated the evil of man's heart, his utter badness in the presence of perfect goodness in Christ.

The nails with which men pierced His hands and His feet, the thorny crown placed in derision on His brow, were wounds He received in the house of His friends; but *these did not remove one sin.*

Christ was not on the cross simply as the "result of the religious bigotry of an unenlightened age," but by the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii. 23). He was there to give effect to purposes of blessing in God's heart before the world was. He became a Man in order to die. Having waived His supremacy as Ruler, He took a servant's form, and constantly reminded His disciples, during His life, that He knew a death awaited Him, which would be of the nature and character of a sin offering. He expressly affirms that His object in coming into this world was to *give His life as a ransom.*—Mark x. 45.

Let us briefly consider two aspects of Christ's death.

First—as meeting the claims of God in His holiness.

Second—as discovering the excellencies of Christ's Person.

The first is typically set forth in Leviticus xvi. The offerings on the great day of atonement were not for particular offences as were the trespass offerings. The sacrifices on this day tell us in symbolic language that God's rights take precedence over all others. The majesty of His being, the holiness of His nature, demanded that which should meet the claims of His throne.

God is the moral Ruler of the universe. He alone can fix and determine the penalty due to the infringement of His laws. In human things judges administer laws not according to the prisoner's view, but as they affect the throne. The prisoner at the bar is amenable to His Majesty the King. A man in wronging his neighbour infringes a law on the Statute Book. That book fixes the penalty, not the wrongdoer, nor the man he has wronged.

God had fixed the penalty due to sin, and determined that which was needful to remove it righteously from before His eye. None but He could pronounce sin's due, and none but One who was His equal could make a suited and sufficient atonement.

Alone, clad in pure linen, enveloped in a cloud of incense, beaten small, the high priest entered the holy of holies and carried the blood of the bullock, and the blood of the goat, and sprinkled it on and before the mercy-seat where God dwelt in thick darkness between the cherubim (Lev. xvi. 11-17). Striking figure of Christ, pure and spotless, offering Himself on Calvary's Cross in the thick darkness.

Every blow which had previously fallen upon Him from the malice of Satan, or the wicked hands of men, only brought out the sweet fragrance of the sacred Person of the one and only absolutely holy and perfect Man. Pure in life, perfect in death, in all His excellencies He offered Himself without spot to God. In those three hours of darkness on the Cross He entered into the great question of sin as viewed by, and relating to God.

With unshod feet we here stand on holy ground. None shall ever know what passed between the holy Victim and the holy God, when, shrouded from the gaze of man, He suffered for sins. The true nature of sin, its heinousness in the sight of God, is alone expressed at the Cross. Its true meaning and God's abhorrence of it, no tongue can utter, no mind conceive. The unutterable agony of those three hours on Calvary, when from the anguished depths of His holy soul that bitter cry was heard, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" no creature mind could ever measure or comprehend.

Alone went the high priest into the holy of holies when he carried the blood within the vail. No man with him (Verse 17). Outside, every Israelite and stranger was forbidden to work on that day. The entire work was

wrought by one man. That man prefigured Christ. "Christ being come an high priest of good things to come . . . by His own blood entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. ix. 11, 12). Alone Christ made atonement, and none but He could make it. It is now complete, for His precious blood has been shed. The matchless worth of His Person imparted all the excellency to His work. His perfect knowledge of what sin is in God's sight, and the fact that He is God's equal and His fellow, enabled Christ to present to Him a sacrifice so perfect, so all-sufficing, that God has been glorified in every attribute of His being.

"None but He, in heaven or earth,
Could offer that which justice claimed."

HE COULD. HE HAS.

Expiation has been made, God's holy claims have been met; and satisfaction has been rendered, suitable to, and in accordance with, all that righteousness demanded.

Atonement is a work presented to God, glorifying Him and meeting His holiness. The blood shed on Calvary alone makes atonement. "Following Christ's example," "serving our fellow sinners," "working in the slums," is no part of atonement; the whole power of atonement is in the blood. "The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. xvii. 11). It is not the blood coursing in the veins of a living man; even the pure, spotless, holy life of Christ did not make atonement. That life had to be given up in death, the blood had to be shed upon the altar as a propitiatory sacrifice. We cannot be too clear on this great truth, this cardinal aspect of the death of Christ. The perfection of His life and ways proved His suitability to offer Himself as a sacrifice of sweet savour, holy and without blemish; but the blood stands absolutely alone as meeting God's claims, and vindicating His

holiness. It does not help to make atonement, nor is it part of atonement, it is that which alone makes it. Atonement was not complete until Christ was actually dead.

The claims of God's throne have been met, sin condemned, its sentence executed, and a righteous basis laid on which God can now make known His grace to the worthless, and salvation to the vilest. The Cross is a witness to God's holiness, a way by which His love and goodness can flow out. The excellency and worth of the Sacrifice there effectuated is witnessed by the fact that the Purger of sins, the Maker of atonement, is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 3).

In Christ's death is seen righteousness against sin, for He suffered and was not spared, God's majesty was there maintained, and a holy basis secured enabling Him to exercise forbearance toward this world (Rom. iii. 25).

But the death which secured God's glory witnessed to Christ's perfection. He not only "restored that which He took not away" (Ps. lxxix. 4), but displayed excellencies inherent in Himself. He gave Himself up that every attribute of God might be perfectly glorified and displayed; but how His own personal worth is discovered at every step! If we think of God, what devotedness to His glory! what obedience to His will! what self-sacrifice! for it was a voluntary act on His part, as evidenced in the words: "I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again." No mere creature could thus *command* his own life. Christ laid down His life; it was *not taken from Him* (John x. 18). The loud cry testified that He

did not die from exhaustion. Pilate marvelled that death had taken place so soon; but the soldier's spear brought forth its witness, for forthwith came there out blood and water. *Voluntarily* He yielded up His life.

Could a mere man do this? Impossible! Jesus became man in order to die, "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death," tasted death by the grace of God for men (Heb. ii. 9), but never ceased to be the same Person He was before He became man, therefore could He *will* as none other. Thus the only Man who had power to lay down and take up His life, laid it down as a willing Victim; and, in the very act which brought such profound suffering could justify God, saying, even when forsaken, "Thou continuest holy" (Ps. xxii. 3). Because death is the wages of sin, part of the judgment of God, He passed through it, and thus "finished" a work which saves men, glorifies God, defeats Satan, and expresses a love that passeth knowledge.

Behold then perfection! Personally, intrinsically, morally. How obedience to God shines out! How devotedness to His will! How love to poor guilty man! What purity, what holiness, what grace, what compassion, what goodness! How it bows our hearts, as gazing upon the holy Sufferer, we say with adoring hearts—"The Son of God who loved me, and gave Himself for me." "Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends."

Other aspects of Christ's death we shall (D.V.) consider in our next issue.

Ebenezer.

We feel something of the mind of Sir Francis Drake, who, after he had sailed round the world, was buffeted with a storm in the Thames.—"What," said he, "have we sailed round the world safely and shall we be drowned in a ditch?" So do we say this day. Helped so long, and helped so often! God is our refuge and strength, and very present help in trouble. Why should we fear?

Stability.

A mind on wheels knows no rest; it is as a rolling thing before the tempest. Struggle against the desire for novelty, or it will lead you astray, as the will-o'-the-wisp deceives the traveller. If you desire to be useful, if you long to honour God, if you wish to be happy, be established in the truth, and be not carried about by every wind of doctrine in these evil days.

The Spirit of Truth.

(H. D. R. JAMESON).

"I will pray the Father; and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever: even the Spirit of Truth: whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you" (John xiv. 16, 17).

IN chapters xiii. to xvi. of John's Gospel, we have the words of instruction and comfort addressed by our blessed Lord to His sorrowing disciples in view of the period of His present absence on high. In each of these chapters, save the first, the coming of the "Spirit of Truth" is presented in differing connections: let us look a little now at His coming as presented in the 14th chapter in the verses above quoted.

Jesus was going away; *He* could not abide with the disciples for ever: the claims alike of infinite love and infinite holiness necessitated His departure in a way they could not then understand, and sorrow filled their hearts. But He would pray the Father, and in response to that prayer the Father would send to them another Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth; and, mark, He *abides* with us for ever. How precious to know that His presence with us to-day is the immediate result of the prayer of Jesus on our behalf!

The title given to the Holy Ghost here as "The Spirit of Truth" is full of significance, occurring as it does just after the Lord Jesus had spoken of Himself as "the Truth" (verse 6). Christ is "the Truth": in Him God is fully declared; and, moreover, in the light of the full shining forth of God in Him, *all things* are seen in their true relative positions. In Christ therefore the whole range of truth is presented objectively before us for the faith of our souls.

But this is *infinite*, and hence we can understand the need of a power *within* commensurate with the greatness of the revelation *without*: and this we have in the Spirit of Truth in us and with us; for the Spirit of Truth is the power and light and witness in us subjectively of all that Christ is objectively as "the

Truth." (He is more indeed than the *power* of it, for, on the subjective side, He is the thing itself. He is "*Truth*" —I. John, v. 6).

Now the coming of the Spirit of Truth, as presented in this scripture, brings immediately to view, in the most striking contrast, two distinct and sharply defined circles, viz., the "*world*" and the "*you*." His coming and presence marks out these two circles in a distinction the one from the other which is vital and eternal. They cannot overlap.

There is on the one hand the "*world*": it does not, indeed cannot, receive the Spirit of Truth, for it "seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." On the other hand in blessed contrast we have the "*you*": the divine circle here on earth where the Spirit dwells. Of these it can be said "*ye* know Him, for He dwelleth with *you* and shall be in *you*."

"*In*" is an explanation setting forth the *way* the Spirit would be with them: He was not to be external to themselves, as Jesus was whilst with them, but He would be with them by being *in* them. But the great thought in the passage is that whereas Christ could not remain with them, the Spirit of Truth, who was to come, would abide with them for ever.

He would be with them moreover as the *Spirit of Truth*. In the "*world*" there is not one ray of divine light, but in the divine circle here on earth (the "*you*" of this verse) the truth and light of God are known, enjoyed and set forth; for there the Spirit of Truth dwells, maintaining in the hearts of all in that circle the glorious light of Him who is—"the Truth."

We have before us then but the *two* circles, the world on the one hand and the Christian circle on the other; and

this brings us in the very simplest and most elementary way to what is collective. "He dwelleth with you": that is the divine circle on earth. Though every believer is indwelt, yet we are not indwelt by the Spirit as so many isolated units; the whole Christian company is in view.

Now this truth is of the greatest practical importance and worthy of earnest attention and consideration, for

if we would have the unhindered gain of the Spirit's presence here, our minds must have the same outlook as His, and our service contemplate no smaller circle than that in which He dwells, and which is the sphere of His marvellous operations—that wide and blessed circle within the everlasting affections of Christ in whose Name He comes (v. 16).

The Lord grant it may be so, for His Name's sake!

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 3.—Joel.

God's Centre of Blessing.

Ch. I. ver. 1-19.

The word of the Lord that came to Joel the son of Pethuel.

Hear this, ye old men, and give ear, all ye inhabitants of the land. Hath this been in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?

Tell ye your children of it, and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.

That which the palmerworm hath left hath the locust eaten; and that which the locust hath left hath the cankerworm eaten; and that which the cankerworm hath left hath the caterpillar eaten.

The meat offering and the drink offering is cut off from the house of the Lord; the priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn.

O Lord, to Thee will I cry.

IN the days of the prophet Joel, the land of Judah was visited by a terrible plague of insects. Such a thing had never been experienced before; and so fearful was the scourge, that generations yet unborn were to hear the story of the dire calamity which had befallen the land.

Devastation had spread on every side. With first the palmerworm, then the locust, then the cankerworm, then the caterpillar, nothing had escaped. The vines and the fig trees were destroyed, the fields of wheat and barley were laid waste, the grass of the pastures was consumed, and the whole land lay in utter desolation.

But what caused the prophet special grief amid all this sorrow was the fact that the meat offering and the drink offering were cut off from the house of the Lord. The means were no longer forthcoming to keep up these sacrifices. Twice in chapter i. is this fact lamented, and no wonder, for the meat and drink offerings spoke of *Christ*. And now they had ceased, and as God looked down from heaven there was no longer anything in Judah that presented Christ typically to His eye.

Here then we get the dark background of the prophecy we are to consider, a prophecy which brightens into such glorious splendour at its close.

We must remember that all these things have a moral bearing. The desolation all around was the counterpart of the havoc that sin had wrought within. The people had grievously wandered from Jehovah, and their state was such that He could take no pleasure in them. The whole scene was one of ruin and departure from God.

Were there none that felt all this? None that viewed things according to God? None that groaned in secret over the condition of the land and the people?

Yes, there was Joel. No doubt there were others, godly men who feared Jehovah, just as in Elijah's day there were 7,000 who did not bow the knee to Baal. But Joel comes before us here as the one who mourned over the state of things, and carried the burden of his people's trouble upon his spirit. And who can fail to recognize the voice of *Christ* in the way he speaks? Who is it, think you, that speaks in verses 6 and 7 of "my land," and "my vine," and "my fig-tree"? Who is it that in verse 19 cries out, in the midst of all the stress, to Jehovah, as the One in whom alone a resource and refuge is to be found?

It is, I believe, the blessed Lord, in the spirit of prophecy, indentifying Himself with His people in their woe, Himself feeling the pressure that is upon them, and giving voice to the feelings that the Spirit of God would produce in them through the trial.

Precious Saviour! with what deep delight can we, who know Him in a still more intimate way, and stand in a still closer relationship to Him, trace out His ways of grace with His people of old!

But the state of the nation was hopeless. The meat and drink offerings ceased; the people had, so to speak, lost that which was a presentation of Christ, and what possible hope could there be apart from Him?

Ch. II. ver. 1-13.

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.

A day of darkness and of gloominess, there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.

And the Lord shall utter His voice before His army: for His camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth His word.

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn unto the Lord your God: for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.

But in chapter ii. the whole situation is changed. God brings forward His great resource. If there was no outlook

for Judah but one of darkness and despair, if their sky was covered with murky clouds without a gleam, their extremity gives God His opportunity to bring in that which He ever had in view, and which is completely secure from all possibility of breakdown, the fruit of His own counsel.

So in chapter ii. the whole situation is changed by the introduction of *Mount Zion*, and the prophecy forthwith carries us on into the future.

The plague of insects is then seen to be figurative of a still more terrible scourge that should come upon the land and the people of Israel in the last days (days yet to come); a time of which it could be said with even greater truth than with respect to the devastation by insects "there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations."

Into the details of the prophetic future I do not propose to enter, for my subject is not exactly an exposition of the book of Joel, but to show how Christ is presented therein. But we must have some understanding of what is referred to, in order that we may see how God brings in His great resource.

In the last days, when the Jews are gathered back to their own land, and are again acknowledged by God as His people, a great enemy will come up against them from the north. This enemy is not to be confounded with the Antichrist, nor with the great king called in Scripture "the Beast," who reigns over the empire of the west. This other enemy who comes up against Jerusalem from the north is frequently referred to by Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, and other prophets, and is generally spoken of as "The Assyrian." The first part of Joel ii. describes his invasion of the land of Israel and the manner of his army's advance upon Jerusalem. Terrible indeed will be their coming. With sword and flame they spread destruction all around, "nothing shall escape them."

But it is not to the enemy, or to the havoc that he works, that God would

direct our attention by His servant Joel, but to the way He brings in Mount Zion as His resource. In connection with Mount Zion we have the utter overthrow of the enemy and the final deliverance and blessing of God's people.

Now, of course, all this is yet future. But there is a passage in Heb. xii. I would like to remind you of: "Ye are come unto Mount Zion." Zion has not yet come; the blessing of God which will be secured for the earth in connection with it is still in abeyance. But though Zion has not yet come, we (Christians) have come to it. That is what Heb. xii. 22 states. The meaning is clear enough. Zion is really a type of the Risen Christ, *the One in whom God has made His blessing sure, not on the ground of fulfilled responsibility on man's part, but on the ground of His own purpose.* When everything on our side had broken down, and every claim upon God forfeited, He was pleased to set forth Christ as His great Resource, the One in whom blessing is treasured up for man, according to His own purpose, and in such a way as to be eternally secure from all fear of breakdown or forfeiture.

I have no wish to follow in the steps of those who "spiritualize" the prophets, and make their references to Israel apply to the Church, and who interpret all the literal blessings promised to the chosen nation as referring, in a spiritual and allegorical way, to Christians. Great harm has been done by that sort of thing.

When Israel is spoken of, Israel, not the Church, is meant. When the Jews are mentioned, the reference is to them literally, and not to Christians.

At the same time we Christians have come to that of which the literal Zion is a type, and with that thought in mind I will ask you to look with me at the seven passages in which Joel speaks of Zion.

I.

The first thing is that from Zion an alarm is sounded. The effect of it, in the future day, is described in verse 11.

The calamity under which they suffer is recognized as coming upon them *from God*, the devastating army was executing His word. Then a proclamation of God's goodness follows, and a call for fasting and repentance.

Now see how that applies to us when we think of Zion as a type of Christ. In Him we have a perfect expression of God's grace and goodness, and the first effect of that upon our souls is to bow us down in repentance. An alarm is sounded, we acknowledge our lost condition and fall at His feet. It is a great mercy to be able to learn our state in the light of the Risen Christ, for by this means we learn it in the presence of infinite grace. Otherwise, like Judas, we should be filled with remorse at the discovery of our condition, and with bitterness in our hearts we should turn away, as he did, into the darkness of eternal alienation from God.

We cannot be too thankful that it is from *Zion* that the alarm has been sounded; that is, that the light that has shone upon us, and brought us down (as it did Saul the persecutor on the road to Damascus), is the light of the grace of God in Christ risen.

II.

Chap. II. ver. 15-21.

Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly:

Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children:

Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them:

Then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people.

Fear not, O land: be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things.

Again the trumpet is to be blown in Zion, not this time to "sound an alarm," but to gather the people together that they may learn how God is going to intervene for them. Though they have sinned and have suffered, they are *His* people, *His* heritage, *His* land, and He is jealous on their behalf. The enemy has done great things; God has allowed him to; but now He shows Himself to

be on the side of His people, and the promise is "*The Lord will do great things*" (verse 21). The great things that He would do for them would far surpass the great things that the Assyrian had done against them.

Again let us remember that we have come to Mount Zion. In Christ God has set forth a great rallying point for man, and in Him we learn the precious truth that *God is for us* (Rom. viii.), The enemy's power may be ever so great, but can he touch us if God is on our side?

This is a most establishing thought. We begin by seeing that God's judgment is against us, and righteously so, because of our sin. Then we see how Christ has been down under that judgment, and has borne it for us, and that now God Himself is righteously *for us*. It is not merely that in Christ we have a complete settlement of the question that stood between God and *us*; but that the question between God and the enemy has been settled, by the utter overthrow of the latter, and the right secured for God to come in on our behalf, as our Deliverer, as the One who is *for us*. We have the light of this in Christ Risen, the true Mount Zion.

III.

Ch. II. 23-31.

Be glad, then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh.

And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke.

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.

The people now become identified in the mind of God with Zion, and are addressed as "children of Zion." Suffering and sorrow are things of the past, joy and gladness fill their cup to overflowing. "Ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied," they are told, "and praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you: and My people shall never be ashamed.

And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God." (verses 26 and 27).

Then, the gift of the Spirit is promised. The "wonders" of verse 30 happen, we read, *before* the great and terrible day of the Lord come. But "*afterward*," it says, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." God will be able to dwell with complacency among His people, and to signify His pleasure in them, as children of Zion, by pouring out His Spirit upon them.

To all this we, Christians, have already come. After learning that God is for us, we learn that we are on a new footing before Him, associated with the risen Christ, "children of Zion." We can now take account of ourselves as the companions of Christ, and of His order. We live of His life, and have received the gift of the Spirit. As the companions of Christ we share in His anointing. He always retains His place of pre-eminence (how gladly do our hearts accord it to Him!), but we have His Spirit, and are thus able to enter into the joys of the new position into which we are brought as "children of Zion," companions of the Risen Christ.

IV.

Ch. II. ver. 32.

And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.

Here we find that salvation, or deliverance, is in Zion for Israel in the last days, but it is in connection with *the call of God*, and will be made good in a remnant. It will be there for all, for "whosoever shall call," but the call of God has to come in to make it effective. He calls a remnant, and this remnant get all the good of the deliverance that is in Zion. Again I quote that passage from Heb. xii. that I am using as a key to these prophecies: "*Ye are come unto Mount Zion.*" We have, in Christ, the One in connection with whom the call of God is made effective, and in whom we therefore have deliverance. In Him, blessing for

man is lifted entirely off the plane of responsibility, and put on the ground of the call of God. II. Tim. i. 9 brings in salvation in this connection. God's purpose and grace are spoken of as having been given to us in Christ Jesus before the world began. According to this (and not by any means according to our works) is His salvation and holy calling. In speaking of salvation in this way we must not limit it to salvation from hell. It is salvation from every form of power that the enemy can bring against us. Those who get the good of this great salvation are those who are the subjects of the sovereign call of God, and who are connected, according to His purpose, with Zion, that is, with Christ risen.

V.

Ch. III. ver. 1-16.

For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem.

Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (threshing); for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision (threshing).

The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of His people, and the strength of the children of Israel.

In this last chapter the prophecy looks on to the time of full blessing and glory. But first it shows us how the world has to be prepared for it by the sweeping judgment of God upon the nations. Zion is the place from which that judgment goes forth. The nations are summoned to the valley of Jehoshaphat (which means "Jehovah judges"). They are seen in their multitudes in this valley of threshing. Then the Lord roars out of Zion, and the very heavens shake at the sound. But for His people He has something very different in store; He is their hope, or their "place of repair," their "harbour," in that day.

It is a solemn thing to remember that the Risen Christ is not only the Fountain-head of blessing but the Executor of all judgment. The guilty nations will meet their doom at the hands of a Man, not

the man of their choice, but the Man of God's choice. If He is to hold the universe for God and fill it with what is agreeable to Him, He must first remove all that is contrary. That involves judgment. It is a necessity, if the blessing centred in Christ is to fill the earth, that what blocks the way should first be removed. And Christ, the Mighty One, will gird His sword upon His thigh, and will sweep out of His kingdom all things that offend.

But we "are come unto Mount Zion." The world, for us, is already a judged thing. In Christ Risen we have arrived at the blessing with which the whole earth is to be filled, and all that is outside of that lies under judgment. That is how we view things from the standpoint of the Risen Christ. It was Paul's outlook when he said "the world is crucified to me."

If a Christian is going on with the world, it is evident that he does not realize this. But Zion is a great reality, and involves the disappearance in judgment of man's world as a vast moral system. How happy to be able to say that for us *it has gone* already. It no longer holds us by its power, for its true character has been exposed in its rejection of Christ.

In times of war, a well-equipped naval port is the "place of repair" for the king's vessels. But from the same place engines of destruction go forth against the enemy's fleet. That is like our scripture. In Christ Risen there is a harbour, a place of repair, for His people, and from Him destruction will go forth against all that has wrought confusion and damage in the world.

VI.

Ch. III. ver. 17.

So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.

Here we find a very important thing. Not only will God establish blessing in Zion, but He Himself will dwell there. He will take exclusive possession, no stranger's foot shall ever again defile that holy mountain.

To this, also, *we* are come. For in the Risen Lord we are brought to the very dwelling-place of God. Not only do we find God fully revealed, for the blessing of His people, but that He is pleased to dwell in their midst, in infinite rest and satisfaction. God could not *dwell* in a scene where there was anything contrary to Christ. But where the excellency and fragrance of Christ pervades the whole atmosphere, where all is of Him, God can dwell with unspeakable delight.

As children of Adam, men of that order, there is nothing in us that God could look upon with pleasure. But as in Christ, God can find the most perfect satisfaction in us. How is that? "If any man be in Christ there is new creation," and, viewed in that light, there is nothing in us or about us but what is of Christ. And in a house where every stone is part of Christ, where nothing is visible but Christ, where His fragrance pervades every part—in such a house the blessed God dwells, He makes His home there, with unutterable delight.

The practical result in us, should be holiness. When God dwells in Zion, Jerusalem shall be holy. And holiness is more than mere abstinence from sin. It involves the exclusive possession of us by God, so that "no stranger" has any part in us.

VII.

Ch. III. ver. 21.

The Lord dwelleth in Zion.

Here the fact that we were considering just now is again stated, but in this case it is spoken of as the great *end* that God has in view. Reading verse 17 and no further, one might think that

holiness was the end, and that God's dwelling in Zion was merely the means whereby this end might be secured.

But it is not so. Holiness in itself is not an end or object. I say this because there are plenty of Christians to-day who seem to make holiness their great object. I believe they have a very faulty notion of what real holiness, according to God, is. In the way they pursue it, they really make *SELF*, in a most subtle form, their object. How fearfully insidious a thing is self! What could seem more right than to aim at a holy life, and an experience of continual joy? But how that ugly "I" shows itself even in connection with a desire of that kind! How nice if "I" could be holy and good, and if "I" could have this wonderful experience. I do not want to be uncharitable, but I know of no people more self-occupied and self-complacent than those who imagine that they have reached this state and enjoy this wonderful experience.

God's great end, however, is that *He* might dwell. With that there must, of course, be holiness. But holiness, in itself, is not the object. If we have any object or end before our souls short of God's end, we shall be losers.

How good to have before us God's great end, namely, that He is pleased to surround Himself with a universe filled with Christ, every part of it fragrant with *Him*, and there to dwell. It will actually come to pass in a day that is ever drawing nearer (never so near, thank God, as at this moment), but it is already established in Christ, and we have come to this by faith, and by faith may enjoy the glory of it now in some measure.

When Susanna Wesley was asked how she managed to bring up such a large family, and all of them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, she gave this never-to-be-forgotten answer—"There is no mystery about the matter. I just took Jacky alone with me into my own room every Monday night, and Charles every Tuesday

night, and Molly every Wednesday night, and so on, all through the week: that is all."

And did she not get her reward, when one of her family came forth from his mother's room to be the great and God-honoured evangelist he was, and another stepped forth to be one of the sweetest of singers in our modern Israel.

Answers to Correspondents.

The Sabbath and the Lord's Day.

J. A. P.—The Sabbath is distinctly connected with the first creation; it marked the completion of God's work therein; and then, all being "very good," He "rested from all His work which He had created and made."

When God separated Israel from the nations, He gave them the law which, if kept, would have enabled them to enjoy the blessings of the first creation, for theirs were earthly blessings, and the Sabbath was given to them as the sign of His covenant with them as a people in responsibility on earth (Ex. xxxi. 13 and 17).

But as God's Sabbath was broken in upon by sin in Eden, so Israel failed to enjoy it because of their transgressions, and in consequence God had no rest or satisfaction in them. Thus, when Jesus came to earth, there was no Sabbath for Him, for sin was here; and He had to say "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."

But the Sabbath as given to Israel (along with everything else that belonged to the old covenant) was but the *shadow* of good things to come; Christ is the *substance*; in Him alone could rest be found. This the Pharisees refused. They held to the letter of the law, which could only slay them, while refusing Him, who was the spirit of it, and who alone could give life and rest.

Every thing is changed for the Christian. Old things have passed away, and his blessings are not connected with earth, but heaven. He has not to labour six days to keep the law, and enter into rest if he does this; for he owns that he has come short of God's standard, and that the law could only curse him; but he has turned from the law to Christ who bore its curse, and his soul has entered a new day, with not rest at the end of toil, but rest before he begins to serve the Lord in newness of spirit.

Nothing could prove the utter breakdown of man in his place of responsibility in God's creation like the fact that Jesus, who was the Creator, lay in death on *the Sabbath day*. Nothing proves the greatness of His triumph and the completion and perfection of His works as does His resurrection from the dead, which took place on *the first day of the week*. That is the day of days for the Christian: the day of a great triumph, the inauguration of a new creation, all secured in, and to be brought into full completion by the First Begotten from the dead. The day is distinctly honoured in Scripture. The Lord appeared to His disciples on it on at least two occasions; the early disciples met on it to commemorate the Lord's death in the breaking of bread; and it is distinctly spoken of as the Lord's day in Rev. i. Because of this the Christian cannot view it lightly, though he does not regard it at all in the light of the sabbath, which belonged to the old creation, to the dispensation of law and shadows.

When God takes up Israel again and places them as His redeemed earthly people, secure from harm in the land of promise, then the Sabbath will be kept according to the mind of God; that is future.

But Christian blessings are not earthly, but heavenly. *Before* the earth was, or any covenant existed between God and man upon it, our heavenly, holy calling, and all the blessings connected with it, were purposed and secured for us in Christ Jesus (II. Tim. i. 9).

Our Lord's humanity.

—F. writes as to the use of the expression "condition" on page 34 of our February issue, as applied to our blessed Lord in the words, "Come . . . into manhood, into the condition of His lost and fallen creature," and

fears lest these words should give the impression that Christ partook of the *sinful* nature of man. Far be the thought! The Son of God in incarnation was absolutely unique. In Him was no trace or taint of sin; His every thought and word and act was of, and according to the Spirit of God.

But while earnestly insisting on this, it is needful also to insist on the *reality* of His manhood, for there is a phase of doctrine abroad to-day, which seems to view the Lord Jesus as having merely assumed the *form* of man, and nothing more. That is not the truth; else we had no real Saviour, no true Substitute or Mediator. His was not merely the outward form and likeness, but also the whole condition that belonged to humanity (always perfect in Him). He was in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart (Heb. iv. 15, N.T.). He could "hunger" and "thirst," and knew what it was to be "wearied" by the way; He came into manhood, too, in all the reality of that condition of being *Godward* (Heb. v. 7). Moreover, though the suffering and weakness is over, He still retains His manhood in resurrection. See Heb. ii. 13: "Again, I will put My trust in Him."

The mystery of incarnation is inscrutable, but through it is presented to us, for the adoration of our souls, One who was, is, and ever shall be, God over all, blessed for ever, and yet is the peerless "Man Christ Jesus."

The Kingdom and the Church.

W. R.—Your question as to the kingdom of God and the Church opens up a very large subject, and one which the space at our disposal this month will not allow us to go into. For a full and clear unfolding of the truth of the kingdom we recommend you to get a copy of a book on that subject by J. A. Trench (price 4d.) from the office of this magazine.

As to the Church, in its completed aspect, it will be made up of all believers on the Lord Jesus in this present period, *i.e.*, from Pentecost to the coming of the Lord (see I. Thess. iv. 16, 17). These are all indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and thus linked up with Christ, their risen Head in Heaven. A series of articles commencing this month, in this paper, entitled "The Mystery of God," will, we trust, be helpful to the understanding of this great subject.

Love's Mystery.

(W. R. NEWELL).

"The Son of God . . . loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

LOVE—uncaused, loving *me*!
From far Eternity,
In sovereign mystery
Of Thine election!
Low in subjection
Worship I Thee!

BLOOD—poured out full for *me*!
On dark Golgotha's tree,
In awful mystery
Of Thy salvation!
Faith's adoration
Bring I to Thee!

GRACE—lavished still on *me*!
All worthless though I be,
In daily mystery
Of Thy heart's kindness
Through all my blindness!—
Praise be to Thee!

HEAVEN—opened wide for *me*!
For all Eternity!—
Love's last, long mystery!
O consummation
Of God's redemption,
Wait I for thee!

"Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

Outward Bound!

(W. H. WESTCOTT).

(Inkongo, Congo Free State).

Romans xv.

16 For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me, to make the Gentiles obedient, by word and deed,

19 Through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God; so that from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

20 Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation:

21 But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken

of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand.

22 For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.

23 But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you;

24 Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company.

IN translating the Epistle to the Romans for the benefit of natives converted to God from heathenism, its beauty and largeness have been more impressed upon me than ever.

Not to speak now of the early chapters with all their importance for our souls' establishment in grace, there are some excellent considerations at the end, which shew the spirit and faith of the great vessel, whom God chose to be His servant to minister Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. I refer to the Apostle Paul, and to his communications by the Spirit in the fifteenth chapter.

It is a peculiar feature of the present dispensation that God has set aside all national or hereditary religion, as exemplified in His chosen nation of Israel (and no other nation is ever spoken of in Scripture as His chosen), in favour of the testimony which embraces all the Gentiles, that is, every nation and tribe under the sun.

Accordingly the Apostle, in fellowship with the heart and with the purpose of God, took first the whole region from Jerusalem to Illyricum as his parish, and fully preached the gospel of Christ. To our lilliputian minds it seems almost incredible (see the map of Paul's travels and the area involved); but in all his labours the power of the Spirit of God was with him. Hence souls were everywhere brought to the knowledge of God revealed in Christ Jesus the Lord, assemblies were planted and watered,

the mystery of the gospel was communicated.

The measure of saints' intelligence and faith everywhere varied, and we might suppose that this great vessel would now surrender the evangelistic side of his work to younger men, and devote himself to pastoral and teaching labours in the meetings already formed. Such might have been the human expedient, but it was not the Divine mode, in regard of *his* service. As long as there remained any part in that district in which Christ had not been named, he felt that there was not only a justification for his working in it, but a call to take the gospel there; yet at the time of writing he felt that the ways of God took him onward. "Having no more place in these parts" was, for him, the loosening of the tether that bound him to them.

Now Rome and Italy were next in order as his thoughts went westward. But since at Rome was a large and prosperous assembly at the time, he did not regard that place as a terminus by any means; on the contrary, his thoughts went on to regions beyond them. He would spend time with them truly, and would impart some spiritual gift that they might be established; but a deep yearning possessed him to launch out into the deep. Spain lay beyond; Spain in the grip of the enemy of the Lord whom he served; Spain where might be found other trophies of the saving grace of God, and other

members of that body, of the truth as to which he was constituted minister.

But do notice the words, "*For which cause* also I have been much hindered from coming to you" (v. 22). For what cause? Because there still remained, up to the time just previous to the writing of the epistle, some towns where they had not heard of Christ. But once these were evangelised, Paul had no hesitation about leaving the assemblies with their local helpers in the care of the Lord and of His ever present Spirit, nor about plunging afresh into heathendom.

Does it not encourage and widen our hearts to read, "It is written, To whom He was not spoken of, *THEY SHALL SEE*; and they that have not heard *SHALL UNDERSTAND*"? If we wish to be certain of converts to God, men who will both see and understand Him of whom the gospel speaks, we may look for them confidently among men who have not heard before, and to whom He was not spoken of before. It seems to me that the normal movement of a saint's heart must be forward. A steamer is built for forward movement. It is capable of navigating to the rear, for there may be some poor fellow, who falls overboard, to be picked up; or there may be occasional short-sightedness that nearly produces collision—and it is better to go astern a bit than to send one's fellow-navigators to the bottom; or it may be necessary to go backwards to get out of dock, or to get clear of other craft in harbour. But all this is abnormal, and the owners of the steamer would be very dissatisfied with their investment if she were not usually going full steam ahead on their business.

I understand this to have been the spirit of the Apostle. He could put into

Ephesus, and stay there a long time at the Lord's will; he could linger over Galatians, who seemed like subjects for the lifebelt or the lifeboat rather than sturdy mariners for God; but his evident business from Jerusalem to Illyricum, and again from Illyricum to Spain, was "full steam ahead" to regions *where Christ was NOT NAMED*. This was the port of destination. Here is one of the notes in his log-book: "We are come as far as to you also in the gospel of Christ, . . . having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you, *according to our rule* abundantly, to preach the gospel in the regions beyond you" (II. Cor. x. 14-16). If he went to Rome as he planned, it is thus he speaks: "I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way *thitherward* by you" (Rom. xv. 24). Thitherward! *thitherward!! THITHERWARD!!!*

We are not apostles now; in fact, we are very poor witnesses of our Lord at best, and the state of the assembly calls for constant care and prayer; but I judge we shall very greatly help saints by cultivating the Apostle's spirit of active testimony to the Lord. Nine hundred and ninety in every thousand may be fixtures in their own localities by business ties and other lawful claims; but let our hearts go out *thitherward, thitherward*. Whither? To where Christ is not named.

I am convinced that largeness of heart in such lawful directions would preserve from much introspection, and from much striving about words to no profit. A sound, active frame, healthful and vigorous, throws off microbes, where a frame enfeebled by inactivity absorbs and assimilates them.

May the Lord enlarge our hearts.

Shake off earth's sloth!
Go forth with staff in hand while yet
'tis day;
Set out with girded loins upon the way,
Up! linger not!

Fold not thy hands!
What has the pilgrim of the cross and
crown
To do with luxury or couch of down?
On! pilgrim, on!

The Lord's Supper.

(J. T. MAWSON).

"In remembrance of Me."—1 Cor. xi. 25.

EVERY incident recorded for us in the Holy Scriptures by the Spirit of God, has for its chief purpose the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ; and as He rises in His surpassing glory before the soul, all divine truth takes its right place in the heart, and the Christian is edified and established according to the will of God. To acquire knowledge of doctrine without this is disastrous, for the flesh is puffed up thereby, and the possessor, falling into the fault of the Devil, becomes enwrapped in the worst of error.

The re-telling of the institution of the Lord's Supper (I. Cor. xi. 23-25) seems to have this character in a special way. In the first place, we notice that the Apostle had received direct revelation from the Lord as to it for the Gentiles. In no other passage have we these words used—"I have received of the Lord," though in connection with the coming of the Lord (I. Thess. iv.), we have something similar, marking these two things out for special notice: the Lord's Supper—the reminder of His great love to us in the past; and His coming again for us—proof that that precious love does not and will not wane.

But not only did the Apostle receive a revelation from the Lord as to this, but he was also inspired by the Holy Ghost to record that revelation in the epistle addressed to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours, so that the subject has received double emphasis, and should command the earnest attention of all who love the Lord.

If a human mind had been left to its own wisdom in the recording of this incident of incidents, we should probably have been told that the Supper was instituted on the night before the crucifixion, for that which is the greatest thing in the mind would have

been uppermost. But a divine hand has drawn the picture, and the object seems to be that the constancy of the love of Jesus should be thrown into the brightest relief by the dark background of the betrayal.

We recall that scene: from the world's cold rejection and bitter hatred Jesus had withdrawn with His own into the upper chamber. Oh, how He loved them! He knew that without, the Pharisees had plotted His death, that even then the moment was at hand when the rabble would lay violent hands on Him, but nothing better than this could be expected from a world of which Satan was the prince. Yet surely His sorrow-charged heart could find rest and solace in the midst of His chosen twelve? Nay, it was then and there that He had to say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, that *one of you shall betray Me*" (John xiii. 21). What anguish must have pierced His heart as He gave utterance to these words "*one of you.*" He had watched over them with an infinite tenderness. He had shielded them from the rude blasts of a devil-deceived world, and had been their Comforter and Guide in every trial. He had prayed for them while their weary bodies slept, and had taught them when they woke; no tongue can tell how precious they were to Him, but at the end He has to testify, "*One of you shall betray Me!*"

It was reserved for the flesh to display itself in that little circle in a way that was impossible elsewhere, so that its hatefulness might be demonstrated and its incorrigibility undeniably proved. It is vain to talk of the elevating effect of environment, and to plead that if the conditions in which men live were altered they would be different. No man could have had greater privileges or better opportunity than Judas, yet at the end of three years "familiar"

friendship with the Son of God, he betrayed Him with a kiss, and that for the price of a slave. That which is born of flesh is flesh, and the flesh in which Judas lived and acted is within every one of us. We do well to keep this in mind.

But this did not change the heart of Jesus: indeed it was with this terrible disclosure of the flesh in full view that He instituted the Supper—that which was to be throughout all time a reminder to “His own” of a love that was quenchless and eternal, a love which would buffet the fierce billows of death on their behalf, that would give Himself for them.

We are taught important lessons by the contrasts in Scripture and here we light on one of a most striking character. Peter heard the words of Jesus, “one of you,” but he did not believe that he was capable of so vile a deed; he was forward in protesting his devotion to his Lord, he was prepared to stand by Him even unto death. All others might fly before the foe, but Jesus might rest secure in his support. *Peter was a self-confident man*, and he did not see why the Lord should not put the same confidence in him as he put in himself.

It was there that the flesh had him at an advantage, and the consequence of this self-confidence was, that he slept while his Master watched and wept, he fought in the excitement of nature when his Master was calmly submissive. He stooped to console himself at the fire of his Master’s foes. He denied Him with oaths and profanity, and is seen at last in the pitiless night a conscience-stricken and heart-broken backslider.

John also heard his Master’s words; he made no profession above the rest, but he was near to his Lord, and it was as though he said, “Master, I hear what you say, and believe your words, and I can neither trust my own heart nor the heart of any of my fellows, but I can trust yours,” and so he put his head down upon Jesus’ breast (John xiii. 23).

This was confidence in the Lord instead of self, and mark the result. John went in *with Jesus* to the palace of the high priest, and he stood so near the Cross during the last great sorrow that Jesus could turn to him and say, “Behold thy mother” (John xix. 27). What a comfort it must have been to the tender heart of the Son of God to have had one near to Him at that moment, whom He could trust, and to whom He could commit that precious legacy. But this could not have been if John had reposed in his love to Jesus instead of Jesus’ love to him.

So the night of the betrayal, and the Lord’s Supper, are linked together for us in the holy record, that we might not rely upon that which is utterly untrustworthy as did Peter, but upon Him who can never fail us. And it is as though His own lips exhorted us to the partaking of His Supper that these things might be kept green in the memory. In it He Himself is brought before the soul, for it is, “This do in remembrance of *Me*,” and we do well to lay the emphasis on the “*Me*.” All that He is and ever will be in the depth of His love for us and the strength of His unlimited devotion to God shone out in His death. As He hung with head bowed upon a cross of shame, and blood flowing from spear-rent side, having tasted death as the judgment of God against sin, the full tale was told. “Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it” (Song of Sol. viii. 7). To the uttermost extremity that love would go, that God might be glorified, and we might be saved.

“Oh! what a load was Thine to bear
Alone in that dark hour,
Our sins in all their terror there,
God’s wrath and Satan’s power.”

It is *Himself*: what He endured, and the perfection which shone in the midst of that darkness, that we are given to recall in His Supper, until our souls are filled with adoration and worship. And from the remembrance of Him, if rightly affected thereby, we shall go forth having no confidence in the flesh, but rejoicing in Him: not to rest in our love to Him, but His to us, and so shall

we be His friends to whom He can commit some precious charge to keep for Him in this world.

If the flesh displayed itself in the betrayal, it met its full condemnation in the death of Jesus; for He who was ever the holy, spotless Son of God, came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and submitted Himself to its full judgment.

This is a deeply solemn side of the subject, and it is here that the exhortation comes in, "Let a man examine

himself (or 'let him be self-judged'), and so let him eat" (I Cor. xi. 28). The flesh in us which brought the Son of God into the judgment of death, must be judged by those who partake of that Supper. But to judge the flesh is not to hold it in check by some legal resolve or method, but to be wholly taken up with and dependent upon the One whose love shone forth in death, and who lives evermore to be the satisfying object of the heart that knows Him.

"Creation."

(S. L. JACOB).

The General Idea of the Preface.

GENESIS commences with the words "In the beginning GOD"—. God precedes all things, and by His word were all things brought into being. Next we come to the original act of creation: of this nothing is said but that God created. We know not in what far distant ages this may have been, nor what interval of time separates verses 1 and 2 of Genesis i. In other scriptures we are given just a glimmering of what may set forth some long past terrific cataclysm which followed on the inception of sin in angelic beings, and which overwhelmed the fair creation of God.

Into those secrets of the ages past we are not initiated, but in verse 2 is brought to view a world in a condition other than that in which it was created. At this point begin the dealings of God with the earth and the heavens in view of *man*, and in particular in view of the Man of His counsels, in whom the whole conflict between good and evil should be brought to a triumphant issue in the eternal victory of good.

In verse 2 we read "the earth was *without form*." In Isaiah xlv. 18 the inspired statement is made, "He created it not *in vain*." The word translated "without form" in Genesis i. is the same word as is translated

"in vain" in Isaiah xlv. Unmistakably, then, the earth was not, in the second verse of Genesis i., as God created it. Moreover, unrelieved darkness was upon the face of the deep: this was not of God. According to the universal meaning of the symbol, "darkness" here presents the state of a lost world (similarly elsewhere of a lost soul), fallen under the power of sin, alienated from God, and without remedy unless God intervened.

But the next sentence speaks of God's work, for "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." God being at work, all must be well eventually; but everything must be done thoroughly, deliberately; there must be no haste, for spiritual and moral work is portrayed, and such work cannot be hurried. He that believeth shall not make haste, because God does not make haste. The word for "moved" in this passage is remarkable; it is quite different to the word "moving" in the 20th verse, or "moveth" in verses 21 and 28; it is only used twice elsewhere in Scripture, viz., in Deut. xxxii. 11, "As an eagle . . . *fluttereth* over her young," and in Jer. xxiii. 9, "All my bones *shake*"; so that it is evident the motion is not progressive as in the other cases in Gen. i., but vibratory or oscillatory. God moved

and continued moving. What a change from the stillness of death!

God is a living God; by Him all things are preserved in life (I. Tim. vi. 13, New Translation); all is activity with Him, and He impresses activity on all things. Nothing is still in Nature; even the most rigid body, such as a steel blade, is composed of particles in rapid vibratory motion. Otherwise there is nothing but death and dissolution for things animate or inanimate; and *rest* is not cessation from motion, which would be stagnation, but by the triumph of good over evil, so that conflict may cease, and the activities of love flow on unchecked.

The proof.—The first day.

The proof that good and evil are here symbolized comes out clearly in the first day's work. "And God said, let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness." Before, it was all dark; now the light had come in: and the light was good, very good, whilst the darkness speaks of evil.

The passages are numerous by which it could be proved that this is the meaning of these symbolic words: *i.e.*, light always speaks of good, and darkness invariably refers to evil, either directly or indirectly. Thus, "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not" (John i. 5). Again read II. Cor. iv. 4 (which we quote from New Trans. as more correct): "In whom the god of this world has blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that the radiancy of the glad tidings of the glory of the Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth for them. . . . Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the radiancy (see marginal note) of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Here is the darkness—moral and spiritual—but the light must shine brighter and brighter till in the end those in whose hearts it has shone shall

appear in all the beauty and glory of Him who has shone upon them, in that heavenly city where there will be no darkness and no night, "For there shall be no night there," for the glory of God shall lighten it, and the Lamb will be the light thereof.

In the meantime, however, there is the darkness as well as the light, the night as well as the day, the evening as well as the morning, and one must succeed the other until the light completely triumphs. It is still the night in the world's history, though "the night is far spent and the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii. 12). True "the darkness is passing (not *past* as in the A.V.) and the true light already shines" (I. John ii. 8, New Trans.); but still both are here, and in the history of each individual soul there will be many evenings before the many mornings, till the last grand morning dawn. There must be many nights before the various days of the many experiences through which God has to pass us till night be no more.

Weeping must still endure in the evening (margin) if joy (or singing) is to come in the morning (Ps. xxx. 5), for we are still in the vale of tears; sorrow there must be, and pain and deep grief; death is still here, and death must work in us if life is to work in others; and there is no growth, no blessing, save through the various exercises through which our Lord passes us. The valleys must be crossed before we reach the hills, and each hill leads to another valley, to lead again to a higher height of Christian joy and experience. There is no such thing as one unbroken pathway ever upward in the Christian's experience; the most placid life (judged externally) has still its storms and its calms, its depths and its heights, its tears and its joys, its agonies as well as its ecstasies. This is God's order in this fallen world, and he who seeks to evade the sorrows will not participate in the joys. If there be not the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ, how can there be a share in the reigning?

All this, and much more, is spoken to us from the opening verses of the Bible.

What is true of the individual is also true of the world; Zion must travail before she brings forth her children; it is the barren woman, or the desolate wife, who has suffered, that brings forth the most and best children for God. There must be the travail that effects nothing (*i.e.*, darkness and night in sorrow), Isa. xxvi. 17, 18, before the *travailing* where a nation is born at once (*i.e.*, light and day) Isa. lxvi. 8. It is thus we learn how bitter and how evil a thing it is for a soul, or a world, to have departed from God; and how exquisitely sweet it is to see the blessed light of the glory of God, which shines in all its beauty in the face of Jesus Christ, dispel and overthrow the darkness; and then to know that we are to go out from that light into the darkness no more. For though there must be at present the darkness as well as the light, the night as well as the day, yet once the light has shone upon us, it is never the same darkness as before, and the second evening and morning is an advance on the first, and so on until the glorious consummation at the end.

We are children of the light, and sons of the day (Eph. v. 8, and I. Thess. v. 5, New Trans.), and God our Father is taking great pains with our education, for as of the light we are to share in the glories of the reign of our beloved Lord, so that all that is being worked out in us in much sorrow here, is to come out in all its value in that day, for the glory of Him who has redeemed us.

Thus these few opening verses are

quite sufficient to prove our point, but there is much more. It is better to have thus portrayed before us the actual world in which we live, with its ups and downs, its sorrows and its joys, its training and its progress under the hand of God, than a world which none, save Adam and Eve for a brief moment, ever saw. If we want to see God's world we must learn to see the world of God's purpose, not a world which was lost in one brief moment and can never be again; the former excels the latter as much as Christ excels Adam; the difference is infinite, immeasurable, but God is working all out in His own matchless way, and in these seven days of God we see how He does it all.

All is effected by the word of God; eight times in this first chapter we get, "And God said;" "He commanded, and it was done," "He commanded, and it stood fast." Yet as one has well said, the mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small, for He must do the work so thoroughly; and when He has finished, evil and darkness shall never raise their heads again, and the accomplished glory will be of such a character that it will never be tarnished, for it must be such that it will satisfy the heart of God the Father, and be an adequate expression (as far as God Himself can effect this) of the work and Person of God's beloved Son, and of the agony He endured for the glory of God and the unspeakable blessing of the creature, especially of man.

(To be Continued).

EDITORS' NOTE.—These papers are intended to be suggestive rather than dogmatic, to be stimulative of study rather than to present its final and completed results as to the detail of a subject at once so great and so seldom considered.

Beware in your prayers, above everything, of limiting God, not only by unbelief, but by fancying that you know what He can do. Expect unexpected things, above all that you ask or think.

Obedience is in the present tense.

It is not the bee's touching on the flowers that gathers the honey, but her abiding for a time upon them, drawing out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most on divine truth, that will prove the choicest, strongest Christian.

Papers on Service.

(SELECTED).

The Heart's Purpose.

I thank God I was led in anywise to think of serving the Lord. The first thing that attracted my heart from my very youth was that I must serve Him. I know very well how I have neglected it, and wavered from it; but the Lord never lets slip from you a real purpose of your heart; no matter how many years you may be, as it were, unattached, still He keeps it in mind, and as sure as possible it will come, and this is an immense comfort to one's heart.

"Not in Vain."

Be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; if you do not see souls saved to-day, or to-morrow, still work on. Ours is not the unrequited toil of Sisyphus rolling uphill a stone which will rebound upon us, nor that of the daughters of Danaus who sought to fill a bottomless vessel.

Our work may no more quickly appear than the islands which the coral insects are building below the blue waves of the southern seas: but the reef is rising, far down the foundation of the massive structure is laid, and its walls are climbing to the surface. We are labouring for eternity, and we count not our work by each day's advance as men measure theirs: it is God's work, and must be measured by His standard.

Be ye well assured that, when time, and things created, and all that oppose themselves to the Lord's truth shall be gone, every earnest word spoken and every importunate prayer offered, and every tiny bit of service rendered for Christ's sake, shall remain embedded in the mighty structure which God from all eternity has resolved to raise to His own honour.

The Gospel.

The Gospel is God's power to save: we know that for every case of spiritual sickness we have an infallible cure; we need not say to any man "we have no good news from God for you." There

is a way of getting at all hearts. There is a joint in every sinner's harness, though he be an Ahab, and we may draw the bow hopefully, praying the Lord to direct the arrow through it. We believe in the Holy Ghost, and feel that He can win a hearing and carry conviction to the hardest conscience.

We do not expect the Gospel to be loved by all mankind, it will not become popular amongst the great and noble, for we remember the word, "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called," but we do not believe that the Gospel has become decrepit through old age. When the foolish wise men of this age sneer at the old Gospel, they render an unconscious homage to its power. We do not believe that our grand old castle and defence has tottered down because men say it is so. We recollect Rabshakeh, and how he reviled the Lord, and how, nevertheless, it happened to him as the Lord said: "He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there. . . . *By the way that he came, by the same shall he return.*" We have seen enough philosophies go back to "vile dust from whence they sprang," to know that the whole species of them is of the order of Jonah's gourd. We therefore in confidence wait, and in patience bide our time. Victory is sure.

Power.

Power is the ability to act rightly, at any moment in any case. Faith in God always ensures power, and then we act for Him, irrespective of men and their judgment.

Power is never violent; mere strength can be very violent and impulsive, but power is even and equal to the occasion, be it great or small.

Samuel, more than any of the judges in Israel, was a man of power, for he availed himself of the power of God by prayer; he is an example to us. As we pray, we have power with God; so the man of prayer is the man of

power. Great, glorious, and most blessed is it to be going through this world in the power of Christ, unswerving in pursuit of our service, and unruffled in our manner, however aggravated. Encompassed with infirmity, and assailed on every side, but made equal to every emergency by His grace and power.

I have noticed, too, that if God's power comes to a man with a message, he not only has childlikeness of mind, but he has also singleness of eye. Such a man is all ear. He honestly and eagerly desires to know what God's mind is, and he applies all his faculties to the reception of the Divine communication. As he drinks in the sacred message with a complete surrender of soul, he is resolved to give it out with the entire concentration of his mental and spiritual powers, and with a single eye to the glory of God. Unless you have but one eye, and that one eye sees Christ and His glory in the salvation of men, God will not use you. The man whose eyes cannot look straight on must not be reckoned as a servant of the living God.

True Faith.

True faith will make us independent of man. The man who believes in God, in Christ, in the Holy Ghost, will stay himself upon the Lord alone. He does not wish to be solitary, or singular, yet he can by himself contend for his Master; and when he has most human helps, he sedulously endeavours to wait only upon God. If you lean upon your helpers when you have them, you may

have to realize the terrible meaning of the ancient word "cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." Let those that have zealous helpers be as those that have none, but let us be as free of all carnal confidence, as if we stood like Athanasius against the world, and had no one to speak a good word for us, or to bear a portion of our burden. God alone suffices to bear up yon unpillared firmament. He alone balances the clouds, and upbears them in the heavens. He kindles the lamps of night and gives the sun his flames of fire. He alone is sufficient for us, in His might we shall do His work.

Further, true faith gives us courage under all circumstances. When young Nelson came home from a bird-nesting expedition, his aunt chided him for being out so far into the night, and remarked "I wonder fear did not make you come home." "Fear," said Nelson "I don't know him." That is a fitting speech for a believer when working the work of the Lord. The Lord is on our side, whom shall we fear? If God be for us, who can be against us?

The Hidden Springs.

We must eliminate from our minds and hearts the thought of the quantity rather than the quality of service; one man may be able to accomplish more, and in the eyes of the world altogether overshadow another, but God will go down to the heart and there take cognizance of the motives. Passing through all outside show and to the depths of the soul, and finding it in harmony with Himself, He speaks His approbation, and gives His "well done."

Taking Men Alive.

Every man in the world is going to be "taken alive" by some one; this is evident from two passages of Scripture. The Greek word *zogyeo*, which means "to take alive," is used twice in the New Testament: First in Luke v. 10, where the Lord proposes that those who follow Him should "take men alive" for Himself; and again in

II Timothy ii. 26, where we are told that some are "taken alive" by the Devil at his will. How solemn a consideration is this, for this catching alive is going on unceasingly, and men are being caught either in the Gospel net for the kingdom and joy of the Lord, or by the snares of the Devil for the eternal darkness of hell.

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter II. 13-20.

13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

14. For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews:

15. Who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men:

16. Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.

17. But we, brethren, being taken from you for a short time in presence, not in heart, endeavoured the more abundantly to see your face with great desire.

18. Wherefore we would have come unto you, even I Paul, once and again; but Satan hindered us.

19. For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming?

20. For ye are our glory and joy.

Verses 13, 14.

SEEING then that it was God who was calling them, it was His word they heard and not the word of men. The emphasis lies not on what they heard, but on the source and authority of it; and so the Apostle says, "having received the word of the report of God by us [*i.e.*, the word which we preached to you], ye accepted, not men's word, but, even as it is truly, God's word, which also works [is operative] in you who believe" (New Translation). Similarly "the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth" (Jonah iii. 5). The word they heard was not to them the word of the prophet merely, but the word of God.

Moreover, with these Thessalonians as with the Ninevites, it displayed its own energy as the word of God in their souls: it became operative through faith, as was evidenced by their enduring sufferings at the hands of their own countrymen, even as the churches of Judea did from the Jews.

Verses 15, 16.

These latter were at the time the most pronounced foes of Christianity. From the beginning of their history the category of their crimes had been terrible, and the judgments that had befallen them from the hand of God in conse-

quence had been exemplary. This list had been immeasurably increased and their character still further emphasised by their conduct in recent times, as the Apostle says: "[they] have both slain the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and have driven us out by persecution, and do not please God, and are against all men" (New Translation); while their blindness is completed in their "forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway."

By the title "Lord," which he uses here, he enhances their guilt, and sets the heinousness of their sin in the strongest light: by the word "alway" he shows the unbroken, unchanging character of their conduct through all time, from the beginning of their history right on. (*Cf.* Deut. i. 26, etc.; ix. 24; Acts vii. 51).

An unbelieving people from the beginning, they had been visited in the government of God with varying judgments from time to time; but now wrath had fallen on them to the uttermost. In a few years—some fifteen from then—destruction and misery were to overtake the nation, their city was to be demolished and themselves scattered over the face of the earth, as they are to this day, awaiting the still more crucial troubles that shall befall them in "the latter days." Then will be "the

time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. xxx. 7), when the crisis of their unbelieving history will have arrived, and the final wrath of God will be culminated in them.

Verses 17, 18.

In what touching words the Apostle here describes his emotions. Feeling the bereavement of separation from them for a little moment in person, not in heart, through circumstances over which he had no control, his longing was the more increased to see them "with much desire;" and once and again he essayed to do so, *but*—and the reason he gives for his failing to do so is remarkable—"Satan hindered us."

Who, in the face of such words, can question the actuality and personality of this mysterious power? Satan, the evil spirit, the adversary, by whatever agencies or means he acted, was the hindering power to oppose the purposes of God for the comfort and blessing of the saints through the personal ministry of the Apostle. This opposing power is ceaseless and varied in the forms in which it manifests itself, but it is specially signalised as *Satan's* to these souls newly converted from its thralldom (*Cf.* Job i. 6; Zech. iii. 2; Rev. xii. 7-9).

"Satan hindered": what the means were which he used is not revealed. Nor is the mystery of the existence of this power cleared up for the curiosity of "fleshly minds" "intruding into" things not made known (Col. ii. 18). But the existence and personality of this power, and its direct and ceaseless opposition to God with the desire to thwart His purposes, are put beyond all doubt by the Scripture record: while its constant rebellion against the will of God—the proud will of the creature against the Creator (I Tim. iii. 6)—and its final and complete overthrow, is the uniform theme of Scripture from Gen. iii. to Rev. xx. He is called "the god of this world"—this "age" (II Cor. iv. 4), and "the prince of this world" (John xii. 31): and seeing that

Scripture constantly attributes to him such authoritative power (Acts xxvi. 18; Col. i. 13; Eph. ii. 2), it would be folly indeed to treat lightly, or fancifully, so real and so terrible an enemy both of God and man.

Verses 19, 20.

From all this how naturally and simply the Apostle's mind turns to the time when no power of the disturber will be there to hinder in a brighter scene, in the presence of the Lord Jesus at His coming, the fulfilment of his desire, which will in due course be realised, even though it be postponed till then.

And with that thought a new element is introduced into the character of "that day." In ch. i. 10, it is connected with the coming of the Son of God, and the deliverance He will then accomplish for His people: here he is concerned with the fact that He will gather them all together into the joy of His presence. The delivered ones will be united with those who have been instrumental in their deliverance, each to increase the other's joy.

And how surpassingly true this will be of Him, of whom primarily and pre-eminently it is written, "He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing His sheaves with Him" (Ps. cxxvi. 6).

"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy." In this same spirit sang Samuel Rutherford:

"Oh! if one soul from Anworth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens
In Immanuel's land."

May we, too, take fresh courage, and remember the words of the Apostle: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. xv. 58).

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ. (H. NUNNERLEY).

Paper No. 2.

WE have already considered :

- (1) Full atonement effected, and God glorified in His holiness, at Calvary.
- (2) Christ's nature and perfections there manifested.

We will now briefly look at the death of Christ as the revelation of God's love in its fulness, and as meeting man in regard to his sins.

Who can fathom the heights and depths of those wonderful words—God so loved . . . that He gave His only begotten Son (John iii. 16)?

So loved! He "so loved" His creature, His fallen, ruined, sinful creature, that He gave the very best gift of heaven. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son the propitiation for our sins" (1. John iv. 10). In this was manifested the love of God toward us. The love was always in God's heart, Christ's death did not put it there, nor did His sufferings alter God's feelings toward this world, but they were the expression of that love in all its fulness. God spared not His Son, because He would spare us. God gave His Son to suffer for sins, because He wanted us near to Himself. He died to bring us to God—to God's heart of love now, hereafter to God's home of peace and love for ever.

This love of God is holy, compassionate, forgiving and spontaneous. Its holy character is seen in Christ's suffering for sin; its compassion, in giving Him for helpless, undone sinners; its forgiving nature, in its being shown toward His enemies; and its spontaneity, in that it was the outcome of His essential nature and being—unsought, unasked, by those who are its objects. God *is* love. The Cross, the death of Christ, declares this as nothing else: there *God* is made known.

The Father sent the Son.

The Son, through

The Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot (Heb. ix. 14).

The whole Trinity was deeply, intensely concerned, and each Person therein had a part in this great work. God was never really known in love or holiness until the Cross. Now, His intrinsic being has been revealed; Christ's death has brought to light His love—boundless, causeless, matchless, eternal.

"Love that no tongue can teach,
Love that no thought can reach,
No love like His."

This love of God is a holy love: God is "light" as well as "love". The Cross shows how mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. That which *light* demanded, *love* provided; the righteous claims of light were met by the gracious provision of love.

Love was fully expressed when God gave His well-beloved; holiness fully manifested, when He hid His face from Him, whom He "made sin" for us.

These heavenly wonders, these divine mysteries, these apparent contradictions, these stumbling-blocks to the subtle reasoner, are the joy and delight of the believer. In them he discovers God revealed as He truly is; and in that revelation he learns how God can be just and the Justifier, and that not only is the love of God fully declared, but that God, thus revealed in love, maintains His holy, righteous character.

But, further, the death of Christ is also God's perfect provision for sinful man. In part we have already considered this wondrous death on the side of atonement, but let us examine a little more closely the two-fold aspect of the sacrifice of Christ as it is presented in

Leviticus xvi. In verse 15 of the chapter we read how the blood of the bullock and the goat were carried into the holy of holies by the high priest, veiled in a cloud of incense, thus offering typically a propitiatory sacrifice to the outraged majesty of Jehovah. So Christ in His death removed the dishonour brought upon God by His sinful creature, man, and glorified God as God, in all that pertained to His rights as Creator, and His claims as the Governor of the universe, as well as in the essential attributes of His being.

This aspect of the work of Christ is Godward (though man be in view, see verse 16); it is therefore of supreme importance. The throne must be propitiated ere the sinner can be pardoned; nor does it follow, *of necessity*, that pardon is involved in propitiation. Thousands refuse to bow to Christ, and ignore God's commands to repent and believe the Gospel, but this in no way alters the value of Christ's death Godward. At the Cross, God was fully glorified in His nature and in all His attributes by One able to take account of all that sin was as affecting the throne of God and to meet the utmost requirements of that throne in respect of sin. This He has done; God has been glorified as to the whole question of sin, and His throne propitiated, and He who did it is now seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Founded on this, flowing out from it, and connected with it, though distinct in aspect, is another side of the death of Christ, which is typified in the second goat of Lev. xvi. (verse 10). Here we learn that the same work which has glorified God *inside* the Holiest, also atones for man's guilt, and is a righteous basis on which God can justify the ungodly sinner *outside*.

Picture that second goat standing with the hands of the high priest on its head: listen! he is confessing Israel's sins—all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins—and thus transfers their guilt to the goat: the goat becomes their

substitute. Then, burdened with their transferred load, it is conducted by the hand of a "fit man" (margin "a man of opportunity") into a land of separation, uninhabited, outside the camp, to perish (Verses 21, 22).

God was thus teaching Israel that their guilt had been removed, their sins banished into a land of forgetfulness, on the head of the goat; and teaching us that Christ is the Substitute and Sin-bearer, as well as a Propitiatory, or Mercy-seat.

Rest then the eye of faith upon the holy Victim on the central cross of Calvary, and listen to the testimony of the Holy Ghost that Christ's work on the Cross is vicarious and substitutive:

"His own self bare our sins, in His own body on the tree." I. Pet. ii. 24.

"Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." I. Cor. xv. 3.

Peter tells us He took the guilty sinner's place, and suffered in his stead; Paul also tells us "He gave Himself for our sins" (Gal. i. 4), and then adds—what I trust each one who reads these lines can add—his own personal interest in the vicarious sufferings of the Sin-bearer: "the Son of God . . . loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. ii. 20).

"In my place condemned He stood
Sealed my pardon with His blood."

Yes, every believer is entitled to say, "it was *for me* He suffered, *for*—or instead of—*me* He bore the judgment, drank the bitter cup, endured the hiding of God's face. It was *for me* all the accumulated punishment due to my sins was concentrated upon Him on Calvary, it was *for me* He descended to the lower parts of the earth, went into the dark domain of death, bowed His head, gave up the ghost, and thus finished the work of substitution, propitiation and atonement."

The just One died for the unjust ones, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, it is in virtue of His stripes that healing is ours. Those opposites, sin and Jesus, were brought together on the Cross; the sinless One was made sin.

There Jesus took our sins upon Himself, answered for them, bore them, exhausted the judgment they deserved, and took them away from before God.

The sting of death is sin, the wages of sin is death: never was death's sting so intensely known, never was death so solemnly tasted as sin's awful wage as in the death of Jesus. Banishment from God's presence was God's sentence on Adam; into the deepest meaning of that banishment Christ entered, and thus made a way by which His "banished" can be brought back again, for through His work on Calvary death is now abolished and distance removed.

Nay more: of such surpassing excellence is that atoning work, so complete and perfect the removal of "sins, iniquities and transgressions," that God

can declare of every believer "their sins and iniquities will I remember *no more*" (Heb. viii. 12),—*no more for ever*—they are removed as "far as the east is from the west," and shall never again be "imputed," or laid to their charge.

Calvary witnessed the true day of atonement; Jesus is the "*man of opportunity*," God's "fit man" for our *extremity*, our Substitute, our Sin-bearer. He glorified God as to sin, and also carried away our sins, burying them for ever out of God's sight; for when He rose, He rose absolutely free of both the sins and the judgment due to them. In contrast to all the types, He consumed the "fire" which fell upon Him, exhausted the judgment, and is to-day in heaven in all the favour of God, without one of the sins He bore on the Cross, and each believer is as free of them as He is.

The Perfection of Scripture.

(A. SAPHIR).

ON the testimony of the Lord Jesus and the Apostles I receive the Scriptures as God's word.

Not as a critic dare I approach this Book as if it were an ordinary book, which I may hope to master and fathom. It is above me, and I cannot exhaust its fulness; it knows me, even the hidden things of the heart; it judges me, bringing me into contact with the all-seeing God.

I enter with reverence into the temple of Scripture, which from the height of God's eternal counsel, and out of the depths of God's infinite love, beholds and comprehends all ages, and is sufficient for the guiding and perfecting of souls in all generations.

But while I thus stand in awe, beholding the grandeur and infinite depth of the Scripture as one organic spirit-

built temple, I am not paralysed by the divine perfection and infinite depth of it. Instead I feel at home and as in a peaceful and fragrant garden, for such is the love, such the perfection of God that even a child may know the Scriptures, and be made by them wise unto salvation.

And while it may be given to me in some favoured moment to take a comprehensive view, and to behold somewhat the breadth, and height, and depth, I know that every word of God is pure, every name which He has revealed, every promise which He has given is perfect, and it is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him.

Thus I possess the whole in a little fragment, and can say with Luther, "In Scripture every little daisy is a meadow."

"A Little While."

Words by ISABELLA BATCHELOR.

Music by L. A. WESTCOTT.

1. On - ly "a lit - tle while" the watch of sad - ness:

The drea - ry night. And then the ban - quet

of im - mor - tal glad - ness: The morn - ing bright

- 2 Only "a little while" the heavy burden : The troubled breast.
And then the coronet of starry radiance : The perfect rest.
- 3 Only "a little while" the battle dirges : The ocean's roar.
And then the everlasting songs of victory : The stormless shore.
- 4 Only "a little while" the mournful partings : The wailing knells.
And then the meetings in the pearly mansions : The bridal bells.
- 5 Only "a little while" the icy winter : The lonely gloom.
And then the fragrance of eternal summer : The joy of home.
- 6 Only "a little while" the light affliction : The furnace fire.
And then the weight of glory bright exceeding : The golden lyre.
- 7 Only "a little while" the cruel woundings : The dangers rife.
And then the Saviour's blessed love enfoldings : The endless life.

How may Christ become a living reality to the soul?

Second Series of Replies.

Answer (3).

(H. D. R. JAMESON.)

That which makes Christ a reality to the soul is *faith*, for faith it is which is the evidence, or conviction, of things unseen (Heb. xi. 1); and ere our Lord departed from the realm of sight, He said to His disciples "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me" (John xiv. 1); that is to say Christ is now, on high, an object for *faith*.

When, then, faith has become dimmed in the soul, and Christ no longer shines personally before the Christian, we do well to see first, whence faith is in its source, and second, what are the things which directly tend to the overthrow of that faith, and bring in darkness where light once shone.

As to the source of faith, it comes, as indeed does every good gift, from God (James i. 17 and Ephesians ii. 8), but *mediately* it becomes ours through the Word of God, for "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom. x. 17). This scripture relates no doubt to the first dawn of faith within the human soul; but, if that be its source, need we wonder that where there is neglect of private reading of God's precious Word, or of tarrying in the presence of Him of whom that Word speaks, and who is Himself the Word, faith becomes dim within, and Christ seems to fade from before the vision of the careless Christian?

But to pursue the subject and take up the question of the positive hindrances to faith, it is remarkable that the epistle which is especially concerned with the subject of personal piety (I Timothy) brings before us three well defined practical reasons for that darkness of soul which many have now to deplore. Each of the following passages brings before us that which practically means the overthrow of faith, but in connection with different causes; affecting first, the conscience; second, the heart; and third, the mind.

(1). "Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (I Tim. i. 19).

The first and most effective blow at faith is

struck when a *good conscience* is surrendered, for sin and Jesus are diametrically opposed; there is therefore no limit to the darkness which may overtake a soul when once it begins to give up the practical maintenance of a *good conscience*.

(2). "For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (I Tim. vi. 10).

Here we see how departure from faith is brought about through the avenue of the *heart*—the lust of other things entering in. Christ *must* be supreme. If He be not given the first place He can no longer shine brightly before the vision of our souls, and darkness must follow. How earnestly then should we hearken to the exhortation, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. iv. 23).

(3) "O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (I Tim. vi. 20, 21).

Here the *mind* comes in. Man has been made in God's image and likeness, an *intelligent* being, and the mind has accordingly a wonderful place in Scripture. We are not to despise it; but it is to be a mind formed by the Truth, *i.e.*, the testimony of things as they really are, which is what we get in the inspired Word. A mind, on the other hand, distracted by the ever changing theories of that which cannot truly be called science, or knowledge, for it is not the truth, is in very real danger, of which God in His goodness gives us solemn warning here, for that way lies thick darkness.

Our wisdom as Christians will most assuredly be to hearken earnestly to these divine instructions; and guarding *mind, heart and conscience*, to give time to daily study in His own presence of those words of spirit and life which are the food of faith; thus shall Christ Himself be, and abide, a blessed reality to our souls!

Answer (4).

(W. BRAMWELL DICE.)

We may learn a lesson and receive a warning in what is recorded of one to whom Christ had ceased to be a living reality. Casting

our eye on II Timothy iv. 10, we read—"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." In this pregnant sentence

we have the story of the spiritual downfall of a child of God. That he was such, we cannot doubt. In Colossians iv. 14, Paul sent greetings from Demas, while in writing to Philemon he referred to him as his "fellow-labourer" (Philemon 24). We feel sure that he who wrote "lay hands suddenly on no man" (I Timothy v. 22) would not have alluded in such terms to Demas, had he not at that time been a fellow-labourer in the true sense of the word. There must have been a time, we conclude, when to him Christ was a living reality, and when to serve Him was his desire. What, then, caused his declension? He "loved this present world."

The world, we understand, is looked at in Scripture in, at least, four ways: the material earth (Acts xvii. 24); the people in the world (John iii. 16); the world system (I John ii. 16); and the present age, or present course of things (Galatians i. 4). This last, we believe, is what is meant in the verse now under consideration. We are not told that Demas fell into gross sin, he might not be termed by others a backslider; he may have continued the outward observance of things religious, but he was affected by the spirit of the age. Instead of observing the clear line of demarcation marked out by Paul, (on account of which, we judge, he was deserted by all in Asia), Demas, it may be, thought that by compromising with the world, he could elevate his fellow-men; his presence amongst them might have a restraining influence upon them, and thus he could do more to further the interests of Christ than Paul who, bound with a chain, lay a helpless captive in prison. This reasoning sounds plausible, but God's thoughts are not as our thoughts (Isaiah lv. 8).

It is written, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James iv. 4); and "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John ii. 15).

To touch pitch is to be defiled, and to go into the world, even though it be with the best intentions, is to be degraded to its level, and to be no longer of any service to Christ. Whatever was Demas's motive when he started, once on the down grade, descent was rapid. And the last word recorded of him is that he "loved this present world." Christ was obscured by the world; his love for Christ was eclipsed by his love for the world, his desire for Christ's appearing was extinguished by his desire to be distinguished in the world, and his testimony was in vain.

Thus there passes from our view this erst-while soldier, who, in the day of battle, proved false to his Lord, forsook the standard and went over to the enemy. Surely there is a reason for this sad verse being placed on the page of holy Scripture. Are we not in danger to-day of going in the way of Demas? The world bids for our friendship. "Come to us," it says, "and you will do us good. Give up your puritanical notions, and adopt our ways

and methods. Countenance our amusements and join in our pursuits, then will we consider your views, and religion will suit us." The spirit of the age is to acquiesce in this semi-worldly, quasi-religious state of things, and those who do not fall in with this are considered bigoted and narrow-minded.

How many Christians have been caught in this current, and, carried out of their true course, are, so far as testimony for Christ is concerned, but useless derelicts stranded on the rocks of "this present world."

Ere we conclude we venture to call attention to all that we are permitted to know of the close of Paul's history as recorded in this same chapter. He who, being a man of like passions with ourselves, could write "be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. xi. 1), is a pattern man. He had now reached the end of his journey. He knew that his work was finished, and that, not on account of Nero's sentence, but because of his loved Master's call, the supreme moment was just at hand. Let us hearken to his closing words, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day" (II Tim. iv. 7, 8).

The valiant warrior put off his armour, laid aside his sword, resigned his commission into His hands from whom he had received it, and was ready to pass from the prison-house of Nero to the presence chamber of the King. He was about to step up even then, in anticipation of a day yet to come, when he should receive the "crown of righteousness" from the Lord, "the righteous Judge." We believe this title indicates the delight the Lord will have in that day, in showing how much He appreciates the loyalty of those who, in this day are true to Him, and who love and long for His appearing.

Thus the curtain drops upon the history of one to whom Christ was a living reality from first to last. Whether in the flush of the joy of first acquaintance with Christ, or in the severe test of endurance throughout a long and chequered career, or with the prospect, as in this chapter, of early martyrdom, it was Christ, only Christ, and nothing but Christ.

May it be so with us, assured that as our eye is fixed upon, and our heart is engaged with that living Person at God's right hand, so will He become a living reality to us; He will command our affections; He will dominate our lives; "to live unto Him who died for us, and rose again" (II Cor. v. 15), will be our constant wish, while to see His face will be our profound desire.

"Jesus! Thou art enough
The mind and heart to fill;
Thy patient life to calm the soul;
Thy love its fear dispel.

O fix our earnest gaze
So wholly, Lord, on Thee;
That with Thy beauty occupied,
We elsewhere none may see."

The Mystery of God.

(J. ALFRED TRENCH).

2nd Chapter.

TAKING up again the little company of disciples where we left them in John xx., with the Lord in the midst, we note the significant action with which, as the last Adam, a quickening Spirit, He breathes on them on that resurrection day, saying "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." This was not the Spirit actually given, as we shall see, but rather the Spirit as the power of life, to bring them into the new position of that life as it now existed in a risen Christ, a life past every question of sin, death, and the judgment of God, the power of Satan being wholly broken—"life . . . more abundantly," as He had spoken of it.

But they had yet to wait for the promise of the Father, "which, saith He, ye have heard of Me. For . . . ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." They were already associated individually with Christ as the Risen One, in all His place of life and relationship with His Father and God; but now the Holy Ghost was about to come to form them into *corporate* relationships, on the one hand with God as His house, as we have seen, and on the other with Christ as His body, of which there had been no word as yet in Scripture.

The One Body.

Who can estimate sufficiently the momentous consequences of that wonderful Pentecost, when, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, the building of the Assembly began, and God took up His dwelling-place in it! But at the same moment those who believed were all baptised into one body by the same blessed Spirit given to them. God had thus not only carried into effect His declared purpose to dwell in and amongst His redeemed as His house; but also, all unconsciously to them, had formed them into corporate relationship with Christ. Of this latter no hint had been given in Scripture.

It was one thing that a Divine Person should thus have come down upon earth to fulfil what had been in the counsel of God from eternity: quite another that He should be pleased to reveal what He had done, that we might be brought into the intelligence of it. But it is His desire that we should know this great truth. Of what absorbing interest then it will be if we may be allowed, with bowed hearts before God, and in dependence upon divine teaching, to trace the progress of the revelation.

The martyrdom of Stephen prepared the way for this revelation, for it was the answer of the guilty nation to the last testimony God had to address to it by the Spirit, through Stephen, according to the intercession of Christ for them on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Pending the result of this testimony, the Lord Jesus is seen by His servant, *standing* at the right hand of God—not yet sat down. But when they stoned Stephen all was over.

It is recorded that they who stoned Stephen laid down their clothes at the feet of the young man, Saul of Tarsus, who thus became the formal witness of the last possible expression of man's enmity against Christ in the glory of God; but God, in infinite grace, took up this same young man to be the vessel of the testimony of the last and greatest possible expression of the love of God to the man that could only hate Him. Thus it is that he speaks of himself as the chief of sinners, in whom, "chief" as he was, the whole long-suffering of God had been shewn forth, "for a delineation of those about to believe on Him to life eternal" (I. Tim. i. 15, 16. New Trans.).

We all have been converted on the same principle as Saul of Tarsus: namely, that all God's ways with the race, putting man to the proof of what was

in him, are over, with the result of man's proved irreconcilable enmity against God. And now if sovereign grace breaks down our proud wills before God in the discovery of it, and subjects our hearts to the Son of God in glory (in whom, in the judgment of the cross, the end of all flesh had been reached for God and for faith), it is that, taken up in Him as our life, righteousness, and acceptance, God may show in us to ages yet to come how far His grace could go.

The Revelation of it.

But I am anticipating: Acts ix. gives us the astonishing details. Saul, true to the characteristics of his tribe, raving as a wolf (Gen. xlix. 27) against the lowly men and women who dared to confess Jesus the Lord, thought to blot out the very memory of His name from the earth by dragging them to prison and to death; and "being exceedingly mad against them he persecuted them even unto strange cities," and so was on his way "with authority and commission from the chief priests" to prosecute his deadly work at Damascus, when suddenly the arrest came. A light from heaven above the brightness of the mid-day sun shines round about him, and, fallen to the ground, he hears a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" And to Saul's immediate question "Who art thou, Lord?" the answer is "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

What a revolution does this effect in his whole being! what a discovery of what man is at his best before God! With all his strict conscientiousness, earnest religiousness, and blameless outward walk, he was yet the most avowed enemy of Christ in glory the world had ever seen. But I do not dwell upon that pattern of every subsequent conversion, but call attention to the marvellous revelation contained in the words by which the Lord convicted Saul, "Why persecutest thou Me?"

What meant that "Me"? It meant that the persecuted saints were every one of them united to Christ in glory

by the Spirit who dwelt in them: they were members of His Body, that which He accounts to be Himself, even as He had become their life. There had been nothing like this before. The Assembly had been formed into this relationship at Pentecost, but this was the first intimation of it: the whole truth of it was involved in the words that fell so strangely from heaven upon the ears of Saul. It was, in principle, the mystery, which was ever after to characterise his ministry; even as the Lord had further to say to him, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things *which thou hast seen*, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee" (Acts xxvi. 12-16).

The doctrine of the Mystery, till now so carefully kept out of the divine communications, had yet to come fully out through Paul, the vessel raised up to be the minister of it. But when all is told, nothing can surpass what was contained in the precious words of the Lord, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Let us put it to ourselves individually, "Have I entered into the reality of being united to the Lord in glory by the Spirit dwelling in me; and that thus I am a member of the Body of which He is Head, and of which all who are Christ's are fellow members?" To really believe this will affect the whole current of our lives from the moment it bursts upon the soul: first, in drawing out adoring affections to Him who has taken us into such intimate union with Himself in love so inconceivable; then in all my relations with my fellow Christians, everyone of whom is, with myself, a member of that one Body by one Spirit. Scripture, I need hardly add, knows nothing of any other body.

The Ministry of it.

Let us turn then to the ministry of the apostle through whom it has pleased God to bring out this wonderful secret of eternity. It is not the subject of the Epistle to the Romans, wherein we have that which is of primary importance for our souls: how in righteousness

God can take up sinners, such as we are, to justify them, and set them in Christ before Him, by His death and resurrection, and the power of the Spirit given to dwell in them. But he cannot close the epistle without letting out what was in his heart :

“ Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was *kept secret since the world began*.

“ But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets [or prophetic writings], according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.”

(Rom. xvi. 25, 26)

How magnificent the outburst of it, now that it was God's will that what had had such a deep place in His heart, but which had been hidden there throughout all the ages of earth's history, should come out, and be made known to all nations : and that, by His commandment ! Nor was it to be made known merely to enlighten and establish us, but to produce the very real subjection of our souls to the revelation ; for “ the *obedience of faith* ” is what God looks for now as the only true answer to His wonderful grace.

To the Corinthians, Paul can only allude to it (I. Cor. ii. 6-10), for though still outwardly one, the spirit of division was amongst them. They were carnal, walking as men, and making much of their knowledge and gifts. But enough comes out in the Apostle's words to have moved any heart, as to what they were losing by their low state spiritually. There was the wisdom of God, which was not of this world nor of its leaders. Those who were in Christ in the faith of their souls, would recognise it as this. This wisdom was contained in the “ mystery ”, which is brought in here, not as the subject matter of revelation, but as giving its character to this hidden wisdom of God, which was “ ordained before the world unto our glory ”, as he does not hesitate to tell us.

And now mark the principle of it. The wisdom of God centred in the Lord of glory, whom the leaders of the world crucified. And, to bring out its characteristic blessedness into the strongest relief, the Apostle quotes from the prophecy of Isaiah as to how it had been in his day : “ 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 ”. And there the quotation is too often left, whereas the Apostle's design is to *contrast* the present state of things with what existed in the prophet's day, and so he adds, “ But God *hath revealed them* unto us by His Spirit : for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God ”. So that all that had been wrapped up in the heart of God for those that love Him, unseen, unheard of by them, and never for a moment conceived of, had now come out to be the revealed and possessed portion of faith by the power of the Spirit. The inspired revelation of these blessed things of God's own nature and counsel is alone by the Spirit, the communication of them is in words that He alone could teach, and our reception of them is as equally and absolutely by that same blessed Spirit (verses 10-14).

Oh ! how incalculable the loss, if our state is such that the power and the blessedness of such a revelation of God's wisdom in the mystery is hindered ! Yet so intimately does the truth contained in it affect the practical walk of the saints in their relations with one another, that when the Apostle comes to this latter subject in Romans, and much more fully in I. Corinthians, he cannot but bring in what flows from union with Christ by the Holy Ghost according to the mystery. I refer to Rom. xii. 4, 5, and I. Cor. xii. But he does not there enter into any development of those counsels of God for the glory of Christ, which give the mystery its full blessed character. For this we must go to the epistle to the Ephesians.

(To be continued).

“ Look well to your integrity, and leave your prosperity to the Lord.”

Tribulation.

(SELECTED).

"We glory in tribulations also" (Romans v. 3).

IT would be impossible to glory in tribulation were it not (1) for the knowledge of the object in view, and (2) the experience of the power of the love of God which sustains the soul while passing through the trial.

It is with us as though a gifted sculptor carried to his studio a block of marble, and began to chip away at it with mallet and chisel. If the marble were endowed with feeling and speech, we can understand it saying, "I do not like this constant chipping."

But the artist replies "Let me shew you what my intentions with regard to you are;" and setting before that rough and shapeless block the model that is in his mind, the creation of his consummate genius, he says, "See, you are to be exactly like that, that is my purpose for you, and the chipping from which you shrink is the only way in which it can be brought about."

Then replies the marble, "I will endure the tribulation," and at each blow is henceforth able to say "That brings me so much nearer the master's design for me."

We have been predestinated to be "conformed to the image of God's Son" (Romans viii. 29). Fellow Christians, this is God's great design for us. To be like the risen Christ, like Him in thought and ways and spirit and body. Nothing less will suit the matchless love of our God.

This glorious purpose is set before our souls, and as we behold it, God would have us say "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans viii. 28). We have been called according to this wonderful purpose, and the chipping of the chisel of the great Master Sculptor is to bring us into moral conformity to Christ now, as we shall be actually

when He comes.

It is when this is before our souls that we can glory in tribulation, and say as we feel each blow, so unpleasant to nature, "Thank God! This is but to bring us so much nearer the perfect Model, and to free us a little further of the ways of the flesh."

But while the hand of our God applies the chisel, He stands very close, so to speak, to the marble, and makes us realise by blessed experience what the power of His love is which can sustain us in all trial, and in this way we gain in the knowledge of God, as we could not apart from the testing: this experience is blessed compensation and fills the soul with a hope that cannot fail.

"If ye endure chastening" (Heb. xii. 7).

There are three ways in which we may act under the chastening hand of God our Father. We may despise it, say perhaps "Oh, such things will and must happen;" or we may faint under it—become depressed and begin to doubt the love of God. Or we may be sustained by the grace of the One whose love sees the necessity of the chastening, and in consequence glorify Him.

There are three birds, which each act differently in a rain storm. The duck, which is altogether indifferent to it—it despises it; the hen, which is then the most miserable object imaginable—it faints under it; and the robin, which sings its sweetest note when the storm rages. We are like one of the three; if like the duck or the hen, then the devil has the advantage over us, but if like the robin, then we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. It is faith—true, constant, living faith in Him, that can sing "All, all is well" even in days of storm and sorrow.

Resurrection.

(F. B. HOLE).

No. 1.—The Key to the Position.

WHEN the Apostle Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy, he was about to depart from the field of battle, and enter upon the bliss of being with Christ. He had been in the thickest of the fight, and now the tide of conflict was beginning to run against him: the adversaries were growing bolder, and many a deserter was leaving the ranks; yet his words breathe forth a dauntless courage and supreme confidence in the great Captain, who will ultimately lead His forces to victory.

But the very fact of the aged warrior, Paul, laying down his armour, must only make the young man, Timothy, gird his the more tightly on, and prepare himself to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (chap. ii. 3). He is to "stir up the gift of God" which is in him. He is not to be "ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," but rather to be a "partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God" (ch. i. 6, 8).

The mighty adversary in the conflict is a foe of sleepless vigilance and consummate skill. Every military commander of outstanding genius has been marked by two things: first, he was able to quickly locate the exact spot in the enemy's defence which was the key to his position: second, he was able so to manipulate his own forces as to make that point his objective, and sooner or later deliver a crushing blow there. We may be sure, therefore, that Satan, the secret energizer of all man's opposition to God, has from the beginning, and all along the line, been aiming his blows at that which is at the very heart of the truth of Christianity.

Let us glance at the epistle itself that like Paul we may not be "ignorant of his devices."

Ch. i., 1-10. The Apostle encourages Timothy by lifting the eye of his soul from himself, and even from the field of

conflict below, to God, and to those purposes of His which shall never fall to the ground, since they find their place of undisturbed repose "IN CHRIST JESUS," and further by reminding him that in spite of apparent defeat, victory is sure, for the great Commander Himself, "our Saviour Jesus Christ," has already, single handed, achieved it. He "hath abolished [or 'annulled'] death, and hath brought life and immortality [or 'incorruptibility'] to light through the gospel" (verse 10).

What an inspiration this is!

Verses 11-18. Having breathed in fresh life and energy, Timothy is bidden to calmly view the actual position of the conflict as committed to the saints of God below. How dark the picture! Paul, lying in a Roman dungeon with martyrdom before him; "all they which are in Asia"—his own converts, including those at Ephesus, the capital of that province, where much of his finest work was done—had turned away from him: it may have been to run eagerly after new teachers, who were already developing the deadly theories known afterwards as "gnosticism," so that even the "form of sound words" was in danger of being given up.

Ch. ii., 1-6. Here are given the qualities required in the good soldier of Jesus Christ. Danger and the rolling tide of disaster must only stiffen his back. "Thou, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He needs the faithfulness of a witness, the endurance and devotion of a soldier, the obedience of the athlete, the patience of the farmer.

Verses 7-19. Having brought Timothy thus far, the Apostle now discloses to him the great key to the Christian position against which all the enemy's assaults are delivered. Verse 7 is a preface showing the deep importance

of it. Verse 8, containing the disclosure, is poorly translated in the A.V. The R.V. is better—"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel."

CHRIST RISEN is the key.

If we may paraphrase the Apostle's inspired words, it was as though he said, "My gospel presents to you Jesus Christ in two ways, as incarnate upon earth, come of the seed of David, and as risen from the dead. Maintain both; but since you are not Israelites, but Christians, 'risen from the dead' comes first as of paramount importance to you; let go that and the day is lost."

Already Satan's forces, led by Hymenæus and Philetus, were being launched against this truth (verses 17 and 18). Not that it can be really touched. Christ *is* risen. The foundation of God stands sure. Thanks be to Him! Yet, if forgotten or denied, the key of the position is left in the enemy's hands, and disaster to our faith is sure.

The Corinthian believers illustrated this. They had in their midst grave immorality unrebuked (chap. v.); party spirit was rampant amongst them (chap. i.); and disorder marked their coming together to partake of the Lord's supper (chap. xi.); but it is not until we reach chapter xv. that we find the root, in that the resurrection was being questioned in their midst!

Moreover Paul immediately shows them the effect of this, not only on Christian behaviour, but Christian doctrine. Read verses 13 to 19 and learn that if the resurrection of Christ be unreal, Christianity itself is dissolved like the unsubstantial fabric of a dream.

Has not all this a loud voice for us who live at the end of the Church's conflict upon earth? Instead of being as in her first years "comely as Jerusalem, terrible as an army with banners," she

has become in her responsibility on earth an outward wreck, torn in every direction, alike the prey of enemy without and traitor within, till the poet had to write—

"With a scornful wonder
Men see her sore oppress,
By schisms rent asunder,
By heresies distrest."

Early in her history "Jesus Christ, risen from the dead," faded from her memory. The thought of Him as a risen, heavenly Man was almost lost; if He was remembered it was as a babe in the arms of His virgin mother, and that only in a carnal way. Hence the Church lost her heavenly character, forgot her heavenly hope, and settled down into the corruptions of the world around.

If any revival has in these last days visited us from on high, it has been as He, the risen One, has shone as the Morning Star into our hearts.

His appearance in the midst of His disciples on the resurrection day transformed them, so that instead of huddling together like a flock of frightened sheep, they stood forth filled with the Holy Spirit, on the day of Pentecost, as bold as lions. The faith of Himself as the risen One will do all this for us to-day.

Christian men and women, may this faith be ours! To have His resurrection as an article of our creed is not enough—it was an article of the Church's creed all through the dark ages. It is Jesus Christ Himself, raised from the dead, shining before the faith of our hearts, that we need.

Then hope will burn brightly, and the fort of true, God-given Christianity will be held, till those words come true with which the poet closed his verse—

"Yet saints their watch are keeping,
Their cry goes up, 'How long?'
And soon the night of weeping
Shall be the morn of song."

"Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness:" clearness of

perception goes along with integrity of purpose.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 4.—Amos.

Ch. I. ver. 1.

The words of Amos who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, king of Israel, two years before the earthquake.

Ch. I. ver. 3 to II. ver. 6.

Thus saith the Lord; "For three transgressions of Damascus, . . . of Gaza, . . . of Tyrus, . . . of Edom, . . . of Ammon, . . . of Moab, . . . of Judah, . . . of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof."

Ch. III. vers. 1 and 2.

Hear the word that the Lord hath spoken against . . . the whole family . . . brought up from the land of Egypt, saying,

You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Ch. III. ver. 7.

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.

THE prophecy of Amos belongs to a period when the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were at the zenith of their glory. Illustrious monarchs filled their respective thrones, and during their long reigns of forty-one and fifty-two years, secured a state of prosperity for their subjects that had not been enjoyed since the palmy days of Solomon.

Worldly prosperity, however, is a transient thing at best. Of this we are reminded by the mention of *the great earthquake* by our prophet (see also Zech. xiv. 5). Perhaps nothing is better calculated to make men see the flimsiness of their greatest works than the shaking of that whereon they are all founded. But it is a lesson men are slow to learn. What are all the political plans of to-day, the schemes of reform and of national expansion, but the work of builders engaged upon a structure that is to be shaken to pieces before long?

In contrast to this, we (Christians) receive "a kingdom *which cannot be moved*" (Heb. xii. 28). We are brought to that which is eternally stable, and

beyond all liability to change or decay. Unless our souls are really established in the truth of this, we cannot "serve God acceptably," for our thoughts and hopes will be largely taken up with things that belong to the earth, so soon to be shaken. If, however, we make our home by faith amid "those things which cannot be shaken," we become ourselves stedfast and unmoveable, abounding in the work of the Lord (I Cor. xv. 58).

Amos, himself a man of Judah (an inhabitant of Tekoa), concerns himself for the most part with Israel. The rupture between the two tribes and the ten still existed, but the prophet, directed by the Spirit of God, does not confine his testimony to the tribes with which he is directly connected. His words are addressed to "the whole family" which had been brought out from Egypt (ch. iii. 1). Here there is no trace of the selfishness that would consider none but those with whom we have immediate links. In spite of ruptures and dissensions, from apostolic days to the present time, the Church of God is *one* under His eye. There is one body, one flock, one "household of faith," which we are to serve. Indeed, our sphere of service and testimony is wider still, for we are bidden to "do good unto *all* men," and to go into "*all* the world" with the glad tidings, and even in our prayers to have "*all* men" in mind. In this way the character of the blessed God is set forth, for He desires the salvation of all (I Tim. ii. 4).

But though Amos had "the whole family" in view, his words of warning are intended specially for the house of Israel. Why then, it may be asked, does the prophecy begin with the doom of six *Gentile* nations? For a very cogent reason. Jehovah had said of Israel that "the people shall dwell

alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Num. xxiii. 9). Yet Amos here presents us with a list of eight guilty nations, in which Judah and Israel are the last included, and marked out for doom, in exactly the same formula of words as are the other six. They had, by their sin, forfeited all special recognition by Jehovah. As to their state, they were even as Damascus, Philistia, and Moab before Him, and are mentioned alongside these heathen peoples in a way to reach their consciences, and stir up their remembrance of their peculiar place in God's favour.

Special privilege carries with it special responsibility. This important principle is enforced in the prophecy before us. "You only have I known, of all the families of the earth: therefore will I punish you." The nearer the relationship, the more serious the sin, and the more severe the punishment.

Another great principle is laid down in chap. iii., viz., that when God designs to do anything, He makes it known to His servants. This is true, whether He has blessing or judgment in view. His hidden purposes are revealed to His servants. They are honoured with His confidence, and are let into His secret. It is the same with us Christians. God has been pleased to let us into the blessed secrets of His mind, and to reveal to us, for our present joy, and as subjects for our testimony, that which He will by and by display to millions of wondering eyes.

Ch. III. ver. 12.

Thus saith the Lord; As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear; so shall the children of Israel be taken out . . .

Ch. V. vers. 3-14.

For thus saith the Lord God; The city that went out by a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth by an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel.

Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an evil time.

Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live; and so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye have spoken.

Judgment, not blessing, is the theme upon which Amos dwells in the

first part of his prophecy. The very fact, however, of doom being pronounced upon the guilty nation, is the occasion of reference being made to One who should deliver a remnant.

Here, surely, we trace the footsteps of Him, who is the Object of our study in these pages. He comes before us here as

The Shepherd-Deliverer.

The nation, as a whole, would be given as a prey to the adversary, but a small handful would escape. Israel's Shepherd would deliver "a piece of an ear" from the mouth of the lion, and in connection with this remnant, God's promises would be fulfilled. There could not be even this little remnant were it not for the delivering grace and power of the Shepherd. When restored to their land and blessed with the bounty of God, they will own that they owe it all to Him. They have been in the lion's mouth, and while multitudes have perished, they have been delivered. And Christ is the One who has done it. All praise and glory to Him.

In chapter v. this remnant of Israel comes still more distinctly into view, a mere tithe of the whole, a hundred left out of a thousand, and ten out of a hundred. They are characterised by prudence, or wisdom, in the "evil time." The power of oppression seals their lips, but in their hearts they hate the evil, and love the good, and they experience the goodness of the God of hosts. Thus they *live* before Him.

Ch. VII. vers. 2-10.

. . . then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech Thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small . . .

Then said I, O Lord God, cease, I beseech Thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small. . . .

Then Amaziah the priest of Beth-el sent to Jeroboam, king of Israel, saying, Amos hath conspired against thee in the midst of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words.

Ch. VIII. ver. 10.

. . . I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only son . . .

In chapter vii. Amos himself becomes a type of Christ as

The Great Intercessor.

The name of Amos means "Burden", and in his measure he carried the burden of Israel's sin and woe upon his heart, thus foreshadowing the One who did the same in a far deeper way. The prophet, acknowledging the smallness and helplessness of Jacob, beseeches God on his behalf. His prayer is effectual, but his service and testimony are rejected of men, and priest seeks the aid of king to rid their land of his presence. He was not officially a prophet, being a mere herdman, but God was with him, and those, therefore, who rejected him were fighting against God.

All this speaks eloquently to our hearts of Christ. No graduate in the "schools of the prophets" was He. Coming of lowly birth, He was God's Messenger to Israel. He bore upon His heart the burden of the nation's woes. Yet He was set at nought by them, despised for His lowly birth, a mere "carpenter's son" in their eyes. Priest and king, Caiaphas and Herod, conspired to rid themselves of Him, and the Cross was His award.

But He has not given up Israel for ever, and in the coming day they will prove how mighty His intercession has been on their behalf. To Him they will owe the joy and blessing which will be theirs, beyond all conception, in that day. But the *first* results of Christ's mighty intercession for Israel will not be joy or glory, but *bitter repentance*. Conscience will be awakened, and the discovery made that He whom they crucified as an impostor was their Messiah and Deliverer. The scene between Joseph and his brethren will be re-enacted upon a grander scale. Sackcloth will be upon all loins, and baldness upon every head when they thus mourn "as for an only son."

We are reminded thus, of Christ as

Israel's Hope—

THE ONE TO WHOM ISRAEL WILL TURN
IN REPENTANCE.

What a moment it will be for *Him!*

His love for the chosen nation has not waxed cold, and with infinite joy He will welcome them to His arms. Shall we refuse to find pleasure in the contemplation of this because *we* have no direct part therein? Perish the thought! The heart that loves Christ will rejoice to know that He is gratified, and that with streaming, tear-filled eyes, Israel will turn at last to her rejected Messiah.

Ch. IX. vers. 1-9.

... I will slay the last of them with the sword . . . Behold the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saying that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob . . .

... I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth.

Ch. IX. vers. 11-15.

In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, . . . and I will build it as in the days of old.

That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my Name, saith the Lord that doeth this.

... the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; . . .

And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, . . .

And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.

But the nation at large must go in judgment, "all of them", to the very "last of them" (chap. ix.). Only the election of grace will be preserved, and of these "not the least grain" will perish. In the midst of these preserved ones, "the tabernacle of David" will be raised up. The existing state of things under Uzziah and Jeroboam II. would be ended, and God would revert to David, and secure permanency for him, and for his order of things. Here, too, our thoughts are carried off to Christ, the true David, as

The Man of God's Counsels.

Upon Him, from the beginning, God's choice has been set. Everything here has fallen into decay, and every man that has lived has contributed to the ruin, but when the appointed time comes, that which God has purposed will be brought in and established by

Christ: none but He could accomplish this. In that day, even the heathen will share in the blessing. As for Israel, they will be planted upon their land, no more to be "pulled up." Then shall the plowman overtake the reaper, and happiness be the portion of all.

The pivot upon which all this turns is CHRIST. As we have seen, He is brought before us in Amos, (1) as Israel's Shepherd, rescuing a remnant from the lion's mouth; (2) as Israel's Intercessor, beseeching God for them,

that at all events some might "arise;" (3) as the One for whom Israel will mourn, and to whom their hearts will turn; (4) as the true David, who will bring in the state of blessing and peace which God has from the beginning purposed for His people.

Into all this *Christianity* does not enter. But there are precious lessons that Christians may learn, and it is food for our souls to contemplate *Christ* whether in connection with Israel, or ourselves.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 3.—Man accountable to God.

CONSCIENCE came in by the fall. Then God said, "The man is become as one of us, to know good and evil" (Gen. iii.). This the Scriptures declare; and we know that man does possess a conscience, whatever may have been the circumstance under which he came to possess it. It is the intrinsic power by which he is able to judge of good and evil when they come before him.

It has been contended that what men call conscience is simply the result of education; but when we hear the Creator say that the ability to know good and evil made man "like one of us," it is clear that, in the Scriptural sense of the word, education has nothing to do with the creation of such a faculty. It is not beyond being affected by education; it may be blinded, where the soul is schooled in error; benumbed also, where it has been ill-treated; but it is not the effect of education, or the result of coming under an imposed rule of life. The judgment which God passes upon actions is His own judgment, having nothing whatever to do with law, or environment, or anything external to Himself.

Man came into possession of this faculty by his disobedience. It is *fallen* man who has this conscience. He knows good and evil, but knows the evil as something which has power over him, and good as a thing to the possession of which he can no longer lay claim. Yet he does not like to confess this. He will say a great deal in favour of himself, a great deal in favour of man in the abstract; but he has the inward consciousness of his own imperfections. He knows that, to an extent, evil has the mastery over him; and his fellow-men he regards with distrust. To get along through the world at all, he finds it necessary to place a certain amount of confidence in his fellows, but just as little of that as will serve the end he has in view; and when that confidence is abused, although he may become very angry, he is not greatly disappointed, for it was with a certain amount of hesitation he trusted him at all. He knows a little about himself, and from what he finds in himself he judges his neighbour; and in this he does not greatly err, for all men are alike evil.

It is not the Bible alone that tells

men they are not what they ought to be (which is equivalent to saying that they are not what God made them, for if they are what God made them, they have no business to seek to be anything else), though he is there described from the tip of the leaf to the very roots of his moral being; but he has the witness in his conscience that there is a great difference between him and a perfect being. Each man is ashamed of the wicked thoughts which inhabit his own breast, though he knows very well that they are not morally worse than the thoughts of the man at his elbow. In a world of sinners he is ashamed of being a sinner, and, therefore, he makes efforts to hide the nakedness of his lamentable condition from the scrutiny of his neighbour, whose condition he knows to be no better than his own.

However unpleasant it may be, man cannot get out of his mind the thought that there must come a time for the settling of accounts, a day in which he must give account for the deeds done in the body. He is unable to shake himself free from this suspicion, for he knows that he holds his fellows accountable for their actions, as far as they affect his interests. They may plead, in extenuation of their offence, that they are just as they were made, and their actions were only the manifestations of the nature with which they were born, but he would not accept this as sufficient excuse for their transgression. He would tell them they should be different, or at least they should act differently with regard to him. Their paltry excuses would fall upon deaf ears.

But if this be so amongst men, it must be admitted that God has rights, which must be respected as well as those belonging to men. He cannot be the only one who has got no rights of any kind. I have responsibilities with regard to the throne of the kingdom of which I am a subject. Has God a throne? Are men His subjects in any sense? Does He hold them accountable? or has He thrown the

reins upon the neck of humanity? If I am accountable to Him, and if He has got rights over me which I ignore, what will happen? Do I go free? Is He to receive no compensation? If so, God has practically no rights, for He is either indifferent to my trespass, or He is unable to safeguard His rights: I trespass upon them with impunity; offence exists only in name, and there is no righteousness.

Do not tell me that men are punished for their offences in the present life, and that there can be nothing after death in the way of stripes for sin, for suffering in the present life is not always the effect of sin committed by the one who suffers. Men are born cripples, blind, deaf, idiotic; how have these transgressed? The transgressor often goes through life without the least mishap. When, and in what way, does the punishment of such take place? How is the man to be punished who has wronged, hated, cursed, insulted, and robbed his neighbour? and how is he to be punished who has given all this back with interest?

The self-respect of a man will often keep him from loose company, but he will not allow that his Creator has any partiality for the pure in heart, more than for the abominable. Man hates the good and loves the evil, and in spite of his self-respect, his actions prove his preference for the latter; but he has a conscience which approves the good that he hates, and condemns the evil that he loves; and yet if both are alike to God, what right have I, who am His creature, to make any distinction? Good is evil, and evil good; right is wrong, and wrong right; filthiness is purity, and purity filthiness: this must be so if everything is alike to God.

The principle of accountability is found all the world over, however men may seek to shirk it. If I trespass upon my neighbour, he will very quickly let me know that I cannot do this with impunity. I may have a desire to trespass upon his property, to appropriate for my own use that which he claims as his. He does not excuse

in me the covetous spirit which possesses me. He will tell me that I have no right to that which he has inherited, or purchased with the sweat of his brow, or bought with his money; and though the selfish spirit in others might not much object to see him defrauded, they must, in order to safeguard themselves, acknowledge the righteousness of his claim.

How is it that the intelligent creation has been placed upon these moral foundations? Are we to be taught nothing regarding God by all this? How and why is it, that such a principle is found in the minds of men? Why have we been set in relationship with one another, so that such obligations exist? The thought of righteousness, truth, love and peace is found in the hearts of men, and they are the principles upon which relationships with one another are established. Why is this? Could not another order of things have been established, where such principles would have been unknown?

That these principles have been founded is enough for me. I know no relationship which does not carry with it responsibilities. Has man no relationship with God? If not, he is nothing but a beast. He may be the cleverest beast there is, but he is nothing more if he has no link with God. That which elevates man above the brute creation is his link with God. Put aside the idea of accountability to God, and you have degraded him to the level of the brute creation. His cleverness does not give him any moral pre-eminence. He may be the most clever and inventive of all the brute creation; and when you have said that, you have said all that can be said if he has no responsibility to God. This is how man dishonours himself when he casts off God. This is where he brings himself by his infidelity. And yet, were he injured by a beast, you would not find him saying *it had no right* so to act. He does not after all connect the thought of responsibility with the other beasts which are less clever than he is.

In this world men, who have themselves no honourable distinction, boast of their connection with those who have. Like certain planets, their glory is derived from the orb to which they are attached; having no glory of their own; they attract no attention once they are robbed of their connection with their brilliant centre. It is so with man, whose dignity consists in his having to say to God. It is because of this he has been formed to walk erect, and lift up his head to heaven, in contrast with the beast who looks downward into the earth, from whence he sprang and into which he sinks again. Man became a living soul by the inbreathing of God, and this returns to God who gave it; not so the beast, which was made a living soul by the fiat of God, and whose spirit, as well as his body, goes back to the earth again (Eccles. iii. 21).

The Scriptures tell us it was this abandonment of God on the part of man that brought all the evil into the world at the beginning. That he has proved himself to be very clever and inventive is unquestionable, but he has used his cleverness to set himself up in independence of God. He has built up and embellished a world for his own glory and the gratification of corrupt fallen nature, and the door of which he has carefully bolted against the knowledge of God. Moralists are not wanting either, for people have consciences and wants, and fears for the future which require to be set somehow at rest. We are told that all will come right in the end; good will be the final goal for all; man is at present building his own heaven, or scooping out his own hell by his works; and after all, misery is not eternal, for the sinner must be given chance after chance, either in the present life or in some other undefined existence, until in the end he reaches perfection.

This is the human mind gone stark mad. It is against all reason and experience, leaving Scripture out of the question. It is the *downgrade* with most people in the present life. A child is more free from guile, hypoc-

ris, deceit, envy, and every kind of wickedness, than a grown person. All experience goes to prove that there will always be the downward tendency unless some powerful intervention outside man himself comes in to stay it. The child, as I have said, is more innocent of evil than the adult. I do not say the tree is different in old age from what it was in its youth, for trees do not change their nature. The nature of a man is the same in an infant as it is in a centenarian, but the development of that nature means an evil life. There is no upward tendency; it is all downward. Give a man another chance, and will he do any better? His past experience will not help him, for every man knows that the way of transgressors is hard, and that satisfaction is not found in the fulfilment of the lusts of the flesh; but the lusts of the flesh they will fulfil, even at the risk of eternal damnation. No danger is a sufficient deterrent in the pathway of lust. I do not mean lust in any unclean sense, but the desires of the carnal appetite.

Bible Reading.

A man tells me that he reads the Bible through once every year. I reply, no man can read the Bible through. This he can do literally, measurably, externally; he can utter articulately and distinctly every word in the Bible, but he has not read the Bible through. It has no "through." It grows as it is read; it turns the reader back again; he cannot read the twenty-third Psalm without turning back to see what the twenty-second says; and when he has found "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" he can get into the twenty-third, which says "The Lord is my Shepherd: I shall not want." The Bible calls for recapitulation, review, another study of the last page; and so it lures its readers on by sending them back, that they may not drop a single ear of corn which they have gleaned in the field of revelation.

Prayer.

That time is never wasted in which a man stays to *pray* before he goes to *work*.

And is there no one, and nothing, with ability to throw light upon all this confusion and unspeakable tangle of discordant ideas? Is there nothing which can put everything in its proper place, so that we may come to know the whole truth of the matter? What is there under the sun which can solve for us the problem of life? What about death—its gloom, horror, silence? Will the dead come forth again? Must we give account to God? What is the disposition of Him to whom I am responsible? What is His nature? Is He hard, unkind, cruel, envious, careless as to my happiness or misery? Is He like men, as I know men? Who can answer these questions to the satisfaction of my heart? The Bible, and the Bible alone, comes to my rescue in the midst of the surrounding gloom, and sets sin, death, judgment, God and man, heaven and hell, paradise and perdition, before me in their true light, and my darkness is dispelled, and worship fills my soul.

"I will fear no evil."

A mother one morning gave her two little ones books and toys to amuse them, while she went to attend to some work in an upper room. Half an hour passed quietly, and then a timid voice at the foot of the stairs called out, "Mamma, are you there?"

"Yes, darling."

"All right, then;" and the child went back to its play.

By and by the question was repeated, "Mamma, are you there?"

"Yes."

"All right, then;" and the little ones reassured of their mother's presence, again returned to their toys.

Thus we, God's little ones, in doubt and loneliness sometimes, look up and ask, "My Father, art Thou there?" and when there comes in answer the assurance of His presence, our hearts are quieted.

Answers to Correspondents.

Manna.—The Omer.

Just as no house in Egypt was too big for the lamb—setting before us the sufficiency of Christ's death to meet our lost and ruined and sinful condition—so no man's eating was too great for an omer of manna (Ex. xvi. 16-18), *i.e.*, the life of Jesus, what He is in Himself, as expressed in His life of dependence on earth, is sufficient to feed, sustain, and satisfy the greatest desires of the new life. That one omer was also laid up before the Lord, would signify that He is also all-sufficient for the satisfaction and delight of God (Ex. xvi. 33).

Baptism.

R.J.R. asks several questions as to Baptism. To these we offer reply as follows:—

The "one baptism" of Eph. iv. 5 is Christian baptism, and stands in connection with "one faith" and "one Lord."

Christian baptism is by water (Acts viii. 36-38), in the light of God fully revealed (Father, Son and Holy Ghost, *cf* Matt. xxviii. 19), and is unto Christ as Lord. It is both an ordinance (*i.e.*, an authoritative instruction) and a privilege.

Israel was baptised in the cloud and in the sea *to Moses* (I Cor. x. 2): Christians are baptised *to Christ*, who is the Antitype of what Moses was as the deliverer of God's earthly people. *Vide* Rom. vi. 2, and Gal. iii. 27, where "into" should properly be read "unto".

In the examples referred to (Acts ii. 38; x. 48; xix. 5; etc.) the record does not assume to state the whole formula of words used on the occasion of each baptism, but singles out for attention that which was distinctive, *i.e.* the Name of the One who had just been rejected and crucified, but whom God had exalted, and in connection with whom alone was any place of refuge and safety opened out to the guilty and the lost.

As to the most correct formula to be used, the expressions found in the Acts are really involved in the words given in Matt. xxviii. 19 (that Scripture, be it noted, does not limit the formula used to only the words there given), but we think Scripture supposes that definite recognition in baptism of the Christian place in subjection to the Lord, which is so explicitly conveyed in the expressions used in Acts. This would mean baptism "unto the Lord Jesus Christ, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." We may remark that the closing verses of Matt. xxviii. do not contemplate the disciples in exactly the distinctively Christian relationship, but, in their scope, reach out so as to include evangelizing by the believing Jewish remnant in a coming day.

Eph. iv. 5 does *not* allude to baptism "with the Holy Ghost." This latter must not be confounded with our individually receiving the Holy Spirit of promise, who comes to indwell each of those who have believed the Gospel (Eph. i. 13).

Baptism with the Holy Ghost is (in this dispensation) spoken of in relation to that which is collective. The expression is used firstly as to what occurred on the day of Pentecost, when the "one Body" was formed—though the truth of it was not revealed until later—(Acts i. 5; I Cor. xii. 13), and secondly, as to the distinctive bringing in of the Gentiles, so that they might be of the "same Body" (Acts xi. 16 and Eph. iii. 6).

Baptism *by* or *with* the Spirit (for it is the same word) was thus initiatory to the Church's *collective* relationship to Christ as His Body. This is not repeated, and as we come individually to believe in Christ, and individually receive the Spirit, we find that we come into a wonderful collective relationship with Christ as His Body, the Assembly, which was formed long ago by *baptism* with the Holy Ghost.

Baptism by water on the other hand is entirely *individual*, and is initiatory to the Christian position as bearing Christ's Name; in it we each one become identified with the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ—"as many . . . as have been baptized into [or 'unto'] Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27).

John v. 21.

T.M.—"*For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom He will*".—We do not think what is here said as to the Father refers to "His work in souls in Old Testament times." In the first place "*raising*" the dead is not a work in the soul, and secondly, we do not think there is any point of *time* in the passage at all. The statements are characteristic. What is true of the Father, as to the essentially divine power here spoken of, is true also of the Son, who is co-equal with the Father, and exercises quickening power in respect of "*whom He will*," albeit taking the place in manhood of a *recipient*, even as to that which belongs to Him in His own proper rights as a divine Person (see the connection of the statements in this

verse with those in the two verses preceding).

Verbal Inspiration.

R.—We do not see any difficulty as to "verbal inspiration" in the fact that in what seem to be identical addresses, Matthew should use the term "Kingdom of Heaven," and Luke "Kingdom of God."

During the three years that the Lord spent with His disciples, He must have instructed them, not only as to that character of the Kingdom which Matthew presents to us, but also in that which is peculiar to Luke. And as much of what the Lord said, and did, is not recorded at all, we judge that what seem to be identical utterances are not so.

When the Holy Ghost inspired these writers to pen their gospels, He controlled their thoughts, and brought to their minds just those words of the Lord, which are in perfect keeping with that presentation of Christ, which it was their part to portray. Thus all is in beautiful order, and divine inspiration is evidenced at every step.

NOTE.—The tune to Missionary Hymn published last month on page 70, is, as is there stated, No. 723 in the old editions of the Bristol Tune Book, but it should be added that in the new edition of that book the tune referred to is No. 742.

"Thou Remainest."

(SELECTED).

"Thou, O Lord, remainest for ever"—(Lam. v. 17).

For ever Thou remainest—Thou whose name
Is Alpha and Omega, First and Last,
Jehovah—Jesus, changelessly the same
In future, present, past.

Amid the rolling years of changing time,
The shifting sands upon the ocean shore,
The coming and the passing, how sublime
This thought—for evermore!

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

Communion, Worship, and Service.

(CHARLES HICKMAN).

John xii.

Verses 1-8.

Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

THE home at Bethany was always a place of rest and comfort for the Lord, and in this chapter we see the whole family that He loved so well contributing to His joy; Lazarus sat at the table with Him—a figure of communion, Mary anointed His feet with ointment—a figure of worship, while Martha served. These three things—communion, worship and service, go to make up the present privileges of every Christian.

Communion stands first, and is the spring from whence worship and service flow; moreover it is this that the Lord particularly desires. He is not satisfied with the hope of having us with Him in heaven presently; He wants our company now. This is strikingly proved by His tender appeal to the Laodicean Church, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: 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" (Rev. iii. 20). Do we desire His company as He desires ours?

It is impossible for us to have communion with Christ, if we are walking in a way that grieves the Holy Spirit. We need to judge ourselves in what may seem little things. In the Song of Solomon we read: "Take us the foxes," but it does not stop there, "the little foxes that spoil the vines." I will call your attention to one or two little foxes that spoil the vine of communion. The first shall be—*spiritual sloth*. Diligence

has a large place in the Word of God. It is the diligent soul that shall be made fat, and apart from spiritual diligence you cannot know very much about communion with the Lord.

Another little fox is *neglect of prayer*. It would be a very interesting thing for each of us to see how much time we spend in prayer. There is no such thing as maintaining communion apart from a prayerful spirit. It is good to live in the spirit of prayer. You can pray while walking down the street—you can pray while at your business, but never neglect to spend time *alone with the Lord*.

Another little fox that spoils the vine of communion is *anxiety*. It is impossible to have communion if weighed down by a load of care. Hence it is written "Cast [or roll] thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee" (Ps. lv. 22). The Lord wants us to roll every care upon Him, so that our hearts shall be free for communion with Himself.

There is another fox, and it is very little, for it creeps in so easily. It is *worldliness*. You cannot walk with Christ and the world at the same time. Remember the prayer of the Lord Jesus in reference to His disciples:—"I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the

world. Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John xvii. 15-17).

The world has rejected and murdered the Lord Jesus, and if our hearts are true to Him we shall not desire its favours.

If you go on in the spirit, and with the pursuits, of the world that murdered your Saviour, you will not know the joy of communion with Him.

Now let us consider the case of Mary. We read:

"Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Elsewhere we read that "Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word" (Luke x. 39). At the feet of the Lord Jesus she had learnt something of His perfections, and her soul was filled with adoration. In the intelligence gained in His company of what was suitable, she took the box of ointment at that hour preceding the Lord's death and anointed the feet of Jesus.

I do not think that Mary was a rich person; if she had been rich, the Holy Ghost would not, I judge, have spoken of the ointment in the way He did. I am under the impression it took all the money she possessed to purchase it. She would say "Christ is worthy of everything," and she expended her all upon Him. Judas said the ointment was worth three hundred pence. But I would rather have the statement of the Holy Ghost: He said it was "very costly." Her appreciation of Christ

was precious to God. We are told that the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. This is a true figure of worship flowing out from a heart filled with love to Christ, and it is very fragrant to God, and precious to Christ; and no higher privilege could we have than this; but there must be communion if there is to be worship. Do not try to reverse the order. First *communion*: you walk in His company; then as the heart is filled with His beauty, there is the outflow of *worship* to Him.

In Martha we see intelligent and loving service. If you look at the narrative in Luke x. you find failure there: she was cumbered with her service. But in John xii. there is no failure. Lazarus was right, Mary was right, and Martha was right: each was right because Christ had His rightful position—He was the supreme object of each. I make bold to say, that Martha was as right in her service, as Lazarus in his communion, or Mary in her worship. Love always wishes to serve its object. If I saw a person who did not wish to serve one whom he professed to love, I should say the love was not real. And how great is the privilege of serving Christ in the scene of His rejection! In heaven everyone owns the Lord Jesus; mightiest spirits fly upon lightning wings to carry out His commands. But in the world, where He is despised and rejected, we have now the honour of owning Him as Lord, and of doing His pleasure. You may feel that your service is poor and feeble, but if it springs from love to and communion with Him He greatly appreciates it.

The Sphere of Service.

The true homeland of the Church is "in Christ Jesus," and all who know Him not, whether at home or abroad, are 'the one great outland,' which is the field of Gospel work. We must preach Christ to all, for to their need of Him there is no exception, and to His power to save there is no limit.

The presentation of Christ to all is our supreme business. This was placed beyond question by His parting charge, to go into all the world, and to preach the gospel to every creature. Through all these centuries the charge has come down to the present generation, telling of a purpose and desire still existent in the heart of our ascended Lord.

"Things that please Him."

(H. D. R. JAMESON).

Deuteronomy xiv.

4. These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep

6. And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat.

7. Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof: therefore they are unclean unto you.

8. And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet

cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you:

9. These ye shall eat of all that are in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat:

10. And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat: it is unclean unto you.

11. Of all clean birds ye shall eat.

12-18. But these are they of which ye shall not eat; the eagle . . . the vulture . . . the owl, and the night hawk . . . and the bat.

19. And every creeping thing that flieth is unclean unto you: they shall not be eaten.

NO portion of the inspired Word is ever obsolete: unchanging as the God it reveals, it sheds its enlightening rays on the path of the believer in all ages. Indeed its course is like that of the just: it "shineth more and more unto the perfect day," so that what was but dimly understood at the outset is now resplendent with heavenly significance to those "upon whom the ends of the world are come" (I. Cor. x. 11).

To the unbeliever whose darkness has not been lightened, as has ours, through grace, such a chapter as that which we here consider possesses no present meaning or value; but to us are given two keys, which, used in dependence upon the Spirit's guidance, cause the Scriptures to yield to us of their rich and varied store.

The first is that *Christ* is the One who is before the mind of the Spirit in all the Scriptures: of Him they are full, He is the theme and burden of the whole, and no part is rightly understood save as it is looked at in relation to Himself (John v. 39; Luke xxiv. 27). The second key is this: "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." That does not mean that we are to interpret Old Testament Scriptures relating directly and primarily to Israel as though they immediately contemplated the Church—which indeed they do not. But they are there for *our* learning, (*all of them, "whatsoever things were written aforetime"*), and precious is their teaching.

Let us seek now to apply these two keys to the understanding of the teaching of the chapter from which leading verses are quoted above.

For Israel we have direct instruction as to what living creatures were "clean" in the sight of God—what He could approve; what they might eat of; what (in a more limited way) they might offer in sacrifice. This was typical, as was also the history of Israel (*cf.* I. Cor. x. 11). Things then ordained were but a "shadow of good things to come" (Heb. x. 1).

In what is stated distinctively of all that which was "clean" in Jehovah's sight, we have Christ brought before us in that which was pre-eminently and perfectly true in Him—the contemplation of this is food to our souls: of this we may eat. At the same time we have the traits presented which are pleasing in man generally as under the eye of God in an evil world, and here is instruction for our path. These are "things that please Him" (John viii. 29).

Separation in the power of good.

Throughout Scripture the feet, when viewed typically, are identified with the pathway or course of a man in this world (*cf.* Ps. cxix. 105), and so the feature first treated of is the hoof; and here at once, in verse 6, we have "division," or "separation," brought into prominence: an animal which God could account "clean" must have a *divided* hoof. That is but a shadow or

type, but it is a shadow or type of a reality. When by the word of God light appeared in Genesis i., then, immediately, darkness is put in contrast, and we get it stated "God *divided* the light from the darkness." This is a principle that runs through all the Word of God, and which will have its ultimate issue when God by the "great gulf fixed" makes the stupendous division between good and evil, which at the "great white throne" is consummated and determined as final and eternal (Rev. xx.).

Meantime the same principle of separation is to govern us. As to iniquity itself, the Scripture saith: "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ *depart from iniquity*" (II. Tim. ii. 19); and as to some given up to its sway: "Come out from among them and *be ye separate*, saith the Lord" (II. Cor. vi. 14-18).

But the "clean" animal not only divides the hoof, but also chews the cud; that is to say, this is not to be a mere outward separation as that of the Pharisees, or of the merely natural separatists contemplated in Jude 19: it is to be a separation *produced* by inward acceptance and appreciation of the precious truth of God—the truth received in the heart, meditated on there (which answers to "chewing the cud"), and brought into practice in a separation from iniquity, which is carried out in the power of what is good, inwardly known and enjoyed. This it is which alone is pleasing in the sight of God.

How perfectly is all this exemplified in Christ, the "blessed" Man of Psalm i, who is seen, in verse 1, as to what is outward, as the Man that "walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful"; and as to what is inward, it is said in verse 2, "but His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth He meditate day and night."

Many are occupied with what is merely negative, *i.e.*, with "separation from evil," but this is useless, and worse, if it does not go along with, and proceed

from the enjoyment and power of positive truth. This is emphasized by the instruction that an animal even with a divided hoof was not "clean" if it were without *also* the other equally important typical feature of chewing the cud.

Amongst the latter class were "swine" (verse 8); and here we may remark on the perfect unity of Holy Scripture, for when, in the epistle of Peter, some are brought before us who were not really converted, but had professed and even attempted a separation from the pollutions of the world, which did not proceed from a heart right with God, the simile which describes their retrogression to their own proper state is that of the return of a "sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Separation, then, in its true and divinely pleasing aspect, is of the character contemplated by Moses when he prayed:

If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and Thy people have found grace in Thy sight? is it not in that Thou goest with us? SO SHALL WE BE SEPARATED, I and Thy people, from all people that are upon the face of the earth (Exod. xxxiii. 16).

For the New Testament counterpart to this see I. Cor. xiv. 24, 25:

But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all:

And thus the secrets of his heart are made manifest; and so falling down on his face he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a truth.

Here in the abundance of that which is for "edification, and exhortation, and comfort" (I. Cor. xiv. 3) the presence of God with them is manifest even to the unbeliever; and those so marked are thus separated *essentially* in the power of good.

Remarkable is the contrast to this in Proverbs xviii. 1, 2:—

The separatist seeketh after his own pleasure; against all that is beneficial he sheweth his teeth.

The fool hath no delight in understanding; but only that his heart may reveal itself therein. (Delitzsch's translation.)

Here no thought of the edification and good of others is present: the separatist treads a path of separation in pursuit of that which is pleasing in his own eyes, his own separate view and

cherished ideas; whilst to all that is really beneficial his mind is opposed. The moral source of this is seen in verse 2: he who is there contemplated has not the necessary second mark of that which is "clean," *i.e.*, that of "chewing the cud"; he delights not in *good*, in understanding itself; indeed in it he perceives no gain saving in so far as it may serve the end of self exaltation.

Thus we have divinely portrayed for us both the character and source of that merely schismatic separation which is an abhorrence to God, and also in bright contrast that energy of positive good which essentially separates those in whom it is active, according to God.

Reverting to our chapter we note that on the other hand there might be the chewing of the cud without the dividing of the hoof (verse 7). Such also were "unclean" in the sight of Jehovah. The possession of light but adds to man's condemnation if he be not thereby affected and separated *from* what is unsuitable, *to* the One from whence that light proceeds.

Movement.

Now as to what were in the waters: in verse 9 we read, "These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat: and whatsoever hath not fins and scales may ye not eat; it is unclean unto you."

The caudal fin, or tail, is the principal organ of locomotion in the fish, whilst the dorsal and ventral fins serve to balance it in the water that it may pursue a directed course; the scales form the protective covering of the whole body. Bearing in mind these simple uses of the distinctive and well known features brought before us here by the Spirit, we may pass to the consideration of the obvious typical teaching of these verses.

The waters in Scripture (in their wide aspect, as seas, etc.), typify the peoples (Rev. xvii. 15). The living creatures found in the waters were only "clean" in the sight of God—speaking always in the typical sense—if they were marked by two things: firstly *movement*—

not aimless movement, as the motion of a jellyfish drifting with the tides, but *directed* movement in an ordered course; and secondly, an efficient protective covering.

It is thus with the people of God. They are found in the midst of men, and their lot is to pass in and out amongst men in the pursuit of their daily duties and the ordinary affairs of life, but if they are to be pleasing in the sight of God they must be marked by these two things, the first of which is *movement*. This is a principle which obtains all through the believer's pathway. When Israel began their history with God as a redeemed people, by eating the Passover in the land of Egypt, they did so with loins girded, shoes on their feet, and staff in their hand; and that very night, delivered from judgment, and enriched with plenty, they began to *journey* towards the promised land—"the children of Israel *journeyed*" (Exod. xii. 37). Thenceforward movement was to characterise them, not settling down in any place short of the promised land. True, they wandered a good proportion of the years, but that was through unbelief; it was not the divine thought for them. When we reach the point in Israel's typical history, at which they beheld the brazen serpent and reached the springing well, then immediately we read of their "setting forward" and "journeying," and from that point the record of their successive encampments (Numbers xxi. 10-20) reveals persistent unwavering movement, stage by stage, in as nearly as possible a bee line for the outposts of the promised land; and victory marked their progress (verses 21-34).

The Christian is not to settle down here, is not to drift aimlessly through life; but his loins are to be girded, and he himself is to be marked by *movement*—movement in an ordered and directed course, a course marked out for us by the blessed Lord Himself (for in Him all that should mark the Christian shines most perfectly); and the issue of that path is glorious (Heb. xii. 1, 2). Paul too, with Christ before him, could write

"One thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" and then he urges others to be "*thus minded*" (Phil. iii. 13-16).

Protection.

Then the second point is protection from what is without. Now the Christian needs this. He is in an evil world, and he needs what answers to "scales" in the verse before us—that which will protect him from the seductive influences of all that is around. In what does this consist? Not in a set of rules; law could never form an efficient protection, and the Christian is not under law but under grace.

What then? Look at the first epistle of John. In chapter ii. we read: "These things write I unto you that ye sin not." That is not mere prohibition of sin, not a statement simply that he was writing to them with direction that they should not sin. In chapter i. of that epistle we have a marvellous unfolding of eternal life made known to men in Christ, and brought before us in Him for our souls' communion. There is opened up to us fellowship with the Father and the Son that our joy may be full, and, along with that, other privileges which belong to those "in the light" (as all "begotten of God" are)—viz. fellowship one with another, with the knowledge of perfect cleansing. It is in the power of the positive good and blessing here unfolded that the Christian is kept from sin. These things were written to them that they might not sin, for in the present possession of heavenly joys the pleasures of sin lose their attractive force, and the Christian is preserved.

This will be perfectly exemplified in the heavenly city by and by: its gates are never closed, yet "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth;" there is "no night there," and evil is absolutely excluded in the expansive and expulsive power of positive good, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and

the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. xxi. 23-27).

Then, as always, for supreme exemplification we turn to Christ Himself, who could say "the prince of this world cometh and hath *nothing* in Me" (John xiv. 30). In Him absolutely and always was there the perfect intolerance of evil in the power of perfect good.

Light and Love.

Next in order we come to the birds. These were all "clean," save some specially enumerated. These latter all appear to possess one or more of three outstanding characteristics, *i.e.*, they are either birds of prey, as the eagle, vulture, and kite; birds of night, as the night-hawk, great owl, and bat; or birds of foul and unclean habits, as the lapwing (or hoopoo).

The birds that were unclean show by contrast that which in the believer is pleasing in the sight of God. He feeds not on the dead, as do vultures and the like, nor is his pleasure in that which is foul, as the lapwing: his food is Christ, the living bread, and his delight is in the things that are lovely, that are honest, that are of good report (Phil. iv. 8). He is not of the night, but is a child of light, and belongs to the coming day towards which his eager footsteps ever press, "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God" (II. Peter iii. 12).

He lives not at the expense of others, as do birds of prey. Divine love has reached him at infinite cost to itself, and, learning in his measure the lessons of that love, he begins himself to live, first, unto Him who died for him and rose again, and second, for the good of others—to give, not to get; to spend and be spent. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (I. John iv. 8).

"Things Above."

Lastly we have the creeping things that fly (or were winged). These were all unclean. The characteristics of those typified under the figure of *creeping* things, may readily be recognised in

the following lament of the apostle Paul when writing to the Philippians. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who *mind earthly things.*"

The parallel passage, Leviticus xi., intimates that there were certain exceptions to the rule that all such creeping things were "unclean": yet the exceptions but serve to emphasise the typical teaching of that which was written, for these exceptions were marked as having "legs above their feet to leap withal upon the earth," as the locust and grasshopper (verses 21 and 22). These possessed a length of limb which enabled them to leap, to rise above the earth. Thus it is with the believer: though on the earth and found in exactly the same earthly relationships and circumstances

as the unbeliever, yet he possesses in the Spirit's power the ability to rise far above the things of earth and enter into that which is spiritual and invisible: as "risen with Christ," he is able to have his mind on "those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Col. iii. 1, 2), yea, through the Lord Jesus Christ and by that same Spirit he has access even to the Father (Eph. ii. 18).

May the Lord give us to seek that which is thus brought before us as "well pleasing in His sight": the separate path in the power of good; constant and definite movement in the ordered course; the expansive and expulsive power of heavenly joys; the unselfish life in this, the world's night, along with an eager outgoing of heart to the coming day; and with, lastly, the soul's present home in that which is above and beyond all that is merely of earth.

The Green Pastures.

"Oh that we used a wholesome frugality in our reading of uninspired books and tracts, and that we possessed a healthy appetite for the nutritious and strengthening word of God! That we would not confine ourselves to our favourite chapters, but launch out into the free, majestic, infinite ocean of Scripture! That we fed on the green pastures, so spacious and so varied! Let me entreat the young especially to read the whole Scripture, copiously, regularly, and systematically."

Have Faith in God.

"I was writing to a friend in Canada whom I knew to be a true servant of the Lord working in entire dependence upon Him, when it occurred to me that he might be in need; I took my pocket-book out and found that a two-dollar bill was all it contained, and moreover that was all that I possessed, so I put it back, saying, "I shall need that myself."

But I could not shake off the thought that had laid hold of me, and as I was enjoying the hospitality of a friend at the time and so had no immediate need, I put the bill in the letter and carried it unsealed to the post. On reaching the post-office it was evident to me that it must go, so I sealed it and dropped it into the letter-box. I had no sooner done so when a cheery voice said "Good morning, glad to see you, but I can't stay," and with a hearty shake of the hand he disappeared, he left something in my hand, however, which on examination proved to be a two-dollar bill.

The one to whom that bill was sent replied that it came to him just at a moment when he was being sorely tempted to doubt God's care of him, and that it had turned his doubts to praise."

In all circumstances make God the great circumstance.

How may Christ become a living reality to the soul?

Concluding Series of Replies.

Answer (5)

(J. T. MAWSON).

OUR steamer was expected to reach a certain small coast town on a West India Island about daybreak, for the disembarking of passengers, and we knew that we ought then to see one of the most beautiful sights that nature could present. A high range of mountains, shading away from bright green at the foot into a deep purple at the summit, reared their heads against the glorious blue of a tropical sky, while waving at the base of them were the feathered palms as of some fabled land, and all the picturesque surroundings of a lovely bay. We were up betimes waiting for the morning to break over the eastern waters; but when at last it did appear, we saw not the landscape that we had expected, for a heavy bank of cloud hid those mountains with their gorgeous colourings from our view.

Those who had not seen them could scarce believe that they were there, and if they had not been indelibly photographed on our minds, we too should have questioned their reality, so that even to us, being thus obscured, they were but a memory. It is often thus with the things of God; the clouds from the world arise to obscure the bright prospect, or the foul miasma of the flesh wraps the soul in its embrace, then the sense of the reality of these things passes away, and the sweet serenity and calm of the uplands give place to the restless fever of a soul out of communion with God.

Things nearer at hand remain in view—perhaps the fellowship of Christians, or some service undertaken in the brighter days—but the joy, the charm, the reality are gone, everything seems out of focus, for Christ is not seen as the great central Object throwing everything else into its right relation. Then the question arises as to the reality of these things, for no things are so unreal as divine things to the soul out of communion and under the cloud of what is temporal. It may be the memory remains to increase the unhappiness, but Christ is not a present living reality.

Under such circumstances what is to be done? There is but one way of escape, and that is to seek the presence of God. We may go to Him assured that He is more desirous that we should live in the power of divine things than we can be, moreover He, who brought us into them at the beginning, is the only One who can restore the joy of them to us when that joy is lost.

If we fear Him we shall go to Him, and the fear of the Lord is the first necessity of our lives, every mystery is made plain to those who fear the Lord, for the secret of the Lord is with such. It is in His presence, away from the

deadening influences of things temporal, that we hear His voice, and we must pray the Psalmist prayer, "Be not silent to me, lest if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit" (Ps. xxviii. 1). If God's voice is not heard, and we are not in exercise, we are like the unquicken'd multitudes that know not God.

The World.

In the presence of the Lord we get a right estimate of the world, and our souls respond to His judgment about it, as given us in the Scriptures.

The word of God is most insistent and emphatic as to the world. Jesus said of it, "It hated me" (John xv. 18). He also said of His own, "I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John xv. 19), and, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John xvii. 16). Paul, by the Holy Ghost, said, "The princes of this world . . . crucified the Lord of Glory" (I. Cor. ii. 8). John said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him" (I. John ii. 15). James said, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James iv. 4). It is evident then that we cannot find our delight in worldly pursuits and in the things of Christ at the same time. We cannot hug the world and know the reality of divine things: there is no co-mingling between them, and on our part there must be, there can be, no compromise. To adopt such an attitude will be to be thought eccentric, and indeed if our souls find their centre in Christ, we shall be eccentric to the world, for it hated Him, but we shall be concentric to all in the circle of the Father's love, for the Father finds all His delight in His Son.

The world is but a vapour that shall pass away with all the lust of it, even as the clouds that hid the mountains disappeared before the advancing day; when this comes to pass in actuality, then shall Christ stand out in His inherent and eternal beauty before the admiring eyes of a universe. But in the presence of God our faith judges the world even to-day, and this clears the vision so that those things which are invisible to carnal eyes come into full view, and are the greatest realities of the life.

The Flesh.

No Christian loves "the flesh," and there are times when the soul's hatred of it is most intense, and the agony of being overcome by it

almost more than can be borne; and yet victory comes not. The reason for this is often that underneath all the desire after Christ, there is the reserve of some part of the life, or some time in the day, for self and gratification of the flesh. Augustine in his confessions tells us that he used to pray "O God make me pure, but not just now"; and many another heart has had that secret thought and desire even if the prayer has not risen to the lip.

There are three things the remembrance of which will help us:

1. The flesh is the great rival to the Spirit whose delight is to occupy us with Christ.
2. It will always mar our enjoyment of Christ's things.
3. All the time spent in it is lost time.

Answer (6).

(J. WILSON SMITH).

If Christ is no reality to a man it would be well for him to ask himself the question, "is Christ aught to me? Is His name anything more to my mind than a sound which I have been taught to venerate? Have I ever been brought into such contact with Him that I have consciously received blessing at His hand? Have I proved, in a truly sensible way, that He has touched and enriched my soul?" Let this enquiry be first answered.

Then it may safely be said that, in the experience of the true Christian, there are varied degrees and measures and unfoldings of the Lord to him. He may pass slowly perhaps from the time when he said in pride of heart—

"All of self and none of Thee,"

to the time when, by grace, he prayed:—

"Some of self and some of Thee;"

and then to that when, by that same grace, he cried:—"None of self and all of Thee."

This, indeed, is the blessed climax, and suggests to us the words of Paul:—"Nevertheless I live, yet not I." In his case, "self" (and what a mountain of evil is "self"!) had been morally displaced by the Lord Jesus Christ, who had become his life in true practical reality. Yet the same climax may, and should be reached by all.

But just as there is continuing advance from the time when the first beams of light irradiate the eastern sky, until the hour when the sun reaches its zenith in the heavens at noon of day, so there may be, and must be, progress in the Christian's apprehension of Christ.

The bride in the Song of Solomon begins the path of such progress by saying: "My Beloved is mine and I am His" (ch. ii. 16). Her initial

But neither the world nor the flesh will be truly judged by our occupation with them, or even by a close investigation of their godlessness, nor shall we turn from either because we have suffered loss at their hands.

It is when there is borne upon our souls by the power of the Holy Ghost what the Cross of Christ means, that we shall be able to say, "The world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14), and that we "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. iii. 3).

For this we must go to God: in His presence our thoughts will give place to His, and grace, power, and mercy, will be given for a walk of separation from the evil things, and the joy of the knowledge of Christ as the risen and exalted one who loved us and died for us, will be a great and present reality.

apprehension is her own wonderful possession:—"He is mine!" What a sense of reality is here!

But then, after a while she says:—"I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine" (ch. vi. 3). This indicates growth—her possession is not so prominent now as the dawning apprehension of the thought: "I am His."

Finally she declares:—"I am my Beloved's, and His desire is toward me" (ch. vii. 10). Here self is lost in the consciousness of His satisfaction in her.

How forcibly real and simple is the knowledge of Christ! and in this line no experience can be of greater value. Was it not with this in view that the great apostle of Christianity bowed his knees before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and prayed (as in Eph. iii.) "that He would grant them according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith" [thus becoming to them a living bright reality as the abiding tenant of their affections] "and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge"; so that, while they loved Him, they might learn more fully His love to them—a love beyond knowledge.

This is the great study, and object, and aim in Christianity: and, on account of it, the four inspired Evangelists wrote their separate descriptions of Him who was everything to them—their endless theme and story—till they finished by saying that the world itself could not contain the books which should be written. For this glorious reality, apostles lived and suffered and died; whilst to-day in the apparent wreck of everything divine, we are sustained in triumph by the Spirit-given consciousness of a living, loving Christ on high who is everything and in all!

Answer (7)

(H. P. BARKER).

Let your thoughts travel for a moment round the whole circle of your Christian friends. Then fix them upon the one whom you esteem more than all the rest. Perhaps this will be the dear servant of Christ who was used of God

for your conversion. May be it will be one who has been a great help to you in your Christian life; or possibly a godly parent who has many a time prayed for you and with you.

Imagine that you are staying for a time under the same roof as that honoured friend of yours. One night, after he has retired to his room, you hear a sound as if he were talking to someone. And so he is. It is his voice in prayer that you hear; he is talking to God.

You cannot but hear what he says, and your attention is rivetted when you catch the mention of your own name. Your friend is praying about YOU!

And how he pours out his heart in earnest supplication on your behalf! He seems to know all about you, your daily trials and struggles, your temptations and failures, the pressure that sometimes seems almost too great to bear, and your lack of strength to carry life's burden. He speaks, too, of unknown and unsuspected dangers that surround you, and of snares that Satan sets for your feet. And he mentions your earnest longings after the things that are true and good, your desires for closer communion with God, and your feeble endeavours to serve Christ.

In connection with all these things your friend prays for you, earnestly, beseechingly, importunately, mentioning your name again and again.

What you hear fills you with comfort. You say, "I am sure God will answer the prayers of His dear servant," and you realize the immense

blessing of having someone to offer "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man" on your behalf.

But now transfer your thoughts from your friend to *your Saviour*.

Your ears cannot hear Him, but He is interceding for you as really as if they could. He mentions your name; He knows all about you. He has watched your faltering footsteps and has encircled you with His protecting care. He loves you more than tongue can tell. He died once, for love of you, and would be willing to do so again if it were necessary. Day and night He thinks of you. He is nearer to you than any earthly friend can be, and His intercession is mightier than any that such can offer. Does not the thought of this cheer and encourage you?

Sit down quietly for a few minutes and think. Close your eyes and say to yourself: "My Saviour is thinking of me. He is interceding for me in Heaven. He never takes His eyes off me. He loves me tenderly, faithfully and for ever."

Then get down on your knees and talk to Him as if your eyes could see Him. He hears every word that you say.

And when you rise from your knees I venture to think you will know what it is to have Christ as a living reality to your soul.

The Mystery of God.

(J. ALFRED TRENCH).

3rd Chapter.

HAVING seen then the mystery, which had been hidden in God from ages and generations, now revealed to Paul and committed to him as minister thereof, we must pass on to his epistle to the Ephesians, in order to trace the full unfolding of this precious truth.

The Development of God's Counsels.

And now how important it is for us to observe the way God takes with us, when, in such grace, He would communicate what had ever been in the depths of His own being. All His thoughts and counsels centre in Christ; and we find that He first of all sets us in the light of these counsels as to our *individual* place in Christ (Eph. i. 4-7).

But before the Apostle can go into the orderly presentation to us of what was filling his heart, he finds relief in worship (for worship is simply the overflow to God of a heart too full to contain itself):—"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ." May this be the effect produced upon us as the fulness of the blessing opens out to us.

The stand-point to which the Spirit conducts us, is that of the eternal nature of God; for we read "according as He hath *chosen* us in Him (Christ Jesus) before the foundation of the world." For "choice" is simply the expression of what perfectly suits him who chooses.

It is not the activity of counsel yet, but just the expression of God's own nature; and how astonishing the thought: 'He chose us in Christ!' But if in Christ, it will be found to be in all that He ever was to God; and so we read "that we should be holy and without blame," and "before Him"—before His own satisfied gaze—and "in love," as the object of God's delight: just what Christ is, and was manifested to be when here (see Matt. iii. 16, 17).

True, Christ was alone then in the place He had before God; and only by redemption could He bring us into it. But it is not our being brought into it that is in question in these opening verses: it is how God saw us in Him in His own thoughts about us, before ever the foundation of the world was laid.

But in what *relationship* will divine and sovereign love be pleased to set us who are the objects of that love? Would angelic relationship have ever been conceived possible by us? It would not do for God. He had myriads of angels that excelled in strength, and ever did His pleasure: but they were only servants. He wanted *sons*—sons to surround Him in His home of light and love with the cry of Abba Father: accordingly we read "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children [or 'sonship'] by Jesus Christ to Himself" (Eph. i. 5). Sweet thought: He had counselled this for His own ineffable satisfaction: not merely for our blessing, but according to the *good pleasure* of His will. And this relationship was set forth in Christ when the voice from heaven (Matt. iii. 17)¹ addressed Him as the Son. Nor is even what was there connected with the place the Son had in his Father's heart—"this is my *beloved* Son"—reserved from us; for to the *praise* of the *glory* of His grace "He has taken us into favour in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6, New Translation: where see note).

Then once more His grace is brought out, not in the glory of it in this case, as in verse 6, but in its riches to meet us in the poverty of our need—"In whom we have redemption through His blood . . . according to the riches of His grace." For this was the righteous ground of the accomplishment of all that was thus projected upon the page of revelation, of what had been in His heart for us from eternity.

Now it is only when the revelation of the individual Christian position according to these wonderful counsels of God is thus complete, and revealed by the Holy Ghost for faith to enter into and enjoy by the power of the same Spirit, that God counts upon our being free, so to speak, to enter into His interests for *Christ*. His grace is then seen abounding in all wisdom and prudence in bringing out to us these counsels. "Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one [or 'head up', as it really should read] all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." This is the mystery then in its widest range: for what could go beyond not only all things being put into *subjection to Him* (which had been announced before, and will be fulfilled in the last of earth's times, *i.e.* the kingdom), but the whole universe being brought into relationship with Him as its Head; which, when the times have reached their fulness, is now revealed to be the end and object of God in instituting them? What an expanse of glory opens up to our souls as we are enabled to delight in the place which God had purposed in Himself for Christ, and which He in unspeakable grace is now pleased to make known to us.

But that is not all. For in the very next words we learn that in Him we have been made heirs of that whole inheritance of glory, having been predestined even to this "according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things

¹ The verb *eudokeo* used in Matt. iii. 17: "I am well pleased", answers to the substantive *eudokia* used in Eph. i. 5: "the good pleasure."

after the counsel of His own will: that we should be to the praise of His glory." The opening verses presented to us His calling in what is, beyond all thought, above us: here we have what is below us, in the inheritance that answers to such a calling—"the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints" (v. 18). Only it is to be carefully observed that this expression does not mean that the saints *are* His inheritance, as is constantly said of Israel. *We* are *heirs* of the inheritance which is Christ's, and which has been presented in the whole extent of it in verse 10. But if it is in Him we enter into it, it is in us He takes possession of it. Dan. vii. helps to explain the thought. In verse 14 of that chapter we read, "there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom;" in verse 18 we read that "the saints of the high places" (margin) take it and possess it for ever. The sign of His taking up the inheritance is that He puts them into possession. So here in Ephesians it is "the riches of the glory of His inheritance," but taken up before the universe by putting the saints into it, and hence it is "in the saints."

That this is the force of the expression is greatly confirmed to us when we find that, because we do not enter upon any part of the inheritance till Christ does (when it will be time enough for us), we have meantime been given an earnest of it (Eph. i. 13, 14). In Him we have been sealed for God with the Holy Ghost, when we believed the glad tidings of our salvation. But the Holy Ghost is also the earnest for us of our inheritance, until the day when redemption is put forth in power, and the inheritance is actually taken up. Could anything give a greater conception of the extent and glory of it than to have such an earnest?

And yet what is more precious still for our hearts is the way we enter into the inheritance. When God set Adam at the head of everything in the lower world, He gave him Eve to share with him the fair inheritance, so soon to be dragged down by him into the bondage of

corruption. But no thought of God will fail of its accomplishment. Adam was but the type of Him that was to come; whom God will set, according to His counsels for His glory, at the head of everything in heaven and earth. Nor will He be alone in that day of glory: He will have His heavenly Eve to be heir and sharer with Him of it all. And so the wonderful Eph. i. of God's counsels does not close without bringing Christ out as "Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22, 23).

The Divine Masterpiece.

Eph. i. is then the unfolding to us of the thoughts and counsels of divine love that centred in the Beloved Son of the Father, involving for us not only an individual place before Him in Christ, but a corporate relationship to Christ as His Body, the Assembly. And in this epistle alone, as connected with the counsels of eternity, the Body embraces the aggregate of those who are Christ's, from Pentecost till He comes again, when the assembly will be complete, and "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." In every other passage the Body of Christ is either the whole company of the saints at any given time on the earth, where the Holy Ghost is to maintain it in its unity: or the local expression of this in all who are His in any given place.

In chapter ii. we come to the wonderful work of God in time, by which the Body is formed out of the material of Jew and Gentile, who were both alike dead in sins, but who are quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in Him in the heavenlies: that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (verses 6, 7).

In the latter half of the chapter we have the actual subsisting assembly here on earth viewed also as the household of God, and as a building fitly framed together, growing to a holy temple in the Lord, but which even in

its present state has become the habitation of God through the Spirit (verses 19-22).

Chapter iii. comes in parenthetically to give us Paul's part in the work; and there is a further development of the mystery made known to him by revelation, "which in other ages was *not* made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be co-heirs and of a co-body and co-partakers (if we could read it in this way to help as to the force of his words) of His promise in Christ by the Gospel" (verses 5, 6).

Observe how he especially presses the aspect of it as it concerns us Gentiles. For there had been thousands of Jews formed into the body from Pentecost, before one Gentile was brought in.

The apostle had a double ministry, and he himself was greatly affected by what he carried to others, for he felt himself to be less than the least of all saints. Would that we were affected in our little measure in the same way! This double ministry was, 1st: "to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ"—what a gospel that was for the preacher!—and, 2nd: "to make all see"—this is the word for the eyes of the heart being "enlightened," see chap. i. 18,—"*what is the administration of the mystery.*" *Fellowship*, the word used here by the transcribers, is a very precious part of it: but the apostle really uses the larger word (like the one used in sound, and therefore easily mistaken for it by the copyists) which takes in the whole practical carrying out of the Assembly's relationship to Christ as His Body on the earth (verses 8, 9).

But oh, if only we had hearts to be more affected by the truth, how well it might move us to have the truth of the mystery, that from the beginning of the ages had been hid in God, thus revealed to us! By the mighty fiat of His word He had called all things into being, and therein displayed His eternal power and Godhead, but He had kept this hid in Himself throughout the lapse of the ages. But now that the Assembly was

formed, and united to Christ as His Body by the Holy Ghost come down at Pentecost,—one body out of the most opposed nationalities of the world,—and the administration of it committed to Paul, it was God's intent that now unto the principalities and powers (the highest created intelligences) in the heavenlies, might be known by the Assembly the *manifest* wisdom of God.

To use an earthly illustration of what is so far beyond our conceptions, it is as if a painter, having produced many works of art, had resolved to concentrate all his resources upon one great masterpiece. This is what God has done in His own divine way: this is what the assembly is to Him; His masterpiece, in which all the varied resources of His wisdom are seen. For if little (alas, how little!) thought of by us, who are of the Assembly, yet the heavenly intelligences can discern the skill and beauty of the divine workmanship; even though through our unfaithfulness to the light and truth of it communicated through the Apostle, the Assembly that should have answered to it, has become, on its responsible side, the sport of Satan, and the scene of the worst failure ever manifested in His people here.

Beloved in the Lord, who can read the inspired words, and enter in any measure into the place of the Assembly before God, whether as the fruit of the counsels of His love, or as the effect of His mighty operations in time, or as now made the depository of all He had planned and carried out for the glory of Christ in it, without being filled with shame: not only as to the way the whole truth of it was lost for ages, but as to the feeble impression made upon any of us, when in these last days, by an energy of the Spirit in testimony, God has presented the truth to the hearts and consciences of numbers of His own? What insensibility and indifference and practical unbelief has been manifested by us! May we be humbled in His holy presence, that the highest truth—always the easiest to let slip—may be once more revived in the affections of His saints.

(To be concluded).

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter III.

1. Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone;

2. And sent Timotheus, our brother, and minister of God, and our fellowlabourer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith:

3. That no man should be moved by these afflictions: for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.

4. For verily, when we were with you, we told you before that we should suffer tribulation; even as it came to pass, and ye know.

5. For this cause, when I could no longer forbear, I sent to know your faith, lest by some means the tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.

6. But now when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, and that ye have good remembrance of us always, desiring greatly to see us, as we also to see you:

7. Therefore, brethren, we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress by your faith:

8. For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.

9. For what thanks can we render to God again for you, for all the joy wherewith we joy for your sakes before our God;

10. Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

11. Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you.

12. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you:

13. 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.

Verses 1, 2 and 3.

AS in the preceding chapter we see the devoted and self-sacrificing love of the Apostle, as of a nursing mother and of a father cherishing, instructing, and bringing up their children with tender care: so here we see the anxiety with which he thinks of them as exposed to the perils and sufferings of their new pathway.

It is instructive and inspiring to see the various feelings of the Spirit of Christ brought into play in the ministry of His servant, and the emotions that fill his breast. His work was not the work of a mere preacher. The least part of it was the preaching. Apostle, evangelist, preacher, pastor, teacher, father, mother, friend, and lover, all in one, he sought not their's but *them*. He sought them at the cost of all he had—himself. He sought them not merely for their present, but for their eternal, their highest good. He sought them, not for themselves and their welfare merely, but for the Lord Jesus Christ and for God. He was a servant in the true sense of the word; and with the perceptions of the Spirit, and the sentiments that are alike the pleasure

and the pain of true affection. Nor is he alone in this, though surely foremost. Others are joined with him in the same spirit; and in the same unselfish spirit he joins them with himself.

As we have already remarked, Thessalonica was the resort of a large colony of Jews, and the place was greatly under their influence, even as it is to this day. Now the Jews were, as I might so say, the hereditary enemies of the testimony of God, and therefore of Christ and of Christianity (ch. ii. 15), and it was therefore no wonder that the Christians at Thessalonica suffered sorely at their hands. In Acts xvii. we read that they succeeded in chasing Paul out of Thessalonica, and not content with that, they followed him to Berea and stirred up against him the people in that place also, so that from there he had to leave for Athens. Carrying therefore in his mind the sense of the persecuting opposition from which he himself was suffering, he was naturally in much anxiety about the baby converts he had left in Thessalonica, and in his tender solicitude on their behalf he elects to be left alone in solitude at Athens (and how solitary he must there have felt!)—and he sends

Timothy back to them to enquire of their welfare, and to establish and exhort them concerning their faith, encouraging them that no man might be moved by these afflictions.

Verse 4.

Already he had foretold them that tribulation is the appointed lot of the believer. In this statement there is nothing new. The Lord Himself had clearly foretold it to His disciples, (John xv. 20-25; xvi. 2-33). It is the necessary adjunct of the testimony of God in a world that hates Him: and it was not only the preaching but the portion of the Church from earliest times (Acts v. 41; xiv. 22).

But from then till now, and so it ever will be, that the north wind is as necessary for the garden as is the south wind, "that the spices thereof may flow out" (Cant. iv. 16); and while the storm of persecution may do some damage, yet nevertheless, generally speaking, it does more good. Some indeed think that when they are saved, they are saved from all trouble; and they think it strange when some fiery trial overtakes them. The Apostle says rather "Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (I. Pet. iv. 12, 13). As well might a sailor expect to learn navigation on a duck-pond, as for a Christian to follow Christ, and not take part in His sufferings. "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." It is the royal lot of the Christian, and therein "the Spirit of glory and of God" resteth upon him (I. Peter iv. 14): although we none of us like it.

Verses 6-10.

How greatly therefore was the Apostle comforted in his own distress and affliction by the good tidings that Timothy brought him of their faith and love, and of how they reciprocated his feelings towards him, and desired to see his face, even as he did theirs. He is comforted in all his distress by their faith; and what intensity of feeling is

betokened in the words "because now we live if you continue to stand firm in the Lord" (Lit. trans.). Joy in their present standing, comfort in the lowliness of their faith, solicitude as to all that was still before them:—"if you *continue* to stand firm in the Lord." Their trials were not yet over, nor was the goal reached: so that while his heart is filled with thankfulness to God, and joy before Him on their account, he is also importunate above measure in prayer, night and day, that he might see their face, and perfect that which was deficient as to their intelligence in the faith.

And how natural and unaffected is all this: the exposure, the laying bare of those deep and tender feelings of the heart that cannot be hid! And how it invests Christianity with an open, frank transparency, a deep and vital reality, an earnest and practical expression, which is too easily lost sight of amidst the withering controversies of terminology, and the profitless disputes of words which loom so largely before the Apostle's mind as the rank growth of later times (*cf.* II. Tim. ii. 14-23).

Verse 11.

The grammatical structure of this verse is remarkable. With two nominatives the verb "direct" is in the singular. The same construction occurs again in II. Thess. ii. 16, 17; but the order of the Persons there is changed. As another has put it, "God the Father and Christ the Lord forming, so to speak, one in the thought of the Apostle's mind, though personally clearly distinguished," each individually, or both collectively, are rightly addressed in prayer (*cf.* also II. Thess. iii. 5-16).

Verse 12.

He prays (ver. 11) that his way may be directed to them, if such be the will of God: but (ver. 12) under any circumstances his heart enlarges towards them, and enwraps them in his own spirit, breathes into them, and as it were feeds them with his very breath, in his desire that in any case, whether he sees them or not, "the Lord make *you* to increase

and abound in love one toward another and toward all men, even as we do toward you."

Too often we are content to love those that love us, and them not very much. But the word of the gospel teaches us to "love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you" (Luke vi. 27, 28). We see how necessary it was to inculcate such pure and wholesome teachings on these, who were till so recently, poor benighted pagans. We might add, how important for those who teach to themselves practise, lest their guilt become doubly dyed, and their judgment correspondingly severe. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

The Thessalonian saints had seen a living illustration of this doctrine in the spirit and conduct of those who, at the risk of their own lives, had come to preach it to them, and to practise it amongst them; and who could now use the moral weight of their own behaviour amongst them, as being the exponents themselves of what they had taught to others. Happy men! May we seek each one to be animated by and to carry out into practice the same spirit.

"Jesus bids us shine,

You in your small corner,
And I in mine."

Verse 13.

Notice too that he puts love (ver. 12) before holiness (ver. 13). Holiness is not the life of the Christian; but love is. It is a holy love. But it is love, divine

love, the very nature of God Himself and of the child of God, that produces holiness: not holiness that produces love. And as this is connected with the responsibility of the Christian it is therefore referred to the presence of "God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

It is not a question here of going into the Father's house for the enjoyment of all the grace connected therewith; but though God is always our Father, still it is here at the time of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when the consequences of Christian responsibility will be manifested, and it will appear how far we are unblameable before Him. This must not be lost sight of in the remembrance of His grace: and again His grace must not be beclouded in view of this. This will be the holy judgment of God at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ with His holy ones, when every secret will be searched and every hidden thing laid bare.

But he is careful to say it is all "before God, even our Father." And with this are closely connected the words of the apostle Peter: "as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation . . . , and if ye call Him Father (Lit. trans.) who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (I. Pet. i. 15-17). We need to distinguish between, but not to divorce these two great principles: the government and the grace of God.

We must have faith, not only in the form of fixity of doctrine, but also in the shape of *constant dependence upon God*.

A whole Bible for my staff, a whole Christ for my salvation, and a whole world for my parish.

You *can* work without praying but it is a bad plan and your work will be mainly barren. But you cannot pray in earnest without working.

Rest in the Lord, my soul;

Commit to Him thy way.

What to thy sight seems dark as night,

To Him is bright as day.

Rest in the Lord, my soul;

He planned for thee thy life,

Brings fruit from rain, brings good from

And peace and joy from strife. [pain,

Rest in the Lord, my soul;

This fretting weakens thee,

Why not be still? Accept His will;

Thou shalt His glory see.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 4—The Heathen.

THE question of the heathen, who have never been favoured with the message of the grace of God, will naturally arise in the mind of the reader. That they will never have to give account to God for the way in which they have treated a Gospel which they have never heard goes without saying. It is a principle of Scripture that where little has been given, little shall be required; but to whom much has been given, from him much shall be demanded (Luke xii. 48). The heathen can only have to give account for the way in which they have treated whatever light they may have had given them of God. The difficulty which arises in the minds of men in connection with their accountability to God has its origin in the fact, that in the heart of each lurks the latent desire to at all costs justify himself. It is natural to him as a sinner, and is a great proof of his fallen condition.

Surely the Creator has a right to do as He pleases in and with His own creation. If man has not answered the purpose for which he was created, God must please Himself as to how He shall deal with him. He may condemn him without giving him any opportunity of salvation, as He has done with fallen angels; or He may act toward him in the way of grace, as He does to men generally; or He may save him by His sovereign mercy, as He does the elect; and who can call His ways in question? He made man, to begin with, and His rights over him are supreme. He can kill and make alive, and He does so without consulting His creature. The whole universe is completely in His power, and it must be so, for it is the work of His hands. The fallen sinner may rebel against His decrees, and attempt to grasp the authority which can be His only, but whether as an object of mercy or of wrath he must

learn that the fear of the Lord is the thing for him to cultivate, for this is true wisdom.

It is important to get right ideas of God. I do not mean only in His grace, which must be learned in the Gospel, but as a Creator. "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest Thou? or Thy work, He hath no hands?" (Isa. xlv. 9). I have not yet come to consider what God makes, or what He does with what He makes; I am only seeking to show, that if you allow the idea of a Creator at all (and a man must be mad who does not), you must allow that He has a right to do just as He pleases; to make what He pleases, and to do that which He pleases with the thing that He has made. No one ever yet gave God this His rightful place but Christ, who, having taken the place of man, maintained that place consistently, to the glory of God, from the manger to the cross. He held Himself here at the disposal of God, and though He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, yet He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. That it was the will of God was a sufficient explanation of every circumstance in which He found Himself.

I have dwelt long upon this principle, because of its importance in our consideration of God's ways with men in His dealings with the world. That no man has been, or could be, clothed with unlimited authority, and be so free from outside influences that he could carry out the desires of his heart I suppose no one will question. Many considerations conspire together to prevent the greatest despot from working out the conceptions of his evil mind. There is the fear of degrading himself in the eyes of others, or of how the thing may recoil upon his own head. There are

always outside influences at work which prevent men having their own way completely. Were it not so, a man with unlimited power would destroy the whole human race, and end all by the destruction of himself.

But God cannot be brought under any influence whatever. And yet man's thought of God does not rise higher than himself: "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Ps. l. 21). Naturally we think of God as an evil being, and fear to have to do with Him. Being evil ourselves we cannot take in the thought of a Being supremely good: we think of Him as niggardly in the dispensing of His benefits, and vindictive in the execution of His judgment. The god of man's conception is a demon, an evil and cruel being, endowed with the same kind of passions as himself, and influenced, in all his ways with men, by selfish considerations. To come to know Him in Jesus is to be brought out of darkness into marvellous light.

Another thing I would say before referring to the light Scripture gives us as to the heathen. Nothing can be perfectly known by the creature. This is so self-evident that I need do no more than mention the fact. The creation itself is beyond us. I know that it exists. I see it, feel it, am part of it. I see the relation which certain things bear to others. The sun, moon, and stars appeal to my senses as the handiwork of an all-wise, almighty, and supreme Being, and from them I drop down to the consideration of a globule of water or a grain of sand. But what do I know of these things? What are they made of? I may be told water is a compound of hydrogen and oxygen. But what are these gases? I may know a great deal about created things, how they will behave under certain conditions, the uses I may be able to put them to; but what they are in themselves I know not. The Creator does, but the creature cannot know what the creature is. We know all that is necessary for us to know, or perhaps I should rather say, we are capable of knowing

all that God deems good for us to know. May we be content with this.

Had man remained in innocence he would not have needed a revelation from God. It was when he sinned this became necessary, and he gets it at once. He has never yet left any of His creatures without witness regarding Himself. Man being like a planet out of his orbit, nothing remains for him but destruction, unless he can be recovered and brought into right relationship with his Centre. When man wheeled wilfully out of his appointed course, His Creator at once intervened, and pointed the way back to righteousness, peace, and salvation. Abel took that way, and found it paved with the favour of Jehovah; Cain refused it, and became a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth. Cain had all the light that Abel had, but he was unfaithful to it; and the whole antediluvian world was not less favoured, though with few exceptions the testimony of God was scorned.

There does not seem to have been any practice of idolatry until after the deluge. It may have been the tradition of the fallen angels which Satan took up, by which to ensnare men, and entice them into demon-worship. Anyhow, almost immediately after the flood mankind fell into idolatry, and idolatry is demon-worship (I. Cor. x. 20). The idol itself is *nothing*, but what is behind the idol, and which fills the heart and mind of the worshipper, is a demon. The gods of the heathen are evil beings, and the worship of demons became universal after the flood.

It was not any lack of testimony on the part of God, which brought about this state of things, but the hatred of God natural to the human heart. We have the downward career of the sons of Noah into the moral quagmire of corruption brought graphically before the vision of our souls in the first chapter of Paul's epistle to the Romans. They sinned against the light which they had from God, and they were, the Apostle says, "*without excuse.*" They had all the light possessed by Abel, Enoch, and

others, and these had found it sufficient to guide their footsteps back to the Source of life and happiness; and indeed they were still more favoured, for they had seen by the intervention of God in the deluge how well He was able to deliver the godly, and judge the rebellious. Added to this they had the testimony of creation, the visible things bearing testimony to the invisible. The eternal power and divinity of the Creator comes to light in the works of His hands, leaving those who bow down to the idol without excuse.

This is just as true to-day as it was then. The heathen have the heavens declaring the glory of God, and the firmament showing His handywork: day uttering speech unto day, and night unto night teaching knowledge. There is neither speech nor words, yet is their voice heard through all the earth, right to the extremity of the world (Ps. xix.).

There are also evidences of His goodness in the fact that He gives sunshine, rain, and fruitful seasons, "filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv.). The object of it all is that men might feel after Him and find Him, for He is not far from any one of us (Acts xvii.). Man has gone far from God, and his great desire is always to increase the distance, but God has not gone far from man. The distance lies in alienation of heart and mind, and therefore man being a *God-hating* sinner, the distance to which he has gone is immeasurable; but God pursues him in the grace and love of His heart, ready to fall on his neck and cover him with kisses (Luke xv.) the moment he, in the sorrow of his soul, turns round and begins to feel after his Creator, whom he has so heartlessly abandoned.

We are told by Paul (Acts xvii.) that the times of this ignorance God winked at (overlooked, or dealt with in no special way), but left man to the testimony of the visible things, against which he sinned grossly and provocatively, while wallowing in every abominable pollution that suggested itself to his corrupt and devil-deceived heart. He had sufficient testimony given him by

God to light his way back to Him from whom he was gradually drifting farther and farther away; but to this he paid no regard, for the service of Satan was connected with a license for the flesh, which the idea of a holy and righteous God forbade. Because of this, the service of their fell destroyer was considered easy, his bondage was delightful, God was forgotten, and darkness reigned supreme.

It has been thus from the beginning. The testimony of God by Noah was despised, the law was trampled under foot, the prophets were stoned, and those who foretold the coming of the Messiah were murdered. And has it been any better under the Gospel dispensation? The Jews despised it, it went out to the heathen and there few believed it, and in Christendom, which is supposed to be the result of the preaching, comparatively few believe it with their hearts. Men seem more concerned about what is to be the fate of the heathen than they are about their own souls, or about the multitude around them, who, with the Gospel ringing in their ears, go heedlessly down to a lost eternity.

The state of the heathen is brought forward by many to discredit the Scriptures. They foolishly imagine that because they have had no testimony of the grace of God presented to them, they cannot be held amenable to the judgment of God. But this conjecture arises from the erroneous idea that men shall be judged for the rejection of the Gospel only. That men shall be judged for the rejection of the Gospel is true regarding those to whom it has been preached, but all men are amenable to the judgment of God, whether they have heard the Gospel or not.

We are told in I. Thessalonians that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His might, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. This will take place at His appearing, and is spoken of as the judgment of the living. It is "*When He shall come.*" Here we

have two classes of people upon whom the judgment falls, namely, them that know not God, and them that obey not the Gospel.

But in Romans ii. 12-16 we have a very plain statement made by the Apostle referring to this very question. He says, "As many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law . . . in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ." The Gentiles sinned "*without law*," the law was never given to them. They shall be judged by the light given by creation, natural conscience, and the goodness of God manifested in His providence. They shall perish: they have been altogether unfaithful to the light vouchsafed to them. The Jews to whom the law was given shall be judged by it. Christians are not supposed to come into judgment. If they were truly that which they are by profession they would not come into judgment, for in Christ the believer is already justified from all things. Still because of the unfaithfulness of those favoured with such abundant light, the time has already come when judgment must begin at the house of God (I. Pet. iv. 17).

Judgment will be according to privileges enjoyed. Therefore the soul who has heard the Gospel and rejected it shall have the heaviest sentence; the Jew comes next in responsibility, as having the law, priding himself in the possession of it, and dishonouring the Lawgiver by the breaking of it. Last and least in responsibility come the heathen, who have had neither law nor Gospel. He who knew his Master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he who knew not, and yet did commit things worthy of punishment, shall be beaten with few stripes (Luke xii. 47, 48). The judgment of God will be according to truth against such as do evil: "To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honour and immortality (or incorruptibility), eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not

obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile" (Rom. ii. 7-10).

That the Judge of all the earth will do right there ought to be no question in any mind; but whatever He does the wisdom of the creature is to submit himself to it. The creature cannot be the judge of his Creator. In the way in which the Creator has been pleased to declare Himself, in that way both reader and writer must come to know Him. I take the perfect account which He has given of Himself in the Word of truth; I contemplate Him in His love, grace, righteousness, holiness, power, wisdom, majesty and might, and my heart is filled with thanksgiving that I have found Him to be such as the Gospel reveals Him, and such as my natural heart never for a moment thought Him to be.

I think of Him in His mercy on the one hand, and in His judgment and wrath on the other, and I am not terrified before Him, for I see nothing even in the lake of fire inconsistent with His holy love. He has come to light in Jesus: there His heart is revealed, but from those lips from which rivers of grace flowed forth, there came the testimony of a judgment which in its severity turns the most terrible utterances that ever burned upon prophetic lip into tides of mercy. His enemies had to say "*Never man spake like this Man*," and surely no one ever did, for no one knew what He knew. When He spoke, the breathings of the heart of God were heard, but mingled with it all the tempests of eternal wrath broke upon the ear. He brought everything to light. The heart of God, the heart of man, the heart of heaven, and the heart of hell. All is in the light now, and men everywhere are seen to be without excuse, and all will find Him justified when He speaks, and clear when He judges (Ps. li. 4).

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ. (H. NUNNERLEY).

Paper No. 3.

THE historical records of Christ's death are in the gospels, the doctrinal teachings in the Epistles, the typical teachings in the various sacrifices in the old Testament.

The first four chapters of Leviticus describe the offerings connected with the brazen altar, and that altar was *foursquare*.

Shall we view each side of this brazen altar, and reverently contemplate the mysteries of the sacrifice of Jesus as unfolded in the burnt-offering, the meat-offering, the peace-offering and the sin offering? They typify the all-various perfections of the holy Sufferer.

The Burnt Offering.

First in order is the burnt-offering. This side of the altar shows us Christ presenting Himself of His own voluntary will, in all the perfection of His Person, without spot to God. The sacrifice—as a whole—was placed on the altar, then the fire consumed it; all of it went *up* as incense, a sweet savour to God (Lev. i. 9); indeed the very word used for the burning here is the word used for burning the sweet incense, and means “to ascend,” “a burning upward,” whereas the word for burning the carcase of the sin offering outside the camp is to “descend,” “a burning downward.”

The ashes of the burnt offering had to be carefully gathered up, and carried to a clean place. So precious was the burnt offering to God that the fire was never allowed to go out, it was to burn all night (Lev. vi. 9).

It is night in this world. Christ, its true light, has been rejected, and the world remains in darkness.

During His absence it is the privilege of each believer to enter into the preciousness of Christ to God, to contemplate Him as giving Himself “*an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet*

smelling savour,” to share the Father's delight in the sweet fragrance of that blessed One who said “therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” No wonder that this *fire was never to go out*, but that each morrow fresh wood was placed on the altar, telling of the ceaseless, changeless delight of heaven in Jesus.

Moreover we have our portion there. It was a sacrifice *to God* but it was *for* us. “It shall be accepted for him—the offerer—to make atonement for him” (Lev. i. 4). Our acceptance is in the offering which above all others delineates the infinite perfections of Jesus in His whole-hearted surrender of Himself for the accomplishment of the will of God in an atoning death—inward perfections, discernible by the eye of God alone, which give it its intrinsic value.

The skin of the sin offering was burnt without the camp, whereas the skin of the burnt offering became the priests' portion (Lev. vii. 8). The first mention of skins in Scripture is in connection with Adam and Eve (Gen. iii. 21), and the thought presented is that of clothing, that in which they were to walk here before God.

In the sin offering the *sacrifice* is viewed as identified with the *sin of the offerer*, and hence it could not be burnt for a sweet savour; but in the burnt offering the *offerer* is viewed as identified with the excellencies and perfections of the *offering*, which went up as a sweet savour to God: the believer thus stands “accepted” with God in all the sweet fragrance and acceptability of the sacrifice of Christ.

In the consciousness of this, we, as each day rolls round, should adoringly contemplate this side of the brazen altar, consider the spotless, unblemished sacrifice there offered, all the inward parts

washed with water (thus fitting them to typify the sinlessness, purity and holiness of Christ), the entire sacrifice emitting an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable and well pleasing to God.

It was Christ's whole sacrifice of Himself to God, it was the perfection of His obedience fully manifested. The "fire" which fell upon Him served to bring out in sweetest fragrance His excellencies, the personal worth of the willing Sufferer offering Himself through the Eternal Spirit without spot to God.

The burnt offering was to be *unblemished*: how true this was of Christ, spotless without, unblemished within; in perfect obedience and love to the Father His death rises up as a memorial ever before God of a work in which He has been fully glorified, and in which we are fully accepted. All the delight God finds in the perfectness, purity and devotedness of the Victim is the delight in which the believer is set, his abiding standing before God.

The Meat Offering.

The second chapter details the meat offering. This connects itself with that aspect of the sacrifice of Christ most nearly allied to the burnt offering. In this offering no blood was shed; in it not the death of Christ was prominent, but His spotless life—albeit a life which was tested and tried even unto death.

The meat offering was of fine flour, oil and frankincense. The *fine flour* speaks of His perfect and even humanity, the "corn of wheat" that should fall into the ground and die (John xii. 24). He was "that holy thing . . . the Son of God" (Luke i. 35); the *oil* speaks of the Holy Spirit pervading all that life; and the *frankincense* of its sweet fragrance Godward. The memorial of it was burnt by fire upon the altar, and ascended as a sweet savour to God: on the remainder the priests were to feed.

This offering presents the perfection of Christ as a Man in His *life here*, a Man who has been tried and tested (for of this the "fire" speaks) in every way—by the malice and enmity of men, the treachery and faithlessness of His disciples, the ceaseless opposition of

Satan, and finally by the awful fire of divine judgment, yet each test but brought out His personal perfections.

Heaven opened to express its delight in this lowly, gracious Man. Misunderstood, despised, hated, having nowhere to lay His head, He passed on seeking not His own glory, reviled yet reviling not again, meek and lowly of heart, living on account of the Father, dwelling in His bosom, and ever doing those things which pleased Him.

This is the Man whose ear was opened "morning by morning," who lived not by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. "A body hast Thou prepared me," "Lo, I come to do Thy will," was the language of lip and life. The manner of His death was the climax of a lowly dependent life: the burnt offering displayed a Victim excellent and perfect in death, the meat offering the perfume of a life lived to God, and ever subject to His will, even to death itself.

Who can conceive the ineffable delight of the Father's heart in the Son of His love thus living and dying to do His will, and having no other object or purpose.

The mind of this *lowly One* is to be ours, we are to walk in His steps, the steps of a will-less, self-abnegated, self-renunciated Man, for Christ pleased not Himself, whether in life or death. He has left us an example that we should follow in His steps.

But please note carefully His offering of Himself in this aspect is not that of a sin-bearer, *it does not make atonement*, it simply sets before our adoring gaze the *Man Christ Jesus* in His pathway through this world, and how perfect He was everywhere! No "honey"—mere nature's sweetness, no "leaven"—nature's evil, entered into that spotless life; but "salt" was there, for neither did corruption mark Him in life, nor feed upon Him in death; He saw no corruption, but lived and died anointed and led by the Holy Ghost, the one Man who never swerved from start to finish, thus demonstrating His personal fitness as a spotless victim.

(To be Continued).

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 5.—Hosea.

1. The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.

2. The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea. And the Lord said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms, and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the Lord.

9. Then said God, Call his name Lo-ammi: for ye

are not my people, and I will not be your God.

10. Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered: and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God.

11. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head.

UNDER certain circumstances mild measures avail nothing: only those of an extreme and drastic kind are of use. The state of Israel had become such, in the days of the kings mentioned in the opening verse of the prophecy before us, that mere words were futile. They would fall upon ears that were utterly deaf.

So "the beginning of Jehovah's word by Hosea" was an action which must have been extremely repugnant to himself, but which should call attention to the backsliding state of the nation, and to the judgment that must inevitably ensue.

But the Spirit of God does not delight to dwell upon evil, though He may employ it as a dark background, to set forth in all the more striking relief, the glory and the blessing which are in the purpose of God for the earth.

Especially do we notice this in Hosea, where after briefly, but solemnly, portraying the terrible condition of Israel, he passes on to dwell upon the glories of the day of Christ. And it is exceedingly precious to the heart that loves Him to observe how the prophecy makes all the coming blessing to centre around Him.

The One Head.

He is first spoken of in Hosea as the **ONE HEAD** under which the divided nations of Judah and Israel will be reunited in that day. This He will be, not only by God's appointment, but by appointment of the people themselves.

Having turned with true repentance to the God of their fathers, and their stony heart being exchanged for a "heart of flesh," they will joyfully fall into line with God's gracious appointment, and will with one voice acclaim Him, whom God has given them, as their Head.

The breach between Israel and Judah dates back to the days that followed the reign of Solomon. Though allowed of God in His government, it was none the less through the folly of His people that it was brought about. But when Christ gets His place in the hearts of His restored people, the breach will be forever healed.

The unity of the people of God evidently lies very near to His heart, and the Holy Spirit seems to take special delight in dwelling upon it, in connection with the coming day. Elsewhere we read: "I will give them one heart and one way" (Jer. xxxii. 39); "And I will make them one nation . . . and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided . . . any more at all . . . and they all shall have one Shepherd" (Ezek. xxxvii. 22-24); "In that day shall there be one Lord, and His name one" (Zech. xiv. 9).

If *Christ* will be the bond of unity in that day, how much more is He such to-day, when believers are members of His body, which is one! And it is as we give Christ His place in our hearts, and in our midst, that *practical* unity results.

These are days when amalgamations and confederacies of all sorts are devised. To none of these would we attach much importance. But we greatly desire to see Christians laying increasing emphasis on what unites all the children of God, rather than on the differences that divide them, so that there may be a drawing together, on spiritual lines, of those whose hearts beat true to Him, and who "love His appearing."

Israel's Husband.

Ch. II. vers. 14-19.

Behold . . . I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there, as in the days of her youth, and as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.

And it shall be at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali.

And I will betroth thee unto me for ever.

In Hosea ii. we find the restoration of Israel described from the standpoint of Jehovah's faithful love. He will be known to His people by a name that expresses that love. "Thou shalt call me Ishi (my Husband); and shalt call me no more Baali (my Lord)." We must ever bear in mind that the Jehovah of the Old Testament is the Jesus of the New. And in this place He, the Jehovah-Jesus known to us in grace, is addressed as ISRAEL'S HUSBAND. After all her years of wandering and apostacy, she will be brought to know the love that has followed her unfaithfully. Her coldness of heart will be gone, and warmth of affection will spring up there, towards that blessed One who is Israel's Bridegroom, as well as ours.

Israel's King.

Ch. III. vers. 4 and 5.

For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.

Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.

Then in chapter iii. Christ is brought before us as the true David, ISRAEL'S KING. The long period of scattering when without king, or prince, or sacrifice, (and without the idolatrous symbols of the false worship to which in the past they had so often had recourse)

they have wandered homeless among the nations, will be over. They shall return and find the Lord, and "David their king."

Regal honours will then belong to the One disowned at Calvary. Do not our hearts rejoice at the prospect? Is there one so selfish as to say, "I am not interested, because the scene referred to is not one in which I personally am concerned?" Are you not concerned in what concerns *Him*? Are you not interested in all that will give Him pleasure and conduce to His glory? When you sing "The crowning day is coming by-and-by," is it only *your* crowning day of which you are thinking? Is it nothing to you that *His* crowning day is coming? May God deliver us all from such pitiable selfishness!

The remaining chapters of Hosea are full of instruction, but we pass over much, because our search is for *Christ*, in these old-time prophecies.

But it may be remarked in passing that *knowledge*, the knowledge of God, is a very great point in Hosea.

Israel's declension is traced, first of all, to the lack of knowledge of Jehovah's bounty. "*She did not know that I gave her corn*" (ii. 8). But in the day of future glory, when Jehovah betroths her to Himself, she shall fully know Him. "*Thou shalt know the Lord*" (ii. 20).

Meanwhile, the prophet has to mourn over this lack of knowledge: "there is no truth, . . . nor *knowledge of God* in the land" (iv. 1). This was the cause of all the trouble: "My people are destroyed *for lack of knowledge*;" they had "*rejected knowledge*" (iv. 6).

It was this, too, that stood in the way of their return to God: "*they have not known the Lord*" (v. 4).

But when repentance is wrought in them, and they are raised up, and live before God, then *shall they know*, and shall "*follow on to know the Lord*." (vi. 3), and they will learn that this is more agreeable to God than anything else: "*the knowledge of God* more than burnt offerings" (vi. 6).

Mere profession would not do. Though Israel cried "My God, *we know Thee*" (viii. 2), it was in vain.

But even then, amidst all the surrounding corruption, those who, like Hosea, groaned over it, and sought the Lord, should be brought into the real knowledge of His ways. "He shall understand these things . . . and he shall *know them*" (xiv. 9).

To know God, is to be brought to the Fountain-head of all blessing. There can be no happiness for the creature comparable to the revelation of the Creator in beneficence and love, and in a relationship in which He delights to have us before Him as *sons*. I speak now of the knowledge that is the portion of Christians. If God has revealed Himself *fully*, that means *full* blessing for us. Nothing can possibly transcend the unspeakable bliss of being brought to *know God*, in the fulness of His love, as revealed in His Son.

Israel's Representative.

Ch. xi. 1.

When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt.

But we turn, finally, to one more reference to Christ, in the pages of Hosea. The inspired quotation by Matthew of Hosea xi. 1. enables us to find Christ here too (*cf.* Matt. ii. 15). For when He came to earth He identified Himself in grace with Israel's history—the sojourn in Egypt, and the temptation in the wilderness (*cf.* Matt. iv. 1). Where Israel had been the subject of God's preserving care, there He also trod, (His faithfulness displaying itself in shining contrast to Israel's failure), so that He might, in a very real way, be able to sympathise with, and support and succour the hearts of His people in days to come, when God shall again bring them from the lands of their oppression, and cause them to pass through the wilderness; (See Ezek. xx. 34, 35; Isa. xi. 16; Hos. ii. 14) before establishing them in the land which He has promised them.

The Ten Gates of Jerusalem.

(JAMES GREEN).

Nehemiah III.

WHEN the remnant of Judah returned to Jerusalem from their captivity in Babylon, they were few in number and had many enemies, but they determined in the fear of the Lord to repair the ruined walls of the city.

This was a great work, but it was "the work of their Lord," verse 5, and He had stirred up their hearts to do it. They felt that His name was dishonoured, and His city lying in ruins, and though the work was "great and large," and they were "separated upon the wall" (iv. 19), they had the support of Him whose cause it was, so that they were able to complete their labour.

It is interesting to notice that the whole city is mentioned in this chapter:

Verse 1.—Then Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep gate.

Verse 32.—And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

No part of the wall was overlooked and every gate was repaired; one man could not have done all this, but each man could build the part over against his house; and as they built each in his place they had the whole in view, there was no clashing one with the other, they were "workers together" in "the work of their Lord."

An important lesson is taught us here: nothing less than the whole circle of God's truth and work must occupy our thoughts. There is the Church, the

Body of Christ, and the Gospel; our affections must not be narrowed or cramped or set on a smaller circle. We may not be able to do great things, but what we do must be done with the whole of God's interests in view: the work is great, but it is one in which we have no need to allow our weakness to discourage us, for the good hand of our Lord will be with us, as we are in communion with Him, so that we may act upon the apostolic exhortation "Quit you like men."

The Sheep Gate.

The first of the gates to be repaired was the sheep gate, and at this gate we must all start. Happy is that soul that has heard the Shepherd's voice, and can say "The Lord is my shepherd." He came seeking the sheep. He was the good Shepherd who laid down His life for them (John x. 11).

What deep affection throbs in those words, "MY sheep"! (John x. 14). Oh, the wonders wrapped up in that companion word "His own"! Angelic intelligences served Him; worlds on worlds have been called into existence at His bidding: yet amidst the whole universe that He has brought into existence by His power, there is one company He calls "His own", His very own, the flock for which He gave Himself, out of the depths of infinite love. Fellow-believer in Jesus, you and I, through grace, form part of this flock: He gave His life for us, and that is why we must begin at the sheep gate, and truly we must also end there, in the eternal anthem, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen" (Rev. i. 5, 6).

The Fish Gate.

Ver. 3.—"But the fish gate did the sons of Hassenaah build . . ."

This seems to be the Gospel gate. When we have been established in the precious truth that we are Christ's sheep, it is our privilege to go out and fish for souls. God would have

us earnest in this blessed work: the heart of the Lord was set upon it, for He said to His disciples, "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men" (Mark i. 17).

We can all be of some use in this service. If you cannot preach, you can pray for those that do. There are more results from prayer than we think. Many a servant of God has had his heart rejoiced by seeing souls brought to Christ without knowing, perhaps, what lay behind the success of his labours: someone out of sight and unknown had been crying to God to save souls, and the blessing had come that way. Beloved saints of God, let us pray. May we be kept closely in touch with this work of the Spirit of God, and so help to build "the fish gate." Keep this repaired and wide open, that men may "be added to the Lord" daily. There is one important verse (the fifth) in connection with this.

"But their nobles put not their necks
to the work of their Lord."

It is His work; He came into this world to seek and to save: shall we be found negligent in this service of grace? It is a wonderful privilege to be associated with Himself in any way; let us not be like these men of position that put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

The Old Gate.

Ver. 6.—Moreover the old gate repaired
Jehoiada . . ."

Here it was the old gate, reminding us of the passage: "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. vi. 16).

The old paths have been choked up; the old ways need clearing. There is many a saint of God who needs to have the old gate repaired, to be built up in that which was established from the beginning in Christ. Satan is ever ready to provide something new—the latest thing. May God remove the rubbish and enable us to build up our souls in the truth, as old as the thoughts of God Himself, that which existed in His eternal purpose before

all worlds. Man changes: God does not. He has established all the blessed truth in the death, resurrection and ascension of His beloved Son, and those who by His grace are built up in that which was from the beginning, are able to help others back to the old paths.

The Valley Gate.

Ver. 13.—“The valley gate repaired Hanun . . .”

Before we can go up, there must be the going down. We may feel our lack of power, and how feeble are the desires of our hearts after Christ: we may feel how little we have the conscious knowledge of divine things; but do we remember that these things can only be gained by the way of the valley of humiliation? In the years of the past we may have longed that the realities of God might be the controlling power in our lives: He longs to satisfy that desire, but it can only be brought about in the “low places.” It is a wonderful moment when we are willing to be led into the valley, and have to do with God there. There must ever be a going down before the going up, the valley before the mountain, the cross before the crown, the sorrow before the reigning. This is always God’s way, that we may be “bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (II. Cor. iv. 10).

The Dung Gate.

Ver. 14.—“But the dung gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab . . .”

The Apostle Paul knew something of this place; he had no place or position in this world; he accepted the cross, and in his practical experience had to say, “We are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (I. Cor. iv. 13). What do we know of the path of rejection? How much we shrink from it; and yet, what shall we say when we think of that way, uncheered by earthly smiles, which was trodden by the Son of God? He, the Eternal Son, the Infinite One, was cast out, rejected, rebuffed,

scorned, despised, spit upon! What is any little slight put upon us compared with that? May we truly accept in heart occupation with Himself His own path, “disallowed indeed of men.” He has no other place for us here, “It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master” (Matt x. 25). This is left to us as a legacy, “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer *for His sake*” (Phil. i. 29). It is a faithful saying: “For if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (II. Tim. ii. 11, 12).

The Fountain Gate.

Ver. 15.—“But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallun the son of Col-hozeh . . .”

The builders did not stop at the dung gate; if you know something of what it is to be an outcast, there is the gate of the fountain—the fountain of the fourth of John, springing up to everlasting life.

This gate, as the remainder of verse 15 shows us, is intimately connected with the king’s garden by the pool of Siloah (which is by interpretation “Sent,” John ix. 7), and with “the stairs which go down from the city of David,” which He, the Sent One, descended, when He laid aside His Messiah glory, that He might open up the way for His own into the garden of His own delight: the Father’s love (John xiv. 1.).

It may be our portion to be cast out here, indeed it must be; but at the same time in the power of the Spirit we may have the foretaste of the joys eternal, which shall be the unending portion of the “many brethren” (Rom. viii. 29), with Him, the Firstborn, in the Father’s house. “With Thee is the fountain of life” (Ps. xxxvi. 9).

The Water Gate.

Ver. 26.—“The water gate towards the east.”

If there is the springing fountain of John iv. 14, there must also be the flowing waters of John vii. 38. If the fountain within us springs up to God, there will be the flowing out also of

streams of living water for thirsty souls around. How great a privilege to be channels of that of which Christ is source!

Why is it that often we have to mourn our weakness? Is it not that we lose sight of the presence of the Holy Spirit? "*But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive*" (John vii. 39). Is the Spirit's power weakened? Thank God, He is ever the same, and is not less occupied with the whole interests of God than ever He was. If, then, in our souls' history, these seven gates are truly repaired, and the Holy Ghost has His true place of control within us, He will see that the three remaining ones are set up.

The Horse Gate.

Ver. 28.—"From above the horse gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house."

The horse is used in Scripture as the symbol of power; and power, whether for joy, worship, service or endurance, is always connected with the Spirit of God. He it is who recalls to us the words of our Lord; leads us into the deep things of God; and, unveiling the future, shows us things to come, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, and so repair the east gate.

The East Gate.

Ver. 29.—"After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate."

And what is the east gate? It is the gate of the sun-rising. How often do we take our stand there, beloved, and lift our wishful, longing eyes in hope, waiting to see the Morning Star arise?

Christ is coming! May we be as men that wait for their Lord. When first that precious truth was brought home to us, we laid our heads down on our pillows and said, "Perhaps before the morning we shall see His blessed face." Is this hope as fresh as it was? Is it less bright in our souls than when it first came to us? It ought to have grown brighter, for we are nearer to it now than ever we were—nearer to that moment when we shall see Him as He is. "The Spirit and the Bride say,

come." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. xxii. 17 and 20).

There is only one gate more—ten in all—for the wall in Nehemiah is connected with us in our responsibility here, and ten in Scripture stands for this. There are twelve gates in the heavenly city of Revelation, for there all is perfect, for the true administration of God's will with men: twelve stands for this.

The Gate Miphkad.

Ver. 31.—"After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son . . . over against the gate Miphkad."

That word, "Miphkad," is translated in II. Sam. xxiv. 9 "number," and in Ezek. xliii. 21, "appointed place." Beloved saints, that blissful moment is soon to dawn when God shall make up the number of His elect in the appointed place; soon the Lord will fulfil His own word for us, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am there ye may be also" (John xiv. 2, 3).

May God grant us to keep before our souls the whole circle of the truth, with which the Spirit of God is occupied: not one part of it but the whole; and that our hearts may rejoice in carrying on "earnestly," like Baruch in ver. 20, any part of that work which falls to our lot; and that every saint of God may have his or her place in our prayers.

There is just a word for our sisters in connection with the building of the wall. You will find in ver. 12 that the daughters of one of these men took their share in the work:—"And next unto him repaired Shallum, . . . he and his daughters." I think that is very precious; everyone has some work to do, something to build up of Christ in the soul of another, however obscure her place may be. You have the opportunity for passing on that which has been made precious to your own soul, to those you come in contact with. Whatever you yourself, dear sister, have received of Christ, *pass it on*, and His Name shall be glorified.

“Creation.”

(S. L. JACOB).

No. 4.—Further Proofs.

6. And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.

7. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.

8. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.

9. And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.

10. And God called the dry *land* Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it *was* good.

11. And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.

12. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed *was* in itself, after his kind: and God saw that *it was* good.

13. And the evening and the morning were the third day.

ON the second day God speaks as before (His word is the source of all the good), and the waters are divided from the waters by an *expanse* (as in the margin, for firmament does not seem to be the right word).

In connection with the second day's work there is the remarkable omission of the words "And God saw that it was good." This omission alone would prove the point we have pressed. The apparent reason for this is that nothing was actually formed at this time, only the expanse was caused to divide between the waters. But further, the region of the air—the expanse—is evidently Satan's seat, for he is called "the prince of the power of the air;" it is probable that this region is peopled with evil spirits, which occupy the heavenlies (Eph. vi. 12), and that for this reason God could not pronounce it good. Moreover historically it was in the period symbolised in the second day that God had to destroy the world by the flood.

What we get in this chapter is not the purpose of God pure and simple, but the ways of God for the working out of that purpose. In this work innumerable hindrances are allowed by God, but these are all overcome and the blessedness of the result enhanced thereby.

As there was a division on the first day so there was also a division on the second day; and every Christian knows that experimentally this is the case in

the history of the soul. There was a time when these divisions had not taken place, and we knew not what was within us. But when the light began to shine, then we began to discriminate, to see what was of Christ and what of Satan, what of the Father, and what of the world, what of the Spirit and what of the flesh. Each bit of increased light, and each further step in the gracious work of God, emphasized these distinctions, often at great pain to ourselves; for the painful character of the experience of Rom. vii. is due to learning one of these distinctions, and the first result of these divisions within must necessarily be painful and give rise to great exercise of soul. Yet painful as they are, the soul must travel by this road in order to enter into the blessedness which lies beyond.

We have already seen that the history of the soul is in miniature the history of what is collective; and God's dealings with men show that though He is working to gather in, not to divide, yet He must divide what is of Himself from what is not, in order to gather what is of Himself into one. Yet He is very patient and full of long-suffering: good and evil will be found together in the world till the end, and then the final severance between them will be effected by those more capable of doing this than poor fallible man (Matt. xiii. 28-30, 39 and 40). There is a division now which is right, as in II. Cor. vi. 17; and there is division which is wrong, as in I. Cor. xii. 25 and Jude 19.

The Third Day.

On the third day it is twice repeated: "and God saw that it was good!" and the progress is now rapid. The waters are gathered together into one place and are called Seas, the dry (*"land"* is in italics) appears and is called Earth. Here again the same character of opposites can be noted. Earth in this chapter has a double meaning. In the first verse it is earth in contrast with heaven: meaning not what is bad, but inferior to the other, and therefore liable to be superseded. This is the whole argument of I. Cor. xv. 47-49. Fallen man is not there in question; not sin, but only origin; an earthly origin is defective by reason of the glory which attaches to the heavenly, therefore is the earthly image unsuited to the heirs of the kingdom of God whose origin is heavenly, and who thus must bear the heavenly image. Blessed be God, this must be our portion through Christ the heavenly One.

However in the portion we are now considering, ver. 10, it is different, here the earth signifies what is stable, in contrast with the seas which are unstable. In the eternal state there will be more sea, it will not be needed. *Now* the seas are needed: for physical reasons we could not do without them. Nor can we do without what they signify spiritually: that is needful for the carrying out of the education of our souls. In the Lord's prayer to His Father for His own, He said "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the evil" (John xvii. 15). How often has this been forgotten. How fearful were the results of asceticism and monasticism, and the withdrawing from the world in the early centuries of Christendom. And though we do not fall into the error in the same shape in this day of ease and luxury, yet there is another phase of it into which we may easily fall, even that of seeking to seclude ourselves within the barriers of a specially selected company of saints all conforming to our own mind and standard.

The result of such seclusion might be

a certain quietude, arising from escape from much of that disciplinary exercise which should properly be ours as, on the one hand, passing through an evil world, and, on the other hand, as having our part in the professing church into which evil has been permitted to enter. But *that* kind of quietude is anything but desirable and can only issue in stagnation and spiritual death. As to fact we are in the midst of evil on every hand, and we must be found *actively resisting* the evil, or we shall die. When Christ comes, and we are changed into His likeness, it will be different; but *now* imperfect beings such as we are, having within us the flesh as well as the Spirit, need such a world as this is, for our souls' education; and every attempt to form special companies must certainly defeat the object aimed at. It has been well said, we have not to make or seek *a* company, but we *find* company (a very different thing) if we follow on the lines of II. Tim. ii. 22.

The earth then is stable and is often used symbolically for Israel under the government of God in contrast with the lawless Gentiles, or the wicked who are like the troubled sea which cannot rest. The kingdom of grace gives us solid ground under our feet, in contrast to what existed before we saw or entered the kingdom (*cf.* Heb. xii. 26-28). The same thing was presented in figure in Israel's history when the throne of David was established in Zion, in contrast to what was before, when in the days of the judges every man did that which was right in his own eyes.

Our hearts are to be established with grace, and we are not to be occupied with meats (outward things) "which have not profited them that have been occupied therein" (Heb. xiii. 9).

Upon this, the third day, the earth is made to bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth. Here is almost infinite variety, yet a most blessed unity. What a contrast we see in the ways of men. They will either be lawless or legal, either allow any kind of license

or else attempt to conform all to one rigid pattern, whereas God's way is unity in extraordinary diversity. Yet all are alike in this, each has the seed in itself, each must yield fruit after its own kind, and each must reproduce itself. The penalty of failure in reproduction is extinction.

Thank God for this. How badly we should have fared but for this comprehensive law of God. The Christian must conquer or be conquered. There is but one step as it were from the victories of Joshua to the miseries of the times of the judges. To cease to advance is to rapidly retrograde. To cease to evangelise is to stagnate. To build up ourselves alone, and to pay little heed to feeding the flock of God, is to call down judgment on ourselves (Ezek. xxxiii. 8-10). May we take heed to these parables. God must have fruit, or we must make room for others (see John xv. 2). In a sense we may say with Rachel "Give me children or I die." No splendid light, no wondrous talents, will exempt us from these blessed laws of God. Everything which God has given He has given to be used, and woe to him who seeks to evade these responsibilities.

All nature, whether in the vegetable or animal world, speaks of reproduction. Nations which, like France, seek to evade these principles, will deteriorate and die. Let the Christian take heed to it also: there *must* be spiritual fruit

and reproduction, not in the sphere of a select company, but in the Church and in the world. God saw that it was good. May He see this with us also. He is looking for fruit, viz., the reproduction of Christ. Are we willing to lose our lives and die that we may bring forth fruit unto God? In all these things Christ is alone the key.

Moreover there is no room for selfishness in connection with our subject: every herb and every tree yielding fruit was to be meat for others (verses 29, 30). Are we prepared for this? We must suffer if others are to be nourished. No evasion of this is possible. Bread corn must be crushed to be food for the eater. In this world all life comes out of death, and goes into death again that life may be reproduced; and it is well. All speaks to us of God's ways in Christ, and one single plant of coarse grass may teach us more lessons than we can assimilate in a life time.

There had to be the formation of the earth before the herb and the tree could be produced. Yet when the earth appeared then these appeared also. So when God's king (David) appeared, then in him was found God's sweet singer of Israel, and in figure we have the "light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (II. Sam. xxiii. 4). Blessed are they who have seen this morning in their own souls.

Answers to Correspondents.

The Fall, and the Generations of Adam.

J.L. enquires of what kind was the forbidden fruit of which Adam and Eve partook; also why Cain is not included in the "generations of Adam."

As to the first question Scripture does not enlighten us, nor is the answer of the smallest importance, for the seriousness of partaking of that fruit evidently lay, not in any evil properties inherent

in the fruit itself, but in the fact that it was placed there as the necessary test of man's loyalty to his Creator.

The bounteous provision of "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food" left man without any excuse or natural inducement to infringe the one positive precept laid upon him; which, small as it was, served the necessary end of practically defining the proper relations between Creator and creature.

As to the second question, it is very evident that there are two *lines* presented to us side by side in Genesis iv. and v.—two orders of generations.

The *first* (for the natural always precedes the spiritual, *cf.* I. Cor. xv. 46), in Gen. iv, is the worldly line—Cain's line. Cain was a guilty and unrepentant exile from God in the land of Nod ("wandering"). He founded the first city, and with his descendants Scripture records the rise of the arts, luxury, music, and poetry, but along with distance from God and moral degradation. The whole of this line perished in the flood.

In chapter v. we can trace the line of faith, which is derived through Seth ("appointed"). In Noah the line of faith passed through the flood; and through that line is traced the genealogy of Christ in Luke ii. Throughout Scripture these two lines are separate and distinct whilst every attempt at co-mingling the two has been disastrous.

In Gen. vi. 2, we read of a certain co-mingling of the two lines, resulting in moral corruption which brought on the flood. In the history of this dispensation [historically at the stage represented by Pergamos ("inter-marriage") in Rev. ii. 12-15] a sadly

similar mingling of the ostensible line of faith and the worldly line has taken place, with the disastrous results we see all around us to-day, and which will issue eventually in the rejection and judgment of that which professes Christ's Name but bears not His character (Rev. iii. 16 and xix. 2).

"Sleep through Jesus."

W.R. enquires the meaning of "them also which sleep in Jesus" (I. Thess. iv. 14).

Those spoken of in this expression are identical with those described in the 16th verse as "dead in Christ." For us Christ tasted death in all its meaning, and for us it is robbed of its sting, so that the death of a believer can be spoken of as "sleep."

Rightly translated the preposition should be translated "through" not "in" Jesus. These have fallen asleep through Jesus.

Observe the perfection of Scripture; Jesus is the name which describes our Lord as man personally, thus believers are not spoken of exactly as *in Jesus*, but *in Christ*, "the anointed," which is the title under which we come into relationship with Him in resurrection (Acts ii. 36).

"At His Feet."

(ADAPTED).

"Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word . . .

"But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her" (Luke x. 39-42).

OFt comes to me a blessed hour,
A wondrous hour and still—
With empty hands I sit me down,
No more to work or will.
Now all my laboured thoughts have ceased,
I rest me at Thy feet,
And calmed by Heaven's eternal peace,
I hear Thy words so sweet.
Erewhile I reasoned of Thy truth,
I searched with toil and care;
From morn to night I tilled my field,
And yet my field was bare.
Now, fed with corn from fields of Heaven,
The fruit of hands Divine,
I pray no prayer, for all is given,
The Bread of God is mine.

There lie my books—for all I sought
My heart possesses now.
Blest words are they which tell Thy love,
That love itself art Thou.
One line I read—and then no more—
I close the book to see
No more the symbol and the sign,
But Christ revealed to me.
I sit, an infant, at Thy feet,
Where moments teach me more
Than all the toil, and all the books
Of all the ages hoar.
And thus my worship is, delight—
My joy to see Thy face,
With folded hands and silent lips
Within Thy holy place.

The Present Purpose of God.

(THE EDITORS).

THERE are two things that ought to have a governing place in the hearts of all God's people on earth, two things that should have this place because they are the direct outcome of the sufferings and death of Jesus, and not merely the outcome, but the very cause of those sufferings, for they form the great purpose of God that lay behind that mystery of sorrow and woe. These two things are, on the one hand the Gospel of the glory of Christ going out to every creature under heaven (II. Cor. iv. 4 and Col. i. 23), and on the other hand the gathering together in one of the children of God that were scattered abroad (John xi. 52).

The Gospel in its magnificent universality, and the binding together in an indivisible unity of all who believe it: this is the intent of eternal love; for this the Son of God suffered and died; and to make this an accomplished fact the Holy Ghost has come down to earth. No Spirit-energised man could be satisfied, or rest from his labours, as long as any of Adam's race are ignorant of the glad proclamation; and no man who is intelligent as to the mind and purpose of God will be contented that sinners should know their sins forgiven merely; he will earnestly desire that the truth of God's unity may become a practical thing in the hearts and faith of all who believe.

The supreme efforts of Satan are directed against these two things. He will hinder the Gospel from reaching men if he can; or if he fails in this, he will mar the testimony and power of the second; hence we are called upon to do battle with him. For this we need to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might;" and to put on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil; for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenlies (Eph. vi. 10-12).

Now the chief part of this conflict is waged by prayer. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication" (Eph. vi. 18), and the object of the conflict in prayer is twofold: first "for all saints," and second that God's ambassadors might boldly declare the mystery of the Gospel (verse 19).

The disciples did not readily grasp the meaning of the Lord's coming to earth: they "trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel." "ISRAEL" stood out in large capitals before their eyes, so that even the glory of Christ took a secondary place; therefore He had to 'open their understanding,' so that they might grasp the drift of all prophecy, and live henceforward in the glory of the truth that "thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke xxiv. 46, 47).

There are many in the direct succession of this early blindness: the vision of the soul is limited or warped by some point or line of truth that has been exaggerated out of its true relation, or by some narrow circle of interest, and the Gospel among all nations has become of little importance. Many excuses are made for this lukewarm condition, and it is even boldly declared by some that the time for the Gospel to every creature is either past, or has still to come.

We need to be carried to where those disciples stood, that our understanding may be fully opened to God's great and gracious purpose. There in the midst of them was the Lord, with the fresh wounds in hand and side and foot; He was there to tell them that He had suffered, not because men hated Him, but because God loved them, and would have all to know this blessed fact. Thus was the prophetic word confirmed by the Son of God in resurrection, after

all the suffering was accomplished.

What enlargement of soul this gives! how it lifts out of all petty and narrow notions, and fills the soul with the glory of God's character! and what surpassing glory it gives to that Cross of shame! for by it the door of repentance has been thrown open to all mankind; and thus the moment a sinner turns to God, from no matter what clime or nation, he discovers that God is a pardoning God.

To be God's ambassadors carrying forth the glad tidings of repentance and remission, beseeching men to be reconciled, is an unspeakable privilege; to be associated in any way with this mission is a favour that the chief of the angels might covet; but it is reserved for those of the sons of men whose souls have been brought under the sway of that love which is without limit or end.

But the crown of the Gospel is the gathering "together in one" of the "children of God that were scattered abroad" (John xi. 52). The Gospel turns our eye outward to a mighty circle, including all nations, a circle of which a shameful cross stands as the centre; and we see the love of a Saviour-God streaming out from that wonderful centre to the utmost limits of that great circle. But this gathering "together in one" which is effected in "the mystery of the gospel" shews us every individual unto whose heart that light has shone, whether he be Greek or Jew, "Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free" (Col. iii. 12), linked up in an indissoluble bond to the risen and exalted Christ: He has become not merely the gathering centre but the Head, and they are the members of His body on earth. It is by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost that this is accomplished, and in spite

of all the efforts of the devil to scatter and divide, this unbreakable unity remains under the eye of God, and the truth of it will ever be a precious treasure, guarded by a purposeful faith in the hearts of all who walk in the Spirit, and answered to practically by the endeavour in all lowliness, meekness, long-suffering and love, "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. iv. 3).

To be indifferent to this, in which is made known "the manifold wisdom of God," is to shew ourselves to be but babes in Christ, and not merely babes but dwarfs, stunted, having settled down to something short of God's purpose for us, and as a consequence growth has been arrested; and to concentrate our thoughts upon any narrower circle, and so become sectarian in spirit, is to give evidence of carnality. The contrast to this stunted, dwarfish, and carnal condition that can only feed upon milk and not meat (Heb. v. 12, 13), is set before us in Eph. iv., where we read of the divine intent for which gifts are given from Christ on high: "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 fullness of Christ."

These two great things formed the ministry of Paul the apostle (Col. i. 23-27); for the furtherance of them he was prepared to die a thousand deaths; and they will govern every heart that loves the Lord, and is set for His glory undaunted by all the scattering and dividing that "the wolf" has effected, until the day of glorious consummation when Christ shall present the Church "to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

We have no sounding-line where with to measure the depth of Divine love.

Many preachers have built a tower of theological speculations, upon which they sit, like Nero, fiddling the tune of their own philosophy while the world is burning with sin and misery. They are playing with the toys of speculation while men's souls are being lost.

No service in itself is small,

None great, though earth it fill;

But that is small that seeks its own,

And great that seeks God's will.

I knew a man who wasted his life trying to reconcile two of God's attributes while all about him men and women were dying unreconciled to God.

The Mystery of God.

(J. ALFRED TRENCH).

Conclusion.

IN our study of the unfolding of the Mystery in the Epistle to the Ephesians we have arrived now at the middle of the third chapter; and here we cannot but notice how perfectly in place it is that before the Apostle leads us on to the practical carrying out of these great truths in our walk (chapter iv.) he is led to bow his knees in prayer (verse 14): not now for that which is indeed the first need of souls, that we should be brought in the full knowledge of Him into the intelligence of these truths, as in chapter i., but for that which is far deeper, communion with Him in what we know, without which the most precious truth is inoperative. And so he prays the Father of our Lord Jesus, of whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, "that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His [the Father's] Spirit in the inner man."

What infinite resources of power and glory are here to be made available, that in effect Christ, who dwells in the Father's heart as the centre of all His counsels, may also dwell in our hearts by faith, that, being at the centre, we may look out upon the illimitable expanse of these counsels for His glory, and that we may know that which is just as illimitable and undefinable—the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, and thus be filled into all the fulness of God, for it is contained and revealed in that love.

Power too is ready to answer to all that the Apostle seeks for us: power that works in us, and is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think, that there may be glory to Him in the Assembly in Christ Jesus "unto all generations of the age of ages"—the strongest expression for eternity of which the language was

capable. There will be no failure there, blessed be God!

The Walk worthy of the Calling.

In the presence then of such divine resources how great are the possibilities opened out to faith for our path through this world, as with subdued hearts we follow the Apostle, who proceeds in chapter iv. to trace out a walk worthy of such a calling—first in the corporate and then the individual aspects of it. Deeply important as it is for us to do so, the attempt would lead too far away from the subject of this paper. Only let us note and hold firmly in our souls, that what chapters i. and ii. have brought out as to our relationships, individually with God the Father, and corporately with Christ as His body and with the Holy Ghost by whom God dwells in His house—these precious relationships form immutably the calling of the Assembly. No failure of ours to walk worthy of that calling affects the great foundation principles of it. God does not lower the standard of it to suit our fallen condition: faith and obedience seek to maintain it at its full height unto the end, even if the path has to become more and more individual.

What then is the great leading principle of a walk worthy of our wonderful calling? The place this has in our hearts and lives will serve to test how far we are in unison with the mind of God for the glory of Christ in the Assembly. It is seen in chapter iv. 3 which literally translated reads: "using diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond [*sundesmos*] of peace": But we must not overlook the moral conditions in which alone, even in the brightest days of the Assembly, such a path could be maintained—conditions more necessary than ever now—namely, with all "lowliness" as before

God, "meekness" in relation to each other: "longsuffering, and forbearing one another in love" (ver. 2).

The gathering together in one of God's children, for which Christ died, had a wonderful realization before God when, besides their family relationship with the Father and with Christ as His brethren, they were formed by one Spirit into one body, the body of which Christ is the Head in heavenly glory, and which is maintained in the unity of it on earth by the Holy Ghost. Oh! do we know anything of the faith which with every energy of our whole being would seek to own and realize by the Holy Ghost this unity in which we have been formed with all who belong to Christ? For "there is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."

Do any object that the failure of ages has made it impossible now to walk according to such a unity? Scripture has anticipated the difficulty: for in the wisdom of God the apostles were not withdrawn before the ruin of the Assembly began, and we have inspired instructions to suit the changed conditions in which the great principles of our calling have to be carried out; as in II. Timothy. But I must not further pursue the wide theme of the responsible walk of the Christian in the last days, but revert to the light of the positive truth that forms it.

The Church as the Bride.

Nothing can be more blessed than to find that the Lord is not satisfied yet, even with all the wealth of divine relationships that have been unfolded to us in the epistle. For when (chapter v. 22-23) the Apostle is led to take up the relationships that belong to our natural condition, and begins with the source of all others, that of husband and wife, the Spirit at once seizes the opportunity to bring out what the Assembly is to Christ, as proved in the immeasurable love that gave Himself for it, and which engages Him, with the love that ever delights to serve its object in just that service needed to extricate it from all that

is unsuited to His heart, and form it like Himself, till He shall be able to present it to Himself such as He can delight in for ever—"a glorious Assembly not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing."

Not that this is some new relationship, but that when the truth of the Body was not sufficient to express the place of the Assembly in the affections of Christ, the Spirit finds the occasion to bring this out in speaking of what marriage was as God first instituted it. Eve was given to Adam to be his wife, and she was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh: she could be recognised to be himself. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies: he that loveth his wife loveth himself: for no man ever yet hated his own flesh." And this is applied to Christ and the Assembly though the mystery be great (verse 32). Neither is any detail of tender care wanting to it on His part "for we are members of His body."

It is given to John to carry out the precious truth of the relationship to the full. In Rev. xix. he writes of a day for which we wait, when the "marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready." In chapter xxi. from verse 9 she comes out as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, displayed in all the glory of the Kingdom. Then when the thousand years are over, she is seen in the eternal state (verses 1-8) in the unchanging affections of Christ, as a Bride still, only now adorned for His own eye and heart alone. How blessed for us that even now, before the day of our heavenly espousals, being made conscious by the indwelling Spirit of our relationship, and with hearts formed by it, we may be able to respond when He presents Himself to us, so that "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come" (Rev. xxii. 17); and thus is drawn out the expression of our love which is so precious to Him. Oh, for hearts more deeply responsive to His great love!

Christ in the Saints.

But there is one more aspect of this Mystery needed to complete the glorious revelation. It is found in the Epistle to

the Colossians. Once more the double ministry of the Apostle comes before us: the ministry of the Gospel to every creature (ch. i. 23) and that of the Mystery, whereby it was given him to complete the word of God. For it is the centre-piece of the whole. Without the apprehension of it many precious truths may be known, but detached from one another like pearls on a string. By the Mystery they are found to be co-ordinated in one perfect whole of the truth. It had been "hid from ages and generations, but now is made manifest to His saints" (for God would touch this chord in our hearts again and again), "to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles which is Christ in you the hope of glory." Thus, by the way the Mystery is presented here, Colossians becomes the counterpart of Ephesians in the truth. In Ephesians it is the richest unfolding of the place of the saints and *the assembly in Christ*: here it is the wonderful answer to this, namely, *Christ in the saints*. Christ among Jews would have been the long promised glory come. But "the Mystery" involved Christ coming out among and in Gentiles as their life; this had never been heard of before.

In Ephesians, our identification with Christ as quickened together with Him was carried out to its full consequence as seated in Him in the heavenlies. In Colossians, it is arrested at the point of our being risen with Christ, that the mind might be directed to heaven to find not only its life but its object there in Christ, who had been presented in such a concentration of the glories of His person in chapter i. of that epistle. Christ becomes all things as Object (ch. iii. 11), to the one in whom He is life (ch. iii. 3, 4), so that being formed by that glorious Object, the traits of that life may be reproduced in us down here, of which the beautiful detail is given in verses 12-17. Thus in unspeakable privilege the Assembly—in the walk of the saints that compose it, for all is individual here—has been set to be descriptive of Christ in the scene of

His rejection, in word or deed alike representing Him, doing all in His name with thanksgiving welling up out of full hearts to God the Father by Him.

But where is there to be found such an answer to the place in which we have been set according to the counsels of God for the glory of Christ? It must have been the thought of this that affected the Apostle so deeply, when he tells us (ch. ii. 1) of the "great conflict" he had for them of Colosse and Laodicea, and wherever he had not been able to reach in his wonderful ministry. He uses the strongest terms. Where he had laboured he "agonized" for the saints according to His working which worked in him in power (i. 29, *lit.*). He would have those whom he had not seen know the "agony" he had for them.

But what moved him so powerfully? Nothing can be more solemnly suggestive for us, my beloved brethren. There was no lack of godly order, nor of steadfastness of faith in Christ amongst those addressed. At Colosse both could be owned to the apostle's joy. What they lacked, and what he sought so earnestly for them, was the full knowledge of "the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." For this is the connection of verse 3 (the intervening words are not rightly there).

To how many does this apply now? Let us put it to ourselves; do we, do I enter into what the apostle felt to be of such incomparable importance for Christians? Has it ever come home to the soul in power, in the light that streams upon us from those heavens opened to faith, that the Christian is "one Spirit" with that blessed Lord, united to Him, in the glory of God, by the Spirit of God dwelling in him; and if so, that all who are His are similarly united, now to hold Him as the Head from whom the whole body derives all, for its nourishment and increase according to God? And that we have been left here that He, who is our life, by the power of Christ known as our all as Object, may come out displayed

in the characteristic traits of that blessed life once seen in all its perfection in Him here!

If we have none to labour among us, like Paul, to this end, or even few like Epaphras who "agonized" for the saints in prayer that they might "stand perfect and complete in all the will of God" (ch. iv. 12), does it not behove us all the more earnestly to seek from Him the knowledge of what He has fully revealed. Serious indeed must be the lack of this knowledge when we hear the Apostle speak as he does.

I only note in conclusion, that, as ever when truth from God is in question, there must be first a state produced in us by His grace suitable to its reception. And hence the Apostle's desire for them, and us, "that their hearts might be *comforted*, being *knit together in love*, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement ["full knowledge"] of the mystery of God." In such a soil alone the truth of it could be looked for. Only as hearts were *comforted and knit together in love*, could it flourish. Are we not too sadly conscious that there

has been a hindrance? Let us each be exercised and humbled before God as to anything that may have obstructed the truth laying hold of us in power, when He who had hid it in His counsels from eternity, has been pleased to bring it all out so fully for the riches of the full assurance of the understanding of it in our souls.

Then may we not look for a renewed ministry of the Mystery in the power of the Spirit: to be answered by a widespread revival of heart-attachment to Christ, and with this an increased appreciation of what the Assembly is to Him? Then lifted into the light of this, above the mists of earth and all the confusion brought in by our failure, we shall see clearly to discern the path of it, still marked out for us by the unchanging principles of our calling, even if were it to come to this that but two or three were found to be gathered to His Name in the faith of it. But there will He be in the midst of them: and the Assembly had nothing beyond that Presence in its brightest day. It is secured to the faith that counts Him all its sufficiency to the end.

Look at Mary at the sepulchre in John xx. "The disciples went away again unto their own home," but Mary had no home for her heart where Jesus was not. "She stood without at the sepulchre weeping." She wept because she could not find the dead body of her Lord. Your intelligence might readily rebuke her tears; but there is something more precious to Christ than intelligence, and that is a heart that loves Him. Her tears told that she had loved Him on earth, and missed Him now that He had died. Bright heavenly visions were seen, angels were at the tomb, but she turns from them, for what were they to one who had known Christ?

The loveless theory of the survival of the fittest has no place in true Christianity, for the greatest must serve the least, and the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and so carry out the principles of Christ.

Let us be careful that we do not diminish the authority of the Bible by misunderstanding the purpose of the Bible itself. How did the Lord Jesus use the Bible? By the Bible I mean the Old Testament. His way will surely be the right one. What did He go to the Old Testament for? For '*Himself*.' This is the whole necessity: to find the Son of God should be the object of every Bible student and reader.

Our feelings are like the waves which dance and sparkle, but are ever fluctuating, changing, and when the breeze subsides are wholly gone. God's truth and faithfulness are a "great deep." They resemble the ocean itself: always there—vast, fathomless, sublime, the same in its majesty, its inexhaustible fulness, yesterday, to-day, and for ever: the same in calm and in storm, by day and by night: changeless while generations come and pass: everlasting while ages are rolling away.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 6.—Jonah.

THE Book of Jonah has been assailed again and again by the opponents of Christianity, because of the marvelous nature of the facts which it narrates. These facts, however, have received special authentication from the Lord Jesus Himself. Sceptics have asked, How could Jonah be for three days and nights inside the fish? But the Lord Jesus affirmed that he *was* "three days and three nights in the whale's belly" (Matt. xii. 40).

In spite of this, however, the critics have continued their attacks. They have stated—

- (1) That no whale has a gullet big enough to allow the passage of a man's body through it.
- (2) That no city of the size of Nineveh, and answering to the description here given, ever existed.

But God has wonderfully confounded the wisdom of the wise. It is now proved beyond all doubt—

(1) That there are whales, found in the very sea upon which Jonah was sailing, quite capable of swallowing a man; and that some whales have throats big enough to swallow half a dozen men at once.

(2) That there was a vast city answering to the description of Nineveh. It has been laid bare by the excavations of Layard and others. In the days of King Sargon (who reigned shortly after the visit of Jonah), it was no less than ninety miles in circumference and covered a much larger area than London does to-day. It contained large enclosures of pasture land, for the "much cattle" which the Ninevites kept, so that they might have food if their city were besieged.

Thus the Scriptures are vindicated

by modern discoveries, and the critics convicted of ignorance.

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Jonah himself, according to the New Testament, is a type of Christ, both in his sufferings and in his testimony. Yet we might draw the inference from the book that bears his name, that he was by no means even a good man. Disobedient, distrustful, vindictive, sulky, his character is at first sight most unattractive.

But the Lord knew that Jonah was a true servant of His, in spite of failure, and He took care to leave on record a testimony that should enable us to recognize him as such. In II. Kings xiv. 25, Jonah is spoken of as Jehovah's servant, whose prophecy He had Himself fulfilled.

Moreover, it is of interest to note that Jonah's native place was Gath-hepher. This village stood very near to, if not on the exact site of the later Nazareth. The Jews, in their unbelief, declared that "out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." But in point of fact Jonah was a Galilean, and in this, as well as in other ways, foreshadowed the greater than he, who was also "of Galilee."

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The book of Jonah may be taken up in more ways than one. The evangelist may use it as giving a picture of one who ran away from God. Jonah's course, like that of man generally, was a downward one. He "went down" to Joppa, and there he found a ship and "went down" into it. Not only so, but he was "gone down" into the sides of the ship to sleep.

But trouble comes, as it always does, sooner or later, to those who wander from God. Strenuous efforts are then put forth by the mariners for Jonah's salvation. But all was in vain; they

could not achieve their desire. The only way of salvation was through that which typified the death and resurrection of Christ, three days and nights in the fish's belly. And thus he reached "dry land."

Or the book may be viewed as the history of God's dealings with one of His servants, and most instructive it is when thus regarded. We learn that God's will must at all costs be done. Jonah shrank from doing it. He recognised fully that his mission to Nineveh would be the means of mercy being shewn to it (ch. iv. 2), though his actual message was one of judgment. He seemed to feel that Israel's truest interests lay in the destruction of the city, and that Nineveh's preservation would mean Israel's downfall. Like Moses, and like Paul, his love for his nation was so intense that he would sacrifice himself, and incur the displeasure of God, rather than be the means of preservation to Israel's foe.

Underlying all this was his lack of faith in God. Yet how graciously the Lord bears with him. He does not rend his service from him, but disciplines him and teaches him, and entrusts His word to him "the second time." What grace! And amid all the discipline, God's care for His failing servant ever showed itself.

But though restored to the path of obedience and service, Jonah's heart was not yet brought into full communion with the heart of God, and the book closes with words of reproof. But the fact that Jonah was subsequently inspired to record this narrative, to write down his faults, and to let God have the last word, is proof that ultimately his restoration was complete.

But the book of Jonah may also be viewed typically. The typical bearing of the narrative was undoubtedly in the mind of the Holy Spirit, for it is in considering it in this light that we find Christ therein.

Let me briefly indicate how this comes out, in the four chapters of the book.

Ch. i. and ii.

Just as Jonah was bidden to go with a message to Nineveh, Israel was entrusted with a mission to the nations, to testify to Jehovah's greatness and goodness. But as Jonah failed to do God's bidding and set sail instead for Tarshish, one of the world's great commercial emporiums, so Israel shirked her mission, and has made commerce and the acquisition of wealth her object, instead of the testimony of God.

Jonah, by his disobedience, involved those with whom he sailed in storm and tempest. Israel, too, far from being a blessing to the nations around, has brought trouble, through her unfaithfulness, upon all with whom she has had dealings, even as Abram brought trouble upon the house of Pharaoh (Gen. xii. 17).

The upshot of Jonah's course was that he was flung into the sea. There he became the subject of God's sovereign and protecting mercy. Even thus has it been with Israel. Overthrown and scattered by the Gentile powers, her sons are to this day dispersed in the sea of the nations. Yet the preserving care of God has followed them, waves of oppression have surged against them, billows of blood have passed over their heads. Hated, persecuted, driven hither and thither, they remain to this day, as a people, one of the wonders of the world, protected, in spite of all their sin, by the mighty hand of God.

The three days and nights which Jonah spent in the deep are no doubt typical of the depths through which Israel has passed, and is yet passing, until the glorious "third day" of national resurrection. A passage in Hosea speaks similarly: "Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up. After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us up and we shall live in His sight" (Hos. vi. 1, 2).

Now into the sorrows of Israel, torn and smitten on account of their folly, Christ has in grace entered. Delivered up to the Gentiles, He was by them

buffeted, scourged and crucified. But into deeper depths yet He went. The waters came in unto His soul. He sank in "the mire of depth" where there was no standing, into "depth of waters" where the floods overflowed Him. Down even to death the blessed Saviour went. "The depth closed Him round about." For three days and nights He was "in the heart of the earth."

But from the depths He cried to God, even as we read that Jonah did. And God "brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus." On the third day Jonah came out on dry land; and on the third day Christ rose in triumph from the grave. How our hearts delight to dwell upon it! The storm that bowed His blessed head is hushed for ever now.

Jonah ii. gives us the prophet's prayer when in the fish's belly, after his terrible experiences in the deep. He speaks under a sense of God's deliverance. The chapter is made up almost entirely of quotations from, or references to, the Psalms. And as several of these are Messianic Psalms (that is, Psalms relating to Christ) we have no difficulty in understanding that Jonah's experiences were typical of those of Christ.

The references will be more easily compared if we place them side by side.

Jonah ii.

I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and He heard me.

Thou hadst cast me into the deep.

All Thy billows and Thy waves passed over me.

I said, I am cast out of Thy sight.

The waters compassed me about, even to the soul.

Yet hast Thou brought up my life from corruption.

When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord: and my prayer came in unto Thee, into Thy holy temple.

They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.

Salvation is of the Lord.

Psalms.

In my distress I cried unto the Lord, and He heard me (xxx. 1).

Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps (lxxxviii. 6).

All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over me (xlii. 7).

I said . . . I am cut off from before Thine eyes (xxxi. 22).

The waters are come in unto my soul (lxix. 1).

Neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption (xvi. 10).

In my distress I called upon the Lord . . . He heard my voice out of His temple, and my cry came before Him (xviii. 6).

I have hated them that regard lying vanities (xxx. 6).

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord (iii. 8).

How it endears the blessed Lord Jesus to our hearts to trace Him out in all these sufferings, and to know what His experiences were therein. It is not atonement that we are speaking of, nor of the results of Christ's work, but of the experiences of His soul in that which did indeed make atonement, both for Israel and for us. In dwelling upon a theme like this we are on holy ground. And we must never forget that if He came into depths where sin had brought us, it was His grace that brought Him there. Without taint Himself, the Holy One of God, He stooped to suffer for others, and endured not only that which was judicially upon every man, because of sin, but also that which was governmentally upon Israel. It is in this latter connection, for the most part, that His sufferings are spoken of in the Psalms and the prophets.

Ch. iii., iv.

In these chapters what is set forth, typically, is Christ in testimony. Jonah, who in a figurative way had passed through the experience of death and resurrection, became a "sign" to the Ninevites. His marvellous story must have become known to them. Hence the reception of his testimony, and the consequent repentance of the whole city.

Now Christ was given as a "sign" to Israel in the days of His flesh, He was the "sign" that was "spoken against" (Luke ii. 34). But in resurrection He has become a "sign" not only to Israel but to the whole world. The testimony of the risen Christ has been "spoken against" by the Jews (Acts xxviii. 22), but has been "sent unto the Gentiles" and heard by them (ver. 28).

Jonah's preaching among the Ninevites, and its wonderful results, is thus typical of the testimony of Christ among the Gentiles. But how much greater is the antitype than the type! If thousands in Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah, think of the millions that have been reached by the gospel of Christ, and brought thereby to repentance.

And this will be true also in a day that is yet to come. The restored of Israel, brought back to Jehovah after their experience in the deeps, will be used of Him as His messengers to the nations. Instead of shirking their mission, as in the days of old, they will gladly go forth with the testimony of the coming kingdom. And the repentance of Nineveh will again find its antitype, in that day, in the reception of the message by multitudes of Gentiles.

No longer will Israel, like the dog in the manger, wish to exclude the Gentile from blessing, as Jonah did. No longer will there be the "elder son" to be angry at the reception of the prodigal.

The remnant, no doubt, will be exposed to the temptation of following the traditional attitude of the Jew towards

the Gentile. But in these last two chapters of Jonah they will find wholesome instruction as to the attitude that God would have them assume. He cares for the poor Gentiles, even as Jonah cared for the gourd. God created them for His own pleasure, and is not unmindful of them. His chosen people will be brought to His own mind regarding them, though for this they will need the "vehement east wind," and the scorching sun beating upon their heads till they faint. God will have His own gracious way after all, and His blessing shall extend to the ends of the earth. Even the animal creation, the "much cattle," will enjoy the benefits of that day. The lion shall lie down with the lamb. And God's mercy will be everywhere the theme of happy song.

Resurrection.

(F. B. HOLB).

No. 2—The Believer's Peace.

A GREAT deal can be compressed into few words. We have the Apostle's statement "I had rather speak five words with my understanding . . . than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue" (I. Cor. xiv. 19), and in keeping therewith it is worthy of note how many of the most pregnant sentences of Scripture contain only five words.

For an instance take these words:—*"We have peace with God"* (Rom. v. 1) and think into them as you would gaze down into some clear lake whose still waters run deep. Can you see the bottom? No! There are depths in those words unexplored yet by the believer of ripest experience, though "peace with God" is not something to be *attained* at the close of a Christian career, but something to be *received* at the beginning. It is the choice birthright of every child of God.

In spite of it being so, however, we may safely affirm without fear of exaggeration that there are to-day

thousands of believers who cannot say "we have peace with God," as a matter of personal experience. That Jesus made peace "through the blood of His cross" (Col. i. 20), they do not doubt: to say "I have peace" is, however, a different matter. Truth would remind that they should say "I have many a doubt and fear in my heart."

Let us clearly recognise that this is a very abnormal state of things. Sincere souls may think it becomes them to remain to the end of their days in humble uncertainty as to their exact relations with God, and consider doubts and fears to be an especial sign of grace, but Scripture lends no countenance to such an idea. Indeed, it teaches the very opposite. To the "little children," *i.e.*, the babes of God's great family of the redeemed, John says "I write unto you, little children, because your sins *are* forgiven you for His Name's sake" (I. John ii. 12); and again:—"These things have I written

unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life" (chap. v. 13).

Why then the uncertainty which darkens so many hearts, and prevents the bold and happy utterance of those words "I have peace with God"?

Cases differ, especially in details of a secondary nature, but the primary cause lying at the root of the whole matter is the failure to grasp in the soul the meaning and bearing of the resurrection of Christ.

In the first verse of the fifth chapter of Romans there is a much-overlooked word:—"Therefore . . ." That word refers us back to that which immediately precedes.

Let us then ask "wherefore?"—and for answer we must read "Jesus our Lord . . . who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. *Therefore* being justified by faith we have peace with God."

Two important facts lie upon the surface of this text.

Firstly: *Our peace with God depends upon our being justified by faith*; and hence, since to be "justified" is to be "righted," and thus to be right with God, we may say that to be right with God is the only basis for peace with God. Peace on any other basis must be but a delusion and a snare.

Secondly: *Our justification by faith depends upon the death and resurrection of Christ*. We are "righted" altogether by the work of Another, and that work altogether apart from us. But "righted" by *faith*.

The Puritans used to speak of faith as a recumbency, a leaning; the soul reposing itself upon an outside object. How simple this is! and how completely it exposes the folly of the oft-repeated saying of anxious souls, "Oh, but I *can't* believe." Indeed! Is believing then so great a load? Nay. It is but to cease from doing, and to lean on that which is done, and the One who did it. Let no man say he *cannot* lean.

But faith not only reposes upon an

outside object; it also sees, apprehends, and grasps the meaning of that upon which it leans. Here it is that the break-down comes. The death and resurrection of Christ are believed in as historic facts, reposed upon as the basis of salvation, but inasmuch as many do not grasp in faith their meaning and bearing upon the question of their own justification, they dwell in uncertainty instead of in peace.

Ponder well that last verse of Rom. iv. Let us go over it slowly, and in faith, that some light may dawn upon us.

"*Who*": *i.e.*, Jesus our Lord, the Son of God. None less than He!

"*Was delivered*": He was given up to death and judgment. Who delivered Him? God. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God . . ." (Acts ii. 23). It was an act of God on our behalf.

"*For our offences*": Not as a martyr merely, but as a sacrificial victim, He stood in our stead. He took upon Himself the awful load of our guilt. He charged Himself upon Calvary's tree with the full weight of our broken responsibilities, and the dread liabilities resulting therefrom. He stood there *representatively* for us. Each believer may say "He went into death as my representative beneath the load of my offences."

"*And was raised again*": This great truth is as much part of the gospel as is the death of Christ. It speaks of victory over every adverse power, and of the complete settlement of every claim of the righteous throne of God. Death and the grave could not hold Him. He arose.

"*For our justification*": These words give the bearing of His resurrection upon us who believe. Keep in mind that He represents us if you would seize their meaning. Has He come forth free from the dominion of death? Then we are free. Is He triumphantly cleared from the burden of our offences? Then we are clear. As clear as He is. We stand or fall by our Representative. His position is our position. If death

and judgment are behind Him they are behind us.

This is strikingly illustrated by that well known scene in the valley of Elah (I. Sam. xvii.). The conflict lay between the champions of Israel and Philistia, David and Goliath. Upon either side of the valley stood the two armies in battle array, yet the battle wholly lay between their respective representatives.

What a tempest of conflicting emotions must have raged in many an Israelite's breast as they watched David walking down into the valley to meet the giant. If reason prevailed, and they estimated David's chances by the laws of probability, doubts and fears must have held undisputed sway. And if faith raised its voice, and brought Israel's God before them, hope must have been kindled in their hearts. But so long as it was only David going *down into* the valley, it was a case of hoping for the best.

A few more moments and the victory was won. The smooth stone crashed into the Philistine's skull, the big man lay prone on the ground, slain with his own sword, his head in David's hand;

The key of faith unlocks God's mysteries; the key of prayer unlocks God's treasures.

Christians are the world's Bibles. The world will not read the Book, but they will read you and me.

All eternity will be lit by the once wounded Face.

One of our greatest lessons is to learn to put God between us and our circumstances; then they are seen, if at all, modified and qualified by His intervening presence: but if we put our circumstances between us and God, they often hide Him from us altogether. Blessed are they who always set the Lord before them, and keep Him between themselves and all their foes and fears!

and the stripling commenced his triumphal walk *up from* the valley to the hill-top.

"And the men of Israel and of Judah arose and shouted." Every doubt and fear vanished before the return of their victorious representative. His victory was their victory. They were as clear and as free from the Philistine oppressor as he was.

The application of this lies plainly before us. Our Lord Jesus, the greater than David, has been into death's dark valley "delivered for our offences." Many a Christian stops there, and consequently gets no further than hoping for the best. The gospel does not stop there however. Having vanquished the foe, our great Representative has come up out of the valley "raised again for our justification." His victory is our victory. His freedom is our freedom. This is the meaning for us of His resurrection.

Remember then "Jesus Christ . . . *raised* from the dead according to your gospel," and, with peace in your heart, rise up with the true Israel of God to shout His praise.

The old age of grace is maturity, not decay—advance not decline—perfection not imbecility. We go from strength to strength, from grace to grace.

The serene beauty of a love-lit and holy life is the most powerful influence in the world next to the might of God.

When Abraham interceded for Sodom, God did not stop granting till Abraham stopped asking. When Elisha poured the oil in the Shunamite's vessels, the oil ceased not till the vessels ceased. When Jesus opened His treasures on the mount, and fed the multitude, His supply did not stop till they ceased in their demand. "As much as they would," this was God's measure. So it is now, Christ's measure is infinite . . . Remember, if we have little grace, the fault is ours, not His.

Fellowship in the Gospel.

(E. E. CURTIS).

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now (Phil. i. 3-5).

“THE Gospel” is a wonderful expression embracing all the witness of redeeming love in its infinite length and breadth, and depth and height; and fellowship in this is accordingly a privilege of the highest order. But the Gospel sets God forth, *active* in His love; and fellowship in the Gospel is therefore necessarily *active* and *practical*.

Such was the Philippians' fellowship in the Gospel which in the verse before us the beloved Apostle Paul so joyfully recalls whilst himself lying bound in a Roman prison. From the last chapter of the epistle we learn how in the beginning of the Gospel, when Paul departed from Macedonia, no assembly communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving, but the Philippians only. Even in Thessalonica they sent once and again to his necessity, and he speaks of having received the things which were sent by them “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God” (Phil. iv. 18).

Such to-day also is “fellowship in the Gospel”: it is always active and always practical, for still in wondrous grace is God *active* in His love.

Let an incident of yesterday illustrate this fellowship in one of the many and varied ways in which it may express itself. The following letter reached me by the morning post:

Dear Brother,

If you are disengaged could you come over to-morrow? I know a man who is very ill near X Station. I could go with you to see him. The train leaves — at 1.40 p.m. If you could get here about 12, we could have a little dinner before starting. It is an urgent case; I do not think he can possibly last long—cancer is his complaint.

Yours very affectionately in Him.

The writer of the letter is a hard-working tradesman with a large family; but the thought of that poor dying man

on the canal-side at X, who had led a godless life, troubled him. He remembered, moreover, and could not dispel it from his mind, how the Lord took that journey of thirty miles to meet the women at the well (John iv).

Feeling some incompetency to himself meet the case, but earnestly desiring to partake in the outgoings of the Gospel towards this needy one the letter was sent.

I found upon meeting him, that all that was incidental to thus carrying the message had been taken into account—provision for the needs of the poor sufferer, the rail expenses, etc. An empty compartment in the train served as a place for prayer, and “two” were agreed as touching this one thing asked for—the blessing of the soul of him we were to visit (Matt. xviii. 19).

Upon reaching the bedside of the poor dying signalman, it became evident that *God* had been before us preparing the soul for the reception of the blessing. A Christian mother's prayers and sayings had been recalled, and repentance had already taken place. How easy then was the task which was mine in unfolding to that penitent soul “the glad and glorious Gospel” of God's grace to men, my fellow worker backing it home by speaking of the joys which that same Gospel had brought into his own life, and which made him long that this poor sufferer should also share in the blessing which God is ever waiting to pour into any broken heart.

Deep then was the joy which was ours when we heard him confess Christ as his Saviour and his Lord, and exclaim in his new found gladness, “Bless the Lord, O my soul!” whilst his prayers and thanksgiving mingled with ours, and on taking our leave a little later we could not but feel how real and how precious a thing is “*fellowship in the Gospel.*”

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter IV. 1-12

1. Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.

2. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus.

3. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication :

4. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour ;

5. Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles who know not God :

6. That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter : because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.

7. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

8. He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit,

9. But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you : for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.

10. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia : but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more ;

11. And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you ;

12. That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing.

Verses 1-8.

THE first two words of this chapter connect very distinctly what the Apostle here says with the subject introduced at the close of the preceding chapter (ver. 13). There he spoke of the holiness of God our Father, before whom the whole responsible issues of the Christian's life will be manifested ; here he turns with concern and emphasis to the consideration of the moral condition common to the whole pagan world, out of which the gospel had called these Thessalonian saints. And, seeing that he appeals to them in a manner so forceful and authoritative, it may be well first to give, as nearly as possible, the exact rendering of this passage according to some of the best authorities, so as to be able to better appreciate the earnestness with which the Apostle addresses himself to a subject, the importance of which, in its practical bearing, he evidently rates most highly.

" Furthermore, then, brethren, we beg [or beseech] you and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that even as ye have received from us *the way* how ye ought to walk so as to please God, as indeed ye are walking, that so ye would abound still more.

For ye know what commandments we gave you through [or by] the Lord Jesus.

For this is God's will concerning you, your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication ;

That each one of you know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.

[Not in lustfulness of desire, even as the nations who know not God.]

Not overstepping the rights of and wronging his brother in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all these things, even as we also told you before and have solemnly testified.

For God has not called us for [i.e. in that condition characteristically, for] uncleanness, but in [i.e. in the very elements of] holiness.

He therefore that in this matter disregards his brother, disregards not man [merely] but God [the God who] has also given His holy Spirit to you."

Reflecting on this passage it is not easy to say which is the more to be admired, the delicacy and gentle tact with which the Apostle addresses himself to the subject, or the authoritative non-compromising firmness with which he handles it. It was a subject that demanded his utmost skill, and we see at a glance the inspiration of the Spirit in the way he treated it, setting forth in a few short sentences its various aspects in the clearest light, and connecting in the most comprehensive way each issue with the highest Christian principle involved, and so raising it from the plane of mere social morality to the highest level of divine truth and Christian responsibility.

As is well known, the sin fornication (used here with a general and comprehensive meaning) was lightly thought of in the Gentile world. It was regarded indeed as an indifferent thing ; while in some cases—true in both ancient and modern times, as in India under British

rule to this day—it was even consecrated in the name of religion. It is a common and pernicious vice in the fallen family of man; an offence against the soul; the cause of bitter strifes in the world “*teterrima belli causa*” (quoted by Alford); a sin in the sight of God, which, when He separated a people to Himself from the nations around, He definitely prohibited under penalty of a curse, by the seventh commandment.

Assuming that there are five commandments in each table of the law, the seventh commandment in the second table stands opposite to the second commandment, against idolatry, in the first, *i.e.*, the grievous evil against God, that brought His judgment on the pagan world, stands correlatively placed opposite the great social evil of man against himself and against his neighbour.

The emphasis laid by the Lord on the seventh commandment is especially to be noticed (Matt. v. 27-30), connected as it is with the twice repeated threat of having the “whole body . . . cast into hell.” Again, at the conference at Jerusalem the apostles and elders classed it with idolatry on the one hand, and on the other hand with practices that disown the fact that God is the author and owner of life (Acts xv. 19, 20).

We can understand, therefore, how the Apostle is moved to use to them in regard of this matter the very strongest language, both in the way of entreaty and command, founded alike on personal affection and on Divine authority, so as to direct their walk in a manner pleasing to God. Nor was it now for the first time that he addressed them on this subject. He had done so already; but he repeats and enforces his exhortation, because of the need there was to retain their minds and to cultivate them in the new atmosphere of holiness, into which they had been lately called, from out of the impurity of their former pagan life. He had set before them the “how” they were to walk and please God, which, he adds with a touch of refined delicacy and encouragement, they were actually doing; but he desires that they

would abound more and more. This was the true test of life and spiritual energy; for it is certain that where there is no growth in holiness there must be decay. We live, not in the sufficiency of what we have acquired, but in the energy of acquisition. The vital question is not whereto we have attained, but the goal of pursuit, the energy of attaining (Phil. iii. 7-16); when the latter fails, the failure of the former is inevitable. Let us know, let us “*follow on to know the Lord*” (Hos. vi. 3).

But he does not rest his exhortation merely on his own entreaties. He passes from them to the commands he had given them by the Lord Jesus, through whom, as the mediating channel directly from God Himself, the Apostle had delivered them to the Thessalonian saints: and so he adds, “For this is God’s will, even your sanctification,” *i.e.* (in the words of another), “It is not merely the fact that God wills so; but it is a matter of God’s will. It is of such a character that God Himself wills it.” And this will of God means, is put in apposition with, “that ye should abstain from fornication,” that each should “possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour, . . . not overstepping the rights of and wronging his brother in the matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all these things, even as we told you before and have solemnly testified.” More stringent language, more pathetic appeal, more authoritative commands, or more solemn warnings could not be well conceived. And the style of the Apostle’s address to them recalls to mind the words of the Lord Jesus when He said, “He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me, and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me” (Luke x. 16, *cf.* John xiii. 20).

He then that in this matter disregards his brother, in whom also the Spirit of God dwells, disregards not man merely but God—the God who has not only called us in holiness, but has also given His Holy Spirit, thereby furnishing us with the power of realising the purpose of that call.

Ver. 4, "his own vessel." Some understand this to mean his wife; but the weightiest authorities take it to mean "his own body."

Verses 9, 10.

But if the negative abstaining from evil was above the morality of the pagan world, the positive and essential nature of Christian life was beyond the conception of the human mind. The word used for love in the New Testament is not found in the whole range of classical Greek. It is not used by Philo or Josephus. Other words for love are there, but debased as they are by man's passion, they are not used in the sacred writing.

The words for "philanthropy" and "brotherly love" are common; but the former meant little more than friendly decorum and hospitality; the neighbourly feeling that considered the legal rights and welfare of others, and did its duty towards them, where self-interest did not clash; but hardly rose, if at all, to the spontaneity of a love that is above the prescriptions of law: while the latter was confined to the affections between blood relations, members of the same family.

But "love is of God," and God was not yet revealed. The word is first used in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, but even there it could not rise to the true and essential meaning of it as manifested in the "gift of God." In John iii. 16, and I. John iv. 7-12, we have the declaration of the love of God and the grand climax of revelation now made known (II. Cor. ix. 15).

Love does not in itself exclude affection, but it is the moral affection of conscious deliberate will, not the natural impulse of immediate feeling, so that it becomes self-denying and compassionate in devotion to its object. What it is, it is not for itself but for others (Cremer S.V.)*

* To avoid disfiguring the text, quotations are not always put in inverted commas, but when it is deemed necessary their source is notified.

Now the Thessalonian saints were "taught of God to love one another," not by any code of ethics conceived by man. "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God" (John vi. 45), and the Apostle here recognizes this underlying principle of divine teaching, the word of life rendered effectual in them by the operation of the Spirit of God: and love is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. v. 22).

All this is alike beyond the mind of man and his practice. There is a saying of Aristotle's, "The Deity exists not to love but to be loved." Therein, with all his acuteness of mind, he betrays his utter ignorance of God. His god is an idol, the creation of his own selfishness; an idol that is natural to us all. And if, indeed, we have learned anything otherwise, it is because we "have been taught of God to love one another." But how little we have learned it is a matter of sorrowful and humiliating reflection! These Thessalonian saints had learned something of it and were practising it: and we can well understand how earnestly the Apostle exhorts them to abound still more; not content with the progress they had made, but lovingly urging them on to increased energy of attaining.

Verses 11, 12.

But besides that he exhorts them to seek earnestly to be quiet, and to mind their own affairs, and to work with their hands at their ordinary calling, so that they should have need of nothing from any man, and thus present a seemly deportment and becoming demeanour "towards them that are without," who were not Christians, and by the honest pursuit of daily toil maintain themselves in the conscious sense and the avowed testimony of honourable independence.

The appointed lot of man since Gen. iii. 19 has been "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread"; and the loyal acceptance of this judgment is alone his right and proper attitude, wherein he can look for and receive at the hands of God the mercy needed for

his daily toil. But fallen man is a thief and a robber. Barabbas is his master-piece. And the elemental propensity of his evil nature is to acquire, without honest labour in the fear of God, either by plunder or by begging. If he has power he will practise the former; if he has not, he will resort to the latter.

This was a subject of frequent admonition on the part of the Apostle, as the spirit and practice of the world was ever before his eyes. For himself he set the example of an honourable independence, and he enforced it on others. It is inconceivable that a system of Christian ethics could be divinely set up in which it was ignored: and so he says to the elders of Ephesus with great emphasis,

"Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.

"I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support [come to the aid of] the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts xx. 34-35).

And in very similar words he wrote to them afterwards,

Undiscovered Wealth.

A poor farmer owned a piece of land, hard and rocky, from which only at the price of severest toil was he able to support his family. He died and bequeathed the farm to his eldest son. By an accident the son discovered traces of gold on the land, which, being explored, was found to contain mineral wealth of immense value. The father had precisely the same property that the son now possessed, but while the one died a poor man, the other attained to great wealth.

It is even so with Christians. All have received the same wonderful gifts of the grace of God, but some have never discovered their riches. For instance, think of the passage, "What know ye not that your bodies are the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you which ye have of God and ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (I. Cor. vi. 19-20). How many

"Let him that stole steal no more; but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. iv. 28).

It seems plain that this exhortation, necessary in a general way everywhere, was particularly so at Thessalonica, where we might gather from ver. 11 that the Assembly was mostly composed of the class of persons thus labouring (Alford); for by comparing II. Thess. iii. 6-12, we learn that he was obliged to pass from a loving exhortation as to this practice to a stern and authoritative "command . . . in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" to withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the instruction here given.

Another important lesson is herein set forth, how that the topmost stone of the fabric reared high to the glory of God is based on the establishment of governmental principles connected with the most elementary factors of daily life. It is in vain that we pretend to the former if we ignore the latter.

Christians are alive to this great truth? The realization of it makes all the difference between spiritual poverty and prosperity.

"*He that gathereth not with me scattereth.*" There may be gathering, as we see, in looking round at what is called the church; but if it is not *with Christ*, the whole thing, vast as it is, is but scattering. One may be very ignorant about Christ, but it must be Himself around whom we gather.

Christ did not come to be occupied with the ten thousand vanities filling the hearts and minds of poor sinners down here; but He came from His Father's bosom, to tell out all His Father's love, that He might occupy their hearts with the joys of the Father's presence. "If thou knewest" was ever on His lips.

"Thy will be done" is the keynote to which every prayer must be tuned.

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ. (H. NUNNERLEY.)

The Peace Offering and the Sin Offering.

WE have already considered in the burnt offering and the meat offering two aspects of Christ's death prefigured in the sacrifices offered on the foursquare brazen altar. In the peace offering (Lev. iii.) another side is presented.

A better name for this offering is the "prosperity offering," for here we have not exactly that which has to do with the sinner finding peace with God (which is more the sin offering aspect), but rather the communion which flows from that peace known and enjoyed, communion which finds its centre in that wondrous death on Calvary in which not only was God glorified about the whole question of sin, but in which also infinite love to us is fully displayed. Hence the peace offering is spoken of primarily as one "for a thanksgiving" (Lev. vii. 12).

This offering differs from each of the others in that the priests, the offerer, and Jehovah all found in it a common joy. A part of the inwards and all the fat was burnt on the altar and ascended as a sweet savour to God (Lev. iii. 3-5); the breast and heave shoulder became the portion of *Aaron and his family* (Lev. vii. 29-34 and Num. xviii. 19); whilst the remainder of the flesh became the food of the offerer and others with him (Lev. vii. 15-21). It is thus the offering which presents to us *communion* with God and each other.

This is the special aspect of the death of Christ which we celebrate in the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper. In the burnt offering all ascended to God, and what was for God was the prominent thought: in the Supper "this is My body which is *given for you*" is a constant reminder that the matchless love which took Him to death was *for us*.

But though the peace offering is distinct, it is yet closely connected with the burnt offering, for we read that

"Aaron's sons shall burn it (the peace offering) on the altar *upon the burnt sacrifice*" (Lev. iii. 5), it ascended there as a sweet savour; so that we can regard Christ as the burnt offering under the eye of God, and yet all the time be conscious of our deep eternal interest in His death.

It was for us He suffered; it was our sin brought Him there; the blood that was shed was shed for us. In that death we have been reconciled to God, by virtue of the work there finished we shall find ourselves in the glory of God, and it will be the unceasing theme of our praises in eternity.

The Sin Offering.

The last of these four great types is the sin offering presented to us in Lev. iv. and further detailed for us in a slightly different aspect as the trespass offering in Lev. v.

In the sin offering, as we have before pointed out, the sacrifice (Christ) is viewed as identified with the sins and sin of the offerer, hence the flesh was not burnt for a sweet savour as in the burnt offering, and might not be placed on the altar, but the whole bullock was to be carried forth and burnt without the camp (Lev. iv. 1-12).

The offerer, having placed his hand on the bullock's head, shed its blood. Some of its blood was sprinkled before the veil, showing that all sin is against God. Some was placed on the horns of the altar of incense, and the remainder poured out at the bottom of the altar of burnt offering. Then the carcass was removed from the camp where God dwelt, and carried to a clean place: there full and unsparing judgment fell on it: the dung—its worthless part—the flesh and skin—its valuable part—consumed by fire, all gone under the judgment of God.

The skin is the outward covering which distinguishes one from another.

"Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not!" "There is no difference. For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 22, 23), and this reminds us that whatever distinction exists among men, socially or intellectually, these avail not before God, all men are equally lost.

The flesh, too, was burned—that excellent part according to man's estimate; all has come under the judgment of God, our goodness as well as our badness. Sin, sins, self, all that we are, all we have done, or thought, condemned, judged, burnt outside the camp where God dwelt, as unfit for His presence.

The Galatians had a religion after the flesh, it made something of them. The Corinthians tried to combine worldly greatness with the lowly Jesus. Both had to learn the Cross as that by which they were crucified unto the world, and the world to them.

If we decipher the teaching aright of this side of the altar it will have the effect of delivering us from self-glorification, and self-occupation, and from this present evil world.

Paul was gazing on this side when he wrote God "condemned sin in the flesh," and God "hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us," and again when he said "I am crucified with Christ."

But if the sin offering presents Christ, as it does, as identified with all our sins and guilt, and so as having to go into the place of distance "outside the camp," yet the Spirit guards most jealously the truth that the load of guilt laid upon Him never for an instant touched His own intrinsic holiness in that hour of deepest woe; and so it is said again and again of this offering, as of the meat offering, that it was "most holy"; everything brought into contact with it must be *holy* (Lev. vi. 25-29). The fat of the sin offering and a part of the inwards was burnt on the altar (ch. iv. 8, 9), and though the sin offering was not one of the sweet savour offerings, this burning of the fat and inwards is *once* said to be for a sweet savour (ch. iv. 31). We are thus reminded that even

in the sin offering aspect of the death of Christ, the energy of purpose the un-failing devotedness of Christ, His personal excellency (which the fat and inwards typify), even when "made sin" was ever before God, even in the hour when He had to hide His face from Him. He was still a sweet savour to God. Sin has been dealt with in death, but a death which proved the excellencies of Jesus.

There are gradations in the offerings; in the case of the burnt offering the grades range from a bullock down to a turtle dove. These grades varied with the comparative prosperity or poverty of the offerer, and typically teach us how acceptable to God is even the weakest and feeblest appreciation of *Christ*. The turtle dove ascended with the same sweet savour as the bullock.

Now in the sin offering we have a wider range of grades than in any of the other offerings. These vary from a bullock downwards, and descended even in case of need to a tenth of an ephah of fine flour (ch. v. 11); and this is the more remarkable as *blood-shedding*, which is the dominant thought in the sin offering, could not be present in this exceptional offering which might be brought by the very poorest. But how the grace of God shines in this, for it shows us that that uninstructed turning of the heart to Christ which does not even rise to the knowledge of the divine necessity for His death, but which nevertheless realises its need of a sin-bearer, and appreciates the fact that this need can be met in Christ alone—even *this* is sufficient to secure acceptance with Him who delights in the feeblest appreciation of His Beloved Son.

Looking back, then, over the types we have been considering, we can bless God that whether we are learning Christ in the sweet savour of the burnt offering, the desolation of the sin offering, the lowly grace of the meat offering, or the communion of the peace offering, they are all parts of that death by which He glorified God and has eternally saved us.

(To be continued).

“Creation.”

(S. L. JACOBS).

No. 5.—The Fourth Day.

Gen. i. 14-25.

14. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:

15. And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.

16. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.

17. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven, to give light upon the earth.

18. And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.

THE truth embodied in the fourth day's work did not come into manifestation early in the history of God's dealings with men, nor is it early in a soul's history that it enters into the same. The light of God must in some measure be received at the start, but this falls short of heaven's order and rule. Christ is, when this is received, seen as the sun—the centre of the moral universe according to God. He becomes in actuality the Head; He gives light and heat to all; He governs and He controls; and all in that universe takes character from Him.

The moon, too, whether we look at it as Israel (one figure) or as the Church (another figure), is closely connected with the sun, derives all her light from him, and can only shine upon the earth as she turns her face to him, and in that measure. Hence she may be very light, or may be very dark and not shine at all, and generally is part light and part dark. How suggestive is all this as picturing what actually exists.

There is here, as it were, a second division between the day and the night, and the lights are “for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years.” On them depend God's periods, they tell us whither we have arrived in the dealings of God with men. They give us summer and winter each in its due time and season, for there is the summer and winter as well as day and night.

It is still the world's winter, as it was in John x. 22, and the world yet waits for the passing of its winter—when the time of the singing birds shall come and the fig tree shall put forth leaves and

green figs, and the voice of the turtle shall be heard in the land (Song of Sol. ii. 12, 13); for this the earth must wait, until the Jew repents and turns to God, and thus gets Christ back, and with Him the times of restitution of all things (Acts iii. 19-21).

But the Christian need not wait for that day of glory, for he that has the Spirit, and can hear the voice of Christ, is allowed to anticipate the coming day and enter by faith into its glories beforehand; and however much the Church may have failed in that which was committed to her, every blessing and joy is still open to him who overcometh. God grant us to understand the place that Christ has as the mighty Sun of Righteousness who will one day arise to shine for this world; and understand, too, His place as the Centre and Head of all things; and the place of the Church also, as associated with Him, that we may walk in the power and reality of these heavenly things in our own souls, even though heavenly order is not yet publicly realized on earth.

Heb. xii. 22-24 brings before us some of these heavenly realities. Heavenly rule is the source of great blessings; without it we are lawless; with it we are in attachment to Christ, we abide in Him, we do not practise sin, we are kept in the Father and in the Son, and this is the promise He has promised, even life eternal: His commandment is life eternal.

But just as on earth, so in the heavens, there is variety. The earth revolves round the sun, yet its distance from the sun varies from day to day. Everywhere

there is variety, everywhere there is change, but the sun maintains its sway, and the moon still gives its light when its face is turned to the mighty sun. One star differeth from another star in glory. The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork.

It is a great day in the soul's history when divine order is thus in measure apprehended. As always the evening has to precede the morning; the time of exercise, the time of longing desire, the time of waiting, must come before the time of entrance into blessing: this is always God's way. He creates the desire and He satisfies the longing, He leads the soul along and fills the hungry soul with goodness, He brings His people out of darkness and the shadow of death and breaks their bands asunder. May our souls wait for the Lord for His mornings, more than they watch for the (literal) morning; then shall we be blessed indeed.

We cannot get redemption in this chapter, yet the fact that darkness and night are portrayed therein points to the necessity of it, and is in a way a prophecy that it must be. We know that no one can be brought out of his evil plight unless the Creator take His place among

His creatures and enter into his condition, which Jesus did in all its reality (sin apart as to His nature, and yet being made sin upon the cross) in order to bring men out of all that sin had plunged them into; so that between the lines we read how all creation cries out for its Deliverer to put all upon a new footing. The world pictured here is a world over which darkness passes and which looks for the light, a creation which cries out for Christ.

Till 400 years ago it was almost universally held that the earth was the centre of the universe, yet in this creation chapter the sun's controlling place is clearly given, and that 6000 years ago. How knew Moses these things? The civilised world recognises to-day that the sun is the centre of the visible universe (*i.e.*, this solar system with all its attendant planets, etc.), yet how few acknowledge that Jesus is the Sun and Centre of all the *moral* universe according to God, and that till He gets His right place as Head of every man, Head of all principality and power, Head of His body the Church, Head over all things to the Church, nothing can be right, for it is only in right relationship to Him that anybody (or anything) can be right, yet it is all portrayed here in a figure for him who has eyes to see.

Prayer.

In London an enterprising newspaper has a private wire connecting with Edinburgh, in order to command the latest and freshest news from the Scottish Athens. One night the clerk who had been out to collect local items, returned late and could not get in—he had forgotten to take his night key. He thought a moment. It was of no use to knock at the door—the only other fellow-clerk in the building was too far away to hear him. He stepped around to a neighbouring telegraph office and sent a message to Edinburgh: "Tell—that I am down at the street door and can not get in." In twenty minutes the door was unfastened and he was at his desk in the office. The shortest way to get

at the man in the fourth storey was by way of Edinburgh!

How long will it take us to learn that our shortest route to the man next door is the way of God's Throne! God has no greater controversy with His people to-day than this, that with boundless promises to believing prayer there are so few who give themselves to intercession. This is represented as being a matter even of divine wonderment "And there is none that calleth upon Thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee" (Isa. lxiv. 7).

Prayerless work will soon slacken, and never bear fruit.

If you would stand straight in the presence of sin, bow low in the presence of God.

The Story of a Great Revival.

(WM. BOUSFIELD)

Haggai.

Chapter i. 1-15.

1. In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying,

2. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

3. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste ?

5. Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.

9. Ye looked for much, and, lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

10. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

11. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

12. Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the Lord their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the Lord their God had sent him, and the people did fear before the Lord.

13. Then spake Haggai the Lord's messenger, in the Lord's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the Lord.

14. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God,

15. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

Chapter ii. 18, 19.

18. Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid, consider it.

19. Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree, hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

ONE of the first marks of soul declension is loss of spiritual perception.

In the book of Ezra we read of the zeal and energy with which the rebuilding of the house of God was commenced by the godly remnant of the Jews on their return from captivity. But opposition arose, and in ch. iv. 23, 24 we find that their opponents made them to cease "by force and power."

Then with them, as with all who cease to *advance*, decline set in: they speedily fell into line with their surroundings, and put forth the miserable excuse for their lack of interest and loss of zeal, that the time had "not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built"; when, as a matter of fact, they had lost spiritual understanding as to what was suited to God, and as a natural consequence they fell into the condition so sorrowfully mourned over

by the Apostle Paul, when, writing to the Philippians he said, "*all seek their own*" (Phil. ii. 21).

But if *they* had lost heart and interest in God and His things, God had not lost *His* interest in them nor in His house. Therefore He sends the prophet Haggai to them with "Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts saying" (verse 2).

Fellow Christians, do we find ourselves beset with spiritual drought, blight, barrenness, want of dew; have we to mourn the lack of satisfaction and precious sheaves of harvest? If so, God would put to us the same solemn question to-day as He put to His people then, "Why? saith the Lord of hosts" (verse 9).

There can be nothing more searching than this one word from God "Why?" Let us take it into the sanctuary of His presence, and answer it there, and we shall certainly get the same word now

as then, "Because of Mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house" (verse 9). When God's things are neglected for our own, when "all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's," spiritual poverty *must* result. That is its secret and source.

But God presented Himself to them as "*the Lord of hosts.*" They had desisted from the work of the house of God under pressure of the authority of an earthly king, but *He* was the very Lord of hosts, and would have put forth His mighty power for them had they been but true to Him and to His interests.

It is most interesting to trace the various steps in connection with this wonderful revival, and to see how blessedly God can work in a short time (here it was 24 days, compare verses 1 and 15), when there is obedience to His word, and a willingness to respond to His claim on our obedience and affections.

How solemn and searching are the words "Consider your ways" (verses 5 and 7): the "ways" go to the root of things.

"He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel" (Psalm ciii. 7).

"When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. xvi. 7).

The *ways* include the hidden springs which lead to the outward acts, and we need in self-judgment to take our *ways* into the Divine presence and let them be fully weighed in the balance of the sanctuary. Then much of the "own ceiled house" hindrance would be exposed, and dealt with, and we should learn in God's way the answer to His "why" (verse 9). We should find out the "why" of the absence of blessing and power, and the awful barrenness and blight which have so long fallen upon us.

But, the darkest hour did but herald the dawn of a brighter day; and as then, so now, for are we not even now on the eve of a wonderful blessing? Everywhere there is great expectancy and a quickening of the pulses of God's

dear saints, with increased interest in things of God. We do not expect things to get better in Christendom generally, for Scripture witnesses to the contrary, but individual souls and true hearts everywhere will have great blessing and encouragement as the days get outwardly darker and more difficult. All that is needed is a moral condition suited to the ways of God, then shall we enter the harvest field, and share in the blessing He is so ready to bestow.

The second step towards recovery is to "go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house" (verse 8). Let our souls but "go up" in prayer, in confession, in intercession, in divine blessed reality, and we shall have no lack of material for building the house. Let us "wait upon the Lord" and we shall "renew" or *change* (see margin) our "strength" (Isaiah xl. 31). That is, we shall get strength of a new kind; in *our* strength we can do nothing, but in His strength everything is possible.

Now mark how God connects with His house two of the greatest things we can possibly think of, His "pleasure" and His "glory" (verse 8). How intense must be the interest of God in that house with which He is pleased to connect these two immeasurably great things! And how we should long in this our day to have our hearts set on that which makes for His pleasure and His glory, the whole wide range of *His* interests, for that which is typified in the "house" of Haggai's day is vast in its extent.

The 12th verse depicts the actual work of restoration. Commencing with the highest, Zerubbabel, and going down to the feeblest of the remnant of the people, it came out in two blessed ways in its effect upon their hearts: they "obeyed the voice of the Lord their God," and they "did fear before the Lord." Everything is possible to the obedience of faith, and to the one who fears before the Lord; for is not "the fear of the Lord the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm cxl. 10), and "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to

hearken than the fat of rams" (I. Sam. xv. 22)? On the other hand the *fear of man* bringeth a snare: and a snare of a most deadly character. Even an apostle fell in an unguarded moment into a snare of this character, and had to be withstood to the face (Gal. ii. 11).

Paul says "I was not *disobedient* unto the heavenly vision" (Acts xxvi. 19): and vision on vision, revelation on revelation, came to him in consequence.

Now notice God's attitude towards these restored people; no longer is it the word of a *prophet*, bringing home to the conscience of a backsliding people the solemn warnings of the "Lord of hosts," but a "messenger" and a "message" (verse 13): the *same* servant but in a *different* character. We can well understand with what joy this servant of the Lord would deliver his soul-inspiring message "I am with you, saith the Lord" (verse 13). How truly it has been said, "the man who is with God is in a majority." God is pleased to link His almighty strength with an obedient God-fearing people.

Verse 14 presents to us a *spirit-stirred* people: whose spirits the *Lord* had stirred. It is here where we first decline, and it is here we must get recovery. It is noticeable how often the Apostle Paul speaks of the "spirit" in his

epistles, (II. Tim. iv. 22) "the Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit." The awful tendency of this day is to decline in spiritual fervour, to be neither cold nor hot. Our spirits need to be stirred up constantly, that we too may come and "work in the house of the Lord," then there will be a "revival" indeed.

We are so apt to concentrate our attention on some "ceiled house" of our own, whether this be natural or ecclesiastical, and to forget the larger interests of *His* house, and, alas, to say "The time has not come." This is the pivot on which all turns: what have we before us? Is it *His* things or our own, the wide circle of *His* interests or some narrower circle in which *we* have especial interest? His interests take in *every one* of the saints of God upon the face of the earth, and if He but give us this larger outlook, then shall we be more fitted to build, not pull down; to work, not selfishly neglect; and to be willing "workers together" in "the house of the Lord of hosts," our "God."

In conclusion note the emphasis with which, all that was merely preliminary and preparatory being over, and the foundation of the Lord's house being laid on the 24th day of the ninth month, God announces that from *that* day He would bless them (Ch. ii. 18, 19).

A grateful heart is the mainspring of obedience.

God's commands are God's enablings.

The only path of safety and happiness is prompt unquestioning obedience to the commandments of the Lord.

It is good to bear in mind that whatever our circumstances, it cannot be necessary to disobey God.

We may be too engrossed with the shell even of heavenly things.

The Bible is like the leaves of the lemon tree—the more you bruise and wring them, the sweeter the fragrance they throw around.

Note how grace throws the virgins, who all slept, not back on themselves and their failure, but forward to the coming Bridegroom. The Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to *meet Him*. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. (Matt. xxv. 7).

So entirely redeemed are we that not a hair of our heads is omitted from the inventory of the possession which He has purchased in purchasing us.

There is nothing that the hearts of God's children should more sedulously cultivate than the thought that we have to do with *God*. Christ hath "once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God."

"God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I. Corinthians 1, 9).

The Christian's Calling.

EVERY Christian has been called by the Gospel to the obtaining of eternal glory, and that glory is as sure as the love that brought the Gospel to us. But by that same Gospel we have been called into Christian fellowship, and our business is to attend to this with all our hearts: it is the business of every soul that has received the Gospel, though thousands of Christians never seem to give it a thought. They are most conscientious as to all the obligations that their earthly avocations lay upon them: but this, the calling of God, their divine avocation, seems to have escaped their notice; as a consequence they miss God's intention for them and the great privileges that attach to it. It is possible that they imagine that since their sins are forgiven, and they are sure of Heaven, they can choose just that fellowship that suits their taste the best, instead of seeing that the same blessed heart that planned the Gospel for their salvation, also formed the one fellowship in which their feet had henceforward to walk.

This fellowship is not formed or held intact by any regulations of men: it is established in Divine life and in the power of the Holy Ghost, and ecclesiastical boundaries and devices can only fetter and hinder its full expression and development. There are three things that are necessary to it:

1. One All-controlling Object outside this world—that Object is Christ.
2. One Divine Spirit dwelling within to fix the eyes of all on that Object.
3. The pursuit of the things of Christ here below.

The All-controlling Object outside this world will deliver from self-centredness. The one Spirit within supplies

the vital and unbreakable bond between every member so that we are one body. The pursuit of the things of Christ will make us strive together in faith and love for the good of the whole.

The Things in which we have Fellowship.

The things about which we have fellowship, or share in common, are not of this world, nor are they grasped by the wisdom of man. They are entirely outside the range of his highest conception, for "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him" (I. Cor. ii. 9). They are the things of Christ, the deeps of God, the blessed things which were hidden in the eternal Bosom throughout the ages, that angels would deem themselves honoured even to look into: these things, the choicest that the eternal God could disclose, are opened up for our souls in infinite grace, for "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

The Great Benefits of it.

We are all equal sharers in these things, the most advanced saint of God cannot lay claim to a greater share in them than the youngest babe: he may have realised more of their preciousness, have entered more fully into the mighty extent of them, but the things that he has learnt are for all, and if any Christian begins to hoard up what he has learnt as though it were some peculiar treasure of his own, he will at once lose the joy of it, for every other Christian has a divinely-given right to all these things; and it is strikingly true in this matter, that "there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than it meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (Prov. xi. 24).

Christian fellowship may, therefore, be likened to a partnership (always bearing in mind that there is a vital bond by the indwelling Spirit), and an illustration may help us to understand it. Three men are equal partners in one concern, they go out to do business, one North, one South, and the other West. At the end of some time they return to their head-quarters; the first has had no success and fears of absolute failure haunt him; the second arrives from a similar experience and in a like mood; but at last the third comes in, his face is bright and he has good news to tell, for his success has been phenomenal. Now mark how his partners revive in spirits, and why? because his success is the success of the firm in which they all are equal sharers, and instead of his success producing jealousy or division between them, they all rejoice together.

It is even so, no Christian can claim any thing of Christ's as his exclusive possession; it is given for his own soul's joy first, but it is given for the common good of all; so that if one Christian, who has not made much advance in the things of God, meets one who has been prospering in these things, the result of that contact will be a great reviving of heart, and refreshment of soul. May God stir us up to our responsibility in this matter, that we may know the joy of giving out, and passing on, and of having common participation in the things which are the very life of Christians. "There should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (I. Cor. xii. 25, 26).

The Great Principles of Fellowship.

The three great principles of this fellowship confront us at the very opening of the subject, in verse 9 of I. Cor. i. (quoted at the head of this paper), they are,

1. HOLINESS.
2. LOVE.
3. SUBJECTION TO THE LORD.

Holiness, because God who has called us is holy. *Love*, for it is the fellowship of His Son, and this brings before us a relationship which exists in divine and eternal love. And *Subjection to the Lord*, for His Son is our Lord.

The greater part of the Epistle (I. Cor.) is taken up with the removal of the obstructions to fellowship (the flesh in its different phases), but when the subject of the Lord's Supper is reached (which on our side is the constant pledge of our identification with the death of Christ; that which gave birth to the fellowship), these three principles stand out in striking prominence.

First must come holiness: the death of Christ was the full expression of the holiness of God; it was seen in all its intensity when He, the sinless One, took upon Himself the condemnation of sin and the flesh; at that awful moment He had to cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" And He Himself supplied the answer to that question, "But Thou art holy" (Psalm xxii. 1, 3). In the death of Jesus we are brought into contact with the holiness of God as nowhere else, so that in the eating of the Supper we are exhorted to examine ourselves, or be self-judged, and so to eat (xi. 28). But that which was the full expression of God's abhorrence of sin and all that we are as in the flesh, was also the telling out of His great love to us, a love that many waters could not quench, the unconquerable love of God. Then, it is the Lord's Supper, and it is by the word of the Lord that we have received it (xi. 20, 23).

In the following chapters this fellowship is seen in its workings. Chapter xii. gives the body formed by the Spirit of God (ver. 13), and the Holy Spirit is mentioned eleven times in the first thirteen verses, so that *holiness* is placed at the very threshold of fellowship. Chapter xiii. has *love* for its subject, for the word translated "charity," should be love, it is the spirit and character of the life that belongs to the body as being of God. Chapter xiv. closes with the words, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him

acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (ver. 37).

There could be no fellowship according to God without these things, and it is the ignoring of them that has led to the terrible confusion in Christendom, which all those who love the Lord Jesus must deplore. Holiness lies at the root of all; there must be the judgment on our part of the world, the flesh, and sin, and all that has come under the judgment of God in the cross of Christ; if we are weak in this so shall we fail in the calling of God. But holiness is not a matter of outward separation from evil (though it includes that), it is an inward thing, a question of nature. It means true heart separation from what is evil, the hatred of iniquity, and the love of righteousness; and it is by this characteristic of the new, the divine nature, that we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (II. Pet. i. 4). But love is as essential as holiness, it is the perfect bond; under its power we shall be ready to lay down our lives for one another, it will make the strong bear the infirmities of the weak, and make each seek the good of all.

Lastly there must be subjection to the Lord that every member may work in harmony with the other, and that each may attend earnestly to his own individual service instead of judging and finding fault with others, which is the cause of many a breach of practical fellowship.

The Great Hindrance.

The flesh is always opposed to these principles; it may be legal but it knows nothing of holiness; it is utterly selfish and knows nothing of love; it is not, nor indeed can be, subject to the will of the Lord. So that it is the great hindrance to Christian fellowship, and is exposed in its various phases in this Epistle. Schism, arrogance, lust, self-assertion, restlessness, license, and indifference to others, all works of the hateful flesh, were active in the church at Corinth; these are the fruits of the flesh whether in the first or the twentieth century. But that phase of it which is most destructive to fellowship is

the first, for there it intrudes into divine things; and in this form it is more subtle than any other, so the Apostle puts it first and mentions it four times (i. 10; iii. 3; xi. 18; xii. 25).

Let us not suppose that sectarianism is only to be seen where it is openly avowed; an inward sectarianism, that which is in the spirit while denied by the mouth, is far worse, for it adds the sin of hypocrisy to that of schism. At Corinth there was no open breach, but in the one assembly the devil had succeeded through the workings of the flesh in destroying the practical unity and fellowship. They were saying "I of Paul," "I of Cephas," "I of Apollos."

These servants of the Lord represented the three gifts that will remain in the church until the end. Paul was undoubtedly the evangelist, for he speaks of himself of having planted, which is the work of the evangelist; Cephas was the pastor by the Lord's own commission (John xxi. 15-17); and Apollos was the teacher, for he was "mighty in the Scriptures," and was the one to follow Paul in his work, and water that which he had planted—the teacher's work. Now, instead of accepting these servants from the Lord, and learning through their ministry the varied ways in which Christ may be known, (1) As the expression of the compassion of God's heart to the world, (2) His tender care for the sheep of His pasture, (3) as the Truth in which our souls may be edified, they formed their special lines of ministry into schools and sects.

When the third chapter is reached Cephas is dropped out, for most are ready to appreciate the Pastor's work, and the great division is seen to be between those who refused to sanction the ministry of the evangelist, and those who thought that the teacher was a dispensable quantity; or who leaned to one line of ministry or the other. In their folly they imagined that this was a mark of their spirituality, but the Apostle shews most scathingly that it was the one thing that gave evidence of their gross carnality. Alas, how like these Corinthians are the Christians of this twentieth century, and how Satan has

succeeded, in spite of the warnings of God's word, in reproducing the sins of the first century again! May God graciously give repentance, as to this grave insubjection to Himself, and deliver His people from glorying in that which is their shame, and a sure mark that they are walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit.

The Remedy for Sectarianism.

To see the way the Spirit of God took to meet this state of things is most helpful. He brought before them what the grace of God had made them; so we read "Ye are God's husbandry," "Ye are God's building," "Ye are the temple of God," "Ye are Christ's" (ch. iii.). Every one of these statements shuts out the thought of division, but none of them more completely than the first.

There is great preciousness in the thought of the saints as God's husbandry: He is the Master-Gardener, they are all plants in His garden; and He cares for His plants with an infinite tenderness.

It is His gracious intention that they shall thrive and prosper, and bring forth the precious fruits and fragrant flowers of the life of Jesus, and all His dealings with them are with this purpose in view; He may have to cut and prune them, He may have to pass them through many a process that is unpleasant to nature, but it is all with one end in view.

Are we the special care of God, the lilies of His garden, planted by His grace to produce that which is grateful to Him? then how thankfully we shall avail ourselves of *every* provision that He in His eternal wisdom has made for us. Suppose it possible for a plant in a natural garden to refuse water because it had sunshine and air, or sunshine because it had plenty of water, would it not languish and die? It is even so in divine things, and the Christian who imagines that he can do without the truths connected with the special ministry of either evangelist, pastor, or teacher, is sure to suffer great spiritual loss.

But if each Christian views himself individually as a plant in God's garden,

he must also look at every other Christian in the same way, then will his dealings with all the Lord's people be most tender, and he will tremble at the thought of injuring any one of them no matter how feeble, for there is the danger of making to perish a weak brother for whom Christ died, and in so doing "sin against Christ" (I. Cor. viii. 11, 12). Instead of injuring he will seek to help all, and the priceless privilege of helping and refreshing the Lord's beloved plants is put within the reach of all. A sweet poem brings this out, it tells of—

"The Master who stood in His garden
Amongst His lilies so fair,
Which His own right hand had planted,
And trained with tenderest care;
He looked on their snow-white blossoms,
And marked with observant eye,
That their flowers were sadly drooping,
And their leaves were parched and dry."

So He sought about for some vessel with which to water His precious plants, and found an earthen vessel lying close to His feet. It was small but clean, and so suited for His service; so He carried it to the fountain, and filled it again and again, using it to pour the refreshing water upon those lilies, which were so dear to Him, until they revived and lifted up their heads, and shed forth again the sweet perfume in which He delighted. That tiny vessel was well pleased to have been of use to Him, and said, "I will lie close to His feet on the path-way, then perhaps some day He will use me to water His lilies again."

There are three passages in the Proverbs that we might bring together in this connection:—

"As cold waters to a thirsty soul,
so is good news from a far country"
(ch. xxv. 25).

"He that watereth shall be watered
also himself" (ch. xi. 25).

"As the cold of snow in the time of
harvest, so is a faithful messenger to
them that send him: for he refresheth
the soul of his masters" (ch. xxv. 13).

This is the work of God and not man, but happy indeed are those who are so freed from schismatic folly and bias, that they can place themselves at God's disposal for His work in the midst of His husbandry.

“One Shepherd.”

(H. J. VINE).

I am the good shepherd; and I know those that are mine, and am known of those that are mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one FLOCK, ONE SHEPHERD.

—JOHN X. 14-16 (N.T.).

O SHEPHERD of the flock of God,
 Thy voice we love to hear,
 Its tones divine, so strong and true,
 Still ev'ry anxious fear;
 O call Thy sheep together Lord,
 As one to follow Thee!
 Yea loudly call, and by Thy Word
 Set all Thy loved ones free!

O hear, Thou Shepherd of the flock,
 Whose love no lips can tell,
 O Son of God, Thou great and good,
 Break every hurtful spell!
 For Thou hast died, that all Thine own
 May know thro' grace divine
 Thyself, as by the Father known,—
 What love compares with Thine?

O Shepherd of the flock of God,
 Thy watching eye doth see
 The dang'rous track, the scatt'ring wolf,
 The thief and those who flee;
 In Thy true wisdom we'd confide,
 Trusting in Thee alone,
 Happy to shelter by Thy side,
 All drawn to Thee as one.

Almighty Shepherd of the flock,
 Thy pow'rful hand doth hold
 Each timid sheep, each tender lamb
 Without a narrow fold;
 One Shepherd o'er one flock enough
 To keep us all, and guide
 To fountains pure, to fields of truth,
 By bounteous love supplied.

O glorious Shepherd of the flock,
 Th' assembly bought by blood,
 The priceless pearl, the heav'nly bride
 Is Thine, O Christ of God:
 We would then, Lord, for Thy Name's sake
 To Thee e'en now be true,
 And God the Father's glory seek,
 His will with gladness do.

Answers to Correspondents.

Between Genesis i. 1 and i. 2.

Hy. J.—As to such interval of time as may separate these verses nothing is definitely revealed, and we may not be wise above what is written. From Isaiah xlv. 18, it seems clear however, as already pointed out—page 101, April issue—that during this period some terrific cataclysm overwhelmed this earth as a result of divine judgment. With this passage read Jer. iv. 23-26, and Isa. xxiv. 1. In the words of another we may add:

“The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of such a catastrophe. There are not wanting intimations which connect it with a previous testing and fall of angels. See Ezk. xxviii. 12-15 and Isa. xiv. 9-14, which certainly go beyond the kings of Tyre and Babylon.” (*Schofield Reference Bible: Note p. 3; see also pp. 726 and 871.*)

As often in the prophetic writings what is said in these passages has a scope embracing much more than is immediately contemplated. Many of the expressions in Ezek. xxviii. 12-15 are incapable of full application to any mere man. There is no doubt that the addresses to the Prince and the King of Tyrus have a threefold bearing: first they describe to us Satan the inspirer and unseen ruler of all such pomp and pride as that of Tyre and other successive world powers; secondly, they apply to the then reigning ruler as Satan's tool (more particularly perhaps verses 1 to 10 addressed to the Prince); and thirdly, they look on to the terrible development of this character of evil in the last days before Christ's public return.

Ezek. xxviii. 17 should be read with I. Tim. iii. 6: pride was the condemnation, or more correctly translated, the *fault* of the devil. Here we get sin in its inception, manifested in the “I will” of Lucifer, day star (Isa. xiv. 9-14) who can be no other than Satan. There are many passages which lead us to the conclusion that in bygone ages Satan was set in a place of great dignity, and

that that dignity, though he has fallen by sin, still attaches to him in measure according to the permit of God in the working out of His ways. Thus see Jude 8, 9.

Eternal Punishment.

“Anxious.”—Your enquiry runs “would God our Father who is merciful commit anyone to eternal punishment for wrongdoing;” and your letter passes on to the question of whether there is or is not “a sort of purgatory where we purify after death to fit us for heaven.”

The witness of the Scriptures to the dread reality of eternal punishment is plain and direct. It is impossible for anyone who honestly and implicitly accepts the Bible as the Inspired Word of God to doubt the fact of judgment being “eternal” (Heb. vi. 2). The same word is used to describe the duration of the punishment of the wicked as is used to describe the duration of the blessing of the just (Matthew xxv. 46; and note here that the two words used in the verse, “everlasting” and “eternal,” are both the same in the original); the same word is used moreover as to the very existence of God Himself (Rom. xvi. 26).

God has only one measure of judgment for sin, and that is infinite. Sin is rebellion against God, hence it is infinite in its character, and judgment against it must be infinite.

For the believer that infinite judgment has been exhausted in an infinite Sacrifice, but he who rejects the free offer of mercy and pardon on the basis of that infinite Sacrifice must himself, as the only possible alternative in the righteous ways of God, come under the weight of eternal judgment.

As to the last question, the idea proceeds on the assumption that punishment is reformatory. It is not. The history of Pharaoh in the book of Exodus is evidence of how the enmity of man's heart is unaltered by judgment; stroke after stroke of wrath from God fell upon

him; there were apparent momentary repentances, but the instant these judgments were withdrawn the irreconcilable enmity of the sinner's heart was manifested in renewed rebellion against God. For an awful New Testament example of this truth see Rev. xvi. 10, 11; "they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven."

Sin which hath never forgiveness.

"An enquirer."—"But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: because they said, He hath an unclean spirit" (Mark iii. 29, 30).

If this passage is read with the parallel passage in Matthew xii, it will be seen that the Lord had just healed one possessed of a devil, blind and dumb. The people were amazed and said "Is not this the Son of David" but the Pharisees said "This fellow doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." This was the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost which hath never forgiveness, as Mark iii. 30 distinctly states.

The occasion was unique. The Son of God, who was Israel's Messiah, was there in the midst of the people, and through Him the grace of God was displayed in delivering power. His mighty works were the witness to them as to who He was, and for the moment the people confessed Him, but the Pharisees, seeing His works, wilfully and deliberately charged Him with being in league with Beelzebub. This was no passing thought, causing them poignant grief afterwards, but their deliberate verdict after having weighed the evidence; and it proved the intensity of their hatred of Him. There was no mixture of the failure of the sinful creature in any thing that the Lord did: in Him every thing was absolutely perfect, and altogether of God; and yet they attributed that which was altogether of God, the manifest working of the Spirit of God, to the Devil; and that which was purely good they called unmixed evil. There was no other test for them: their doom was sealed by their own attitude towards the only One who could have saved

them; and they manifested in this way an utterly reprobate state that would not bow to receive forgiveness.

Strictly speaking the commission of such a sin is impossible to-day, though the deliberate and final choice of evil in the known presence of good entails now, as always, consequences which are eternal and irrevocable. It was by words, not acts or thoughts, this sin was committed: certainly those of whom "Enquirer" writes "into whose minds blasphemous thoughts have entered, unbidden and hated" have not committed it: their very grief because of these thoughts, which they hate, and which are attacks of the evil one, are proof of this. Let all such be assured that the grace of God is free and boundless. He will eternally forgive all who turn to Him in repentance. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin (I. John i. 7).

"A Little While."

Miss. T.—Replying to your enquiry for copies in leaflet form of this hymn, which appeared in our April issue, we have to intimate that copies (music and words) can now be had at 6d. per dozen from the office of this paper, 12, Pater-noster Row, London, E.C.

China.

The following is an extract from a communication just to hand from a missionary in China:—

"Some kind friend sent me a March copy of 'Scripture Truth' this week, and I shall be grateful if January and February copies can be sent and the remaining copies for this year . . . you may have a distribution fund.

"It is sad, very sad indeed, to find even in the China Mission field so much teaching that is not Scriptural. We have quite a little 'modern Theology' here, and you will be doing good service in helping those who stand up for the Bible, the Word of God."

This request is being attended to; but we print the extract for the sake of half-a-dozen words in it: "*You may have a distribution fund.*" Well, we have not; but we think we should: these are days of terrible departure on every hand, and there is not a question

as to the need of spreading sound Christ-honouring teaching to the utmost limits of our power, or of strengthening the hands of those of our brethren and sisters in Christ who are standing for the truth, often in most difficult circumstances.

We propose, therefore, to commence such a fund forthwith; and as we prefer for several reasons to keep the working of the fund separate altogether from the editorial conduct of this magazine, we have secured the kind consent of our brother in Christ, D. R. Huntley, of Stocksfield-on-Tyne, to undertake the management of the same.

Contributions may be sent to Mr. Huntley at his address given below, and will be duly acknowledged by him jointly with a colleague whose name and address will be published next month, and moneys thus received will be applied to the free distribution of monthly copies of "Scripture Truth," principally to Christian workers in the foreign mission field.

Some hundreds of copies at least are being sent abroad in this way already by friends known to us, to whom we have supplied names and addresses of missionaries in distant lands (and letters of appreciation are being received from such); but we have the addresses of many hundreds of others to whom we long to supply copies.

Often-times too we may remark a single copy reaches *many* workers: thus in a letter to hand from Egypt the writer says:

"It is with much pleasure that I have received the second copy of "Scripture Truth" which you have so kindly sent to me. Please accept my hearty thanks for the same. It is being read with interest and profit *by our little band here*—for we realise how necessary it is to hold closely to the Scripture of Truth in these days, when so many of God's children are being led into error.

"We are holding the fort here in a dark and difficult field, for the darkness and fanaticism of Mohammedanism is hard to break down, and how hardly are men saved from its power; and were we not assured that God's Word shall not return unto Him void we should often faint and be discouraged, but we know that the Gospel must triumph. To this end pray for us that the Word of God may have free course, and God be glorified in the conversion of men and women, and in us His representatives.

"With hearty thanks, and praying that much blessing may result from the publication of 'Scripture Truth.'"

Address to which contributions to "Scripture Truth Free Distribution Fund" may be sent—

D. R. Huntley, New Ridley, Stocksfield-on-Tyne, England.

Along with our practical aid in this direction, may we not also pray with increasing fervency to God: "O send out Thy light and Thy truth."

"Go quickly." Not with angel hosts
the glad commission lies:
'Tis thine the blessed news to bear.
Redeemed lips His love declare,
A joy which angels may not share,
The work is thine! Arise!

Happy who so Christ's word convey,
That He may meet them on their way.

"Go quickly," urgent is the call, it will
not brook delay;
Go forth with loyal heart and brave,
Go win the souls He died to save,
Go tell them of the empty grave;
Go speed thee in thy way,

"Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John xv. 14).

At His Feet.

(J. T. MAWSON).

TO be at the feet of Jesus is to be in the most blessed spot in God's universe; it is there that every problem is solved, and every question settled; whether the questions be of sin, sorrow, self, or service; there is no place like this for the guilt-laden sinner; no place like this for the happy or perplexed saint.

Jesus is greater than our sins.

The first great truth that dawns upon the soul as we come to this place of blessing is that Jesus is greater than our sins; it was this that the sinner of the city proved in Luke vii. He had said: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." It may be that she had heard those words, and so she sought Him out. No doubt she would hesitate upon the threshold of the house of Simon as she saw the frown gather upon the brows of host and guests, but two mighty powers conspired together to bring her to Jesus' feet: her great need drove her there; His great love drew her; and between the driving power of her need and the drawing power of His love, her hesitancy was overcome, and as a tempest-tossed bark finds peace at last in the calm waters of some long desired harbour, so she found a place of refuge and rest at the travel-stained feet of the Son of God. Simon would not have had her touch him; the disciples would doubtless have treated her with scant grace; but He, the lowly Jesus, and yet the mighty Prince of life, allowed her to weep out her repentance and her gratitude at His feet.

She found that He had a heart of infinite tenderness, for He neither spurned her nor fastened her sins upon her, but His hand lifted the burden, and she heard His own voice declare, "Thy sins are forgiven . . . thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace."

The past, present and future was all settled there for her who had long been

the prey of men and the Devil, and her whole heart, cleansed from its evil ways by the sanctifying power of His blessed love, poured out its affection upon Him. "She loved much," for He had forgiven much.

At His feet she found salvation, and the same priceless boon is still to be found there, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Jesus is greater than our service.

We do not say that the beloved Mary of Bethany is identical with the woman of the city, we merely point out that she loved the spot where that woman's burden rolled away, in fact in each instance which is recorded of her in the Scripture she is at Jesus' feet. The first of these instances is in Luke x. 38-42. We have no word for condemnation for Martha's service, the service was right, but the servant was wrong, she had missed the secret of a peaceful and unburdened spirit, and "many things" cumbered her, whereas "one thing" and one thing alone, *Himself*, was Mary's object.

We often admire Mary for taking the place of the disciple on this occasion; may it not be that we waste admiration on her that might well be bestowed upon the Lord? for *He* it was who drew her to that place of blessing, she had but responded to His drawing as the needle to the magnet. He came forth from the Father to do the Father's business—to fill up the hearts of sinful men and women with a satisfaction and joy of which the world knows nothing. He, at whose feet Mary sat without a fear, was none other than the One before whom mighty angels veiled their faces, crying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts"; but she knew Him in the revelation of His grace; as the Breaker of the bread of life, His words were the words of eternal life, and her heart delighted to feed upon them. Oh! if only Martha had

known that He had come not to be ministered unto but to minister, that His heart found a peculiar and unspeakable joy in filling up the vacancies in human hearts with the knowledge of His Father and Himself, the Father's sent One, she would have left her serving awhile and joined her sister at His feet, and there found the satisfaction that Mary found. May we prove this also, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Jesus is greater than our sorrows.

The chill winds of bereavement had passed over that home of peace at Bethany, and the sisters were crushed and broken and bewildered by the wrecking of their circle. When all hope had failed them, for their brother lay in the sealed sepulchre, Jesus came to them. And when Mary was come to where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet saying unto Him, "Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died" (John xi. 32). With a broken heart she cast her heavy sorrow at His feet. What passed between them is not recorded for us, for there are moments such as these when the communications that pass between the Lord and His sorrowing saints cannot be expressed. The sense of His love and sympathy is too deep for words. One thing we know: He walked by her side; and in His company, with Himself so near, her heart must have said, "All is well."

Presently His voice of power unloosed the bands of death and set the captive free; but Mary saw something more wonderful than His power. She knew His sympathy, for she saw His tears; and never would she have known how much He loved her, or how tender was His heart, or how all-sustaining His sympathy, had it not been for that great sorrow. Sorrowing saints of God!

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Jesus is greater than self.

The last we read of Mary is in John xii., and it is fitting that the record of her life should close there. The pound "of spikenard very costly" would have distinguished her in the midst of her acquaintances, but she lavished it upon Him, well knowing that He was going into death. The world had nothing to give Him but a shameful cross and a grave, and she only amongst all His loved ones seemed to realise this, and she said by her action, "The best I have shall go into His grave, for He is worthy." The Lord interpreted that action, and said, "Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this," and "Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. xxvi. 13).

Thus the Lord valued that which was despised of men, that which was the result of self being eclipsed and Christ all in all. It was this point that Paul had reached when he said, "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" (Gal. vi. 14).

To this point the Holy Ghost would lead us, and it is at the feet of Jesus that these lessons are learnt. Soon (may the Lord hasten the day) every ransomed soul will bow before Him, in the Father's home on high, there to cast our crowns before those blessed feet once pierced in death for us, and forever, without a rival in our hearts, to worship and adore Him who has won our hearts. But if worthy *then* to be our all in all, He is also worthy *now*, for "Jesus Christ (is) the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

You cannot see the sun except by its own light; neither can you see Christ except by His own light, that is, by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures.

From clearer knowledge to deeper love, and from deeper love to closer communion! This, Lord, is my prayer—my earnest desire!

Eternal Life.

(H. NUNNERLEY).

"GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but *have everlasting life*" (Jno. iii. 16).

This matchless gift is the great theme of the apostle John. We learn through him that God is a *Giver*, and, in the greatness of His love He gives life eternal, and He gives it *in His Son*.

It was ever the intention of God that man should have eternal life, it was promised in Christ Jesus before the world began (I. Titus i. 2), and it was the end God had in view when He sent His only begotten Son into the world.

In its essence it was ever *in the Son, with the Father*. It was manifested in Him when Man down here, it is imparted by Him in resurrection, to those who believe; it is intelligently entered into now by the Spirit; and its end is glory *with the Father and the Son*.

John and Paul write of eternal life in different aspects. John views it manifested in Christ here. Paul who had never seen Jesus on earth, as far as we know, but who had seen Him in heaven, connects it with Christ in glory. John usually refers to it in its characteristics. Paul in its own proper condition and result before God. It is the *same life* with Paul, as John; both concur in fixing our gaze upon Christ. Holy Scripture, our sure and infallible guide has much to say on this subject, and a careful study of each occurrence of the expression will reveal its many-sidedness. There we learn that:—

Eternal Life is a Gift.

The gift of God is eternal life *in*—not through—Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. vi. 23).

This gift can neither be earned nor purchased, the most earnest devotee could never merit it. It is God-given, and bestowed as freely as the air we breathe, and in giving it God expressed the "much more abounding" of His grace, for grace reigns, "through right-

eousness unto eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. v. 21). Grace is love stooping to bless and enrich its object, without the imposition of any condition.

How it is obtained.

"He that *heareth* my word" (the Son of God is the speaker) "and *believeth* on Him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*" (Jno. v. 24).

"He that *believeth* on the Son *hath everlasting life*" (Jno. iii. 16).

It is by hearing the voice of the Son of God, and believing on the *One* who sent Him, that men may possess it. Nothing can be more simple, clear, and emphatic than these Scriptures. He who *hears*, and *believes*, *hath* eternal life.

Moreover it is God's will that the believer should *know* that the gift which matchless love bestows, and which faith by the Spirit's power appropriates, is truly his.

"These things have I written unto you that *believe* on the Name of the Son of God; that YE MAY KNOW that ye have eternal life" (I. Jno. v. 13).

The Lord also adds in Jno. v. 24 that those who hear and believe have already passed "*out of death into life*" (R.V.), and "*We know* that we have passed from *death unto life* because we *love the brethren*" (I. John iii. 14). Life, divine life, *expresses itself in love* toward the *whole family of God*, for no less a circle than this is included in the words "the brethren."

Until the actual communication of this new life by the quickening voice of the Son of God there could be no love for the children of God, for the world hates them (John xvii. 18), so that to love the brethren is an undoubted proof that we have passed out of death into life.

Faith in God through listening to the "sent One" gives life.

Love to all saints is proof of life possessed.

Much misapprehension has arisen as to eternal life by confining its meaning to the endless duration of existence, and the eternal security of those who possess this life.

It is an endless life, and all who have it are eternally secure; our Lord's words in Jno. x. 28 leave no room for doubt as to this, "I give unto my sheep eternal life and THEY SHALL NEVER PERISH." None of Christ's sheep shall be lost. Their eternal security is thus pledged. The Father and the Son hold them in their hands and none shall pluck them thence. Security is thus assured, but "never perish" refers to the sheep, not to the *gift* bestowed; the gift of life eternal is more than security, or an endless existence. Many rest satisfied with knowing that this gift is theirs and that they are eternally secure, without making themselves at all fully acquainted with its scope and meaning.

Eternal life has many aspects. If we would view it in its essence, beginning, fullness, and perfection, we must first of all contemplate

Its manifestation in Jesus.

The apostle John speaks of its manifestation in the world, "that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; (for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us)" (I. John 1, 2).

The world looked upon Jesus and only saw in Him the "carpenter's son," but the eyes of the apostles were anointed by the Holy Ghost, and they saw a life that had come out of eternity into time, a life, the roots and springs of which were not of this world, but that found its joy and sustenance in the conscious knowledge of the blessed relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. While He was here on earth He was the eternal life *with the Father as in ages that were passed.* The disciples saw this life manifested here, His very words were the words of eternal life, for they were the revelation of the Father, "and this is life eternal that they should know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ Thy sent One" (John xvii. 3 N.T.).

We cannot separate the manifestation of this life from the manhood of the Lord, for it was in manhood that He manifested it.

The mystery of the person of the Son is inscrutable, for "no man knoweth the Son but the Father"; but we know that He was truly Man, born of the virgin, and He poured out His soul unto death (Isa. liii. 12). He was, and is, the eternal life with the Father; He was, and is, "God over all blessed for ever."

In His Godhead none can share, man is not "absorbed" therein, nor is Deity communicated to us. In the essence of His being the Son ever dwells in unapproachable light, He is Jehovah's equal, the "I am," the self-existing One. He "is the true God, and *Eternal Life.*"

Let us then fix our gaze on Jesus, a Man moving about among men, and behold the "Eternal Life which was with the Father." Let us contemplate the adorable Person, whom the apostles heard, saw, and handled; let us have fellowship with them, for their fellowship was with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Eternal life has been manifested, its full display is in the "Word of Life." In the ways and words of the Son of Man, who was "*in heaven*" though on earth, the Son in the bosom of the Father, whilst declaring Him here.

Life is imparted to the Believer.

In His life here the Lord was the Corn of wheat that abode alone (John xii. 24), and it was absolutely necessary that He should die in order that we might participate in eternal life. But we know Him now as the "last Adam"—Head of a new race. He is a life-giving Spirit, and the life that He gives is His own life, it is set forth in Him, the Second Man, once uplifted upon the cross of shame, now risen out of death. It is life in resurrection, a life not only clear of all condemnation and death, but capable of sharing all the holy intimacies of divine affection with the Father and the Son.

It is not Adam-life restored to innocence, or fallen nature improved; it is a life divine in its origin, heavenly in its character, holy in its nature, given to us *in the Son*.

"He that *hath* the Son *hath* life." Life is never separated from *the Son*, it is ever *in Him*, though imparted to us. He is the source, spring, energy and power of it, and we *live of His* life subjectively; while He Himself is the object of it. He is our life. God "hath given to us eternal life, and this life is *in His Son*."

We do not wish for a moment to weaken the truth that there is *an actual life communicated, individually, to every Christian*. We only wish to emphasize the fact that eternal life is inseparable from *the Son*, Who is its Source and Giver, and that believers have it in association with Him.

Eternal life is a life of communion, a participation in divine relationships, an experimental knowledge of the Father and His *sent One*. "This is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (John xvii. 3).

Christ, in whom eternal life was manifested, ever had the Father as His object, hence this life is one of communion with the Father; it was a heavenly life in this world; it belonged to the home He had left, and He ever looked away from antagonistic surroundings, and found His life and joy in that home.

His life, lived before men in all the gracious activities of mercy, love, goodness, was, in its true origin and sphere, a life lived outside the world, a life of intimacy, affection and communion, He was ever "*with the Father*."

To *know* the Father is to *live*, to *know* Jesus Christ whom He has sent is *life indeed*.

In ordinary language we speak of a life we have, and a life we live. Paul lived by the faith of the Son of God, who had loved him, and given Himself for him; henceforth the entrancing object of Paul's life, was the "Son of God." The world was not the place of his life and hopes, but that circle of divine affections in which the Son of God was at home.

The outward effect of this was a life of affection for the saints, the excellent of the earth—a life of self-denying love for man in his misery; but this was only the outcome: he knew the Father and the Son; he had "part" in the home circle; he lived in spirit "in life's eternal home"; and so he acted like the Lord in a world of sin.

The food of eternal life.

"Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood hath eternal life (John vi. 54). This does not refer to the Eucharist: "eating my flesh is the daily, hourly, appropriation of Christ as the living Bread, the Bread of God, the Bread of Life, the living Bread which came down from heaven: a heavenly Man though in earthly surroundings. That men might have life, He gave up His. He gave up His life for the life of the world.

The meat is His flesh, the drink His blood; "my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (v. 51).

"He that eateth, dwelleth in me, and I in Him" (v. 56).

"He that eateth me shall live by me" (v. 57).

First, life for ever; then a life of communion; next a life lived on account of Him, even as He lived on account of the Father. Thus Christ Himself, in life and death—the full declaration of the love and grace of God, is the food of this new and heavenly life.

Eternal life as a hope.

Scripture also presents eternal life as a hope: "In hope of eternal life" (Titus i. 2): and again as the object of desire, that which we are to covet beyond all riches, to "lay hold" of as I. Tim. vi. 8.

These, and similar scriptures, refer to the heavenly inheritance, the home or sphere, into which believers will actually enter at the coming of the Lord. It is the Father's house, the true and proper place of the children of God, and all the glory connected therewith. Eternal life has been given to them here in this world, but when they reach the Father's house they will live the life which is theirs in its suited

environment, in its heavenly and natural element.

All Christians are heavenly by birth and association, but, in this world they are like a man in a diving bell, sustained by that which is above. Bring him to the surface and he will live in, as well as by, the air which sustained him below.

Our hope and glorious future is to live the life we have in the home to which that life belongs.

Carry your thoughts heavenward. The path of life through death led the Son of God, as Man, to a home where there is fulness of joy and where are pleasures for evermore. How different are the surroundings in which He is now found to those in which He moved here as the Man of Sorrows! The Father's love to the Son, and the Son's to the Father; the glory given to the Son, and the glory brought to the Father by the Son, are some of the elements of that holy and happy home. There all the children of God shall live together with the Son and the Father! They shall eat of the Tree of Life, feed upon the hidden Manna, walk with Him in white, in the paradise of God. Unhindered and uninterrupted communion with the Father and the Son will be theirs. Christ is ever their life; as much now as when they shall be with Him, but hope looks forward to the joys of that blessed place, where He now is.

When the Lord comes He will conduct them into the Father's house; and they shall be in the cloudless enjoyment of eternal life, in company with the Source and Giver, and participate in the glorious and unhindered activities of life in spiritual and glorious bodies in perfect harmony and consonance therewith.

Eternal Life on Earth.

Eternal Life is also connected with blessing on the earth; in the millennial reign of Christ it is associated with Mount Zion; "there the Lord commanded the blessing even *life for evermore*" (Ps. cxxiii. 3). In the synoptic gospels life is usually spoken of as something to be entered into or *inherited*.

Those forsaking all for Christ "shall *inherit* everlasting life" (Matt. xix. 29). "What shall I do that I may *inherit* eternal life" (Mark x. 17; *cf. also* Luke x. 25, xviii. 18). Jerusalem will be the glorious centre from whence the blessing will flow out world-wide during that glorious reign of Christ, and life will be known and enjoyed by His earthly people Israel in company with the Messiah. This is Israel's portion, and will be the fulfilment of many promises of God to them. It is obvious that eternal life is spoken of in Scripture as *life lived in a congenial scene, as well as life possessed by those who live there.*

For a Christian, the Father's house and the glory of it is the scene of life. But for redeemed Israel and the saved amongst the nations on earth during the millenium, Mount Zion (the earthly Jerusalem) will be its centre.

We thus gather from Scripture that God *has* given eternal life to all who believe in the Son of God.

It is a free gift expressing the love of God.

We may know we possess it.

It has been manifested in Jesus.

It is imparted to the believer, but never separated from the Son. He that hath the Son hath life.

The knowledge of the Father and the Son is its privilege and characteristic.

The flesh and blood of Christ is its food.

The one who possesses it shall never perish.

The home of divine affections is its consummation.

"Who shall to me that joy
Of saint-thronged courts declare,
Tell of that constant sweet employ
My spirit longs to share."

It will be participated in by the earthly saints on Mount Zion, as well as the heavenly ones in the New Jerusalem, where its full result will be found.

The term involves a life communicated, and a life lived, and also a suited sphere of life.

Papers on Service.

(EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS).

“I HAVE been reading the first half of the Acts of the Apostles lately, and have been much struck by the simplicity and diversity of the actings of the Holy Ghost. What a complete absence of form or system! Jerusalem, Samaria, the desert, Damascus, Lydda, Joppa, Cæsarea, etc., each successively bring out some new feature or some varied display of the mighty power of the unseen Person who had come down to testify of Christ. Yet every acting is perfect in its place, and in divine beauty and order. The very contemplation of it has made one long with increased desire to be more in the power and current of the blessed Spirit, for *His* actings are as perfect to-day as in the days of old.”

“Be much with God, so that your service may be toned and matured by the secret intercourse of your soul with Him. I think this is where we most lamentably fail. The evangelists of a century ago had to face intense opposition wherever they went, and were often entirely without human support or the fellowship of saints. But their very circumstances of isolation cast them upon God. They were men who knew what it was to travail in birth for souls. The midnight hour and the grey dawn often found them on their faces in an agony of prayer. They had power first with God, and, as a consequence, with the people. They learnt the value of souls, and estimated the real worth of the world in the secret of the sanctuary, and when they came forth to preach they awed their listeners as they spoke out in burning words and with loving hearts the message of God. The divine truths they knew were tremendous realities to them, and they spoke of them as such to sinners.”

“I fear it is true of most of us that we are more familiar with the presence of men than with the presence of God. Oh! to have the Apostolic spirit—‘we

will *give ourselves* to prayer and the ministry of the Word.’ Blessed self-surrender! To be altogether occupied in speaking *to God* and in speaking *for Him!* This is the *servant’s* business. As *saints* also we need to listen to His word and feed on it for ourselves.”

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“One of the first converts in Europe was found in a prison (Acts xvi.), and was, possibly, addressed afterwards by the apostle Paul as a ‘true yoke-fellow’ (Phil. iv. 3). Alas! our poor cold hearts have very little idea of the depth to which grace stoops to find its objects, or the height of blessing to which it brings them. Yet, we might well know something of this when we think of *ourselves*—what *we were* in the flesh and what *we are*, through grace, *in Christ* and by the Holy Ghost.”

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“It is good to have our hearts drawn out in prayer for others. How wretched *self* clings to us! How soon we find our hearts narrowed up from the wide and blessed circle of Christ’s service and glory, to the contracted circle of *our* service and *our* success! Oh! for hearts expanded by divine affections to burn with ardent desire for *His* glory, while we ourselves are willing to be anything or nothing at His pleasure! This is the secret of joy, and liberty, and power in service. For when Christ alone is before the heart, and we have no thought of self, we are morally suited to be vessels of the power of the Holy Ghost. *He* is here for Christ, and if Christ is simply before us, we are in touch with all the blessed purposes in and for which the Holy Ghost is now on earth.”

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“I am more and more cheered by the thought that *every* bit of true service—that is, service in the power of the Holy Ghost—will be productive of eternal results. It is not given us to know all the results of our work, but

we may be quite sure that so much of it as was God's work and in the power of His Spirit will be for eternity: '*Whatever God doeth it shall be for ever.*' This casts us wholly upon God, inasmuch that everything that we contribute is valueless, and it is only as 'our sufficiency is of God' that we really succeed. It should therefore be our great object to have 'the power of God' (II. Cor. vi. 7) with us in service. Results may not always be manifest, but if God has wrought, something has been effected for eternity, and must be manifested sooner or later. Oh! to be more self-emptied, Christ-filled, and Holy Ghost possessed—earthen vessels, carrying the excellency of the power of God! It is no small thing to sink out of our own sight, to have the heart's vision clear upon Christ, and to be sustained in every bit of service by the power of God."

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"The sternest things that have ever been said as regards sin's penalty in the future, first passed the tenderest lips that ever proclaimed God's love to man."

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"What a change comes over a man when Christ has truly conquered his heart. He will answer insult and abuse with magnanimity, patience, fortitude and

gentleness. It is here that he has the advantage over the infidel; the infidel may be smarter in argument, he may have read more books, he may be more fluent in speech, he may be more audacious, impertinent, defiant; but when it comes to the real stress and tug of life the Christian has the advantage. When he is smitten on the one cheek he can turn the other also, and that is an argument that has never been answered. When he is mocked and reviled, he will not revile again; and that is a piece of theology that has never been written down by any of the Philistines who have sought to destroy and defile the heritage of God. By your holiness of life, sweetness of temper, love, meekness and humility you can magnify the Gospel, and make men say 'Well, after all, the Gospel, come whence it may, that made that man what he is, is the true Gospel.'"

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"He that cleaves unto the creature shall fall with the falling; he that cleaves to the Lord shall stand fast for ever."

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"The Apostles appear to represent prayer not so much as the practice of Christian life as its very breath and instinctive movement."

Our prayers often resemble the mischievous tricks of town children, who knock at their neighbours' houses and then run away. We often knock at heaven's door and then run off into the spirit of the world, instead of waiting for entrance and answer.

Satan seeks either to give confidence apart from Christ, or to hinder from confidence in Christ. He well knows that if a soul is looking to Jesus, he has no power over it, and so cannot use it for his own end; nay, that such an one has power over him.

A Pharisee is a man with plenty of divine light in his head, but no divine love in his heart.

One fatal hindrance to a heavenly walk and conversation is our too frequent disputes. A disputatious spirit is a sure sign of an unsanctified spirit. They are usually men least acquainted with the heavenly life who are the most violent disputers about the circumstantialities of religion. Yea, though you are sure that your opinions are true, yet when the chiefest of your zeal is turned to these things, the life of grace soon decays within.

It is a good thing to be so unsatisfied with self as to feel the supreme need of Christ alone.

There is nothing too great for God to give—nothing too small to be beneath His care.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 5—The Responsible Man.

TWO lines of truth run throughout Scripture and are so sharply defined that one is surprised to find even the most superficial reader unacquainted with them. I refer to the line of *responsibility*, and the line of *Divine counsel*. On the line of responsibility are the first Adam and all His race, and on the second line are the last Adam and all His race.

I have already attempted to prove that all men admit the idea of accountability. It cannot be questioned that we are on that footing with one another, whether it is admitted with regard to our relationship with God or not. Adam was placed upon this ground, but failed to fulfil his obligations. He was not content with the place which the goodness of his Creator had given him, but grasped at Divinity itself the moment the tempter dangled the bait before his eyes. Thus failure is connected with the first and responsible man from the outset of his history. I do not suppose he stood one day in innocence, he certainly fell at the first assault of the enemy. And it has been so the whole way down the history of the world, and in all the dealings of God and His fallen creature, for this order of man was kept on probation for the first four thousand years.

Failure has marked the man after the flesh in every position of trust in which he has been placed by God. Cain was a murderer, and the flood brought his guilty descendents to an end. Government was laid upon the shoulder of Noah after the deluge. A sword (Gen. ix. 5, 6) was put into his hand, but it is immediately necessary to record his drunkenness, which demonstrated his inability to govern himself. The law was given to the nation which God had redeemed out of slavery, and it was broken by them before the two tables of stone upon which it was written came into the camp. Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of

Aaron, presented strange fire before the Lord the first day after their consecration, and were consumed for their wickedness (Lev. x). The carcasses of all those who came out of Egypt, with two exceptions, fell in the wilderness because of their unbelief (Numb. xiv). Those who were allowed to enter the promised land defiled it with their idolatry, persecuted the prophets, slew them who testified of the coming of Christ, and when He came, murdered Him.

However man may exercise his mind he cannot really bottom any of the works of God. He may make a good many discoveries as to the powers which lie concealed in certain elements, and he may be able in a very remarkable degree to use the resources of nature, but to say that he understands anything thoroughly is to say that which everyone knows to be untrue. This is so as to divine and spiritual things. We may not be able to understand how it is that a creature can have responsibility to his Creator, but this is because we are creatures, and therefore limited in our knowledge of everything.

A man may make a machine, but be it good or bad, it is just what he made it, it has no responsibility. If it break down under the test applied to it, it cannot be held accountable. If it exploded into a thousand fragments, and every fragment killed a human being, not it, but its maker, if any one, can be held accountable. Man cannot make anything possessed of independent thought and action, so that it can be held responsible for what it does. God can make such a being, and He has made him, and that being is man. And we all admit this for we hold one another accountable for what we do; and the conscience of man where it has not become benumbed by ill-usage, takes account of God, and confesses itself responsible to Him. People blasphem-

mously say that if man fell under the power of evil when assailed by it, there is no justice in God's condemnation of him, for He should have made him able to withstand the temptation. This is a vain attempt to get rid of the idea of accountability. I say it is vain, for those who use the argument are inconsistent with it in their dealings with one another.

That God knew man would fall I need hardly affirm. That He secretly connived at it is a wicked aspersion upon His infinite goodness. He knew well what the effect of the attack of the fell fiend upon man would be. No creature can maintain himself in blessing by his own obedience. Every creature set in blessing with God must be maintained there by the power of God, and all have fallen who have stood upon the footing of responsibility. There are fallen angels as well as fallen men, and there are elect angels as well as elect men. It is impossible to imagine a creature as self-supporting. Hence what was in the counsel of God was a universe of blessing in which all intelligent beings would be upheld by the power of God. The fall of man gave occasion for God to bring out the secret thought of His heart, and in all His ways He will in the end be justified even in the eyes of those who shall come under His eternal displeasure.

The self-will of those who rebel against the revelation which He has given of Himself may stoutly affirm that they will never submit to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, but it is foolish for people to be boasting about what they will or will not do. To-day they are groping in darkness and distance from God, and what they will do when His power is manifested and His light shines about them they know not. In that day there will be no fault found with the ways of Him who will be manifested as their Creator, their would-be Redeemer, but, alas, their Judge.

I do not concern myself much with the pretentious reasonings and boastings of men. The most learned philosopher has no more the knowledge of God than

has the most illiterate numskull in the land. Men may reason about the things which come before them in nature, but the knowledge of God, as He has come to light in Christ, is as hidden from the reasonings of the most learned as it is from the insubject mind of the most illiterate. As to all that can be said, apart from the Bible, concerning the relationships of men with God, and as to what God is and is not, and what man is and is not, they are only theories evolved from the mind of man, which I utterly distrust, for I believe that behind all the thoughts of the natural mind in these things there is a power of evil bent upon driving the soul to destruction.

The Scriptures set before us all the various ways in which it has pleased God to address Himself to men, and in them we have a record of all His thoughts, counsels, words, and works, as far as He has thought necessary to make them known to us. I see one mind pervading the whole volume, both Old Testament and New, and the writers take the ground of having all their communications given to them from the living God. If this is not true, if they did not receive that which they have put on record, so that there could be no more mistake about it than there could have been had He been pleased to speak the words in the ears of the whole world by audible voice from heaven, then these writers are nothing but a set of wicked impostors; and the man who thinks him to be an honest person who says "Thus saith the Lord," and "The Lord said," when the Lord said nothing of the sort, must have strange ideas of morality. According to the law of this land the man who, when under oath, knowingly and wilfully utters an untruth, becomes liable to imprisonment, and he certainly would not be likely to be trusted again; and I fail to see how the writers of the Scriptures have any right to differ and better treatment, if their offence is found to be the same.

The Old Testament sets before us the first Adam and all his fallen race under probation, and failing in every test which was applied to him. The

race is what the *head* was. Adam became head of a race when in his fallen condition, and God has been pleased for His own wise reasons to put that race under cultivation to demonstrate there was no good in it, before bringing in the Man of His counsels who would fulfil all His will. This trial was largely confined to one people Israel. It was not necessary to apply the test to the whole world, for all were alike, either bad or good. The test was to bring all to light. A farmer might test the quality of a field of grain by subjecting a mere handful from it to the test, and he would be justified in his judgment of all by that one handful.

God singled out Israel from the nations of the earth, and gathered them around Himself, telling them exactly and in few words all that He expected of them. They were simply to fulfil their responsibilities. They were encouraged to obedience by the brightest promises, and they were warned against disobedience by threats of the most terrible nature; but all was seen to be in vain. The flesh would not have God one way or another. The mind of the flesh was seen to be *enmity against God*, it was not subject to His law, nor could it be brought into subjection (Rom. viii. 7). It was a case of "like father like son." The tree whose seed is in itself brings forth its own kind. Every creature upon earth reproduces itself in its offspring, and man is no exception. The first human sinner has filled the world with sinners, and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and in the flesh good does not dwell (Rom. vii. 18). Violence and corruption characterised it before the flood (Gen. vi. 11); the worship of demons marked the descendants of Noah (Josh. xxiv. 2; I. Cor. x. 20); transgression was stamped on the sons of Israel from Sinai (Dan. ix; Acts vii. 53), and irreconcilable hatred of the Father and the Son came out in their treatment of Christ (John xv. 24).

There is scarcely any other doctrine of Scripture more clearly proven to us in our dealings with men than is the doctrine of man's total depravity; and

yet we are most slow to believe it. We are continually getting disappointed in those in whom we have placed confidence, and yet there is the tendency to once again confide in that which has failed us, and the reluctance to give up looking for good in the fallen creature.

That man is without any sound moral foundation the history of the world proves beyond question. It is not that men are absolutely without natural affection; were this so the world could not exist, for children at least are dependent upon parents, and all men are largely dependent upon one another. But this does not prove that there is any good in the flesh, for natural affection is found in the heart of the most savage beast. Indeed it is found more strongly marked in the beasts than it is in men. Animals of the same species do not often devour one another, while men seldom do anything else. Men seek to make a stepping-stone, not of their dead selves, but of their living, helpless, writhing neighbour, in order to arrive at what they consider a more exalted and honourable position. Few, if any, despots have not been tyrannical and cruel to a degree, and it is well known that it is almost impossible for an absolute monarch to be a good man. The reason of this is because he has facilities for carrying out the corrupt desires of his evil heart with an impunity not accorded to other men. A certain historian speaks of one of the sovereigns of England as a good king, but a bad man. And a great poet speaks of man dressed in a little brief authority playing such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make angels weep. When man has an opportunity of exhibiting himself the exhibition is, as a rule, fearfully appalling.

Some men, of course, are amiable and some ill-natured, just as dogs are, but viewed in his relationships with God there is no good in him. Man is a great ruin, and as one may see in a castle, fast crumbling into dust, traces of its former greatness and grandeur, so may the primitive splendour of him who was made in the image and likeness of

God be still seen in fallen humanity; but just as nothing can be done to repair the ancient fortress, rotten from the foundation to the crown of its roofless walls, so is there not a sound stone in the foundation of fallen humanity on which anything for God can be built.

In some those traces of primitive greatness are more apparent than in others. Saul of Tarsus was a wonderful example of this preservation of outward original grandeur, yet every stone in his moral structure was weather-bitten and friable to the core. No one had more to boast of in the flesh than himself, yet he was the chief of sinners. It was so with the young ruler of whom it is recorded in the Gospels that the Lord loved him. The handiwork of God was visible in him beyond many others, but tested by Christ, his utter worthlessness comes to light: he preferred his worldly substance to the Son of God and treasure in heaven.

Man was tested by law in the past dispensation, and proved to be a law-breaker. The result of that test proved the incorrigible rebelliousness of the flesh. In Psalm xiv. the Lord is said to

look down from heaven upon the children of men to see if there were any who did understand and seek God. What He found was that *all* had gone aside, and that *all* had become corrupt, and that there was none that did good, *no not one*. Man who should have been a servant of God was a servant of sin, and he served it with every member of his body. What the law says to them that are under the law is cited for us in Romans iii. We read there: "Their throat is an open sepulchre: with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes." This is what was true of the Jew, while the nations wallowed in idolatry and fleshly corruption. This is Adam, the responsible man, reproduced in his race, with the power of the Devil behind all, driving the sinner onward in his career of rebellion against God, and in the downward course of his own degradation. How terrible is all this!

God and Man.

(SIDNEY COLLETT).

THE Bible begins (as we should expect it to) with God: "In the beginning God" (Gen. i. 1). Indeed, these few words practically embody the whole theology of the Bible, and constitute the key, not only to the Bible, but to all created things.

The Bible ends with man—the last of all God's creation: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" (Rev. xxii. 21).

So that God is at one extreme end of the Bible, and man is at the other. But the Bible is a message from God to man, and its object is to bring man to God, and so we find that:

In the middle verse of the Bible, which is Psalm cxviii. 8, man and God, originally so near (Gen. i. 27), but by sin separated so far apart (Gen. iii. 8-24), are brought together.

This little verse is in itself a miniature Bible, and contains the germ of nearly all its teaching. In it the golden link of *faith* which unites man to his Maker (Jer. xvii. 7 and Heb. xi. 6), and by which all the redeemed are known (Gal. iii. 7-9 and Heb. xi. 13), is urged as the "better" thing; while "confidence in man," which is really "confidence in the flesh" and is at the root of all evil (Rom. viii. 8), and separates man from God (Jer. xvii. 5), is spoken of as the thing to be avoided! The verse is: "It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in man"—as if to indicate that the written Word, like the Living Word standing between God and the sinner, stretches out one hand with which to grasp the hand of God, and the other to grasp the hand of man, thus bringing the two together.

—From "*The Scripture of Truth.*"

Peace.

As Presented in the Gospel of St. Luke.

Peace Prophesied.

“**T**HOU shalt go before the face of the Lord . . . to give knowledge of salvation unto His people by the remission of their sins, through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Ch. i. 76-79).

It was thus that Zacharias, being filled with the Holy Ghost, spoke of his infant son John, and how great and wonderful are the blessings which he prophesied should come to men by the advent into the world of the Lord Jesus Christ; blessings having the TENDER MERCY OF OUR GOD as their cause.

These blessings are:—

1st. LIGHT for those sitting in darkness and the shadow of death.

2nd. REMISSION OF SINS.

3rd. THE KNOWLEDGE OF SALVATION, and these three leading up to what cannot be known without them.

4th. THE WAY OF PEACE.

Have we each come to know that we are the objects of God's tender mercy? Has light burst into our souls as the spring of day? Do we know that our sins are all forgiven? and have we got our souls saved, with the certain knowledge of it? If so, we have been guided into the way of peace! What a deliverance is ours if an answer in the affirmative can be given to these questions! A deliverance *from* sins, and darkness, death, and its shadow! A deliverance *into* light, pardon, salvation, and peace! Could anything be more blessed than to be assured of the possession of all these things, in the Lord Jesus Christ? It was John's mission to announce the advent of the Lord Jesus as the Bringer of these blessings to men.

Peace Proposed (chap. ii. 1-20).

All the world was set in motion by a decree of Augustus requiring that a census should be taken, and all went to be enrolled in the census scroll—everyone to his own city. The imperial Cæsar little thought that his proud decree was to bring about the fulfilment of God's word by His prophet, but so it was, for Jesus was to be born in Bethlehem according to Micah v. 2. And to Bethlehem this decree required that His virgin mother must go.

“And she (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.”

That despised and unnoticed Babe was the Eternal Son of the Father—the Son of God—the Creator, Upholder and Heir of all things—God manifested in flesh—Image of the invisible God—yea, God over all blessed for ever! The great world moved on its careless way, nor recked it what a marvel had come to pass before its eyes. God come down to men, and to *be* a Man to reach them!

To the humble shepherds on the hill-sides of Judea, keeping watch over their flocks by night, appeared the Angel of the Lord; the Lord's glory shone about them and the angel announced “Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” and scarcely were these words spoken when suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of angels praising God and saying “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good pleasure in men.” (Ch. ii. 14, N.T.).

Glory is ascribed to God in the highest, and PEACE is announced for the earth in connection with the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But *this Peace proposed to earth was of necessity conditional*

upon the acceptance and hearty reception by the earth of the Person who brought it, and who alone could make it good.

It is of the last importance that this great fact should be clearly perceived, for as every Christmas comes round, the difficulty in men's minds, and I may add in the minds of many Christians too, recurs, namely, how is it that the promise or announcement of the angels has not yet been fulfilled?

During a great war a striking leading article appeared in "*The Times*" which commenced "How hollow the promise of the angels, 'Peace on Earth' sounds amidst the rattle of musketry and the roar of artillery, with their attendant bloodshed, slaughter, and desolation!" and to-day the great thought of the European powers is to be ready at a moment's notice for deadly strife. All the ingenuity of men is engaged in the production of mighty engines of destruction, and nations groaning beneath taxation for the maintenance of armies and navies might well ask how this state of things is to be reconciled with Scripture.

The answer is simple. "Peace on earth" depended on the earth's *acceptance* of the Lord Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and lasting peace is impossible otherwise. *Has* He been received in this way by the world? Most assuredly not. There was "no room" for Him at the beginning, He had "not where to lay His head" through life, and at last, despised and rejected of men, He was betrayed by the Jew, and taken by the Gentile to the chorus shouted by the multitude, "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and accordingly—scourged, smitten, spit upon, mocked, stripped, and crowned with thorns, He was crucified and slain! In short, "His life was taken from the earth," and with Him all hopes of peace for earth have been taken too; until He comes again in judgment, sweeps the scene of all iniquity, and, after crushing His foes, establishes peace with righteousness as its basis. *This* we must understand, or the "*Times*" difficulty will be ours.

Peace Possessed (chap. ii. 25-32).

But the fact remains, that the peace

which the world had refused can be had and enjoyed by every individual ready to receive the Lord as Saviour. An instance of this is afforded in the same chapter. When the infant Jesus was brought by the parents into the temple, pious old Simeon was there, and seeing the Holy Babe, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation."

Peace entered Simeon's soul when he received God's Salvation, that is, when he received Christ. So it will be with all who take the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. In Him both salvation and peace are found. Neither is there salvation in any other.

Peace Pretended (chap. xi. 14-22).

In spite of the fact that the Jews received Him not, Jesus went about doing good amongst them, shewing forth the gracious work of God in their midst, but the Pharisees attributed His miracles to the Devil. They said, "He casteth out demons through Beelzebub." The answer to that blasphemy was simple. "If Satan cast out Satan, how could his kingdom stand?" The fact is, man was under the rule and power of Satan, and the Lord Jesus came to break Satan's power and set his poor victims free. "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in *peace*: but when a stronger than he shall come upon him and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils."

From this we learn that there is a kind of peace which the Devil ministers to his dupes. For *he* is "the strong armed man"—the world is his "palace"—and unsaved sinners are his "goods." His desire is to keep the sinner asleep by the administering of his opiates, such as drink, lust, pleasure, pride, riches, and even religion in one or other of its varied forms. The Lord Jesus came to give peace, but they blasphemed against Him, and then He plainly indicates that if they had peace it was of devilish derivation. A false peace, such as those who had said "Peace, peace when there

is no peace." The truth is that "The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Peace Precluded (on earth).

The manifest rejection of the Lord in chap. xi. will in some measure prepare us for the surprise in chap. xii. (49-53), where there seems to be a flat contradiction of the announcement of the angel in chap. ii., "Peace on earth." "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay: but rather division."

This is startling, but it confirms what has been set forth, that the rejection of the Lord is wholly incompatible with the realisation of peace on earth. Therefore, when His rejection came clearly into view, the Lord very plainly repudiates any idea of peace on earth being possible, and He here indicates that His coming to the earth would not result in peace, but in fire and division. For those who receive Him, there is indeed peace to be enjoyed, but this poor "earth" may look in vain for it until after judgment has cleared out of His kingdom "all things that offend, and them which do iniquity" (Matt. xiii. 41), and "when [His] judgments are in the earth, then shall the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness."

Peace Perpetuated (in Heaven)
(chap. xix. 37-44).

"And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and to praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: PEACE IN HEAVEN, and glory in the highest."

It was now no longer "peace on earth" but "peace in heaven." And why this striking change? Because the Lord was going there after that He should have risen from the dead. Peace follows Him. Wherever He is received, peace must be.

Peace Postponed (chap. xix. 41-44).

"And when He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Poor Jerusalem! The time of her visitation by the Prince of Peace had come, but she remained sullen and unapproachable. She did not know the time of her visitation, nor did she know the things that belonged to her peace. In this she was as the world at large to this hour! The tender heart of the blessed Lord was filled with grief as He looked down from the elevation of the Mount of Olives upon the guilty city, and He wept over it as He uttered this solemn and affecting plaint! and He added, "But now they are hid from thine eyes."

May we not, however, put the emphasis on the word "now"? and comfort our hearts with the contemplation of the fact that in a future day it will be different, and Jerusalem will not only know the Lord (whom she crucified) as her Lord and King, but from that then blessed spot will flow peace to the whole world?

Then, indeed shall she know "THE THINGS THAT BELONG UNTO THY PEACE."

Peace Proclaimed (chap. xxiv. 36).

Ere Jesus spoke the gladdening words "Peace be unto you" He made peace by the blood of His cross, He made atonement for sin by taking upon Himself the penalty of sin and meeting all the just claims of a holy God on account thereof. God, in consequence of this, has raised Him from the dead. He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, that being justified by faith we might have PEACE WITH GOD through our Lord Jesus Christ. So that what the world lost by the rejection of the Lord, the individual believer can have and enjoy by faith on the blessed Saviour, who ascended into heaven, and is sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

To sum up, then, what has been before us as gleaned from the gospel of St. Luke:

PEACE

was prophesied by Zacharias,
was proposed by the angels,
was possessed by Simeon,
is pretended by Satan,
is precluded from earth during Christ's rejection,

is perpetuated in heaven,
is postponed for Jerusalem until she shall receive the returning King,
is proclaimed to believers now that Christ has risen; and it may be added
is personified in heaven, where peace is established, for

“HE IS OUR PEACE.”

True Knowledge.

(SELECTED).

“MY people is destroyed for lack of knowledge” is the epitaph written of many Christians who sleep amongst the dead. Neglecting the diligent study of the Scriptures, they have no nutriment for their love and it starves. They sigh after their “first love,” strangely forgetting that God’s love is the first love; that “we love Him because He first loved us,” and that our spiritual affection can only be kept ardent and glowing by a daily finding-out from the Bible how immeasurably and persistently God has loved us. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” How He has thus loved us is written everywhere in Scripture, in the types and shadows of the books of Moses, the predictions of psalms and prophets, the story of the Evangelists, the doctrines of the Epistles, and in the lofty strains of the Apocalypse—in all these myriad voices the same story is repeated of the true “Lamb of God” giving His life a ransom for many, and “hereby perceive

we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us.”

They who do not search into these things know not what hid treasures they miss; and neglect of study leads to decay in the spiritual life. Where gross temptation slays one Christian, ignorance slays scores. It defeats the believer by cutting off his supplies; it puts him into darkness by withholding the light; it nurses him into unbelief by giving him nothing to believe. A rebellious wayward heart is sad enough; but a sterile heart is a great grief to the Holy Spirit and a bitter trial to all who have a care for the Church of God—a heart that yields no fruit or testimony, because it is too indifferent to receive from God the seed of the Word, and so lies perpetually fallow.

“Grow in grace and in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ.” You cannot grow in grace except you grow in knowledge; and you cannot grow in knowledge apart from the Scriptures which testify of Him in whom is eternal life.

There is no process, even of divine alchemy, by which the base metal of “the flesh” can be transformed into the fine gold of “the spirit.” The new birth is an absolute necessity.

The Christian is not a flesh-improved man. He has not a better old-life than the sinner possesses, but new life, which the unrepentant sinner does not possess at all.

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter IV. 13-18.

13. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope,

14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

15. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

THE subject of this section is "concerning them that are fallen asleep;" the object in view "so shall we ever be with the Lord;" while the way of its accomplishment is set forth in the intervening verses.

It is not uncommonly thought that the occasion of this unfolding was the excited and perverted notions that the Thessalonian saints had of the coming of the Lord, which had prevented their following in a quiet and sober manner the ordinary avocations of life. But it is not so stated by the Apostle, nor does it seem necessary to seek for any other motive for him so writing to them, than the very natural and needful desire to instruct these young converts in so fundamental and important a subject of christian truth.

It requires no great research to see, nor spiritual intelligence to understand, why the kingdom and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ loomed so largely before the minds of the first preachers of the Gospel. In fact we have already seen how constantly and in different aspects the Apostle dwells upon it in this epistle: and as before he speaks of living saints in connection with it, so here he shows its relation to those who were "asleep through Jesus," and the way in which their connection with it would be brought about.

It is common in both christian and pagan writings to use the word "sleep" as a euphemism for death. As a figure, while involving the idea of continued existence, it suggests repose

and abstraction from the toil and business of life. It is of frequent use in Scripture (*cf.* Is. xi. 2, Acts vii. 60, xiii. 36, I. Cor. xi. 30). In this sense of severance from the affairs of this world without any superadded thought, it is also common in pagan writings. Thus Catullen, quoted by Alford, says, "Suns may set and rise again; but when the shadows fall on our brief light, we're doomed to the long sleep of one eternal night." No conclusion can then be drawn from this word as though it meant the sleep of the soul in an unconscious state pending its resurrection at a future day. Not only is the general use of the word contrary to such an idea, but the language of the Apostle, when he expresses his fervent desire "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better," forbids any such conclusion. Moreover, it is never said, "the soul sleeps." It is people who sleep, not their souls.

He bids them "not to sorrow as the rest who have no hope." In this category are included both the unbelieving Jew and the pagan world. As to the latter, the future was black darkness to them; a darkness whose "authority" was incontestable, (*cf.* Col. i. 13, Eph. iv. 18, Acts xxvi. 18.) Of this their own writings bear witness; as one of the greatest of their poets sorrowfully expresses it, "once dead there is no resurrection" (Aeschylin). The greatest power within their cognisance was the power of death. The greater power of God in resurrection that annuls him that has the power of death, *i.e.*, the devil, and

delivers those "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14), was not known to them. Nor was the Jew at best as yet clear on this subject. Many amongst them, and they a very influential party, "say there is no resurrection, neither angel nor spirit" (Acts xxiii. 8; Luke xx. 27); "they know neither the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. xxii. 29); and for the rest, what they had was at best but a glimmer of the coming light. True, it was to be found in their Scriptures, as the first rays of the early dawn, if they only read them aright; but as yet they saw as through a glass dimly, and it could not be otherwise, seeing that life and incorruptibility are "brought to light by the Gospel," and apart from the death and the resurrection of Christ, the key of knowledge is not available to unlock the great mystery: even of the disciples themselves it is written, "as yet they knew not the Scripture, that He must rise again from among the dead" (John xx. 9).

He bids them "not sorrow even as the rest." It is not that they were not to sorrow so much as the rest. They were not to sorrow in that way at all. It is not a question of the sorrow they might have in a natural way for their own loss in losing from this present scene their relatives or friends; but of sorrow on behalf of those that slept, and of the loss they thought that these would sustain in not participating in the glory of the day of the coming of the Lord. In point of fact they would lose nothing, for, as he goes on to show, the portion of all the saints, the dead as well as the living, is to "be for ever with the Lord." There was, therefore, no occasion for sorrow on that account.

Verse 14.

The reason he gives them for this assurance is of vast moment, based as it is on the complete victory of Jesus over death and the grave. "For if Jesus died out of this scene and rose anew into [the glory of] another," for such is the implied meaning in full of

the words used here, then surely there is no remaining hindrance why God should not lead, or bring in association with Jesus and in the participation of His glory, in whatever place or form it may be revealed, those who have been laid on sleep through His instrumentality. That they had so fallen asleep was assuredly no crime for which they should be excluded from what otherwise would have been their rightly hoped for privilege; and they were not so to regard it in any sense.

Verse 15.

Now this was in consonance with a direct word or revelation of the Lord to the Apostle. It had never been revealed before—not in the Old Testament nor even during the lifetime of the Lord on earth. He had told His disciples, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John xvi. 12). Events had not yet proceeded far enough to enable them to take in intelligently what He had yet to tell them. "To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven" (Eccles. iii. 1), and the ways of God in all departments of His government evidence alike His wisdom and that patience is a sign of power. In vain you would look in earlier times for the truth the Apostle brings before us here. Now was the occasion and the necessity for its revelation. Now was the sure foundation laid in the death and resurrection of Jesus, on which it could be made known; and now for the first time, and henceforth, we are assured on this infallible testimony, that when that time comes the living saints shall have no precedence over the saints who are asleep, as regards their coming into the presence of the Lord to share the glories of His advent.

Verse 16.

The reason for this he now proceeds to give. "Because the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven . . ." Mark the emphasis on "Himself." He will not send another, He will come Himself. This day is a day for which He has long

waited. This is the day of His deep joy, and of that joy increased by sharing the glory of it with His own redeemed ones. O glorious day! Once before He said, "with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (Luke xxii. 15). He had long waited for *that* day. It was the settlement of the great question of good and evil brought to an issue at the Cross; here it is the result in glory, when He who had been the suffering Victim was now "to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied." For this day He had long waited. He shall descend in great and glorious circumstance, with an assembling shout, with archangels' voice commanding the angelic hosts, and with trump of God,—mark the crescendo,—"He shall descend from heaven." These words are all without the article, and as such they present the thought characteristically before the mind with correspondingly greater force, rather than concretely before the eye. "From heaven": two propositions in Greek are translated "from" the one (apo) having reference merely to the place locally "from which"; the other (ek) connecting the movement with the character of the place. The former is the prep. used here. He comes "from heaven." That is the place of His power. From thence He comes. It is no question here of His advent being heavenly in its character; simply, He comes "from heaven."

This is the first act in the drama. The second follows. "And the dead in Christ shall rise first." While the application here is to the Christian dead, from I. Cor. xv. 51-57, we learn that the circumstances include all the holy dead up to that time, who, with others also in their several spheres, are partakers of the first resurrection, in which general expression many classes are included, (*cf.* Rev. xx. 1-4). But the object of the Apostle here is not to outline these various classes, but to instruct the Thessalonian saints as to the difficulties that were particularly exercising them at the time.

Next follows the third act: then we,

the living who remain, shall be caught up, or raptured in clouds, as in triumph, together with them to go to meet the coming Lord in air, *i.e.*, the air; and thus they and we united shall be ever with the Lord. Other things connected with the coming of the Lord are not here under consideration. They must be looked for elsewhere. The Father's house, the heavenly calling of the Church, the millennial reign of Christ, the administration of the Kingdom, and other subjects of vast and commanding interest are to be found in the Scriptures that treat of them. What is set before us in this Scripture is the immediate hope of the Christian, as the first act in the accomplishment of all that is to be brought about for the saints through the redemption power of Christ in His victory over death and the grave. "We shall be always with the Lord." That is all that is said here. It is all that need be said.

The event is frequently called "The Secret Rapture" as being contrasted with those events that will usher in publicly the advent of the Lord in the power and glory of His kingdom; and in the record of it as here given it is connected solely with the grace that associates the saints who have part in it with the Lord Himself, and as we would gather from John xiv. 1, 2, with all the joy of the Father's house. No question of responsibility is here referred to, whether in reference to the saints, Rom. xiv., II. Cor. v.; or the judgment of the world, Acts xvii. 31; "the quick or the dead," II. Tim. iv. 1; and therefore we are warranted to conclude, that it must necessarily take place before these events that publicly introduce the reign of Christ as set forth in other Scriptures.

If we look for a figure of it in the Old Testament, it would seem to be represented by the translation of Enoch before the flood; while Noah and his family represent the remnant of the nations, including Israel, who are brought through the flood, *i.e.*, the judgments that will close up the present age and prepare for the introduction of

the age to come, (*cf.* Jer. xxv. 15-38, xxx. 7). Meanwhile "we shall be ever with the Lord," whether in the Father's house above, or in the glory of the Kingdom. There is therefore in respect of those who are put asleep by Jesus, no ground for grieving, but contrariwise, the Apostle closes up this section by saying, "wherefore comfort one

another with these words."

"Oh, the blessed joy of meeting,
All the desert past!
Oh, the wondrous words of greeting,
He shall speak at last.

He and *we* in that bright glory,
One deep joy shall share;
Ours to be for ever with Him;
His, that *we* am there."

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 7.—Zephaniah.

Chapter i. 2-4.

I will utterly consume all things from off the land, saith the Lord.

I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling-blocks with the wicked; and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the Lord.

I will also stretch out mine hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place, and the name of the Chemarims with the priests;

Chapter ii. 3, 7, 11.

Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which

have wrought his judgments: seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger.

And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; and they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening; for the Lord their God shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

The Lord will be terrible unto them: for he will furnish all the gods of the earth; and men shall worship him, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.

ZEPHANIAH, like the other prophets has in view the day of Israel's future blessing, and very touchingly he speaks of how God will then rest in His love, and joy over His ransomed ones with singing. It is now for us to study the road which leads to this blessed goal, as described by Zephaniah, and to see how everything really depends upon Christ.

In the opening chapter, judgment of a widespread and comprehensive character is declared. Man had become obnoxious in the sight of God; he had polluted the land with his idolatry and his deeds of violence. He had involved even the beasts, birds and fishes; his sin had defiled the whole creation, and there was nothing for it but for him to disappear under the judgment of God from the scene which Christ is to fill. So God "shall make even a speedy riddance of all them that dwell in the land."

But in the midst of all the corruption there has always been, and will be again (in the time to which the prophecy has special reference) a remnant that fear God. Such are called upon (chap. ii. 3) to seek Jehovah, so that in the day of His anger they may be securely hidden.

This brings us to the heart of the prophecy at once. Zephaniah means "hidden of the Lord," and in a very special way he foretells how the "hidden ones" will be brought through the storm and stress of the last days into the joy and glory of the millennial world. And it is in this connection that our thoughts are turned to Christ, For who but He could be the hiding place of these godly Jews? As another prophet has said: "A Man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest." In Him they will find their refuge; from Him will come the resources that will sustain

them in their faithful adherence to the way of truth. He will be their guide and protector until the land is purged from the presence of the ungodly, and all around is peace.

The prophecy does not refer to Christians, but to Jews. Yet we may observe a close parallel between what Zephaniah unfolds and what the gospel makes known to us. For we have to learn, first of all, that man in the flesh is utterly obnoxious to God because of his sin, and must be got rid of in judgment. But the believer can see this effected for him in the cross of Christ. Man, the world, sin, himself, are all judged, and removed from the eye of God in the death of Christ. The end of all flesh has thus come before Him. But in raising that blessed One from among the dead, God starts, as it were, the history of man again. It is however, man of a new order, of the order of Christ. He becomes the hiding-place, the covert of His people, and we are brought to God in Him, as hidden in and covered by Him. This is beyond what we find in the prophets, but we can hardly read the words of Zephaniah without being reminded of the way that God has brought us into blessing in the risen Christ.

To return to the prophecy before us. In chapter ii. the nations round about the land of Israel come into view for judgment. Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, Assyria: these central nations were all to be judged. But just as there will be a spared remnant of Judah, so there will be some spared from amongst the Gentiles to share the blessing of Christ's kingdom. Idolatry shall be utterly destroyed, but "the isles of the heathen" (that is, the remoter parts of the earth in contrast to the countries immediately surrounding Judah) shall come into blessing, and men shall worship the Lord, every one from his place, in all these outlying regions. They are not "hidden" like the remnant of Judah, during the time of the outpouring of wrath; but when judgment is executed they are spared, and have the healing and peace that will come into the world with the advent of Christ.

Both in chapters ii. and iii. "the remnant" is chiefly in view. "The remnant of the house of Judah," "The remnant of My people" (verses 7 and 9). These are the "afflicted and poor people" who trust in the Name of the Lord (iii. 12), and who are blessed in connection with Christ.

Jehovah in the Midst.

Bearing this in mind, we shall look at the threefold way in which Christ is presented here. Three times in three different connections Jehovah is said to be *in the midst* of His people. That surely is Christ. *He* was Jehovah come into the midst of His people for blessing.

First, in chapter iii. 5, we read, "*The just Lord* ('the righteous Jehovah' N.T.) *is in the midst thereof; He will not do iniquity . . . He faileth not.*"

It is the state of Jerusalem that is dealt with in this chapter, and she is called "filthy and polluted." Her princes had become roaring lions; her prophets light and treacherous persons. Her priests had polluted the sanctuary and outraged the law. But in shining contrast to all this we have the blessed One presented, who was—

"Faithful amid unfaithfulness,
'Mid darkness, only light."

In His pathway here, He never swerved for a moment from that which was right. He was entirely uninfluenced by all that was around. Amid the prevalent corruption and hypocrisy He shone as the true Light. He was "in the midst" of Israel as the Just One, the Maintainer of truth and righteousness.

But His presence brought to light the workings of evil, and necessitated the condemnation thereof. This we find in our prophet. But, besides judgment for the rebellious, there were other results that flowed from His presence in the midst of Israel. He wrought by His grace upon the hearts of many, and attracted them to Himself. They were not of much account in the world, a few poor fishermen and others, but they were precious beyond rubies in His sight. And they will have their counterpart in the day that is coming, for there

shall be "an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the Name of Jehovah."

This remnant, the work of Jehovah's hands, will be characterised by that which marked Himself when He was here. He did no iniquity; so we are told "the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity." Manifesting His character, refreshed by the food He gives them, secure in His mighty protection, they shall lie down, satisfied and at rest.

This brings us to the second presentation of Christ, as Jehovah in the midst, in chapter iii. 15: "*The King of Israel, even Jehovah, is in the midst of Thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.*"

God's thought of a king is that he should rule for the comfort, and peace, and blessing of his subjects. And this, Christ indeed will do. If He puts forth His might for the destruction of His enemies, He also puts it forth to ensure the welfare of His people.

Israel had suffered much at the hands of many kings. Her first monarch oppressed the families and appropriated the possessions of his subjects (I. Sam. viii. 11-18), and most of his successors walked in his ways. But at last Jehovah Himself will, in the person of Christ, take possession of the throne, and will be in the midst of His people with unbounded blessing. His hands will be filled with bounty. If, as the Righteous One in the midst, He has exposed Israel's sin (and borne it Himself), as the King in the midst, He will drive all evil away, so that it may be said: "Sing . . . shout . . . be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem."

I want to smite and expel the notion that it requires great genius to be an infidel or a destructive critic. There is nothing so easy as destruction; that is a simple doctrine which is often forgotten. Any beast can crush a flower, but God alone could design and construct it.

More, however, has to be told. For He who is the Righteous One, and the King, is also God! As such He is presented in chapter iii. 17: "*Jehovah thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; He will save, He will rejoice over thee with joy.*"

What an insight we get here into the very heart of God Himself, Israel's God and ours. Again and again had He mourned over the unfaithfulness and sin of His people. He had, times without number, entreated and warned them. But they had turned a deaf ear, and had run eagerly in the paths of pride, and lust, and idolatry. But at length God takes His place "in the midst," and shows Himself mighty, not to judge, but to save. Instead of mourning over his wayward people, He will rejoice over them with joy. Instead of continually entreating them, He will be silent (as the margin reads) in his love. It is the deep silence of love that is perfectly satisfied, a silence only broken by the voice of *joyful singing*. *Whose joyful singing? Ours? Israel's? Nay: God Himself "will joy over thee with singing."*

No doubt this too is Christ. We have thus viewed Him, as Zephaniah presents Him, in the midst of His people in three different ways:—

1.—As the just Jehovah, acting *for righteousness' sake*, maintaining truth.

2.—As Israel's King, acting *for His people's sake*, ensuring their unspeakable blessing.

3.—As Jehovah-God, acting *for His own sake*, bringing to pass His own designs of grace, that He might satisfy His own love, and rejoice over the objects of that love with singing.

The one great impression that the Father made on the prodigal son (Luke xi.) was—I love you; and that is the first impression that the Holy Ghost makes in the soul when He comes to dwell. "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Creation."

(S. L. JACOB).

No. 6.—The Fifth and Sixth Days.

19. And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
 20. And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.
 21. And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
 22. And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful,

and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.

23. And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

24. And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.

25. And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.

Fifth and Sixth Days.

HERE we come to the filling of the earth with life; the waters, the air and the earth were to be filled with living souls; for the same words are used in the 21st and 24th verses which are used for man in Gen. ii. 7, though the animal is not the subject of God's counsel as man is in chapter i. 26, nor did God breathe into the nostrils of the animals the breath of life, as He did to man. Still the whole created sphere of this world is filled with living souls. It is remarkable how God blessed them (verse 22) and reiterated the command that they should multiply and bring forth abundantly. This is specially the case with reference to the waters, for the 20th verse should read, "And God said, let the water swarm with swarms."

It is assumed by many that there was no death of any sort or description on the earth, at all events subsequent to verse 3 of this chapter, until Adam fell, and that until that event the world was a deathless world. Is there any scriptural ground for this belief? Will then the reader kindly judge dispassionately what is here said as to this.

We read, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Now the word "men" is emphatic, and this is most important. The natural way in the Greek language would have been to say, "death passed upon all," and to have left us then to supply either the word "men," or the word "things," as is usually done in English translations,

but here Scripture seemed to go out of the way to definitely say death passed upon all men.

Just to quote at random, there is no noun in the original after "all," or "every," in the following passages, John iii. 26, xi. 48, xii. 32; Acts ii. 45, xvii. 30; Rom. iii. 23; Heb. ii. 9; where, therefore, a noun occurs, it is emphatic. And why say, "So death passed on all men for that all have sinned," if it included the animal world which has not sinned? No, it is passed upon men, mankind: not man in contrast with woman, but men in contrast with animals. Scripture, therefore, is not against the idea of death in the animal world, but the inference is all the other way.

But does not Rom. viii. 19-22 show that death came upon animals through the fall? It does not say so. Who can doubt that the fall wrought sad consequences on the animal world? This is not in question; but that there was a deathless animal world before the fall is nowhere hinted at. We must not take the "him" in Rom. viii. 20 as referring to Adam but to God: it is He who subjected creation, and He who gave it hope; and it is not the original state that God means to bring in, but something much better, when the restitution of all things takes place.

Moreover we have overlooked the plainest inferences of Gen. i. That death was in the vegetable kingdom is clearly involved (verses 11, 29, 30, cf. John xii. 24.); and the creation of living creatures is stated in the same

way as the production of the grass, thus, "Let the earth bring forth grass"; "Let the waters bring forth abundantly"; "Let the earth bring forth the living creature." The inference is that the animal world follows the vegetable.

We may also consider what the result would have been (miracle apart) were it otherwise. Multiplication is spoken of in the case of all, and especially of the denizens of the sea, and fish are accordingly extremely prolific. Now if it were possible for fish to multiply their offspring indefinitely without check, it is probable that the progeny of one single fish (a small fish, say, like the mackerel or herring) would fill up all the seas solid in an incredibly short space of time. Even a single flesh fly will breed so quickly that, were there no check, the offspring of one such fly in six months would probably be greater than the mass of the whole world, and so on; and in a few days life would be impossible on the earth by the very fact of there being no death. It is only through death that life is possible. This has been the parable lesson all through. Oh that we all saw this! The language of the heavens and the earth, of the rocks and of the field, and of the beasts of the earth is, "Oh may the Deliverer come!" There can be no lasting paradise without Christ.

Where we have erred is in thinking that we are in an altogether different world to that mentioned in Genesis i.; whereas, as we have seen time after time, what is portrayed is this very world of good and evil, with God at work overcoming the evil with the good, until the ultimate triumph of good shall be complete. But in the meantime we see here the good and there the evil gains an immediate victory; now light breaks in, then again darkness succeeds; now there is life, and again there is death; an unceasing struggle, an implacable warfare, which must go on day and night until complete victory is attained. The lovers of truth and goodness ever seeming to be worsted, but even in death more than conquerors through Him who hath loved us.

In the great sheet of Acts x. 11 there were the four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. Here in strange medley are all men portrayed, for we have our links with the animal world through the dust of earth, as well as with heaven by the breath of God; all our passions, our lusts and propensities are pictured in the animal world. We may be like the fierce tiger or venomous snake, the timid sheep or harmless dove. So also as to that which is good: the remains of what God has implanted, *i.e.*, natural affection, the mother's love, the love of wife and children, kindness, gentleness, all is pictured in and stamped upon the original creation from the first, that man may have this wondrous object lesson spread before him, and that he may understand that till the God-Man comes and takes all things into His own hands even God's creation will not (cannot) be at all what God means it to be.

If it is not this, then we must imagine another creation of the present animal world since the fall, either by an absolutely new creation, or else by the complete remodelling of the structure of almost all beasts, birds, fishes and creeping things. For neither of these suppositions have we the slightest proof, either direct or indirect, whereas what we have herein stated is in perfect accord with the teaching of the whole chapter, and brings into prominence God's original great object lesson: that all things wait for their great Deliverer, and have waited for Him since their original creation, and nothing can be right until He comes. God has never had any other thought, and from the beginning all things and all creation have (unconsciously it may be) cried out for Christ. Do not let us miss this lesson. The proof will yet become more and more plain as we proceed. It is so important that we venture to reiterate it often.

(To be continued).

EDITORS' NOTE.—These papers are intended to be suggestive rather than dogmatic, to be stimulative of study rather than to present its final and completed results as to the detail of a subject at once so great and so seldom considered.

The Old Testament Scriptures.

(WALTER B. WESTCOTT.).

Their Authority and Value.

THAT the attitude of a very large number of persons towards the Old Testament Scriptures has undergone a change of recent years is beyond all contradiction true. This is to be accounted for partly by the growing scepticism of the age, partly by the extreme statements of some of the higher critics, and partly by the prevailing ignorance of the contents, as well as the intent, of the "sacred letters."

It is now commonly proclaimed from the pulpit itself that the books of the Old Testament are interesting from a literary point of view, and that they teach some useful moral lessons, but that their claim to inspiration or divine authority must be abandoned.

Anglicans and Nonconformists vie with each other in making these pronouncements, as could be readily proved if space permitted. This, too, in spite of ordination vows in the one case, and traditional loyalty to the Word of God in the other.

The nation, as such, is clearly committed to the old-fashioned estimate of the Bible as a whole. Sect. xiii. of the Coronation Oath provides:—

"Then shall the Dean of Westminster take the Holy Bible from off the Altar and deliver it to the Archbishop, who shall present it to the King, first saying these words to him: 'Our gracious King, we present you with this Book, the most valuable thing that this world affords. Here is wisdom: this is the Royal Law: these are the lively Oracles of God.'"

It is the writer's desire to prove—and it is by no means a difficult task—that the surrender of the "God-breathed" character and the divine authority of the Old Testament writings necessitates the surrender also of any claim to the

above-named qualities in the New. The truth of God—if such has been revealed—is accredited by two witnesses whose testimony agrees. Destroy the evidence of one, and it would be folly to place any reliance upon that of the other. It is a significant fact to notice at the beginning of our enquiry that no less than two hundred and seventy-six passages from the Old Testament are directly quoted in the New, and many more are indirectly introduced.

Moreover, of the incidents related in the Old Testament, at least one hundred and twenty are recorded, or referred to in the New, including the commonly rejected miracle of Jonah swallowed by the whale, the story of the Flood, etc.

A statement made by the apostle Peter in the presence of the hundred and twenty disciples after the Lord's ascension, throws a flood of light upon the general character of the Scriptures familiar to the Jews of his day: "This scripture," he says, "must needs have been fulfilled which *the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David* spake before concerning Judas" . . . Thus the words uttered prophetically by David, and recorded in the psalm, had high authority and origin indeed. The human element in the scriptures is under divine control, and what was true in the case of David was true in that of the prophets likewise, if we are to accept again the testimony of Peter in his second epistle. There we find it stated (II. Pet. i. 19-21), "We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the

will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Let us beware, therefore, lest in belittling the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, we be found "fighting against God," even if we have the higher critics on our side!

Among the many advantages enjoyed by the Jew, the apostle Paul singles out as chief this priceless privilege (Rom. iii. 2), "that unto them were committed *the oracles of God*." This is the value set by the cultured, logical, divinely-taught apostle of the Gentiles upon the Scriptures entrusted to the care of his much-loved nation. Speaking before the governor Felix, he confesses himself as "*believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets*" . . . Surely it ill becomes us who profess to esteem his ministry so highly, to differ from him in so vital a matter!

There is another feature of the case that requires our careful consideration. While history, experience and prophecy all find their place in the Old Testament, it is distinctly stated by Paul that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." This statement asserts the present and permanent value of the early records of the Bible. Altered conditions of life do not render obsolete or archaic any part of the Holy Scriptures. God's principles never alter, though His revelation varies in form and degree. No new aspect of truth contradicts an older one, though it may enlarge and supersede it.

Unquestionably there is development in the manifestation of the nature and attributes of God, who was never fully made known until the Son came to the earth.

The slaughter of the Canaanites, the imprecatory Psalms, and other problems of the Old Testament are solved for those who take into account the local circumstances and the eternal righteousness of God. These questions,

however, do not come within the scope of our enquiry, and other pens have written ably on such subjects.

That which most convincingly evidences the authority and value of the Old Testament Scriptures, is the use made of them by the Lord Jesus Christ when here on earth. His attitude in general is revealed in His argument with the Jews, related in John v. (v. 39, etc), "[Ye] search the Scriptures," said He, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they *which testify of Me*"; and again (v. 45-47), "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust, for had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me, for *he wrote of Me*. But if ye believe not his writings how shall ye believe My words." In this utterance our Lord places His seal upon the Scriptures in general, and the writings of Moses in particular. To reject the writings of Moses involved (and still, we maintain, involves) the rejection of Christ Himself.

It is deeply interesting and important to notice that at several crises in the life of the Lord, He makes use of, or applies to Himself, some part of the early Scriptures. Thus after His baptism, when He "was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil," He meets the threefold attack of His great enemy by "It is written," quoting in each instance from the Book of Deuteronomy. He does not draw upon His infinite resources as the Creator, but as the dependent Man He selects from the armoury of the Old Testament weapons mighty to the overthrow even of the great adversary.

Following closely upon this victory, achieved by the use of the Word of God, comes the Lord's first public appearance in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke iv). Standing up to read, He turns to "the book of the prophet Esaias," and finds the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor: He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to

preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord". Then with the eyes of all that were in the synagogue fastened on Him, He continues, "*This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.*"

Here we find the Lord definitely applying to Himself the prophetic Scripture written hundreds of years before He came to the earth, the writer himself probably having no idea of the ultimate use of his inspired utterance (I Pet. i. 10-12).

That this is no solitary instance of the direct application and confirmation of Old Testament writings is clearly shown by the fact that at least twenty times in the Gospels is the same comment made, in varied forms, that what was recorded took place in *fulfilment* of the Scriptures. Matthew xxvi. brings before us another crisis in the Lord's life, namely His betrayal; even at such a moment it is clearly seen that His thoughts reverted to the prophetic Scriptures. Thus in v. 24 He says, "The Son of Man goeth *as it is written of Him;*" again in v. 31, "*it is written I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.*" Once more (v. 53, 54), "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels? but *how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled* that thus it must be?" So in v. 56.

Still deeper into the sea of unutterable sorrow did the Saviour advance, until finally the awful waves of Calvary surged upon Him. Yet even in the fierce anguish that pressed upon His spirit on the cross, He remembers that there is still one more prophetic word that He must seal, and "knowing that all things were now accomplished, *that the Scriptures might be fulfilled,* (He) saith, "I thirst" (John xix. 28).

Surely here is proof enough, though much more might be given, that our divine Lord vindicated and confirmed to the full the Old Testament Scriptures.

This should be enough for all those who own Him as Saviour, Lord, and Pattern.

To the two going to Emmaus, Christ, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets . . . expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself." Again, a little later in the day, to the disciples gathered at Jerusalem, He thus speaks: "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke xxiv. 27 and 44, 45).

"This was the well-known threefold division of the Hebrew Bible: the Law, the Prophets, and the other writings. The Book of Psalms came first in the last division of the Canon, and thus gave its name to the whole. The Bible which the Lord thus unfolded to His disciples was identical with the Old Testament we have in our hands to-day, not one book or chapter less or more, and He thus accredited it as a whole and in every part as being a testimony to Himself" (Sir Robert Anderson, *The Bible and Modern Criticism*, p. 176).

An instance of the unblushing use of the Old Testament Scriptures may be cited from a sermon of a present day religious leader, on the "suffering servant of God" (Is. liiii. 3):—

"It is commonly supposed that these words had from the very first an immediate and direct reference to the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . The conventional Christian belief about the matter seems to be that five centuries or so before Jesus was born, a Jewish prophet foresaw His advent, and was able to describe His experience minutely, even to the agony of Calvary. It is supposed that we have here a natural and inspired anticipation of what our Lord would have to go through for the redemption of mankind. Behind

this view of the meaning of these words is also the assumption that the redemption here alluded to was deliverance from a future hell by the payment of the debt which sinful humanity owed to God."

Having thus referred to what is "commonly supposed", to "the conventional Christian belief", and so forth, traversing them by innuendo, he proceeds: "Will you allow me to point out that this is not, and could not be, what the man who originally wrote (these words) had in mind. In fact, I may go so far as to say that if we think of them *in this literal way* we shall limit and distort their true spiritual meaning very considerably." Having thus cleared the ground, the speaker goes on to declare that the words apply primarily to Jeremiah, and in a secondary sense to all who suffer for the good of others, of course including Jesus.

But what becomes of the witness in the New Testament to this well-known passage? And in what sense could such expressions as the following apply in the remotest degree to Jeremiah or any other "sufferer" who was no more than man?—"with His stripes we are healed" (v. 5); "the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (v. 6); "Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin" (v. 10).

Turning to Acts viii. we find that the eunuch in his chariot is discovered by Philip reading the glorious words, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer so opened He not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away, and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth".

On enquiring from the evangelist, "of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or of some other man?" we read that Philip "opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus".

Had the gentleman referred to been sent in place of Philip, the anxious eunuch would doubtless have been

informed that the prophet not only wrote of "some other man", but of all other men who suffered for their fellows. He *might* have gone "on his way rejoicing", but we should scarcely be able to discover why!

Another pillar of Nonconformity, preaching in his own chapel on the very same day on which the sermon already quoted was delivered, does not hesitate to renounce the historical basis of the miracles of the Old Testament.

Referring to the book of Job, he remarks:—"A curious ignorance and misunderstanding led men to suppose that this great poem was intended as history, intended as the biography of a patriarch, and the orthodoxy of the past day insisted that it must all be treated as history, and that to question its veracity would be to discredit the Bible. When men began to see that it was poetry, that it made no claim whatever to be historical (!), the simple statement of that literary fact excited the indignation of this blinder kind of orthodoxy."

Further on in the same address this Doctor of Divinity remarks:—"The same school of orthodoxy has insisted upon making the truth of Christianity depend upon the fact that the ass spoke to Balaam, or that the prophet Jonah lived three days in the belly of a fish, never waiting to enquire—though surely it was obviously the first question that ought to be put—whether these statements were meant to be historical, or whether they were merely that kind of pictorial presentation of religious truth which is admissible in every literature, and may therefore be admissible in the Bible. No one waited to see whether the story of Balaam, or the story of Jonah, was merely the kind of didactic poetry which could be used for the instruction of men, and to illustrate the co-ordination and co-operation of the dumb creation with the living Creator."

Dr. — is somewhat unfortunate, or unprincipled, in his selection of the incidents referred to in his sermon. If the Book of Job is merely a romance,

and not—as “blind orthodoxy” regards it—“the biography of the patriarch,” what becomes of the passage in Ezek. xiv., where Jehovah is twice quoted as saying (v. 14 and 20), “Though these three men, Noah, Daniel and Job,” etc., Are we to regard the records concerning Noah and Daniel as poetry also?

Well might James say in his epistle (v. 11), “Ye have heard of the patience of Job”, seeing that he is called to such suffering at the hands of a twentieth-century friend!

The apostle Peter clearly followed, if he did not establish, the “blinder kind of orthodoxy,” which this religious teacher so tenderly enlightens, for he writes, concerning Balaam, “[He] was rebuked for his iniquity, *the dumb ass speaking with man's voice* forbad the madness of the prophet” (II Pet. ii. 16).

More emphatic still in this connection is the seal set by Christ Himself upon the “blind orthodoxy” that regards the story of Jonah as historical fact. Do we not read of His saying to the scribes and Pharisees, “As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”?

It is abundantly evident from the foregoing, and many other proofs that could be adduced, that to tamper with the accuracy, inspiration, and authority of the Old Testament Scriptures involves of necessity a denial of the full and absolute truth of the New Testament; and if neither the Old nor the New is to be relied upon, where can we look for guidance? The cry, “Back to Christ,” is a good one, but we must travel *via* the Scriptures.

The whole is greater than its parts, but the whole is not independent of its parts; and we cannot reasonably accept the teaching of the New Testament without admitting to the full the equally-inspired nature of the Old, with which it is so wonderfully interwoven. They stand or fall together; and woe be to the man, however gifted or apparently sincere, who attempts to divide them.

The attack upon the Scriptures must culminate in an attack upon Christ, and it is well that honest and simple souls should see this, that they may refuse to surrender any portion of the Holy Scriptures through which He is made known to them.

The Book of God.

“I have thought I am a creature of a day, passing through life as an arrow passes through the air. I am a spirit, coming from God and returning to God, . . . a few months hence I am no more seen. I drop into an unchangeable eternity. I want to know one thing; the way to land safe on that happy shore.

“God Himself has condescended to teach the way. He hath written it down in a Book. Oh, give me that Book; at any price give me the Book of God! I have it. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one book. Here I am far away from the busy ways of men. I sit down alone; only God is here.

“In His presence I open and read His Book for this end—to find the way to heaven.

“Is there a doubt concerning the meaning of what I read? Does anything appear dark or intricate? I lift up my heart to the Father of lights. Lord, is it not in Thy Word, ‘if any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God?’ Thou hast said, ‘if any man be willing to do Thy will he shall know.’ I am willing to do—let me know Thy will.”

—John Wesley.

He who abides in Christ will always be fruitful and full; he who essays to live in his own past blessings and experiences will soon deplore his barrenness and emptiness.

Answers to Correspondents.

The Seventy Weeks of Daniel.

(Dan. ix. 24-27).

C.S.R. You ask whether the first half of the seventieth week of Daniel has already been fulfilled in the three-and-a-half years ministry of Christ on earth, as has been suggested.

We think not. You will notice that it is distinctly stated that after the three score and two weeks (mentioned immediately following the first seven weeks, or forty-nine years, during which the wall of Jerusalem would be re-built "in troublous times") Messiah would be cut off. The cutting off of Messiah is thus placed not in the midst of the seventieth week, but after sixty-nine weeks in all had run their course: that is, of course, in the symbolism of Daniel's prophecy, weeks of years, *i.e.*, 483 years. The period of 483 years runs from "the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem:" this commandment was evidently that given to Nehemiah in the 20th year of the reign of Artaxerxes, for the earlier decrees recorded as to Jerusalem concerned simply "the house of the Lord God of Israel" (Ezra i. 1-3; vi. 38; vii. 7); and the dates of secular history confirm the fulfilment of the prophecy in the fact of the 483 years running out in the time of Christ, His crucifixion, and the suspension of God's special dealings with the Jews. From that point they were left to the mercy of the Gentiles, and very soon "the people of the prince" (the Romans) besieged and destroyed the city and the sanctuary.

So that the last week, or seven years, still awaits fulfilment. This week will commence when God resumes His special dealings with the Jews. This will be of course after the rapture of the Church (I. Thess. iv. 14-18), but how soon after is not revealed.

It is interesting to notice that it does not say "the prince" will destroy the city and the sanctuary, but "the people

of the prince;" the prince himself comes into the arena during the last week, which is still future. He will belong to the Roman Empire, for he is of the same people that destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70; but it is the Roman Empire divided into ten kingdoms, the ten horns (the horn is symbolical of power) of Daniel vii. 24. He shall arise and subdue three of these kingdoms. At the appearance of this prince it would seem that many of the Jews are already gathered in unbelief to their own land, their temple rebuilt and the sacrifices resumed, and they will make a covenant with him, in order, probably, to save themselves from "the overflowing scourge"—some great power from the North (Isa. xxviii. 15). Nothing corresponding to this covenant of verse 27 has taken place since the events of verse 26.

But the alliance thus formed with this blasphemous prince will be broken by him in the midst of the week; he will force idolatry upon them, and even erect an idol in the holy place within the temple—the abomination of desolation (Matt. xxiv. 15, see also Rev. xiii. 15). There are several Scriptures which evidently refer to this point of history: "In the *midst of the week* (*i.e.*, in the middle of the seven years) he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease," etc. (Dan. ix. 27). "He shall speak great words against the Most High, and shall wear out the saints of the Most High (the true remnant of Israel), and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hand until a *time, and times, and the dividing of time*"—three years and a half (Dan. vii. 25). Then under the figure of the "beast" (power) "there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue *forty and two months*"—three years and a half (Rev. xiii. 5-7. "And the holy city shall be trodden underfoot *forty and two months*" (Rev. xi. 2).

It will probably be during this period that the Jews will go through the "great tribulation" (Matt. xxiv. 3-25), the time of Jacob's sorrow, the result of her rejection of her Messiah. But through all this period the true remnant of Israel shall be preserved of God "for a time, and times, and half a time" (Rev. xii. 14). Finally those days of sorrow will be shortened for the elect's sake (Matt. xxiv. 22). The Lord will answer the cries of His people by coming to Mount Olivet (Zech. xiv. 14) to the exact spot from whence He left the earth (Acts i. 11, 12). And the seventy weeks will close in "everlasting righteousness" brought in by Him, who, in His cutting off as Messiah, made "reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. ix. 24).

"The Fulness of the Gentiles"

(Rom. xi. 25).

R.H. This is not identical with "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke xxi. 24) to which you also refer. This latter is the whole period during which Jerusalem is subject to Gentile rule: it began with the Babylonian captivity of Judah under Nebuchadnezzar, and will extend until the time when at the close of Daniel's seventieth week the Gentile world power is smitten and destroyed by the "stone cut out without hands" (Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44), *i.e.*, at the coming of the Lord as predicted in Rev. xix. 11.

As to "the fulness of the Gentiles," however, we may point out that God's dealings with Israel as His specially favoured and chosen people on earth, were suspended as a result of their rejection of Christ as their Messiah; they were blind and saw not in the One who came "meek and sitting on an ass" their all-glorious King; they were deaf and would not listen to His word of emancipation and life. So they stumbled, and He became a rock of offence to them. But by their fall, salvation has gone out to the Gentiles (verse 11), and the harvest of this gospel amongst the Gentiles will be the Church, the Bride of Christ. *This is the fulness of the Gentiles.*

But when the fulness of the Gentiles is gathered in—that is, when the Church has been caught up to her appointed place in heaven above—God will resume (from the beginning of Daniel's seventieth week) His dealings with Israel, beloved for the fathers' sakes, "and so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written. There shall come out of Zion a Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob" (ver. 26).

So that Israel's rejection of Christ did but further God's gracious and eternal purpose of gathering out of the nations a people for Himself, nor will the promises made to Abraham and David fail of fulfilment. Thus God makes the very wrath of men to praise Him, and well may we exclaim with the Apostle, as we view it all: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him and it shall be recompensed unto Him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (verses 33-36).

Idolatry.

SCAR. It is clear from Deut. xxxii. 17 and I. Cor. x. 20 that our contributor was right in stating that "idolatry is demon-worship," and the Israelites were undoubtedly guilty of this sin when they bowed down before the golden calf (Ex. xxxii.).

Yet as you point out the worship of the calf "Thy gods, O Israel" is not made prominent in I. Cor. x. 7, but the fact that "the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." The fear of Moses, which doubtless had had a restraining effect upon their evil tendencies was removed, and they gave rein to their passions, and made themselves merry in his absence.

There is certainly in this a warning for us, and to this end it is quoted in Corinthians. The Lord is absent from this earth, it is our privilege and re-

sponsibility to remain true to Him and to watch for His return, and in this way all Israel ought to have acted as regards Moses. But we need to seek grace from God, that we may be kept in true heart separation from the world, lest we fall into this snare, and we be found like the one in Matt. xxiv. 48, 49, "But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken." This is idolatry. It is those who have professed loyalty to a rejected and absent Lord, turning again to the world that rejoices at His absence (John xvi. 20) and making themselves merry with it.

Covetousness is also spoken of as idolatry (Col. iii. 5). Whether it be the using of things *possessed* in self-gratifica-

tion, or the lust for things not *possessed*, the heart is in bondage to something other than God, and it is idolatry.

In Other Lands.

As to the "Scripture Truth" Free Distribution Fund (for free supply of copies of "Scripture Truth" to missionaries and Christian workers in other lands), we have to announce that our brother in Christ, Mr. Thos. Bell, of "Summerleigh," Monkseaton, Northumberland, has kindly undertaken to conduct this fund jointly with Mr. D. R. Huntley, whose address was published last month. Contributions may be sent to either of them, and will be acknowledged by them jointly.

"Freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. x. 8).

The Dignity of the Gospel.

(SELECTED).

WHAT constitutes the dignity of the Gospel? Is it human or divine, earthly or heavenly? It was a most undignified thing from a human standpoint to die on a cross between two thieves. That was the most undignified thing ever done in this world, and yet it was the grandest spectacle that ever heaven or earth gazed upon. With what adoration must the hosts of heaven have gazed upon the illustrious Sufferer as He bowed His head in death. The Pharisees spat in the face of that humbled Man, they wagged their heads in derision and cried, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

Ah! but He was intent on saving others. On that cross we see the dignity of almighty Strength, the dignity of eternal Wisdom, the dignity of everlasting, unquenchable Love, baring its bosom to suffer in the stead of its rebellious creature—man. It was the incarnate God standing in the place of condemned and guilty man—that was the *dignity of Love*.

Oh, precious Saviour, save us from maligning thy Gospel and Thy name by our paltry notions of earthly dignity and forgetting the dignity that clothed Thy sacred brow, as, crowned with thorns Thou didst hang upon the cross!

"Jesus, dishonoured and dying,
A felon on either side—
Jesus, the song of the drunkards,
Jesus the crucified!

Name of God's tender comfort,
Name of His glorious power,
Name that is song and sweetness,
The strong eternal tower.

Jesus the Lamb accepted,
Jesus the Priest on His throne—
Jesus the King who is coming—
Jesus, Thy Name alone!"

Prevailing Prayer.

(J. T. MAWSON).

“And King Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country” (I. Kings x. 13).

NO more successful prayer than this has been placed on record, for not only did the desires receive an answer to the full satisfaction of the suppliant, but from the king's bounty she received abundantly more than she asked or thought. It is thus that our exalted Lord would treat us, and it is for the glory of His great name and for our good that He should so treat us, and there is no hindrance on His side.

King Solomon is a type of our Lord Jesus Christ in His exaltation and glory, and the steps by which the Ethiopian queen arrived at the desired goal is illustrative of the way in which we may know the unstinted giving of the One who is infinitely greater than Solomon.

She “heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord.” (Ver. 1).

She heard his fame; this is the first step, for “faith cometh by hearing” and “how shall they believe except they hear.” But many are satisfied with hearing, some even hear and profess to believe the Gospel of God, but seem satisfied with that, they say that their “sins are forgiven for His name sake” and that heaven is their destiny, but they do not seem to desire to become personally and intimately acquainted with the One who died for their redemption. Their hearts are in the world, and it is to be gravely questioned whether they are the Lord's or not, He knows, but they would do well to take to heart those solemn words “ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is an enemy of God” (James iv. 4).

As the queen of Sheba desired to see the One whose fame had reached her, so

the one who truly believes the Gospel will not be satisfied with its statements merely (blessed as these are) but his soul will be filled with desires after Christ, and at all costs will seek to know *Him*, for nothing but Christ's company can satisfy the heart that has come under His attractive power. The question of the first disciples “Master where dwellest Thou?” will rise from heart and lip.

“She came to prove Him with hard questions” (Ver. 1.)

The queen had many difficulties from which the wisdom of her own land could by no means relieve her; she brought these to Solomon and unburdened her heart to him, and lo, the questions were answered and all the problems solved, according to the God-given wisdom that dwelt in him. It is even thus when the heart turns to Christ. He is made unto us wisdom, and becomes the solution for us of all the problems that confront us because of sin. There are hard questions in most hearts at some time or other; questions as to sins, sin, self, the past, the present, and the future. To all who are burdened and labouring beneath the weight of such questions, He says: “Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest.” How blessed to lay our burdens and perplexities at His feet, and take up His burden instead, for “His yoke is easy, and His burden is light.” When we come to Him simply and trustfully, having the eye single, then the whole body shall be full of light, and our path be clear and plain before us.

With her mind relieved of her own difficulties, the queen was free to behold Solomon's wisdom and glory manifested in every detail of his surroundings, until there was “no more spirit left in her.”

She was entranced with his greatness and had to exclaim, "the half was not told me." Under the influence of his magnificence she made her requests, and we may be sure that the burden of her petitions was that she might shew to her people how great he was in whose presence she had been.

In this we see the true condition of heart for prevailing prayer. The heart first set free from all difficulties and the burdens of self-occupation, to be Christ-centred and filled with the glory of His greatness. To have Him eclipse self and every other object is the acme of Christian blessing; this will be the glory of our heaven.

"For ever our still wondering eye
Shall o'er His beauties rove;
To endless ages we'll adore
The riches of His love!"

But the more this is true of us, *now*, the more truly shall we pray in His name, and "whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John xiv. 13).

It was charged on some of old that "ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (James iv. 2, 3). We shall not be guilty of this folly if we are near to the Lord, for there we shall learn the exceeding wealth of His giving, and *we shall ask*.

We shall be guided in our asking by the knowledge of Himself, who is wisdom and truth, and *we shall not ask amiss*. We shall have our souls so entranced by what He is that we *shall not desire to consume it upon ourselves*, but will gladly say, All for Him, "in all things He must have the pre-eminence."

"She turned and went to her own Country."

She went to make much of Solomon in the land from whence she came, and in like manner it is the Christian's privilege to witness for Christ in this world, and it is in connection with this witnessing that prayer is so indispensable.

It will be well to emphasize the fact that the world is not the Christian's own country. We have exchanged self for Christ, and the world for heaven. Our citizenship is there, and from thence we look for the Saviour; and it is only as the heart glows with a holy and heavenly patriotism that we shall be truly able to witness in the world, which, though not "our own country," is the place for our testimony to go forth—testimony to an earth-rejected but heaven-exalted Christ.

As we pray that His name may thus be glorified, our prayers will be answered and our joy full (John xvi. 24).

"No Object but Christ."

What was the mark of the first action of the Spirit of God in your soul? Was it not that the Lord Jesus Christ got a place which He had not before? And if you are full of the Holy Spirit, you will have no object but Christ; no thought but Christ; no end but Christ; no will but Christ.

A devoted Christian must be a fool in the eyes of the world and of carnal believers. He is impelled by unknown motives; he suffers loss with no visible compensation in any form; he goes calmly and steadily in the opposite direction to everybody else; he despises

the advantages which all others are eager to pursue; he spends his time, his talents, and his means in the service and for the glory of One who is only a myth to men of the world. In a word he lives "UNTO THE LORD," and he is glad to be a "fool for Christ's sake."

"Caught up . . . to meet the Lord."

No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning to sing its sweet song with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air.

O my brother, set it before your mind's eye as a living reality, and then let hope patiently wait for the fulfilment.

The Stone of Israel.

(JOHN R. STEPHENS).

Genesis xlix. 24.

THE Holy Spirit in the Book of Genesis gives us God's first communication to men; and it is remarkable that in the morning of this world's history there should be such a presentation as we find therein of the ways of God in relation to Christ. The instruments He used for the enlightenment of His creature varied, and there were those who embraced His testimony (Gen. iv. 4 and ch. v.), also some who had neither desire nor appetite for anything He might have to say to them; consequently, they became independent of their Creator, choosing a path of their own which could only have one termination (Gen. iv. 5-24, vi. 1-7).

But from the beginning, with unwearied precision, the Spirit of God has delighted to unfold the glories of the Son of God. The prophetic word abounds with clear and unmistakable reference to Him, and if His glory and greatness dawns upon our souls we shall be steadied and tranquilised in the midst of the mightiest upheaval that could overtake us while we wait His glorious appearing.

God's rest did not long remain unbroken, nor His creation unsullied. For a brief space only man answered to the intentions of his Maker: then sin came in, blighting and spoiling that fair world of which Paradise was the centre. Man was turned out of his inheritance because of his disobedience, and outside Eden the world-system sprang into existence. Cain was the founder of it, and his posterity endeavoured to garnish it and establish it in perpetuity: the flood swept it away. At the building of Babel we see the revival of the world-system, but, alas for men! they began to build without a foundation, and in defiance of God; Jehovah looked upon their work and confounded it, and instead of accomplishing their cherished desire they did

but manifest their folly and perversity. But men have persisted in their course of independence of God, they are still developing their system—a world without the true God—but the end of their works is at hand, for all the glory of man shall perish, and the glory of the Lord shall fill the whole earth.

The Stone Foretold.

Christ is the true foundation, the living Stone; He will also be the top-stone of the moral universe which is destined to supplant the great world-system, the first principles of which were seen in Cain and Babel. Genesis xlix. is a remarkable prophecy in this connection. Although the eyes of Israel were dim for age so that he could not see, his spiritual vision was wonderfully keen when he gathered his sons about him to tell them what should befall them in the last days, for in the blessing of Joseph he clearly outlined the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow, and parenthetically in this blessing there is the remarkable allusion to Christ—"From thence is the Shepherd, THE STONE OF ISRAEL."

The special character in which He is thus viewed can be traced through the whole of Scripture, which is full of Christ. If we find anything therein of greater importance to us than Himself we are beside the mark—"Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke xxiv. 27).

The Stone of Israel is introduced in the blessing of Joseph. This typical man was rejected, hated, and cast out by his brethren. His pathway was a downward one until he was cast in a dungeon in Egypt like a common felon; but from that condition of distress and degradation he was suddenly raised to a position of eminence and glory next

to the king upon the throne. Let us consider Him whose sufferings and glory are but faintly prefigured in Egypt's great deliverer.

Long centuries intervene ere Jacob's prophecy is seen to be Jehovah's purpose, but Isaiah comes forward to confirm the word of Jacob—"Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation" (Isaiah xxviii. 16).

Jacob gave no detail, but Isaiah tells us that the Stone of Israel was tried, precious, and sure, the foundation upon which all God's purposes would rest.

The Stone Rejected.

When the fulness of time came God sent forth His Son, He appeared in the midst of Israel, for the leaders of that nation were the builders to whom He was first presented. He was the great test for them, set in their midst according to the word of the aged Simeon when Jesus was brought as a Babe into the house of God: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel" (Luke ii. 34).

The attentive reader of Scripture cannot fail to see how the Lord Jesus took up the Old Testament prophecies in their true and proper order, applying them to Himself during His sojourn on earth. He could use the language of prophet or psalmist in its true connection, bringing conviction to the hearts of His hearers, which could not be produced in any other way. Yet His life of true devotion to the mission on which He came, did not evoke a favourable response on the part of men, it only brought out their hatred. He was rejected at every turn, and brought at last to Pilate's judgment bar as a malefactor, amid the universal cry "Away with this Man, . . . crucify Him, crucify Him" (Luke xxiii. 18-21).

The Stone of Israel was utterly rejected by the builders. In their final act they stumbled, and fell over the Stone, and were broken to pieces. Israel's present condition is conclusive evidence of the terrible fall they sus-

tained in thrusting from them their only hope. In this way Simeon's word was amply verified, "This Child is set for the fall . . . of many in Israel." The latter part of his prophecy will be fulfilled at Christ's coming again, when they shall be enabled to exclaim—after terrible soul exercise and self-judgment—"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation (Isaiah xxv. 9).

The Stone Exalted.

We pass now from the short-lived triumph of the enemy, to the triumphs of Christ. It was not possible that He could be holden of death, for He was the Prince of Life. The cross was the crowning act of man's wickedness. God's triumph is demonstrated in resurrection. The morrow after the sabbath witnessed the exertion of this mighty power in raising Christ from the dead. Let us look, and wonder, and adore. In stately dignity the Conqueror arose from the dead, and the empty grave, vacated in perfect order, gave evidence of the complete overthrow of Satan's power.

The Stone that the builders rejected, and set at nought, has become the Head of the corner (Acts iv. 11). He is the One upon whom every purpose of God hangs, and apart from Him there is no salvation for men; therefore the present period of grace is being used of God in calling the attention of men to His beloved Son in glory. The Holy Ghost has come to earth to gather out of the world a company which shall be associated with Him for ever.

This company is spoken of in Scripture as a spiritual house, those who form it are *living stones*, having come to Christ as the *LIVING STONE* (I. Peter ii. 4, 5).

Though men pay little heed to this work it goes on steadily and without interruption. Just as all the stones for Solomon's temple were prepared beforehand, and not so much as the sound of a hammer was heard in the rearing of

it, so the Spirit of God is silently working, and the building is being prepared through which will shine in the day of glory, the light and perfection of God.

The Stone Victorious.

The great world system commenced in Cain, and revived at Babel, has been perpetuated in Babylon and the kingdoms that followed. This is shewn in the great image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream (Daniel ii.), and which sets forth the history of the world from the time that the government of the earth was handed over to the Gentiles. The head of gold was the kingdom of Babylon; the breast and arms of silver set forth the kingdom of Media and Persia; the belly and thighs of brass the Grecian kingdom; the legs of iron the mighty Roman Empire; whilst the feet of iron and clay are that Roman Empire broken up into many kingdoms, some strong, and some weak, whose peoples dominate the earth. Under the protection of these kingdoms the world system has flourished, until the earth is filled with the great works of men, but since it has no moral foundations and has been raised without respect to and in independence of God, it must be utterly destroyed to make way for that which cannot be shaken, and which is pleasurable to Him.

Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream a stone cut out of the mountain without hands, which smote the image, breaking it to pieces, and carrying it away like the chaff of the summer threshing floor. Afterwards the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. In this symbolic language we see Christ coming out of heaven to put forth the power vested in Him as the Son of man. He will claim the earth for Jehovah, and He must increase (John iii. 30), until His glory pervades the wide creation. "The God of heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel ii. 44).

The Second Man, the Lord out of heaven, has covered the whole extent of territory between the two extremes in the universe of God: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (Ephesians iv. 9, 10). In this way He has established His right to fill everything for God. What a day of rejoicing and gladness it will be when the glory and power of Christ is supreme, and when the earth is in complete subjection to Him:—when "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isaiah xl. 5), and "the pleasure of Jehovah shall prosper in His hand" (liii. 10).

"Like unto a Stone most precious."

If there is the glory of the terrestrial, there is also the glory of the celestial, but whether in heaven or on earth, all glory radiates from the Son of the Father's love. In all things He must have the pre-eminence. Heaven and earth have never been in accord since sin came into this world, but they will be united again; the moral distance will in that coming day exist no longer. One word therefore remains to be added—the Church is destined for glory. The structure now being raised, the vessel being formed, is for the perfect shining out of Christ in the ages to come. Her light will not be her own. It will simply be the perfection of that which is stated of individuals in II. Cor. iv. 6: "Because it is the God who spoke that out of darkness light should shine, who has shone in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (New Trans.).

Here we have a final view of "the Stone," and there is no diminution in the glory of it: "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a

stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal (Rev. xxi. 10, 11).

In eternity the Church will transmit those glorious rays, but then, as now, she will ever be dependent on Him, and yet made competent by Him in every sense for reflecting the light of this Stone most precious.

But who that glorious blaze
Of living light shall tell,
Where all His brightness God displays,
And the Lamb's glories dwell?

It will be the work of the blessed God Himself to write the image of Christ on each of the redeemed.

Therefore we read "And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones"(verse 19). No one stone could describe Him, nor can one saint ever express Him fully, but when this happy consummation is reached, each shall bear His blest image.

May each saint of God, redeemed for such a destiny, be enrapt with this glorious Person while we wait His speedy return, and meditate on the depth, meaning, and import of these words—"From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

"Not of the World."

(THOMAS OLIVER).

"THEY are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"
(John xvii. 14).

Our life does not belong to it.

Our blessings do not spring from it.

Our joys do not depend upon it.

Our home and our treasure are not in it.

Our life does not belong to it. We are born from above and our life belongs to heaven. Death reigns in this world, but life in that. Our life is a life out of death—the death of Christ, He is our life. He lives unto God and we are alive unto God in Him—the Victim once, the mighty Victor now. He remains for ever, and we are associated with Him for eternal ages.

Our blessings do not spring from it. While for earth temporal mercies are given to us our true blessings are spiritual and in the heavenly places in Christ. They are based upon redemption and are the fruit of the counsels of God the Father, they express the riches of the glory of His grace and are according to the good pleasure of His will. They are boundless and embrace intimacy of affection with the Father and the Son, membership of the body

of Christ, and conformity to the image of God's Son in heavenly glory for ever. He has also given unto us His Spirit, and what an inconceivable blessing is this, by whom we know the things that are freely given to us of God, and can know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, and be filled into that fathomless ocean of blessedness—all the fulness of God.

Our joys do not depend upon it. The Christian's joy is joy unspeakable and full of glory. We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the reconciliation. In His presence is fulness of joy, there are pleasures for evermore; and in that presence we may already dwell in spirit.

Our home and our treasure are not in it. Earth is not our rest—the Father's house is our true, our much desired home; there love will rest eternally, and Jesus our Lord and the treasure of our hearts will be the adored and worthy Centre of all that raptured throng.

"There with unwearied gaze
Our eyes on Him we'll rest,
And satisfy with endless praise
Our hearts supremely blest."

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ. (H. NUNNERLEY.)

Adam's Deep Sleep.

SOLOMON tells us "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" Prov. xxv. 2. The Bible differs from every other historical book in that whilst its records are absolutely true in every detail, and are statements of events which actually occurred, yet underneath the letter of the word there lies a hidden spiritual meaning which some other part of Scripture makes clear.

It is our most profound belief therefore that Adam's deep sleep, the flood, Sodom's judgment, and every recorded incident are historical facts, and not mere allegories.

When therefore we speak of Adam's sleep as a figure of Christ in death, the creation of Eve as an intimation of counsels and purposes as to the Church, of Adam's clothing as setting forth God's provision for His fallen creature, of Abel's sacrifice as a type of Christ's death, of the flood as prefiguring the end of all flesh, of Isaac's sacrifice expressing God's love in not sparing His Son, and Isaac's obedience as typifying Christ who was obedient unto death, we do not—like the higher critics and modern sceptics—mean that these are *only* allegories. They are in the first place historical facts of such immense importance to us that Almighty God has seen fit by His Holy Spirit to record them for our learning (Rom. xv. 4; I. Cor. x. 11; II. Tim. iii. 16).

We will now consider Adam's deep sleep as prefiguring an aspect of the death of Christ which has in it a most marvellous conception, a most profound mystery; in which are enfolded purposes and counsels before all worlds.

"The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.

And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen. ii. 21-23).

Four thousand years rolled away ere the hidden mystery of that deep sleep, its typical import, its allegorical teaching, came to light.

Adam had been invested with dominion over all that lived and moved on earth, in air, or sea; all were at his disposal, and owned his sway; but all this still left him without an object for his heart: he had a heart which power, might, and dominion could not satisfy. God, who knew perfectly what was needed to make Adam happy, wrought to this end. He might have created a helpmeet out of the dust of the earth and presented her to him; but He did not, for He had a more glorious thought in view, and all God's goodness to him was but to figure the last Adam yet to come.

In the formation of a helpmeet for the first—as for the last—He wrought so that the bride should be part and parcel of the bridegroom, "bone of his bones, and flesh of his flesh."

This is made clear in Eph. v. 29, 30, 32.

"No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

How then did the Church become "of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones?"

To possess this Church which He calls His body and His bride, it was an

absolute necessity Christ should die, and so we read "Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it (verse 25). He slept the deep sleep of death, but it was a "sleep" that told out the deepest affections of His bosom—He loved the Church—He gave HIMSELF for it. He had given up much, left the peaceful home of the Father, vacated His throne, parted with His riches, sold all to possess this one pearl of great price, and now, in addition to all this, of His own voluntary will, in deep, matchless affection for the Church He loved so well, He gave Himself! When a man has given "himself" there is no more to give, devotedness cannot go beyond this.

Thus Christ loved the Church; for her, He—the Second Man, the last Adam—slept, and when He awoke therefrom, lo! another Eve! "quickened together with Him," living of His life, formed and fashioned by the Lord God; in due time to be presented to Himself a glorious Church, and share His glory and universal dominion.

There is now an actually existing company of people, fruit of His death, baptized by one Spirit into *one body*, "bone of His bones, and flesh of His flesh"—a second Eve.

Every child of God, every true believer forms part of this mystic body. Every saint, no matter under what outward designation he is known, or in what "church" he may be found, is a member thereof, having a living and

vital connection with the Head, and every other member. And here, be it noted, what is old has no place, it is not the old life and nature reformed and improved: all is new, for all is derived from Christ as Eve was derived from Adam, the fruit of His "deep sleep" (*cf* also John xii. 24).

This body is the Bride of the Lamb. Soon she will be presented to Himself, as Eve to Adam, then together, throughout an endless and blissful eternity, they will enjoy mutual delight in each other. She will share His throne, reign and rule with Him during the display of His universal supremacy in the days of the kingdom. The world will then know His thoughts of her, of this second Eve, "made in secret, curiously wrought in the lowest part of the earth" (Ps. cxxxix. 15).

Who would have conceived that such a "mystery" was enfolded in the formation of the first woman? a mystery now made known, the revelation of a counsel and purpose which in consummation shall be to the eternal praise and glory of God (Eph. iii. 21).

In *all* the Scriptures there are things *concerning Himself!* How fitting then that in this first aspect—in the Old Testament—of the death of Christ, we discover that there are things in God's mind which never entered the mind of man, things truly "concerning Himself," and which, in order to their accomplishment, needed that Christ should suffer on the cross, and sleep in the grave.

"Alive for Evermore."

(T. C. MACCORMACK).

Rev. i. 18.

"Alive for evermore!"

Hark to the Victor's cry!
The Lamb once slain, now lives again,
Yea lives—no more to die.

"Alive for evermore!"

The "path of life" He trod
Through death's domain, and lives again!
He liveth "unto God."

"Alive for evermore!"

The King of Terrors spoiled.
The strong yields sweet, the eater meat;
Satan himself is foiled.

"Alive for evermore!"

Ye saints take up the cry:
For you He lives, and life He gives,
So ye shall never die.

"Alive for evermore!"

Nor fear we Satan's power:
Let all assail, none can prevail;
His *risen* life is ours.

"Alive for evermore!"

God's grace we would record;
That victory is ours, we see,
"THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD."

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 6—The Man of God's Counsels (Part 1).

IT is impossible to connect the idea of *chance* with any of the ways of God. Not even a sane man will commence a work without having in his mind the image of that upon which the labour of his hands is to be employed. A man may not be able to perfect his idea; he may find, as his work proceeds, that it will not answer the purpose for which he intended it, and therefore he may have with reluctance to abandon it; he may even learn something in the midst of his toil which may cause him to make considerable alterations, so that the thing when finished is very different from his original conception. This comes from being unable to grasp at the outset every detail connected with the subject in hand, and everything that will be necessary to do, in order to arrive at perfection.

But this can never be the case as regards the activities of God. It is impossible to think of Him as limited in wisdom, skill, or understanding. He must be infinite in every one of His attributes. The man who thinks otherwise, if any such man exist, can have no true thought of the Creator in his soul. Man is only a finite being, and, as I have suggested, while he proceeds with his work, new ideas strike his mind, for though perfection be his ideal, he can never arrive at it. He does not know the power and value of the elements with which he has to work, neither does he perfectly know their relation to one another, nor always the result of certain combinations; hence he is ever astonishing himself with his new discoveries, and bringing out new inventions.

Not so God. The Creator can learn nothing from His creation. The universe is the conception of His infinite mind, and it is impossible that He could receive any instruction from it. "The Lord by wisdom hath founded the

earth; by understanding hath He established the heavens. By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew" (Prov. iii. 19-20). "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Rom. xi. 34-36). He has not, as some suppose, been from the outset doing the best He can, contending with the inroads of evil, meeting the adverse power to the best of His ability, and ever, through the growth of intelligence, improving upon the past. "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself" (Ps. l. 21), is the charge He makes against the wicked, and it is a charge of which all are guilty who have not learned Him in Jesus.

It is impossible for me to imagine the Creator forming a universe like the one of which I form a part, without having distinctly before Him its whole history, and the ultimate result of all His activities in connection with it. His plans must all have been formed before He began His work; and when we come to Scripture this is just what we find. The Book of those counsels is alluded to more than once (Ex. xxxii. 32; Ps. xl. 7; Ps. cxxxix. 16). We have counsel, promise, choice, and purpose referred to again and again; and the central object in all those counsels is the Man who was predestined to give effect to them. As Adam was the man set upon the footing of responsibility, and who, failing to fulfil that responsibility, fell under the power of evil; so Christ is the Man of divine counsel, who upholds everything by the power of God. It was ever the thought of God to set up all things in His own power.

Nothing can stand but that which is upheld by the might of God.

If this be kept in mind, it is easy to see that the Man of God's counsels must be a divine person. No creature is capable of maintaining himself in blessing on the principle of obedience, and none but a divine person could carry out the thoughts of the Godhead. Christ is not a development of the race of Adam. He is not the best man of that race that ever lived, or the most perfect that ever walked the earth. He is not of the old order at all. He is the "last Adam," and the last Adam is not a mere improvement upon the first. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; "the second Man is out of heaven." The first Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam is a life-giving Spirit (I. Cor. xv.). The first had his origin from earth; the second had His origin from heaven. The first man was made to bask in the goodness of God; the second had His place in the bosom of the Father. There are mysteries in connection with the Son which no creature can fathom: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father;" but that, on the divine side, He was equal with the Father is fully revealed in Scripture; and that, on our side, He was Man is just as strongly insisted. He is spoken of as "The Man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Zech. xiii. 7).

A recent writer, who for a little while made a great stir in the religious world, tells us that the truth about the person of Jesus is to be the great question for religion in the near future. The truth is, it has been the great question since the hour in which He took His place in public testimony for God. The Baptist bore testimony to Him as the Son of God, the thong of whose sandals he was unworthy to loose (John i.). The Father also bore witness to Him, opening heaven upon Him, and saluting Him as His beloved Son, in whom He had found His delight (Luke iii. 22). The Old Testament bears witness to the greatness of this wondrous Personage. Isaiah speaks of Him as the One whose rebuke dries up the sea, and makes

the rivers a wilderness; who clothes the heavens with blackness, and makes sack-cloth their covering; and yet One to whom Jehovah had given the tongue of a disciple, whose ear He had opened to hear as the instructed, who gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and who hid not His face from shame and spitting (Isa. l.). He is the object of the worship of angels (Ps. xcvi. 7, Heb. i. 6), saluted as God upon the throne (Ps. xlv.), addressed as the everlasting Creator of the heavens and the earth (Ps. cii.), and yet called up from the depths of death to sit upon the right hand of God, until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet (Ps. cx.).

Now it is true that "No man knoweth the Son but the Father" (Matt. xi.), yet there is a way in which He is to be known by His people. It is life eternal to know the Father, and Jesus Christ His sent One (John xvii. 3), and believers are all to come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God (Eph. iv. 13). There are mysteries about this Person that no creature mind can grasp, and it is exceedingly dangerous to allow the human reason a loose rein in the contemplation of such a sacred and profound subject. When we think of the "*fulness of the Godhead*" inhabiting a human body, a divine Person for thirty three years confining Himself to the limits of a man, yet never less than the omnipotent Creator, we become convinced that in such a contemplation the imagination of man can have no place, and that to move a single step one way or another without divine support would be to court disaster, land us in the depths of error, and expose us to the attack of the enemy of our souls. We are only safe when we keep close to the revelation we have of Him in the Scriptures of truth. That He was, and remains, a Man, these Scriptures affirm; that He is the Creator is also affirmed, and that He was always fully conscious of who He was is also maintained.

The truth about His person may be the question in the near future, but as I

have already said, it is as old as His advent into the world. Jesus put the question to the Scribes: "What think ye of Christ? whose Son is He?" and discovered them to be without any true light on the point. They had no higher idea concerning Him than that He was the Son of David; but the fact that David had in Spirit called Him Lord was more than they could understand. This was the question of the day for the Jews, and it was because He bore witness to this truth that they condemned Him to the death of the cross (John xix. 7). It is also the question of to-day, and it will be the question until the day of His manifestation in glory. Believers can say: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This (Person) is the TRUE GOD, and ETERNAL LIFE" (I. John v. 20).

During the time in which the first man was under probation, and while, by every trial to which he was subjected, it was being clearly demonstrated that he was utterly untrustworthy and unprofitable, the positions of trust in which he was placed,—which tested his ability to hold the position for God—shadowed forth the offices which would be taken up by the second Man, and fulfilled to the glory and praise of God. Hence for two reasons the trial was never repeated. When God committed to man a position of trust and he failed to hold it faithfully, he had no second opportunity. In the first place, the trial was perfect, and the circumstances under which the trial took place were always most favourable to the probationer. To have given a second occasion would have been to admit that something had been overlooked in the first, which should have been kept in mind, and that because of this, the evidence was not quite conclusive. In the second place, in all those prominent men in the past dispensation, to whom positions of trust were committed, Christ was being shadowed forth; and this being so, no more was required than that the picture

should be drawn, and the position indicated; when this was done its purpose was served, and it disappeared.

This explains things which often seem inexplicable to the superficial reader of Scripture. Men are sometimes installed in a position of dignity and trust with as much ceremony as though they were to abide in it for ever, and in connection with this position an order of things is established with as much care, exactitude, grandeur, and glory as though it were never to be shaken, and the next thing we are called to witness is the complete collapse and ruin of everything, and the announcement of something fresh seals its complete and final rejection. It was but a picture drawn by the Spirit of God to illustrate a position which the Man of God's counsels would one day take up and maintain to the honour of God. Hence Christ is the One set forth in such men as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Joshua, David, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, and many others, for in every one of these men was set forth some position, office, or headship, which would be filled by the One whom God had in reserve, and who was to come to light when the worthlessness of the first man would be perfectly demonstrated. In the dispensation of the fulness of times (Eph. i.) all these men will be seen to have been figures, as Adam was, of Him that was to come (Rom. v. 14). He will hold for God everything in which these men failed.

Fallen Adam was head of the old fallen race; Christ is head of the new righteous race. Adam brought in sin and death; Christ brought in righteousness and life—Adam through his disobedience; Christ through His obedience. Adam's act of disobedience had its bearing toward all men in the way of condemnation; so the obedience of Christ, proved in His death, has its bearing toward all in the sense of justification. Sin and death came in by Adam, and have their bearing toward all men; and righteousness and life came in by Christ and have reference to all. If all are lost in Adam, God

has raised up a righteous Head for men, so that all may be saved in Him. He gave Himself a ransom for all, for God would have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (I. Tim. ii.). Therefore the Gospel is preached world-wide that men may turn to God through Christ and find salvation. Christ is to be everything to every man—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (I. Cor. i. 30).

But then it should be understood by all, that if Christ was to take up the position of life-giving Head toward all men, the question of righteousness cannot be ignored. There was the question of sin between man and God, and who could touch it? Christ will not ignore all the rights which God has over His creature. Even between men satisfaction must be offered to the offended party before right relations can be established. It may be the offended party is magnanimous enough to forgive everything, but relations thus established are never of the happiest or most lasting nature. There must be a basis of righteousness if confidence and quietude of soul are to exist undisturbed for ever. If this be so with regard to the relations of men with one another, how much more is it true with respect to our relations with God, seeing that the slightest friction between us and Him would make every thought of God a terror to us, and our very existence one of utter misery.

In the Book of divine counsel, to which I have already referred, we get brought to light, not only the One who was to accomplish those counsels, but also the fact that a *body* was to be prepared for Him. The sacrifices and offerings belonging to the law were valueless to take away sins, therefore if the will of God is to be done a sacrifice of infinite value was necessary. This was furnished by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ (Heb. x. 10). In the Psalm (xl.) which speaks of this Book, and of the Accomplisher of the will of God, we have this wondrous Person crying out of the horrible pit and the miry clay, and heard in resurrection, when His feet are placed upon a rock, and a new song put into His mouth. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews gives us to understand that one reason for His taking a body was, that through death He might destroy the Devil, who had the might of death, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage (Heb. ii. 14, 15). Another reason given was, that we might be set apart to God in the value of that offering (chap. x. 10), our consciences perfected and our hearts won, so that we might be at home in the presence of God. His death is the basis of all blessing, and is the foundation upon which will be built up the whole fabric of the new heavens and the new earth, a universe secure from the invasion of evil.

(To be continued).

God does not fill us as we might fill a vessel with a supply independent of, and separate from the fountain; He fills us as a branch is filled from the vine by union with it, and daily, hourly drawing upon it for every whit of its supply.

He who owns his nature as sinful can only look to Him who is sinless; he who is weakness must look only to Him who is strength; he who is empty must look to Him who is all fulness; he who is dead must look to Him who is life.

Weakness is God's best workshop when we allow Him to enter in.

Christ is the golden casket that holds all spiritual blessings.

The great thing is to remember that we are nothing, *God* is all, and to consent to it. There is no trouble or anxiety then, for there is only God for it. If His will is ours, we do not want things to be otherwise. He is active in His love, and in this we find rest.

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter V. 1-11.

1. But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

2. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

3. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

4. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.

5. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

6. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

7. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.

8. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.

9. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

10. Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

11. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.

HAVING already spoken of the coming of the Lord in connection with the saints, the Apostle now speaks of it in that aspect which has to do with the world. This is known as "the day of the Lord." The expression occurs for the first time in Isa. ii. 12, and from thence onwards through the prophets it is frequently found. The idea involved in it may be gathered from I. Cor. iv. 3, (N.T.), where we read, "For me it is the very smallest matter, that I be examined of you or of man's day. Nor do I even examine myself . . . but He that examines me is the Lord . . . So that do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord shall come . . ." Man has his day to-day, as the Lord says: "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke xxii. 53). But *His* day is coming, when they shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the power of God (ver. 69; Matt. xxvi. 64).

The events and the character of "the day of the Lord" are the burden of many Scriptures. A few passages from among them will set before us the principal features of it.

"For the day of the Lord of Hosts shall be upon everyone that is proud and lofty, and upon everyone that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low" (Isa. ii. 12).

"And the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low; and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day" (ver. 17).

"In that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments . . . instead of sweet smell there shall be stink . . . burning instead of beauty. Thy men shall fall by the sword; and thy mighty in the war" (Isa. iii. 18-25).

"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel" (Isa. iv. 2).

"Alas, for the day! for the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come" (Joel i. 15).

"They shall enter in at the windows like a thief" (Joel ii. 9).

"For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?" (Joel ii. 11).

"Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light . . . even very dark and no brightness in it" (Amos v. 18-20).

These passages suffice to show clearly what the character of "the day of the Lord" is in judgment on the ungodly: while also it brings the joy of salvation to the godly remnant of Israel.

Verses 1, 2, 3.

"But concerning the times and the seasons, brethren," the Apostle writes, "ye have no need that ye should be written to, for ye know perfectly well yourselves, that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief by night" (N.T.). This is the one and only point in connection with it on which he insists; the certainty and sudden stealth of its coming. As to

"the times and seasons" he says nothing.

Regarding the words themselves, "time" is the more general and indefinite period: "season" is a shorter time of the same, cut off. Plato calls time, "the movable image of eternity." Season—*kairos*, from *keiro*, to cut—is a portion of time cut off; as we speak of "the four seasons of the year;" "a convenient season;" hence also the expression, "the nick of time."

In Acts i. 7 (N.T.), when the disciples enquired of the Lord, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not yours to know times or seasons, which the Father hath placed in His own authority."

This it was not given them to know. But the great prophetic fact of "the day of the Lord" was already revealed; and so much at least they knew, as their question shows. But further information as to the "times and seasons" was reserved from them.

This fact is still more emphasized in Mark xiii. 32, where we read, "of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven; neither the Son, but the Father." In Mark's Gospel the Lord is before us in His mediatorial servant character; and the essence of this is to hold all in subjection to the Father. Accordingly He does not here assume the knowledge of these things, occupied as He is with the humbler role of obedient service. Cf. also Rev. i. 1, where it is said of Him "The Revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave to Him." That He had all divine knowledge is equally true, in the sphere in which it belonged to Him by divine right, but everything in its proper place. To our feeble minds and narrow intelligence there are many things "hard to be understood;" but we must not seek to evade the consequences of His humanity because we believe in the reality of His Deity. What we understand, we believe because we understand it—what is written, we believe because it is the word of God.

How unbecoming, then, is the pre-

sumption that would peer into those things, which for wise purposes, are kept secret: and how disturbing to the health of the soul and enervating for true service, the restless inquisitiveness that would mis-spend its energies in prying into hidden mysteries and trying to forecast the time, instead of "redeeming" it (Eph. v. 16) in seizing the opportunity to serve the Lord. There is great fascination for some minds in this kind of imaginative occupation; but Christianity is not a fascination, but a life of humble obedience and submission to the will of God. Besides, what judges could we be of "the times and seasons"? We are too shortlived and ignorant to know when, after the lapse of unknown ages from the first creation of the heavens and the earth (Gen. i. 1), the due time came for the Spirit of God to move in the chaos that succeeded and renew the face of the world (Gen. i. 2).

Neither was it for the wisest of men to fix the date, or judge from passing events, when "the fulness of the time" should come, when God would send forth His Son, incarnate, to work the great redeeming work of grace (Gal. iv. 4; Rom. v. 6).

Neither can we to-day foretell from the trend of circumstances, according to our judgment, nor forecast from Scripture that does not reveal it, when the time is fixed for the Lord to gather His saints to Himself; nor when He is to return in the power and glory of the kingdom in which He will judge the world in righteousness. "The times and seasons" are not for us to know, and we cannot divine them. The Thessalonian saints knew that "the day of the Lord so comes as a thief by night" with the certainty of sudden destruction. That was the horizon of their knowledge with regard to it. This much they knew "perfectly": but they knew no more, nor does the Apostle furnish them with further knowledge as to it. Certain events were to take place, spoken of in the second epistle to the Thessalonians, prior to the revelation of the man of sin "in his own time" (II. Thess. ii. 6), but

they are referred to, not to satisfy curiosity, but to encourage the saints to "stand firm, and hold fast the instructions" which they had been already taught (II. Thes. ii. 15, N.T.).

Unlike the "secret rapture" which needed a special revelation (I. Thes. iv. 13-17), it was already a matter of open knowledge that "the day of the Lord" is coming swiftly, stealthily, and certainly as a thief by night, on the world of the ungodly. The expression itself we have in Joel ii. 9, and it is repeated in Matt. xxiv. 43, and so when they say 'peace and safety,' as they said of old in Ezek. xiii. 10, then swift destruction shall surprise them, as the labour pang suddenly seizes a woman with child, and they shall by no means escape from it (ver. 3).

That is what the Apostle insists on. It is the one and only point that he adduces; and in this he shows the contrast between the saints and the world, as he passes from "we" and "ye" to "they." Our hope—figured by Enoch, who "was not, for God took him" (Gen. v. 24), before the flood of Noah's day—is to be caught up to be with the Lord before the coming judgments are poured out on the world. The saints of this present period will be saved *from* that time of trial. "Because thou hast kept the word of My patience I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial which is about to come upon the whole habitable world to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. iii. 10, N.T.). The remnant of Israel will be saved *through* it. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. xxx. 7).

"Times and seasons" then, as connected with the Lord's second coming, refer to this world and the judgment of the coming age. The proper portion of the Church is outside of all ages, of

I. Cor. ii. 7; Eph. iii. 9-11: outside the course of this world altogether, its judgment and its end.

Verses 4-11.

"But ye brethren are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief: for all ye are sons of light and sons of day; we are not of night nor of darkness. So then do not let us sleep as the rest do [who are not Christians], but let us watch and be sober"; *i.e.*, not merely keep awake, but have all our faculties alive in service and in faith: with the organs of life and energy protected with the breastplate of faith and love, and the head covered with the sustaining hope of salvation, the full fruit of the grace of God, through the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In this way the Apostle reverts again to the trinity of Christian graces, faith, hope, and love, as before in Ch. i. 3, *cf.* also I. Cor. xiii. They were the witness of the effectual power of the Gospel in the saints at Thessalonica; and he here urges them to continue in the same spirit in which they were then moving; for wrath, the wrath of that coming day, is not our portion from God, but the obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether watching or sleeping, we may live together with Him. This is our hope: this is our eternal portion; and this paragraph may well end, as it does, thus: "wherefore encourage one another, and build up each one the other, even as also ye do."

How interesting and instructive this is; but alas! how little carried out. Were it done so in the warmth of freshness and simplicity, what a brightening up of souls there would be all round, as each one encouraged the other in the hope of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of our living "together with Him."

"One of the greatest blessings that can come to God's people is for them to see God's saving grace and power in their midst. It softens the crotchety

ones, sanctifies the worldly ones, and strengthens the weak ones, while it stimulates all to more prayerful and earnest fellowship in the word of the Lord."

"Part with Me."

(M. C. GAHAN).

The Constancy of the Heart of Christ about His Own.

John xiii. 1-10.

1. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

2. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him :

3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God :

4. He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments ; and took a towel, and girded Himself.

5. After that He poureth water into a basin, and

began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.

6. Then cometh He to Simon Peter : and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet ?

7. Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now ; but thou shalt know hereafter.

8. Peter saith unto Him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me.

9. Simon Peter saith unto Him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.

10. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit : and ye are clean, but not all.

IN this and the three following chapters of the Gospel of John, the Lord has historically reached the last stage of that journey that was about to close in the solemn darkness of the cross. In the very antechamber of death He gathers His own, as it were to relieve the tension upon His spirit by pouring out the thoughts of His heart in connection with the day that His resurrection was about to usher in. "In that day ye shall know" etc. (John 14-20). The day of His actual presence with His disciples was to be exchanged for a day of separation from them and provision must needs be made to meet this contingency. The constancy of the heart of Jesus towards His own could admit of nothing less. He was about to provide for the objects of His love by the very fact of His going away and preparing a place for them in the Father's house, and by coming again to take them unto Himself. But that was *future*. What about the interval period, whether long or short?

The answer to that question, solved by incarnate divine love, is presented in chapter 13; it was to be "*part with*" Him in spirit until *place with Him* in the Father's house should fill up the full cup of mutual enjoyment in the heart of Christ and the hearts of His own.

The chapter opens with *the prospect* that lay before the Lord, and *the pressure*

which lay upon His spirit; the former, that He was going to the Father, the latter, the circumstances and solitude of His own, consequent upon His departure. Having loved them He loved unto the end, and for them His love provided that which should be ample compensation for the solitude involved in His absence, even the enjoyment of "part with" Him in spirit, and the means by which this could be maintained in holy reality.

The perfect simplicity of the incident which the Lord selected to set forth the provision necessary to the accomplishment of the desires of His heart is arresting, but more so the perfect grace which made Him bend in lowly service to His disciples.

The towel, the basin, and the water were more familiar to the eastern mind in those days than now, but in the hands of Jesus they symbolized the inauguration of that service that was only to close with the translation of the saints to the Father's house.

Peter was unacquainted with the thoughts of Christ on behalf of His own and swayed like a pendulum from one extreme to another, saying: (1) "Thou shalt never wash my feet," and, (2) "Lord not my feet only but also my hands and my head." The Lord replies in terms that served to tranquillize Peter's impulsive spirit, reminding him that effective bath-washing calls for

nothing more than the washing of the feet. It meant spiritually that while effective cleansing through the operation of the Word, as "born of water," transforms the moral being of the man at new birth, as distinguished from atonement for sin and sins through the blood of Christ, yet by coming into contact in his daily walk with the spirit, principles, language, and motives of a defiled world, the believer contracts defilement which must be removed if part with Christ in the place into which He has now entered is to be enjoyed.

This does not imply that sinless perfection is essential to fellowship with the Son in heaven, but rather furnishes the means by which the Lord Himself in lowliest of grace, applies the word in cleansing, separative, renewing power to the heart that has become sensible of the chilling and lowering effects of worldly atmosphere and influences; and that with a view to lifting it again into touch with Himself in glory, and heavenly things; thus resuming the temporarily interrupted current of that which is involved in "part with Me."

But this service of lowly grace is assumed to be occasional and intermittent. It is clear that the heart of Christ could never find its full divine satisfaction in a ministry that simply partook of the nature of negating and annulling the defiling effects of "this present evil world." There remained the positive ministry of redemption's glorious results; the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man" (I. Cor. 2, 9); "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and "the riches of His glory" (Eph. iii. 8, 16); "the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Col. ii. 3); "the high (heavenly) calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. iii. 14). Into all these great realities the Lord would have His people enter.

But the incident of feet-washing recalls the type of the laver, standing between the altar of burnt sacrifice and the door of the tabernacle, where the

priests were ceremonially required to wash hands and feet, preparatory to entering the tabernacle or temple, in which the full glories of Jehovah shone forth for the satisfaction of those who were entitled to enter there: for "in His temple every whit of it uttereth His glory" (marg. Ps. xxix. 9). The "cloths of service" mentioned in Exod. xxxi. 10, immediately after the laver, in all probability did service in this connection, closing the ceremonial circumstances of washings, preparatory to the priests' entrance into the scene in which everything spoke of and displayed the glory of Jehovah, and bringing them as cleansed from what we may assume to be involuntary defilement,—for sacrifice was provided for transgression—into touch with those things which were "the example and shadow of heavenly things" and the "patterns of things in the heavens" (Heb. viii. 5; ix. 23).

In the type the laver was but preparatory to contact with the glories of Jehovah's house, so here the Lord passes from the incident of feet-washing to the revelation of glories of which those of tabernacle or temple were but shadows. Nor is there any delay, save to wait, patient to the last, upon the movements of Judas, *i.e.*, until he "having received the sop went immediately out,"—*out into the night*. Those feet so recently washed in lowly grace by the Lord and Master, now hurry Judas to the betrayal of his Lord and his own appalling doom. The moral night of darkness into which Judas stepped out of that upper room, one may well conceive, has never been paralleled in the history of a soul.

But what about those within? It could not be night where He was, of whom tabernacle and temple were but shadows, and where glories were revealed which were infinitely greater than the material glories that once dazzled priestly eyes. For, now that Judas is gone out, Jesus introduces immediately to those who were really "His own," the glories connected with His death and resurrection and ascen-

sion. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him" (verses 31, 32). And from that point He passes on to unfold the glories, privileges, and blessings, of which the following chapters are full, without pause or interruption, save for interrogation here and there from the amazed disciples, until the climax of all is reached in the closing verses of John xvii.

Thus was the Lord's heart set free to open up its treasured secrets to those He loved, and who, in spite of all their failures, were true at heart to Him: and here He is "minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man," fitting His people, by the way of the laver, for *part with Him* in all that belongs to "heaven itself" (Heb. ix. 24) where He now appears "in the presence of God for us."

And this feet-washing, this service of lowly grace (which we too are privileged to render one towards another, as enabled of Him—v 14) He will continue to exercise towards us until the moment shall come when such service will no longer be necessary, because the redeemed shall have reached the place

where the street of the city shall be of "pure gold, as it were transparent glass," where "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth," and where the laver shall give place to the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxi. and xxii.).

These were untrodden paths as yet for the beloved disciples, and utterly unintelligible to them (ch. xiv. 5, 8, 22; xvi. 17, 18, 29, marg. "parable"); but the pressure of the glory that lay beyond the cross was apparently upon the spirit of Jesus, at the threshold of which glory the Spirit, "the Comforter which is the Holy Ghost," was to be given, who should bring *all things* to their remembrance "*whatsoever* I have said unto you" (chap. xiv. 26). So for a moment, as though it were through a rift in the storm-cloud that was about to burst upon the devoted head of Jesus, a beam of the glory that belonged to the day of a glorified Christ and the given Spirit shone out with dazzling effect on the vision of the disciples, ere, for an hour, the Sun of all their hopes set in darkness, only to rise in all the glory of accomplished redemption, when the promised Spirit of truth should come, guide them into all truth, and shew them things to come.

Resurrection.

(F. B. HOLE)

God's Victory.—No. 3.

I. Cor. xv. 20-28.

20. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.

21. For since by man *came* death, by man *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

22. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

23. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.

24. Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father;

when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

25. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet,

26. The last enemy *that* shall be destroyed is death.

27. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under *him*, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him.

28. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

WE are apt to forget that a fact may have more than one signification, and that its bearing may be felt in many directions.

The resurrection of Christ is a great and glorious fact which cannot be overthrown. Men have flung against it their wit and strength, but like waves

dashing against a cliff, only to recoil shattered upon themselves. It has stood through the years and will stand. Its bearing on the question of *our* justification and peace with God we have seen. We should be great losers, however, if while rejoicing in that, we overlooked its value and bearing *Godward*.

Romans iv. 23—v. 2, sets before us the former, and I. Corinthians xv. treats of the latter aspect of this great subject.

Some amongst the professed disciples at Corinth had intellectual doubts and difficulties as to the resurrection of the body, and reasoned, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" (ver. 35). They considered it apparently too gross and materialistic a conception; and posed as pioneers of a more spiritual idea of the subject. They were, in reality, fools (ver. 36).

But the apostle Paul, did not content himself with merely answering their foolish questions. He disproved their whole position by establishing, beyond doubt, the great fact of Christ's resurrection (see vers. 3-11), and then from verses 12-28 he shows how this great truth bears upon *everything*: not only upon our safety and happiness, but upon God's purposes and glory.

We have our souls, infinitely precious to us; if we lose them we lose our *all*. Their safety *then*, their happiness *now*, is rightly therefore a matter of absorbing interest to us. Until everything is settled, and the last flicker of doubt has died away, we have neither ears nor mind for anything else. But when once we grasp, by faith, the bearing of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus upon ourselves, and see that we are as clear of judgment as He is, then we do well to remember that God's rights were outraged by sin. He has His own sovereign will and purposes concerning the putting away of sin, and the bringing in of peace, blessing, and glory upon this sin-cursed earth. He has counselled a heavenly region of bliss, and to reveal Himself in such a way that men may be recovered to Himself, and brought in the place of sons to know Him and enjoy Him, and

to give Him His right place of supremacy in love for ever and ever.

All the power of darkness was arrayed against the accomplishment of these things. In the death of Jesus we see divine love grappling with the power of evil. In His resurrection we see its victory declared.

It may help us to perceive the greatness of this victory if we get some idea of the divine stake in the death and resurrection of Christ, by seeing what God's thoughts and purposes were. We need not go outside I. Corinthians xv. for this, though other scriptures unfold these purposes more fully.

The resurrection of the saint was one great thought which God had before Him (vers. 20-23). His character and glory were intimately bound up with it. All through the ages, here and there—often enough in the humblest individuals—the light of faith had shone. Before Christ came, when as yet there was only the starlight of type and promise to cheer the watcher, saints, of whom the world was not worthy, lived, and suffered, and died. Out of the scene of their sorrows, they gazed into the realms of God's purpose.

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. xi. 13).

And what then? They went down, like to the wicked to all appearance, into the silence of the grave.

Further there were the early disciples. They, even while Paul was writing, were the objects of fierce persecution from a hostile world. Gaps appeared in their ranks as one after another was smitten. And yet for every man that fell two stepped into the ranks eager to be baptized for the dead, and themselves become a target for the foe (ver. 29). Why was this? They looked on to a glorious recompense in the coming day.

And they were right, for resurrection was God's thought for them. Yet if ever it was to be, the power of death must be broken and the bars of the

grave, gates and all, must Samson-like be carried away.

The establishment of a kingdom in this world was another purpose of God (vers. 24, 25, 50). It might be thought that this would be a very simple matter, an end which could be easily reached by the simple exercise of Divine power. It was not so. Man was in rebellion, and in league with the power of Satan. There was opposing rule and authority and power, there were enemies to be subdued (vers. 24, 25). True it is that if God makes bare His arm, every enemy is swept before Him like chaff before a tempest, but what about the enmity and the sin which had ruined everything? This must be met. It was met when once at the end of the age Christ appeared "to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). His death and resurrection therefore was the shattering of the very foundations of Satan's empire, and in the risen Christ we have not only the firstfruits of the great resurrection harvest of the saints (ver. 23), but the pledge of the establishment of God's will and authority here upon earth "He will judge [or administer] the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men *in that He hath raised Him from the dead*" (Acts xvii. 31).

Then again at the close of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, it is God's purpose to *receive everything into His own hands and to be all in all* (ver. 28). He will be "in all" for He will pervade the whole of the realms of light, and each and all who dwell therein, whether in heaven or on earth. He will be "all" for He will be the supreme and exclusive object of every soul that He fills. All this too hinges on the resurrection of Christ. Established in the power of *that*, all is permanent; without it all would be passing away.

If we turn to the epistle to the Ephesians, we find the fullest unfolding of the thoughts and purposes of God, especially in connection with believers of this dispensation: unto Him there is to be glory in the Assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age

of ages (Eph. iii. 21). Here too the resurrection of Christ is the great essential (Eph. i. 19-23). But we may not, at present, pursue the theme further than its unfolding in I. Corinthians xv.

We must carefully note, however, the way in which the Lord Jesus is presented to us in connection with all this.

"For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead" (ver. 21).

The victory has been achieved by *Man* in the person of Jesus, just as the ruin came in by man in the person of Adam. Instead of shifting the contest on to an entirely fresh plane, and settling everything by one stroke of Deity pure and simple, God has—if one may so put it—met the foe on the old battle ground originally chosen by Him in the garden of Eden, and there reversed everything. Man comes out of the contest in resurrection, covered with glory, and not the shame of defeat.

But this Man is of an entirely new kind or order. "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul;" the last Adam "a quickening spirit" . . . "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second Man is the Lord from Heaven" (vers. 45, 47).

One thing more. Though the victory is God's victory, He gives it to us who believe, as it is written: "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be yesteadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (verses 57, 58).

Let us only go through this valley of the shadow of death with the light of Christ Risen in our souls, and we shall possess the deep and sweet consciousness that the resurrection world established in Him abides for ever, and that no labour in view of that world is lost, it too abides and will all be manifested in the resurrection day. This will give stability to our souls, and our Christian character, and prove an abiding incentive to spend ourselves in the service of the Lord. The shadow of defeat no longer rests upon us, for Christ is risen and the victory is God's.

“Creation.”

(S. L. JACOB).

No. 7.—Man.

AT the latter part of the sixth day we come to the culminating point of Creation, and here for the first time we find *counsel* :

“And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Genesis i. 26).

Here in the counsel of God man appears in the image and after the likeness of God, and dominion over all is given not to *him* but to *them*, *i.e.*, the kingdom.

The great theme of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation is without doubt the Kingdom. Not that that is its *only* theme; for there is for instance the revelation of the Father in the Son Himself, and this brings in what is entirely beyond the range even of the far reaching truth of the Kingdom. The revelation of the Father in the Son is the most blessed theme of all; but necessarily Scripture says very little about it; it could only be in the Gospels that it is set forth, and practically only in a portion of the Gospel of John. It is *the* theme for special meditation, but there is no language to set it forth.

The Kingdom, on the other hand, sets forth the ways of God in Christ; these ways are very varied, exhibiting infinite variety in unity. Everything wrong, but everything to be won for God, all enemies overcome, every foe brought low, everything that exalts itself cast down, all rule and authority subjugated by Him who must fill everything, and hand over the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all.

If we think of the city, either the heavenly or the earthly, the house, the sanctuary, of Israel, or of the Gentiles, of the angels, or of any other created intelligences, they are all in-

cluded in the heavenly or earthly aspects of the kingdom. If in an earthly kingdom there is great variety, what must be the variety of God's kingdom of which Christ is the Creator and Head, the supreme Ruler and He whose impress and character must be seen in the whole?

Surely all this is set forth in parable in this 26th verse, explained by Psalm viii., and further in I. Cor. xv. 22-28; Eph. i. 9, 10; and Heb. ii. 8, 9.

But it is implied that things are wrong and have to be set right, and this is confirmed in ver. 28, where it is written: “And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion” etc. Now there is no need to subdue what is all right; the loyal subject needs no subjugation, therefore lawlessness is implied; a devastated earth needs replenishing, otherwise where the need? It is not perfection that is implied, but all creation stretching out its hands to the hope God has set before it in Christ.

But the 27th verse says: “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.” It is remarkable that “likeness” is not mentioned in this verse, though we do get likeness in Gen. v. 1, and in James iii. 9.

Here again we must remember that God never begins with that which shall be, with the object of His purpose, but always with something inferior, which serves as a platform for the bringing in of that which shall abide, because it is that, and only that, which He has had before Him from the beginning.

What then does this man in God's image and likeness really signify? Is it Christ? Well here again, the answer is both yes and no. It is, yes, because no

one but Christ can ever *fully and absolutely* be the man in God's image and likeness; and it is so explained in the verses we have alluded to in I. Cor., Eph. and Heb. And yet in a sense it is not Christ personally; because in the first place Christ was not made, but begotten; and because there is a male and a female, and the mention of *them*. Therefore while it is Christ, and must be Christ, it is specially what Scripture speaks of, as "the Christ" (*i.e.* Christ formed in His own) that is in view in this glorious passage; and in truth the Church is this: it is both man and woman (*cf.* I. Cor. xii. 12, where "Christ" should properly be translated "the Christ").

It is man, for Christ died to make in Himself "*one new man*, so making peace" (Eph. ii. 15), and the gifts are given "till we all come in the unity of 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. 13).

The Church is also the woman, for is not this the great mystery concerning Christ and the Church? (Eph. v. 25-32). God is therefore still making what is figured in Gen. i. 27, and how beautiful it must all be! Shall not the saints judge the world? shall they not judge angels? (I. Cor. vi. 2, 3). Shall they not have power over the nations? (Rev. ii. 26, 27). Shall they not sit upon Christ's throne? (Rev. iii. 21). All is the work of Christ, and the glory is all His own, but He associates His own with Himself; and God's object, having set Christ on high, is to make, by His Holy Spirit, a complete answer in His own people to the Christ He has set in glory. The subjective must be a perfect answer to the objective. Christ, the last Adam, must have no unworthy mate in the Eve whom God is preparing as a helpmeet for Him. All, all will be perfect when the antitype of all the beginning is accomplished; but in the meantime the war is dreadful and the strife very dire, and oftentimes it seems as if the evil would prevail. Thank God this is impossible, for Christ has

all in His own hands and He cannot fail. Blessed be His name.

Yet so far we are only at the sixth day, and six does not mean perfection, but imperfection. Why is this? Still there is an evening and a morning, telling of future exercise and something that is beyond. Yet God sees everything which He has made, and behold it is very good. Yes, Christ is there, and that which is of Christ is there: it must be very good, though all is not yet subjugated. Moreover, the picture must necessarily fall far short of the reality it pictures, though indeed the picture is very good, for it speaks of God's ways in Christ, and of Christ Himself.

The Seventh Day.

It is always stated in Scripture that God made everything in six days. For instance, it is written, "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day" (Exod. xx. 11), and so in each mention thereof. But here in chapter ii. 2 it says, "And on the *seventh* day God ended His work which He had made." Why is this? Creation was completed in the six days, but in order to have a true picture of God's ways and purpose, the seventh day is required.

Not until all is subjugated to God can He rest, then the day can be blest, then there is no more an evening and a morning, but the morning knows no evening, God has reached His heart's desire, the day is hallowed, Christ is supreme, His likeness and image all completed, all is subjugated, God is glorified, Christ is exalted, His people shine in His effulgence, the universe resounds with the praises of God. The story is thus told us, God always reveals His purpose before carrying it out. But when creation was being accomplished there was no prophet to speak to about it, therefore the prophetic word had to be written right across the earth, sky and sea, and all portrayed there; but in due time when a prophet was found, God told to him the secret that he might

write it down for our learning. And here we see the meaning of the words of the wise man: "The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us" (Eccles. i. 9, 10). Everything has been thought of by God, all has been embodied in Creation, every idea, every thought has been portrayed there. Man may find out, as he thinks, something new, but lo! it was there before. Man invents nothing, even Satan invents nothing really new. All is there. Who can fight against such a God who knew every device of devil and man, anticipated it, made provision for it, told him all would be overcome and all turned to blessing, and that all would culminate in the rest of God, when God would no longer have to be occupied with overcoming evil, but be able to apply all His blessed activities of love (and nothing is so active as love) in the unspeakable blessing of those whom He has won for Himself.

Who could not believe in such a God: who would not long for the bringing of the Firstbegotten into the world, to accomplish all for God, so that even the Creation may be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the liberty of the glory of the children of God? Blessed be God, all, all is assured. No wonder it is said, when poor puny man opposes, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision." He has set His king on His holy hill of Zion. Faith can say "all is well," the day of rejoicing for all Creation is at hand.

But what a place have His well-beloved saints of this dispensation—the Church, given to Him by the Father in the day of His rejection—theirs is the special nearness, theirs the peculiar association, theirs the supreme bliss of giving the most intense joy to Him who is Lord, Master, and Bridegroom. The hope is certain, the bliss is unspeakable.

Well may the saints rejoice, and the everlasting song break forth in anticipation of the day of triumph, so near at hand. We have the secret of it all, while the world still abides in darkness.

Conclusion.

Thus have we briefly, feebly, imperfectly, sought to set forth a tiny bit of the imperishable record told in the sketch of Creation given us as the purpose of God in this first chapter of God's book. A wonderful preface indeed, as we think all must see, for however poorly the story is interpreted by us, we doubt not sufficient has been told to make clear that we have indeed in these few pregnant words an epitome of all God's work during this period of sin till the day when all is set right for God, and He can rest. The story of the whole Creation and of God's dealings therewith told out, and the history, too, of each individual soul under the blessed hand of God's love and discipline, that He may bring about the desires of His heart, not only for the whole, but for each individual soul. He is so great that the greatness of the whole work never for a moment stays its progress towards its perfect fulfilment; so great, too, that He can pay as much attention to the perfecting of the individual as if there were nothing else in the universe for Him to do. What a God is ours, and He is our God and Father revealed to us in the Son.

And this is not all, though it is as much as we can learn at one time, and it is what we are set to learn now, thereafter there is infinitely more which will be told. We talk of eternity, God the all wise, speaks of the ages of the ages. Eternity suggests monotony, ages upon ages tell of infinite variety. Not in the seven days can all the glories of Christ be set forth, not in the seven days can all God's answer to the cross be given. These will require "the age of the ages" and still the story will never be told, for Christ and the cross are infinite. Yet, blessed be God, nothing accomplished will be lost. All the work of God abides, the blessed place of the Church can never be for-

feited, but all being perfected will be the platform for the things yet to come.

The seven days being completed, the lesson learnt, the contemplated work finished, *that* lesson book can be closed, of these things and of that time it is said: "They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shall Thou fold them up and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and

Thy years shall not fail!" (Heb. i. 11, 12).

A new lesson book will then be provided, for creation does not cease to be, only all is changed for the new conditions. There must be a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth will have passed away, and there will be no more sea.

Here we must close, with hearts filled with deep thankfulness, adoration and praise.

"All's Well."

(J. T. MAWSON).

GLOOMY thoughts filled my mind as the good ship ploughed the grey waters of the Northern Atlantic: thoughts as to the state of things in the professing Church of God, the increase of worldliness, the departure from the truth of many in whom one had placed hopes, the lack of power in service and testimony, the few who seemed able to truly present the truth as they of old: all these things filled my mind, and upon them I brooded as I lay in the night. The ship rolled from side to side in a stormy sea, and the surroundings were suited to my thoughts. Thus the night wore on; then came the changing of the watch; the middle watch gave place to the morning, and as the bell chimed forth the fact, the voice of the quarter-master rang out "All's well."

The ship still rolled and pitched, and the darkness seemed deeper than before, but that call of the morning changed my thoughts; I remembered Paul's shipwreck, and how when things seemed their blackest the Angel of God stood by him saying "Fear not Paul." The ship on which Paul sailed went to pieces, but all hands came safe to land, and it would seem as if this divinely recorded incident has a prophetic bearing: every organization of men will fail as vessels of the truth, and all hopes placed in an arm of flesh will perish, but the work of God will remain, and every soul touched by His gracious Spirit and brought to Christ will come safely to land, to stand

there in all the glory of the fulfilment of God's eternal purposes.

This was a heartening theme, and as I dwelt upon it my spirits rose, for the cheery "all's well" sang through my soul, and though I knew that no change for the better could be looked for in that faithless profession that has joined hands with the world that murdered her Lord, "for evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse" (II. Tim. iii. 13), yet the bright prospect of God's triumph in spite of all, shone as a light in the darkness. Our thoughts and faith must turn from earth to heaven, to the One whose hand has overturned the dominion of death and who lives now in all the power of resurrection life upon the throne of God. The darkness is passing, and by faith we can see the bright Star of the morning already shining, and we know that all is well.

When at last the dawn broke through the cabin window I took the Scripture Text Calendar to read the text for the day. It was this: "I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee" (Is. xli. 13), and "He giveth power to the faint" (xl. 29). It is thus that faith is strengthened by our gracious Lord, and as He holds the hand, and His strength is made perfect in our weakness, we will keep the watch and look out for the morning, "the morning without clouds;" cheering the darkness about us with faith's cry, "All's well."

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 8.—Nahum.

Chapter i.

1. The burden of Nineveh. The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.

2. God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth; the Lord revengeth, and is furious: the Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries, and He reserveth wrath for His enemies.

3. The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked; the Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.

6. Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.

7. The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.

15. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace. O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

NAHUM was the Barnabas of the Old Testament, for his name means "consolation," and the great object of his prophecy was to comfort the sorrowing and downcast hearts of the people of God; but, of course, his ministry differed widely from that of the "son of consolation," of whom we read in the Acts. Barnabas rejoiced when he saw the *grace* of God extended to the Gentiles, and his exhortations were uttered in the full light of that wonderful grace. Nahum, on the contrary, rejoiced when he contemplated the *judgment* of the Gentiles, and his exhortation to the men of Judah was based upon the fact that their enemies were cut off.

But the Spirit of Christ breathed in Nahum as truly as in Barnabas. Whether we think of Christ in grace, suffering and praying for His foes, or Christ in power treading them beneath His feet, it is the same Christ, the One whose love we know, and whose grace and power we have proved.

Whether girded with a towel to serve His disciples in love, or with a sword to hurl destruction upon His enemies; it is the same blessed Person, and in both characters He displays *God*.

One thing that makes the study of the Old Testament so profitable is that therein we learn the ways and character of God. For the full unfolding of all that He is, we have, of course, to turn to the New Testament, and to see Him revealed in the Person of the Son. But

the Old Testament presents God to us in connection with His ways with men, and our loss will be great if we overlook this.

We are prone to forget, when we speak of the love and mercy of God, that He is a Being great and terrible in His intolerance of sin. The God which the mind of the twentieth century has conceived is not the God of the Scriptures, and it is like a breeze from the highlands of eternal truth to read the words of our prophet, describing God's jealousy and awful anger against evil-doing, His righteousness, His power, and His majesty.

True, He is *good*, and His people find Him to be a stronghold indeed in the day of trouble. Moreover, His wrath is not easily aroused, He is "*slow to anger*." But when evil raises its head in persistent hostility to good, and will not be subdued, then indeed God shows that He is not indifferent, but that His indignation and fierce anger are such that nothing can stand before Him. His pity is infinite, but He "*will not at all acquit the wicked*."

The great subject of Nahum's prophecy was the overthrow and destruction of Nineveh, the chief city of Israel's great and dreaded foe, Assyria. This we find in chapters ii. and iii.

Chapter i. is a psalm, giving us the state of soul produced in Nahum himself and in those to whom the testimony of chapters ii. and iii. was brought home in power by the Spirit of God.

Assyria's ascendancy meant Israel's ruin; Assyria's destruction would mean Israel's salvation. Can we wonder that those old-time saints and seers longed for the overthrow of the oppressor's power, and made it the burden of their prayers and songs? Can we wonder at Nahum's triumph and joy in contemplating the disaster that was to overtake Nineveh, and the blessing that would come to Judah as a result?

A hundred and fifty years before, God had sent warning to the guilty city by His servant Jonah. The message had been received, and Nineveh had turned in repentance to God. But the generation to whom Jonah preached had passed away, and Nineveh had returned to her wiliness and wickedness as a sow goes back to her wallowing in the mire. The fact that God had waited for a century and a half before intervening in judgment proved that He was long-suffering in grace. But the time for judgment was at hand, and those whom Nineveh had oppressed and afflicted might lift up their heads and rejoice.

All this is, no doubt, typical of what will take place on a still larger scale at

the end of the age. The "Assyrian" of the last days will be Israel's great foe, and Nahum's prophecy undoubtedly looks on to his destruction (foretold in detail by other prophets), and to the consequent deliverance of the people of God.

Nahum celebrates this deliverance in chapter i. 15, and here our thoughts are directed to Christ. The "good-tidings" borne across the mountains are the good tidings of that blessed coming One, for He, born of a woman in Bethlehem Ephratah, shall be great, and "shall be *the peace* when the Assyrian shall come into our land" (Micah v. 5).

There will be no peace and no blessing apart from Christ. It is He who will break the oppressor's yoke, and burst His people's bonds in sunder (i. 13).

No doubt, in that coming day of victory and peace, the majestic psalm that we have in Nahum i. will be often sung by the faithful remnant of Israel, and thus to their hearts, as at that time to the hearts of his contemporaries, will this Old Testament Barnabas minister true consolation.

The Fatherhood of God.

(ADDRESS BY WALTER B. WESTCOTT).

"If God were your Father" (John viii. 42).

IT is not the fashion in this present age to denounce sin and warn men of judgment to come and the wrath of God. To a very large extent, the conception of the day is that this was all very well in the days of our Puritan forefathers, but great advance has been made since then, and such a God as they were trained to fear must be cast out of twentieth century theology; instead there is preached a loving All-Father who could not banish men from the joys of heaven and consign them to the woes of Hell; for if an earthly parent shrinks from punishing his child, and often forgives the most wayward when the crucial time for deciding his fate arrives, how can it be supposed

that God—"our Heavenly Father"—could shew less mercy than one of His failing creatures?

That this is a very popular conception of God to-day can be readily proved by quotations from many of the prominent preachers. The following extracts from recent utterances will suffice.

- 1.—"The heart of the Age is panting for brotherhood; but is not this the very core of the Gospel of Jesus? Brothers, because God is *our common Father*."
- 2.—"In the fulness of time God sent His Son. It is the only way the Father can do, and it is the only way the Father can tell you about His Fatherhood. He sent the Elder Brother . . . so that He can bring us back . . . He will be our ideal, He will be our motive power."

- 3.—“The meanest, most despicable man that ever lived is, after all, a *child of God.*”
- 4.—“God’s Fatherhood is the main article in Jesus’ message.”
- 5.—“There is only one religion of Humanity, that which centres in a man revealing the love of God, a Son who links us to His Father and our Father, a Brother who binds us to Himself and to one another as brothers, that is *the religion of mankind.*”

Are these statements true? Let us test them by the New Testament Scriptures. We must have authority, for the mind of man is so constituted that unless it is held in by authority there is no limit to its speculations, and if it is merely a matter of opinion, one opinion is as good as another, and nobody can say what is true, and what is not true. Therefore I propose to take the New Testament Scriptures as my authority. In them we read:

“God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands ;

Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things ;

And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation ;

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us ;

For in Him we live, and move, and have our being ; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also His offspring.

Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device” (Acts xvii. 24-29).

This scripture states very plainly that in one sense we are the handiwork of God and so constituted that we are entirely dependent upon Him, and to use Paul’s words “IN HIM WE LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE OUR BEING” that is to say in the sense of creatures in relation to a Creator, we are dependent upon God. We are members of one family that owes its origin to God. One sweeping statement that God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth does away with all race distinctions.

There are those who look down upon the coloured races. Granted that they live in degradation, in sin, (that which we avoid, largely by reason of what others would say of us), yet their very darkness is due to their ignorance of

the Bible, thus proving the value of the Word of God. It is perfectly clear that God has made all nations, whether they be black or white, as in Malachi: “HAVE WE NOT ALL ONE FATHER?” We all trace our origin back to Adam. We all derive our existence from, and are sustained by, a Creator God. In that sense we may speak of God’s parental interest in us, but in that sense alone is there any ground for the current conception of the Fatherhood of God. Men have abused that passage of Scripture. Their argument is that we stand by our natural birth in relation to God who has the keenest interest in all His children, and will suffer no harm to come to them.

That God is a Creator who has indeed the keenest interest in the welfare of all His creatures is a very comforting thought, and it is true that He has been working behind the scenes for the blessing of the man He placed upon the earth, but it does not follow that all are His “children”; for as we shall see on looking into Scripture, the expression, “children of God” covers a great deal more than the thought of origin in the sense of being the creation of His hand.

That “the meanest man that ever lived is, after all, a child of God,” is a statement without support in the Scriptures. If we are all children of God by nature, there are some conclusions that must result from these premises. For instance, there is no room for the old-fashioned doctrine of the fall, for if the fall means anything it means that man, placed in innocence in the garden of Eden, fell from his estate and was placed at an infinite distance by sin from God. So great was that distance that a barrier was placed at once to prevent man getting back into the garden of innocence and delight by a flaming sword turning every way at the entrance of it. If we be all the children of God, then the doctrine of the fall must be abandoned.

In addition to the fall must be dismissed the necessity for the new birth. If we are all children of God by

nature, what need is there for the new birth? What need to be born from above if even the most degraded be children of God? With the new birth must be abandoned the doctrine of the atonement, for if men are children of God by nature, why should they need to be redeemed from sin and all its consequences, for is not God good, kind, loving; would He not be as good to His children as an earthly father? We must banish the thought that Christ died as a sacrifice, and regard His death as an example to show how far a man can go in suffering for his principles, instead of as an atoning death by which propitiation has been made for sin. Further, and finally, must go the truth of eternal punishment. As a matter of fact, usually the first thing given up by a professing Christian who goes astray on these lines, is the doctrine of eternal punishment. It has been given up far and wide, and you may vainly search in Christendom (save here and there) for any reference to it as an article of the Christian faith.

The popular doctrine is that God is a Father, and we are His children; He cares for us. He looks down upon us with pity, sees us surrounded by temptations, and His great heart of compassion goes out to us, and it is impossible to conceive that God would be so cruel as to sentence His creatures to a lost eternity, for He is like unto us, who, as fathers, would be only too glad to overlook the failings of our children. Such are the reasonings of to-day, and if the Fatherhood of God as a common conception be admitted to be true, we must give up all those doctrines I have named and others too.

Let us turn to Scripture:

"Jesus saith unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love Me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me. Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My Word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John viii. 42-44).

There is a very definite statement made by the Lord Himself: "If God were your Father ye would love Me."

That is a great test. Do all those who believe in the "Fatherhood of God" love the Son of God? It is a proof of the relationship with the Father, that everyone who can truly call God his Father, loves Jesus, not a person conceived in the imagination of men, but the One whose character and life on earth is recorded for us in the Gospels. Put that test to those to-day who propound the conception of the Fatherhood of God. If God *were* your Father you would love Him.

You find a similar thought in I. John iii. 8, 10, 13:

"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

"In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother."

"Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you."

These statements trace things to their source, and divide the human family into two companies. "In this the *children of God* are manifest, and the *children of the devil*."

If all were the children of God how can it be said that there are children of God and children of the devil? and how can all men be brethren when the Apostle says "Marvel not if the *world* hate you." If all men are brethren, who represent *the world*? "Marvel not if the world hate you," clearly distinguishing between "the brethren" and "the world." Who are the brethren? They are all true believers in Christ on the face of the earth, and they have nothing in common with the world, and the world is in opposition to them as they are true to their calling and position. So you get two companies—the brethren in Christ, and the world that is opposed to the brethren, and has no interest in their welfare. You must get rid of "the world" or "the brethren" entirely if all men form part of one common brotherhood in the ordinary acceptance of the term.

At this point I might refer to the thought that "God sent the *elder brother*." That is to say that Christ is looked upon as the elder brother, having come into this world in incarnation and become a

man like other men, a member of the human race, to help us out of our difficulty, and to develop what was good in us that we might be made suitable to God. That is utterly unsupported by Scripture. You never find Christ addressed or referred to as the elder brother. It is not until resurrection that He addresses people directly as His brethren. When they pressed round Him on earth and said "Thy mother and Thy brethren" desire "to speak with Thee," He looked around and said, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother." But He did not actually address any company of people directly as His brethren until He had been raised from the dead, and by His atoning sacrifice had redeemed a company to Himself and to His God, whom He could righteously call His brethren; of a new order altogether, and not connected with Him by nature's ties, or by a common humanity.

The Lord had said before His death "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth *alone*, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." As a result of that death He has those who are linked up with Him for ever. In resurrection, not in incarnation, is this new and eternal connection formed. Moreover, the harvest is as the seed cast into the ground; the truth is that those whom the Lord calls "brethren" have a new nature and life, the same nature and life as He possesses; they are linked up with Him in *His* life and position, and not He with *them* in their old life and position.

I find that the Apostles and early Christians addressed Christ as Lord, and I believe every Christian to-day who understands the dignity and glory of the Person of Christ will refrain from speaking of Him as the elder brother, but will prostrate himself before Him and call Him Lord. Because He calls us brethren are we to abuse His grace by calling Him brother? If the King of England were to call me by my Christian name, should I turn round and address him in the same familiar

manner? There must be respect even with an earthly monarch. How much more, then, should there be reverence toward the King of Kings?

Now let us turn to John i. 10-14.

"He was in the world, and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not.

He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.

But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name:

Which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

Now it is impossible, if we accept the truth of the New Testament Scriptures, to overlook a statement so distinct as that "He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received HIM, to *them* gave He power to become the sons of God," and to none others. These people were not born after the natural order (of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man), as people would have us to believe who speak of the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God; but they were born of God.

Have you received Christ? Have you believed on His name? If so, you are in the family of God; you are one of the children of God. If you have not received Christ, if you have not believed, you have neither part nor lot in this matter. But you may enter into the family by believing. If you have *not* believed Christ you are not one of the children of God.

"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26).

"For ye are all the children of God"—shall we stop there? Men of degraded life, men who despise the word of God and reject the Saviour, it matters not, ye are all the children of God! That seems a wonderful toleration. People plead for toleration. They say we must consider other people's opinions, and make allowance for others. There is a false toleration abroad to-day against which we must protest. It behoves us to stand by the truth and to refuse that false toleration that will embrace error and say, "Ye are all the

children of God." But the word of God guards it very clearly. "Ye are all the children of God *by faith in Christ Jesus.*" That settles it once for all. The children of God we are if we have faith in Christ Jesus, and no others have any right to take the title.

"Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I. John iii. 1, 2).

Now we come to the part one delights in. Behold the manner of love—the idea of the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man, a degradation of the truth—but the true Fatherhood of God. The love of the Father that He has bestowed upon all those who have received His Son into their hearts, "that we should be called the children of God." There is a wonderful charm in this blessed truth, that we, as we live here, are truly, if we believe in Christ, the children of God. The world around does not understand us in this character. Men meet us in business; they know us in that character, but as the children of God we are a mystery to them. They do not understand the One who came from God. When He was here amongst men He was completely misunderstood in all His words and ways.

There is a gulf fixed by the death of Christ between those who trust in Christ and those who reject His claims; and that gulf will widen until it becomes impassable, and the world will wonder when they see those whom they have disregarded down here conformed to the image of God's own Son. We are going on to that day of splendour, of glory, and even down here we are basking in the sunshine of a Father's love, in the very family of God, led by the Spirit of God. The Father looks down upon us and there is nothing He will not do for us, because we have trusted in Christ and are part of that great family that is linked with Christ.

We need to see what the truth really is, and it is patent on the face of Scripture, that only those who are born of God and have trusted in Christ, are

really and truly entitled to call themselves children of God. And it is the privilege and responsibility of such, not by magnifying their differences, but by magnifying all that they have in common, to make the bonds of love which bind them in this true brotherhood stronger and more manifest.

It is argued that the idea of the Fatherhood of God is contained in the parable of the prodigal (Luke xv.). Luke's Gospel presents man as having sprung from God's creative hand (iii. 38), as we have seen from Acts xvii. 24-29; but by his sin and rebellion he had become dead and lost to God; and it is thus he is viewed in this Scripture.

It is blessedly true, as the parable teaches, that any poor prodigal sinner who comes back to God in true repentance will be welcomed with all the love that beats for him in the heart of God, and the delight of the prodigal will be eclipsed by the deep, deep joy that the Father finds in his return. But the *whole* truth cannot be taught in any single parable: for instance, there is no mention of atonement, or of many things that are essential if you want to get an idea of the truth as a whole. The parable perfectly presents the one part of the truth intended to be illustrated, namely, the joy of God in the sinner's return, but does not in any way sanction the popular error we are considering.

One does not want to be argumentative about these matters, but I think we should face the general trend of things to-day. I am persuaded that behind a great deal of the giving up of the truth of God, is based this false conception of the Fatherhood of God. But there are those who know what it is, having received Christ, to be in the family of God, to embrace all those who are in the family of God, and their destiny is to be conformed to the image of God's Son; having this hope they are purified from the world, its attractions and snares, and are daily being conformed to the One whose likeness they will bear in the coming day of glory.

Papers on Service.

(AN ALL-ROUND MINISTRY).

GOD imparts His message to those who are in a complete subordination to Him. It is evident that many have renounced that holy reverence for Scripture which is indicated by such an expression as "trembleth at My Word." They rather trifle than tremble. The Word is not their teacher, but they are its critics. With many, the Word of the Lord is no longer enthroned in the place of honour, but is treated as a football, to be kicked about as they please; and the apostles especially, are treated as if Paul, James, and John are men with whom modern wise men are on terms of something more than equality. They pass the books of Scripture under their rod, and judge the Spirit of God Himself. The Lord cannot work by a creature that is in revolt against Him. We must manifest the spirit of reverence, or we shall not be as little children, nor enter the kingdom of heaven.

When some men come to die, the religion which they have themselves thought out and invented will yield them no more confidence than the religion of the Roman Catholic sculptor who, on his death-bed, was visited by his priest. The priest said, "You are now departing out of this life;" and, holding up a beautiful crucifix, he cried, "Behold your God, who died for you." "Alas!" said the sculptor, "I made it." There was no comfort for him in the work of his own hands; and there will be no comfort in a religion of one's own devising. That which was created in the brain cannot yield comfort to the heart. The man will sorrowfully say, "Yes, that is my own idea; but what does God say?" Brethren, I believe in that which I could not have invented. I believe that which compels me to adore, and I thank God for a Rock that is higher than I am. If it were not higher than I am, it would be no shelter for me.

of religious excitement than see the air grow stagnant with a dead formality. It is far better for people to be too hot than to be lukewarm. "I would thou wert cold or hot" is Christ's word still, and it applies to preachers as well as to others. When a man is freezingly cold in the things of Christ, we know where he is; and if another is red hot, or even at a white heat, and is thought to be too enthusiastic, we know where he is; but when a preacher preaches in such a way that, at the close of his sermon, you say, "This is neither cold nor hot," you go away feeling that you have had enough, or even too much of it. You could almost wish to have been made angry rather than to have been lulled by such discoursing. A lukewarm sermon sickens every healthy mind.

But let us test ourselves, our Lord holds the true thermometer in His hands, what does He say of us. How is it with you? Do you say, "Well, I am not the warmest of all, but then I am not the coldest of all"? Then I have a suspicion as to your temperature; but I leave the matter to your own judgment, only remarking that I have never yet met with fire that is moderately hot. The fire with which I have been acquainted has been such that I have never given it my hand without remembering its warm embrace. Fire has never yet learned moderation. I am told that it is wrong to go to extremes, and upon that ground fire is certainly guilty; for it is not only intensely hot, but it has a tendency to consume and destroy without limit.

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"Do not make too many heads to your sermons, lest you may not be able to find ears for them all"! Indeed having the ears already to hand many a preacher by his long sword of intolerable prolixity wantonly repeats the offence of Peter upon the servant of the high priest!

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Better risk the dangers of a tornado

The Lord would not have told Peter to put up his sword if it had been the sword of the Spirit that He had been wielding. The sword of the Spirit lays open the heart while the sword of the flesh only cuts off ears. Now there has been a long succession of Petrine apostles, valiant swordsmen, whose principal trophies are severed ears and not converted hearts; who have preached with such two-edged severity as to alienate their hearers when they should have won them. The Lord has not called us to this, we are not theological gladiators, to win applause from the crowd by our skill in cutting and slashing. We are God's witnesses, not His logicians sent to argue men into the kingdom of God. We are not God's debaters, sent to discuss theology with men, and to convince them of the truth of Christianity. On the contrary we as Christ's servants are simply to bear witness year in and year out, using the word of God and not our own. Our success will not depend on our

acuteness, or our eloquence, or our skill, but on God's Spirit, that accompanies and energizes the word. It takes a strong muscle to throw a hand-ball so that it shall strike a hard blow; but a child can fire a rifle-ball effectually since the propelling power is in the powder and not in the muscle. So it takes a strong man to use an argument effectively, but a babe in Christ can use a text of Scripture with prevailing force, since it is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit," that the text is impelled.

Be more careful to prepare yourself than your sermon.

Feet shod, not with the preparation of the Gospel of peace, but with conjecture, tracking an experiment or running in some unexplored "perhaps"—these can leave no path for sin-blinded and truant souls to walk in.

To electrify a hearer is one thing, to bring him prostrate at the feet of Jesus, quite another.

Answers to Correspondents.—Replies to letters from J.N.P. and W.W. will (D.V.) be printed in next issue.

The Morning Star.

(SELECTED).

"I am . . . the bright and morning star" (Rev. xxii. 16).

I woke, and the night was passing,
And over the hills there shone
A star all alone in its beauty
When the other stars were gone—

For a glory was filling the heavens
That came before the day,
And the gloom and the stars together
Faded and passed away.

Only the star of the morning
Glowed in the crimson sky—
It was like a clear voice singing,
"Rejoice! for the Sun is nigh!"

O brethren! a Star is shining
Into the hearts of men—
It is Christ with a voice of singing,
"Rejoice! for I come again!

"For the long, long night is passing,
And there cometh the golden day;
I come to My own who love Me,
To take them all away.

"It may be to-day or to-morrow,
Soon it will surely be;
Then past are the tears and the sorrow—
Then Home for ever with Me."

"I will come again" (John xiv. 3).

“He Maketh the Storm a Calm.”

(JAMES BOYD).

“Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses.

He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.”—

Ps. cvii. 28-30.

JESUS, Saviour, Son of God, in faith I cast my soul on Thee,
Knowing that Thou ever livest, keepest vigil over me.

Be Thou near me, Holy Saviour, when the sun shines on my path,
Even as when evil clouds about me gather threatening wrath;
When the storms assail my bark, and lightnings play across the prow,
And to swallow up my life the hungry ocean yawns, be Thou
Near me, Lord, that I may contemplate the peace upon Thy brow.

Be Thou near me in the black night, when the waves are swelling high,
Making thunder in the darkness, flinging foam against the sky;
When to right, or left, or forward, or behind, no earthly ray
Cheers the murky gloom that mantles all my solitary way;
Be Thou then my light, Lord Jesus, be my sun, my moon, my star,
Shedding beams of heavenly glory on my pathway from afar,
Earthly fogs and mists dispelling, which my prospect bright would mar.

Hold my hand in Thine, my Saviour; hold me firmly, let me feel
Of Thy love the strong pulsations through my fainting spirit steal.
Succour me, when from the heavenward path my tottering steps would reel.

If I only feel the pressure of Thy hand omnipotent,
Which was pierced when for my sinful soul Thy holy flesh was rent—
If I know that Thou art leading, and Thy well-known voice I hear,
Let the way be what it may be, peaceful or begirt with fear—
I shall dread no demon, devil, principality, or power.
When the hosts of darkness close about me, this shall be my hour:
In Thy might they shall be broken, conquered, scattered, made to flee,
Like to chaff before the fury of the tempest they shall be,
And my soul triumphant shall ascribe the glory unto Thee.

Thou hast told me, if I trust Thee, I shall surely win the fight,
Not by creature craft and cunning, human prowess, valour, might,
Greater ten times are the foes that do my heavenly way withstand,
Than the forces I, to meet them, can at any time command:
Hence not on the arm of flesh would I for victory depend,
But upon Thy strength, almighty Saviour, Succourer, and Friend,
Heavenly Guide, and great Redeemer, Lover, faithful to the end.

From the deep Thou wilt deliver, from the jaws of death and hell.
I commit me to Thy keeping; from the wrath of angels fell.
Thou wilt be my bread and water, and my strength throughout the way,
Thou wilt be my rod and staff, my shield and shelter night and day:
Until the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, with healing on His wings,
About the world the golden strands of love immortal flings,
And all the great glad universe with “HALLELUJAH” rings.

"Praising and Blessing God."

(J. T. MAWSON).

"Behold thou shalt be dumb and not able to speak . . . because thou believest not my words (Luke i. 20).

"And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" (Luke xxiv. 53, 53).

THE Gospel of Luke commences with a dumb priest in the temple, and closes with a company of men in that same place "praising and blessing God": proof to us of some great occurrence between the two.

Now if any man on earth ought to have praised God it was Zacharias, for he was a priest, and in the temple of God. Moreover the angel of God had just announced to him most blessed things; but there was no response in his heart to the glad tidings from God: he met them with rank unbelief. As a consequence the astonished Gabriel pronounced God's sentence upon him, and his dumb lips became the outward sign of his inward and spiritual state of unbelief; and this condition was typical of that in which all men are by nature.

It was not for this that man was created, for it is written that whoso offereth praise glorifieth God: God created man for His glory—a well-tuned instrument—to respond to the touch of His infinite goodness with intelligent and joyous thanksgiving. But the devil spoiled God's handiwork by introducing distrust of God into the heart of man; and the chord was lost, and the music died out, and instead of songs of praise greeting God's advent in the garden, Adam—a fallen man, a sinner against God, cowered away in dumb fear from the One who loved and had lost him.

But God cannot be baffled, nor His purpose thwarted, and the apparent triumph of the devil only yielded the opportunity for the establishment of the praise of men upon a secure and eternal basis.

This basis is found in Christ. He came to be about His Father's business

(ch. ii. 49): this business was to call sinners to repentance (ch. v. 32), to seek and save that which was lost (ch. xix. 10), "*to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem*" (xxiv. 46, 47). He came to destroy the works of the devil, and to deliver men from his power and bring them to God, so that faith might take the place of unbelief, and love supersede enmity, and worship and thanksgiving break forth from hearts and lips, that erst were dumb.

It is intensely interesting and blessed to see then that when He was "carried up into heaven," His mission to earth completed, there was left behind in this world of sin, and unbelief, and sorrow, and death, a company of men who had been put into tune with heaven, and whose hearts vibrated with responsive praise to that boundless love which had been expressed in the Lord Jesus Christ: they were filled with "great joy, and were continually . . . praising and blessing God." It will be readily admitted that theirs was a most blessed and desirable condition: and yet this is the normal Christian condition, and where it is absent in true believers there is some cause. But there are certain things which are necessary to it, and these are clearly indicated for us in this closing chapter of the Gospel.

The Word of God.

The two disciples travelling to Emmaus had no song, for sad men do not sing (ver. 17). They had placed their hopes in Christ as the glorious immediate Redeemer of Israel, but instead of realizing these hopes they had seen Him rejected by the Jews and

“crucified in weakness;” and these walkers according to the light of their eyes were returning to their own homes gloomy and disappointed. There was no need for their despondency for that day was the most glorious in all the annals of time: and if the stars of the morning sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy when the earth’s foundations were laid, how much more cause for joy was there on this day in which was manifestly established a new creation which can never be spoiled by sin and death!

But the Lord laid bare the cause of their gloom when He said, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (ver. 25), and it was necessary for Him to begin at “Moses and all the prophets,” and expound unto them “*in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself*” (ver. 27).

Unbelief lay at the root of their sadness: their own thoughts, and perhaps the traditions of men, had a larger place in their minds than *all* that the prophets have spoken. Hence they did not understand the thoughts and ways of God.

It is important to note the way that the Lord took to lead them out of the darkness into which unbelief had carried them. He did not straightway reveal Himself to them, as we might have expected Him to do; but He threw them back upon *the Scriptures*. As another has said, “He led them into the infallible Word of God, which discloses to us the divine counsels of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, *that their faith might rest on the testimony of God in the written Word.*”

They had neglected to heed *all* the Scriptures, and so they had missed the precious treasure that the Scriptures contained, *the truth as to Himself*.

Who but God could have revealed beforehand those sufferings and that glory, and with what reverent joy we who know Christ can turn to the Holy Writings, knowing them to be God-breathed, to find them like unto a golden casket which when opened

reveals priceless gems, which glow and scintillate before the astonished eye! It was thus with these two troubled disciples, for as they saw and heard things concerning Himself, their sadness and disappointment fled, and their hearts glowed with hope, and faith, and love.

The first essential to fulness of joy is to believe *all* that God hath spoken, to accept His word in simple and unquestioning faith; we shall never understand it, or Him, until we do this; for it is “through faith we understand” (Heb. xi. 3), and “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. x. 17).

This ministry of Christ is continued to us by the Holy Spirit come down from above, for He has come to take of the things that are Christ’s and shew them to us; but this is not apart from the Scriptures: they are indispensable to our understanding the ways of God in Christ.

The Risen Christ.

But the value of the Scriptures is that they turn the thought and eye to *Christ*. We are therein taught the glory of His shame; for more glorious was He, thorn-crowned and rejected, than if He had been borne to the throne of David amid the acclamations of the multitude of Israel. Upon the dark background of that unmeasured and unrelieved sorrow there shone the glory of His moral perfection. Men despised Him for what they judged to be weakness, when as a lamb He was led to the slaughter, but then there shone forth that infinite meekness, absolute subjection to the will of God, and the strength of a love that no terrors could daunt. Moreover, it was then that the wisdom, and might, and love of God were displayed: that cross was the triumph of the divine heart, and there in that shamed and crucified *MAN* we see the glory and wisdom of God’s eternal plan. Throughout the eternal ages that cross will be our grandest and most profound contemplation.

But the disciples who had lost Him

for awhile (for they could not follow Him into that mystery of darkness and sorrow when surged around Him the hatred of men and devils, and when His soul was made an offering for sin) had found Him again: He was with them in all the value of His sacrifice and the power of His resurrection. He was with them as the Saviour who had died for them (verse 40); the Centre to gather them (verse 36); the Lord to command them (verses 46-49); and the great High Priest to sustain them in the blessing He had secured for them (verse 50).

With hands uplifted in blessing He was parted from them: they knew that He had gone to the exaltation of God's

throne, they knew that that place was the only one worthy to receive Him, it was His due: infinite perfection had received just recognition, and in the sense of this their hearts were filled with exultant joy and praise.

We have the same blessed triumphant Saviour, Centre, Lord, and Priest, the One in whose mighty hand all the purposes and promises of God are held securely, so that not one of them will fail of fulfilment. He is given to us to be the object of our love, and our Lord; to dispossess every idol: and, as in all things He is pre-eminent, we too shall worship Him, and be filled with great joy, praising and blessing God.

Thoughts on Service.

(W. BOUSFIELD).

ONE who has been much used in the preaching of the gospel says, that he has been greatly helped during his long years of service by what his mother impressed upon him as a child, whenever he had an errand to do for her.

After carefully instructing him in the details of what she required him to do, she would say:

1. Now tell me, *Where* are you going?
2. What will you *say* when you get there?
3. Mind you tell them *who* sent you;

and he was not permitted to start off on his errand until his mother was perfectly satisfied that he was clear on all these three points.

Now let us look at the application:

1. "*Where* are you going?"

Be definite in your service. The angel of the Lord said to Philip, "*Arise and go . . . unto Gaza* (Acts viii. 26), and willingly and at once "he arose and went," leaving a sphere of most successful service to go.

We know how he was blessed to that earnest seeker. Such is God's intense interest in one soul.

2. "What will you *say* when you get there."

Be definite in your message. Seek a message rather than a sermon; and "say" from a full heart (for out of the "overflow" of the heart the mouth speaks); be "the Lord's messenger in the Lord's message unto the people" (Haggai i. 13). It is true many an arrow shot at a venture finds its mark, but the sharp-shooter is much more deadly than he who fires at random.

3. "Mind you tell them *who* sent you."

Don't go without feeling distinctly that *the Lord* has sent you. Be like Abraham's servant: "I being in the *way* the Lord led me" (Gen. xxiv. 27). Always remember in whose *name* the message goes forth, and that forgiveness of sins is preached in *His name*, and that it is the glad tidings "concerning *His Son*."

Be *constant*. The enemy never slackens, and the need is ever present.

One of John Wesley's mottoes was "*All at it and always at it*."

"Workers together with Him," and He never wearies.

"Always abounding in the work of the Lord."

Bible Study.—I. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter V. 12-28.

12. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you;

13. And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

14. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.

15. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.

16. Rejoice evermore.

17. Pray without ceasing.

18. In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

19. Quench not the Spirit.

20. Despise not prophesyings.

21. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

22. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

23. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

24. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

25. Brethren, pray for us.

26. Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss.

27. I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren.

28. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.

IN this concluding section of the Epistle, the Apostle turns more directly to what is purely hortatory, as the previous part is rather the expression of his own feelings and personal affection towards them. It is marked by the same exuberancy of style in which the outflowings of his spirit are poured forth: and in the structure of it the subject seems to fall naturally before us into three parts: he beseeches them; he exhorts them; and he prays for them.

If we make a distinction between the terms, the word "beseech" (ver. 12) means to beg in a tender and delicate way, so as to gain thereby the request desired; while "exhort" (ver. 14) carries with it the idea of admonition, encouragement, comfort, as using persuasion, and so gaining the will.

Verse 12.

First, he beseeches them with regard to those who are over them in the Lord, that they should recognise them with the respect which is their due, and esteem them "hyper-highly," if one might be permitted so to render as closely as possible the word, in love for their works' sake, and to be at peace among themselves.

It is very interesting to see already

rising up among these young converts those who took the oversight and guidance amongst them. They were in much need of such; and in the Lord's tender care for His people, such were provided for them by Him. No doubt these young teachers had much to learn themselves. Their experience and their knowledge were but scanty: but they put their hands, as best they could, to the need before them, and they were blessed in the deed.

It is useless to wait for perfection before you do what lies before you to be done. If your implements are not perfect, make the best use of what you have. He who waits to do until he finds perfection wherewith to do it, will never do at all. But he who does what he can do, and does it to the Lord, will do as she did of whom it is written, "She hath done what she could Verily, I say unto you, whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done [mark well the word "this also," as an accompaniment of the very gospel itself] shall be spoken of for a memorial of her" (Mark xiv. 8, 9).

But, in a community freshly brought out from paganism, it is easy to understand how needful such an exhortation as this would be, where all the elements

of ignorance and pride, independency and self-will, a vain impatience of restraint and such like things, were as yet only held in check, for the most part unconsciously, by the fresh force of first love, and had not yet been measured experimentally by them in their essential opposition to the kingdom of God. All this exercise will come in due course; it must do so; but meanwhile the Apostle beseeches them in the most delicate and winning way to submit themselves in all love to the direction of this new regime, under which they had already found such joy and blessing; and to be at peace among themselves.

How clearly he diagnosed, so to speak, the constitutional taint that needed such an exhortation; even as Joseph said to his brethren of old, "See that ye fall not out by the way" (Gen. xlv. 24). How soon this taint was manifested amongst them. Alas! how soon! A taint that for well nigh 2,000 years has developed itself into all the hideousness that has disfigured the erst fair face of the Church of God on earth.

Verses 14-22.

He now turns to their conduct in respect of those (ver. 14) who would naturally test the reality of the grace that was in them. There is nothing strange in this testing. If we have received grace, it is that we may show its virtue. Of what value is it, if it be not thus proved?

When the disciples came down from the mount of transfiguration, where, in the company of Moses and Elias, they had seen the glory of the Lord in the splendour of that scene, they were at once confronted with the circumstances of another scene, which put to the test how much available power they had brought with them from the glory of the scene above. Alas! They quickly showed how out of touch they were, subjectively, with all that had so lately passed before their eyes. The glory of the kingdom had been before them, and they had been impressed by the

sense of it when they said, "Lord it is good for us to be here" (Matt. xvii. 4); but they were not yet able to translate into practical effect the power of it in common life.

If we have received grace, it is that it should control us in the various circumstances which we are bound to meet in a world of temptation such as this. How manifold the trials are! But grace is given us that we should conduct ourselves in a becoming and Christian manner in the midst of all, and thus, as it is written, "show forth the virtues [margin] of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light" (I. Pet. ii. 9).

This section falls naturally into two parts: 1st, their conduct towards others; 2nd, their own state within. In each part there are seven injunctions; and in view of the general structure of the Epistle on which we have before remarked, it is quite possible that this double handful of fulness is not accidental but of design.

1. "Warn them that are unruly,"
2. "Comfort the feeble-minded,"
3. "Support the weak,"
4. "Be patient toward all men."
5. "See that none render evil for evil unto any man;"
6. "But ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves"
7. "And to all men."

Little need be said as to these things in detail. Let us rather see to it that we ponder them in the presence of God; and that we steadfastly set ourselves to practice them before men.

Then he adds, as regards their personal state:

1. "*Rejoice evermore.*" There are those,—pessimists, men of moody minds—who dwell in the contemplation of evil, where sunlight seldom shines to brighten up the soul. Such men would not allow themselves to rejoice; or, if for a brief moment a gleam of brighter things flits across the sky, they quickly correct themselves lest they should presume too much on the "grace wherein

we stand." They forget the injunction "Rejoice evermore."

2. "*Pray without ceasing.*" How needful this is for those who are young in the faith, just starting on their Christian course! Those who are older will know its value better.

3. "*In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you*" (comp. Phil. iv. 6). We are ready enough to give thanks while things are prosperous according to our notions of prosperity. It is the province of faith to give thanks always. Let those who are in great difficulty only try its virtue.

4. "*Quench not the Spirit.*" In Eph. iv. 30 we read, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God," *i.e.* by the practice or allowance of evil contrary to His holy nature. Here it is not the question of corrupt conduct which "grieves," but as a fire which might be "quenched," whether in ourselves or others, by refusing to follow His promptings in simplicity and in faith.

5. "*Despise not prophesyings.*" That which is of the Spirit is of spiritual value, wherever it appears. Despise it not.

6. "*Prove all things; hold fast the right*" (New Trans.). The existence of evil—which they were to test—need be no hindrance to their progress, but the reverse. The sifting of it would teach them to discriminate between right and wrong: would cast them on the truth and the power of it; and they would thereby learn to "have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb. v. 14). In result they would learn to hold fast the right.

7.—*Abstain from every form of evil* (New Trans.) This closes up in a general injunction the sum of all that he inculcates. And how suitable to the circumstances of those who had just been called out of the darkness of their former state into the light of the gospel, to "serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven." How suitable it remains still for us in our day, who are called by the same grace and in the same hope.

Verse 23.

His heart now turns to God Himself—the God of peace—who alone, above and beyond the best efforts of feeble man, could effectuate these desires, and make good and real and complete in them this truly divine work of sanctification, and preserve them blameless, their whole spirit and soul and body in reference to, or at, the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is to be noticed that he does not say, "sanctify you perfectly," as though they were already partly sanctified, and they had to progress in it to perfection; but "sanctify you wholly," *i.e.*, entirely, in all your parts, spirit, soul, and body, and that in these you be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The three parts, spirit, soul and body, constitute the entire man. The spirit is the superior and active part that properly moves and governs the rest. Of it is predicated both mind and will; and upon it the Holy Spirit acts in the highest functions of spiritual life.

The soul is the inferior animal part. It is the seat of the affections and passions, and is the more passive part normally acted on and governed by the spirit which is above it.

The body is the material part which serves as the instrument for the expression of the immaterial part—the vehicle for the carrying out of the will. The three parts form the entire man.

The movements of the soul and of the spirit are necessarily much involved, and they are not always easily distinguishable. The word of God, "sharper than any two-edged sword," unerringly divides between them (Heb. iv. 12).

Verses 24-28.

And with these mighty desires on their behalf filling his soul, and foreseeing too, as doubtless he did, all the dangers that lay exposed to his prophetic vision, as he foretold to the elders of Ephesus (Acts xx. 29, 30), yet with undaunted faith he adds without qualification or limitation, "Faithful is He

who calls you, who will also perform it" (New Trans.).

Ver. 25. But if the Apostle was a strong man, he was also a dependent one: ultimately dependent on God, mediately dependent on the prayers of the saints, as he also devoted himself in prayer for them. Were there more prayer, mutual prayer one for the other, there would be less trouble amongst the saints.

Ver. 26. The holy kiss was the greeting of love.

Ver. 27. Is there not here a forebod-

ing, realized actually later on (*cf.* II. Thess. ii. 2, 3), of the evil way in which his teaching would be subverted, either by suppressing what he had written, or by misrepresenting it, or by false letters purporting to be his, misleading the saints and disturbing their minds as to what he had really taught? Hence he solemnly adjures them "by the Lord that this Epistle be read unto all the the holy brethren."

Ver. 28. The epistle ends with grace, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and all will end in glory. Amen.

The Law of Increase.

Here is a man who has got a handful of corn. He says, "I have got it, and I will keep it." Here is another man who says, "I have got it too, but I will give it away. I will throw it into the earth." "More fool you," responds the first, "I will not throw mine away."

The man throws it, and the whole chemistry of nature is set up in connection with it, until by-and-by there is the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. The acres gleam at

last with gold, and the return is sixty fold. The other man is still gripping his corn, and whatever you grip you lose. What are you going to do with your handful? It is not good for you or for others to hold it. You do not resort to the law of production and reduplication: you are not an economist, but a destroyer. But by giving we get; by scattering we gather; by watering others we receive a plentiful rain upon our own souls.

Though there are paradoxes in Christianity there are no contradictions.

"I no more dare to fret than I dare to curse and swear."—*J. Wesley.*

Your melancholy and long-faced Christians are not the "out and outers" but the "half and half" men—those who want to "fear the Lord and serve their own graven images," to make the best of both worlds, or to be pious according to the flesh. They have never learnt in their soul's experience the truth of Luther's definition of a Christian—that he is "a new man in a new world." At any rate, they are not practically owning that "new man," and living in that "new world."

Let us maintain a *good conscience* and a *thankful heart*.

Wherever you go, endeavour to carry with you a sense of God's presence, His holiness and His love; it will preserve you from a thousand snares.

So long as our hearts are cleaving to earthly things, we shall not be able to sing the pilgrim's song; but if we are thorough pilgrims, and apprehend our great High Priest ever living for us at God's right hand, we shall be perpetually giving thanks.

"Rest, rest, beloved, thine head upon My bosom,
Lean on My arm and tell thy griefs to Me;
My heart is thine, in all the full perfection
Of sympathy, none else could give to thee."

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ.

(H. NUNNERLEY).

Coats of Skins.

"Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins and clothed them" (Gen. iii. 21).

ADAM is not only a "figure" of the "last Adam," our Lord Jesus Christ, but he is also an object lesson in which we may learn God's provision to meet man's sinful condition, and clothe him according to His own mind.

We need not recount the story of man's fall and its resultant effects. Men have cavilled at such a trivial offence being visited by such condign punishment. They forget that thereby God's supremacy was set aside, His sovereign rights contravened, and man's allegiance transferred to Satan. The point of prime importance in the prohibition was the maintenance of the relative place of the creature to His Creator, the acknowledgement of his fealty to his liege Lord.

Man demands a "peppercorn" rental from his fellow, not because the thing tendered has any *real value*, but because thereby his superior rights are acknowledged.

Adam's possession of an earthly paradise was only as long as the supremacy of the Creator was practically owned. His tenure depended on obedience, and the prohibition under which he lay—not to touch the tree of knowledge of good and evil, under penalty of death—was the way the Creator took to maintain His rights.

Adam's disregard of God's prohibition involved serious results for his descendents. By it, not only was God's authority, as supreme Ruler, contravened, and Satan's purpose to oppose God, and gain ascendancy over man, accomplished, but man's moral nature was tainted, and death's reign begun.

How then could God defeat the devil, remove the taint of sin, and abolish death?

The coats of skins, and the death which necessarily preceded their formation, supply the answer.

Words such as "atonement" and "expiation" (margin Num. xxxv. 33), all come from the word "Kaphar," which means "to cover." The covering wherewith God clothed Adam and Eve is the earliest figure of the "best robe" with which every returned prodigal has been clothed since the day of grace began (Luke xv). This covering was obtained from a dead victim. What a symbolic delineation of God's way was presented in that earthly paradise, when Satan was cursed, man clothed, and the woman's Seed announced!

We find a companion picture in the third chapter of Zechariah. Joshua, like Adam, is unfit for the divine presence; he has garments indeed, but they are "filthy garments."

Satan is there, adversary and accuser, to resist.

God also is there, the holy and righteous God, against whom Adam and Joshua had sinned.

Both men are polluted, both fallen from their high estate. What are *they* called upon to do? Nothing!

Joshua utters not a word, he stands silent and convicted. How gratefully upon his sin burdened conscience must have fallen those gracious words "*I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment*" (or "festal robes" as it should read).

How the goodness of God must also have passed before Adam's soul, as he learns that his iniquity has been removed. Clothed in coats of skin, in "festal robes," he too was arrayed in a garment which was typically one of righteousness apart from works.

What of Satan? Cursed and rebuked, his doom is sealed, his judgment announced and pronounced. The promised Seed of the woman should be his undoing, and at the same time the Saviour of ruined Adam.

Here we see God taking up the question of man's sin and settling it. Acting for and from Himself, clearing the whole scene, stopping man's mouth, and defeating the adversary.

In Eden the Creator is moving, acting in the midst of a fallen world, revealing Himself in a new glory. God does everything. It was His own blessed hand wrought, formed, fashioned, those coats of skin, and clothed the naked sinner. Adam's fall becomes the occasion for the disclosure of God's resources in the woman's Seed—Christ. Fallen, ruined man, the platform for the display of a more excellent glory than that to which creation has witnessed.

The only begotten Son, the perfect Exponent of grace and truth, was needed to fully reveal, declare, and give effect to it: but the morning dawn of God's purpose to bless, and provide all that is needful for blessing righteously, is thus early discovered to us.

Every saved sinner, from Adam's day to Paul's, from Paul's to ours, is a witness that the ruin and fall of man by sin has been made the occasion for the display of abounding grace, sovereign goodness,

infinite matchless love, a love no thought can reach, no tongue can tell, a love which finds its joy in giving a fair and costly robe, a righteousness of its own providing.

In this first presentation of God's gracious provision for fallen man, we see, in the covering which the Lord God "made," the *coats of skins* with which Adam was clothed, God's way of meeting man's need. Blood must have been shed, life given up in death, to provide that covering. An innocent victim provided a coat for a sinner, and that coat *made*, fashioned, fitted, wrought, from first to last by the hand of a Saviour God.

"Soon as the reign of sin began,
The light of mercy dawned on man."

Behold then a man whose life, typically, had come to an end in the death of an innocent victim, clothed, enveloped, robed, mantled, in the skin of one who had died. Declared thus to be in all the worth of the person and work of his substitute.

Herein we get a foreshadowing of Calvary. God "*hath made Him—Christ—to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*" (II. Cor. v. 21). This is the true coat of skins, the best robe prepared by God's own hand for every poor convicted sinner, who is prepared to *submit* himself "unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. x. 3).

This robe is not only "unto all," but also "*upon all them that believe*" (Rom. iii. 22). It is freely bestowed upon every convicted sinner who, ceasing from his own work, confides in God who "justifieth the ungodly" (Rom. iv. 5).

Romans xiv. 8, 9.

LIVING we are the Lord's, to know His will
And to obey;
His mighty love, the soul to sway and fill
And keep alway.

DYING we are the Lord's, for us in love
He died and rose:
Our happy spirits He'll receive above
At this life's close.

 No. 4.—The Test Case.

THE consideration of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as being the demonstration of God's victory, naturally leads to another aspect of the same great truth, very closely connected therewith. What, it may well be asked, is the bearing of this victory? Is anything involved in it beyond the display of His supreme power and the personal vindication of the Lord Jesus?

That it was the personal vindication of Jesus is evident from Acts ii. His resurrection was the great theme of Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost and the conviction was borne irresistibly in upon three thousand men that God had intervened in the great controversy between the leaders of Israel and Jesus—between the builders and the Stone which they rejected—and the decision of Heaven's final court of appeal was in favour of Jesus. He was triumphantly vindicated. "The Stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner" (Luke xx. 17).

Every one who loves our Lord Jesus Christ must greatly rejoice at this thought; yet we must not overlook the fact that there was involved in His resurrection much more even than this. It was *the great test case* upon which infinite and eternal issues hung.

Occasionally the Law Courts witness a great fight over a seemingly trivial matter. There is a great array of legal talent on both sides, many witnesses are called, much money is expended, a large amount of valuable time consumed, and court and spectators alike treated to brilliant displays of oratory, wit, and legal acumen, and all over what to the uninitiated appears so small that they are inclined to turn away saying, "much ado about nothing"!

But it is not so; they are mistaken, all this effort is quite justified by the importance of the occasion. The case

under trial, though nothing great in itself is a representative one. There are many other cases like it in their underlying principle, and this one has been selected as a test case. The decision given, whichever way it is, will establish principles and interpretations of law which will instantly bear in scores of different directions. Possibly hundreds or even thousands of cases are really being tried and decided in this one, and this fact instantly raises it right out of the common rut and invests it with great importance.

Scripture plainly indicates that the resurrection of Jesus had this character. Not that it was an insignificant thing in itself—there our illustration fails of course. *No event ever had more importance in itself*, and yet its importance is enhanced by the fact of its being the great test case of the ages by which everything—ourselves included—must stand or fall. In Ephesians i., vers 17 to 23, we get recorded one of those wonderful prayers which were continually ascending to God from the heart of the great apostle Paul. He prayed:—

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him through the eyes of your understanding [or heart, R.V.] being enlightened; that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places."

Here clearly resurrection comes before us in this light: His resurrection is the test case, and we learn the greatness of God's power toward *us* according to that. Small wonder therefore

that the apostle uses the forcible language he does. God's power towards us—His people—is *exceeding* (or *surpassing*) *great* because measured according to the working of the *might of His power* (margin) which He wrought in Christ.

All this is surely intended by the Spirit to convey to our minds that God's power in a surpassing and wholly extraordinary degree was exerted in the raising of Jesus. No such strong expressions are used when it is a question of raising the millions who shall share the bliss of the first resurrection, for the reason, doubtless, that that is a simple matter uncomplicated by all those tremendous questions of sin, death and Satan's power, which were in evidence in the case of Jesus. Then it was that the real battle was fought; then that every adverse power, whether human or Satanic, rose to its highest expression, and combined in one last effort to hold the Saviour in the dominion of death; then that the might of God's power rose up, flung back every assault, confounded the full power of the enemy, and raised Him *from* the dead, and *up* until, seated at His own right hand, He is above, and not only above, but "*far above* all principality and power" (ver. 21).

Majestic language, this! The Spirit of God is evidently rejoicing in the triumphant ending of the great test case.

And our little cases are settled in His great one. Hence chapter ii. begins "And you." Pick up the thread of the argument, and it runs thus: "The working of the might of His power which He wrought *in Christ* when He raised Him from the dead. . . . *And you* . . . who were dead in trespasses and sins." *In Christ*, the controversy was settled, and when the power of God is displayed *in us* it works in exact keeping therewith; we are quickened, and raised up and seated in heavenly places in Him (chapter ii., vers. 5, 6). But further, His resurrection not only has its bearing upon us in this spiritual way now, but it is also the certain

pledge of the actual resurrection of all that are His at His coming. This is plainly indicated in these words:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept, . . . Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming" (I. Cor. xv. 20-23).

Death can, in the long run, no more retain its hold upon us than it could upon Him. Once see this clearly, and the well-worn phrase "In sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection"—so often quoted by the gravesides of believers—becomes illuminated with a fuller meaning than ever. Our hope is sure and certain, not only because we have God's word for it (though that were sufficient) but we have in the risen Christ the ever abiding pledge of it for our souls. It was with this before him that Paul could say "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you" (II. Cor. iv. 14).

To raise us up only a word is needed, —one word of power.

"The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth" (John v. 28 and 29).

This too it was, that made the Sadducees such bitter opponents of the apostles as recorded in the Acts. The Pharisees were the great adversaries during the lifetime of the Lord Jesus, for being Himself the truth He exposed at every step their hypocrisy; but immediately He was gone and the apostolic testimony to His resurrection became the prominent thing, we find the Sadducees springing into activity.

The priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached *through Jesus* [in Jesus, *r.v.*] the resurrection from the dead" (Acts iv. 1 and 2).

These ardent advocates of "no resurrection" theories were keenly alive to the fact that the resurrection of Jesus was destructive of their whole position. Had it been a mere isolated or

accidental event they might have passed it by in silence, or even claimed it as the exception which proved the rule of no resurrection, but it was not so. "In Jesus" the resurrection from the dead was in principle established, hence they left no stone unturned in their efforts to silence the preachers and crush their testimony.

Thank God! that testimony was not crushed, and never will be. Who can rightly estimate its practical value in ministering comfort and vigour to the souls of believers? Listen to Peter when he says:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively [living R.V.] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I. Pet. i. 3).

We can perhaps but faintly understand the desolation which must have swept into the hearts of those who loved the Lord Jesus Christ when they saw Him die. Not only did it outrage their personal affections for Him, but at one blow it destroyed all their hopes which centred in Him as their heaven-sent Messiah. We may gain some idea of

it by considering the two disciples going to Emmaus (Luke xxiv) and marking their spirit and demeanour. Hope in their hearts was dead.

But the Risen One revealed Himself to them. What a change! They were "begotten again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." It was as though they were born into a new world where new hopes reigned, and those hopes *living*, because all centred in the *living* One, who in resurrection life would never die again. Well might praise and blessing ascend from the Apostle's heart to God.

Good it is for our souls if we have had an experience after this sort and learned to centre our hopes and expectations in the Risen One. It was just when everything was, to all appearance, lost, that the day was really won, and it remains for us who through grace believe, to quietly watch and wait till the power that fully expressed itself in the great test case shall exert itself toward us, lifting us out of the reach of death and the grave for ever, and crowning our hopes with the glory of God.

True Humility.

It is better to be thinking of what God is, than of what we are. This looking at ourselves, at the bottom, is really pride—a want of the thorough consciousness that we are *good for nothing*. Till we see this, we never look quite away from self to God.

Sometimes, perhaps, the looking at our evil, may be a partial instrument in teaching us it; but still, even then, that is not all that is needed. In looking to Christ, it is our privilege to forget ourselves.

True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all.

I am too bad to be worth thinking about: what I want is to forget myself, and to look to God, who is indeed worthy of all my thought. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves, we may be quite sure that will do it.

If we can say, (as in Rom. vii) that "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing," we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us think about Him who thought about us with "thoughts of good and not of evil" long before we thought about ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of grace about us are, and take up the words of faith, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Prayer.

H. D. R. JAMESON,

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened unto you."

"For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke xi. 9, 10).

I PURPOSE to look at this subject in its very simplest elements. Prayer is a factor which properly enters into the life of every Christian every day that he lives, and it will be well therefore if, by looking into the Scriptures together, we can in even the smallest degree help one another in regard to it. With this in view I wish to notice some of the first essentials to prayer, the conditions that govern it, and the hindrances which arise and prevent that *answer* to prayer for which the Christian may rightly look.

God.

In the first place look at Hebrews xi. 6.

"He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."

God is "*the living God*" (Heb. iii. 12); He lives to-day, and is active in all that concerns the welfare of His saints. Nothing about us happens by chance; all around us is movement, yet all is controlled and directed by the almighty and all-wise hand of God, who causes all things to work together for good to those that love Him.

The first essential then in drawing near to God is to realise very distinctly that *He is*, that He is the living God: and not only that He is, that He lives to-day, and that His ear is open to the prayer of the righteous, but more, He is the *Rewarder* of them that diligently seek Him: He *answers* their prayer.

Prayer has thus a great deal more than a merely subjective value (*i.e.* the value which it possesses as rightly exercising the soul of the one who prays); though that is all that is admitted by present-day teachers who have drifted away from the truth as to the glory of the person of Christ and so

have practically lost God (II. John 9). When such come to take up the subject of prayer they have to seek for some explanation why it is that in their own experience their prayers are not answered, and from the attempt to explain this has doubtless arisen the suggestion (so natural to the unbelieving heart of a religiously inclined man) that prayer has only a *subjective* value; that it is good for the one who prays, but that that is all! That however is not the truth, as the scripture we are considering very clearly shews us. The great all important factor in prayer is the One who is the object of it—*God*.

Faith.

I shall not here take up all the different scriptures which condition prayer, but will emphasise one which is of first importance. It is found in Matt. xxi. 22, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive."

Now this scripture has been greatly misunderstood even by true Christians. They draw near to God in the full assurance that He is, and, more, they are convinced that He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. They have known of many remarkable instances of prayer being answered in the experience of others; and, in greater or lesser degree, they certainly know something of this in their own experience. But they have read this verse to mean that if they want anything from God (albeit they mentally qualify it in different ways), what they have to do is to ask for that which they desire, and, *if they can bring themselves to believe*, then they will receive. In their minds it becomes a question of the strength of a faith of their own production: that if they can, so to speak, work up a suffi-

ciently strong faith, then answer is assured.

But that is an altogether wrong conception of the scripture. Faith is not something which we work up by an effort of our own minds, but is always founded on some distinct revelation that God has made. In Romans we read, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." That gives us the source and basis of faith: it comes by *hearing*, and hearing by the *word of God*. That is to say, God in His word *says* something, He makes some revelation to man: the believer *hears* what God has to say, and the word coming home to him in power as God's word, produces the conviction in the soul which is called *faith*.

So that faith is not a leap in the dark. It is not persuading oneself to believe something. Faith is the evidence (or *conviction*) of things unseen (Heb. xi. 1). It springs, as I have said, from some distinct revelation which God has made.

Now if this be rightly understood, that which at the very outset conditions prayer will also be understood *i.e.*, "believing." God has revealed Himself in His word: He has there made known what His mind and will is, and what is pleasing to Himself. When this then is made known to us, and taken in by us, we can ask for those things which are according to His mind and will, things which are according to God Himself, in full assurance that our prayer will be heard and that it will be answered.

But some may think that this is too vague and indefinite, so general as greatly to limit the scope of the prayers we may thus offer in faith. It is not so indeed, for the Book which has been given us is one which is full of the most marvellous detail.

A man may say, "I find myself in such and such circumstances: I would like to pray to God for so and so; but it is impossible for me to know from His word whether or not that is according to His will for me." Is it impossible? I think it will surprise us,

I am sure it has surprised me, to find in what wonderful detail are presented all the circumstances of our lives in the biographies which we have given us of the men of God who lived in ages gone by, and which are recorded for us in the inspired word. Too often our want of assurance as to whether a certain thing is or is not according to God's will for us, springs from our ignorance of the Bible, the word of God. If we studied it more earnestly, patiently, and continuously, we should find in increasing measure how wonderfully it sheds light upon all the different circumstances in which we may find ourselves, and what *God* is towards a man and woman in just such circumstances. When we read the account of the lives of this one and that one, say in the Old Testament times, we shall find great gain not in considering so much what *he did*, or *she did*, but in looking at what *God* did for such an one—in learning what *God* can be to such in their varied circumstances.

It is very wonderful in this way to trace out the prayers which have ascended to God through all the ages, the different conditions in which these prayers were uttered, and the way in which God answered. In this way we learn God, and approaching Him thus in faith, prayer can be made in the conviction that God hears, and will answer as He has done of old. So much for the basis of *faith* which conditions all prayer.

In His Name.

In God's wonderful grace believers are now identified in every way with the Lord Jesus Christ:

"In Thee and with Thee ever
Is found by grace our lot"

He came in love into our place, bore our judgment, and rendered satisfaction to God about the whole question of our sins: now *we* are brought into *His* place of perfect acceptance with God, and His name is named upon us—we are *in Christ*.

From Genesis v. 2 we learn that the name Adam covered not only the man, but also the woman, Eve—He "called

their name Adam, in the day when they were created." In I. Cor. xii. we find that the name "Christ," or as in such scriptures it should correctly be translated "the Christ," covers not only Christ personally, but also all those who are members of His body and who will in their completeness by-and-by form His Bride. That name is named upon us (*cf.* also Gal. iii. 27), and as being covered by the name of Christ we are to do *everything* in His name. Thus we read in Col. iii. 17:—

"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (*cf.* also Eph. v. 20).

Everything we do or say (and that includes, of course, our praying) is to be done *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*, for that is the whole ground of our acceptance before God: we are "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6).

We draw near to God in prayer then, not on the ground of what we are—for on that ground we have no standing at all before Him—but we draw near on the ground of what Christ is, in whom we are accepted and through whom we "have access . . . unto the Father" (Eph. ii. 18). We thus present all our petitions in His Name, and if we have even a little understanding as to how fragrant to God is that Name, and how truly we are covered by it, it will give us great boldness and a very sweet confidence in prayer.

I will look now very briefly at some of the hindrances, some of the reasons why we do not receive that which we need and desire.

"Ye ask not."

First of all there is the very simple reason given us in James iv. 2 which I think we shall be startled to find so very often applies to ourselves: "Ye have not, because ye ask not." God *could* bless us to the full no doubt apart from prayer altogether: but we are creatures, and it is not according to His mind that the creature should be out of the proper creature-place of *dependence* upon Himself; and therefore it is a principle of all His ways with us that

our dependence upon Him should be expressed in *prayer*, and that the blessing should come that way. It will be so even as to Israel by-and-by. God has counselled that they shall be brought into wonderful blessing through all the millennial years of the reign of Christ. It will be brought about in an instant by the coming of our Lord from heaven, altogether outside of anything that they do, and yet, though that is so, we read "I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." If we *ask not*, we need not then be surprised that we *have not*.

"Ye ask amiss."

Very solemnly the same passage in James goes on to say:

"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."

Of how many unanswered prayers is this the secret? Here is searched out the *motive* in prayer.

Again we read, I. Tim. ii. 8, that men are to "pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." This takes up the present moral condition of the one who prays. If the hands be not holy, if sin be cherished and allowed in the heart and life, we cannot be surprised that prayer is not heard. God would not be the God He is if He passed over such toleration and answered such prayer. The verse brings before us three hindrances, unholiness as regards *ourselves*, wrath or an unforgiving spirit as regards *others*, (*cf.* also Matt. v. 24 and vi. 15), and "doubting" as regards God (*cf.* also James i. 6, 7).

Prayer after Failure.

But there is another very real hindrance to prayer. One may say, "But I deserve all that which I am suffering at this present moment. The pressure of it is almost more than I can bear, but *I have brought it upon myself*. How can I pray and make request as to that which I feel I am suffering as punishment at the hand of God for something in which I have transgressed."

This difficulty is not imaginary. It

is very real and may bring much anguish of soul. Let us note here, to begin with, that no chastisement which God allows to come upon any of His children is of a retributive and *penal* nature; that is to say, it is in no way to expiate the sin itself which has been committed. All the judgment which was due to that sin has fallen upon Christ, and God has been glorified about the whole question. It is not therefore a case of bearing what is due to the sin, but God deals as a Father with His children, and where wrong has been done by any such, He may visit present consequences of that sin upon the head of the one who has so offended, yet with one purpose alone in view, viz., the restoration of the one who has fallen, the bringing of such to true repentance and confession before Him. And when that end is reached—and He alone knows when it is truly so—then there is no longer cause (on that side of the matter) for a continuance of the discipline.

But while it is important to see this as a general principle, yet for faith to have a solid basis upon which we can draw near to God and make request even in such circumstances, we need to turn to the Word itself. Let any who are troubled thus, study the way that God has dealt with His own in days of old; how they transgressed, and He visited judgment upon them; how they humbled themselves and turned to Him; and how at once His heart was moved towards them, and the end of His discipline having been attained, He hearkened to their request, and granted them that they desired, even though it involved departure from His own expressed intention as regards them in view of the sin they had committed. I might give instance after instance in such books as Kings and Chronicles, but these are best sought out by those exercised for themselves.

Fatalism.

There is just one other difficulty I want to notice in conclusion, and that is a difficulty easily arising in a reasoning mind which stumbles over the truth of God's sovereignty.

Such an one will reason that God's will *must* be carried out, that what He has purposed and planned must come to pass, that no blessing and no good thing will reach anyone at all save in accordance with that all-embracing will carried into effect in power that nothing can withstand. And then from these premises (the perfect truth of which none can deny) the apparently logical conclusion is drawn that it is not really necessary to pray at all; that that which God wills shall come to pass *will* come to pass whether we pray or not, and that therefore our prayers, save for their subjective effect on ourselves, are really of no use at all. This is fatalism.

But is it true? Certainly not. What is said as to God's will, His purpose and counsel, surely and inevitably coming to pass, is perfectly true—and when we understand how good and how blessed is all that will we shall delight that it is so—but it is equally and as absolutely true that if we ask we *shall* receive; if we knock, it *shall* be opened to us; and if we seek, we *shall* find. We may not understand it; but what finite being can expect to understand fully the infinite? What we do not understand we can yet believe if revealed to us in God's word. Let us pray on. God will hear, and God will answer.

But someone says, "How can that be reconciled with God's sovereignty?" It is not for us to reconcile: leave that to Him; He can do it we may be sure. There are two answers to all these objections. The first is, "God hath said, and therefore it *must* be so": and the second is, "We have believed, and we have ourselves found that it *is* so."

Our Lord, who knew all the secrets of the bosom of eternal love, Himself uttered the far-reaching words which head this paper: let us venture on them to the full, for tho' heaven and earth shall pass away, His word can never fail, and it holds good to everyone who will believe it, for: "*Everyone* that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke xi. 10).

“Who will shew us any good?”

(ARTHUR CUTTING).

“There be many that say, Who will show us any good?” (Psalm iv. 6).

THAT is the complaint of thoroughly distressed and depressed souls. They are looking within, and they are disappointed: they are looking round, and they are distressed whichever way they look: whether within or without they see change and decay, failure and breakdown: evil seems to predominate; and then the cry is rung from their depressed and oppressed heart, “Who will show us any good?”

Now we know that discouragement does not come from God. God is the God of encouragement. It is the devil who brings in discouragement. He wants the hands of God’s people to hang down, and their knees to become enfeebled so that they may give up the good fight of faith, and grow weary of their pilgrim path.

The Old Testament is full of incidents that prove that God is against everything that brings about discouragement. When the children of Israel got to the border of the land of Canaan they sent forth spies, who came back with the report that there were cities walled to heaven, and giants in the country; and they said “We were in their sight as grasshoppers.” They said in effect, “We are no match for them, we cannot fight them;” and so they disheartened the people. But the men of faith, who are always the men for the crisis, said: “It shall be done, and the whole thing rests upon this, whether the *Lord* has pleasure in us: all hangs upon His good pleasure in us, not upon our prowess or our strength.”

When Gideon went to do battle with the Midianites, God gave instructions to him that every man that was a coward must go home. Why? Because cowardice is infectious: so Gideon put the test to them, and twenty-two thousand of them went home. Gideon was well rid of them, they would have

spelt defeat for his whole army. “Have with your faith *courage*” (II. Pet. i. 5, lit.).

Now turn to the Book of Job, chapter xxii. verse 21. Here we get a beautiful answer to the question “Who will show us any good?” It says, “Acquaint now thyself with Him” *i.e.*, with *God*. The people who get the good, are they who bring God in. They get right with God. If we are to be helpers of each other’s faith in the great conflict in these closing days of the Church’s history, it will only be as we are able to minister encouragement to each other, and we can only do that as we bring *God* in.

Peace of heart and mind must follow true acquaintance with God, so the Scripture goes on to say, “And be at peace, thereby good shall come unto thee. . . . If thou return to the Almighty thou shalt be built up. . . . Then shalt thou lay up gold as (*marg.* “on”) dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks.” To me, that means you take the best you possess and put it down in the dust. All your own righteousness, all that you have prided yourself in, must go down into the place of death. And what then? “The Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver” (verse 25). The Almighty shall be your precious all. You drop your own self-righteousness, and you get the righteousness of God.

“Thou shalt make thy prayer unto Him, and He shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows” (verse 27). If we want deliverance from all that holds us in bondage, it is by bowing down in the dust as far as we ourselves are concerned, and finding all our help and strength in God, and deliverance comes in that way. Then, knowing the delivering power of God, we shall be able to help others, and to say to those who are cast down, “Cheer up”: for the

Scripture proceeds, "When men are cast down, then thou shalt say, There is lifting up, and he shall save the humble person."

If we find ourselves under the chastening rod of God because of failure, we must not lose sight of the hand that uses the rod. Remember that when the husbandman uses his knife on the tree, it is never nearer, or of greater interest to him, than at that moment.

"The Father's hand will never cause His child a needless tear." But He would have us to partake of His holi-

ness, hence the chastening; and it is a good thing to become acquainted with the loving thoughts of His heart in regard to this. Then we shall strengthen the feeble knees, and lift up the hands that hang down, and make straight the paths for our feet, in consideration for others, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way. What *consideration* it begets for others if we get right with God ourselves!

May the Lord help us to be helpers of one another's joy, and not to be a source of discouragement one to the other.

Symphony.

Our Lord taught a great lesson in Matthew xviii. 19. He said: "If two of you shall agree on earth (symphonize) as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven." The agreement referred to is not that of a mere human covenant, or even of sympathy: it is *symphony*. Symphony is agreement of sounds in a musical chord, and depends upon fixed laws of harmony. It cannot be secured by any arbitrary arrangement. One cannot lay his fingers accidentally or carelessly upon the keys of a musical instrument and produce symphony of sounds. Such touch may evoke only intolerable discord, unless regulated by a knowledge of the principles of harmony. Nay, there is even a deeper necessity—namely, that the keys touched shall themselves be *in tune with the whole instrument*.

Two conditions then are needful: first, that a skilful hand shall put the

whole instrument in tune; and then that an equally skilful hand shall touch keys which are capable of producing together what is called "a true chord."

It is inconceivable that our Lord used such a word as this by any accident. This language evinces Divine design. He is teaching a great lesson on the mystery of prayer, which likewise demands two conditions: first, that the praying soul shall be in harmony with God Himself, and then that those who unite in prayer shall, because of such unity with Him, be in harmony with each other.

There must be, therefore, back of all prevailing supplication and intercession, One who, with infinite skill, tunes the keys into accord with His own ear, and then touches them like a master musician, so that they respond together to His will and give forth the chord which is in His mind.

—*Revival of Prayer.* A. T. Pierson.

The Style of Scripture.

The difference between the Scripture style and the style of human writings is the same as between the work of God in creation and a work of man in art. It is the difference between a rose out of a garden and a rose made of wax—the work of art may be more perfect

and faultless than the living flower, in which there may be some irregularity and flaw. Yet when we see the real rose, we exclaim, "How beautiful! How fragrant!" When we see the artist's work we say, "How clever!"

—A. Saphir.

The Gospel in the World.

(S. L. JACOB).

The Mission, the Missionary, and the Field.

THE field is the world. Into this world God sent His Son on this great mission, "For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the *world*," and again, "For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved."

Our blessed Lord then was the great Missionary, or Sent One. More than forty times in the Gospel of John He is so called. He brought the knowledge of the love of God into this world; and in His death the glory of God's love has been manifested here, that men might be supremely blest.

Before our Lord's time God sent forth many servants (Matt. xxi. 34-36), but these were manifestly sent to the house of Israel; for only in a very minor way did the prophets speak to the Gentiles, who were left in ignorance; and the times of this ignorance God winked at, though now He commandeth all men everywhere to repent.

Indeed our Lord Himself came in the first place to Israel only (Matt. xv. 24); but He could not be restrained, and the more His rejection by Israel came out, the more widely His divine compassions became manifest, and He taught by act and parable that His mission was to the whole world (Matt. viii. 11; xiii. see the parables thereof; John iv. 34-38).

We read in several places in the Gospels of the twelve being sent out by Him to preach and to heal, and also of seventy being sent out for the same purpose; and all this was evidently in view of what they were to do after His death. Therefore in each Gospel we get the great commission, or mission, of His disciples set forth each in its own distinct way, shewing that the whole

world was to be in the scope of the gospel. The last words of our Lord before He was taken up into heaven were, "Ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

If it be replied that some of these commissions at the end of the different gospels have a dispensational bearing, and are not applicable to us, the answer is "Not so!" A dispensational bearing they unquestionably have, but not so as to exclude a present application also; and if we miss the present bearing of Scripture, we shall be great losers. A study of the quotations from the Old Testament in the New will prove that very few quotations are made to shew their exact dispensational fulfilment, but almost always it is a present application which is pressed. Moreover, whatever may be said as to the dispensational character of the commission in Matthew's Gospel, there can be no question that the words of the Lord in Luke bear altogether on this day (xxiv. 47).

The great mission that the Lord gave to His disciples may be stated in His own words, thus: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world (John xvii. 18); and "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John xx. 21). To be in the world as He was in it, and to make Him known, is therefore their mission throughout the length and breadth of it; and the Holy Ghost was sent down from heaven to be in them the power for this most blessed service.

Strange to say, an argument often used in the present day is that "the times of the heathen Gentiles have not

yet come: and therefore they should be left in ignorance." The pitifulness of this astounding statement is exceedingly great, seeing that they who use it are themselves Gentiles, and "the apostle of the Gentiles" is their great apostle (Romans xi. 13). But it only proves how easy it is to fall from the simplest truths of Scripture.

A thought which has long been before us is this: "How has this mission which the Lord gave to His own been carried out, and what is the state of things in the world with regard to it at the present time?"

These are questions which it is very difficult to answer, and which are only capable of imperfect answers at best; yet it may not be without interest to seek to get some little knowledge of the subject. If a friend comes from some other town or country, we are glad to hear from him something about the Lord's work in that town or country. We do not say, "He cannot give a correct account, he knows not the hearts of men, therefore we will listen to nothing." No, we listen with eagerness; though we quite understand that much that is said will have to be subsequently corrected at a future day. It is thus with regard to our subject: we desire to understand the matter as well as we can, and any help should be cordially received: hence this feeble attempt to interest our readers.

Feeble the attempt must be for a three-fold reason: 1st, because of the vastness of the subject; 2nd, because of our own lack of knowledge; and 3rd, because in a magazine of this sort we must be very brief. All we can hope to do is to stimulate our readers to look into matters for themselves, and so increase the interest of saints in the whole circle of Christ's interests; for how, otherwise, are we to fulfil the apostolic injunction to pray for all men (I. Tim. ii. 1), and all saints (Eph. vi.

18), and how else can we truly and intelligently desire that God's will may be done on earth even as it is in heaven. Surely nothing should be allowed to rob us of this longing.

We must remember that the outward, responsible history of any movement of God must necessarily be a sad one. Every dispensation ends in failure, every movement of God committed to man begins to deteriorate from that very moment, and continues so to do until God comes in with fresh energy of the Spirit.

Moreover we are plainly taught in the Scriptures that unless we continue to advance, make progress, and conquer, we shall be defeated and enslaved. Compare the Book of Joshua with the Book of Judges, for proof of this; and even the latter part of Joshua is sad reading compared with the former. The twelfth chapter is a list of conquests, the thirteenth begins in a sad strain: Joshua was old, *and there remained "yet very much land to be possessed,"* and hundreds of years of sad experiences had to be passed through before this land was possessed by a new energy of God manifested in David, a remarkable type of Christ.

The Acts of the Apostles is like the Book of Joshua, and also ends in a different strain to its beginning, concluding in the account of the shipwreck of the twenty-seventh chapter—a parable of what was to follow. The Church's history on earth since then answers to the Book of Judges, and is a sad history of failure relieved by many interventions of the grace and goodness of God. But though the appalling failure of that which bears the name of Christ might well make us weep, there is no need for despair, for the resources of our God are not exhausted, and Christ fails not.

(To be continued).

Let no man think error in doctrine a slight practical evil: no road to perdition has ever been more thronged than

that of false doctrine. Error is a shield over the conscience and a bandage over the eyes.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 9.—Micah.

THE prophecy of Micah is particularly rich in its varied presentations of the glories of Christ. Within the limited compass of a paper like this, however, a bare outline will have to suffice.

The book before us divides itself in an easily recognized way into three sections. We shall see how the One to whom *all* the prophets give witness, is referred to in each of these three sections.

First Section—Chaps. i., ii.

Chap. I. vers. 2-5.

2. Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple.

3. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.

4. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.

5. For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? *is it* not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? *are they* not Jerusalem?

The prophecy opens with Jehovah taking the place of a witness against His people on account of their sins. How painful a position this must have been for Him to occupy, we who know something of His tender, faithful love can in some degree understand. It is as if a father were called to the witness-box to give evidence against a dearly-loved child.

But God can never be indifferent to sin, whether in His own people or in the world at large. He is a God of unsullied holiness and truth. All His ways, from the earliest moment of His dealings with men proclaim Him such. One great good that comes to us from the study of the Old Testament is that therein we learn *God*, as He made Himself known in His governmental ways with Israel, and with certain individuals.

In Micah we find Him *coming out of His place* (ver. 3). His true place is that

of Blesser. It is His delight to bestow benefits upon His people with a hand that knows no stint. Judgment is His strange work. But holiness and truth demand that He should put His hand to that work in which He finds no pleasure, that He should come forth from His place where He sits as the beneficent Source of blessing, to punish transgression and to rebuke transgressors. Hence it is that sweeping destruction is foretold, both for Samaria and Judah.

But an important principle comes out in this connection, namely, that the warnings of impending judgment are not merely to arouse the sinful and the careless, but especially *to do good to those who walk uprightly*. Thus we read:—

Chap. II. ver. 7.

7. O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

It may be asked, *how* can predictions of coming judgment benefit the godly, who are either saved through, or exempted from the awful destruction which will involve others? In two ways.

First, *by increasing their confidence in God*. In our day, as well as in by-gone times, cavillers are found who ask, why does God permit all the evil in the world to go on unchecked? Such cavilling finds its complete answer in a prophecy of this sort; and those who love the truth and walk uprightly are encouraged in their confidence as they learn that God is not going to allow evil to go on unchecked. He will intervene in judgment, to secure the final triumph of good.

Second, *by separating them; heart and soul, from that upon which judgment is coming*. Herein lies the great value of the prophecies of "The Revelation" to us. We see there that certain things—the

great world-system, and the professing Church in its apostate state—are to be visited with unsparing judgment. The effect of that upon us is, that we thankfully keep apart from both, we have no wish to be mixed up with anything which is so soon to be disastrously overthrown.

Chap. II. vers. 10-13.

10. Arise ye, and depart; for this is not *your* rest; because it is polluted, it shall destroy *you*, even with a sore destruction.

11. If a man, walking in the spirit and falsehood, do lie, saying, I will prophesy unto thee of wine and of strong drink; he shall even be the prophet of this people.

12. I will surely assemble, O Jacob, all of thee; I will surely gather the remnant of Israel; I will put them together as the sheep of Bozrah, as the flock in the midst of their fold: they shall make great noise by reason of the *multitude* of men.

13. The breaker is come up before them; they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it; and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them.

On account of sin Israel and Judah were driven out of their land. It could not be their rest; they had to arise and depart. But the sure word of prophecy looks on to the future when Jehovah will assemble the remnant of Israel, and will gather them in their multitudes like sheep of Bozrah. In this connection we have a lovely presentation of Christ; for Israel's restoration will be His work.

He is here viewed as the great Breaker of obstacles. He will break through all that hinders the recovery of His chosen people. He will make an outlet for them, wherever they are scattered, that they may break forth from their captivity. Then, as their King, He takes His place as their Leader, with Jehovah Himself at their head.

However far this may apply to Israel's past recovery from Babylon, the final fulfilment is assuredly yet future. What a day will that be when Israel's King intervenes for His people, and the fetters with which the nations have bound them will be as green withes in His hands! How deep their joy when the great Breaker of bondage leads them again into the land of their blessing!

Second Section—Chaps. iii.—v.

Chap. III. ver. 8.

8. But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

The Spirit of Christ speaks in the prophet. Whose voice can it be but His, claiming to be full of power, by the Spirit of Jehovah, and of judgment and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin? It is a foreshadowing of Christ, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, full of power for testimony.

Chap. IV. vers. 1-4.

1. But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.

2. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

3. And he shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks; nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

4. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord of hosts hath spoken it.

Here is a magnificent prophecy of millennial blessing, the chief features of which are divine teaching of the nations, divine rule over all, world-wide peace, power and glory centred in Zion.

The "thoughts" and "counsel" of Jehovah (ver. 12) will then be brought to pass. He is Lord of the whole earth, and He will dispose of it as He pleases. His pleasure will be to exalt Zion, and to cause blessing to flow out therefrom to all peoples.

Of course, God has His thoughts and counsels for His heavenly people, as well as for those whose blessing will be on the earth. His purpose for *us* is to have us holy and without blame before Him in love, dwelling in His own immediate presence as His sons, along with His beloved Son who ever dwelt there. We are to bear the image of that Son, and as His brethren to share His place in the Father's love, to enjoy holy blessed intimacy for ever, with the

Father and the Son. All this (and there is more that might be told) far transcends the portion that will be given to Israel, and which the prophets describe. But the same blessed Person will be the centre of both the heavenly and the earthly spheres of blessing. And He is worthy!

Chap. V. vers. 1-5.

1. Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops; he hath laid siege against us; they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.

2. But thou, Beth-Jehem 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* from of old, from everlasting.

3. Therefore will he give them up, until the time *that* she which travaileth hath brought forth; then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel.

4. And he shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God; and they shall abide; for now shall he be great unto the ends of the earth.

5. And this *man* shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land.

Chapter v. opens by presenting that blessed and adorable One, the theme of heaven's delight, smitten with a rod upon the cheek, rejected by the Israel whose Ruler and Deliverer He came to be. The sad result of Israel's treatment of her Messiah is given in verse 3. But verse 2 comes in as a lovely parenthesis, showing that same glorious Person, whose goings forth have been from the days of eternity (see margin), yet who was born in lowly circumstances in a small town in Judah.

How utterly beyond the highest range of human thought is the wonder of all this! Whether we think of the lofty height *from* which He came, or the lowly depth *to* which He stooped; whether we dwell on who He was, or on what He became, we can only bow in worship.

Transcendantly great He ever was, the days of eternal ages long past knew His goings forth, yet He stooped to the manger, to Bethlehem, to lowliness, and poverty.

And *this* was the One smitten with a rod upon the cheek!

But if men knew not His worth, there was One who appreciated Him to the full. He was to come forth from

Bethlehem *unto God*, to be Ruler in Israel. God would see to it that He should have His place as Israel's Ruler. Meanwhile, in lowly patience and grace, He would leave all to God, and be content to be for His pleasure and delight.

The consequence of Israel's rejection of Christ, is that the nation is given up of God, for the time (v. 3). The time will come, however, when the nation that refused Him will acclaim Him as Ruler. Then shall He stand and feed them, as a shepherd does his flock. And their prosperity will be assured, they shall abide, because *He shall be great*.

Hallelujah! Let this word sink into your rejoicing souls, ye who love the Lord. *He shall be great!* Personally great He always was. But here where He has been belittled and put to shame, among the people who crowned Him with ignominy and contempt, *He shall be great!*

Not only in the midst of Israel will this be so, but "unto the ends of the earth." *He* will reign without a rival then. Jubilant songs will be sung in His honour. Kings will bow down before Him. His Name shall be the national hymn of every tribe and kindred. *He*, He whom we know and love, He who has died for us, *He* shall be great! Where is the Christian, whose heart does not throb with exultation at the thought?

The bright millennial day will be ushered in with terrible conflict and unprecedented bloodshed. The vast hordes from the north, "the Assyrian" of prophecy will swoop down upon the coveted land of the chosen.

But the presence of Christ will be the shield of His people. "*This man shall be the peace.*" His coming will mean more than victory. It will mean the utter destruction of the foe. Not high walls, or skilful tactics, or powerful engines of war, will bring security in that day. He will be the peace.

Chap. V. ver. 7.

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

8. And the remnant of Jacob shall be among the Gentiles in the midst of many people, as a lion among the beasts of the forest, as a young lion among the flocks of sheep; who, if he go through, both treadeth down, and teareth in pieces, and none can deliver.

9. Thine hand shall be lifted upon thine adversaries, and all thine enemies shall be cut off.

When Christ gets His place thus, Israel will have hers, in a twofold way. First, as dew, or as showers upon the grass, she will be the channel of refreshment and blessing to all. Second, as a lion, she will be the means of cutting off all adversaries, and putting down all that is contrary to the sway of Christ.

Third Section—Chaps. vi.—vii.

Chap. vi. brings before us a touching reminder of God's mercy and goodness, and an appeal to His people based thereon.

The concluding chapter, gives us the spirit of Christ in the prophet, feeling and owning the state of the nation. Ver. 6 is quoted in the gospels as the condition of things produced by the presence of Christ among the people. His eyes (ver. 7) are upon Jehovah, and he waits for God to intervene, in salvation. All this voices, no doubt, the thoughts and feelings of the remnant in the coming day. The spirit of Christ will be in them as in the prophets of old, and they will be able to sing the beautiful psalm of praise and triumph given in the remaining verses of the chapter, and ending thus:

18. Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy.

19. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities: and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.

20. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.

Negative Teaching.

Merely negative teachers are as the wind; they destroy but they cannot build; at their best they do but sweep away the unsubstantial fictions of human fancy or human fraud, but they erect nothing solid in the place of the discarded fictions. Positive truth alone can feed, sustain, and invigorate the soul.

It is no support in the hour of despondency, or in the hour of temptation, to reflect, or to be told, that such and such a doctrine or system is false. Possibly enough it *is* false, but what then? A sense of falsehood only sup-

plies moral power so long and so far as you are confronted with the falsehood. You hate the lie, and your hatred imports force into your contradiction; you loathe the idol, and a righteous scorn nerves your arm to shatter it. But when the idol has been pulverised and the lie is exploded, your force is gone. Your force was purely relative to the objects of its animosity, and it perished with them. Nay more; even whilst they lasted, your force was good for nothing beyond and beside the function of destroying them (*e.g.* Jehu and his subsequent failure).

God preserve us from ingratitude, that abominable thing, that viper which creeps forth when the sun is up; for when signal mercies demand special thankfulness, how often have we resembled Hezekiah, who rendered not again according to the benefit (II. Chron. xxxii. 25).

If because of painful circumstances we cannot praise the Lord, we ought to confess it as sin.

Divine truths are like a well-drawn portrait which looks particularly upon every one amongst the great multitude that looks upon it.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 7—The Man of God's Counsels (Part 2).

AS regards ourselves, who are by nature Gentiles, the whole fabric of Scripture authority rests upon the basis of the greatness of the person of Jesus. The answer of my faith to the question: "What think ye of Christ? whose son is He?" must regulate my thoughts regarding this all-important subject. And as a matter of fact, I find that the way in which people do answer this question makes all the difference as to their ideas of inspiration. I never knew a man sound upon the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures, who harboured the least doubt in his mind regarding the divinity of Jesus; neither have I ever known any one who looked upon Jesus as the Creator incarnate, and who relegated the Bible to a lower place than the Word of God. I am sure it will be found that these two convictions are inseparably connected, and that where any one of them is not welcome, the other will refuse to enter.

One who has recently apostatised from the faith of Christianity questions if we ever would have heard of the Old Testament had it not been for Jesus; and though it may be very difficult to say what might, or might not have been, had the light of the gospel of Christ never reached us, we certainly would not have had any real faith in it apart from the Son of God. We have received the Holy Scriptures solely through faith in Him. He has authenticated to us the writings of Moses and the Prophets; and the writers of the New Testament declare their epistles to be *the commandments of the Lord* (I. Cor. xiv. 37); and that not only the *thoughts*, but the *words* in which those thoughts were conveyed to us, were words chosen by the Spirit of God (I. Cor. ii. 13).

If these statements of theirs, which

lay claim to such authority, are falsehoods, then they are the most wicked falsehoods ever told to men, for they are lies against the living God; and as they concern the most important matters with which the human race has to do, they are the inventions of soul-murderers. These statements of the avowed followers and servants of Jesus are accompanied, on the one hand, with the promise of eternal and unspeakable blessedness for the believer; and, on the other hand, the most terrible consequences of unbelief are announced as hanging over the head of the impenitent rebel; and all these things are placed before the reader in language which is absolutely simple, natural, unstrained, and bearing no resemblance to that which rises from the frenzied imagination of crack-brained zealots. If what they affirm of their words and writings be not true, they were a parcel of wicked and bad men, and they can be believed in nothing. And yet we owe to those men all that we have ever heard of Jesus; and my knowledge of men gives me the most perfect assurance that such a person as He of whom they testified could not be created in the mind of a child of Adam.

His story touches the most tender chords of the human heart, and His moral excellency so mightily appeals to the soul of the faithful disciple, that his most blissful moment is when he is at the feet of this adorable Person as a worshipper. So great is Jesus, so morally different from every other human being, so completely free from all the unworthy motives which govern others, so gracious, guileless, gentle, meek, lowly, compassionate, merciful, self-sacrificing, righteous, holy, harmless, good, so completely unique in all His characteristics, and so unlike man, as we know man, in every solitary way,

that some have questioned if such a person ever really existed.

But if His disciples invented Him, they must have travelled for their conception outside the sphere in which the thoughts of men revolve; and if they ever took such a journey, we have to ask ourselves what power it was which carried them into those hitherto unexplored and unknown regions of purest thought, and imprinted upon their imaginations the moral glories with which they decked Him of whom they spoke as the SON OF GOD.

No man can conceive anything beyond himself in a moral way. We all know what children of Adam are, for this is what we are ourselves; we know also the lower creation, for man was made to have dominion over everything beneath him; but who among men knows anything about angels or spirits? With these he is not set in relation, nor has he anything to do with them. In the wisdom of God a boundary has been placed between man and the spirit-world, which it would be well for him to observe. His lawless and inquisitive mind would urge him to find out inventions which would nullify that boundary, and on the other side there are turbulent and wicked spirits who are as anxious to hold converse with him as he is with them; but woe to that soul which intrudes into those invisible and unknown regions.

The partial success with which his efforts seem to be crowned may be an encouragement to him, and embolden him to make still greater efforts to find his way in those regions of darkness, but he is in the hands of creatures in whom there is neither truth nor mercy, and unless God intervene, his damnation is a certainty. "Rapping" may be made on this side of the wall, and this may be answered from the other side; and on certain occasions a venturesome spirit may find means of breaking through altogether, until expelled by a force greater than his own; but these are the works of darkness, and in them poor, foolish, fallen, wilful man is the plaything of the devil. He thinks that

these creatures are much what he is himself, except that, from the reports which they give of their condition, he imagines them in a state of happiness. He knows nothing of them, nor of the spirit-world which they inhabit, for he cannot go beyond himself.

That man is very wicked is indisputable, none of us knows how very wicked he is; but he is not *wickedness itself*. From a divine standpoint there is no good in the flesh, but he still bears remarkable traces of the handiwork of God about him. He is like a great ruin in which there is not a sound stone from the foundation to the top, but which bears through all its decay, traces of its former greatness and grandeur. It was this which met the eye of Jesus in the young ruler, whom He is said to have looked upon and loved. Yet, though those traces of primitive grandeur were more noticeable in him than in many others, he preferred his wealth to the Christ of God and treasure in heaven. But those spirits with whom men foolishly seek to have to do, are *unmixed wickedness*, and they rejoice in the destruction of the creation of God; therefore there is no escape for those who place themselves under their power. But this is rather in the nature of a digression, though I trust it may not be found unprofitable to the reader. I gladly return to the subject on hand.

If Jesus were an invention of those who called themselves His disciples, then His disciples were not ordinary men, for they have certainly gone beyond all that can be understood by men of the world. Leaving this world, after having revealed the Father, Jesus has to say, "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee" (John xvii. 25); and again, "They have not known the Father, nor Me" (xvi. 3). The *Father* cannot be known by a mere child of Adam, nor can the second Man be known by the first. There is no analogy between the *Father* and the *world*, nor between the *man made of dust* and the *Man out of heaven*; both Father and Son are beyond the ken of the men of this world.

The gods of the heathen are by the makers of them indued with passions such as men have; they are morally like men, but with greater strength. And if I take the heroes of the novelist, pride and self-reliance are the prominent features, for these are the characteristics in which men delight, but not one of them is like Jesus. There is nothing in common between men, as I know man, and the Son of God. It is only in the Bible I can find Him. How is this? If those fishermen of Galilee invented Him, how is it that no one has been able to invent another who can be compared with Him? and how is it that, now that He has been invented, He is so little understood that the greatest minds on earth, even when well-intentioned, cannot reproduce Him? Their frequent attempts have been at best but miserable caricatures. Apart from the holy anointing, the indwelling Spirit of God, no one can know the Father and the Son.

Read the best written life of Jesus ever produced by the uninspired pen of an unregenerate man, and then turn to the four Gospels, and see if it is not an emergence out of thick darkness and the domain of death, into marvellous light, and the radiant sphere of everlasting life. As you read the nine beatitudes which introduce the sermon on the mount, you are made to feel as though a door were opened in heaven, and the whole atmosphere about you at once becomes redolent with the perfume wafted from the paradise of God; then pass on until you hear the bells of heaven pealing forth the welcome of a returning scape-gallows, who in broken utterances sobs out his repentance into the gracious ear of a Saviour-God, and you must feel that all this is outside the sphere in which the thoughts of men revolve, and that you are made to listen to the pulsations of immortal love.

When you have finished with this, if you ever can finish with it, turn to John xiii and behold the grace of that lowly Son of God, doing the most menial service for His disciples which it is

possible for one man to perform for another; and listen to those counsels of grace, wisdom, and holy love which fall from His blessed lips upon the ears of His humble followers; and follow Him until He is done speaking to them, and turns His eyes up to heaven, and pours into the ears of His Father His desires for them, and for all who will believe on Him through their word; and hear Him demand on their behalf, as One who has a righteous claim upon the wealth of power, and grace, and love, which in the Father dwell. Then follow Him to the judgment hall of the Roman governor, and hearken to the leaders of His earthly people howling for His heart's blood; and follow the crowd to dark Golgotha, and behold Him who made the worlds led as a lamb to the slaughter, nailed to a gibbet as a malefactor, and that between two robbers; and watch to the close, until He is taken down dead, while darkness enfolds the land, and under your feet you feel the earth reel beneath the weight of the corpse of Him who was its Creator, while the rocks are rent and the graves are opened; and if, after witnessing these things, you can flatter yourself that Jesus was a man like other men, or that such a Person either was, or could be, the invention of His disciples, you have a way of judging and arriving at conclusions unknown to me. From the benighted heart of the pagan centurion who had charge of the crucifixion was wrung the confession: "Truly this Man was the Son of God" (Mark xv. 39). May the reader's heart be at least as impressionable.

This is the glorious Person who has authenticated to us the Old Testament, of which He is the Subject, as He is also of the New. As to Israel, the law was given to them by Moses, and accompanied by such visible manifestations of majesty and terror on the part of God, that its divine origin could not by them be called in question; and as to the prophets, their word was proven to be of God by the sanctity of their lives, by its harmony with that which was given through Moses, and by the signs and wonders with which God

was sometimes pleased to send it forth; though generally speaking, the prophets who after Moses were used of God to build up the canon of Scripture, do not seem to have been miracle workers. Men like Elijah and Elisha, who were characterised by miraculous manifestations, have not been used to put anything on record, though their words and works and manner of life have been recorded by others. The Jewish Scriptures, were well authenticated to the people.

But we Gentiles were outside all those special dealings of God. We were "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12). We have come into this rich inheritance through having to do with God revealed in Jesus. He came to His earthly people in fulfilment of the promises made to the fathers, but they rejected Him, and slew Him with the sword of the Romans. God raised Him from the dead, and in answer to the prayer of Jesus from the cross on their behalf (Luke xxiii. 34), offered to send Him back to them if they would repent (Acts iii. 20). The stoning of Stephen was their answer to this, and closed the door of hope to the nation; therefore devout men made great lamentation over his death, for in his grave every hope of Israel after the flesh was buried.

Then the Gentiles come up for blessing before God, and the persecutor of the Church is converted and sent to them. The perfect revelation of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God in whom the Jews boasted, came in the Word made flesh, so that believers from among the Gentiles find themselves linked up in the worship of the true God with Abel and all the faithful from his day until the coming of Christ. In this way we have a title to the Old Testament as well as to the New, and to us the two volumes become one Book, both equally inspired of God; the authority of the old established for us in the submission of Christ to every jot and tittle, though a better thing has

been brought in by Him, for the Old was but the *demand*, whereas the New is the supply.

The subtle way in which men who call themselves Christians put before the public theories which are in direct antagonism to the plain statements of Scripture, is a plain proof of their determination to undermine in the thoughts of men whatever bit of confidence they may still possess in the Bible as the Word of God. If they would tell us plainly that they had abandoned Christianity as a useless encumbrance in the pursuit of knowledge, one might be grieved and sorry for them; but they would not be sailing under a false flag, neither would their ways fill one with the same measure of disgust and loathing.

I may be told that these men think there is much in the Scriptures that is really valuable, and therefore they do not feel justified in casting them aside as altogether useless. But if the Bible be not the word of God, and if Jesus be not a divine Person, and if we have no revelation from God, and if the apostles were a set of deceivers and knaves—. But here I am interrupted at once, and reminded that the writers are considered to have been good and true men. Are they? *Did* Jehovah say to the prophets the things which they spoke to men as His word? Was the burning bush a fact in the life of Moses? *Jesus* said it was, but was it? Is the Exodic account of the deliverance of Israel from the power of Pharaoh true? What about the passage through the sea? the desert? the manna? the water out of the rock? Whose Son was He who said: "Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness"? (John vi. 49).

Did Jesus work the wonders which are recorded of Him? They are recorded by the Evangelist, that we should believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing we might have life through His name (John xx. 31). Is the greatness of this Person built upon a foundation of falsehood, and is it upon a raft of lies against the living God we are to float into the harbour of

eternal life? Did these *good and true* men who wrote the Gospels and Epistles concoct the baseless wonders with which they accredit Jesus, and leave them on record encased in a framework of piety as hypocritical as false? This is not what I should expect from men who are good and true.

And yet they do commend themselves to the conscience of all men as both good and true. No one can question that they believed the things which they have put on record. And how could they have been deceived? They were

not men easily convinced, and the deeds were not done in a corner. They were neither credulous nor easily imposed upon, and though their persistent unbelief was failure, and had to come under the rebuke of their Lord, it gives additional weight to their testimony, which they gladly bore for His honour and for our eternal blessing, when the last cloud of unbelief at length yielded to the gracious influence of that eternal day, which broke upon their souls as they stood beside the empty grave of Him who could not be holden of death.

Answers to Correspondents.

Will ALL be saved?

W.W., Manchester.—You must not allow the cavilling of the universalist to hinder you in the proclamation of the glad tidings; indeed, the very passages quoted by him should give you a great incentive to go on with your work.

I. Tim. ii. 3, 4.

Take the first: "God our Saviour, who will have *all* men to be saved" (I. Tim. ii. 3, 4). The gospel is for *all*, and is sent to every sinner on earth: this you can freely make known. Moreover a righteous basis for the blessing of all is found in that "Christ Jesus . . . gave Himself a ransom for *all*, to be testified in due time" (verse 6). This must be made known world-wide.

But salvation, which God is willing to bestow upon all, is linked with coming "to the knowledge of the truth," and here the will of man comes in and he refuses it; and in this is his condemnation, for men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil (John iii. 19). But God is dealing with men in grace, it is the day of salvation, and He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II. Pet. iii. 9). If, however, in self-will a man refuses repentance and the gospel, his doom is clearly

foretold in the Word of God:

"The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels.

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

"Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (II. Thess. i. 7-9).

And all such will be without excuse.

The word "will" in verse 4 is not the will of *purpose*, it is the will of *desire*, embracing all men both in the thought of His heart and in the bearing of the one all-availing ransom. But the will of purpose is not thus general: it is definitive of some "chosen" in the inscrutable sovereignty of grace (see Eph. i. 4, 5).

I. Cor. xv. 22.

The passage in I. Cor. xv. 22: "For as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive," certainly does not prove that all men will be saved. It is a simple statement of the fact that on the one hand all that are in Adam die, and that on the other hand all who are in Christ shall be made alive. But all men are not "in Christ." Hence all will not be made alive, *i.e.*, not made alive in the sense in which this verse

speaks of being made alive or quickened.

It is interesting to note that the word quickening applied in verse 45 to Christ, "the last Adam a quickening Spirit," is cognate to the verb used in this verse. Hence there is contrast between the two Adams. Each is head of a race. Death prevails in one line, life in the other. In Adam all die, in Christ, the last Adam, all are made alive.

Though verse 22 does not pass beyond those in Christ, yet we may remark that more is involved (though not developed) in verse 24 where the destruction of the last enemy, death, is spoken of. Death is here viewed as an enemy which has invaded God's creation: that enemy must be destroyed and this involves the resurrection even of the wicked—not their being "made alive" in the sense of verse 22, but the bringing together of the component parts of man—body, soul and spirit by the destruction of that which had separated them. Thus is God vindicated in respect of that which had brought disintegration into His creation: and of this the resurrection of Christ is the pledge. But the resurrection of the lost is in view not of life, but of judgment, hence it is spoken of in John v. 29 as the resurrection of damnation (or judgment) and is contrasted there with the resurrection of life, and in Rev. xx. 4-6 with the first resurrection, from which it is separated by an interval of a thousand years.

Romans v. 18.

As to Romans v. 18. This runs thus:—

"As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation: even so by the righteousness of one (or 'by one righteousness' margin) the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

The words "judgment came" and also the words "the free gift came" are in italics in the A.V., as indicating that they are not in the original. Omitting these words the simple meaning of the Scripture is evident: as the offence of one had its bearing towards all men to

condemnation so the bearing of the one righteousness is towards (literal translation) all men unto justification of life. That does not mean that all men receive the blessing which flows from that one accomplished righteousness, but it *does* mean that it is *towards all alike* in view of justification of life. We have a somewhat similar statement in the third chapter, where we read (verse 22) of "the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ *unto all*": that is to say it is towards all men, but, mark, it does not say "*upon all men*" but goes on, "*and upon all them that believe.*"

I. Tim. iv. 10.

You ask again as to 1st Tim. 4, 10:

"For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe."

Here the word "Saviour" should be translated "Preserver." God is the Preserver of all men. His rain descends upon the just and upon the unjust. He sustains all in life. But His beneficent care in this way is specially marked towards those that believe, and hence the apostle's confidence in the midst of suffering and reproach.

One passage from the Old Testament and one from the New will serve in few words to prove the falsity of the universalist's reasoning. "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. xii. 2). "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John v., 28, 29).

The Father's House, and the Judgment Seat of Christ.

H.H.—We know of no definite passage of Scripture to guide us in replying to your enquiry as to whether believers will pass before the judgment seat of Christ *prior* to entrance into the Father's house, or whether that will be

subsequent to our entrance there. For this reason we can only state our thought as to this in the way of suggestion.

There are two things that must ever be distinguished, *viz.*, grace and responsibility. The Father's house is on the former line, and the judgment seat upon the latter. Infinite love has chosen us as children, we have been given by the Father to the Son, our Lord Jesus (John xvii. 10); and the time is speedily coming when He will receive us to Himself in His Father's house (John xiv. 1-3). This is all grace, and all that is needed for that place is the "body of glory" (Phil. iii. 21). This wondrous change will take place at the coming of the Lord (I. Thess. iv.) in the twinkling of an eye (I. Cor. xv. 52), and we believe that we shall at once enter the Father's house.

The judgment seat (II. Cor. v. 20) has to say to the things done in the body, and of course is on the line of our responsibility. There we shall behold everything in the light of the Lord. We shall there receive His judgment (not in the sense of condemnation) as to our whole course on earth; and being no longer cramped and limited by our mortal flesh, but being clothed upon with our house which is from heaven

(II. Cor. v. 1, 2), we shall have the capacity without hindrance of fully appreciating the matchless grace of God, and also the degradation and hatefulness of that from which that grace has saved us.

The hour in which all will thus be manifested is evidently connected in Scripture with "the day" of the Lord, and rewards are linked with it (I. Cor. iii. 13-15). From Matthew xxv. 14-30, we gather that these rewards determine the respective places of saints individually in their sharing in the glorious millennial reign of Christ over the earth. We incline to the conclusion, therefore, that the judgment seat of Christ, as it applies to believers in this dispensation, will immediately precede our return to earth with the Lord to reign with Him over it.

But the judgment seat in no wise determines our place in the Father's house: infinite love has already done this, and we have nothing to fear, for we shall there be in perfect and eternal accord with the One who for the fulness of our blessing and joy will rightly appraise for us all that has passed in our life below, and fuller and deeper will be the praise that we shall then render to Him.

Suffering and Glory.

(The late J. REVELL).

"The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I. Pet. i. 11).

"If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (II. Tim. ii. 12).

Lord Jesus, when Thou wast on earth
Men scorned Thy lowly guise;
To them Thou wast an object but
To hate and to despise.
Ascended now, and set on high,
And crowned with glory bright,
They scorn Thy messages of grace
And of Thy love make light.
O Lowly One! Rejected One!
I'd share the shame with Thee;
I'd bind their scorn upon my brow,
Earth's only crown for me.

But, Lord, that glorious time shall come
When men shall own Thy claim;
When heaven and earth shall own and
bow
Before Thy blessed Name:
Thy kingdom without end shall be,
In righteousness and peace,
All then shall know Thee (blessed word)
And strife and hatred cease.
But Oh! what wondrous depths of grace!
Thou'lt make me reign with Thee;
With Thee, in brightest glory placed,
Thou'lt share Thy crown *with me*.

God our Shield.

Genesis xv. 1.

“ARE you on the Lord’s side?” I asked of a gentleman I chanced to meet.

“Yes,” he replied “by God’s grace I am, and, better still, He is *on my side.*” I was delighted with his answer, for it proved that He knew the God of the Bible—the One who has revealed Himself for our joy and blessing in the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there are many who are truly trusting the Saviour, who dare not give such an answer; they would deem it presumptuous to say that God was on their side, poor failing sinful creatures as they are; yet this is the blessed truth in which He would have their hearts to be established.

Hear His gracious words to Abram. “*Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward*” (Genesis xv. 1). What a glorious statement! and how safe must Abram have been since the Almighty was his protector! And Abram did not cavil or doubt, for we read, “And he believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness” (verse 6).

God as our shield is strikingly set forth in the case of the passover in Egypt (Exodus xii).

Abraham’s children had multiplied exceedingly and become very great, but they were all slaves, groaning beneath the tyranny of hard and cruel masters.

God looked upon their sorrow and undertook their deliverance. He would lead them out of Egypt and bring them to Himself, that they might be His own people, His treasured inheritance. But His holy character required that a righteous basis should be found upon which He could do this. The sprinkled blood of the paschal lamb was this basis, it spoke of the life of a spotless victim having been surrendered on behalf of those who were sinful, and so under the

penalty of God’s judgment. *It was a type of the Lamb of God whose blood was shed for us.*

The word of the Lord came to those Israelites by the mouth of Moses:—

“Draw out and take you a lamb according to your families, and kill the passover.

“And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.

“For the Lord will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when He seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, *the Lord will pass over the door*, and will not suffer the destroyer to come in unto your houses to smite you” (Exod. xii. 21-23).

The words, ‘the Lord will *pass over* you,’ are full of significance and comfort; they do not mean that He would merely *pass by* the door where the blood was, but that He would halt before it, and cover those within it from all harm.

The use of the word translated “passover” in other Old Testament scriptures will prove this. In I. Kings xviii. 21, it is translated “halt,” the sense, as the context shows, being to hover. A remarkable instance is found in Isaiah xxxi. 5, “As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it; and *passing over* He will preserve it.”

How striking is the figure! With all the tender solicitude of the mother-bird for her young when danger threatens, so the Lord hovers over those who are His. This is the meaning of passover. The Almighty stood as sentinel and shield outside the doors that were blood-marked, and did not suffer the destroyer to enter in.

And God’s passover in Egypt is the type of the way He deals with every soul that, obeying the gospel, flies to the precious blood of Jesus for shelter. That blood bears witness to the fact that righteous judgment has been

executed, and the righteousness that inflicted the judgment must protect those on whose behalf that judgment was borne: so that in every attribute of His being the blessed God must pass over such, taking the place of their Shield and Justifier. His mercy and love and tenderness and grace are all on our behalf, and not only so but

His very righteousness is our justification. The knowledge of this fills the heart with triumphant praise, so that we can take up the glorious boast of Romans viii. 31-34, "*If God be for us, who can be against us?*" . . . *It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth?*

The Cross.

(JAMES BOYD).

"But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" Galatians vi. 14).

IT has been truly said, there is nothing like the cross. It stands and shall stand for ever, in all its solitary greatness and grandeur, in the centre of the circle of eternity, the wonder of every intelligent creature, and the pillar upon which is indelibly inscribed the evil and the hatred of the fallen being, and the goodness and love of God. Out from amid the dim shadows of the past it looms upon the vision, in all its brightness and blackness, truth and treachery, sunshine and shadow, faithfulness and falseness, righteousness and sin, judgment and mercy, compassion and cruelty, love and hatred. By its light the heart of heaven is revealed, and the deepest depths of the abyss of evil are discovered. The blessing and the curse there lift their voices together.

There welters foul the inky sea of human guilt, and there the unsullied ocean of divine grace swallows up everything with its swelling tides. Nothing in the past can compare with it, neither can anything in the future arise to rival it.

There appears the greatest sin the creature ever committed, and there is the mightiest display of infinite mercy on the part of God that ever came to light. It is the place where man was tested in every spring of his moral being, and it is where the compassions of God were sounded to their depths. It is where the hostile fallen creature lifted impious hand, and struck at his

Creator with deadly intent, and it is where the answer of the Creator was given in unspeakable and infinite love. It is the witness of wickedness impossible to be exceeded by man, and it is the evidence of favour which God Himself could never repeat. The volume of wrath, curse, judgment, and woe which encircled Golgotha, not the regions of the lost could enclose; and heaven itself shall not be vast enough to circumscribe the love, the grace, and the mercy which have been there expressed.

There the whole question of good and evil has been gone into, solved, and settled for ever. There all the forces of good and evil were gathered together. There sin rose up in all its power against God, and there God came out in judgment against sin. Never before had the rebel creature dared so much. Never before had sin so behaved itself in the universe of God. Its opportunity had come: the Son of God was in the hands of sinners. All hell was moved. The fit moment had arrived to cast off the restraint of heaven. The raging of the nations, the plotting of the Jews, the malice of the world, all were directed against Christ. They will not have this Man to rule over them. The infernal forces were rallied. The principalities and powers mustered all their might for the final combat. The infernal regions sent forth their last warrior, and the whole phalanx

of wickedness prepared for this desperate encounter, in which quarter was neither to be given nor taken, and by which the victory for good or evil was to be finally decided.

“Man’s Hour.”

Jesus speaks of it as *man’s* “hour.” (Luke xxii. 53). From the fall until that hour man had been held in check by the restraining hand of God. Previous to this he had been mercifully prevented from carrying out the full thought of his heart. He had corrupted the earth, filled it with violence, shed innocent blood, broken the law, worshipped demons, slain the servants of God, and hated Christ come into the world in grace and love. But his enmity had been under the control of God, and he was prevented from doing all that he felt inclined to do. Moved by the causeless hatred of his hard and godless heart, he had been often ready to stone Jesus, but somehow he found himself unable to carry out his murderous intention. But now his “hour” was come; the limit which had been assigned to his wrath was removed; the avenues through which his evil nature was to show itself were thrown open; the bit and bridle, which had in measure been a check upon his impious goings, were cast aside. He felt for the first time in his fallen history what real liberty was, as far as freedom from the intervention of God went. From divine control he is free and unfettered, and the universe must be spectators of the use to which his liberty is to be put. Alas, for poor man! His liberty was his ruin, as it ever is. Like the Gadarene herd of swine, his race was down a declivity, reckless, rapid, ruinous; and it was the same power which drove both to destruction.

What characterised man’s “hour” was the “power of darkness,” he must be guarded by the power of God, or driven to destruction by the devil. What did his liberty profit him? In his freedom he was the tool of the devil. Proud, ambitious, rebellious, and devoid of confidence in Him who had sent His only begotten Son to save him, he

would look after his own happiness. He objected to God’s concerning Himself about him. He would go his own way, and take care of himself. Horrible insanity! It was, in one sense, true that he had never before been as free, but yet, in another sense, it was equally true he never had been such a slave: his very freedom threw him completely into the hands of Satan.

The malice of the Jew astonished the pagan governor, and the vacillation and cowardice of Pilate have astonished the world. In the betrayer the treachery of the human heart comes so terribly into evidence, that even natural self-respect abominates the deed; and so loathsome is the action, even to the man who committed it, that when it is consummated, his very existence becomes intolerable to himself, and in despair he goes out and hangs himself.

Ere man’s hour had dawned, lanterns and torches and weapons, borne by men of strength and determination, were to Peter little more than rotten wood, but when that hour had really set in, the innocent question of a maid belonging to the high priest’s palace, which would have placed him in his right relation to Jesus, fills him with indescribable terror; and this son of Jonas, preeminently courageous at other times and a real lover of the Lord, denies that ever he knew Him, and that with oaths and curses. The other disciples, though also boastful on the Mount of Olives, are now nowhere to be seen. The disciple whom Jesus loved is with his Master at the trial, but is there under the patronage of the high priest (John xviii. 15). It was *man’s hour*, and the *power of darkness*, and no one could stand then except in the might of God. What an hour it was!

Every type of humanity was there, and every human soul insane in his enmity against the lowly Sufferer. We see Pilate subjecting Him to the indignity of stripes, though compelled to confess he had found in Him no fault at all; Herod with his men of war setting Him at naught, crowning Him with thorns, and bending the knee in mockery before Him; priests, whose place

was intercession, judging and accusing Him; the law, which He had honoured and magnified, turned against Him with the object of destroying Him. A robber is preferred to the One who with lavish kindness had showered benefits upon the people, and a murderer is chosen rather than the Prince of Life. For the bread He fed them with, they repay Him with buffets; and for the healing of their sick, they requite Him with a languishing death upon the cross; and for the words of grace which fell from His blessed lips, they heap anathemas upon His thorn-crowned head. What was the meaning of it? Not one of them could have given an intelligent answer to the question. In that "hour" the high priest's palace was truly pandemonium, for there the council of demons was convened.

Man was controlled by a power of which he knew nothing. He had cast off God who had hitherto restrained him for his good, and now he is under the control of one who drives him headlong to destruction, but in a way which, after all, is the way he rejoices to travel. Terrorized by his fears, inflamed by his lusts, maddened by his hatred, carried away by his pride, hardened in conscience by familiarity with sin, pitiless in his dealings with everything divine, and all his fallen, cruel, and corrupt lusts and passions wrought upon and lashed into fury by the influences of hell, nothing will satisfy him but the humiliation, agony, and death of Him who had gone about doing good and healing all who were oppressed of the devil. It was man's hour indeed and it was an hour of unrestrained wickedness.

"The power of darkness."

The spiritual world comes to light in the material. We hear no trumpet blast from the prince of darkness; no rattle of artillery wakes the echoes of Zion; no thunder of demon-driven chariot of war shakes the midnight cloud; no martial tread of troops in armour clad salutes the ear: yet never since the creation of the worlds was there a moment in which spiritual forces were so agitated. The abyss of evil

poured forth its myriads. Golgotha swarmed with forces innumerable; but no more noise was made, than is made by the planets in their courses around their fiery centre. The roar of their thunder, if heard at all, is heard in the false and baseless accusations made by Israel's rulers, and in the howling of the ignorant and brutal rabble, who surged around the palace of the high priest, crying, "Away with Him! Away with Him! Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and in their ribald jests and rowdy blatter as they hurry to the place of execution.

It has been said that *hell laughed*, but it is not quite correct. In the estimation of the powers of evil it was no doubt a triumph to have man so thoroughly blinded to the fact that he was committing soul-suicide, but laughter was, at that moment, far from the heart of him who was directing the battle against God and His Christ. Hell has never yet been able to laugh, nor will it ever be able. Hell has been too busy hitherto to have time to laugh, and it has never been so confident of victory as to hold the enemy in such supreme contempt. God laughs at the impotence of man and hell combined, for He is omnipotent and can never know defeat. But Satan has too often seen his plans frustrated and his wisdom checkmated, and his power annulled, to be able to have the laugh of God. At the cross no one laughed but man, the guilty, giddy tool of the devil, and his merriment was all indulged at the expense of the infinite sorrow of the Son of God, his Saviour and his Friend.

The sorrow of Jesus.

And how great was His sorrow! It is said the higher you go in creation, the sensations of pain are ever more acutely felt, and the lower you go down they become gradually less distinctly felt. But what must it have been to the Firstborn of all creation, to Him who felt everything perfectly! There was nothing hard or callous in the blessed sensitive nature of Jesus. He felt to the utmost every indignity that was heaped upon Him. He was the song

of the drunkard, despised and rejected of men, laughed to scorn, insulted and derided, by those for whose woes His compassions knew no bounds. His betrayal by Judas, denial by Peter, desertion by His followers, wounded Him to the quick of the soul. In such calamities men are often supported by their pride. Ingratitude, insult, and blow, are often endured with an apparent equanimity that is surprising. It may be that *within*, the heart is like a furnace of fire, but a haughty spirit and indomitable will batten down the hatches upon the inner workings of the soul, so that there is no escape for the fury that rages inwardly. But in the meek and lowly Jesus pride had no place. No vengeful feelings needed to be suppressed; no angry spirit required to be controlled. "He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isa. liii.). He says, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Isa. l.). In Psalm xxii. we hear Him recounting all His enemies, and pouring the burden of His griefs into His Father's ear. "*Bulls of Bashan*" were there; "*Dogs*" had compassed Him about; the "*Assembly of the wicked*" had enclosed Him; there was the "*Lion's mouth*"; and there were also the "*Horns of the unicorns.*"

As I have intimated, all the evil of the universe was drawn together against Him. Satan was there in all his might, man was there as his willing instrument of wickedness, God was there in judgment against sin, and the holy Sufferer was there, made sin, and dealt with by God as sin deserved. The fountains of the great deep of divine judgment were broken up, the windows of heaven were opened, and the mighty tempest of wrath, and curse, and vengeance against sin beat upon His devoted head. He sank in deep mire where there was no standing. Like Jonah, only in spiritual woes, He went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about Him for ever. Deep called

unto deep at the noise of God's waterspouts, all the waves and billows went over Him, the waters reached to His soul. But all His infinite and unutterable woes are embodied in that cry, which was wrung from His heart amid the three hours of thick darkness: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*"

But there, and then, every evil principle was judged. *Satan* was discovered as the prince and god of the world, and his power was for ever broken. *The wisdom of the world* was seen to be foolishness with God; it had never arrived at the knowledge of Him, and when He was revealed before its eyes it knew Him not. *Man* was seen to be incorrigibly wicked, and at heart a hater of God. *God* was declared in perfect goodness and love on behalf of man, in spite of the hostility with which it was met by those whom it had singled out as its objects. *Jesus* was there, the obedient One, glorifying God even when abandoned by Him. He had come to do the will of God, and let the cost be what it might to Himself, He would not be turned aside. It is not for the creature to find fault with the Creator; it is not for the servant to dispute the wisdom of his master's will; it is not for man to call in question the ways of God: and the place of a creature, servant, and man, Jesus had taken, and He was perfect in all. To Him be everlasting praise!

The Glory of the Lord Jesus.

At that cross the Son of Man was glorified (John xiii. 31). There the offering was parted in pieces, the springs of His moral nature were all laid bare, and nothing but infinite perfection was brought to light. Not a pulse in His whole moral being but beat true to Him who sent Him. In Him there was found no selfish consideration, no estimating of things by the way in which they affected Himself. With Him everything was viewed in relation to God. The work given Him to do was done without a murmur. There were no reasonings and disputings found with Him: "That the world may know that I love the

Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do" (John xiv. 31). Blessed, perfect Master and Lord.

Before He took the place of a servant, before a body was prepared for Him, He knew what was involved in it. He knew all beforehand. He fully understood the dread weight of that judgment, which He gave Himself to bear, before ever He was made in the likeness of men. He was well aware that to take the form of a servant meant that He must obey without question every commandment which He received; but at all costs the will of God must be done, and therefore, He, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6-8). How brightly the moral glory and excellency of the Lord Jesus shine amid the darkness of Golgotha. Let me remind the reader that there, betrayed, denied, deserted, beset by a lawless world which was influenced by the power of darkness, mocked, insulted, and above all, forsaken of God, He stands absolutely ALONE; and in that hour, and when alone, He bore up in might divine the pillars of the moral universe, and laid a basis upon which they could be established, beyond the possibility of ever again being shaken by any enemy of God.

And God was glorified in Him.

His righteousness was established, His holiness maintained, His authority respected, His truth vindicated, and His love declared. That dread battle between the forces of good and evil was fought out in the cross of that lowly humbled Saviour, who gave Himself that all might be there and then gone into and settled to the glory and praise of God, settled never to be opened again. The conflict is over, the powers of evil crushed. God has triumphed.

Every enemy has been smitten. God has wrought righteousness, and the field is His. The devil has been annulled, death destroyed, sin has been dealt with, our sins put away, our old man crucified with Him; the ground has been as completely cleared of every enemy as though no enemy had ever existed. The cleansing of the heavens and the earth from the *presence* of evil is now only a matter of detail, angelic power will be able to accomplish that (Rev. xii. 7-9; Matt. xiii. 49, 50). The *moral* question has all been settled in the cross of Jesus; and the believer is now identified in life and nature, relationship and favour, with the One who stood, in that terrible hour, faithful to God.

The nature and character of God have, with respect to evil, been vindicated and cleared. The fact that the *creature* is the author of it, and that it remains with him, is placed beyond all question, That *good* is alone with God, that He is good; and that He has ever dwelt in goodness, grace, and love toward man has been abundantly proved; as it has also been demonstrated that the man after the flesh, of the order of Adam, the fallen head, would not have God in any character in which He might present Himself. But the cross is the end of that man judicially before God. His trial came to an end there. He was proven to be, in his very nature, enmity against God, and now no longer is the man of that order, and in that standing, in any relationship with God; he has been already condemned and set aside judicially.

But the cross has also been the crucible in which the moral worth and excellencies of the second Man and last Adam have been tested to the very uttermost, and where the blessed fact has been established beyond all dispute that in Him there was no dross, no substance offensive to God, but everything in the highest degree acceptable. From that cross such a sweet savour went up before God as has effectually taken the place of the obnoxious odours arising from a corrupt world. God has been

glorified in the spot where He was dishonoured, and the gain to Him, through the cross of His Son, has been infinitely greater than all the loss He had sustained through the first and erring head, as well as through the wickedness of all his descendants.

And our place, portion, and relationship are all in and with this exalted Christ, risen from the dead. He is our life. We are to be in His image. His Father is our Father; and His God is our God. The love, and grace, and favour in which He is, we are in also; for we are graced in Him. "As He is, so are we in this world" (I. Jno. iv. 17). May we follow in the footsteps of that blessed apostle and disciple who could so truthfully say, "What things were gain to

me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him" (Phil. iii.). And also, "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" (Gal. vi.). The *person* and the *cross* of Christ were everything to him: may they be everything to us.

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ.

(H. NUNNERLEY.)

Abel's Offering.

"BY *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was *righteous* God testifying of *his gifts*." (Heb. xi. 4).

Faith's worthies are portrayed in that wonderful picture gallery in Heb. xi. It is noteworthy that Abel's is the first *detailed* act of faith, Rahab's the last. She was secured from judgment to come, he was accounted righteous before God.

Abel's name is there purely in virtue of the "excellentsacrifice" he presented, and the faith which saw in that slain lamb God's way to justify a sinner.

The initial act of faith is here illustrated. As great stress is laid on the *excellency* of his sacrifice, we may enquire, what were its special marks?

It was of the flock. It was not an untamed animal intent on doing its own will, for no wild creature could prefigure that blessed One who was led as a lamb to the slaughter, who came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him.

It was clean. God's command to Noah to take seven of every "clean beast" into the ark proves that very early the distinction between clean and unclean was known. Only a clean animal could symbolize the holy, harmless, undefiled Jesus, whose life was pure, without a spot, as a lamb without blemish.

It was a firstborn. Only a "firstborn" could rightly depict that other "firstborn," who not only was the only-begotten of the Father from all eternity, but who also in time has become the Firstborn from the dead, and the Firstborn of many brethren.

It was a sin offering. This we gather from the Lord's words to Cain, "If thou doest not well a sin-offering coucheth at the door." (This is how it should read. The words for "sin" and "sin-offering" are the same in the Hebrew language). "Couching" evidently points to an animal close at hand, which the evil doer had only to present as an atonement for his guilt. It was a *substitutionary* offering, ready to take

the guilty sinner's place and suffer in his stead.

The fat being offered separately, shows that the victim had been slain. Its excellency, typified by the fat, ascended as a sweet savour and the entire offering was consumed by fire from heaven.

We gather this from the way God "testified" of the "gifts" of the priestly family (Lev. ix. 24). Of Solomon's offerings (II. Chron. vii. 1.) of Elijah's sacrifice (I. Kings xviii. 38), and David's in I. Chron. xxi. 26.

Priest, potentate, prophet, and penitent, all received testimony of God's acceptance of their "gifts" by fire from heaven. Is it too much to infer, that when Abel presented his gift, God testified His good pleasure in that which it set forth, by consuming the sacrifice as He did in later days?

It was offered in faith. Clearly then there must have been some word from God intimating that an innocent victim, having no stain or sin-burden of its own, should be slain as substitute for guilty fallen man. For faith to be right must be in God and His word. Faith cometh by hearing, and *hearing* by the *word of God*.

Herein lies the difference between Cain's offering and that of Abel. Cain offered in utter disregard of the death-penalty which lay on man. Abel fully recognised it, and presented to God a sacrifice which typifies that one acceptable, and accepted offering, to which all others pointed.

It was on this ground, and this alone, that Abel was accounted righteous; and in this is foreshadowed the death of Christ as the only way of approach to God, and the sole and only ground on which sinful man can be accounted righteous.

Faith is submission to God's word, Abel illustrates the *obedience* of faith, he approached God in the appointed way, he did not go about to establish his own righteousness, but *submitted* himself to

the righteousness of God. He is a witness that righteousness is imputed apart from works through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; a righteousness which is *unto all* and *upon all* them that believe. Abel, thus justified by faith and justified by blood, is the first of a long line of symbolic testifiers to the immensely important fact, that the sacrifice of Christ is the one exclusive basis of righteousness: the only way man can be just with God.

He also teaches us that justification is not only on the *principle* of faith, but for the *appropriation* of faith.

The Gospel is a revelation of righteousness, but a revelation which claims the obedience of faith. "The just shall live by faith; it is *from* faith *to* faith, on the principle of faith for the acceptance of faith.

Happy the man who has first "submitted" himself to the hand of the blessed God, and learned the joy of His heart as He welcomes the returning prodigal, and clothes him with the best robe, and then learns, that faith, *on his side*, is only a seal set to the act and deed of another, a declaration that God is true.

It is not "faith's appropriation" that removes sin from before God, but it is the way by which it obtains that righteousness which love has already provided.

Let us then emphasise the truth here symbolised. Christ's death is a declaration of the only *righteous ground of acceptance* for a sinner, and *faith* in the One who died thus is the *only way* of justification for the believer.

"The righteousness of God . . . is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe: for 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 which is in Christ Jesus: . . . To declare . . . at this time His righteousness; that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. iii. 22-26).

 No. 5.—The Pattern of the Believer's Place.

BEARING in mind that, as we have seen, the resurrection of the Lord Jesus was the great test case in which all that concerns us was settled, we shall readily perceive that since He stands as the great pattern or representative for us, His place and position before God must be ours, both as regards our actual resurrection by and by, and as regards our souls now in this present time of faith.

This is indeed just what we find explicitly stated in Scripture. "Risen with Him" (Col. ii. 12) gives us in three words the new place or status of the believer upon earth whilst waiting either for translation or actual resurrection at the resurrection day; and Rom. viii. 11 clearly teaches that our resurrection shall then be after the pattern of His: "He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."

Let us seek to get some idea of this side of our vast subject.

His resurrection is seen to be the pattern of ours in several different connections.

1. *As to the power of it.* The Holy Spirit dwelling in the believer is this (see Rom. viii. 2, already quoted).

2. *As to the manner of it.* He rose from among the dead as the first-fruits. We too shall rise, not as the first-fruits, but out from amongst the dead even as He did. The first resurrection, that of the saints, will leave the multitude of those who died in their sins, untouched. They will remain in the grip of death while the saints come forth (see Rev. xx. 5).

3. *As to the character of it.* There was a marked difference, for instance, between the raising of Lazarus and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Lazarus was raised up to live a little longer

under the ordinary conditions of life in this world. He moved amongst men after it just as he did before (John xii. 2). In keeping with this, Jesus ordered that the stone be removed from the tomb before He spoke the life-giving word (John xi. 39-41), for Lazarus was raised a natural body, subject to earthly limitations, fitted for earth, and not for heaven.

The resurrection of the Lord Jesus carried Him as man into a new region and order of life altogether. An angel descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from His tomb, but it was in order that there might be no doubt on the part of His disciples as to His resurrection, but that they might see and believe (John xx. 8). The first words of the angel were "He is not here, He is risen." It was not needed in order that Jesus might come out, as was plainly proved on the evening of that very day (see John xx. 19). He had come forth from the dead clothed in a spiritual body, fitted for the heavenly resurrection sphere into which now He had entered, and the great stone presented no greater hindrance to His movements very early in the morning than the shut door did at the evening of the day.

Now the resurrection of the saints will agree in character with that of their Lord. Lazarus evidently died again, else he would be on earth to-day: but "Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. vi. 9); and of the saints it is said, "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: *neither can they die any more*" (Luke xx. 35, 36).

Resurrection involves then—and it is important to fully recognise it—our entering upon a totally new order of

life, under new conditions and with changed bodies. We have all of us borne the image of the earthly man—Adam; we shall bear the image of the heavenly man—Christ. And inasmuch as flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor corruption inherit incorruption, in the great day of God's triumph over the last enemy, the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we—the living—shall be changed (see I. Cor. xv. 48-54).

The change which will be needful in the case of the living saints when the Lord comes will find its counterpart in the resurrection of the dead. Both classes will reach the same blessed goal—a body of glory like Christ's (Phil. iii. 21), though by a somewhat different route in detail.

It is impossible in this connection to separate between the resurrection of Christ, and His ascension and glorification in heaven. In Him, risen and glorified, we see expressed God's full thought for the saints of this church dispensation. We must of course make one reservation, viz., that in this as in all else, He has the pre-eminence. He is glorified *at God's right hand*. We shall know the fulness of joy which dwells in the presence of God, though there be "pleasures for evermore" at His right hand which will be the special portion of the Saviour alone (*cf.* Ps. xvi. 11 and Heb. i. 9). This special place we gladly yield Him, with eternal homage to His blessed Name!

Allowing fully for this, however, we may truly say as we gaze in faith at the risen and glorified Jesus, "His place is the pattern of ours." "As He is, so are we in this world" (I. John iv. 17) already as to our souls and our position before God, and with regard to judgment; and what He is so shall we be as to our bodies at the resurrection day. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (I. John iii. 2).

The Present Bearing of the Truth.

In all this every true lover of Christ will assuredly rejoice, yet we must not overlook the *present* bearing and application of this truth.

The epistle to the Colossians deals with the privileges and responsibilities of Christians while still on earth. We are "risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God who hath raised Him from the dead" (chap. ii. 12). In His resurrection, faith already sees ours in association with Him. Inasmuch as we are circumcised, or cut off, in His "cutting off" (Col. ii. 11), we have lost the old status or position we once held before God as men in the flesh connected with Adam. In being "risen with Christ," we have obtained through grace a new status in connection with Him, altogether different to the old, and the bearing and character of that new position is all expressed in Him as the risen One.

Forty days elapsed between the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, and a very remarkable and peculiar position was His during that time. He had not left the earth in bodily presence for heaven, yet He was no more of the earth than He was of the great world-system which had crucified Him, and which then as now dominated the earth and held it in subjection. He never had been of the world, and though He had been on earth and moved in earthly surroundings and relationships, He was always a heavenly Man, but these earthly links were now snapped. Mary, His mother after the flesh, was committed to the keeping of John (John xix. 26, 27), and Mary Magdalene was not allowed to touch Him as the One in whom earthly hopes were centred (Ch. xx. 17). He is no more known after the flesh (II. Cor. v. 16). In the list of His appearances during those forty days recorded in I. Cor. xv. 5-8 and elsewhere, there is no mention of His ever having been seen by the world or any who were of the world, but only by His own. He was "other-worldly" indeed.

His interests were not *here* but *there*, and all His conversations with His disciples during that time were "pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts. i. 3).

We are "risen with Him," yet we are still here upon earth. We walk through the old surroundings and find ourselves subject to adverse circumstances as much as ever. We are still in our *natural* condition, with bodies subject to death and decay, but our souls have been quickened into the life of the risen Christ, and we can enter in spirit into the new region where Christ actually is. The Christian, properly speaking, is a man whose thoughts, interests, and affections are outside the vain show of this world and lifted above the plane of earthly things. His politics are in heaven (Phil. iii. 20).

With this truth before us, let us survey the actual condition of things in the church of God. How lamentable it appears. The whole effort of many who take the place of being Christian teachers and preachers seems to be to drag Christianity down to an earthly level, to lop off every branch which stretches itself forth heavenward, to pare down—if not to falsify—its truth, so that it shall be palatable to unclean and unregenerate man, altogether apart from new birth. The Saviour may indeed have said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again he cannot *see* the kingdom of God": they mean, however, so to shape their teachings that a man shall "see" them without any such change!

The result of this is equally sad! Multitudes live to-day who, deceived by these teachings, go on complacently in the world and in their sins, with vague hopes and expectations that all will be right, and that eventually an improved world system will be evolved, wherein they will be perfectly happy without God and without Christ, *Man* (written by them with large capitals), *world* and *earth*, are the centre and circumference of their religion.

But what about true Christians? Alas! the leaven of all this has spread.

Once having been inserted in the three measures of meal, the whole has been leavened (see Matt. xiii. 33). We are none of us altogether free from it. We very easily drop in our thoughts and ways from a heavenly to an earthly level.

The thought is all too common even amongst true believers that the mission of the Christian is to improve, and in this way, if possible, convert the world; hence they fling themselves, often with great ardour, into all sorts of schemes for the betterment of humanity, and plunge earnestly into political controversy, endeavouring to further the cause which they deem to be right.

If we could draw such aside from their busy endeavours for a moment, and bid them take time to gaze in faith upon the risen One whom they call Saviour and Lord, and breathe into their ears those words, "*Ye are risen with Him*," what would they say?

Some would say—almost shout at us—"Unpractical!" They would adopt those ancient words from Genesis, "Behold this dreamer cometh!" and accuse us of diverting attention from positive works of charity and civic righteousness to visionary ideas which nobody quite understands.

Others would admit the truth of what we say, for there it stands on the page of Scripture, and they accept the Scripture, but they would tell us, it is a beautiful theory set before us for contemplation and admiration, but not intended to practically affect us, to be woven into the web and woof of daily living.

The third and fourth chapters of Colossians completely answer all such. In chapter ii. we *are* risen, and chapter iii. begins, "If ye then be risen with Christ." It is the "if" of argument introducing the consequences and results flowing from this fact. As risen with Christ we are bidden to "seek those things which are above" and to set our "affection [mind] on things above, not on things on the earth."

It is noticeable that even when on earth the Lord Jesus refused to touch, or interfere with, men's social inequalities (see Luke xii. 13-15) or their political affairs (see Luke xx. 20-26). As risen He is entirely apart from the course of this world—"hid in God." As risen with Him, our life "is hid with Christ in God," and our attitude towards these matters should be the same as His.

Let not anybody say that to speak thus is to put an extinguisher upon all Christian sympathy and effort, and upon all zeal in evangelisation. It does nothing of the kind. Nothing that is of God is extinguished if the light of God's truth fall upon it. Indeed, to get hold of God's thoughts acts as a great incentive to well-doing, while it saves one from running unspent and wasting valuable time.

The life of those who are risen with Christ.

Read Colossians iii. and iv. Mark the kind of life lived upon earth by the saint who is risen with Christ, and whose mind is set on things above.

First of all, *he is marked by intense personal holiness* (vers. 5-12). He puts to death his members upon the earth—certain grosser forms of evil are mentioned; but inasmuch as the risen man is a new kind of man in nature, he puts off many other things, not so often branded as sin amongst men, and he puts on the very graces and features which marked the blessed Lord.

His relations with his fellow believers are of a gracious and heavenly order (vers. 13-17). The divisions, the endless contentions and bickerings of Christendom

are the direct products of our *not* having retained this truth in our souls.

He carries out all the relationships of life with the Lord before him (iii. 18—iv. 1). He is no fanatic. He quietly goes on through life, and carries out his responsibilities in a very much better way than he otherwise would. Domestic relationships—wives, husbands, children, fathers—and business relationships—servants and masters, are mentioned. Nothing is said as to any other. No directions are given as to how to behave when trying to help govern this world's affairs, or how to conduct one's self becomingly during the hurly-burly of an election campaign. The silence of Scripture is eloquent! It does not suppose evidently that the risen man will put himself in either of these positions. He is a pilgrim and a stranger, and does not undertake to meddle with the noisy affairs of "Vanity Fair," though he passes through it.

But though that be so, *he earnestly labours, both by prayer and preaching, to declare the truth and the grace of the gospel*, so as to rescue men out of the world on the one hand, and establish them in the truth on the other (iv. 2-6). Does then the truth of "risen with Christ" slacken our zeal in the Gospel. No! It takes a man whose heart is already outside the world to rescue people from the world, and to show, even to the worst, the grace of God.

These are some of the results flowing from the practical acceptance of this great truth. Who would not desire to enter a little more into its power and blessedness? For this we must turn our eyes not in upon ourselves, but up to Christ, and learn our new place as risen, in the contemplation of Him.

Discipline.

The Lord has bound up the rod of correction in our bundle of blessings.

The cluster must be bruised to yield its wine, and the sufferings of heavenly patience procure for the soul an over-

flowing cup of consolation, both for its own comfort and that of others (II. Cor. i. 4-6).

God sometimes sends us a wintry season that we may the better bring forth summer fruit.

The Gospel in the World.

(S. L. JACOB).

No. 2.—The Early Centuries after Christ.

THE Scriptures record for us the great blessing that was given in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, of the thousands of Jews who early embraced the faith of Christ, and the extraordinary unity and love which characterized the first days of the Church of God on earth. We are also told (Acts x.) how that being especially instructed by a vision, the apostle Peter went to the centurion Cornelius, and by preaching the Gospel to his household opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, to whom God also granted repentance unto life.

Yet the marvellous brightness of the early dawn did not long continue; failure soon set in *within* the Church, while from without came fierce persecution. Stephen was martyred, and all were scattered abroad from Jerusalem (except the apostles), and these went everywhere preaching the word. In the meantime, the chief persecutor, Saul, had been converted in a miraculous manner, and became Paul, the mighty apostle to the Gentiles, and with marvellous energy he carried the Gospel into the western parts of Asia, and into the south eastern portion of Europe. We know also that he was long a prisoner at Rome, and *in all probability* he also, being let out of prison, visited Spain, after which he was again imprisoned, and finally beheaded. Wherever he went he founded churches, and great grace was upon the work which God gave him to accomplish, while his missionary journeys were extraordinary and his sufferings unsurpassed.

At the time of his death, the faith of Christ had taken a firm hold in many parts of the mighty Roman empire, and the converts had become conspicuous by their numbers, their zeal and devotion, the purity of their lives and the love they bore one to another. But they were not allowed to rest from perse-

cution; the Jews hated them with the most bitter hatred; the Greeks attacked them with their philosophy and keen satire; while the Romans began the attempt to crush out Christianity in the dire struggle which lasted about two-and-a-half centuries.

Nevertheless in spite of the wonderful amount of purity, love, and zeal, which remained, there were not lacking symptoms to show that deterioration had already set in.

The apostle Paul had solemnly warned the elders at Ephesus, where some of his best work was done, saying, "After my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts. xx. 29, 30). And in his last epistle, the second to Timothy, it is clear, in spite of the manifest faith and courage of the lion-hearted Apostle, that very serious defection had set in. All in his beloved Asia had departed from him, he was left much alone, the word of false teachers was eating like a canker, and Timothy is most solemnly enjoined to faithfulness to the testimony of the Lord, in view of all that was coming to pass, *yet the work of the evangelist was not to be neglected.*

Looking back, that time seems to us one of wonderful purity, but to the spiritual and prophetic eye of the Apostle the germs of all subsequent evils were evident.

The apostle Peter, who died about the same time as the apostle Paul, also warned his hearers, most solemnly, against the damnable heresies which would come in; while Jude told of the apostasy which would be the culmination of evil.

The apostle John (the last, we believe, of the apostles to die) was not only sent

to banishment at Patmos by the world powers, but was even rejected by the church of which Diotrephes was the leading spirit. This apostle also gives us in Rev. ii.-iii. the only inspired account of the history—prophetically pictured for our learning in the condition of the seven Churches of Asia—of the responsible church on earth. From that time we have but human records as to the state of affairs in the Church, but these may teach us something.

The era succeeding the times of the apostles, was generally one of dire persecution until the time of Constantine the Great in the fourth century. This epoch would doubtless correspond historically to the epistle to the church in Smyrna (Rev. ii.), when the Lord was purifying His people—as silver is refined—by the cruel persecutions they endured. Vast numbers were martyred: ‘The Christians to the lions,’ became the common cry, and many and grievous were the tortures to which they were subjected. Still the faith grew and prospered, the area which was christianized was extended, and the civilized world was astounded at the vitality which could not be crushed, and which prospered all the more as the persecutions grew fiercer. The attacks made on them drove the Christians to God and to His word; when there was respite heresies often increased. Even the leading teachers were sometimes not quite sound in the faith, but on the whole, the attacks and persecutions had a most beneficial effect.

There is no doubt that evangelists in this period penetrated to Gaul, England, and many parts of the then known world, but the records of what happened are legendary, and not much is known with certainty about the spread of Christianity in the outlying parts of the empire and outside it, in Parthia, China, India, etc., though we know much of what was going on in Italy, Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Northern Africa, and the better known portions of the Empire on the shores of the Mediterranean.

During this period the gross and

horrible idolatry of Greece and Rome had greatly lost its hold upon the people of the Empire, and there was not anything like the intense veneration we find in the East for the great religious systems there.

Early in the 4th century Constantine became emperor and embraced the Christian faith, though whether he was really a Christian in heart we cannot say. It seems very doubtful. Whether or not, great consequences resulted therefrom; the persecutions ceased, and to be a Christian meant the favour of the world instead of the former hatred and enmity. Naturally, accessions in great numbers took place, and often-times pressure was put upon the heathen to become Christian; as a natural consequence, corruption set in fast, and the question is, did Christianity conquer paganism, or paganism conquer Christianity, adopting the name of the latter while retaining the spirit of the old faiths?

The history of the times is sad reading, nevertheless there were many bright names during this period, *i.e.*, from the early part of the 4th to the early part of the 7th century, and as so often happens the greatest brightness was rather on the outskirts of Christendom, while corruption grew apace in the centre.

Parts of England, Scotland and Ireland had been early evangelized, but a great set-back occurred in England when the Romans left the land, and the Angles and Saxons (fierce idolaters) came in. We know but little of those early days except in legends, but in the period we are now come to we are on firmer ground. Martin of Tours evangelized Gaul in the fourth century, he seems to have been a mighty man of God, albeit rough. About 440, a Briton called Ninian settled in north-west England, and worked round about in England and Scotland. A little later Kentigern carried on apostolic labours in pagan Wales, in Scotland, along the Clyde and in the North of England; and about the same time (6th century)

Columba came from the Scots in Ireland to the Scots and Picts north of the Clyde. He and his companions settled in Isle of Iona, and a grand work in the Gospel was done by them, and when Columba died in A.D. 597 the Highlands were occupied for Christ. At this time Ireland seems to have been far ahead of England and Scotland in the Christian faith, how far this was due under God to Patrick we cannot say. Some speak of his as a mighty work, and others that the credit was due to other men. God knows.

From Iona the work spread. Aidan went thence to Lindisfarne, and a splendid work was done there as to the evangelization of England, of which more later. From Iona men went out to the Orkneys, the Shetlands, the Feroes, and even to Iceland, braving seas and storms and bearing great hardships.

Before the death of Columba, a namesake of his, called also Columban, born in Leinster and trained at Ulster, sailed with twelve helpers to the Continent. They settled in the Vosges Mountains, built their wattled homes, felled trees, tilled the land; they copied Bibles and prayed much. Great numbers were converted, and all the north of that country was won for Christ by these and other Irish missionaries. Driven by persecution from France he went to Switzerland, and there he and his faithful Gallus and others were much used, and St. Gall became a missionary centre from which much blessing spread, while Columban passed over the Alps, founded another centre in Bobbio in the Alps, and pushed on into North Italy where heathen still abounded.

Towards the end of the sixth century Pope Gregory sent Augustine and others on a mission to England. It is often stated that they brought Christianity to the land. This is untrue and in all probability the faith would have been much purer in England had the Roman missionaries never come.

Meanwhile, how had it fared elsewhere? Northern Africa was won to Christ, at all events in name, the great Augustine laboured there, living at

Carthage, which had previously given many noble martyrs to the cause, but the corruption was also very great. This was the epoch of councils, and of fierce strife among Christians, and idolatry began to pollute the Christian centres.

In Asia the work did not prosper well. The Gospel at the beginning was carried far, a church was founded in the extreme south of India in Travancore, early in the Christian era, the legend says, by Thomas the apostle. The Gospel knocked at the door of North India in vain, though Hinduism was modified by it, and apparently the story of Rama, who is worshipped by so many in India, is a corrupted form of the story of Christ. The Gospel was carried to China, in, alas, a corrupted form, but after some triumphs all died down. No vernacular translation of the Bible seemed to have been given to the people in these parts, and this was doubtless a cause of much failure.

Much of Parthia or Persia was christianized. Edessa was one centre, and Nisibis succeeded it. Babylon was another centre. Armenia and Asia Minor were mainly Christian, also Syria and Palestine, with some Christians in Arabia, which was generally idolatrous. Purity, however, was greatly lacking, and at the end of the period we are considering, the state of these Christians in Asia was very bad.

Those generally known as Paulicians seem to have made a bold stand for the truth, and gained many adherents. They seem to have stood mainly for the truth given in Paul's epistles, whence the name, but all we know of them is written by their enemies. They were bitterly persecuted, they furnished many noble martyrs, but were eventually wiped out, to the apparent great loss of the Christians in Asia amongst whom they stood for the truth.

Thus at the end of the first period corruption had become great, yet many faithful souls were found, and especially in the outskirts of that which bore the name of Christ.

(To be continued.)

Bible Study.—II. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter I.

1. Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ:

2. Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth;

4. So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:

5. Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer:

6. Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you;

7. And to you who are troubled rest with us, when

the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels,

8. In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:

9. Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;

10. When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

11. Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power:

12. That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

THE epistle may be divided into three sections:

1. Encouragement in the affliction through which the saints at Thessalonica were passing, in view of the righteous retribution of God in the day of the manifestation of His power (ch. i.).

2. Correction of erroneous views which they had received regarding the day of the Lord, as though it had already come (ch. ii. 1-14).

3. Exhortation to stand fast in the instruction they had received, and to avoid the company of the idle and the disorderly (ch. ii. 15 *ad finem*).

One expression in ch. ii. 2 is the key to the whole epistle, "as though the day of the Lord is present"—had already come; not as in the A.V. "is at hand." So misunderstood, the whole point of the epistle is lost. This will be more fully explained when we come to the consideration of that chapter, but it is referred to at once, as showing the occasion of the Apostle's writing to them this letter, to correct their misapprehensions regarding that day.

Young in the faith and inexperienced, they had misunderstood or inadequately apprehended the instructions the Apostle had given them; and the enemy, ever watchful, had quickly sought to misinterpret or contradict what he had taught, and thus to lead their minds into

confusion, not only as to this "day of the Lord," but, by implication also as to the "rapture" (I. Thess. iv. 13-17); for the proper understanding for this latter would have guarded them from the error into which they had fallen as to the former (*cf.* II. Thess. ii. 1).

The date of the epistle cannot definitely be fixed; but it was probably not long after the writing of the first epistle. The form of the salutation is very similar in both.

Verses 3 and 4.

The Apostle recognises at once his obligation—his and that of his fellow labourers with him—to give thanks to God, "as it is right" he says, always on their account, because their faith was growing, above measure, and their love, the love of every one of them was abounding, each towards the other, in the truest altruistic spirit, so that the Apostle himself, as well as the others who knew of it, could boast of them in the assemblies of God for their patience and faith in all the persecutions and tribulations they were enduring at the hands of those who were their adversaries.

Verses 5 and 6.

And all this was to him a proof of the righteous judgment of God, both in regard to the saints and to the world—to those who were suffering affliction,

and to those who were causing these afflictions—to the former in view of their being counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for the sake of which they were suffering; to the latter “if so be” (*i.e.* assuredly) it is a righteous thing with God—the great judge of all—“to recompense trouble to those who trouble you, and to you who are troubled, rest along with us,” who are also sufferers now as well as you (*cf.* Ps. xviii. 22-27).

Verses 7 and 9.

These things will be all put right at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, when He comes with angelic ministers of His power. He now sits at the right hand of God, waiting in patience till that time comes (Ps. cx. 1; Matt. xxii. 44) and it is into that same patience the apostle would now direct their hearts (ch. iii. 5, R.V.).

It is noticeable that in ch. i. 3 the “hope,” which is the sustaining spring of this patience, is omitted from the enumeration of the trinity of virtues which are so markedly characteristic of the first epistle (*cf.* I. Thess. i. 3). Patience there might be up to a certain point amongst them—patience there was certainly to a large extent; but without at all saying that this “hope” was absent from them, the way that he does not speak of it (ch. i. 3) and the way he does speak of it (ch. iii. 5) seems to imply in this delicate manner, and avoiding all semblance of discouragement, that he writes at least to enforce the need of its cultivation.

On the whole there was considerable ground for thankfulness in regard to their general state; but also there is plainly revealed the internal weakness that belongs to every institution committed to the hands of men; a weakness which shows itself only too quickly, and which here ends in failure, both doctrinal, (ch. ii.) and moral (ch. iii.).

But evil at the longest is short lived and always under control, and good is the conquering power (Ps. lxxvi. 10). This was always so, and was brought to light by the resurrection and exaltation of Christ; and however much we

may have to do with evil, it is nevertheless a passing thing, and its limitations are strictly defined. The home, the habitation of our souls is, by the Spirit, in the contemplation and the power of good (*cf.* Phil. iv. 8).

We cannot think the Apostle was deceived as to the fruit of his labours. Acts xx. 17-38, II. Tim. iii., and such like scriptures plainly show us that he was fully alive to the future of the Church as a responsible witness for God; and II. Thess. ii. makes plain in the most distinct manner that there was to be looked for, not only a failure in the testimony, but a complete apostasy from all truth—from the very recognition of God and of Christ in any and in every form.

Moreover to regard this forecast, the signs of the verification of which seem to multiply vividly around us every day, as the result of the shrewdest and most far-seeing wisdom on the part of the man himself, would leave his writings on the level of what is merely human, thereby ignoring their divine inspiration: while also no mere human foresight would be sufficient to picture with such photographic precision as the writings of the apostles do the history of succeeding times. They, as other holy men of old, “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” But while that is so, they spake also as men,—men of like feelings to ourselves, fully alive to the actual circumstances in which they moved, and acted upon by the scenes through which they passed, as we ourselves to-day in similar scenes, to be reproduced until the climax of their period comes.

It is a matter of the deepest interest to see how these men spake by the Spirit of God, for so it is we are assured that it is God who speaks through them. Their mind is the mind of the Spirit, *i.e.*, the mind of God; hence we reverence their writings with the reverence which is their due: while their feelings are the feelings of men, acted on by that Spirit: and hence they speak to us in language native to our own hearts.

It was in this way the Apostle was

able to enter sympathetically into the sufferings through which these Thessalonian saints were passing: whilst also prophetically to picture to them circumstances of increasing difficulty right on to the end; and yet to dwell himself, and to encourage their hearts to dwell, in the serenity of present peace and the assurance of final triumph; for the whole question of power was to be solved by the introduction of the power of Christ at His coming.

He is to come, to be revealed from Heaven with the messengers of His power, in flame of fire—symbols and accompaniments in the Old Testament of the glorious majesty of Jehovah, here attributed to the Lord Jesus Christ (*c.f.* Ex. iii. 2; xix. 18; Dan. vii. 9-10; Mal. iv. 1; Matt. iii. 12)—taking vengeance on those who know not God, *i.e.* the Gentile nations in the darkness of their pagan state, blind worshippers of false gods, and on the unbelieving Jews, who were ever characterised by disobedience, and are here specially so, in respect of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These all shall pay the penalty of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His might, when He shall have come to be glorified in His saints and to be admired in all them that have believed, in that day.

This plainly shows that that day has not yet come. The persecution they were suffering was a proof of it. When the day of the Lord should come everything for them would be entirely changed. Peace and rest would be their portion, tribulation and vengeance the portion of their adversaries. Such was the contrast that he pictures between their actual circumstances and the day of the Lord. It was a sort of *a priori* argument to prove that that day could not possibly have come; and in this way to disprove and nullify all the assertions whereby the enemy sought to disturb their souls: *i.e.* he argues from the circumstances of to-day, that to-morrow had not come; when the circumstances of to-morrow come, it will be an *a posteriori* proof, if such were needed, that the day is there (ch. ii. 3-12).

Verse 10.

When the Lord comes, He will be glorified in His saints; and as "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" is the fullest measure possible of punishment to be meted out to those who suffer it, so by contrast we have here the height of privilege and blessing that will be the portion of the saints at the manifestation of His glory in that day. He will come to be glorified *in them*—not through them, nor among them, but as the sun is reflected in a mirror (Alford) so will His glory be reflected in the saints,—and He will be wondered at in all them that believe (*c.f.* Is. viii. 18; Heb. ii. 13; and for "wonder" of a different kind, Rev. xiii. 3).

But as these things were not so then, it was proof enough that "that day" had not come. "I would it had come," says the Apostle elsewhere to some who were regarding it in a different light from the Thessalonians. "I would to God ye did reign that we also might reign with you" (I. Cor. iv. 8). The Corinthians were betrayed into an opposite error from that of the Thessalonians. They were ante-dating the glory of that day: the Thessalonians were overwhelmed with its terrors. What poor creatures we are! How easily deceived and led from one error to another! How feeble, too, our sense of the helplessness that characterizes us, and how little in the Spirit of Him, the attitude of whose soul is exposed to us in the words, "Preserve me O God, for in Thee do I put my trust" (Ps. xvi. 1).

Verses 11 and 12.

With the end as thus set forth in view, his prayer was constantly on their behalf for two things, *viz.*: 1st, in respect of their present life, that God would count them worthy of the calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of His goodness, and the work of faith with power, so that the name of the Lord Jesus might be glorified *in them* here, and 2nd, that they might be glorified *in Him* in the day of His manifested glory according to the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jehovah-Jireh.

(A. J. POLLOCK).

(The Lord will Provide).

SEE, an old man, two young men and a lad have been travelling for three days, the young men and the lad quite ignorant of the object of the journey. Had they known of it they would have been sorely troubled, especially the lad, who with bounding step and all the strength of budding manhood coursing through his veins, pursued his journey without a care.

No wonder if the old man were more than serious, perhaps weighted down with grief, and yet keeping the awful secret of that journey locked up in his breast until the dread moment arrived when it could no longer be kept. Was ever a more fiery trial or deeper grief than Abraham's when God told him to take Isaac, the son of his dearest affections, his only son, and offer him up for a burnt offering?

And yet it was not merely the heroic summoning of nature's powers that enabled Abraham to go forward on that journey. His grief was not without alleviation. He remembered how God had called him out of his tent years before and bid him count the number of the starry deep, and gave him the wonderful promise, "*So shall thy seed be.*"

And then we read the grand words, sublime in their simplicity, in their faith, in all they imply of God, "*And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.*"

For Abraham was well stricken in years, and to nature God's promise was impossible. God's words were everything to him, circumstances nothing. For the One who created everything out of nothing, was equal to any promise He made.

So we read of Abraham, "Who against hope believed in hope." Faith's paradox. Unbelief might make Sarah laugh, but when the promised heir

arrived God made her to laugh again, and Abraham in the triumph of faith's realization called him Isaac [laughter], for gladness and hope came with God's promise.

So "he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform" (Romans iv. 18-21).

And further, when Isaac was born, God told Abraham that He would establish an everlasting covenant with him (Isaac), and with his seed after him; so though Abraham obeyed God, he knew the promise rested in Isaac, and Abraham rested in the promise, and that God would fulfil to the very letter all He said.

With the remembrance of all this, and with the same faith then operative in his heart, he could now go forth at God's command. With grief, on the one hand, filling his heart, yet with unshaken confidence in God, he moved forward in that sad journey.

And as they journeyed Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place of sacrifice afar off. He bid his young men abide with the ass, whilst he and the lad would go yonder and worship, and come again to them. How sublime! Go and *worship* and return. How faith triumphed over nature. Would any of us be in a worshipping spirit under circumstances like those? "*And return.*" He spoke to the young men calmly, as if Isaac would return with him. How, he knew not, save that God was able.

And as the lad and he journeyed together what thoughts filled his heart. What a contrast to the beauty and quietness of nature all around was the tumult of his heart. And what a stab in the quick of his affections was the

artless question of his boy: "My father, . . . behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

There was the fire and the wood, but where was the lamb? What a question: and how the very heart of Abraham must at the moment have burst with grief had it not been for that glorious faith which sustained him.

With a strange unnatural calm he built the altar and placed the wood in order upon it. How great must have been his grief, but greater still the energy and purpose of his faith, when he laid hold of his darling son and bound him, and laid him upon that altar. How supreme the anguish of the moment when he took the knife in his trembling hand to slay his son, and extinguish, as far as nature went, the light of his eyes and the hope of the promise. One could imagine how, with closed eyes, blind with grief, he summoned all his strength for the last act in that drama of sublime obedience.

But no, his hand is stayed by One who saw Abraham's faith would not withhold his son, his only son. With what intensity of relief did he then behold a ram caught in the thicket by its horns, and offer him for a burnt offering instead of his boy.

Then with keen prophetic gaze he looked beyond the coming centuries and called the name of the place "JEHOVAH-JIREH" (*the Lord will provide*). Faith mounted up with eagle's wing, and cried aloud in exultation, "*In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.*" On the sad journey he had replied to Isaac, "God will *provide* Himself a lamb"—in other words, *the Lord will provide.*

God had promised that in Abraham should all nations of the earth be blessed; but the promise could only be confirmed through death and resurrection. Abraham was a sinner, and his offspring according to nature, sinners. How then could God bless the whole earth

**Provide* comes from two Latin words which mean "to see forth," so "The Lord will provide" is similar in meaning to "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen."

through him? How could all the nations of the earth be made happy in him? The answer is CHRIST. "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is CHRIST" (Gal. iii. 16).

Jehovah-Jireh pointed on to Christ. In Christ all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

Centuries have rolled by, and upon the lonely mount in the land of Moriah, on which Abraham and his son stood, behold a gorgeous scene. "Kings shall come out of thee," said God to Abraham, and now Solomon, his lineal descendent, is dedicating a glorious temple, the Architect of which was God, even if the king had the high honour of being His clerk of works (II. Chron. v., vi., vii.).

But see another scene. A long line of kings has come and gone. The nation is rent in twain, the ten tribes are scattered and hidden by God; the two tribes, a mean, weak remnant, spread over the land, are tributary to the Romans.

Solomon's temple is destroyed, a meaner temple, which succeeded Solomon's is gone too, and a temple built by Herod the Idumean, now stands on Mount Moriah. How the glory of Israel is abased!

Through the streets of Jerusalem is a sad procession: a Man, bearing a heavy cross, on the way to be crucified, and at His heels a frenzied rabble. Women rend the air with their lamentations. Strange things happen that day. At noonday, when the sun is at its highest, darkness fills the whole land. What is the meaning of it?

Centuries before when Abraham, at God's command had taken sacrifices, dividing them in pieces, and watching over them, lest birds of prey should seize the carcasses, deep sleep and a horror of great darkness fell upon him as the sun was sinking in the west; and when the sun was fully down and darkness covered the land, behold a smoking

furnace, and a burning lamp passed between the pieces (Genesis xv.), proclaiming that only through the death of a substitute, and that in awful judgment, could God in righteousness maintain His covenant of promise to Abram.

But here at midday, an horror of great darkness covers the land. Nature is thrilled. The rocks rend. The graves are opened. The mysterious veil is rent in twain from top to bottom. What does it all mean?

It is the fulfilment of JEHOVAH-JIREH. It is an answer to "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." That Man bearing a cross to crucifixion is the grandest and greatest of Abraham's seed. He is the Seed of promise. Beyond Him there is none other. In Him shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Outside of Him there is nothing for this sad world. All is wrapped up in Him.

For though truly of Abraham's seed, yet to the taunt of the Jews, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He could say, "Before Abraham was, I AM," thus indicating that He was Jehovah, the uncreated, self-existent, I AM,—JEHOVAH.

Truly more than a man, "*God over all, blessed for ever,*" yet a man, in tender grace, on that cross He secured the promise to Abraham, and through him to the whole world.

This, then, was the glorious fulfilment of Abraham's prophecy, for prophecy it was. What a rest of soul to sit down and meditate on how God has secured everything in Christ for His own glory, so that He may carry out all the purposes of His heart of love in blessing poor fallen men.

And yet Abraham's eye of faith pierces on beyond the present gloom. The Lord said to the taunts of the unbelieving Jews, "*Your father, Abraham, rejoiced to see My day: and he saw it and was glad.*"

At the cross He could say, "*This is your hour and the power of darkness.*" This was not then the day Abraham

saw with prophetic gaze. That is still future. We look forward to it. Amid the clash of arms, the unrest of nations, the Christian can look forward with patient hope, patient because hope is sure, to that day when Christ shall reign King of kings and Lord of lords, and the whole earth shall be filled with His knowledge as the waters cover the sea.

What a grand scope, what sublime truth, what living hope is expressed by these two words, or rather this one compound word, pregnant with meaning and blessing to the whole earth—

JEHOVAH-JIREH.

The mount of the Lord shall see His exaltation as it has seen His sorrow. There was no hand to stay the knife in that day; He knew perfectly who was to be the Victim; He had no need to ask, *Where is the Lamb?* There was no ram caught in the thicket by its horns. He was the willing Victim, shrinking from it with inexpressible shrinking, yet moving with deliberate steps towards the hour of all time, to fulfil the reason why He came into the world His hands had made,—to die. The pathos and grief of the scene as Abraham journeyed with his son to offer him up we can imagine. But the sorrows of this scene are too sacred for analysis. No plummet line can sound the depths of His feelings—this is utterly beyond us.

By His death He has laid the foundations of His triumph, and the mount of the Lord shall yet see His glory, and streams of blessing shall flow therefrom till all nations of the earth shall be blessed, and Abraham's eager eye shall be more than satisfied.

"Every mark of dark dishonour,
Heaped upon the thorn-crowned brow,
All the depths of His heart's sorrow
Told in answering glory now."

And yet hundreds buy the text, JEHOVAH-JIREH, hang it on their parlour wall, and think it means the Lord will provide for their needs, the rent, food, clothing, etc. How selfish are our hearts, and how we naturally drag things down to suit our mean horizon. We have plenty of scripture to assure

us on that line. For instance, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." This is grand indeed, meeting our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

But let

JEHOVAH-JIREH

stand in all its matchless majesty and sublime simplicity. Let us feast upon the thought, adore Him who is the pledge of it, the Day-Star arisen in our

hearts, and wait for the fulfilment of it when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.

Then shall creation cease her groaning, and God shall be glorified. Let us lift up our eyes and see on the marvellous horizon of faith's vision, *God's providing*. The dark lurid clouds of apostasy, heralding the Antichrist, are more than silver-lined with the promise of *His* coming.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARREN).

No. 10.—Haggai.

Chap. I., vers. 2-8.

2. Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.

3. Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying,

4. Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?

5. Now therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

6. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

7. Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways.

8. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord.

HAGGAI and Zechariah were fellow-labourers in the service of the Lord, shortly after the return of a remnant of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon.

They are mentioned together in the book of Ezra as prophesying to these Jews, and helping in the building of the temple. We also learn that they were much blessed of God in their labours, so that those who were engaged in building prospered through their testimony (Chap. v. 1, 2; and vi. 14).

While in Ezra we have the *outward* side of Haggai's service for the cheer and encouragement of the people of God, in the prophecy that bears his name we have the *inward* side of his service. Faithfully and severely he had to deal with the people themselves, and their leaders, as to their low moral state, before he could comfort them by unfolding God's gracious purposes for them.

The immediate occasion of Haggai's first prophecy was the stoppage of the

work of building the temple. It appears from Ezra iv. that this was the result of the adversaries' work. They accused the Jews of rebellious designs, and armed with royal authority they went up and "made them to cease by force and power."

But there was another reason, a moral one, for the ceasing of the work. Haggai, in his prophecy, discloses it. It was the cold, selfish indifference of the people of God themselves. Dwelling in their own ceiled houses they were content to let the house of God lie waste, excusing themselves by saying "The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built."

No doubt they talked in a very pious-sounding way about waiting God's time, and looking to Him to carry on His own work. But God had committed the work to *them*. Would He not be with them in protecting power if they set themselves to do His bidding? He might permit the opposition of their foes to test them. But no

power could prevail against Him, and the *real* reason for the stoppage of the work was not the hostility of the opposers, nor the decree of King Artaxerxes, but the fact that these returned Jews were more concerned about their own houses than about the house of the Lord.

Not that they had really prospered, even in the pursuit of their own interests. God had blown upon their efforts. They sowed much, but brought in little; their labours met with but scant success. Drought and dearth prevailed in their midst.

Haggai's mission was to arouse the people to their own grievous moral state, of which their outward impoverishment was but the consequence. He appeals to them to consider their ways, and to set their hands in earnest to the work entrusted to them, the building of the temple. If only they would do this, Jehovah would smile on their labours. He would take pleasure in the product thereof, and would be glorified.

Is there anything in the circumstances of the people of God to-day which makes this old-time lesson from Haggai peculiarly applicable? Assuredly there is.

The house of God is here to-day. It is not a material house built with stones and timber. It is composed of *people*. The Church of God is His house (I. Tim. iii. 15). But how little *real building* is going on in connection with it! How comparatively rare it is to find the souls of Christians *built up* in the things of God. We are exhorted to build ourselves up on our most holy faith, and to be "built up in Him" (Col. ii. 7).

This is the sort of building work that greatly needs to be done to-day. It is the only sort of building that will stand the test of the coming day. To seek to build up a cause, or an organization, or a select company of Christians, who are agreed upon certain doctrines or methods of discipline, is not to build according to God's mind. Oh, for men with God-given eyesight to perceive the desolation that has come in amongst

the Lord's people, to note the prevalent impoverishment of soul, and then to arise and build! May God prosper the work of building up the souls of His people *in Christ*!

In the result of such work as this God takes pleasure. He is glorified thereby. To build up souls in anything but Christ is to labour in vain. But to build up the souls of His people *in Him* is to labour for the pleasure and glory of God.

If any one asks, *How* can souls be built up in Christ? the answer is, By the ministry of Himself to those souls. When one considers the kind of subjects chosen for ordinary pulpit discourses, one is appalled to find how very very little of the real ministry of *Christ* there is. How little He is set forth before men as a blessed, living Saviour at God's right hand, and how comparatively rare in Christendom is the ministry of the glorious and wonderful truths connected with His session there.

Alas, the Lord's dear servants often spend their strength in seeking to build up "*our mission*," or "*our cause*," or "*our fellowship*," or "*our society*." What is all this sort of thing but attending to our own ceiled houses, while true building, according to God is neglected?

Chap. II., vers. 1-9.

1. In the seventh month, in the one-and-twentieth day of the month, came the word of the Lord by the prophet Haggai, saying,

2. Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

3. Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

4. Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts:

5. According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.

6. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land;

7. And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

8. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts.

9. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

Haggai's message did not fall upon deaf ears. His words were attended with power. Fear fell upon the people, and God stirred up their spirits. Encouraged by the assurance of His presence with them, "they came and did work in the house of the Lord."

Within four weeks of this fresh start another gracious communication was made by God to His people by the mouth of Haggai. In connection with this, we find Christ introduced. This brings us to what is more immediately the subject of this series of papers. The prophet is charged to remind the people of Jehovah's covenant, made with their fathers when they came out of Egypt. To that covenant the Lord of hosts would assuredly be faithful. The heavens and the earth would be shaken, everything visible would be touched with His power, but His promise would stand firm, and the Desire of the nations should come.

This word, translated "Desire," is in the plural, and may be rendered "the desired things." But the reference is undoubtedly to Christ. The things which the nations desire, but which they vainly seek for in this direction and in that, will be found in Him.

Do they desire universal *peace*? It will be found when Christ comes (Isa. ii. 4). Is *just government* an object of desire? The desire will be gratified when He comes (Isa. xi. 4). Is the *knowledge of the true God* desired? The coming of Christ will cover the earth therewith (Heb. viii. 11).

Christ is the true and only solution of the perplexing problems of to-day. With Him alone it rests, to pacify the nations by subduing them to His benign rule. His coming will introduce the golden age for the earth.

Needless to say, we do not find in Haggai, nor indeed anywhere in the Old Testament, that which is the proper hope of the Church. The New Testament shews us that before the day of Christ's appearing as the Desire of the nations, He will come into the air, to take all who are His to be with Him.

We must never confound this, the Christian's hope, with what we find in the prophets. But it is the same blessed Person, whether we consider His coming with reference to the Church, or to Israel, or to the nations.

Chap. II., ver. 23.

23. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet; for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.

The prophecy concludes with a special promise to Zerubbabel, the royal prince of David's line. No doubt he is here a figure of Christ, and the promise made to him will be fulfilled in the person of his greater Son, for "Zerubbabel begat . . . Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matt. i. 13-16).

The promise is, that in "that day" (the day of universal shaking, when thrones and armies are overthrown, and warriors perish by the sword), Jehovah will give a place of peculiar exaltation to His servant, as the Man of His own choice.

For the coming of Christ will not only mean the blessing of Israel and the nations. It will be the occasion of His own glory. He who has been spat upon and crowned with thorns will be as Jehovah's signet. He will be glorified in that all that God does will be done by Him, and for Him.

Adam failed in connection with what was committed to his charge. So did Noah, and David, and everyone else to whom responsibility was entrusted.

But from the beginning God had in view not Adam, nor David, but *Christ*. He was the One upon whom God's choice rested. His sojourn for thirty-three years on earth proved the rightness of that choice. He was

"Faithful amid unfaithfulness,
'Mid darkness only light,"

and the heart of God will find peculiar delight in honouring that blessed One who, as a Man, has so entirely justified the divine choice.

Is it not balm to *our* hearts, too, to know that the day approaches when *He* will be exalted in the eyes of all?

The Son of God.

(J. WILSON SMITH).

"He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."—Matt. xvi. 15, 16.

THE significance of this question put by the blessed Lord to His disciples must be apparent to the reader. At that moment a crisis had been reached in His testimony by the only too evident refusal thereof on the part of the leaders of the nation. He had come to "His own," and, now, in the panorama of His life, as presented in this first Gospel, we see that "His own received Him not."

He had been announced by the Baptist, the herald of the kingdom, in terms of charming interest; and the wise men had been attracted from the east by the finger of God to do Him homage. He had proclaimed, in the mountain, the holy principles of the kingdom of heaven; He had wrought miracles of mercy on every hand; He had bidden the weary to find rest in Himself—the Son of the Father; He had, as Son of man on earth, pardoned sins; He had, as the promised Messiah, opened the eyes of the blind; He had been owned as Son of God by Satan, whom as "the strong man" He had bound, and, as the stronger, was able to spoil his goods; but, withal, He had been proudly rejected, even where His greatest works had been done. There was no national repentance. This sin and that of His rejection went together.

As to the common opinion regarding Him, He might have been John the Baptist, or Elias, or Jeremias, or one of the prophets: that was all! Unconcern, on this vital point, marked the mass. This "greater than Solomon," both in wisdom and works, was ignored. He was despised and they esteemed Him not. Nevertheless, it was their Messiah whom they thus rejected. How blind, how culpable they!

Then it was that He asked of His disciples the question:—"But whom say ye that I am?" He could surely count

on some hearts which would respond to it, for there must ever, in days the darkest, be those in whose hearts God is working, for He never leaves Himself without witness; and accordingly Peter made answer: "Thou art the Christ [the Messiah], the Son of the living God."

But this rich and true confession was by no means the fruit of the natural mind. Such knowledge does not originate in the heart of man. It was communicated to Peter, said the Lord, by "My Father which is in heaven." It was necessarily a direct revelation.

But there it stands, in its eternal value, to command the faith of every one who professes the name of Christ. Let the words "the Son of the living God" carry their due weight with every believing heart and conscience, and call forth the adoration that is meet.

"Whom say ye that I am?" Not only Jesus of Nazareth; nor alone the Christ known to us on high, seated, as Man, on the throne of the Father, Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, but as "Son of the living God," over whom death had no power, nor could it hold Him. May this supreme glory of His infinitely glorious Person engage the attention of His saints increasingly. Let us remember that we live in a day when that Person is, in one way or another, disparaged.

The holiness of His humanity is denied on one hand, and the truth of His deity is assailed on the other; but, in this question and answer, "whom say ye that I *the Son of man* am," and "Thou art the Christ, *the Son of the living God*," we have both facts stated as equally true—"the Son of man" and "the Son of God." Hence it becomes us to cherish both His perfect manhood and His essential deity. And it may be

very fairly questioned if He can be worshipped aright unless this relationship be owned. My soul, dost thou truly recognise in thy once dying Redeemer, who bought and washed thee from thy ten thousand sins in His blood, the veritable Son of God? If so, then prostrate thyself at His feet, and magnify, adore, and worship Him.

When on the Mount of the Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John were privileged to hear the voice from out of the cloud saying, "this is My beloved Son, hear Him." That voice Peter never forgot: nay, "we have not followed cunningly devised fables," he wrote (in his second epistle) "when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty." He received an indelible impress of the glory of our Lord as the beloved Son on the Mount, even though, in his written ministry, he treats more of "the Christ" than "the Son."

James early earned a martyr's crown (Acts xii.), so that we have no ministry from his pen: but the writings of John are replete with the moral glories of "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." And how we love those writings! How they enrich and call forth the adoration of the soul!

Then, if we refer to Paul, we find that his very first text in the Damascene synagogue, as soon as the scales had fallen from his eyes, was that "Jesus is the Son of God!"

This was the first note of his lovely song—the first tribute to the glory of Christ in his testimony. It formed the backbone of all the rest. Hence the extraordinary and Spirit-owned (as Spirit-given) power of his ministry. That ministry was manifold; it covered the Gospel as it had been made known,

in a special way, to him; and then he writes of Jesus being "declared to be Son of God with power . . . by resurrection from the dead," so that not only the resurrection of our Lord, but His deity as well, give colour and character to the apostle's gospel (see Rom. i. 4.)

So, too, it covers his ministry of the Church; for in his Epistle to the Ephesians, in which he treats of the Church as the present vessel of the grace and purpose of God, he speaks of the gifts of the ascended Christ, as having for their object "the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, 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" (ch. iv. 12, 13).

Here the knowledge of the Son of God is the acme of all spiritual attainment, and the grand object of the Spirit of God in the edification of the body of Christ. "Whom say ye that I am?" is still the great question for heart and conscience. That knowledge is clearly the deepest and most profound, as well as the initial, in the whole revelation of God: for, on the glory of His person the value of His atoning work depends. The issues for eternity, whether as regards glory or judgment, depend on the person and work of the Son of God.

Along with the knowledge of the Son is that of the Father, and this is "eternal life" in its full Christian or present aspect, even as we shall, when in glory with the Lord, enjoy it in absolute fulness for ever.

May the Spirit of God give us fresh unfoldings of the Son of God day by day.

I've a place in the heart of the Rock.

(Deut. xxxii. 4-11).

If you are a child of God, wherever you propose to nestle, there your heavenly Father will plant a thorn, until you are driven like a bird from spray to

spray, and from leaf to leaf, and taught by painful experience, that God, and God alone, is from everlasting to everlasting the "dwelling place" of His people.

Correspondence.

Under this heading the Editors purpose publishing letters from time to time received on Biblical questions of interest, and also replies thereto by one or more others—printing letters on both sides of the question so as the more clearly to enable each to “prove all things.”

Readers are invited to write us further on any subjects so arising, and their letters, if suitable, will be published as “Correspondence” in a subsequent issue of the Magazine.

Questions requiring briefer treatment will be answered by the Editors as heretofore under the heading of “Answers to Correspondents.”

The Day of Atonement.

D.S. writes us as follows :—

How do you understand that in the service of the day of atonement given to us in Lev. xvi. there are *no grades* in the sin offering—the special offering for that day?

It apparently was a *yearly service*—a renewal of the ground on which as a nation they stood with God.

In Lev. iv. there are many grades, marking the position of the offerer *in* the congregation. Can it be that God legislates for the poverty of apprehension as to the offering?

He legislated doubtless for the poor (see Luke ii.). But could we give it as an instance of poverty as to apprehension?

The *ground* on which the priestly family are seen in chapter xvi. 11 is evidently the *same* for the congregation (verse 15). God has only one measure when it is the judgment of our sins or when it is the *ground* of approach. When it is His *governmental* action (iv.), is it not different?

Verse 3. If the priest that is anointed do sin? No forgiveness mentioned—how is this?

Verse 13. The whole congregation—(20) it shall be forgiven them.

Verse 22. A ruler—the blood goes no further than the brazen altar—(26) it shall be forgiven him.

Verse 27. One of the common people—the blood as in 25—it shall be forgiven him (31).

Chapter v. 7. Actual natural poverty. But God marks in His *government*, that place in His family makes a difference as to the sin—the more privilege the more responsibility.

Reply—by J. A. Trench.

I think your correspondent has himself stated what accounts principally for the difference between the sin-offering of the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.) where there are no grades of it, and those of chapter iv. where there are several. It is that the Day of Atonement (recurring annually, surely, verse 34) set forth the whole ground upon which Israel as a nation stood with

God, and He could be with them, or, as in the expressive language of verse 16, the ground upon which “the tabernacle of meeting” (as it ever is—the meeting place between God and the people) dwelt among them in the midst of their uncleanness.

The ground upon which the priestly family are seen (verses 11-14) is clearly the same as that upon which Israel generally come in (verse 15); there could be no other. It was the blood of the sin-offering as it met every exigency of God’s throne and nature in holiness and righteousness, and glorified Him, as far as a type could express this. The only difference being that for Aaron and his house there was no scape-goat, because the blood that he sprinkled upon the mercy seat for God was sprinkled seven times before the mercy seat. Once was enough for God, who could estimate perfectly the value of the blood presented to Him, but it was His will that there should be this seven-fold presentation of it for the priestly house to make thus absolutely sure to them the ground of their reception. Aaron’s eye rested where God’s did: he needed no further proof of the acceptance of the sacrifice.

In chapter iv. the gradations of the sin-offering are interesting in the holy government of God, which is the point I doubt not. The blood is not carried within the veil. In the case of the two first, the sin of the priest or of the whole congregation, the link of the whole people with God was affected most seriously, and the offering is the same. The blood of the bullock is carried into the sanctuary to be sprinkled seven times before the veil, and of it was put upon the altar of incense, or of communion, which had been absolutely

broken. I suppose that in the case of the anointed priest's sin bringing guilt upon the people (see verse 3, R.V.) the omission of the clause "it shall be forgiven" as in verses 20, 26, 31, 35, is because there would be no one to pronounce it; which was the less important, as in the anti-type no such case could occur. When our Aaron stood representatively for His people's sins He made propitiation for them. It was not a question of remission for Him.

In the other cases where it is individual, as in the ruler and one of the common people, the people as a whole are not affected, and the sin-offering varies according to their position of responsibility, as D.S. says. But in the case of insufficiency of means (chap. v. 7-13), I hardly think it can be looked at as "God *legislating* for the poverty of apprehension as to the offering," which would too much confound the actual offering required with its

typical significance. Besides, it went as far as the bloodless "one-tenth part of an ephah of fine flour for a sin-offering," in the last extreme. This shews that sin cannot be met in any different way than by a "sin-offering."

Poverty would be no plea for consideration apart from it, hence he brings it where the blood-shedding is required for sin, and it is accepted in place of it, the priest taking his handful of it as a memorial to burn it (the word for sweet incense) "upon" (R.V.) or "with" (New Trans.: "sur," French) the offerings made by fire unto the Lord; it is identified with all the infinite value of the burnt-offering before God, although "it is a sin-offering"—more than making up for any poverty of apprehension (assuming this be the force of gradations) on the part of the offerer, in the grace that provided for such circumstances.

The Judgment Seat of Christ.

W.H.T. writes us as follows:

I have looked at September Number of "Scripture Truth" (with regard to above question) but I regret to say that to my mind it throws no further light on the subject.

The particular words which I cannot reconcile with the views there put forth are "that each may *receive* the things done in the body . . . whether it be good or evil (II. Cor. v. 10, N.T.). These words were the means of my studying the subject, and I cannot help thinking that they have reference to God's governmental dealings with us.

Scripture distinctly says "*receive*"—then how is it possible for us to receive the *evil* things (the good things present no difficulty) we have done, when we have bodies changed like unto His body of glory (Phil. iii. 21)? Shall we not receive the evil things in the same body in which we committed them—on the principle of reaping what we sow?

I think it is generally admitted that II. Cor. v. and Rom. xiv. deal with our pathway in this world. And it appears to me that the judgment seat is brought in to steady us in that path where evil abounds: and to make us refrain from judging others. We have to examine ourselves—to

walk in the light and keep ourselves personally clean. But if, unfortunately, we should sin, still there is perfect provision for that sad emergency (I. John i. 6; ii. 1), and we thus learn as an immense *soul reality* God's utter abhorrence of sin, and prove the truth of that statement that "our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. xii. 29).

God disciplines us as sons that even now we might be partakers of His holiness (Heb. xii. 7-10), and then go on to "perfect holiness in the fear of God." This appears to me (though I gladly admit my great ignorance and willingness to learn) to be the force of the Apostle's argument in II. Cor. v. Consciously knowing in our souls the *holiness* of God ("knowing therefore the *terror of the Lord*") "we persuade men, but *have been manifested to God.*" We have felt the searchlight of the holiness of God burning upon our souls, and have been made morally fitted for that light: and we turn to the poor world deluged in sin, and we use all our God-given eloquence and persuasiveness to "rescue the perishing." It was recorded in Peter's epistle 1800 years ago that the "time for having the judgment begin from the house of God *is come.*" (i.e., at the time he was writing): and this is also used as a powerful gospel appeal, "but if first from us what shall be the end of those who obey not the glad tidings of God? . . ."

Reply—by H. D. R. Jameson.

In undertaking to reply to your letter, I must first remark that you make the judgment seat of Christ a *present* thing, but the scriptures which have reference to this solemn event will not allow of this: in each passage it is distinctly future (see Rom. xiv. 10; II. Cor. v. 10; *et al.*)

It ought to have a present *effect* upon us: it had upon the Apostle, for he tells us that “knowing the terror of the Lord” he persuaded men, and that he was himself even now manifested (without reserve) before God.

But I can quite understand your difficulty as to the word “*receive*.” In our editorial reply last month on this subject we refrained from detail, and only entered upon what concerned our correspondent’s question as to *time*; but your question is really as to the precise exposition of II. Cor. v. 10:—

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”

Now as to the difficult word “*receive*,” do not weaken the meaning but give it its own full and proper force. Those that have done good will *receive* the things done in the body; similarly those that have done evil will *receive* in accordance with what their deeds have been in the body. The same fact is stated in other language in Rom. ii. 5-11:

“The righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.

“To them who by (or in) patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, **ETERNAL LIFE**:

“But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, **INDIGNATION AND WRATH**,

“**TRIBULATION AND ANGUISH**, upon every soul of men that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

“But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile:

“For there is no respect of persons with God.”

In both Rom. ii. and II. Cor. v. we thus have distinctly before us two classes, those that do good and those

that do evil; it is a question of what is *characteristic*, just as in I. John iii. 8-10, we read “He that committeth (or practiseth) sin is of the devil . . . Whosoever is born of God doth not commit (or practise) sin . . . in this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil;” and again, “He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God” (III. John 11). When things are thus viewed characteristically in Scripture it does not suppose that a man does both good *and* evil, it is rather “whether good *or* bad”—that which marks his life.

In the scripture we are considering (II. Cor. v. 10) there is no point of time, and no detail: it is the solemn general statement. From other scriptures we know that the *time* at which the saints of this day will be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, is far removed from that at which the wicked dead are raised and judged (Rev. xx. 5, 11), and is distinct too from that at which will take place the judgment of the nations actually living on the earth at the moment of the Lord’s public return with us, His saints, to reign (Matt. xxv. 31-46). Nor is there the detail in II. Cor. v. which we find elsewhere; and while it is well to have clearly before us that which is indicated in other scriptures, yet the interpretation of this passage must not be obscured by bringing in what is found elsewhere.

Here it is not a question of the kingdom and varying rewards as in I. Cor. iii. 12-15; Matt. xxv. 14-30, etc., but the passage itself and its whole setting (see ch. iv. 17-18, v. 1 and context) has to do with what is *eternal*; hence we have before us but the two distinct classes, and immediately Paul speaks of his persuading men, being moved thereto by the terror of the Lord (terror, mark, not as to his own ultimate destiny, as to which he was “always confident,” verse 6, but as to the wicked for whom the retributive judgment of that day would mean eternal woe).

In I. Cor. iii. 12-15 we get detail, and there it is *works of service* that are manifested, here it is persons: *we* must all

appear (or, as it should read, be manifested) before the judgment seat of Christ. Note here, however, that the word is "manifested," not *judged*, for no saint can ever come into judgment (see John v. 24 R.V.)—for the believer every question of sin, guilt, and judgment has been for ever settled at the cross of Christ.

As to the words "we all," it is evident from the context that the thought before the Apostle's mind embraces the appearing of all men before that judgment seat (the "all" in verse 10 reaching in its scope to the full limits of the "all" in verse 14), and, as has been pointed out by the late Mr. Wm. Kelly, the Greek construction is accordingly different from that found in such a scripture as II. Cor. iii. 18, where believers only are included.

But to rightly understand this passage, I believe it is important to remark that there are *two* thoughts mentioned in it, each distinct in itself, and neither to be confounded with the other: these two thoughts are, first, *manifestation*, and second, *retribution*.

First then as to the "manifestation" of saints. *We* shall all be *manifested*—everything in our lives will come into the light of a throne characterised by judgment: and we shall be glad to have it so; for solemn though that moment be, there will be no question of guilt arising, our sins having been atoned for and put away, and, *as such*, will be remembered "no more" (Heb. x. 17). At that time too we ourselves shall be in glorified bodies like the One who will sit upon that judgment seat: and like Him not only in body but also morally, so that we shall hate that which He hates and love that which He loves, and will with Him, and in communion with His mind, review all the past—understanding things then in the light of that day as we never can do whilst as at present we see but as it were through a glass dimly.

Then follows *retribution*—receiving according to the deeds done in the body; but as to the saint this is only in respect of good, for although our manifestation brings *everything* into view (not publicly,

I judge, but as between the individual and the Lord), yet that which has been evil is not present *as guilt* (all our sins having been borne by Christ, upon whom fell the whole weight of retributive judgment due to them): it is most important to see this.

There is first, then, full and complete manifestation: and this fact exercises our conscience in view of that day, for we desire to have all out and manifest before God now in our own soul experience, which will in any event be manifested in that day. Then following manifestation there is retribution, but retribution which we do not fear, for *guilt* is no longer ours.

Retribution here is what is *eternal*, not the varying rewards for service which distinguish one from another during the continuance of the Kingdom (*cf.* Matt. xxv. 14-30). Eternal blessing is in view as in Rom. ii. 7, Mark x. 30, and other scriptures, where it is put as the end of a certain course of life, albeit we know that that manner of life which characterizes saints is but the fruit of the grace which has taken us up as poor guilty sinners, justified us by blood on the principle of faith, sealed us with the Spirit, and kept us all along.

With the wicked all this will be a woefully different matter: their manifestation will bring out all they are and all that they have done; and retribution in respect of this must be both terrible and eternal. Moved by this solemn consideration, the Apostle "persuaded" men, beseeching them to be reconciled to God (verses 11, 20).

I. Corinthians iii. 12-15 has its own special setting: there we get detail as to how in that day all our works of service will come into particular review—(all that we have built on the one foundation)—and specific rewards will be given according to the quality of the service rendered—rewards in which it is even possible that all saints may not participate (for tested in that day the works of some may be found defective, and be burned up), nevertheless they themselves "shall be saved, yet so as by fire." "The day" is to be the

crucible in which everything in the nature of service will be tested.

It may be illustrated thus. A son goes out to a foreign land to represent his father on some important business. He receives instructions from time to time from home: sometimes he acts upon them, sometimes he forgets them, and sometimes he thinks his own way better.

When the work is completed he returns home to the warmest of welcomes that an affectionate father can give him; but following the greetings and the joy, there comes the review of the son's work. Then he sees that some of the time which he thought most fruitful was wasted; that some things which he did were both harmful to himself and his mission; but that often when following instructions from

home he was most successful; and at last he exclaims, "Now, father, I see that all that I did of my own wisdom was worthless and is lost, and only that which I did under your instruction was successful."

It will be even so with all believers then; and "if any man's work abide . . . he shall receive a reward." Very precious is the grace which first *enables* us to serve, and then *rewards* the service rendered.

The present governmental dealings of God with us as His children are on a very different line, but these are very real; you find instances in I. John v. 16; James v. 15. These are extreme cases as is the discipline of the Lord in I. Cor. xi. 32. The chastening hand of God is also on this line that we might be partakers of His holiness (Heb. xii.)

The Ark of the Covenant.

(The late J. REVELL).

THE centre of all the system of ritual and ordinance instituted under the law of Moses was the chest containing the tables of stone, called the ark of the testimony, and the ark of the covenant.

In the contents of that ark there was, in letter, the expression of God's mind respecting man (the testimony), and also that God bound Himself to be the God of such a man (the covenant): but *the man was not present*.

It is affecting to think of the desolation of the holiest in the tabernacle. God placed the sign of His presence there, for He dwelt between the cherubim, but there was no man, only a record in stone in the sacred chest.

Now in the Lord Jesus the man is found; He is the spirit of all that had previously

been only in letter. All that the ark prefigured is found in Him.

His perfect humanity was set forth in the incorruptible wood of which it was made.

Divine Righteousness was set forth in the gold with which it was covered; and the testimony (the law) found its living resting-place in Him.

He is set forth a mercy seat in the power of His blood (Rom. iii. 25), for in Him every attribute of God finds its satisfaction; and the divine glory dwells, for the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ (II. Cor. iv. 6).

It is a deep joy to contemplate everything that was set forth in figure and letter finding its living fulfilment in Him.

You thank God for your food, thank Him also for your medicine, for a day's trial is often of more value to you spiritually than a year's prosperity.

We may not be able to go to the heathen abroad, but we are not thereby released from our obligation to the heathen at home.

Answers to Correspondents.

"Perpetual Sleep."

W.P. Jeremiah li. is a picture drawn beforehand by the Lord of the destruction of the great city of Babylon because of the evil she did to Zion. It was a great city, a city of carousals and debauchery, and the mighty men ceased to fight and became like women, verse 30, and in the midst of this state of luxury and vice it was overthrown and sleeps with a perpetual sleep, *i.e.* a sleep from which there shall never be an awakening (verses 39 and 57), for Isaiah's prophecy predicts of the overthrown city that "it shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation (Isa. xiii. 20).

Secular history strikingly confirms the fulfilment not only of the event itself, but also the precise manner of its accomplishment as predicted in verses 30-44. Verse 37 is a graphic description of the present condition of the ruined city.

Saul and the Woman of En-dor (I. Sam. xxviii.).

The woman of En-dor was possessed

of a familiar spirit—a demon. This spirit evidently personated any departed person with whom those who resorted to her desired to converse. Her exact counterpart is found in the modern spiritualistic mediums, who, poor deceived souls, are not the mouthpiece of departed human beings, but of the demons that possess them.

Saul was abandoned by God for his disobedience, and there was no true repentance in him, for instead of humbling himself before the God whose word he had disregarded he had recourse to this woman. At his word the seance commenced, but to her astonishment and horror the familiar spirit did not respond as usual: instead there was an intervention of God, and Samuel himself appeared to pronounce God's judgment upon rebellious Saul.

As in those days, so in these, the turning to familiar spirits instead of to God is a terrible snare of Satan, and should not be touched by any who are the Lord's.

Answers as to "The Scriptures": "Eternal Punishment"; "Atonement"; and "The Table of the Lord" will (p.v.) be given next month.

From Samuel Rutherford's Letters.

Let ten thousand thousand new-made worlds of angels and elect men, and double them in number ten thousand thousand thousand times; let their heart and tongue be ten thousand thousand times more agile and large than the heart and tongue of the seraphim that stand before the Lord. When they have said all for the glorifying and praising of the Lord Jesus, they have but spoken little or nothing; His love will exceed the praise of all possible creatures.

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"O if the heaven, and the heaven of heavens were paper, and the sea ink,

and the multitude of mountains pens of brass, and I were able to write that paper, within and without, full of the praises of my fairest, my dearest, my loveliest, my sweetest, and my most marvellous Well-Beloved!

Woe is me, I cannot set Him out to men and angels. O there are few tongues to sing of His incomparable excellency. What can I, a poor prisoner, do to exalt Him? Or what course can I take to extol my lofty and lovely Lord Jesus? I am put to my wits and how to get His Name made great. Blessed are they who would help me in this."

The Cream of Christianity.

(H. P. BARRETT).

WE were standing, my friend and I, in the garden of a north country farm-house, beneath the hospitable roof of which we were making a short stay. Before us lay a wide prospect, with the lofty Cheviots towering in the distance, and many a farm and cottage dotting the intervening landscape.

Some years ago, said my friend, there came a man in this country-side who was greatly used of God. Uncouth, and in some ways unattractive, he seemed to have a wonderful power with him, and many were brought from darkness to light through his preaching.

One day he was walking along the road yonder, when he met an old pedlar, evidently an Irishman, selling his wares from door to door.

Hoping to find an opportunity of saying a few words to the old man about his soul, he accosted him, and after a few introductory remarks, observed that "it is a grand thing to be *saved*."

"Eh?" said the old pedlar, "I know something better than that!"

"Better than being saved?" said the servant of God, "what can you possibly know better than that?"

"Ah," said the Irishman, "I know."

"Well, tell me," said the other, "what is there better than salvation?"

"*The companionship of the Man who has saved me,*" was the pedlar's unexpected and astonishing reply.

He was evidently no novice in the school of Christ. He had learned a lesson well worth learning. He knew, not only the blessedness of God's salvation, but the joy that flows from having the company of the One who saves.

How much does the Christian reader of these lines know of this? Salvation through Christ is one thing: the companionship of Christ is quite another.

Many live, and die, and go to heaven without tasting the joy of this. Saved they are, of course, because they have staked their confidence in the Saviour and in His atoning sacrifice. But the *cream of Christianity* is not the assurance of salvation, but the joy of companionship. Those who miss it are but "*skim-milk*" Christians—*i.e.*, content with a great deal less than their own full and proper portion by grace.

May ours be that blessed companionship which Paul desired for his son in the faith, Timothy: "The Lord Jesus Christ be *with* thy spirit."

Mercies.

(SELECTED).

Mercies reviewed and pondered are even sweeter than when first bestowed.

The best way to keep our mercies is to be ready at all times to give them up at God's call.

A child of God taking a cup of cold water with a thankful heart, may render a better service to God than one who gives thousands of gold and silver.

God is love, and His children please Him as they are like Him and walk in love.

Let not the morrow be as a thief to rob you of this day's blessings.

Faith, patience, and prayer can overcome all difficulties.

If we come forth from the closet of communion, the atmosphere of evil speaking will be to us as the tainted air of some great city to one that has been breathing the pure air of a mountain top.

A happy, joyful spirit spreads joy everywhere; a fretful spirit is a trouble to ourselves and to all around.

The Gospel in the World.

(S. L. JACOB).

No. 3.—The Middle Ages—early in the 7th to early in the 16th Century.

WE now come to the Middle Ages, and a time of deepest darkness and apostasies; yet, thank God, during all that time Christ was at the right hand of God and the Spirit here; therefore, as divine Persons never fail, the will of God was being accomplished in His own people all through this period, and the moral features of Christ were being reproduced in their hearts and lives.

The centres were corrupt, the brightest spots were on the outskirts. Rome rose up to her greatness at the beginning of this period, the Pope claiming to be the vicar of Christ, and to have a triple crown and complete jurisdiction in every way over the world. This was in the west, while in the east there rose up Mohammedanism to be God's scourge on idolatrous Christendom; for the state of Christendom was terrible.

Mohammedanism rose in Arabia with startling rapidity and power; it quickly conquered Syria and Egypt, and then spread over North Africa, penetrating into Spain and even into France, though driven back from the latter by the conquering sword of Charles Martel. It also spread north and east, and divided Western Christendom, with its centre at Rome, from Eastern or Persian Christendom, of which Babylon was at one time the centre.

There were times when Eastern Christendom had revivals, and missionaries went out therefrom to the Mongols, the Chinese, the Tartars, and Indians; and at times partial and even considerable successes seemed to be gained. This was especially the case in the time of the Kerait prince generally known as Prester John: handsome stone churches were built far and wide, and in 1250 A.D. the majority of the Turks

were Christian, not Mohammedan, and there were more Christians (so-called) in the east than in the west.

But it all came to nought; the form of Christianity there was corrupt, forms and ceremonies occupied its votaries. Vernacular translations of the Bible were practically unknown; and while there doubtless were many true humble followers of Christ, the known leaders were no help, but more often corrupters. Christianity fell in the east, and we cannot wonder at it, for it was not pure. The Chinese expelled it from China. Timur destroyed Bagdad, the then centre of Eastern Christendom; and early in the 15th century Christianity as a vital force had gone from the east.

There remained the Syrian Church in Travancore in South India, the Armenians, Nestorians, and others in Asia; the Copts in Egypt; and the Abyssinians in East Africa. All these clung to the truth that Christ is the Son of God and suffered in consequence, and God will not forget this; but other vitality there seems to have been none, deadness was everywhere, no Gospel preached, no going out in the activities of love, but mostly dead forms; though we must not forget that God ever has hidden hearts who know Him in the darkest places.

Deeply humbling it all is, for the power was there in Christ and the Spirit. It is useless to talk of the great power of the Eastern religions. Could they stand before the Lord and the Spirit? No: it is the corruption of the truth that brought all to the ground; God cares not for forms and names. He wants Christ formed in souls in vital power, and nothing less will satisfy: better nothing than the presentation of a false Christ.

Now we turn to the west.

In the centre at Rome there was corruption deep and dire, yet even there now and again we see something of God, though more and more suppressed; but in the outskirts the best work was done. From the Celts, Scots, and Franks grand missionaries went forth. From Iona in Scotland and from Lindisfarne in Northumbria and other places noble men arose. Among these may be mentioned Cuthbert in the north of England, and Chad who worked in the Midlands, whose brother became the apostle of Essex; and thus it was from the North that England was mainly evangelised.

The Roman priests, however, were in England at the beginning of this period, seeking to Romanise everything, and in the middle of the 7th century these came into collision with the simple Iona missionaries. The chief point about the dispute was the method of computing Easter; the king sided with the Romans and the simple Christians were driven back, and the Romish agents began to Romanise all England. Still, many noble names are met with, amongst them Wilfred of York who evangelised Sussex; the Venerable Bede and others. But it was not till the beginning of the 11th century that Canute's kingdom, including Britain, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, became as a whole Christian (as we speak). The battle was oft strong and dire, but the apparent victory was won at last, but not, alas, without compromise and the sowing of much corrupt seed.

Wulf the Goth, being converted, went to the Goths; an Englishman named Winfred, but better known as Boniface, did great things among the Saxons and Norsemen on the Continent; Willibrord worked in Friesland. These pagans did not yield easily. Then with the 9th century came Charlemagne and his conquests. He set out to conquer the Saxons and force on them the Gospel, and behind his troops came an army of monks. It was rough work, not the way of Christ, yet in the midst of all the failure God worked. It took four cen-

turies to subdue the stout Teuton race, and then paganism disappeared to return no more to all those regions.

Later the Bulgarians, Moravians, Bohemians, Poles, Prussians, Russians, etc., were attacked, but it was not till about the year 1400 that these parts became wholly Christian. Alas, in the work good and evil were ever mixed. Pure work, like that of the Apostle Paul, we see not; still how greatly we are indebted to the noble missionaries of those days, of whose work we know little; but their record is on high.

In Spain there was conflict continually between the Christian and the Moslem. Finally the Cardinal Ximenez paid large sums to secure converts. The Moors rebelled; they were suppressed with cruelty; then about 1500 A.D. no other religion save Christianity was tolerated in Spain. Europe was at last in name practically Christian, though in 1453 A.D. the Turk established himself in Europe, and a corner of Europe was therefore Mohammedan.

In the meantime corruption had spread apace. The Waldenses in the rocky fastnesses of the Alps kept the torch of truth burning in spite of much persecution. The Albigenses, less fortunate, were wiped out by Pope Innocent III., and their fair country of Languedoc turned into a desert with awful cruelties, just because they were simple Christians and would not accept Popery.

Peter Waldo and his poor men of Lyons, did much to preserve the pure gospel. In the 14th century Wickliffe nobly stood for the truth, and his followers, the Lollards, bore much for Christ. In Bohemia that man Huss, of beautiful character, stood faithfully for Christ, and in the 15th century he and Jerome of Prague were burnt to death. Witnesses there were, and not a few—though the names of most are on high, not in the annals of men—but generally speaking sad corruption had its sway all over Europe.

In the 11th century the great schism between the west and the east occurred.

The nominal cause was as to whether the Holy Ghost proceeded from both Father and Son, or only from the Father; but never did the ostensible cause of the breach appear to be the real cause of any division, ancient or modern. The breach occurs in spirit, and then some trifle is taken up; the stronger demands complete submission, with excision as the only alternative, and the thing is done. Alas, alas, truly we only do the deeds of our fathers.

Thus the corruption spread both west and east, though the west exceeded; but God is over all, blessed be His Name. All must be well, and the Seed of the woman must bruise the serpent's head in the end, even if dispensations end in great darkness, as they assuredly do. How wonderful it will be when God displays the hidden beauties which He formed and sustained in all this apparently hopeless confusion.

(To be concluded.)

The Life of the Christian.

(ADAPTED).

THERE are three parts of the Christian life which may be illustrated by the three stages of bird life. At first the little bird only opens its mouth for food: feeding is its one simple occupation. As it thrives its feathers and wings grow, and as soon as they are grown it enters upon another stage—it flies and sings. It could not fly if it did not feed, but as it is nourished it finds that it has the ability to rise into its own sphere, and its glad song is the natural result of its being there.

As a new born babe, the Christian desires the sincere milk of the word, and as he is nourished by it he becomes conscious of a new power—he is able to fly. It becomes natural to rise above the things of the earth and set his affections on things above, where Christ sitteth; and then begins the singing. I believe that no bird can sing until it can fly, and I am sure that no Christian sings his true note until he rises up in the power of the Holy Ghost to Christ, where Christ is. Then there is singing in full true notes, the deep and overflowing satisfaction of a heart that knows the joy of His presence, where there are pleasures for evermore.

Then comes the last stage of the bird's life, which is building a nest and caring for her young. The bird that flies selects its own food and sings; it is often brilliant, but it is alone and

singular; but when it builds its nest where its young may be reared its character and habits undergo a change; it surrenders none of its former power, but instead of contenting itself with its own peculiar personal satisfaction, it devotes itself to objects outside itself—objects dear to it as its own life, and it shapes itself always to the good of the objects of its love.

How this presents what might be called the perfection of Christian life on earth.

(1) Nourished by the word, ministered to the soul in the power of the Spirit.

(2) Rising, as on eagle wings, to the home of the heart, the presence of the Lord, and pouring out songs of grateful praise to Him.

(3) Having a heart freed from self-occupation, because satisfied with Christ, to care for those things which are for His glory here below. When the great Apostle said, "I endure all things for the elect's sake that they may obtain salvation with eternal glory," he was in the full glow of this blessed life; there was no self-interest or self-seeking with him; his life was spent in seeking and caring for those who were precious to Christ, and, because precious to Christ, precious also to him. To this priceless privilege every Christian on earth is called.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 8—The Resurrection.

AS the authority of Scripture hangs upon the truth of the Person of Jesus, so does the truth of His Person hang upon the fact of the resurrection. It was by the resurrection from the dead He was declared Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. i. 4). The power by which He passed through this evil world, untainted by its defiling influences, was the power by which He offered Himself without spot to God, and by which He proved Himself victorious over death and the grave. One who has to do with death must attest his power over it, or it will attest its power over him. He must annul its might, and come back scathless from its gloom, or it will hold him prisoner in its strongholds of corruption, and thus declare its superior prowess.

From the entrance of sin into the world all who descended into those impenetrable and mysterious regions of fear had to remain there. In a few isolated cases the might of God was exhibited in bringing back again to life upon earth those who had fallen into the clutches of the fell destroyer, but such were never placed beyond the reach of the terrific foe. They were bearers of what might be likened to a "ticket of leave," the time limit of which having expired they were once more compelled to enter the land of shades. We read of two men who escaped altogether the fate common to the sons of Adam. By the intervention of God on their behalf they were translated to heaven that they might not see death, and thus became witnesses of the hidden resources of God, which He could put forth for the complete deliverance of the people of His choice. With these two exceptions all in Adam died, and in death they remain.

Death is to man the most appalling evil that can come upon him; it is the

most heartless and horrible mischief which one man can inflict upon another; and it is the most severe sentence which the law of the land can inflict upon a criminal. Satan has said that a man will give all he possesses for his life; and he is very well acquainted with the way in which men regard things which refer personally to themselves. Those who enjoy a fair share of the mercies of the present life, and to whom death seems far distant, may be found discussing the dissolution of the earthly tabernacle with a certain amount of calmness; but let the dread shadow of the grim monarch fall across their threshold, and you will find their tranquility brought to an abrupt and speedy termination,

We seem never to become accustomed to its ravages. Familiarity with its silent footfall has not enabled us to hold its presence in contempt. It is to-day the same hideous, hateful, horrible invader of hearts and homes as it was at the outset of its reign on earth. He who guides it upon the track of his neighbour is branded as most wicked, and he who invites it to his own embrace is held to be insane. To the appeal for mercy it is deaf; to the question as to whence it comes it returns no answer; as to why it strikes it is dumb; as to whither it conducts the vital principle of its victim it has no information to convey to the unhappy and broken-hearted mourner. It strikes out from impenetrable darkness; and is only known by the certainty of its aim, and by the violence of the blow which needs not to be repeated. It has no more respect for the autocrat upon his throne than it has for the peasant in his humble cot, and it is equally dreaded by both. Its heart is harder than the flinty rock, and the only music it has ever heard is the lamentations which arise from the souls of those who feel the burden of

its iron sceptre. It is swifter than those who flee from it, and stronger than those who stand up to contend against it. It is the monarch of all evils, and is either the executioner of a righteous governor, or the pitiless slave of a being who revels in murder.

But after all, is it indeed a foe which has never known defeat? Has it proved itself victorious in every engagement? Has no one risen up on behalf of man with might enough to grapple with this terrific monster and lay in ruins his apparently impregnable fortress? Has no one been able to track him to his lair, and heap destruction upon the head of the destroyer? Is there no one to deliver us from this ruthless enemy of mankind? If not, our lot is indeed deplorable.

That it is a terrible evil none but a dreamer will deny, and when it is denied no one will believe in the sincerity of the person who attempts to minimise its horrors. It has been designated by every name that the ingenuity of man can invent, from "a bend in the road" to "annihilation," all to relieve it of its hideous and repulsive appearance; but bitter death, call it what you will, is still the "King of terrors." It is the just conclusion of a life of rebellion against God. And this is the very thing that makes it so terrible. Why should human life be so beset with sorrow? and why should the way out of it be so fenced with terror? Without the Gospel of the grace of God the present life is an enigma incapable of solution.

Here the Scriptures come to our relief, and set before us the Son of God as our almighty Deliverer. In grace He goes down into death to break its power. That He might be able to die He took flesh and blood: "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). Again we are

told: "For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead" (I. Cor. xv. 21). It is impossible that such a person as the Son of God could be held by the cords of death. We should not require to be told that death must give way before such a glorious Personage. That Jesus came into death is a matter of profane history; that He came out of it is not. If He was compelled to remain there He was no stronger than any other of the human race.

There is nothing so persistently kept before our minds as resurrection—I may say death and resurrection. We have it every twenty-four hours set figuratively before our souls. The day declines, and noiseless night advances and wraps an unconscious world in her inky mantle. The morning breaks, night vanishes, the song of birds is heard, and man arises from his sleep refreshed, the toils of yesterday forever gone. The seasons run their course, the winter comes, the flowers are dead, the leaves fallen, the trees are bare, snows mantle the earth, and desolation broods over a lifeless world. The spring appears, the winter frosts and snows are gone, nature awakes, the daisies deck the field, the budding woods are full of life, and everything beneath the azure dome of heaven with bounding pulse, and bright brow, and glad heart, instinct with life, gives witness to the God of resurrection.

But when we come to the Scriptures, we find that from the entrance of sin into the world, resurrection is the hope of fallen man. Adam and Eve are no sooner brought under the power of death than they are made to hear of a Deliverer, One who was destined to bruise the head of their fell destroyer. Still they have to take their sorrowful journey down to the dust out of which they were taken. Where then would their deliverance come in? Of what value was a Deliverer to those who were compelled to submit to the penalty of their offence? How could they be made to profit by this Deliverer? As far as we know they knew nothing of a

state of bliss for their spirits apart from the body. And even if they did, how could they be in the favour of their Creator, and in the enjoyment of that favour, while their bodies lay under the judgment pronounced by God on account of their transgression? There was only one way by which their deliverance could be effected, and that one way was by resurrection.

I may be told that I am taking the early chapters of Genesis for granted, and that this is begging the question. I am taking nothing for granted. I am simply putting before the reader the things of which Scripture testifies, and the setting in which the things borne witness to are placed. A Deliverer is announced to those who are told they must return to dust, and I see no way in which they could hope to benefit by that Deliverer except on the principle of resurrection. If the whole matter recorded in the early chapters of Genesis be but the imagination of the writer, then the idea of resurrection must have had such hold upon his soul that it never occurred to him there might be a doubt as to it in the mind of the reader.

Enoch the seventh from Adam is translated, not passing through the article of death; another proof that resurrection is the way of deliverance for man: man is to have his body in his perfectly delivered state. Enoch has his body, and shall have it for ever; for I suppose no one imagines that death stills lies before him, and if he is to have his body it is unreasonable to suppose other men can be blest without theirs. If we are not to have our bodies in our eternal condition, what confusion must arise from translation. I may be told Enoch never was translated. I have not affirmed that he was; I am speaking from Scripture. But I do affirm this, *resurrection was in the mind of the writer of the book of Genesis.*

Abraham and Sarah are childless until nature becomes withered and dead, and then God tells him that his seed shall be as the stars of heaven or the sand upon the sea shore for number,

and Abraham read in this promise the character of the God who had appeared to him, the God of resurrection. This faith of the patriarch had a severe test applied to it when he was told to offer up this child of promise as a burnt-offering upon Mount Moriah; but his faith rose up strong in answer to the demand which was made upon it, and he bound his son upon the altar confident that God would raise him from the dead. It is the same God of resurrection who is preached in the Gospel to-day, but brought to light in raising up our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.

It is brought before us typically in the dividing of the Red Sea, through which Israel passed out of Egypt into the wilderness; and in the parting of the waters of the Jordan, through which the same people came into the promised land. The Red Sea was not the usual way out of Egypt, neither was it necessary for them to cross the Jordan to come into Canaan. But just as death and resurrection were in the mind of him who wrote Genesis, so also was the mind of the writer of Exodus filled with the same idea. Then we have the budding of the rod of priesthood; the dry, dead staff which was laid up before the Lord, buds, blossoms, bears fruit, and thus witnesses that priesthood must be established upon the basis of resurrection.

At the cleansing of the leper the live bird let loose into the open heaven, bearing upon its wing the red stain of its identification with the one killed over running water in the earthen vessel, also Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, set forth the same principle of divine operation. The fact is, if in reading the Old Testament the idea of resurrection is expunged from the mind the Bible is a book of unrivalled contradictions. That great principle pervades every sentence uttered by prophetic lip from the entrance of sin into the world.

Could anything be plainer than that resurrection was that which was the

hope of the One who speaks in Psalm xvi? "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (sheol), neither wilt Thou suffer Thy holy One to see corruption." Here is One who goes down into death in the utmost confidence that the power of God will not allow His soul to abide in sheol, nor His flesh to see corruption. The apostles of the Lord tell us that this Psalm refers to the Christ of God. He could not be held by that dread power. By going into it He broke its might. Does not the whole heart and soul of the reader rise up in praise and thanksgiving to God for the victory which He has gained, gained at such infinite cost, but nevertheless gained on behalf of poor things like ourselves that we might no longer be in bondage to Satan on account of the fear of it.

As I have already indicated, resurrection is, according to Scripture, a great witness to the glory and greatness of the person of Jesus. During His earthly career, instead of being as every other man under the power of death, He is seen to have power over it, for at His word it was compelled to deliver up its prey. But above all, His own resurrection furnishes the most complete evidence of His dignity as Son of God. When Moses smote the waters of the Red Sea they became parted hither and thither, their power was broken, and when Jesus smote the waters of death in His own death upon the cross their power was broken; His resurrection is the witness to this stupendous fact.

"He hell in hell laid low,
Made sin He sin o'erthrew,
Bowed to the grave, destroyed it so,
And death by dying slew."

The witnesses to this mighty victory are overwhelming, and I do not therefore marvel at men, who wish to get rid of the fact, and yet do not feel that they can safely impute deceitful practices to the disciples, suggesting all sorts of theories which they consider sufficient to account for their belief in the event without it being really true. But I would like to ask these men a very old question: "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you

that God should raise the dead"? Had fallen man been the one declared to have gained such a victory, it would have been very reasonable to doubt it, but as it is declared to have been brought about by the power of God I see no reason to question it. No doubt the enemy would desire to treat the report as a fable. He is not likely to foster the notion in men's minds that his stronghold has fallen before the assault of the Son of God, but the witnesses are so many and of such unquestionable integrity that not to believe the fact is a terrible evidence of sheer self-will.

Paul tells us that Jesus was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once. After that He was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all He was seen of Paul himself. Luke tells us in his Gospel that He appeared to two of them on their way home from Jerusalem to Emmaus; and was made known to them in the breaking of bread, the symbol of His death; that He ate and drank with His disciples, and that when they thought it was a spirit they were looking upon, He invited them to handle Him and see, telling them that a spirit had not flesh and bones, as they saw He had. Next, he tells us that He led a company out as far as Bethany, and that while, with uplifted hands, He blessed them, He was parted from them and carried up into heaven (Luke xxiv.). And in what a pure and guileless atmosphere of holy affections this short history of the victory of God is enshrined. Never in the universe has appeared the liar who could set the baseless inventions of his corrupt imagination in such a framework of tender grace and evident piety. Had I no other testimony than that which is furnished by the writer of the third Gospel I dare not question the glad tidings of the overthrow of the king of terrors.

And Paul tells us he saw Him on his way to Damascus, when he thought to wipe out the blessed name of Jesus from under heaven. That this remark-

able convert was neither a deceiver nor a liar is evident from the whole spirit of his writings. Whatever else was true of him he was conscientious, and was certain that he had seen the Just One and heard His voice. Was he mistaken? Was it the effect of sunstroke? Was it hallucination, or some insane wandering of his excited mind? That he was a man with determined will is not to be questioned, but that he was nervous, hysterical, mentally deranged, and subject to hallucinatory attacks, no one who studies his profound, pure, and wholesome disquisitions will be willing to admit. What insight into the mysteries of God he possessed, things which eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor which ever entered into the heart of man—things which God has prepared for those who love Him. What an immense grasp of his infinite subject, what profound reasoning, what ability for anticipating the cavillings of the corrupt human mind, what terrible earnestness, what self-abnegation, what deep piety, and what boundless affection for the souls of those to whom he writes. And all this resulted from that visitation which he encountered on his way to Damascus.

And yet some of the leaders in Christendom tell us Paul never saw the risen Jesus at all, and neither did His disciples, for such a thing as the resurrection never took place. And how do they know? They do *not* know. They are servants of his who desires to keep poor man in the dark as to his own defeat. And yet they call themselves Christians, at least some of them do, while they deny the foundation upon which the whole truth as to Christianity rests. And they tell us that Christianity is not a bad thing, though if we believe them it is founded upon the blackest bundle of lies that ever was told under the sun. Some of them

in their madness go so far as to suppose that the power of the spirit-world was put forth to deceive the poor disciples, so that they might believe in a thing that had no existence, and thus be strengthened in the notion that nothing good could ever really perish (New Theology, page 219), and the spirit of Jesus is supposed to have lent a helping hand in this trickery. Strange morality this! It is evident that very soon in Christendom the devil will have no reason to disguise himself, they will be quite open to receive him as he is.

It was not in this way the apostles of our Lord instructed their converts. They gave them to understand that a lie was a lie, and that a lie against God was the greatest of all lies (I. Cor. xv.). They tell us: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ: whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is Christ not raised: and if Christ be not raised your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished."

This is wholesome doctrine compared with the corrupt ethics which the leaders of the people, to-day, seek to foist upon us. How can the truth be respected in secular things when the religion in which they attempt to instruct the people is founded on a falsehood, which is by them justified, and declared to have been concocted or connived at by the Saviour of the world? If I could not believe in the resurrection I should abandon the profession of Christianity as a system of unparalleled deceit, hypocrisy, and soul-destroying error.

Let us turn every circumstance of the day into an occasion of communion with God; things of small account will then bring us great blessing.

Let us solemnly consider how much we may injure others when we are fretful and wilful, and how much we may help others when we are joyful in God.

His Care and His Delight.

(CONTRIBUTED).

“HOW can the Lord Jesus Christ think of me, and care for me, and listen to my prayers and answer them, when He has so many millions to think of at the same time? I cannot understand it, and it troubles me a great deal.”

So wrote a true but weak believer to me not long ago. My reply was, “I am like you in one respect, for I cannot understand how the Lord can think of me and treat me as an object of His special care, for I am a mere atom in His vast creation, and one of the least of the myriads of the members of His body, but I believe that He is able to do this, and I know that He does it.

“His watchful eye shall keep
My pilgrim soul amongst
The thousands of God's sheep.”

His own words, so full of grace and tenderness, recorded for us in the Gospels, abundantly prove this, and since He has gone on high, we are told by the Holy Ghost that “He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. vii. 25).

But there is something that should give the heart of the believer a deeper delight than simply knowing that all our

needs will be met because He will never cease to care for us, and it is that every one of His own are of consequence to Him. “I am glorified in them,” He said, and happy is that soul, that, free from self-occupation, desires to be just that which the Lord in His grace would have him, and nothing more.

He is in heaven for us, but we are left on earth to be for Him, and, that He is glorified as we blossom, and bud, and bring forth fruit, should urge us to be more to His mind. I may be only a little daisy in His garden, but He prizes me very much, and likes to have me in His garden, and comes to see after me every day, and confers on me continually, like the shining of the sun, some special mark of His favour. If I know this I shall not be thinking of my own littleness or uselessness, but of the unaccountable care and interest and appreciation of the Owner of the garden.

Flowers do not open out into full bloom on a cold, sunless day, but when the sun invites them they expand into their greatest brilliancy, and it is as we are assured that He delights in us that we are encouraged to go in for all that He desires us to be.

Sin.

(SELECTED).

IT is the nature of sin to obtain great power by little beginnings.

God would have us regard sin in its pollution and guilt, and deal with it as done against Him. (Ps. li. 4).

Those who deny the Godhead of Christ, and atonement by His blood know not the nature of their sickness, and so reject the great Physician whom God hath sent.

It is a great principle of God's government that a sin not repented of becomes a seed which greatly multiplies.

Those who question the everlasting punishment of the rejectors of God's salvation, betray a slack conscience as to sin, an inability to grasp the meaning of the death of the Son of God, and a rebellion of heart against the testimony of the Scriptures.

The Sluggard.

(T. R. WESTON).

In the Book of Proverbs.

THE sluggard is much spoken of in the Book of Proverbs, and we think we may do well to reflect upon what is said about him, for doubtless his counterpart is with us to-day, not only in natural but also in spiritual things.

The sluggard may be described as one who does not come up to, or properly respond to his privileges.

He is put to shame by the animal creation, for in the *first* mention of him he is exhorted thus: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Proverbs vi. 6, 7, 8).

Though endowed with a reason, he debases himself below the level of the brute creation, for their natural instincts show the necessity of procuring food by labour and at the right season.

He also ignores the primal curse resting upon man "that in the sweat of his face he should eat bread all the days of his life"; he in fact "will not plow by reason of the cold," and as a consequence he shall beg in harvest and have nothing (Prov. xx. 4).

All his desire is for sleep and indolence; for he says in answer to the question—"How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of sleep?"—"Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep": and the divine commentary upon his conduct is, "so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man" (Prov. vi. 9-11).

Again, although this man is possessed of a field and a vineyard, it yields him no profit, for he will not by industry keep down the earth-born results of the

curse—the thorn and the briar, and as you pass by his possession you are forced to exclaim, "Lo, it was all grown over with thorns; and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down" (Prov. xxiv. 31); and for the second time we read, "so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man" (verse 34). The "stone wall" broken down shows us that a "diligent" man had preceded him, but the slothfulness of the sluggard undoes the work of his industrious father, and he becomes an offender not only before God, but also before his fellow men.

He *desires* good fare, but he cares not to hunt and procure that which is to be roasted (Prov. xxi. 25). He magnifies the smallest obstacle, and his sloth sees a "lion without way" (Prov. xxii. 13), which if he took the trouble to investigate he would find to be perhaps but the tiniest lamb, but he will not go without to look, for he says (and it is mentioned twice), "I shall be slain in the streets."

"As vinegar to the teeth and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him": he is most unreliable in all that he undertakes, or that is committed to him to do, he is therefore always "under tribute," but had he been diligent he might "have borne rule."

By his inactivity he surrounds himself as it were with a hedge of thorns, and can make no headway, whereas if he had acted aright and exercised himself, his way would have been made plain, for he would have prospered in his work, as in "all labour there is profit," but he has been slothful in his work, and has become as a brother to him who is a "great waster," for he who refuses to get, and he who having ob-

tained, wastes his substance, are very much akin to one another.

Sleep! sleep! sleep! seems all his desire. He is indeed an idle soul, and an idle soul we are told "shall suffer hunger," but what cares he? he simply hideth his hand in his bosom instead of stretching it forth in labour.

He thus remains in one place, no progress, no increase, no development, no enlargement, but "as a door upon its hinges" so he turns in his bed, yet with all his base and unworthy conduct, he is full of conceit and arrogance and considers himself "wiser than seven men that can render a reason" (xxvi. 16).

We know that the Book of Proverbs gives us heavenly wisdom for earthly ways, and we may surely be exercised as to how much the sluggard in natural things has his counterpart with us in spiritual things. We are told that that which was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope, and it were well for us to test our spiritual condition and activities by these divinely given comments on the sluggard's conduct. We have a field to cultivate, a wall to repair, a Master to serve, messages to run and wealth to gain. Do we grow slack as to our soul's prosperity, and indifferent to our separation from the world, and idle in our Master's service?

We will quote a few New Testament Scriptures bearing upon this subject, and may the Lord greatly exercise each one of us as to whether we come up to and respond to the blessed privileges conferred upon us, as well towards God

as towards our fellow Christians, and also towards the world that lieth in the wicked one.

Surely the signs of the last times are very visible when we consider the vast inert mass of indifference, do-nothingness and Laodicean lukewarmness extant. May the Lord graciously arouse each one of His own to work for Him "while it is called to-day," full well knowing "that the night cometh when no man can work."

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Rom. xii. 11).

"That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. vi. 12).

"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. xiii. 11).

"They all slumbered and slept" (Matt. xxv. 5).

"Why sleep ye? Rise and pray" (Luke xxii. 46).

"Awake thou that sleepest" (Eph. v. 14).

"Therefore let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober" (I. Thess. v. 6).

"Thou wicked and slothful servant" (Matt. xxv. 26).

"No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light" (Luke viii. 16).

"I shall Arise."

(L. M. WARNER).

MICAH VII. 8.

I fail—I sin—I fall:

But Thou, oh God, wilt raise me up again
As I on Thee do call.

JUDGES VIII. 4.

I faint; yet I pursue,

For Thou wilt give me power to run my race;
My strength Thou wilt renew.

ISAIAH XL. 31.

If I but wait on Thee,
I shall mount up on eagle's wings, and prove
The strength Thou givest me.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 11.—Zechariah.

NO adequate unfolding of the glories of Christ, as presented in the prophecy of Zechariah, would be possible without entering into a detailed exposition of its fourteen chapters. This, of course, is out of question in a short article like this.

It will be helpful, however, to notice that the book naturally divides itself into two portions. The first portion (Chaps. i. to vi.), contains a series of prophetic visions; the second portion (Chaps. vii. to xiv.), consists mainly of direct prophetic utterances, and is particularly rich in its personal references to Christ.

But we find that blessed One also set forth in the first, or apocalyptic, portion of the book. He is shown to be God's great resource, in view of the breakdown and failure of Israel. For this is what we understand by His title, the "BRANCH" (iii. 8 and vi. 12). Israel had become as a dead tree, producing no fruit, and only cumbering the ground. No tillage, no dew from heaven, no showers of rain, however abundant, availed to bring about any change.

Then God, intervening in mercy and power, brought forth in connection with that dead tree a living "Branch." The Lord Jesus came of Israel's race, "a root out of a dry ground," a living branch in the midst of a lifeless profession. As such, He was Jehovah's Servant, fulfilling His will upon the earth, and answering to all His pleasure. In Him, God had at last a Servant upon whom He could absolutely depend, One who would never fail.

Everybody else whom God had trusted with any responsibility had failed. Adam, entrusted with dominion over the earth, failed; Noah, entrusted with the sword of government, failed; Moses, entrusted with the leadership of the hosts of Israel, failed; Israel, called

out to be a channel of blessing to the nations, failed and was a curse to them instead of a blessing (chap. viii. 13); David, entrusted with the honours of royalty, failed, and his kingdom had to be rent in two; the remnant of Judah, restored from captivity in Babylon and entrusted with the maintenance of Jehovah's interests, failed; the Church, entrusted with testimony to the earth-rejected, heaven-enthroned Saviour, has failed. (Grievous beyond all other failures has been that of the Church). Each of us individually, entrusted with some little bit of service for the Lord, has failed, but HE—never!

He is presented thus as God's faithful Servant and unfailing resource, in connection with the feeble testimony of the Jews who had returned from their captivity. Haggai has shown us their failure in building the temple. In contrast to this we read: "Behold the Man whose name is 'the Branch' . . . He shall build the temple of the Lord."

In everything committed to Him His faithfulness is manifest, and "He shall bear the glory." Great enough to sustain the weight of all that depends upon Him, mighty enough to carry into accomplishment all that God has purposed, the glory of it all shall be His. And He is worthy!

Moreover, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all God's ways of blessing. Of this we are reminded in chaps. iii. and iv. In chap. iii. the *Foundation Stone* of the temple, with its seven eyes, sets forth, symbolically, Christ as the One upon Whom God's structure of blessing is built. In chap. iv. the *Headstone*, saluted with shoutings, symbolizes Christ as the crown and completion of that structure. If He is the foundation from which God works in blessing, He is also the One *in view of Whom* God works.

God ever has Christ before Him in all that He does. The worlds were created not only by Him, but for Him (Col. i. 16). He is both Foundation Stone and Headstone of all God's counsels.

But without going too much into detail, let us see how the prophecy before us traces out the service of Christ to God, whether in suffering or in glory.

Micah has shown us the lowly birth at Bethlehem, of Him whose goings forth have been "from everlasting." Hosea has hinted at His journey to Egypt and His return. Isaiah has mentioned His "growing up" before Jehovah as a tender plant, and now Zechariah brings before us some of the salient features of His pathway on earth.

His Ministry.

Ch. xi. 4-11.

Thus saith the Lord my God; feed the flock of the slaughter;

Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty; and they that sell them say, blessed be the Lord; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.

For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the Lord: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king; and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.

And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off: and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people.

And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord.

In chap. xi. Jehovah's flock is seen as committed to Him to be fed. Down-trodden by their "possessors" (the Romans); betrayed and sold by those who with hypocritical piety take the Lord's Name upon their lips (Herod, and such as he); unpitied and uncared for by those who should have been shepherds to them (the religious leaders), truly might they be called "the flock of the slaughter."

It was the delight of Christ to feed this poor, oppressed flock. Not that the flock, as a whole, appreciated His gracious ministry. But there were some who did, and richly did He feed their souls. "I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock." It was these, the "poor of the flock" who waited upon Him, and acknowledged that the word of Jehovah was in His mouth (ver. 2). For in this chapter the prophet himself is a figure of Christ, and the Spirit of Christ speaks in Him.

In connection with the Lord's shepherd-ministry, in the midst of the flock, we have the incident of the two staves, Beauty and Bands. It is easy to see the significance of these; they set forth two great objects that the Lord had in view when He undertook the shepherd-ing of the flock.

The staff Beauty symbolizes that which He desired to make Israel, among the nations ("all the people" in ver. 10 should read "all the *peoples*," *i.e.*, the nations). God's purpose for Israel was that it should be clothed with beauty—the beauty of holiness—and should be the centre from which the knowledge of God should radiate to the uttermost ends of the earth.

The staff Bands symbolizes "the brotherhood between Judah and Israel" (ver. 14), the cementing of the two rival nations into one.

The Lord, in taking the flock under His care, had both these objects in view. He would beautify Israel with the knowledge of her God, and make her a focus of light and blessing to all nations, and would unite the rent and divided people into one.

But with the rejection of His ministry, both these objects had to be, for the time, abandoned. Hence the symbolical breaking of the two staves, in ver. 10 and 14. However, the day will come for both the staves to be re-united. The staff Beauty will be again taken up by Israel's Shepherd, and Zion, "*beautiful for situation*," will be the joy of the whole earth, and God will be known in

her palaces for a refuge (Ps. xlviii. 2). Zion will then be "*the perfection of beauty*," and God will Himself shine out therefrom (Ps. l. 2).

The staff Bands will also be taken up, and Israel and Judah "shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all" (Ezek. xxxvii. 22). Thus will the Lord serve His people in days to come, even as He would have served them if they had received Him in days gone by.

His entry into Jerusalem.

Chap. ix. 9.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

This passage is familiar to us from its quotation in the Gospels. Zion's King, contrary to general anticipation, would not enter His royal city in pomp and splendour. He would come in lowly guise, riding upon an ass. How literally this was fulfilled we all know. But though welcomed with loud hosannas, He was not really received by the people as their God-given King. Though He brought salvation, and was just, He was not appreciated. This is brought out in chapter xi., where we have

His Valuation by the People.

Chap. xi. 12, 13.

And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prized at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord.

Under the Mosaic law, if a slave were killed by being gored by an ox, the master of the slave was to be recompensed by the gift of *thirty shekels of silver* from the owner of the ox (Ex. xxi. 32). Thirty shekels of silver were therefore regarded as the equivalent of a slave. And such was the sum at which the Lord of Glory was valued by the people whom He came to bless! They regarded Him as of no more value than a slave.

Was His heart indifferent to this contemptuous valuation of Himself? Does not His grief find vent in the

exclamation of pained surprise: "A goodly price that I was prized at of them!"

But to deeper depths of sorrow the Saviour had to go, for our prophet presents Him to us as *wounded in the house of His friends*.

His Crucifixion.

Chap. xiii. 5, 6.

But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

The whole passage, if carefully examined, is full of interest. The change of subject is abrupt, but none can doubt, in view of the language of verse 7, that it is Christ Himself whose sufferings are depicted.

The concluding sentence of verse 5 would be more correctly rendered: "for man has acquired me as a bondman from my youth." The Lord Jesus, in marvellous grace, devoted Himself from the outset to the service of man. He took the bondman's place in order that He might effectually serve the objects of His love. But wounds and bruises were His reward, and in the house of those whom He had so devotedly befriended, His hands were pierced. The cross was the shameful answer on the part of man, to the unselfish love that only sought to serve.

But we find something further than this, namely,

His Smiting by God.

Ch. xiii. 7.

Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is my Fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.

He is spoken of as the Man that is Jehovah's Fellow; words that could be used of none but Himself. The Lord of hosts bids His sword awake, that His Shepherd may be smitten. Here are depths that none can fathom!

Our loss will be great if we fail to distinguish between the two kinds of smiting which the Lord Jesus endured: His wounding in the house of His

friends, and His smiting at the hands of God. Both the one and the other are fully dwelt upon in the New Testament.

All the cruel sufferings heaped upon the Saviour's head by wicked *men* could never have made *atonement* for our sins. Love it was that made Him willing to suffer, and it was for the sake of truth and righteousness that He was afflicted.

But when men, instigated by Satan, had done their worst, and when the holy Sufferer was shrouded from their gaze for three hours by an impenetrable pall of darkness, God poured out upon Him the vials of His righteous judgment. He bruised Him and put Him to grief (Is. liii. 10); He brought Him into the dust of death (Ps. xxii. 15); He forsook Him; He made Him to be sin for us (II. Cor. v. 21); He bade His sword awake against the Man that was His Fellow.

It is here that *Atonement* is found. The passage in Zechariah, it is true, does not speak of this. It shows us the sheep scattered as the consequence of the Shepherd being smitten, whereas the result of atonement is that they are saved and blessed. But atonement was made when God entered into the great sin question with Christ upon the cross, and when the wrath that might so rightly have fallen upon us was poured out upon Him. No mere martyr-suffering was this. The judgment of God was visited upon the head of Christ; His soul was made an offering for sin; Jehovah's billows rolled over Him. All praise be to Him that His love made Him willing to endure it all, not only for Israel's sake, but for ours.

His coming again.

Ch. xiv. 1-3.

Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle.

The last chapter of our prophet is full of the glorious day that is yet to

dawn. It is not the hope of the Christian that is here presented. Before the events which are here described shall take place, we Christians, whether alive or sleeping, shall have been "caught up" to meet the Lord in the air, according to I. Thess. iv. 15-17.

Subsequent to the Lord's coming to catch up His Church from the earth, He will come again in power and glory, to establish His throne in Zion, and to reign in righteousness for a thousand years. This, His public advent, is the theme of many a glowing prophecy, in both the Old and the New Testaments. In chap. xiv. 5 we read, "The Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with Thee."

His coming thus will be preceded by what Scripture speaks of as "the day of the Lord" (verse 1).

Various "days" are referred to, not days of twenty-four hours, but periods of time. The present age, when man seems to be having everything his own way, is spoken of as *Man's Day* (I. Cor. iv. 3, marginal reading). The coming day of glory, when the earth shall be filled with gladness under the beneficent rule of Christ and His saints, is called *the Day of Christ* (Phil. ii. 16). The eternal state which follows, when God is all in all, is called *the Day of God* (II. Pet. iii. 12). But before the time of blessing comes, a period of judgment is foretold, and this period is often referred to, as in Zech. ix. 1, as *the Day of the Lord*. During this space of time, Jerusalem will once more pass through the horrors of a siege. All nations will be gathered against her to battle. Relief will come, however, by the sudden appearance of Christ.

His standing on the Mount of Olives.

Chap. xiv. 4, 5.

And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah; and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

It was from the mount of Olives that He ascended, with His hands upraised in blessing. Upon that same spot He will descend, according to chapter xiv. 4. The mountain will be cleft in two: but Jerusalem will rejoice, for her deliverance will have come.

His recognition by Israel.

"They shall look upon Me, whom they have pierced" (xii. 10). Anointed with "the spirit of grace and of supplication," they shall bitterly repent of their treatment of their Messiah. With stricken hearts and streaming eyes, they shall look upon Him.

Glad recognition and true repentance on their part, will be at once followed by acknowledgment, on God's part, that they are once again His people.

"I will say, it is my people!" "They shall say, the Lord is my God!" (xiii. 9).

His Destruction of the Enemy.

When the Lord comes, He will find a great assemblage of the world's battle-forces arrayed against Jerusalem. He will at once espouse His people's cause, and will "go forth, and fight against those nations" (xiv. 3). A previous chapter speaks of the destruction of Antichrist (xi. 17). All that is contrary to Christ will be swept out of the way in judgment.

His Reign over the Earth.

Ch. xiv. 9.

"The Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and His Name One."

No rival kings will then be found, no clashing of interests, no jealousies of nations. All shall be subdued to His rule.

His Royal Priesthood.

A remarkable passage (chap. vi. 13) tells us that when the kingdom is established, Christ will "be a Priest upon His throne," and that the counsel of peace shall be between Him (as such) and Jehovah.

As King, He administers the royal bounty of God to His subjects, He secures them from danger, and causes them to dwell in peace. As Priest, He maintains Jehovah's interests among them, and is the means of their approach to God. In connection with this priestly function which the Lord will exercise in that day, we find

His Building of the Temple.

Chap. vi. 12, 15.

And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH: and He shall grow up out of His place, and He shall build the temple of the Lord:

And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord; and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.

The temple re-built in the time of Zechariah was beautified and enlarged by Herod, but was destroyed by the Romans. A future temple, to be built by the Jews in unbelief, will also be destroyed (Dan. viii. 11). But Messiah Himself, the Priest-King, shall build the temple which will be the centre of Israel's worship in the days to come. He will graciously permit others to be associated with Him in this work (ver. 15), but under His own eye the temple walls shall rise, and He will be its light and glory.

In that day men shall go up from year to year to worship the King (xiv. 16). Jerusalem shall be marked by holiness, even to the bells of the horses, and the bowls and pots.

A vast system of blessing and glory, embracing unnumbered millions, under its beneficent influence will then be brought into being. And the centre of it all, its Pillar and Upholder, its Sun and its Brightness, will be CHRIST! What joy to us to contemplate that scene, though finding our own portion in a yet higher sphere, the Father's house above, where as sons we shall be *at home*, breathing the atmosphere of divine love, and knowing in blessed and holy intimacy, the Father and the Son.

God is wont to frustrate our devices in order to execute His own purposes, and thereby to do us good to the utmost.

As children, we may ask for the understanding of God's will; but it belongs not to us to think for Him.

The Knowledge of the Father.

(J. A. TRENCH).

"I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father" (I. John. ii. 13).

A FEW words are necessary as to the construction of this part of the Epistle of John, for it is obscured in our A.V. translation, through not observing a distinction between "children," by which endearing term the aged apostle addressed the whole family of God, as in Chap. ii. 1, 12, 28 and afterwards; and "little children," for which another word is used in verses 13 and 18, when he is inspired to divide the family according to various stages of growth. For in God's, as in our natural families, there are fathers, young men, and little children. He sums up what he has to say to each of these in verse 13, and then develops his thoughts to each from verse 14 on.

The fathers, the most advanced stage of Christian growth, have known Him, that is from the beginning—that is Christ (see Chap. i. 1)—and to this he can add no more. There is nothing beyond the knowledge of Christ, for all true growth consists in "that I may know Him" (Phil. iii. 10). In the middle of verse 14 the young men are addressed as being strong; their strength being manifested in having overcome the wicked one, but it is important to note that this strength is attributed to the word of God abiding in them. The world is their danger and of this they are warned. From verse 18 he addresses the "little children" fully, warning them against the many antichrists already manifested and the seductions of false teaching, and bringing out where their resources lay, to the end of verse 27: and then at verse 28 he resumes his address to the whole family.

It is not now my object to go into what is said to each, but only to gather from the whole instruction what belongs by infinite grace to the little child, and if to the youngest, to all in the family

of God. Three things come out prominently: that, in common with all addressed, their sins are forgiven them for His name's sake, which involves all the value of His person and work (verse 12): further that, as ever intimately connected with this forgiveness, and consequent upon it, they have received the Holy Spirit to dwell within them. The effect of this indwelling is two-fold, (1) that they know all things (verse 20),—not of course in the developed knowledge of all the subjects of revelation, but as having divine capacity to enter into divine things (for the natural man receiveth them not), and (2) He is within them as the divine Teacher (verse 27) to teach them of all things, thus making them independent of the pretensions, wisdom, or folly of man. Then what the apostle makes the distinguishing characteristic of the little children, they know the Father (verse 13). These three things, then, characterise the full Christian position:—

- (1) The forgiveness of sins through Christ,
- (2) The possession of the Holy Spirit, and
- (3) The relationship of children with a known Father.

The apostle is not taking account of natural years in speaking of fathers, young men and children, nor is it any question of attainment. The little children are such, whatever their natural years, as having been only lately introduced into the full Christian place by receiving the glad tidings of their salvation. The young men and fathers are such by spiritual growth in that place.

And now we are face to face with what led me to take up the subject. What is this knowledge of the Father to which the youngest child in Christ

has his inalienable title? And if he has this title, is it yours and mine actually to enjoy it in all its inestimable privilege? It is clearly something more than knowing that we are children of God; though our hearts may well be deeply touched as we behold the manner of the love bestowed upon us, that we should bear this name and be able to take up the children's place before the Father, as born of Him, and possessing the Spirit of His Son (Ch. iii. 1).

The relationship is one thing; the knowledge of the Father whose child I am is another. Suppose the case of natural relationship, and the difference will at once be perceived: the relationship remains the same whatever the character of the parent, but for the children how much depends on it—he may be loving and considerate, or very much the reverse: the difference to them is incalculable. Is it enough, then, for us to know that by infinite grace we are the children of God, or shall we not seek to know our Father? Ought we not to earnestly desire to become familiar with the thoughts and feelings of His heart, the love of His nature, His character (if I may use the word in the deepest reverence), when He makes this knowledge of Himself the privilege of the youngest child of His? But it may be asked, how am I to know Him? It can only be as He reveals Himself. Let us then humbly seek the way Scripture presents this blessed revelation to us.

Matthew xi. will naturally come before us as the first intimation of such revelation in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. All the circumstances make it the more affecting for our hearts. It was a time of deep trial and testing for Him. Hard-hearted unbelief met Him in the cities wherein most of His mighty works were done, and these works attested who He was in whose presence they were so unmoved. But it only served to bring out in the perfection of the blessed Lord, what the knowledge of the Father was to Him. He knew whence to receive all that pressed so heavily upon Him, for we read, "at

that time Jesus 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."

In His rejection by these cities He owned nothing but His Father's ways of perfect wisdom and love. If in divine wisdom these things were hid from the wise and prudent, there were babes to whom they would be revealed by infinite grace. He knew the love of the Father, and in this He found His perfect resting-place, and submitted Himself absolutely to His will: this is clearly expressed in the words "Even so, Father for so it seemed good in Thy sight." These two things come before us, then, in the experience of the blessed Lord: the source of His rest in the knowledge of the Father, and His perfect submission to the Father's will: into both He would introduce us; for this is the connexion of the words that follow, too often missed. In verse 27 all the deeper glories of His Person, of the place given to Him, and His work in the deepest character of it come before Him. Not only the Messianic Kingdom, but "all things" in universal supremacy are delivered unto Him by the Father: the unfathomable glory of His Person is made known in the words "no man knoweth the Son but the Father": and then as the most precious object of the incarnation—"Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." He had come to reveal the Father, and this goes far beyond and above the glory in which He had been presented to Israel up to the point heretofore reached in this Gospel. But let us carefully observe that it is when the divine and inscrutable glory of His Person as the Son is brought out that He intimates, as so closely connected with and depending upon this glory, His purpose to reveal the Father.

If it now becomes an anxious question, to whom will He reveal the Father whom only the Son had seen and known, the answer comes at once in the precious words, "Come unto Me all ye

that labour and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest." How many there are that have been through the world, and with all their toil and weariness have found it void of anything to satisfy. He had been through it and found it to be such, but He had a secret source of perfect rest. He calls us to Him that He might reveal it to us. This source of rest is the Father, and His heart of infinite love. The Son would give us rest by revealing Him, and then we have only to learn of Him, the meek and lowly One, how to submit ourselves absolutely to His will to find this perfect rest realised practically under all circumstances. Both have been seen in practical operation in the blessed place the Lord took as expressed in "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight"; and it is when faith finds its sure title to trace all that comes upon us to the Father's heart, that the

yoke of submission is easy, and His burden light. How blessed, then, the confirmation that to know the Father is not some advanced experience that only belongs to those who have been long in the Christian way, when we find that it is the first thing before the Lord as needed to give rest, and to establish the heart that trusted Him, in view of the consequences of His rejection and the changes of dispensation involved by it, as the remainder of this Gospel opens them out. But for the full development of all that flows from the divine glory of His Person, that has just been touched here and then dropped, as not within the scope of Matthew, we must turn to the Gospel of John, where from the outset it shines out everywhere, though veiled in the lowly form of Manhood.

(To be continued).

A Much-Maligned Coin.

(CONTRIBUTED)

"And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."—Mark xii. 41-44.

HOW often one has heard of a fat hand drawing out of a well-lined purse a small piece of silver in response to some request for help, and a voice saying in easy complacent tones, "I cannot give as much as I should like, but I can give the widow's mite."

The Bible never speaks of "the widow's mite." Anyone who talks of "the widow's mite" misses the point of the Lord's commendation of her action altogether. The Bible speaks of "the widow's mites." Don't forget there were *two* of them, and they went together, and are never spoken of separately.

Suppose a Christian has £10,000. He gives a guinea for some object, and calls it "the widow's mite." But the Lord measured the widow's action not by what she gave, *but by what she had*

left. A Christian, who gives a guinea and had £10,000 to start with, is not perceptibly the poorer by his offering. The widow gave her all, and "the widow's mites" in his case would mean £10,000.

I confess the widow puts me utterly to shame. Her faith and devotedness were sublime. No wonder her action is recounted by none less a teller of the tale than the Lord Jesus Christ, and twice recorded by God the Holy Ghost.

I could not have the meanness and hypocrisy ever to say that I gave "the widow's mite," let alone the unscripturalness of the expression.

If I had naught but a farthing in my pocket, and wanted to put something into the collecting box, I should have to put the farthing into the box; or nothing at all, for a farthing in this country is

the smallest coin and is not divisible. But in the widow's case her farthing was not only divisible, but actually lay in her hand in the form of two mites.

She was generous indeed if she had given "the widow's mite"—half her possessions, fifty per cent of her property. She had the choice and she took it—she gave them both—she gave her all.

The Lord of life and glory sat over against the treasury. The rich came and threw in much and had much left for themselves. The widow came—the strong arm that had once supported her was gone: she had none but Jehovah to look to, but she knew that He was sufficient—and she threw in *all her living*.

Those two mites were morally weighty. Adjust the scales; place on one side all the gold and silver of the rich; pile up their offerings. Place on the other scale those two small coins. They are pathetic in their smallness; they won't do much for the upkeep of the gorgeous temple. The piled up gold and silver look comfortable and powerful.

But let the Lord lift the scales. See! the mites weigh heavy, and the gold and silver are light. Hear the verdict: "This poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury." How was that? The gold and silver were little more than gold and silver. The two mites had added to them the consuming devotedness of a heart caring only for God's glory. Hence their moral weight.

We plead not for money, but for devotedness. Were there more devotedness there would be no lack of anything. The Lord's interests would not languish.

It is not for nothing that we have the twice recorded story of the poor widow and her two mites.

Most Christians spend pounds over their own pleasure, and pence over God's interests. And yet the Saviour gave *HIS All*.

Have you ever noticed the setting of

that well-known verse, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (II. Cor. viii. 9). It comes in as a great surprise. The apostle Paul is anxious that the Corinthian believers, living in Corinth, a city of opulence, ease, and wealth, with all their enervating influence, should not be behind the Macedonian churches, who, "in a great trial of affliction," out of "the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." In verse 9 he lifts the whole question of giving on to an extraordinarily high platform by appealing to their affections, and reminding them of the grace of Christ, who, rich far beyond all mere creature wealth, became poor, that we through His poverty might be eternally rich.

What an example to move our hearts! May His devotedness to God and to us stir up an answering devotedness to Him. "The preparation of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, is from the Lord."

Only a few months ago was this illustrated beautifully by a lady in Scotland. She sent an offering for the Lord's work consisting of two rings, two gold rings, two chains, a chain and pendant, a chain and locket, eleven brooches, a pair of tortoise shell earrings, a single earring, two pins and an ornament. When sending them she described them. "*as a few remnants of the old leaven for the blessed Lord Jesus Christ.*"

What made her do this? One can read between the lines of her simple description. The warmth with which she called the Lord "blessed," and the way she reverently and lovingly gave Him His full title bespoke a heart won, captured, devoted. She described the jewellery, once used for decking her person and drawing attention to herself, as "old leaven," showing she had judged superfluity of finery was not becoming to a Christian, and she made friends with "the mammon of unrighteousness" in a very happy and practical way.

Bible Study.—II. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter II.

1. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him,

2. That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

3. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;

4. Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.

5. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

6. And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

7. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

8. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:

9. Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

10. And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

11. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

12. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

13. But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

15. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

16. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

17. Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

THE Apostle now enters upon the more direct consideration of the error which was the occasion of his writing this epistle. This is the subject matter of verses 1-12; and, considering the extreme importance of what is here set forth—the complete overthrow of the power of Satan in the instrument of his opposition to the Lord Jesus Christ—we can easily understand how the Spirit of God would unfold it to these young believers in the clearest terms, so as to counteract in their minds the simultaneous effort of the enemy, by every means of deceit in his power, to becloud or distort it.

Verse 1.

To prove to them how baseless was the error into which they had been led, of believing that "the day of the Lord is present" (N.T.), he appeals, first to facts within their own experimental cognisance, viz., by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, as he had already taught them in I. Thess. iv. 13-17, and as to which, by their very presence here in this world they could not be deceived; and secondly, he instructs them in

regard of events which must precede that day, and which had evidently not yet taken place, viz., the apostasy full blown and the revelation of the man of sin.

Verse 2.

And on this ground he begs them not to be soon, *i.e.*, in a precipitate or unreasonable manner, shaken from their ordinary sober mind—from their common sense, as we would say—nor troubled, either by what might be spoken to them or written, even though it came to them under the cloke of having been written by him. The consideration of these two facts should show them that it was impossible that the day of the Lord had already come.

Saints there will be, no doubt, at that day on the earth; there will be the godly remnant of the Jews, and there will be the white-robed throng redeemed from all nations (*cf.* Jer. xxx. 7 and Rev. vii.); but the saints of the present period, who are connected with Christ, now, during His rejection, and whose portion it is to form the Church which is His body (Eph. i. 22), have the

special privilege of being "kept from the great tribulation" that will close up this present period, prior to the introduction of the age to come (Rev. iii. 10).

The rendering of the A. V., "the day of Christ is at hand," is doubly misleading: first, as to "the day of Christ," a reference to I. Cor. v. 5, Phil. i. 5, 10, ii. 16, will show that the day of the Lord Jesus, or of Christ, is connected, as the words Jesus or Christ imply, with the blessing of the saints, while "the day of the Lord" is connected always with the judgment of the world: and again the word "at hand" implies nearness in the future, whereas the word in the original means very emphatically that they thought that it had "come already." The word is used seven times in the New Testament, in two of which, Rom. viii. 38 and I. Cor. iii. 22, "things present" are expressly distinguished from "things to come."

Moreover there was nothing new in the fact that the day of the Lord was "at hand." Its coming had been declared from the time of Isaiah, and implied as far back as Hannah's song (I. Sam. ii. 1-10); so that the apostle had no need to correct them in that respect. The error they had fallen into was that it had "already come."

Verse 3.

But they were not to be deceived, for that day will not be until the apostasy has first come, and the man of sin be revealed, who exalts himself above all that is called God, whether the true God or false gods, or that is an object of veneration, so that he sets himself down in the temple of God showing himself that he is god. This is not the apostasy; the apostasy leads up to this; this is the ripe fruit of it; the full-blown and resultant head. The apostasy is necessary to the Antichrist: the Antichrist is the heading up of the apostasy.

The spirit of apostasy is at work already: compare verse 7 and I. John ii. 18. It has been going on unceasingly ever since the Apostle's time. But here we have its climax. This is

the result of Gen. iii. 5, 6, the man of sin, the son of perdition, completing his rôle under the instigation and power of Satan. This is the end of the apostate Jew, and of the temple of God, rebuilt in unbelief, not for the glory of God, but for the apotheosis of this "blasphemy." This is the end of Christendom, the total giving up of all faith in Christ. This is the liar, who denies that Jesus is the Christ. This is the Antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son.

It is not the secular power of the world, represented by the first beast in Rev. xiii., that is the subject here, but rather the religious character of this wickedness, represented by the second beast in that chapter. This is the man of sin, the false prophet, who in the temple of God, sets himself up against God, the God of Israel. It is the apostasy of man against God, the rational outcome of the first suggestion of Satan in the garden of Eden, "ye shall be as gods": It is the revelation in full of the mystery of lawlessness; as Christianity is the revelation of mystery of piety (I. Tim. iii. 16); It is the lawless one who throws off all restraint and does according to his will (Dan. xi. 36), the anti-climax of Him who came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him who sent Him (John vi. 38).

The world assumes that it is getting better, and the Church joins in this vain boast, and every fresh sect that arises amid the divisions of Christendom thinks that the future is with it, but "Scripture cannot be broken"; and one has but to look around to see the general trend of things making unmistakeably for the apostasy that is here predicted. Ritualism and rationalism are doing their deadly work; superstition and atheism for the nonce in league, like Herod and Pilate (Luke xxiii. 12), to destroy the testimony of God and the Gospel of the Christ; and often where there is professed orthodoxy, the Gospel is presented in such an adulterated form that they who believe it are not saved thereby. How much reason, then, there is for those who

know the Gospel to preach it with increased earnestness, for the time is already come of which the apostle prophesied, "when they will not bear sound teaching . . . but they will turn away their ear from the truth and will have turned aside to fables" (N.T., II. Tim. iv. 3-5). In the mad race for popularity, they who should know better won't stop to think; and all this is preparing the way for the last and great apostasy.

Verse 5.

The apostle had already told them of these things, but they had forgotten them, or had so feebly seized them at the first that they were unable to resist the perverting influence of the enemy. Now he recalls them to their memory, and he assumes that they "know that which restrains, that he, the Antichrist, should be revealed in his own time."

Note that it does not say that the evil was to be restrained. The evil is not restrained: it has been ceaselessly working ever since the apostle's time, and will continue to work to the end; but the final manifestation of it is restrained, "that he should be revealed in his own time."

In verse 6 he speaks of that which restrains—a restraining power; in verse 7 he speaks of a Person who exercises that power. He does not say what that power is. What it was then may not be what it is to-day. Then it was the form of government established in the Roman empire; at least so the early Christians thought, and many prayers were in consequence offered up for its continuance. To-day the same principle of governmental order is maintained by God in different forms in different countries, and evil is thereby to a certain extent restrained: and in countries where this restraint has been most released, we see the consequent growth of atheism correspondingly, and the dissolution of all religious profession, as witness, *e.g.*, the French Revolution. But as the presence of the Spirit on earth, and the formation of the Church thereby, are characteristic of God's

present actings in the world, doubtless we may find in connection with this the fundamental reason of this restraining power, which will surely be maintained until the purpose of God in regard to the gathering out of the Church is fulfilled. When that has taken place and the Church raptured is no longer here, and the operations of the Spirit in connection with it cease, then the apostasy will take its unbridled form, and the Antichrist will be revealed.

All this plainly shows the present working of evil towards its final issue, and the hopelessness of any remedy until the Lord comes. The rejection of Christ was the rejection of God come in grace and bringing salvation. "His blood be on us and on our children" was an awful imprecation on the part of those who invoked it. The answer to it is the energy of evil working ceaselessly ever since, and restrained only in view of its open manifestation under the Antichrist in the latter day.

But this restraint being removed, the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will destroy with the spirit of His mouth, *i.e.*, the word of truth judicially applied, probably in allusion to Is. xi. 4, and annul by the brightness of His coming, the epiphany of His presence—not His presence, but the epiphany, the outshining of it. These two, His presence and the brightness of it, are not to be confounded—him whose coming, in contrast with the coming of Christ, "is after the working of Satan in every possible form of power, and signs, and wonders of falsehood," accrediting himself by the imitation of those things whereby Jesus was accredited of God (Acts ii. 22), and "in every form of deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish," as they are adjudged retributively by God to this fearful doom, "because they received not the LOVE of the truth that they might be saved." The forms of the truth in their broad outlines have been received in Christendom in every section of the professing Church; the common creed is the same everywhere; but the *love* of it? that was the real test, and it was

not there. Judas was ordained an apostle as truly as the rest, but he loved money; they loved their Master: and his end is emblematic of what the apostle here sets forth. "Satan entered into him"; and how terrible is the Satanic energy, "the energy of error," here predicted. No stronger words could be used to describe it: no more fatal picture could be drawn of the state of those who "believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Serious and solemn words and terrible to contemplate: all the more so that we know that the spirit of it all is actually at work. We live in the midst of it: the effects of it are all around and its influence pervades the very air (Eph. ii. 2).

Verse 13.

What cause, therefore for thanks on the part of those to whom light is vouchsafed and who are chosen of God to salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, called by the glad tidings of Paul to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a contrast to the judgment that was to overtake the world.

Verse 15.

And for this very reason he urges them to stand firm and to hold fast the instructions they had been taught, whether by word or by letter from him, *i.e.*, the former Epistle. Had they indeed

held fast the truth of "the rapture", as given to them (I. Thess. iv.), they would not have been misled into errors as they were. Now, in spite of this warning, Christendom as a whole has wholly given up this important truth, the precious treasure of the Church, the guerdon of her hope. To be caught up to be with Christ is not known or understood amongst the great mass of Christians, and where spoken of is denied; and even those who have received the light of it seem little under its power of late years. For it is possible to hold this glorious truth in the letter and not have it as a bright hope in the heart. It behoves us, therefore, all the more to take heed to the apostle's words, and "hold fast" the instructions that we have learned from him.

Verse 16.

And now again, as is his wont, he turns from them and his exhortations, to a higher and a firmer trust—he turns to the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and to the *love* of God the Father, who has given us eternal consolation and a good hope by grace, that their hearts might be encouraged, and that they might be established in every good work and word. May we too turn with increasing earnestness to the same source, that we may be preserved from the many perils of these "difficult times," and be "like men that wait for their Lord."

Baptism.

(CONTRIBUTED).

THERE are diverse views as to baptism, who should and who should not receive it, and so forth; but there can be no question as to what it symbolises, it is the end of the old life and the man that lived it.

This great truth had been truly learned by a man who had turned to the Lord Jesus Christ, and was baptised unto Him. In the bath, when the

baptism was over, there was found a parcel containing a pipe and pouch of tobacco, and several other things in which he had indulged in his unconverted days.

"Do these things belong to you?" he was asked.

"No," was his reply, "they belong to the man who went under the water."

Atonement

(J. T. MAWSON).

And the New Theology.

The Question is asked, "What is the difference between the New Testament Teaching as to Atonement, and the views of the New Theology Leaders?"

THE sheerly anti-Christian character of the "New Theology" has often been exposed, and there would be no call to answer this question were it not that the deadly virus of this teaching is spreading fast, and breaking out, in one form or another, in unexpected quarters. It is like the leaven in the measures of meal, and subtle as the snare of the devil in Eden, and consequently, it is still necessary to lay bare its delusions, and present the truth of what it denies.

We are not alarmed, or even surprised, at its appearance or popularity, for the Holy Scriptures, which are our guide in all these questions, have warned us that "of your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them (Acts xx. 30), and that "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II. Thess. iv. 3, 4). So that the truth of the Bible is established by the very teaching that seeks to undermine its authority, and the Omniscience of its writer proved by the acts of its would-be destroyers.

God is denied by this teaching; it is true that its chief interpreter states, "to disbelieve in God is an impossibility," but he also explains that his God is the "Mysterious Power which is finding expression in the universe, and is present in the tiniest atom of the wondrous whole . . . whatever else it may be, *it is myself!*"

Sin, in its true nature, is denied: for we are told that "evil is a negative not a positive term, the shadow where the light should be," "the devil is a vacuum," and "sin has never injured God except

through man. It is the God within who is injured by it rather than the God without."

The one Mediator between God and man is denied. New theology has clothed the man of its imagination with the name of Jesus, but he is not the Lord Jesus Christ of the Gospels. "Jesus was God, *but so are we,*" it boldly states. He did not give His life a ransom for all, "and many a British soldier has died a death as brave as Jesus." His death merely lay across the path along which duty led Him, His determination to do His duty and the frenzy of the populace were the only factors in the cross of Christ, and in it the "determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God" (Acts ii. 23) had no place.

If God is man, and man is God; if the doctrine of the fall, as taught in Scripture, is mischievous, and the true teaching as to it being the coming of God into humanity; if sin is a blundering search after God; then there is no need for atonement at all, and every prophet that aforesaid gave witness to Christ, and every apostle and servant of Christ that has proclaimed this doctrine in the name of God throughout the ages, is found a false witness of God.

R. J. Campbell tells us that he goes further back than Jesus, to the ancients of the East, for some of his thoughts: he will have to go further back still to find the origin of them, for the "Ye shall be as gods" of the lie in Eden, is writ large across every page of this laudation of fallen and corrupt man; and the writer is a living witness to the solemn words of the Son of God, "if the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matt. vi. 23).

And though we are constantly told in 'The New Theology' what the "thought-

ful reader" will do, we venture to say that the honest, exercised and truly thoughtful reader will reject the whole system of teaching as being self-contradictory, without foundation or authority, and a veritable Sahara in which the hungry and thirsty soul will search in vain for the Tree and Water of life.

The Truth of Atonement.

When the truth of Atonement truly dawns upon the soul of a man, he confesses that he is the chief of sinners, while he glories in God through our Lord Jesus Christ; he finds that in his flesh dwells no good thing, and yet he stands clear of all condemnation in Christ, and is compelled adoringly to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! . . . for of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 33-36).

Atonement presents God in His true place as God—the Almighty Ruler of His far stretching realm—it throws into prominence His inflexible justice and perfect righteousness; justice and righteousness which must be maintained at all cost, but it also manifests His great compassion, His infinite tenderness, His glorious love. By it sin—rebellion against the Creator—is shown up in its terrible character, it is exposed and condemned, but the sinner is saved and his heart won to everlasting allegiance to the One whose love would go to the very uttermost in order to ransom him from the ultimate consequence of his lawlessness.

Is it Immoral?

It is said that the doctrine of substitution is immoral, that it cannot be right for one man to suffer for the sins of another, and verily if Jesus had been only man such an objection might have had force. But He is God; were it not so the doctrine of atonement could not stand.

He became man for the vindication of His own law; the Source of all justice stooped even to the sinner's place, and

submitted to the penalty that the eternal throne imposed for the vindication of His own everlasting righteousness. In this glorious plan, we do not see the guilt of one creature unjustly laid upon the head of another creature; but we see the infinite wisdom and love of God providing a way by which He can lavish His love upon men, and yet be consistent with His character. We see God taking upon Himself the whole cost of the redemption of men.

Had not God a right to do this if it pleased Him? Some men may despise and reject His way of salvation, but it will be His eternal glory, while they will reap the sad fruits of their folly, beneath the weight of their own sins, and the just judgment that those sins deserve.

The Love of God Manifested.

Now the Scripture plainly shews that love lies behind all that God has wrought. The glorious gospel verse, John iii. 16, is well known to all:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And Romans v. 8 is not less precious:

"But God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

From these Scriptures we learn that instead of the cross proving that God is an angry, hard-hearted Being, it is the very thing that has manifested His love in all its glory.

The wisdom, love, and power of God combined to bring about a salvation, which shall be the glory of God and the joy of the universe for ever. The cross of Christ is where all this glory shone out.

Infinite wisdom devised the plan.

Eternal love found the means.

Almighty power carried out the work.

At the Cross infinite wisdom solved the problem as to how God could save and yet be righteous; and almighty power met and overthrew all the forces of darkness that would have kept men from God.

When Jesus hung upon the cross, love bared its bosom to the storm of righteous wrath, and when from spear-point side there flowed the precious blood, this love shone out in all its splendour. The cross of Jesus was the triumph of love, there love was enthroned, but enthroned upon the everlastingly stable throne of divine justice. Love is the crown of justice, and justice is the crown of love, and both have conspired together for the blessing of men, and of this the blood of Jesus is a token and witness to us. Then if this is so, God is for us, and who can be against us?

There never was nor will be anything greater or more glorious than the cross of Christ; His death will be the wonder of ransomed myriads eternally, and the Lamb once slain shall be the light of that city through which will be shed the glory of the knowledge of God to earth's utmost bounds.

Some Substitutes.

Some in their folly and blindness substitute other things for the blood; in their pride they are bold enough to speak of bearing the consequences of their own sins; and imagine that their own vain efforts at self-improvement, or purgatorial fires will purify their guilty souls; and this latter, the papal lie, is being preached by professedly Protestant lips. Alas! for all who are thus deluded. God says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission." He has declared, "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul," and "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." Nor is there a word in all Scripture which would indicate that the fire of hell will make men fit for heaven.

The question may be asked, "Why are men so foolish as to reject this wonderful provision of God?" the answer is given in II. Cor. iii. 4, the god of this world (Satan) hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine in. They are willing to be de-

luded, and the devil finds in them an easy prey. He hates the blood because it gives him the lie direct. He has deceived men into believing that God does not love them, and the blood is the undeniable and everlasting proof that God does love them.

The Consequences of rejecting God's provision.

But the consequences of rejecting the blood are absolute and irretrievable. For if they *died without mercy* who despised the law of Moses—which was the shadow—of how much sorer punishment shall he be counted worthy who despises the blood of the Son of God—which is the substance?—for in despising the blood there is the utter rejection of the God whom Christ came to reveal. It is vain to talk of Him as the universal Father. Sinful men need a Redeemer, and God, the Redeemer, has displayed His character in all its glory in the blood of Jesus. It is the best and the last that He can do for men, and if this is cast aside and despised, the just and terrible consequence will be the lake of fire for ever and for ever: the ultimate and only end of rebellion against the Almighty Ruler of the universe.

Children of God, let us pray that the glories of the atoning death of Jesus may be better understood by us, that we may see more fully how every attribute of God has been glorified thereby, how His throne has been vindicated and the love of His heart declared. And may we be earnestly looking forward to that day in the which, as a result of it, there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and God shall be with men,

"And He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 3, 4).

And all this shall be founded upon this strong and immovable basis, even the death of Jesus, for in that death God, in all His glory, was manifested.

Faith.

(SELECTED).

THE germ of faith will outlive the sternest winds and roughest winters. Nature or disposition may have much to do with our external manner, but it is faith in God which stands the wear of years and the sorrows of life.

To walk in faith the eye must be outside this world, and fixed upon Christ; and as this is so we shall be pilgrims and strangers here. The life of faith is the only true and wise life, for it is the one in which Christ walked; in it we shall be always deepening in the

knowledge of God. In this path the one whose natural resources are exhausted finds all his supplies in Christ, and the one who has an abundance of natural resources finds that He surpasses them all, and that in Him alone is real help.

Everything within the compass of God's immutable word is within the compass of faith.

Trial humbles the soul, and enables it afterwards to bear the blessing, and to carry a full cup with a steady hand.

Hymn.

(HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED—BY the late G. V. WIGRAM).

Faint not, Christian! though the road
Leading to thy blest abode
Darksome be, and dangerous too—
Christ, thy Guide, will bring thee through.

Faint not, Christian! though in rage,
Satan would thy soul engage;
Gird on faith's anointed shield,
Bear it to the battle field.

Faint not, Christian! though the world
Hath its hostile flag unfurl'd;
Hold the cross of Jesus fast,
Thou shalt overcome at last.

Faint not, Christian! though within
There's a heart so prone to sin;
Christ the Lord is over all,
He'll not suffer thee to fall.

Faint not, Christian! though thy God
Smite thee with His chastening rod;
Smite He must with Father's care,
That He may His love declare.

Faint not, Christian! Jesu's near;
Soon in glory He'll appear:
Then shall cease thy toil and strife,
Thou shalt wear the "crown of life."

From Samuel Rutherford's Letters.

"I rejoice in the hope of the glory to be revealed; for it is no uncertain glory we look for: our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread, as 'I imagine so' or 'It is likely'; but the cable, the strong tow of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity: our salvation is fastened with

God's own hand, and with Christ's own strength, to the strong support of God's unchangeable nature. "I am the Lord. I change not, and therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Mal. iii. 6). We may pray, and dance, and leap upon our worthy and immovable Rock: the ground is sure and good and will abide the assaults of hell and the world."

How few the words of Jesus when all the world, in its representatives—Herod, Pilate, priests and elders—rose up against Him! He never uttered more or

less than was needed for God's glory. That perfect guidance of the tongue proceeded from the perfect subjection of His will to God.

Answers to Correspondents.

The Word of God.

W.H.T. writes us as follows :

On page 271 of "Scripture Truth" I notice the phrase, "the Bible, the word of God," and again on page 286 the term "The word of God" is apparently applied to the Bible.

1.—Am I right in saying that the "Word of God" is a title of dignity and glory applied to the Lord Jesus, and that it is this adorable Person spoken of in the following (amongst others) scriptures:—John i. 1; Heb. iv. 12 and 13; Heb. xi. 3; Rev. i. 2 and 9; Rev. vi. 9; Rev. xx. 4?

2.—Is there any Scriptural authority for calling the Holy Scriptures or any part thereof the "Word of God"?

3.—What do people mean by the term when they apply it to the Scriptures?

4.—Assuming the title belongs to the Lord Jesus alone, would it not be in some degree derogatory to Him to apply it to the scriptures as well?

We hold the Bible to be the very word of God; in it is communicated to men in human language the whole truth as to God, as He has been pleased to reveal Himself, and blessed indeed are they who have ears to hear.

In the case of the words of the Lord this will not be questioned, for we read, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God," and again, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest me" (John iii. 34 and xvii. 8).

When we come to the testimony of the Apostles we find that their words were not the words of man's wisdom, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth (I. Cor. ii. 13), and what they wrote was the commandments of the Lord (xiv. 37).

In the Old Testament we have the "Thus saith the Lord" of Moses and the prophets, and the Lord spoke of the written commandments of Moses as "the word of God" (Mark vii. 13); and the prophecies are distinctly said to be the words of the Holy Ghost (Acts i. 16; Hebrews iii. 7; iv. 7, &c.).

There are, then, the distinct and direct words of God, which come under the head of *revelation*, and there is also

the record of the lives and sayings of men, which were given by *inspiration* of God; but these latter are not merely historical writings, like the uninspired writings of men, and they cannot be judged by the same standard; but in them God makes known His ways with men, and therein is made manifest for our learning, what men are as departed from God, and what God is in His mercy and justice, His grace and righteousness towards men. The Old and New Testaments are both needed for this, and that we might have them "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (II. Peter i. 21), and every scripture is God-breathed (II. Tim. iii. 16), and so we rightly speak of the Bible as the word of God.

The expression the "word of God" occurs about forty times in the New Testament, and in most instances describes God's testimony as to the Lord Jesus Christ, in Whom is the whole revelation of the truth of God; this was committed to His servants, this they preached and for it they suffered gladly. This is all contained in the Scripture.

Several of the passages quoted in your letter do not refer to the Lord personally, but to this testimony of God. Revelation i. 2 and 9 relates to that which is going forth in this present day of Grace; and Revelation vi. 9, xx. 4 to that which will go forth during the interval following the rapture of the Church and the coming of the Lord to His Kingdom.

Hebrews xi. 3 is the spoken word of power by which the worlds were called into being.

Hebrews iv. 12 and 13 is the word of God and its effect in the soul; "out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword" (Rev. i. 16); this word for us is in the Scriptures, the immediate reference throughout chapters iii. and iv. being to Psalm xcvi.

Revelation xix. 13 presents the Lord personally as the One in and through

whom God's righteous judgment is displayed in the overthrow of all that is opposed to God.

John i. 1 stands alone. "The Word" occurs there as a title of Deity which none but the Son could claim; He is the full and perfect expression of all that God is, whether in creation, redemption or judgment. He could not be this were He not God, for only One who is Himself God can make God known to men; but the Word, who was in the beginning, who was with God and was God, was made flesh and dwelt among us for this purpose.

Everlasting Punishment.

QUESTION.—Upon what texts do the holders of non-eternity of punishment base their views, and will you explain them and give some passages which prove this doctrine.—W.P.

The more advanced of those who deny the truth of eternity of punishment, do not appeal to any passage in the Bible: that Book is discarded by them as being without authority. R. J. Campbell tells us that what Paul wrote, for instance, should have less weight with us than the opinions of a pious mother; so that we are not surprised to have from his pen the statement, "Perhaps it would help to clear up the subject if I were to say frankly, before going any further, that there is no such thing as punishment, no far-off Judgment Day, no great white throne, and no Judge external to ourselves." He makes this emphatic assertion without a shadow of proof, and has no authority for it except his own personal feelings on the subject. No earnest seeker after the truth will be satisfied with that.

There are others, of whom the late Canon Farrar was representative, who build up a doctrine of salvation after death upon the much discussed text, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit; By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient when

once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah" (I. Peter iii. 18-20).

Their interpretation of this is that the Gospel is preached to men after death, but there is no other passage in the Bible to support this view, moreover it is in direct contradiction to several plain scriptures, about which there can be no question. For instance,

"It is appointed unto men once to die, but *after this the Judgment*" (Heb. ix. 27).

"Behold *now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (II. Cor. vi. 2).

"And besides all this, between us and you there is a *great gulf fixed*; so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; *neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence*" (Luke xvi. 26).

We know that there are no contradictory teachings in the Holy Scriptures, so that this interpretation of the passage must be rejected, and one in keeping with the whole body of Scriptural truth sought in its place.

The whole question hangs upon the *time* when the preaching to the spirits now in prison took place, and about this there ought not to be any difficulty.

In this same epistle, Peter speaks of the Spirit of Christ testifying in the prophets (ch. i. 10, 11). When did the Spirit of Christ—the Holy Ghost (II. Epistle i. 21)—testify in the prophets? When they uttered their prophecies. When did Christ *in* (as it should be) the Spirit preach to the spirits who are in prison? When Noah uttered his prophecy of the coming flood. It was not Noah's word merely that they rejected, but the warning of Him who is the Eternal Word.

This is confirmed in the account of the preaching in Genesis vi. 3, where we read, "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man . . . yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years." And so in great longsuffering the Spirit of Christ—the Holy Ghost—continued to strive for 120 years, but men continued disobedient, and the door of mercy closed, and closed for them forever. There is not the slightest ground in this passage

upon which to build the doctrine of hope for those who die without mercy (Heb. x. 28, 29), and in their sins (John viii. 21).

The following passages speak clearly upon this solemn subject—everlasting punishment—and need no comment—

“And these shall go away into *everlasting* punishment, but the righteous into life *eternal* (the same word in both cases)” (Matthew xxv. 46).

“Into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched” (Mark ix. 43, 44).

“Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power” (II. Thess. i. 9).

“But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. xxi. 8).

I. Corinthians x.

R. J. R.—What is the meaning of the term (in I. Cor. x. 21), “*The Cup of the Lord*”?

What is the meaning of the term, “*The Lord's Table*”?

What does the expression “*Partake of the Lord's Table*” convey?

Is it right to speak of being “*At the Lord's Table*”?

Can believers “*Receive* (other believers) *to the Lord's Table*”?

Do *all* true believers “*partake of the Lord's Table*” or some only?

The Cup and Table speak in symbol of the foundation of Christian fellowship, which is the Lord's death. *The Cup* is also described as “the cup of blessing”; it is the new testament in the blood of Christ; in it is set forth the blessing and love in which we are called to participate, blessing and love of which His blood is the pledge and token.

The Table probably brings the bread more into prominence, and here we have the communion of the body of Christ, and in breaking it we manifest our fellowship as one body. They are called the cup and table of *the Lord* in

contrast to the cup and table of *devils*; it was morally impossible to partake of, or “hold with,” (as the word means) both. In partaking there is complete identification with the Lord's death in all the blessings and responsibilities attaching to this identification.

Scripture does not speak of being at the Lord's table; it is not a point of locality but a matter of Christian profession, and should be a great exercise as to whether our conduct and profession are consistent with each other.

We do not read of believers receiving other believers to the Lord's Table, but we are exhorted to receive one another, and this of course is to Christian fellowship. In doing this we acknowledge those whom God has received. There may be doubt in the mind as to some, as in the case of Saul (Acts ix. 26, 27), but when all question is settled it would be an act of disobedience to the Lord to refuse one of His own, except in such cases as are made abundantly clear by Scripture.

As to the last question, the chapter contemplates all true believers—the whole Christian “we” as breaking the one loaf (verses 16, 17) and so partaking of, or in communion with, the Lord's table; *not* to do so is to be in an altogether anomalous position, whereas the chapter is treating of what is normal.

The State of the Dead.

W. T. M.—It is evident that the spirits of those who die in the Lord are immediately present with Him (see Phil. i. 23; Acts vii. 59; Luke xxiii. 43), and this must mean bliss for them, even though they remain in the disembodied state until the coming of the Lord, when their bodies will be raised in glory (I. Cor. xv. 43, 51-53).

It is also clear that those who die without Christ are in the place of torment (Luke xvi. 23 and 24), though they await the *last* resurrection when at the great white throne they receive their final sentence to the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 11-15).

“Thou art the Same.”

(J. T. MAWSON).

AMID the restlessness of rolling years,
The changing seasons as they pass away,
We rest in Thee, and calmed are all our fears,
For well we know “Thou art the same” always.

And through the gloom there shines a wondrous light,
Light of a love that glows with fervent flame;
’Tis this that cheers us in the earthly fight—
Jehovah-Jesus—evermore the same.

To cleave death’s billows for Thy ransomed host,
Love girded Thee to breast their wrath, unmoved;
To-day, for ever, it shall be our boast,
Strong as when in the past its might was proved.

O great and glorious Lord! of Thee we sing,
And tread with triumph in the living way.

O faithful Priest! Thou wilt not fail to bring
Thy people unto God’s eternal day.

Christ in the Minor Prophets.

(H. P. BARKER).

No. 12.—Malachi.

Chapter i. 6-11.

6. A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, Wherein have we despised thy name?

7. Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar: and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.

8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts.

9. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the Lord of hosts.

10. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand.

11. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.

THE pages of Malachi deal with the grievous moral condition of the remnant of Jews whom God had mercifully brought back from captivity in Babylon. In particular the evil state of the priests is dwelt upon.

In turning to the prophecy one would naturally enlarge upon this, all the more so because the state of things which it depicts finds a close parallel in the present state of professed, and even of real, Christians. There is much valuable instruction, too, and

great encouragement for those who seek to be true to Christ in the midst of wide-spread declension and apostasy.

All this, however, hardly comes within the scope of our chosen theme, which is *Christ* in the Minor Prophets. We must, therefore, confine our thoughts, in this paper, to the way in which *He* is presented in Malachi.

We find Him set forth in two principal characters:—

- (1) As Jehovah’s Messenger.
- (2) As the Sun of righteousness.

The prophet was himself a type of Christ, in the former character. The very meaning of his name, "My Messenger," indicates this. His service was to remind the people of Jehovah's claims upon them, and of His love and willingness to bless (i. 2, and iii. 10).

Chapter i. 2.

I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob,

Chapter iii. 10.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

In this he foreshadowed the Lord Jesus in His pathway of service here. None maintained so faithfully as He the claims of God; none was ever so jealous over what was due to Him. To this His memorable words bear witness: "Render . . . unto God the things that are God's."

Yet none spoke so tenderly of God's love to His fallen creature man as He; and none proclaimed so constantly God's willingness to bless. Take for instance the glowing parable in Luke xv. Here God is set forth under the similitude of a father, with a heart full of tenderest love to His erring son, running in eager haste to welcome him, and showering favours upon his undeserving head. Truly the blessed Lord, in uttering this parable, was God's Messenger of grace to men.

But He is further set before us, in this character, in two passages in our prophet, chap. ii. 7 and chap. iii. 1.

Chapter ii. 7.

For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.

In the former of these passages the true Priest is described. The sons of Aaron should have answered to this description, but none have done so. The priestly functions here mentioned remain to be fulfilled in their entirety by the Lord Jesus Christ.

It was mainly because of the failure of the priests in Israel that prophets were raised up. The priesthood became

corrupted, the law of truth ceased to be in the mouths of the priests, and their lips did not keep knowledge. Prophets were therefore raised up to be Jehovah's messengers to the people. Zechariah has shown us, however, that in the day that is coming, prophets will be no more. In that day anyone who assumes to prophesy will at once be known as "speaking lies" (Zech. xiii. 3). The priestly function, taken up and exercised by Christ Himself in perfection, will render the special gift or office of a prophet unnecessary. He, the Priest upon His throne (Zech. vi. 13) will fully answer to the description given in Mal. ii. The law of truth will be in His mouth; His lips will keep knowledge; men shall seek the law at His mouth, and He will be the true Messenger of the Lord of hosts.

Then will be fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy: "He will teach us of His ways" (ii. 3). Then shall the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

Chapter iii. 1.

Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.

But He is also the Messenger of the covenant; that is, it is in Him that the covenanted blessings shall be made good to Israel.

Chapter ii. ends with the unbelieving enquiry, "Where is the God of judgment?" The opening words of chapter iii. supply the answer. God would send His messenger (John the Baptist) to prepare the way for the coming of Him for whom they had enquired. The Lord, of whom they had been asking "Where is He?" would suddenly come. But His coming, who would abide? and who would stand when He appeared? For as the refiner's fire consumes the dross, He would purge away all that was obnoxious to Him, so that what is pleasant in His sight might remain.

The prophecy has been partially fulfilled. The messenger was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, and the Lord Himself did come to His temple.

But the prophecy looks on to His coming again. The whole of the intervening period of grace is passed over, and our thoughts are carried forward to the time when Jehovah will fulfil the terms of His gracious covenant, and when Christ, the Messenger of that covenant, will come. His presence will test everybody and everything. The sons of Levi are specially mentioned as coming under his hand for purification, whilst He will be a "swift witness" against those who practise evil and fear Him not.

Chapter iii. 16-18.

16. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.

17. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.

18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked; between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.

Chapter iv. 1-2.

1. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch.

2. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall.

But a special promise is given to those who fear His name. A remnant in the midst of a remnant, they have sweet communion with one another in the Lord's things. They speak often one to another. They think upon Jehovah's name. And they are of peculiar value in His eyes. He delights to claim them as His own—His jewels.

Of course the reference, prophetically, is to the remnant of Israel in the future day, after the present period (of Christianity) ends, and the Church is caught away to be with the Lord. In the days which immediately precede His coming in glory, the tide of evil will run swiftly indeed. Then will be found these godly people, a little remnant, caring for Jehovah's interests, and with hearts beating true to Him.

Without in any way assuming to be a remnant (for a "remnant" in any given day includes *all* the godly), surely

the readers of these lines may seek to follow the practice of these devoted people. May not we, who fear the Lord, speak often to one another of Him? May we not thus enjoy sweet communion in His things? Will not such practice be acceptable in His eyes?

The special promise given to those who feared Jehovah's name was that *to them* the Sun of righteousness should arise, with healing in His wings.

To those who live in the glare of man's day, no "sun" is necessary. They have their reward already. The future will bring darkness, not light, for such. But to those who fear the Lord, the time of His absence is as a dark night. *To them* the promise is given of the Sun of righteousness, which will turn their night to day.

Christ is the Sun of righteousness. When He arises the dark night will be over. Sorrow and sighing will be things of the past, for those who are His.

In contrast with this, the *Christian's* hope is the Bright and Morning Star (Rev. xxii. 16.) The morning star rises before the sun appears. Christ is the Morning Star. Before He comes with healing in His wings for this sin-stricken earth, He will come to take us to be with Himself on high. Then will follow a period of deepening darkness, only to be ended when the Sun of righteousness flings His welcome beams of light and warmth upon the scene.

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Our study of the minor prophets is ended. We have sought to find therein Him whom our souls love. To Him they one and all bear witness. If we know Him in a deeper and fuller way through the pages of the New Testament, and if a closer relationship with Himself is ours than that which the prophets set forth as existing between Him and the chosen and beloved nation, yet it is *Himself*, the same blessed One, whom we contemplate in the writings that have been before us.

May God be pleased to make Him increasingly precious to our hearts. Christianity, apart from Him, is mere philosophy; doctrine, unless presented in living connection with Him, is mere theology; prophecy, unless taken up with Himself as its known and loved

centre, is but an intellectual study. *He* is the sum and substance of it all, the fulfilment of every promise, the goal of every hope. Time spent at His feet, learning of Him, is time well spent, and will bear fruit in the days of eternity yet to come.

Fragment on Repentance.

(J. N. DARBY).

IN Luke xxiv. 47, we are told "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." There can be no question about that, but what has enfeebled preaching is, there has been such a sense that repentance is preliminary to faith.

We are all apt to topple over from one side to another, and so the true place of repentance has got obscured and its presentation enfeebled. This is mischievous for this reason, the claim of God is left out or enfeebled by it. But God is now gathering His own in, if I may so speak, in haste. The Lord is coming, and woe be to us if we say, 'He delays His coming.'

He now calls on "all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained." Repentance is God's claim upon people, and if in preaching I merely say 'God loves you and you are a poor sinner, but there is grace for you,' (and that I surely would say) and then leave repentance out, it is leaving the man's conscience out.

Repentance is the judgment we have passed upon ourselves, as to all that

we have done and been, in God's presence under grace. Even now, as under grace, there may be a legal repentance, but if it is put before faith, it unsettles the whole ground we stand upon before God, it is then something I am doing in my own heart, and that will not do. When I preach repentance, therefore, I must preach it in Christ's name, and so I said "under grace": but if I carry God's message, I must carry God's claim, and I say, 'if you don't repent and turn to Him, you will be lost.'

Yet if I call on people to repent, in the name of Christ, they must believe on Christ in order to repent. As a man you have to say to God: and what state are you in before God? And if I call on man to be in God's presence with God's claim upon him, and that in grace—perfect grace—then if he returns, he returns to God. Repentance ought to be preached as God's claim, but putting in that claim in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

God calls on all to repent, but if they don't, they must come under judgment—you cannot have your eye open on the Lord Jesus Christ and not hate yourself as a sinner.

Our works are to be works which nothing but faith can accomplish, and which are infallible proofs that the man who works them is in living fellowship with the living God.

God may have many faithful servants where we may imagine there are none.

Elijah cried out "I only am left," at the very time that there were seven thousand in Israel, who abhorred idols. A consideration like this should enlarge our charity, and encourage the expectation that there is much more real piety than may have fallen under our notice.

A Hawthorn Tree in the Dreary Winter.

(J. B. STONEY).

"And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved (II. Cor. xii. 15).

THE Christian, when opposed and thwarted, must not retire into the sanctuary of his own heart to enjoy his blessings alone, or he is like the flower that closes its petals on a cold rough day and refuses to shed its fragrance when everything is out of season. But he should be like the hawthorn tree, that in the depth of winter hangs out its scarlet berries for the suffering birds, when there is succour nowhere else. This tree, the admiration of all in May, comes forth and offers a ready susten-

ance to the needy. To be like the hawthorn tree you must be proof against the frosts of neglect and the snows of indifference. In a word, instead of retiring into yourself to find in the Lord a comfort denied elsewhere, you must seek for nothing from around, but, having the heart satisfied with Christ, be free from self-thoughts, to be a blessing even to those who oppose you—be a hawthorn tree in the dreary winter.

The Knowledge of the Father.

(J. A. TRENCH).

Continued from Page 340.

THE Word, who was in nature God, became flesh and tabernacled amongst us, so that the opened eye of faith beholds His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten with a Father—the one cherished object of the Father's delight (John i. 14.) This it is that gives His blessed competency to make the Father known; even as we read in verse 18, "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father He hath declared Him." Who so fitted to make Him known as the Son who dwells in His bosom? For His nearness and intimacy of relationship with the Father ever characterised Him while speaking and acting as Man amongst men. Let us then seek to follow out how the revelation of the Father comes to us in the person of the Son. It is in His words and works as grouped together by the Spirit in the Gospel of John we shall find it. Here alone, in all Scripture, the Father is fully revealed: one reason, doubtless,

why the little flock turns to it instinctively as their richest pasture.

Mark the way He is presented to us in chap. v. 17-20: it becomes a revelation to us of the place the Son had taken, and which He ever kept in His pathway here. In refusing the possibility of a Sabbath for the heart of God in a world of sin and sorrow, Jesus says, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." If the time for the rest of God was not yet, the full time of His work had come, that men might be fitted to have their place in that rest. The Jews were right in taking the words of the Lord as involving His equality with the Father, but for that reason it could not be true that He *made Himself* God. The truth was that, being in the form of God, He thought it not a matter of usurpation of that which did not belong to Him to be equal with God, but *emptied* Himself (for that is the wonderful word) and took upon Him the form of a servant and became in the likeness of men; and even then being found in

fashion as a man He *humbled* Himself (Phil. ii. 6-8.) Emptying Himself as God, He humbled Himself as man, instead of making Himself anything.

He was not here then to act as God, independently, for He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing from Himself, but what He seeth the Father do." He had come only to act in absolute dependence upon the Father; yet none but He who was equal with the Father could have said, "What things soever He doeth these also doeth the Son likewise." But it was as acting from His conscious place in the Father's love and in perfect communion with Him, "for the Father loveth the Son and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth." All His works were thus the Father's works, the expression of the Father's nature and will as flowing from this divine communion. In His works the Father was revealed. Hence His solemn words in John x. 37, 38, "If I do not the works of My Father believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works: that ye may know, and believe, that the Father is in Me, and I in Him."

Nor was it otherwise with His words, as chap. xii. 49, 50 wonderfully shows: "I have not spoken from Myself; but the Father which sent Me, He gave Me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak . . . whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto Me so I speak." What new and precious interest His whole path is invested with, when we learn that in words and works alike He is expressing the Father, that we might be brought to know Him as thus perfectly revealed. From this, too, flows the revelation of the Father's house, never before spoken of in Scripture.

The Father's House and the Way.

John xiv., where all comes out fully, commands our deepest attention. For there we find that when the Lord Jesus could no longer take His place with His own in a world that rejected Him,

He would give them a place with Himself in the Father's house where He was going: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Two things then He expects them to have conscious knowledge of—the Father's house, as the place where He was going, and the way. But how could this be so when the Scriptures had been silent on such themes?

Thomas asks as to the way and learns that Jesus spoke of the way to the Father, for the revelation of the Father was the revelation of the Father's house, the way to the Father was the way to the Father's house. Jesus was Himself "the way," "for no man cometh unto the Father but by Me." He was also "the truth," for God being revealed they had the truth as to everything, which consists in its relation to Him: and then further He was "the life," the blessed capacity to enjoy the revelation. And He adds, "If ye had known Me, ye should have known [conscious knowledge, Rev. Text] my Father also: from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him."

Philip would know more of the place, for he seemed to seize the thought that the Person makes the place, that the Father constitutes all the joy and blessedness of the Father's house, hence his prayer, "shew us the Father and it *sufficeth* us." How blessed by grace to have the consciousness that nothing else is needed to fill and satisfy the whole being. How far do we enter into anything of this sense of things, now that all is fully out? But the answer lies in what has been before us; and in words of gentle reproof Jesus says, "Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father, and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?" And He appeals to His words and works, "Believest thou not

that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not from myself, but the Father that dwelleth in Me He doeth the works." And if the words were not sufficient—"believe me for the very works' sake" (ver. 11).

But Philip had not then the Spirit, as we have, to enable him to enter into the testimony of the words he heard and of the works he saw. What of ourselves, beloved brethren, how far—to ourselves again let us put it—how far have we profited by the revelation?—now that the Spirit has brought it to constant remembrance by the apostolic record, and, as dwelling in us, would give effect to the testimony in our souls, and be the power of our enjoyment of it to the full.

We have not been left Orphans.

We all know how to feel for an orphaned child, with the capacity for the enjoyment of relationship, and yet without that which alone could draw out and fill and satisfy the affections and give the sense of home—a father and the love of a father's heart known and possessed: for the father's house is ever the home of the children. But we are not orphans, for we know the Father, and again it must be pressed that the knowledge of the Father implies more than merely the consciousness of relationship. There is the *love* of the Father, and the Lord would lead us into the blessed reality of it. See chap. xvi. 26, 27: "At that day ye shall pray in My Name, and I say not unto you that I will ask the Father for you [for the words 'pray' and 'ask' ought to be thus reversed]: for the Father Himself loveth you because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God." What wealth and fulness of divine affection are here! The Father loves the Son, and if we love Him there is a bond between our hearts and His in a common object of love; and thus we are given the sense of being the objects directly of the Father's love.

Eternal Life.

But there is what even goes beyond this, for in chap. xvii. there is presented another character of the blessing that is connected with the revelation of the Father, namely, what eternal life is, the life we possess in the Son of God. It is, in its deepest character, "that they may know Thee [that is, the Father whom He was addressing] the only true God [not now to be known apart from the revelation of the Father] and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent"—the way and One in whom He has been revealed. Eternal life had been in the Son with the Father from eternity (I. John i. 2) ever characterized by that relationship; it was manifested for the first time on earth by the incarnation, the Son revealing the Father in all His ways; now, based upon the work of redemption, which in this chapter is looked at as already accomplished by His death and resurrection, He introduces us into all the position and relationship of that life as set forth in the risen Christ. The position in which He here associates us with Himself in relationship with the Father, in absolute separation from the world, leading on to our yet future enjoyment of it in the proper sphere of that life, His heavenly glory and the Father's House, is the most complete setting forth of eternal life we have.

Then how beyond all the thoughts of men is the purpose of eternal love which finds expression in the words of this wonderful prayer. For Jesus speaks not only of the perfection of the given-glory of Christ in which He will manifest us to the world (verses 22, 23) "that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me and *hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me*;" but in the last verse He speaks of the way He has provided for our *present* enjoyment of such a place in the Father's love: "I have made known (a richer word than 'declare') unto them Thy name, and will make it known." The revelation of the Father's name in the Son by His words and works is perfect, as we have seen in this Gospel, and

nothing can ever be added to it. But the blessed Lord assures us that He *will make it known*, so as to bring the power of the revelation into our hearts and lives now as an ever-increasing reality. And this in order "that *the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me* may be in them, and I in them." He Himself—oh, if we could only enter a little more into the marvellous thought!—to conduct the Father's love, as He knew it, and was the object of it, into our hearts—He Himself in us as life, to be our strength and capacity for knowing and enjoying it. If chap. xvii. had not so revealed it we never could have conceived that the Father's love to us was of such a character, and that the place the Son had in it was the only measure of our place in it. We cannot grasp it, but we can believe and enjoy it and adore Him, and know something increasingly of living in the consciousness of being loved by the Father as He loved the Son.

The Great Obstruction.

One more thought for which we must turn back to the Epistle. What is it that has so obstructed the realization of what has come out as the first and simplest yet deepest privilege of the youngest in God's family circle? I think it is not far to seek. We are brought to it when the next stage of growth is reached, and the "young men," who have met Satan coming openly against them, and, by the word of God abiding in them, have overcome him, have to be warned against *the world*. The subtle enemy of our souls knows how to work by that which is his sphere, and present some object in the world to allure the heart. For it is not what lies in our hands that is

the chief danger, but that which he can incite us to desire. "*Love not the world;*" and it is added—to guard us against the treachery of the heart that would make "the world" be just that which lies outside the boundary of its own hopes and prospects and ambitions—"neither the *things that are in the world.*" And there we learn that "if any man love the world the love of the *Father* is not in him." He does not speak of the love of God, which is shed abroad in the heart as surely as the Holy Spirit has been given, which is assumed of all those to whom John writes. It is the love of *the Father*—the enjoyment of that special relationship, with all that flows from the knowledge of Him with whom we are in relationship—which is specifically hindered, if the heart goes out after any poor worldly object. Yet all that is in it morally—how well to know it from God—is "lust," the desire to possess what we have not, or "pride"—the contemptible pride of what we have; and absolutely nothing else. What a cheat it is! Yet how many Christian lives, which once opened full of the brightest promise, have soon become clouded over, and closed in comparative darkness, as having become ensnared by it. "The world passeth away"—thank God we may well say, "and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." The Lord make that blessed will the one thing before our hearts, for the few remaining moments of testing, so that there may be true expansion and growth in the divine nature which we possess, by the power of the heavenly relationships we enjoy, and the knowledge of divine Persons with whom we are in relationship by infinite grace.

When a man builds a house or a ship he takes heed that no beam be strained; so God never overtaxes our faith, He knows our frame. He is faithful and will not suffer the testing to be greater than the faith.

To be strong in faith two things are needful—a very low esteem of ourselves, and a very high esteem of Christ.

Humility promotes fellowship, pride produces division.

Thoughts on Service.

(ROBERT CHAPMAN).

If we do not live *beyond* time, we are not fit to serve *in* time.

A good workman gains skill by his mistakes.

Look not to the quantity but to the quality of your service, whatsoever that service may be. If it be preaching, preaching is not the first thing; *the heart must be kept*; then two or three words spoken in the power of the Spirit may avail more than many a long discourse.

The conversion of sinners, the prosperity of saints—these are precious things, but not *the* object of the soul: that should be to please God.

We are not the most useful when the most wordy, but when the most prayerful.

The joy and triumph of faith are only to be found in the way of unreserved consecration of ourselves to God, and of diligent service to Christ.

The work of the servant of the Lord demands entire self-denial. Even Christ pleased not Himself (Romans xv. 3). He must be the servant of all men for Jesus' sake; the foremost to suffer; the most laborious in service; ever caring for others, ever forgetting himself.—(From "Choice Sayings").

The Gospel in the World.

(S. L. JACOB).

No. 4.—Modern Times: 16th to the 20th Century.

THE darkness could scarcely have been deeper than it appears to the spiritual eye at the commencement of this period, but God had His resources; and just when the state of things could not have been worse there burst forth a glorious light in almost every country in Europe—it was a time of God's visitation. Martin Luther's is the name especially associated with this movement and with the truth of justification by faith, but Le Fevre and William Farel, in Paris, preached justification through Christ alone before Luther knew it. Zwingle and Calvin in Switzerland, Berquin and Beza in France, John Knox in Scotland, were amongst the most illustrious witnesses of this period; but nearly every country in Europe had its glorious martyrs, and there was more and greater cruelty practised upon them by the so-called Christians in Papacy than even under the worst pagan persecutions. Thank

God for the many stedfast ones of that time. England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Holland, a great part of Germany, and part of Switzerland, were emancipated from the Roman yoke at that time and have had much prosperity ever since, though, alas, the spiritual has so greatly succumbed to the material.

God knocked at the door of Spain and grand were its martyrs; even from the highest ranks brave souls were found willing to bear dishonour and incredible tortures; but the light was ruthlessly stamped out by direst cruelties at the hands of the Inquisition, and Spain sank from its proud position of first of the nations to the low place it has held since.

France has a vast martyr roll, but the sword was taken up and great battles fought; spirituality waned, and many have been the sufferings of that

great nation since, and the end is not yet.

Italy had but few martyrs save in the Waldensian Alps. The chain of Rome was not broken there, and the state of that land to-day is very sad.

In Hungary, Bohemia and Poland, many died for Christ's sake, but it almost seemed as if they had died in vain, though this can never be. Their record is on high, and their works do follow them.

We cannot be too thankful for this movement of God in the 16th century, generally called the Reformation, without which apparently all had been lost; but alas! the spirituality soon waned, as we see in the epistle to the Church in Sardis (Rev. iii. 1-6), which doubtless foreshadows this condition of things. Political ends took the place of spiritual ones, and in the 17th century Protestant Europe had sunk very low. In the 18th century God granted in England a wonderful revival through the Wesleys, Whitfield, and a host of others, who preached the gospel, according to their light, with remarkable zeal and fervour, and God greatly blessed the word. Germany had its blessing through Labadie, Terstegen, Count Zinzendorf, and many others, and thus God did not leave Himself without witness. Even among Roman Catholics, Fenelon, Pascal, Madame Guyon, and others, bore witness to the truth and suffered in consequence. Roman Catholicism, though unchanged in heart, put on a more decent garb.

In the 16th century, after America had been discovered, South and Central America were seized by the Spanish and Portuguese (the latter taking Brazil).

These vast regions were nominally Christianized, the inhabitants were cruelly treated and robbed, and their history is incredibly sad. At the present time the yoke of Spain and Portugal has been broken, and the great majority (all except the interior tribes of the States) are nominally Christian, but heathen darkness per-

vades the whole. Some light has penetrated here and there in modern times, and still, thank God, the gospel is being preached in these dark regions. May the Lord of the harvest send more labourers into the harvest. The labourers are very few.

Remarkable to say, the earliest modern missions to heathendom have been carried out by Roman Catholics. In the 14th century Ramon Lull, a Spanish layman, who seems to have been a godly man, went once and again to preach Christ in a Mohammeden stronghold, and finally lost his life in consequence. He may be termed the father of modern missions, yet before him Francis of Assisi had gone out to Egypt, and his followers to other places.

In Reformation times rose up Ignatius Loyola and the Society of Jesuits, who went out far and wide through the earth to spread their religion and to plant the banner of Rome. The most noted of these missionaries was Francis Xavier, who laboured long in India, and died off China, longing to enter it.

Was the work of these men all bad? We know that great and terrible evils were mixed up with their work, but can we say it was all bad? Mixture of good and evil is what we see everywhere, the bad not so bad, but that there is some good (Rev. xviii 4), the best not so good, but that great and sad evil is found there, as Judas among the twelve.

The evil of these Jesuits is easily seen, and in the days of their prosperity they were proud, acted with cruelty, and behaved themselves as great lords; but in times of adversity when they were proscribed, banished, and persecuted, they often crept back one by one and endured hardships and suffered much with the persecuted flock. The persecuted converts in China and Japan also at times came out right well in evil days. Thank God for this, and that His heart is so far greater than ours. The judgment seat ill becomes us, but if we see any signs of good let us rejoice. At the present day the state of the Roman Catholic missions is very low indeed everywhere.

Modern Protestant missions date almost entirely from the last 200 years. The Moravian brethren were pioneers on this line and their works have been noble, but the great impulse in this direction was chiefly from about the year 1800; since then the work has greatly spread, and almost the whole of the heathen world has been more or less occupied by missionaries. These are defective, as indeed we all are, but their methods are apparently far purer than most of those of the early centuries of the Christian era, and they are mostly converted men and women doing their best according to their measure, and their lives are as lights in dark places. The more the difficulties and hardships, the brighter as a rule are their lives. In deserts and in mountains, in torrid and in arctic zones, in Central Asia and in Africa will be found refined men and women who, forsaking pleasant times in the Fatherland, have gone out to preach Christ to the poor, the degraded, and the unrefined. Thank God for such, for they are, as it were, some of those who form the salt of the earth. As ever, the brightest are generally found at the outskirts and not in Christian centres.

China, Japan, Uganda, Madagascar, and many other countries have furnished their quota of devoted martyrs in recent years—thank God for this. If the general standard amongst the Protestant converts from heathendom is not high, yet we can thank God for what there is of Christ, and this is not little, and many have been found willing to forsake father, mother, wife, children and property for the Lord's sake. Will He call this nothing? Oh, it is easy to criticise—God have mercy on the critics—they are generally accusers of the brethren. No, the only criticism worth anything is the work of him who will do better than another and shew more of Christ. God raise up many such critics.

For ourselves, we have lived a lifetime in a heathen land, and know the weaknesses of modern missions better than most; but we thank God for them;

they have preserved from utter corruption; thousands upon thousands have been won for Christ from all parts of heathendom; and many lights still burn brightly in the dark places of the earth; and year by year God shews how He loves to bless and use those who humbly seek Him.

But early in the 19th century came a great spiritual movement, doubtless corresponding to the address to the Church in Philadelphia (Rev. iii. 7-13); a most blessed movement it was: not so wide spread as the Reformation, but far deeper and more spiritual. The glories of Christ were unfolded in a way never known before, save in the days of the apostles. The place of the Church, the counsels and purposes of God, the coming of Christ, and many other kindred truths rejoiced the hearts of thousands, as they were again brought to light (though always in Scripture), and ministered with power.

These blessed truths spread far and wide, and produced real heart-separation from the world and a true watching for the Lord's return. But with accession of light there is always danger, for if the conscience and heart are not brought into exercise thereby, it becomes the knowledge that puffs up, and produces the bitter fruits of self-felicitation, the judging of others, spiritual pride, coldness of heart, and indifference to the prosperity of the gospel to sinners. Alas! how much of this is painfully manifest to-day.

What is before us now? Nothing but Laodicea and the coming of Christ (Rev. iii. 14-22). He will not come to a Christendom yearning for Him, but to take His own beloved ones out of corrupt Christendom to be for ever with Himself, before He comes in judgment to deal with this world.

O God, teach us; make Thy people faithful; cause us to love the reproach of Christ more than all the treasures of Egypt; to suffer the loss of all things that we may win Christ; to have fellowship in His sufferings and know the

power of His resurrection. O God, bless Thy people, and maintain the cause of Christ until the end, deepening the work within, as corruption grows without.

We would make one last appeal to those who have much light in these last days. Oh, brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, let us love one another as He gave us commandment. Sinners are perishing everywhere for lack of a full, clear gospel, saints are perishing for lack of knowledge. Let us give these to them. Has not the light and truth been given for this purpose? Is the lamp lighted to be put under a

bushel? Let us give others credit for being as sincerely anxious to do the will of God as ourselves. We are expressly told not to judge one another. Who are we, to judge Another's servant? Beloved brethren, while seeking to walk in deepest self-judgment and humiliation, seeking to maintain true separation to God, let us understand that to go out in the real passion of love to Christ and to men, with the gospel and with the truth, is not to lack separation, but to be followers of Him whom the Father sent to be the Saviour of the world, and of him who said "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ."

Bible Study.—II. Thessalonians.

(EDWARD CROSS).

Chapter III.

1. Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you:

2. And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men: for all men have not faith.

3. But the Lord is faithful, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil.

4. And we have confidence in the Lord touching you, that ye both do and will do the things which we command you.

5. And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ (margin).

6. Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.

7. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;

8. Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you:

9. Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us.

10. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.

11. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.

12. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

13. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing.

14. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.

15. Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother.

16. Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.

17. The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.

18. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

THIS chapter naturally falls into three sections, viz., (1) verses 1-5, the desire of the Apostle for the prayers of the saints; (2) verses 6-16, the directions which he gives them in regard to those who were walking disorderly; and (3) verses 17, 18, his final salutation and commendation.

It is most interesting to see the way in which he seeks the fellowship in

prayer of these young saints on his behalf as a minister of the gospel of Christ. There is something touchingly simple about it; a simplicity that makes the spirit of it intensely real, reaching to the springs of true spiritual life, and attaching the hearts of others to the Apostle, as it demonstrates the sincerity with which his heart was attached to them. We are apt to think of him in

his apostolic position as apart from the ordinary feelings of which we are conscious within ourselves; a being of a superior order, to be revered and obeyed, but not to be approached too closely; in whose presence, as far above the sympathy of our weaknesses, we could not feel the liberty of home. But such is not the way in which the spirit of Christ in him manifests itself. He desires their prayers, not for any merely personal end, but that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified elsewhere through his ministry, even as also it had prospered with them—an expression found in Ps. cxlvii., "His word runneth very swiftly," and which he may possibly have had in his mind (*cf.* also Acts xiii. 48, and II. Tim. ii. 9). This was all his concern. This was the subject in which he would engage their interest. He had suffered much in their midst; he was obliged to fly by night in order to escape the assaults with which he was threatened (Acts. xvii. 5-10); but that did not enter into account with him, by comparison with the one object before him, the success of the gospel and the glory of God thereby.

Verse 2.

But wherever he went he found opposition. The "perverse and evil men" to whom he refers here were probably Jews at Corinth, who were opposing his ministry. Comp. Acts xviii. and II: Cor. xi. 13-26. Some think that the "vagabond Jews" of Acts xix. 13 were those who followed him from place to place with such intent. Against their machinations he enlists the prayers of these young saints, that he may be delivered from such men; for faith, *i.e.*, the faith of Christ, is not the portion of all; plainly not of these unbelieving Jews.

Verse 3.

But if all men have not faith, faithful is the Lord, and He would establish them and keep them from the evil one, who is the author of all the evil going on around: a similar form of expression to that used in Matt. vi. 13.

Verse 4.

And in Him the Apostle has confidence in respect of them, that the things which he commands them they both do and will continue to do. Here, as elsewhere in the epistle, the preposition "in" expresses the sphere or element in which his confidence resided. Whatever his hopes might be on their account, the anchor of his trust was in the Lord. It could be nowhere else. He uses the same language to the Galatians: "I have confidence as to you in the Lord" (chap. v. 10). What confidence could he have otherwise? The mere fact of their having professedly received the Christian faith was not enough. When the Lord Himself was here we read that "many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles that He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men and . . . what was in man" (John ii. 23-25): and the cross was the proof of it. So again the Apostle writes, "we boast in Christ Jesus and do not trust in flesh" (Phil. iii. 3). Nevertheless he can trust in the Lord as to them. That is the sphere and the anchor of his trust; and his spirit can rest there.

Verse 5.

But then on their side, his prayer for them is that the Lord may direct their hearts into the love of God and the patience of Christ, *i.e.* the love of God objectively, "*amor erga Deum*" (Bengel), love towards God, and the patience exercised by Christ as He now sits on the right hand of God, waiting for His coming Kingdom (Rev. i. 9). The agitation of those who said that the day of the Lord was "present" was not in the exercise of that patience.

In Jude 21 we read, "Keep yourselves in the love of God," There it is the love subjectively with which God regards those who were building themselves up in their most holy faith, and otherwise keeping themselves from the spirit of apostacy that was growing up around.

Verse 6.

And now the Apostle again addresses

himself to a subject about which he had spoken to them very seriously before—first, when he was with them personally, and, again, in his former epistle to them, when he besought them very earnestly “to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, that ye walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye have need of no one” (I. Thes. iv. 11-12). But evidently they had not taken proper heed to his injunctions. Now he addresses himself still more emphatically to them on the same subject, re-enforcing his command “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He is evidently dealing here with an inherent national vice, and one moreover which is not easily corrected; and first he addresses himself to the assembly as to their conduct towards those who were guilty of this disorderly conduct, and then he addresses himself to the guilty persons themselves. In the assembly there was doubtless no sufficient judgment of the inconsistency with the Christian faith of this kind of disorder, and it was probably more or less condoned amongst them; accordingly he commands them in the most strenuous terms to withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not after the instructions received from the Apostles: an instruction not in word only, but in the practice of those who gave it. “Because we have not walked disorderly among you; nor have we eaten bread from any one without cost; but in toil and hardship working night and day not to be chargeable to any one of you: not that we have not the right, but that we might give ourselves as an example to you, in order to your imitating us” (N.T.). Thus devotedly, and with such self-sacrifice, would the Apostle impress on the minds of these young converts, gathered out from the grossness and degradation of their natural surroundings, the first principles of holiness as regards religious life, and as regards social life, the pursuit of honest and honourable industry. “Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, for ever” (Ps. xciii. 5), and, “if any man does not like to work, neither let him eat” (N.T.).

This spirit of sloth and selfishness is neither local nor temporal. It belongs to fallen man everywhere and through all times; and in writings both Jewish and pagan, the parasite’s mode of living on the labour of others, not his own, was the text alike of comedy and of comment.

The word “disorderly” seems originally to have been applied to soldiers leaving the ranks, getting “out of order.” Hence it was used in general for a disorderly mode of living of any kind. Here it refers to those “not working at all, but busybodies.”

Verses 5-11.

There is a play on the words “working and busybodies”—“*ergazo*” and “*peri-ergazo*”—which can hardly be reproduced in English. The latter word means “occupied with what is on the outside of a thing, not its core,” *i.e.*, with what lies outside your own business: a “*chevalier d’industrie*”: very much occupied in doing nothing. Such a spirit finds no sanction in Christianity. It should find no countenance from Christians. Yet is the individual not excommunicated therefor from all the privileges of the Christian company, although he is put under its discipline. It must be remembered that excommunication is not properly the discipline of the assembly, but the avowal that all the discipline the assembly can exercise having been used has failed, and the “*recalcitrant*” is handed over to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (I. Cor. v.).

In the epistles of John we find another category, and one far more serious. There, it is the spirit of Antichrist that is in question. They deny the Father and the Son (I. John ii. 22): they confess not Jesus Christ coming in flesh (II. John 7): and this comes to its climax practically in the refusal of Diotrephes to receive the apostle John himself and those who were associated with him (III. John 9). These categories are entirely different, and the modes of treating them are correspondingly different: they must not be confounded with

one another: nor either again with Matt. xviii. 17. There one has to treat his brother as a heathen man and a publican, because this latter, having sinned against him, refuses every overture of reconciliation, and nurses his pride and self-will against the voice even of the assembly.

Again in Rom. xvi. 17 we read of those who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine that had been taught by the apostles, and we are told to avoid them. These stand again in a different category from the rest; and in the maintenance of the order of the house of God, these things must not be confounded.

Verse 16.

The paragraph ends with his desire on their behalf. "The Lord of peace Himself give you peace continually in every way. The Lord be with you all." In other places the Apostle speaks of "the God of peace" (Rom. xv. 33, xvi. 20, etc. But in these two epistles he dwells much on "the Lord Jesus Christ." The word "Lord" is mentioned twenty-two times in each of them; and it is probably in consonance with this fact that he here uses the expression, "the Lord of peace Himself." Peace he desires for them in every possible way and always: and the presence of the Lord with them all. From this he does not exclude those under the discipline named above.

Such was the fulness of the grace he ministered: and who would say that the holiness of the house of God suffered thereby? Perhaps we might feel inclined to pass another judgment: and by so doing confound things that differ. But "God alone is good."

Verse 17.

He adds the salutation in his own handwriting. This was to be the proof of the genuineness of the epistle and of every epistle of his henceforth. "So I write." In whatever form he subscribed himself here, this was to be the specimen of his signature to prevent future frauds (*cf.* ii. 2).

Verse 18.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all." Such in some form is the ending of every epistle of Paul's. No other Apostle so ends his epistles: the nearest to it is II. Peter iii. 18: and he adds here "be with you all," possibly with the design of including those whom he had been obliged to censure; and, if this is so, it would be quite intelligible that as a preacher of grace, he should be the exponent in practice of the doctrine that he taught.

May the lessons we have surveyed in these epistles profit us; and may our hearts grow in the deeper desire to be formed in the Spirit by every good word of God. Amen.

God's Purpose.

(THOMAS OLIVER).

THE great and ceaseless effort of the enemy is to divert us from God our Father, so that *we* may be robbed of our joy, and God of His portion in His people; and God's great aim and end in all His dealings with us is to secure and retain our affections, making us partakers of His holiness—that is, bringing us into such a state of soul that we may enjoy His company and He may enjoy ours, so that on our

side our joy may be full. With this in view He weans us from present things, shows us how death like a shadow rests on all below, that we may be a separate people, leading us by His Spirit into communion with Himself about His own beloved Son, taking us into His confidence about His eternal purposes of love, so that we may rejoice and prosper in every way.

The Authority of Scripture.

(JAMES BOYD).

No. 9—Propitiation.

I HAVE said that, as regards ourselves who are by nature Gentiles, the whole fabric of Scripture authority hangs upon the truth of the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. If He is not risen we are in our sins, and all that have placed any hope in Him in past dispensations have perished (I. Cor. xv.). But if the resurrection of the Lord Jesus witnesses to the truth and greatness of His person, it also bears witness to the perfection of the sacrifice which He offered to God.

The death of the believer.

We know but little of all that the death of the body involves, and it becomes those who feel that they are justly liable to it, to speak of it with that reverence with which it should be treated as the judgment of a holy and righteous God. Short of the coming of Christ it is the most blessed thing that could happen to a believer, for it is "to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II. Cor. v. 8); but this does not alter the fact that it was brought into the world by sin, and that it is sin's wages, and the just conclusion of a life which is in its nature enmity against God. Thank God we have a life in Christ which is beyond its power. Were it not for this it would be an unparalleled calamity. Through the mercy of God it is gain to the saint (Phil. i. 21).

As to the second death, the mighty witness to that is Golgotha. Had there been nothing there but the cruel death of crucifixion, most thoroughly would it have been proven how little that holy Sufferer was in the power of His own exhortation to His disciples, when He told them, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body" (Luke xii.), or when He said that he who did not hate his own life could not be His disciple (chap. xiv.). In a book published not so long ago it is

said, "Many a British soldier has died as brave a death as Jesus." If it were only a question of being undaunted in the presence of death, why not say, "Many a murderer"? There was not anything, nor could there be anything of the nature of bravery or heroism in the death of Jesus. That creature who can talk about bravery when meeting God about the question of sin must be filled with insane conceit. And Jesus, though the Creator and upholder of everything, had taken the place of a creature, a servant to the Godhead, that the counsels of the Father should be fulfilled, and this involved the meeting of God about the question of sin.

Hence the "strong crying and tears" in the garden of Gethsemane. No heroism comes to light in that lonely hour, when beyond the torrent of Cedron He encountered the powers of darkness, and entered into conflict with him who had the might of death. All that He was to meet in the three hours of darkness on the summit of Golgotha was anticipated in spirit, when the sorrow of His soul told itself out in a sweat of blood, which in great drops sprinkled the ground upon which He knelt in supplication to the Father. Where it is a matter of mere animal ferocity, a desire to be distinguished for deeds of daring, or even a test of natural affection, I can understand heroism to any extent; but to meet the displeasure of God against sin does not allow the idea of bravery, heroism, or any other man-admired quality. Victory on the human side is entirely out of the question. Fear only becomes the creature.

The state of men and the world.

I have already pointed out a fact which is patent to everybody, and that is, that man is an evil being. This requires no proving; the state of the world proves it to the hilt. And the

strange thing about it is, that the life of each man is largely taken up with laying the blame of the state of things at his neighbour's door. The rich blame the slothfulness and improvidence of the poor, and the poor blame the avariciousness and niggardliness of the rich; and the verdict of every human being is, that the world is hard, selfish, and cruel, and to be cast upon its mercy is a fate too terrible to be expressed in words.

And in this world, and by man the creature of God, God is unknown, rebelled against, dishonoured, and universally hated. And the creature is under death, and amenable to His judgment, and all the philosophy of the leaders of the world is unable completely to eradicate this feeling from the conscience of the sinner. Men may go on with their inventions, which are supposed to decorate the system of things down here, and ameliorate the condition of the human race; but death goes on with his work, and hearts go on breaking, and people go on murmuring against one another, and violence, oppression, falsehood, and corruption characterise everything—*and after this the judgment.*

Has God done anything to meet this state of things? Some tell us men are working out their own salvation; others, that the creation is a kind of mirror in which God (which is the Universal Life) is contemplating Himself; others, that He is doing the best He can, experimenting as a potter with the clay, making vessels, scrapping them, and always improving; but the theories advanced to quiet the consciences of men, and lead them to destruction, are almost innumerable.

What do the Scriptures say?

“God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John iii. 16). This is the life spoken of in the Gospel; a life in relationship with God known in the love of His heart; a life untainted by sin, selfishness, lust or pride; a

righteous, holy, spotless, divine life. What a burst of sunshine, comforting, health-giving, life-giving! How powerful to rejoice, and gladden the heart! How priceless and how peace-imparting, compared with those pretentious sparks struck from the atheistical brain of men grovelling in their native gloom; those wretched ignes-fatui which allure the unwary multitude to destruction!

But before this life could be communicated to man there was the question of sin to be gone into; for it lay between God and the blessing of the fallen creature. This is the way things are presented in Scripture. The judgment of sin, which lay upon the sinner, the righteous Judge could not ignore. He could not treat it as of no account: it must be atoned for; the judgment which was its due must be borne. If the creature be made to bear it he is lost for ever; he could never come out of it; God would lose his creature, and the devil would gain a victory.

This cannot be. But from whence is the relief to come? Man is under sin, the slave of the devil and of his own lusts, without strength, wandering in darkness and error, and in his nature enmity against God. Can God do anything on his behalf? Can He intervene as deliverer, and at the same time maintain His righteousness, holiness, truth, and majesty? That He will not act arbitrarily in moral questions, so as to upset and overthrow all the trust that His elect, holy, and intelligent creation have in Himself, can well be believed of a Creator who is supremely good. If these questions, which affect the very foundations, as well as the structure of the moral universe, have been raised, they must be settled in a way that will bring a sense of security into the heart of every created intelligence who desires to be faithful to his Creator.

God's Intention.

And these questions have been raised—sin has raised them. And though it would have been easy enough for God

to have cast man from His face, and left him to the consequences of his rebellion, there was that which never would have been brought to light, which the blessed God intended should be the supreme joy of every heart, and the subject of worship and of song through eternal ages; and that was His unspeakable love. The fall of man furnished the occasion of bringing this to light, and in the way in which God has taken to redeem His creature—the only possible way—every moral question has been gone into and settled to the glory of God, and to the peace and assured confidence of every faithful heart. And that way has been by the cross of His Son, who gave Himself a ransom for all, that a way of salvation should be opened up for all; and thus have the kindness and love of God to man been expressed. But let us see if this is a new idea, belonging only to that which has been called the Gospel age, or whether it has been testified beforehand in prophetic writings.

God's way announced.

No sooner did the fall of man take place than a Deliverer is announced; but He was to be a suffering Deliverer; Satan was to bruise His heel. He was to break the power of the fell destroyer, but in doing this He was to feel the might of the adversary. The next thing we find is, that it is God who provides clothing for the nakedness of the sinner. He clothed Adam and his wife with coats of skins. The one who dies for man becomes his covering under the eye of God. Man does not now clothe himself with skins, nor was he doing so in the day in which Genesis was written. Neither was God confined to this means of covering for His creatures. He could very well have provided any other material, but it was this way He took; and "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning (Rom. xv. 4).

When we come to Abel we have the approach of man to God; and here we see that there must be on the part of man the acknowledgment of the

righteousness of the judgment which lies upon him, and he must approach in the strength and excellency of the victim which dies in his stead. Abel comes in this way, and is accepted; while Cain's altar was the denial of all this; neither to him nor to his offering had God respect. The offerer is identified with his offering. The acceptance or rejection of the offering means the acceptance or rejection of the offerer. How important therefore it is to have a perfect sacrifice!

The meaning of Atonement.

The word *atonement*, which is the word found in the Old Testament, as *propitiation* is found in the New, means simply to *cover*. It is first used in Genesis vi. 14: Noah was told to *pitch* (cover) the ark within and without with pitch. It is used again in chapter xxxii. 20: Jacob said he would *appease* Esau with a present; his fault would be covered by the present. We have it in Ezekiel xvi. 63: God there speaks of a time when He would be *pacified* toward the children of Israel for all that they had done. When Israel had sinned in making the golden calf, Moses said he would go up to the Lord to try and make *atonement* for their sin (Exod. xxxii. 30). It is not difficult to gather from these scriptures the meaning the word has in the Old Testament. The *offence* is put out of sight by the *offering*. An equivalent is rendered to the aggrieved party which covers the cause of aggravation. The utter nonsense which is bandied about in Christendom concerning this word is past belief.

The blood in Egypt.

The deliverance of the children of Israel out of Egypt preaches to us the same Gospel. God was about to execute His righteous judgment upon the Egyptians, and took the firstborn as representatives of all the people. But the Israelites whom He had set Himself to deliver were equally subject to the judgment which He was about to inflict upon their enemies. How was He to pass over the one, and destroy the other? Anyone would tell us, He could

easily do that, as He is omniscient, and could make no mistake that would imperil His people. But He was about to leave upon record something for our instruction, and we must, in reading the account, keep this in mind. He instructs His people to take a lamb, and to kill it, and to strike its blood upon the lintel and door-post of their houses; and He says, "When I see the blood I will pass over you." The blood of the lamb met the eye of the destroying angel, and was the witness to him that the judgment which he was executing had preceded him; the firstborn had died in the death of his substitute. Paul says, "Christ our passover has been sacrificed for us."

Why did God take this way of delivering His people? Wherefore this crimson stain upon lintel and door-post? When He sent the plague upon the cattle He required no mark, by which to distinguish those belonging to His people from those which belonged to the servants of Pharaoh. It was the same during the plague of thick darkness: no sign directed the cloud where to settle. Why all this to-do in connection with the last act of this terrible drama? Let my reader hear what those have to say who know what it is to be sheltered by blood: "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. i.); "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood" (chap. v. 9); "Redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (I. Peter i. 19). This is the foundation of all blessing, the key-note of every song that shall thrill with its glorious melody the glad heart of redeemed creation, and that throughout all eternity.

The great Day of Atonement.

The great day of atonement, which was held in the seventh month, is full of instruction. We see that almost all things were by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood was no remission (Heb. ix. 22). At the same time we are given to understand that the sacrifices had in themselves no

intrinsic value, therefore they were of yearly occurrence. Thus, while typifying the sacrifice of Christ, they were in great contrast with it; for by *one* offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified (chap. x. 14). It was impossible that the blood of beasts could take away sins; a better sacrifice was needed for that. Therefore there was a remembrance of sins every year; and the conscience of the worshipper, instead of being taken up with the grace of God, was altogether occupied with the sins he had committed. Such a state of things was not pleasing to God, whose desire was to have man in His holy presence without a shadow of fear in his heart, and therefore He found fault with that order of things (Heb. viii. 8).

The death of Christ.

In the tabernacle God was shut up within the veil: on His part there was no coming out, and on the part of man there was no going in. Now the veil represented the flesh of Jesus (Heb. x. 20), therefore when on earth He spoke of His body as the temple (John ii. 21): God was within the veil in the body of Jesus. On the cross this veil was rent. The death of Christ was the rending of the veil. And this came to light in the type; for the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom (Matt. xxvii. 51). In the execution of the judgment of sin upon the cross, all that God was came to light. His righteousness was there declared, but His love also was brought to light. God has come out to man in perfect love; and now man can go in to God by that way which has been dedicated through the veil. And by that precious blood we have boldness for entering; for it is not only the witness to us that our sins are gone, but it is also the great witness of the perfect love of God to us; so that, not only are our consciences purged, but our hearts are won; and God's presence, which we so much dreaded, has become our eternal home; and nowhere in the universe are we so welcome.

Moreover, the work of the cross has glorified God, and that in a way in

which He never could have been glorified had that work not been done. His righteousness, holiness, truth, majesty, authority, and above all, the love of His heart to us has come to light; and every attribute has been vindicated, and maintained by the obedience of His beloved Son to the death of the cross. No one could have done such a work but a divine person; neither could anyone have taken such a work in hand but the One who gave Himself for us. Who could suffer the abandonment of God, and glorify God when abandoned by Him? To be forsaken of God for a single moment would be the eternal ruin of any created being. But Jesus could stand when absolutely alone, and when from no quarter was sympathy or support forthcoming. And therefore God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of heavenly, earthly, and infernal things; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. ii.).

I may be asked what justice I see in making a righteous person suffer for the unrighteous. I would only reply that this is not a question of righteousness, but of grace and love. What

righteousness is there in one person paying another's debts? None; it is all a matter of pure grace on the part of the one who does it. But there is no *making* about it; it was a matter of divine counsel. The Triune God is *One* in all that is done. Counsels belong to the Father, the Son is the One who accomplishes the Father's will, and the Spirit is the One by whose power everything is accomplished. The Son was as delighted to come as the Father was to send Him; and the Holy Spirit has His delight in working the pleasure of God in the hearts of believers.

This is the way things are presented in Scripture, and one mind pervades the Book. Christ is the subject from beginning to end; but we have His sufferings foretold, from the very first intimation of deliverance by Him. And the Holy Spirit who moved holy men to write the prophetic word never loses sight of the sacrifice of Jesus. On the one hand, His resurrection is the witness to us of the greatness of His person; on the other hand it is the witness to us of the perfection of the sacrifice which He offered for our sins. God has accepted the sacrifice, and the soul who comes by that sacrifice is accepted in all the value of it.

Various Aspects of the Death of Christ.

(H. NUNNERLEY.)

Satan's Overthrow.

THE aspect of the death of Christ which we shall consider in our closing paper is found in the earliest prophetic utterance of Scripture, and shows that God had determined the complete setting aside of Satan, through the cross, from the beginning.

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her Seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel" (Gen. iii. 15).

The death in which God's glory was secured, and man's salvation assured,

is that by which Satan's power is annulled, and his everlasting defeat declared.

Who then is this mysterious being called the old serpent, the devil, and Satan? Is he an actual person or an allegorical or mythical figure by which lust or evil is personified? Matt. iv. 1 tells us, "Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil." This scripture causes us to shrink with holy horror from the teaching that "Satan is only another name for lust," for the

blessed Son of God had no evil nature, no lust, and yet He was "tempted of the devil." Such assertions are blasphemous when applied to our Lord, and are a covert attack on His pure and spotless humanity.

Satan is an actual being of great subtlety, who tempted our Saviour at the beginning of His ministry, and again in the garden of Gethsemane, but found no vulnerable point in Him.

From Holy Scripture we learn that Satan is not now confined in hell, but walks up and down in the earth (Job i. 17; I. Peter v. 8). The seat of his power is the heavenlies, but he has a synagogue, a throne, and a dwelling on earth (Rev. ii. 9-13).

He is the "god" of this world, and as such will pander to its religious tastes. He is the "Prince" of this world, and is actively engaged in keeping men in subjection to his dominion. He is working with unflagging purpose towards the culmination of all his opposition to God, which will be manifested when he brings forth the man of sin—the ripe fruit of Satan's ascendancy over man, who will exalt himself above all that is called God, and to whom men will give homage (II. Thess. ii., 4).

He is neither omniscient, omnipotent nor omnipresent, but he is among the greatest of created beings, whose dignity Michael the archangel acknowledged when he would not bring a railing accusation but called upon the Lord to "rebuke" him (Jude 9.).

Ezekiel graphically describes him under the figure of the King of Tyre (see chap. xxviii.), as a being full of wisdom, perfect in beauty, with every precious stone for his covering, as having been in Eden, the garden of God, and having walked up and down on the mountain of God, the anointed cherub.

How long he kept his first estate we know not, but we are told he was perfect in his ways until he became occupied with his beauty, then, lifted up with pride, he fell, his wisdom was corrupted, iniquity was found in him.

I. Tim. iii. 6 leaves no room for doubt that pride was the cause of his condemnation. He sought to be God; and he ensnared our first parents by promising them they should be as gods. All the sin and misery with which this world is filled may be traced to him. He is not only the prince of the power of the air, ruler of the darkness of this world (Eph. vi. 12), but he is the evil spirit who works in the children of disobedience (Eph. ii. 2).

At Calvary human and infernal beings combined against Christ. It was man's hour and the *power of darkness*. The horror of a far greater darkness than that which shrouded the mid-day sun, enveloped the Saviour on the cross.

Satan marshalled men and demons. Pilate and Herod among royal circles, pharisees and scribes among religious circles, and the rabble of the lowest social circles were summoned to his aid; and added to these were those unseen, subtle, spiritual forces, the principalities and powers of the invisible world.

Picture this dread array, and then think of a lowly Man shrouded in blackness and darkness, passing through inexpressible sorrow and suffering, forsaken by His disciples, deserted by His followers, crucified in weakness.

There He fought the fight alone. What a battle! It was a contest for supremacy over man on the part of Satan. Had Satan gained the victory he would have remained master of the field. "Jesus bowed His head and gave up the ghost . . . But one of the soldiers pierced His side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water" (John xix., 30-34). By that death Satan's power was annulled for ever, though in the eyes of men it seemed as though the Son of God had met with defeat.

The Sabbath dawned; He was still among the dead. That Sabbath was a high day, the psalms were duly chanted, the temple services went on; the prophetic utterance seemed true: that Jesus was "forgotten as a dead man out of mind."

One more thing they must do. Jesus must not only be put in the grave, but *kept there*. Death must hold its prey, the grave retain Him: hence the great stone rolled over the mouth of His rock-hewn tomb; the Roman seal, which it was death to break; and a band of soldiers to keep Him in a tomb!

Even the friends of Jesus *appeared* to help on Satan's plans, for they encased His body in linen wrappings, with a *hundred pound weight* of spices. How then could He leave the grave? Added to this there were unseen, but none the less real, powers and principalities, wholly intent on keeping Jesus there.

It is because of the varied elements combined to hold Christ in death, that Ephesians i. 19, 20 refers to it as the culminating act of God's power, demonstrating how God is greater than man and Satan, principalities and powers. Creation had witnessed His eternal power, resurrection declared the *exceeding greatness* of that power.

Despite soldiers, seal, stone, and Satan, Jesus burst the bond of death, took His life again, and proceeded forthwith to demonstrate His victory, not only by His own resurrection, but by those other graves which gave up their dead, for "*Many bodies* of the saints which slept arose, and *came out of their graves* after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many" (Matt. xxvii. 52, 53), plain, tangible proof that captivity was led captive, principalities and powers spoiled, the strong man bound and robbed of his goods.

Rejoice ye heavenly hosts, cast away your fears ye troubled saints, fear death no more, it is yours, its sting is removed.

Through death—through going into it Himself—He has destroyed him that had the power of death—that is the devil. What for? to deliver them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage (Heb. ii. 14, 15).

The serpent's head is bruised, the tyrant conquered, the grave spoiled, death annulled, yet, for some wise reason known to God alone, Satan is still allowed to roam at large; though defeated he is not bound, though doomed he is not imprisoned.

He will be bound in the pit during Christ's millennial reign; he will eventually be consigned to the lake of fire (Rev. xx. 3-10). Meanwhile, knowing his time is short, he is acting with great energy. Witness how many seats of theological learning are corrupted by evil doctrine; how many infidel writers and gifted novelists scatter broadcast blinding and delusive teachings concerning Christ and the Scriptures, hell and its torments, man and his world.

We Christians are not to be ignorant of his devices. We are not to give him a place, we are to resist him and he will flee from us, we are to keep ourselves, we are to beware of the world, for the whole world lies in the arms of the wicked one. We are to be strong in the Lord and the power of His might, to take to ourselves the whole armour of God.

We are to know our deliverance from Satan, the power of darkness, and to read in Christ's death our complete emancipation from the bondage of the fear of death. Satan was put under Christ's feet at the cross; he will shortly be bruised under the feet of the redeemed (Rom. xvi. 20).

Christian Communion.

Christians need one another; are dependent on one another—not as fountains, but as channels of blessing.

The communion of the members of Christ with each other is of the Holy Ghost by whose indwelling fellowship with the Father and the Son is known. The oneness of mind between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is the spring and

pattern of the one new mind that should be found in, and mark out, the members of Christ.

Unless we have a spiritual understanding of this divine unity, we cannot rightly grieve for the divisions of God's people. By looking into this glass, we discover the nature and the guilt of schism and divisions.

“Grace for Timely Help.”

(JOHN GABRIN).

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

THE last sentence of this passage would be more correctly translated “and find grace for timely help,” and the difference is of the utmost importance.

“Help in time of need” may be illustrated thus: a child is knocked down in the road of a swiftly passing vehicle, the wheel of which passes over its leg and leaves it crushed and full of pain. A tender-hearted doctor, passing at the time, takes charge of the injured child, and attends to all its needs until at last it is well and strong again.

“Timely help” is a very different matter; it is as though that same doctor, seeing the child in danger of being run over, rushed forward and at the moment saved it out of the danger, and placed it beyond the reach of injury. This is the grace of which the verse speaks. We have a High Priest

who watches with tender care all who come to God by Him, and with Him there is grace to keep us in the hour of temptation, to keep us from falling, and to preserve us blameless; it is this grace that we obtain at the throne of grace.

There is also, thank God, grace to help in time of need; if, through unwatchfulness and lack of dependence on the Lord, the Christian sins and falls, there is grace to restore such an one, for if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He can bind up the wounds and make the bones that are broken to sing, and His grace will never fail; but the friendly hand at the head of the cliff is better than the doctor at the foot of it. Prevention is better than cure. “Grace for timely help” is preferable to “help in time of need.”

Resurrection.

(F. B. HOLKE).

No. 6.—The True Beginning.

MORE than one “beginning” is spoken of in Scripture. Its opening words go back to the start of all created things; “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. i. 1). In the first verse of John’s Gospel we travel into a yet more remote past. “In the beginning was the Word,” *i.e.*, He existed before creation began. Go back in thought to the farthest conceivable point which could possibly be called a beginning—He was there.

Then in John’s first Epistle we read, “That which was from the beginning.” There it is the commencement of the

manifestation of eternal life in the person of Christ in this world, carrying us back to His incarnation.

Again in Matthew xix. 4-8. The Lord Jesus speaks of “the beginning,” referring evidently not to the actual beginning of Gen. i. 1, but to the creation of man and woman as recorded in the close of Genesis ii., and the setting them in their respective places in regard to each other, and the creation beneath them. At that point it was that the great clock of creation, as at present constituted, was wound up, and its wheels began to revolve, only to cease as recorded in Rev. xx. 11; xxi. 1,

because of the introduction of sin in its earliest moments.

Adam, however, is "the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. v. 14), and his deep sleep and awaking, out of which sprang the woman, was a type of the death and resurrection of Christ, out of which has sprung the Church which is His body and His bride. As the Risen One, He is *the* beginning.

"He is the Head of the body—the Church, who is the beginning, the First-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence" (Col. i. 18).

If we carefully read verses 13 to 18, we shall see that the Apostle's theme is the greatness and glory of "His (God's) dear Son," in whom we are redeemed, and into whose kingdom we are now translated. Two vast spheres of glory open out before us:

First, the sphere of the first creation in all its parts (verse 16). Inasmuch as He is "the image [perfect representation] of the invisible God," He is "the first-born of every creature." The term "first-born" is not used here with any reference to His birth into the world, but rather, that being Himself the Creator, He is before all things (ver. 17), and hence He has the first-born's rights in His own creation. He inherits everything, and everything hangs upon Him.

In verse 18 the second sphere comes before us. The glory of the first is admittedly very wonderful. "The heavens declare the glory of God" even if the earth has been marred by sin. The glory of the second, however, far transcends it. This is the new creation sphere, for the moment only perceived by faith, but presently to be publicly manifested.

Near to the very centre of that sphere "His body the Church" has her place. The glorious Head of the body is the centre. Here we find Him as Man come forth in resurrection. He is "the firstborn from the dead," and, as such, "the beginning." All and every thing that forms part of that new creation

finds its origin and takes its character from Him.

In whichever sphere we look, He stands absolutely alone. The pre-eminence is His in *all things*.

The great fact, however, with which we are immediately concerned is that in Christ risen we see the beginning of the vast new creation system, even as it was in His death that its moral foundations were laid.

To unfold the glories of that system, to present its various component parts, is entirely beyond the power of the writer, still one or two scriptures may be referred to as throwing a little light on this great subject.

Eph. iii. 15 indicates that in the coming day there will be various "families," various circles of relationship and privilege, some heavenly and some earthly in character, "The Father, of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every [r.v.] family in heaven and earth is named."

In keeping with this the Lord Himself said, "In My Father's house are many mansions [or *abiding-places* r.v.] . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv. 2).

We get a glimpse of some of these various families in Heb. xii. 22-24. The heavenly Jerusalem is mentioned, angels, the church of the first-born, and also the spirits of just men made perfect; while in Rev. xxi. and xxii. the veil is drawn aside from the future, and we are permitted to see a little of that creation in detail of which Christ is the beginning in resurrection. It is worthy of note that twice in these two chapters we get the words, "I am Alpha and Omega, the *beginning* and the end" (ch. xxi. 6 and xxii. 13), and in both cases the speaker is our Lord Jesus Christ. He it is who in John's vision sits upon the throne and makes all things new (xxi. 5), and He is the coming One whose reward is with Him (xxii. 12).

In the first case the setting is that of *God's sovereign purpose*. The end of man's little fevered day has been reached. The ragings of the heathen,

the vain imaginings of the kings of the earth, have been hushed in judgment. Evil has been dealt with in Satan its source, as well as in its outworkings in the self-destroyed children of men. The last enemies—death and hades—have been destroyed. Then the eternal thoughts of God find their accomplishment. The very heavens and earth are re-cast and established in new creation power. The Church, as the bride of Christ, the holy city, New Jerusalem, is set in her appointed place; men on the new earth find their place and portion with God. Every dark result of sin disappears. The former things are passed away, and God's new creation system is launched forth upon a radiant sea of endless life and light and love, where He Himself is all in all.

But there is One—well known through grace—who sits enthroned at the centre. He it is who in sovereign might brings all this to pass, and says "It is done." He is the great end of all things. He is also the beginning. It is even as if He directed every eye filled with the glory of that new creation world back through the centuries, the changing scenes of time to that moment when, as risen Man, He stepped forth from the lonely sepulchre by the side of Golgotha's hill, and said, "There you see the beginning." In that Man and His resurrection from the dead there abode the potential power of all the glory of that eternal day.

In the second case *our responsibility* is the setting. He again emphasises His speedy coming; and this time not so much in connection with the affections of His bride, leading her to say "Come" as with the responsibility of His servants. He says, "My reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." It is in connection with this that He again presents Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. Every man's work will be greatly coloured by the measure of recognition given to this great fact. That service is most acceptable to God which not only has Christ as its end, but Christ as its beginning; taking its rise and source in Him.

The real value and importance of this part of the truth cannot be easily over-estimated, especially in view of the actual condition of Christendom to-day. Two leading features must surely strike any thoughtful observer, *if an earnest and awakened Christian*: first, the great outward prosperity of the professing Church, in its many branches. Much advance has been made in numbers, influence, wealth, and activity. The day of great organized effort has arrived, and things are being attempted and accomplished upon a grand scale, undreamt of not so many years ago.

Second, there is with all this an extraordinary indifference as to Christ. There are many, thank God, everywhere to be found who love and reverence His blessed Name, but they are amongst the rank and file rather than the leaders. In many quarters anything is tolerated in the way of doctrine, so long as the man is intellectual, cultured, and likely to add influence and lustre to his denomination. Men can call themselves ministers of Christ and yet teach from the pulpit practically nothing but the old heathen philosophies, using Christian phraseology to express their terms, and do so with impunity.

Viewing the seven churches of Revelation ii. and iii. as a prophetic outline of the history of the professing Church upon earth, we have evidently reached the Laodicean stage where these features are exactly described. Outwardly "rich and increased with goods" and having "need of nothing," really "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," because neither cold nor hot, but lukewarm when Christ is in question.

It is to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans that the Lord presents Himself as "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, *the beginning of the creation of God*" (chap. iii. ver. 14). This is surely very significant, and gives us in few words the antidote to the poison at work. Let us take good heed to it.

Laodicean doctrine has *man* as the beginning—if it does not go back to the ape, or even the protoplasm—and it

certainly has man, deified man, as its end, and if Christ is brought in, it is as an example, an incentive and helper to man in his struggle on the upward road of progress.

In contrast to this the truth of God, as revealed in the Scripture, declares man to be lost because hopelessly defiled and corrupted by sin. He brings in the cross of Christ as that whereby sins have been atoned for, and man the corrupt sinner—judicially dealt with and ended in the death of the One who took up man's place and state before God. It sets forth Christ in resurrection as the beginning of all those things summed up in "the creation of God." Once let the truth get possession of the heart and the self-complacency of Laodicea is destroyed. May its preserving power be known to every one of us!

One thing more. Apart altogether from this preserving power, and its great importance for that reason in the present day of departure from truth and incipient apostasy, there is the blessing that flows to the soul from thinking the thoughts of God, and viewing things from His standpoint.

Man in his unconverted state is an absolutely self-centred creature; beyond his own very limited horizon his thoughts never rise. Even after conversion it is natural for us to dwell a good deal upon ourselves, our forgiveness, our deliverance, our blessing—and the beginning from which we reckon everything is the hour of our own conversion: that is the great red-letter day for us. We would not wholly condemn this. The moment when, turning to God, we first learned the value of the precious blood of Christ to shelter us was indeed a beginning. It was typically foreshadowed with Israel in Egypt. When the first-born was smitten and Israel sheltered by the blood of the passover lamb, the Lord said, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you" (Exod. xii. 2). It is well that we should recognize that all the days that went before the hour of our turning to God are lost days to us. Until then we never had a beginning. But then

it was *our* beginning: notice the words twice repeated, "to you." Having made our beginning we should advance and begin to learn things as *God* sees them.

When we do not make advance in the things of God we become stunted, and lapse even as Christians into a self-centred condition, which is always deplorable, because leading to unhappiness and lack of spiritual understanding. We are like the old astronomers who formed many conflicting theories to account for the motions of the heavenly bodies, none of them very illuminating or satisfying, and it was not until, breaking away from the traditions of the ancients, it was discovered that not our earth, but the sun, was the centre of the system around which the planets were revolving, that everything was explained, and that which appeared to be complex and chaotic was seen to be simple and harmonious.

Who can measure then the blessing of travelling in thought out of one's own littleness into the immensity of the thoughts of God? Be it ours to view things, not with the eye of a caterpillar whose horizon is bounded by the green leaf on which it feeds, but, with the eye of an eagle soaring into the blue dome above the mountain tops. This we shall do if we start forth with the risen Christ as the beginning and centre. Every thought of God in connection with Him is imperishable, and will find its full consummation in the coming day of glory.

We have thus surveyed in these papers—though imperfectly—a little of the wealth of spiritual meaning which must have been conveyed to the ears of heaven when the angel said, "He is not here, for He is risen," on the dawn of that never-to-be-forgotten day.

"He is not here! Hushed are our woes for ever;
The Victor's shout hath made the welkin ring.

All heaven rejoices, for again shall never

The creature suffer from the serpent's sting.

The keys of death and hell are in the keeping

Of Him, who from the foe my soul hath freed,

With exultation great my soul is leaping—

HE IS NOT HERE! THE LORD IS RISEN INDEED!"

Answers to Correspondents.

(H. D. R. JAMESON).

Numbers xxvi. 64, 65; Heb. iii. 19;
Jude 5.

F.K.M. writes—

I shall be glad of a little help in regard to the above-mentioned scriptures.

In Heb. iii. 19 we read "so we see that they could not enter in because of *unbelief*." Similarly Jude 5 states "that the Lord having *saved* the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that *believed not*."

From these scriptures it is quite clear that unbelief prevented their entrance into "the land." My difficulty, however, is this: Are we to view the company referred to as *true believers* or *only professors*; If the former, do we understand them to represent worldly believers who never rise to their heavenly standing? If, however, on the other hand, they are simply "professors," how are we to reconcile this with the fact that they are under the shelter of the blood, and delivered from the power of the enemy?

In reply to this question we would point out that the people of Israel are viewed (typically) in Scripture in a double aspect: first as one whole as a people sheltered by blood in Egypt, redeemed by power at the Red Sea, divinely guided in the wilderness, and finally brought in victorious strength into their possession in the promised land (*cf.* Ps. lxxviii. 51-55). When thus viewed, their history typifies that of the believer, and the very fact that all the men of war perished ere they crossed the brook Zered (Deut. ii. 14-15) becomes luminous with meaning, for though the link of identity between the Israel who came out of Egypt and the Israel who entered the land is clearly maintained in Caleb and Joshua (Num. xxvi. 64, 65), yet the constitution of the host was otherwise entirely changed; and so in the case of the believer, he enters the glory in the likeness and beauty of Christ, an *utterly changed* man morally from what he was when, typically speaking, he was "in Egypt," and yet he remains in identity the same person.

The second aspect in which the people of Israel are viewed in Scripture, is that which takes them up *in detail* as a people outwardly set in relation with God, but the reality of whose profession would be, and was, tested in the path of faith. It is this aspect which is so prominent in the Epistles addressed to those who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and undoubtedly the destruction spoken of in such scriptures as those quoted is typical not of God's governmental ways with true believers (which are brought out in other passages), but of the eternal destruction which awaits those who, whilst in the outward profession of Christ's name, are not really and truly believers. If this distinction of aspect be observed, difficulty disappears.

We would remark in conclusion that it is important to notice that the *rest* spoken of in Heb. iii. and iv. is distinctly future (*cf.* iv. 9, 10): it is not simply the spiritual rest which is ours to-day, but looks on to the end of all the present period of testing, labour, and trial, and when this is seen the parallel in Heb. iii. 18, 19 becomes unmistakable.

"He cannot Sin."

H. C. K. The passage you find it difficult to understand runs in the A.V. as follows:

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin: for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God."

A more correct rendering of the words "doth not commit sin" reads "does not practice sin" (J. N. Darby's New Translation), and the change makes more clear the great truth stated: *i.e.*, that the *practice* of the child of God is not sin. He has been born of God, and in consequence his nature is to love what God loves, and hate what God hates.

This Scripture moreover views the child of God abstractly *as such*, and hence the statement "he cannot sin": he revolts from it as foreign to his nature, somewhat as Joseph in the words "How then *can* I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" It is not that he may not unguardedly be betrayed into sin, inasmuch as he still has in him the flesh with its sinful tendencies, but that is abnormal, and a grief to the child of God: he does not *practice* sin, it is not his deliberate choice, it is not what marks his manner of life.

A sheep does not wallow in the mire, a sow does (II. Pet. ii. 22): in the figure the children of God answer to

the sheep, and the children of the devil (I. John iii. 10) to the swine: nevertheless though a sheep does not wallow in the mire, that being contrary to its nature, it may *fall in*; but if so, is distressed, and seeks to get out again, just as the Christian who has been betrayed into sin is distressed and grieved, and seeks restoration.

We hope these remarks will make clear to you what has been a difficulty.

Several answers to correspondents must be held over until our January issue owing to lack of space.

Our thanks are due to those correspondents who have kindly called our attention to the fact that G. V. Wigram's hymn, inserted last month as "hitherto unpublished," appeared some years ago in at least two collections.

Unchanging Love.

(J. T. MAWSON).

AT the close of another year we recall the old story of a Christian farmer who erected a weather vane upon the gable of his house, upon which was the text, "God is love." He was asked if he meant to convey the idea that God's love was as changeable as the wind, and his reply to the questioner is worthy to be often told: "No, I mean that 'God is love' whichever way the wind blows." What a comfort and stay is this in the midst of passing seasons, changing circumstances, and sometimes fierce trials, to those who know God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, revealed to us in all the blessedness of a quenchless and eternal love.

The rolling years cannot ruffle the peace of such, for whether they look back into the receding past, or forward into the swiftly coming future, all is bright with that love which nothing can destroy.

The past has been likened to a

sunset, and the simile is an apt one; we can look upon it with adoring hearts and eyes, for we see the clouds that once threatened us, and filled us, perhaps, with misgiving, made glorious by the golden light of the ways of God. Those clouds, perhaps, tell of hopes blighted, ambitions thwarted, and idols broken, but it is well to have behind us those things which would obscure faith's vision and impede faith's footsteps in the race.

The future is the sun-rising, when every promise and purpose of God will be fulfilled at the coming of the Lord. The eager hands of faith stretch forward to the eternal realities which then shall be revealed, and the heart substantiates them even now (Heb. xi. 1); but what will it be when faith gives place to sight, and the glory of God surrounds us in His home above?

"Our hearts beat high, the dawn is nigh
That ends our pilgrim story,
In that eternal glory!"

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."—Rev. xxii. 21.