VOLUME XV. 1923

"Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth."
—Prov. 4. 5.
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THE TESTIMONY OF THE LORD.

1. Christ has been here.
2. He is no longer here.
3. He is coming back again.

These three great facts with what is involved in them make up "the testimony of the Lord," and it is incumbent upon us who own His Name to understand the full force of them, and to maintain them without shame or fear.

They formed THE TESTIMONY OF PETER in Acts 2.

1. Christ has been here. "Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know" (verse 22).

2. He is no longer here. "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it" (verses 23, 24).

3. He is coming back again. "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on My right hand until I make Thy foes Thy footstool" (verses 34, 35). "And He shall send Jesus Christ which before was preached unto you" (chap. 3. 20).

JOHN BEARS WITNESS to these facts in Revelation 1.

1. Christ has been here. "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness."
2. He is not here. "The First-begotten of the dead."
3. He is coming back again. "The Prince of the kings of the earth" (verse 5).

He has been here, for God sent Him.
He is not here, for men rejected Him.
He is coming back again, to establish His rights in power in the place of His rejection.

He has been here; in this the love of God was declared.
He is not here; in this the sinfulness of the world was manifested.

He is coming back again, to execute the judgment of the God whose love He declared upon the world that gave God only hatred for love.

TO PAUL as to none other it is given to bear witness to these facts and to teach the results of them. He determined to know nothing among the Corinthians but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. He proclaimed that He had been here, but was no longer here, for the princes of the world had crucified the Lord of glory, and he declared that He was coming back again, and that in view of this fact God commandeth all men everywhere to repent.
Christ has been here. His presence in the world was the last and the supreme test for man. God, “having yet therefore one Son, His well-beloved, He sent Him also last unto them, saying they will reverence My Son. . . .” And in Him there came into the world every beautiful human trait according to God’s standard, and God was revealed to men in Him. He loved the Lord His God with all His heart and His neighbour as Himself, nay, He went beyond the law in this latter respect and stooped down to be the Servant of all; but His life was taken from the earth, He was cut off and had nothing. He is not here, “they took Him, and killed Him and cast Him out.” The cross of Christ has clearly proved that there was not a chord in the heart of the flesh that would respond to God’s most tender touch; that cross of shame was man’s defiant answer to the most blessed advance that God could make to him; the best that God could do only disclosed the full hatred and incorrigible rebellion of man’s nature. When the princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory they acted for Adam’s race of men; they were the heads of that race for the moment, and they fully showed that the race was so blinded by Satan, the deceiver and adversary, that it could not discern infinite goodness, when it saw it; that it loved darkness rather than light because its deeds are evil; its very nature was to prefer Satan to God, even though God is love.

Nothing could be gained by putting man to any further test. The coming of Christ had brought everything to the light, and the cross was the end of the history of God’s testing of man, and the result of the testing is clearly stated in the Scripture, “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

What a scene of desolation this world was when Jesus hung dead upon the cross and lay dead in the grave! Could there come out of that desolation any glory for God or blessing for men? Yes. For Christ, whom men slew, God has raised up again. “This is the Lord’s doing and it is marvellous in our eyes.” It is God’s intervention for His own glory and our blessing. Christ is not here, He is risen. This is the dominant note in Paul’s gospel. Christ is the first-begotten from the dead. God has not only given His answer to man’s foul act, and justified His Son whom men condemned, but He has in the risen Christ His new beginning, the beginning of the creation of God.

The hopes of the faithful were ever centred in Christ. Of Him the Old Testament Scriptures spoke continually, and those who loved and had those ancient words looked forward with a great longing to His coming, being assured that He only could bring in full deliverance from every oppression. And when He came great joy filled the hearts of the watchers. They said, “We have found the Messias,” “We have found Him.” “Come is not this the Christ?” “Thou art the Christ.” Then in a moment all their expectations seemed to perish, their hopes lay broken and dead by the sealed tomb of Him whom they loved. Panic seized them, and like sheep without a shepherd they were rudely scattered. But the news of His resurrection gathered them again, and He revealed Himself to them as alive from the dead, and they were glad when they saw the Lord.

Still He did not stay with them. As He stood in the midst of them upon the brow of Olivet He was parted from them and a cloud received Him out of their sight, and yet, though He had gone from them, they had not lost Him, they were united to Him by the Holy Ghost who came down from Him, and their hopes were centred in Him now, not as the lowly Nazarene treading the rough road to the cross, but as death’s Conqueror, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high. Their hopes and affections, their very life,
were transferred from earth to heaven, for He is not here, but He is there. He was here, but He is no longer here, He has gone over to the other side, and those who love Him will pass over with Him; actually and bodily they cannot do this yet, but in heart and spirit they will do it, like the Ethiopian eunuch, to whom Philip preached Jesus, who when he learned that His life had been taken from the earth, immediately responded, saying, “See here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?” Jesus, who had been here, had won his heart, and he desired to part company with the place in which Jesus died and the race that crucified Him, that he might have part with Him in the place where He lives.

This is the blessed privilege of all who know Christ. In the purpose of God they are to be conformed to His image that He may be the Firstborn among many brethren. That is their sure destiny, but even now He is not ashamed to call them brethren, for He is their great Leader and they belong to a resurrection race of which He is the head. In the thought of God the death of Christ has cut them off from Adam’s race that lay under condemnation and death, and in their baptism they are committed to the death of Christ, that they might live in His life; not the old life of sin and shame in which God could find no pleasure, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

These bear witness to the fact that He is coming again. This was the witness of the first prophet who ever spoke the word of God. “The Lord cometh,” cried Enoch, the seventh from Adam. This was the first message that came out of the glory after Christ had entered into it. “This same Jesus . . . shall so come . . . as ye have seen Him go,” said the angels. It is the last word of the Lord to His church on earth. “Surely, I come quickly,” He says. He is coming back again.

No testimony to the world is complete that leaves this out, for in it are involved the rights of Christ, who is Heir of all things. The rights that were refused Him when He came in grace, will be secured for Him by the power of God when He comes in glory, for God has said, “Sit Thou at My right hand until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” God grant that these great facts may live in power in our souls, and be our effective testimony to others.

HOW DO WE REGARD THE BIBLE? (F. B. HOLE)

In the age-long conflict between the truth of God and the lie of the devil, between faith and unbelief, the attitude which we adopt towards the Holy Scriptures is decisive—decisive as regards ourselves.

It is not at all decisive as regards God and His truth and the Book in which that truth is enshrined. You and I may regard the Bible in any light we please: the Bible and the God of the Bible are quite unmoved by our thoughts or words. If an airman attempts to fly over the Himalayas and, regarding Everest’s mighty mass as an illusion, steers straight into it, he will not move Everest an inch. He will move himself and his machine in very disconcerting fashion, and the way he regarded the mountain will prove quite decisive to him and to the result of his flight.

Ever since the Bible reached completion in the apostolic age it has been the object of continual attacks. For long it was removed from the common
people and buried in monasteries and the like. Since the Reformation it has been widely circulated and bitterly denied and criticized. In more recent times the mode of attack has varied, and the fashionable thing, especially in religious circles, now seems to be to eulogize it to the skies as literature, and as a repository of beautiful religious conceptions, and a story of religious progress, whilst assiduously impeaching its real veracity and undermining its authority as the Word of God.

We have just received a four-page pamphlet bearing the same title as this article, which summarizes the teachings of modern religious infidelity in small compass. We notice it here because it bears the imprint of the Social Problems Committee of the United Free Church of Scotland, and hence goes forth under the sanction of a substantial religious organization that once would have prided itself upon its orthodoxy.

No reader of this magazine is likely at first sight to find much fault with its opening words:—

"We Christians love our Bible. As life goes on most of us come to love it more and more. We go to it in sorrow and find comfort... We go to it in perplexity and find light. We go to it when we are weary and find inspiration. It never fails us. It is out of our own experience that we call it 'The word of Life.'"

Here are some quite nice sentiments, and our author undertakes to express them on behalf of Christians generally. He writes, you notice, not "some of us," not even "we Christians of the United Free Church of Scotland," but "we Christians"—speaking thus for the Church universal. We love our Bible, he avers, because of certain benefits it gives,—comfort, light, and inspiration—he does not state that we love it because it is true. He does not believe that it is true, as we shall soon see.

Comfort, light, and inspiration are quite good and desirable things if they are true and proceed from TRUTH. If not, they are but destructive opiates to the soul. How would this do for the opening of a pamphlet advocating Spiritism?

"We spiritists love our seances. As life goes on most of us come to love them more and more. We go to them in sorrow and find comfort. We go to them in perplexity and find light. We go to them when we are weary and find inspiration. They never fail us."

At this point many would wish to interrupt and observe that possibly spiritists do find what they claim in their seances, but that the supreme test is not as to the subjective effect produced in the devotees of any cult, but as to the truth or falsity of the cult to which they are devoted. Exactly! But that only proves how poor and lame a beginning the pamphlet in question makes. Our author affirms the comforting and soothing properties of the Bible. We agree, but we affirm further that if this be the test, there are a score of false cults which, once implicitly believed, have remarkable powers of inspiration and soothing properties in the highest degree, and we ask—why applaud the Bible and reject them?

To such a question we should give immediate answer—because the Bible is true and they are false. Our author, however, has no such logical reason for his choice, since for him the Bible also cannot be said to be true.

Having reminded us that a great many people do not find the Bible helps them in the way he has described, but that, on the contrary, "a great deal of it has simply bored them," that it seems to them "childish," or "contradictory and incredible," he gives us what he calls "blunt answers to blunt questions."

"Do we hold that every word in the Bible is true? No! we do not. Do we
accept the views of the Bible on scientific questions? No, we do not. Do we approve all the moral sentiments expressed in the Bible? No! certainly not. Do we regard the Bible as infallible history? No! Do we agree with all the opinions of St. Paul? No! we do not."

Our author here is not alluding to the fact that here and there, in Scripture, we have words and sentiments of evil men and even of Satan recorded; and that obviously such words and sentiments are not to be accepted as of God. No. He just means what he says, that "we Christians" do not believe the Bible to be true and thoroughly trustworthy either as to its words, its views, its moral sentiments, its histories, or its opinions; and, if so, it is not easy to see that there is left any respect at all in which it can be said to be true.

Thus he asserts. But is his assertion correct? By no means. There are Christians by tens of thousands who utterly repudiate such unbelief on the one hand and such a weak and illogical position on the other. How comes he, then, to make such assertions in the name of "we Christians" generally? Because either he ignores the fact that there are Christians for whom he does not speak, or else he treats such as differ from him as no Christians at all.

Leaving that aside, however, let us address ourselves to the main question. Ought we or ought we not to accept the Bible in its words, its views, its moral sentiments, its histories, and its opinions, and we would add, its assumptions, as true? Let us allow the Bible to propound to us concerning itself the very question that the Living Word addressed to His critics, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin? and if I say the truth, why do ye not believe Me?" (John 8. 46).

Take that tremendous Bible assumption, "Thus saith the Lord," repeated over and over again. Now, did the Lord say or did He not say? If He did say, then to treat any thing He said after the fashion of our author is sheer blasphemy, and if He did not say, then to talk about anyone deriving comfort or inspiration from such deceitful utterances is to advocate a very silly form of sentimental, not to say, immoral, religion. Nor would it improve the position to urge that the men who prefaced their writings with "Thus saith the Lord" and its many similar variant forms were good men who genuinely imagined they had a divine commission; for it is not the good men but their bad writings that our author would have us derive our comfort from!

Now what underlies the sad unbelief expressed in this pamphlet? Our author strokes us with a velvet paw, yet a sharp claw which scratches lies beneath the velvet!

We have no hesitation in saying—the steady refusal to see anything in the Bible beyond a purely human literature; the acknowledgment of nothing in the nature of a revelation from God, but only the history of the evolution of religious ideas in the minds of successive generations of men. Here are the words:

"What, then, is the Bible to us?"

"It is simply the story of how through long centuries men gradually worked their way from primitive religious ideas, and very primitive moral ideas, up to the loftiest heights of spiritual perception which the race has yet attained."

"The story is told us in very varied ways. The Bible is really a literature and not a book. It contains historical records, laws, poems, visions, books of teachings, proverbs and prophecies. Some of it is very dry; other parts of it are the most beautiful pieces of writing the world has produced."

"But the essential point about it all is that as we read it we can trace the great progress referred to. Israel began with what we should call pagan ideas about God. They believed in many gods, and about their own special god they believed some very strange things. They held him capable of such feelings as jealousy and the desire for revenge. They believed he could be pleased by animal
sacrifices. They thought He cared only for one nation and could take pleasure in seeing others massacred. And yet, slowly and surely, such thoughts were left behind. Slowly they learnt that God is holy, and thinks not as a man thinks. Slowly they learnt to fill out the idea of His righteousness with ever nobler content. They rose to a belief in His mercy, and then in His love. They received the greatest of all evangelical thoughts and came to know that God suffices with and for His children. And as this progress went on they discarded their earlier ideas. Many of the earlier conceptions in the Bible stand condemned by the later teaching of the Bible itself. It can, therefore, only be used rightly by those who receive its final and greatest teachings, and use these as a standard for judging all the rest."

Having read these statements which purport to be an instruction as to the true character and value of Old Testament Scripture, we have just our one question to ask as to them. ARE THEY TRUE?

They are NOT true to the facts as stated by Scripture. That can easily be verified. Israel did not begin with pagan ideas of God, if the Bible account of their beginnings is to be relied upon. Israel himself and his immediate descendants began with the knowledge of the true and only God. At a later stage in Egypt they evidently caught the infection of Egyptian idolatry to a considerable extent. From this, they were again to some degree extricated by the wonders of Sinai and the law then given. Their subsequent history was the exact opposite to the picture drawn by our author. Not a steady upward evolution of religious ideas, but a steady degradation to the depths of polytheism until the Babylonian captivity, only relieved by the faithful intervention of prophets sent by the Lord. And after the captivity, though they avoided idolatry, they degraded religion into a mere matter of ceremonies and pharisaic observances that was sternly denounced by our Lord. This, we repeat, is simply beyond all contradiction the plain testimony of the Bible. The only increasing light to which it bears witness is the increasing clearness of prophetic testimony to the Coming One which culminated in the COMING ONE Himself, the SENT ONE of the New Testament—the Lord Jesus.

Whence, then, did our author get all these assertions as to what Israel thought and how their ideas were evolved? Is there some other history of the chosen race extant, a history of such unimpeachable accuracy that he feels himself authorized entirely to rewrite their story? If there were, it would be honest of him to denounce our Bible as a fraud, and to say "We Christians despise our Bible": it would not be honest for him to attempt to twist the words of the poor old discredited Bible to mean what they manifestly do not mean. There is, however, no such other history. Whence, then, come the ideas he foists upon the Bible? They represent the account of things now fashionable in speculative circles where evolution is still the rage. There is no other history. There is no proof. Our author just moves with the times and advocates the latest craze in evolutionary philosophy. He tells us he loves the Bible, but he loves his philosophic notions more, and in their favour he "handles the word of God deceitfully," and thus "corrupts the word of God" (2 Cor. 4. 2; 2. 17).

To him, of course, it is not the Word of God. He speaks of it, did you notice, as "writing" which "the world has produced."

He is pleased, however, quite to approve of "Jesus." Here are his words:—

"The summit of all this progress is reached when we come to the person and teaching of Jesus. It is to that that all the earlier parts lead up. In Jesus we have the perfect revelation at last. He is all the best we ever dreamed that God might be. He is the final and complete picture of what God is. His teaching is the final word about the will of God for man. He satisfies perfectly man's craving for knowledge about God. And, therefore, the book that tells us about
Him must necessarily be mankind’s most sacred possession.”

Quite a number of these statements are true, and yet the whole passage exemplifies how truth may be used to decorate falsehood. The main idea is that “Jesus” is the summit of human progress. The race had been striving upwards, and its dreams of goodness were consequently in advance of anything yet attained, when, lo! as the fruit of this evolution there appeared “Jesus” and fulfilled our dreams—“He is all the best we ever dreamed that God might be.” Now for our question—Is this a FACT?

Not if the Gospels be true. Their history shows us that instead of the Lord Jesus Christ appearing as the summit of human progress, fulfilling human dreams of goodness, in which case He would have been rapturously acclaimed by all the leaders of this evolutionary progress, if not by the common people, He came fulfilling Isaiah’s word, “when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him,” and He was rejected.

Has our author access to some other “Life of Jesus” more authentic than the Gospels that he thus dares to rewrite the story? He has not. There is no other authentic history. He either is unable to read the sober objective facts of the Gospels without importing into them a strain of romance from his own subjective consciousness, or he so completely disbelieves their veracity that he feels quite at liberty thus fundamentally to alter the story. His “Jesus” is largely a figment of his imagination, and we compliment him upon the degree of intellectual honesty displayed in the fact that not once in the pamphlet does he speak of Him as his LORD.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect and final revelation of God, because He is God. He is not the fairest and most perfect expression of the genius of Adam’s race, but the last Adam, the Lord from heaven, the Head of a new race (see 1 Cor. 15. 45-49).

This quotation from the Epistles will not count for much with our author of course. In his paper he proceeds to explain to us that the Old Testament, though hardly needed by us, has at least some value, as an interesting story of the preparation for Christ. So, too, the Epistles “are of value because they fill out our knowledge of Christ;” but he does not regard them as authoritative. St. Paul, for instance, “has written the greatest things that ever were written about the Christian religion,” yet “he writes theology sometimes,” “he expresses opinions now and then.” “His is not the last word about Christian morality.” If that be so, we clearly need not pay much attention to what he says. We may accept what we like and discard what we like, and this is what our author does.

The Apostle John declares otherwise. Speaking of the false spirits in the world—the spirit of antichrist—he says, “We [the inspired apostles] are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (I John 4. 6). The spirit of truth hears, and bows to the apostolic word. The spirit of error does not. Which spirit pervades the pamphlet we have before us? The issue is pretty plain. Our author considers the apostolic epistles quite open to question in many parts; the verses quoted from John’s writing would, of course, be to him just John’s opinions; he would regard John as “writing theology,” and so we need not follow him. On the other hand, judged by that sentence of the Word of God through John, our author is deluded by the spirit of error.”

Now what is the upshot of this way of regarding the Bible? A closing quotation shall tell us:—

“From all this it must be plain that the Bible which Christians love so much, and which proves so invaluable for life, is not the whole Bible. It is the greatest
thoughts of the Bible which feed our souls and refresh our spirits.

"Possibly the amount of Scripture which is thus living, and which actually operates in the lives of some Christians, might turn out to be little more than a tenth of the whole. But it remains true that in and through this book simple people find God, and learn year after year more of God.

"Probably every reader makes his own Bible. The parts that do not grip him he passes by. Certain books become so thumbed and worn that they can hardly be read. Others remain clean and white year after year."

A few more lines follow, containing a pleasing sentiment or two about the Bible, and the pamphlet thus closes as it opened, bestowing its blessing upon the venerable Book!

But we are left, if the pamphlet be true, with about one-tenth of the Bible's contents of any real use, and which can be said to be living. The remaining nine-tenths is dead. Nor are we given any assurance as to which tenth is the living part. We are just left at liberty to make our own Bible. So "we Christians" who "love our Bibles" are left each loving a different "Bible"—each loving what is in part totally condemned by the majority of other "Christians." We are thus presented with the melancholy spectacle of "Christians" every one of whom on a majority vote of other Christians would be condemned as foolishly credulous. This being so, who would not be an out-an-out infidel?

We do not know whether the author includes Luke 24. in his "Bible." He professes admiration for the "Jesus" of the Gospels; though why he should it is hard to tell, since we owe the very Gospels to the apostles or men under apostolic influence, and if such are not to be relied upon in their epistles, why trust them as to "Jesus" in the Gospels? Have we left anything reliable at all as to Him?

It may be, however, that he does include Luke 24. in his "Bible" which is one-tenth of our Bible. If so, we hope he may some day read that chapter, and note what our Lord Jesus said when He was raised from the dead:—

"O fools, and slow of heart to believe ALL the prophets have spoken."

"Beginning at Moses and ALL the prophets He expounded unto them in ALL the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

"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."

The issue between this Lord Jesus and the writer of the deceitful pamphlet is complete. He tells us, speaking of Paul, that "where he does not simply interpret Jesus we feel that we need not follow him. We follow Jesus." The case supposed never arose with Paul's writings, for he always did "follow Jesus." It arises, however, in most glaring fashion with the writer of this pamphlet. We thank him for his kind assurance that we need not follow him. We certainly will not; and neither, we trust, will anybody else, and least of all any reader of Scripture Truth.

Had the pamphlet been openly and honestly infidel we should hardly have noticed it in these pages. Its danger lies not in its negations but in its smooth professions of admiration. The "Jesus" of the author's imagination is eulogized in order the better to deny to the Bible its true character as A REVELATION FROM GOD. Did not the kiss of Judas prove of old a more effective weapon than the swords and staves of the multitude?

We welcome the opportunity, at the start of another year, to make once more manifest our glad and humble acceptance of the whole Bible as the inspired word of God.
THE HOUSE OF GOD.

God has a house upon this earth, where He puts His people into relation one with the other, so that He may dwell among them. We get a typical illustration of this in the tabernacle in the wilderness. The priest in his sanctuary service, the Levite in his levitical service, and "the common people" as they pitched their tents in order around the tabernacle, all regulated their conduct in relation to what was then the house of God upon the earth.

So it is to-day. The fact that God sets His people in relation one to another in order to dwell among them gives privileges and imposes responsibilities upon each one of us.

THE NURSERY FOR THE BABE IN CHRIST.

What a mercy and privilege it is for the newly converted soul to find himself in the house of God, sheltered and cared for. The Thessalonian converts were but babes in Christ. Paul wrote to them: "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (1 Thess. 2.7). And Peter says, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2.2).

It has been stated that we have no right to care specially for the young Christian, that we should care for all alike. But did not the Lord say to Peter, "Feed My lambs"? And did not Paul recognize the state of the Corinthian assembly and say to them, "I have fed you with milk and not with meat" (1 Cor. 3.2)?—that is to say, he ministered to them "the first principles of the oracles of God" (Heb. v. 12). The babes of the Corinthian epistle were still babes because they were carnal; the babes of the Hebrew epistle were still babes, they were of stunted growth; the babes of Peter's epistle were normal, healthy babes, ready to take the milk of the word.

But whether the young Christian is normal and healthy, or the older Christian is of stunted growth and has not grown for lack of earnestness and devotedness, or perhaps because of carnality, that is, living for self and the world in some shape or other, there is great need for the babe in Christ to be patiently cared for, fed and nurtured in the things of the Lord.

Often in the nursery an older child will assume an almost parental care of a younger child. So in the things of the Lord it is happy when a Christian sets out to care for one a little younger in grace and advancement than himself, and when the whole atmosphere of the assembly is one of kindly care for the young. Oh! that we had the spirit of Paul, who acted as a nursing father in his day. May this appeal stimulate saints of God to this godly care. The young need encouragement and help as never before.

THE SCHOOLROOM FOR GOD’S PEOPLE.

It is in God's house that the Christian learns his lessons. In the very lowest class, as it were, at the very beginning of our school-days we learn that grace does not mean licence or carelessness. On the contrary, grace has most positive teaching. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Titus 2.11-13).

But the teaching does not stop there.
Not only was Peter exhorted by the Lord to "feed My lambs," but also "feed my sheep." There are upper classes—there are sheep as well as lambs; there are those who can assimilate "meat" as well as those who can only digest "milk." Food comes by teaching, and true teaching is spiritual food.

The Holy Ghost is the Teacher in the school, but the ascended Lord has given "teachers," who, with the other gifts, are for "the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4. 12).

The Old Testament speaks about "a teaching priest" (2 Chron. 15. 3) and of "the Levites that taught" (2 Chron. 30. 22), whilst the New Testament speaks of "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2. 2), and again one of the marks of a good bishop is that he should be "apt to teach." The teaching takes in the whole revelation of God and puts the soul into the full light and blessing of Christianity.

Then there is discipline in connection with the schoolroom. If we fail to learn our lessons it may be that we shall need to come under discipline in order that we may learn them; or it may be that we are learning well but the Lord wants us to learn better, as is plainly stated when the Lord said, "Every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit" (John 15. 2).

There is one searching and unfailing test as to our knowledge. It is truly said that we only know what we practise. Under this test we may well hang our heads. Do we talk about love and not show it? Do we talk about long-suffering and refuse to suffer long? Then our talk is not true knowledge. Our talk in that case would be that of the parrot, imitative, and not real knowledge.

THE BARRACKS FOR THE CHRISTIAN WARRIOR.

Paul could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4. 7), and we find him exhorting Timothy, "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6. 12), and again bidding him to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2. 3). It is in the house of God we get the training for all this. Would that our Christianity was of this virile stamp. Surely if Jude in his day had to exhort his fellow-believers to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (verse 3), it behoves the Lord's people to do it now, when the apostasy is at our very gates. May we be used to the help and protection and deliverance of God's beloved people.

THE SANCTUARY FOR THE SAINTS OF GOD.

This leads us to the highest aspect of the house of God. It was a great privilege to be "a common person"—common is an expression in contrast to the Levites and priests, who had sacred offices—a greater privilege to be a Levite, but greatest of all to be a priest, for a priest had the privilege of entering the sanctuary and performing offices typical of worship.

Christians sustain all three characters. They are "common people" in regard to their ordinary life; but of old the common people had to regulate all their behaviour in regard to the great fact that God was dwelling in their midst, which imposed holiness upon their manner of life. They answer to Levites when they perform the Lord's service in ministry to men, but above all they answer to priests, when they minister to God.

All God's people are priests. The Apostle John's ascription of praise and worship runs thus, "To Him who loves us, and has washed us from our sins in His blood, and made us a king-
dom, priests to His God and Father: to Him [be] the glory and the might to the ages of ages. Amen' (Rev. 1. 5, 6, N. Tr.). Peter, too, speaks of the saints being an "holy priesthood" (1 Pet. 2. 5), also as "a royal priesthood" (verse 9). Would that we esteemed and carried out our privilege more.

To minister to God, what can be higher? The occupation of heaven itself will yield nothing higher, and it is heaven below to taste its sweetness now.

"PRAISING AND BLESSING GOD."

( H. J. VINE.)

WITH the above words the inspired gospel of the perfect Man ends (Luke 24. 53), and we may well ask, what caused the disciples' hearts to rise up thus and with such great joy to praise and bless God? They had just seen that perfect Man ascend from earth to heaven, and as our faith lays hold of the stupendous victory involved, for the believer's blessing and for God's glory, we, too, with deepening joy shall continue to sing—

"Rise our hearts and bless the Father,

Ceaseless song e'en here begun;

Endless praise and adoration

To the Father and the Son."

Yes, there is a Man in heaven,—"The Man Christ Jesus!" There is a Man sitting "on the right hand of the throne of the greatness in the heavens,"—the Son of God. The Spirit of God has come from thence to glorify Him, as He said, "He shall glorify Me, for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Moreover the coming of the Spirit baptized all who believed on Him into one body, and the Man at God's right hand is the Head of that body; but those who believe are also built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit, who has come from the Son of God on high. The marvellous fact, having such universal import, is,—A Man sits exalted in heaven and God has a habitation on earth! All this was involved in the ascension of Christ which the disciples saw, but the truth was not unfolded until the Spirit came to indwell us.

"'Tis thence now Christ is gone on high,

Redemption's work complete,

The Spirit brings His glory nigh

To those who for Him wait."

As our hearts are thus filled by what the Spirit of God delights to bring before us, praise will ascend as a sweet-smelling savour to God. Israel of old brought up their burnt offerings to the house of God, and by the priest they were caused to ascend from the altar as fragrant sacrifices to God, for they pointed on to the one perfect offering of Christ; but now, by Christ the risen One, we offer the sacrifice of praise "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

THE ASCENDED MAN.

Just before our risen Lord ascended, He said to His own, "Behold My hands and My feet that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as ye see Me having." Yes, there standing in their midst was the risen Man, who by His sufferings and death had secured eternal redemption for them,—He was indeed a real Man!

It is this truth, coupled with the fact that He has ascended as a Man with "flesh and bones" to God's right hand, that has turned what looked like the defeat of God's purpose for man into a most glorious and everlasting victory. Man fell in Adam: man is exalted in Christ.
Long ago the question was raised, "What is man?" The answer is now given,—"We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." What triumph! and those who are His are "more than conquerors" through Him that loves them. Moreover God Himself has secured in that exalted Man the effectuation of all His counsels of love and glory.

As the Son of Man our glorified Saviour is yet to take up the kingdom and dominion over this earth, and as Son of David all the rights and titles of His father's throne belong to Him, and He now waits in patience till the appointed hour when He shall "sit upon the throne of His father David." Why, then, did He not honour "the city of the great King," Jerusalem, as the place of His ascension to the right hand of God? How could He? The responsible leaders had rejected Him! The Man who is honoured in heaven is the rejected of earth! That makes the present position a very serious one in a certain sense for those who are loyal to this rejected One, although the fact of His exaltation on high may well fill our hearts with great joy on the other hand as it did the disciples' hearts at the beginning, for He sits in triumph, waiting at the right hand of the throne in heaven until the time which now draws nigh.

No, He did not ascend from the official centre, the city which shall yet—when repentant, cleansed and sanctified—yield to Him with reverence and rejoicing the royal honours which are rightly His. He ascended from another spot. He did not link the earthly city in her then unfaithful state with heaven. He chose another place—a place little thought of by the religionists of Jerusalem, whether ritualistic or rationalistic—Pharisees or Sadducees—Jesus led His disciples "out as far as to Bethany." From that part of the Mount of Olives He ascended.

But why Bethany? Did He not always find solace there when refused elsewhere? Did He not receive kingly honour there when scorned elsewhere? Did He not feast in the house of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus when despised by others? Was not that house in Bethany filled with the sweet odour of the royal anointing which He there received when others plotted His death? Was not that house (where the three inmates knew His resurrection power and His love) the place in Bethany where responsive service and love were His portion? He led His own out as far as to Bethany. There He Himself and His love were prized; at Jerusalem they esteemed Him not.

"Two or three" gathered to His Name may answer to the Bethany abode to-day. There the ascended Lord, the victorious Son of God, is known, and His power and love are cherished; but the disciples were "led out" to reach that favoured, yet little-thought-of spot. Yes, led out from the proud, unfaithful centre, "as far as" to Bethany. There the house of welcome was hidden away by the slopes of Olivet from the city which despised Jesus, from the place where His Name was dishonoured. We are told, "He calleth His own sheep by name and leadeth them out." A great gap lay between official religion and vital reality then, and it is so now. Indeed, the gap is widening daily as responsible professors are being carried away by modernist doctrines which are dishonouring to the Son of God. We may not, however, dwell on this, but rather encourage those who glory in Christ Jesus and worship God by the Spirit to continue in power and the love of their ascended Head, Saviour, and Lord. He says, "Abide in Me."

After Jesus had led His disciples "out as far as to Bethany, He lifted up His hands and blessed them." That must have moved their souls very deeply. He had just previously showed them those same hands to convince them that He was still a real Man risen from among the dead, and they were filled with wonder and joy;
but now those hands were lifted up for those who knew Him as the risen Man, the Victor over death and the grave, and He blessed them. In that outside spot with Himself, they know the lifting up of the hands, that had finished the work of salvation upon the cross—the lifting up of the hands that had laid the foundation of Calvary for the superstructure of eternal glory, and they know also the personal blessing and presence of the Son of God. All this results in filling their souls with great joy, and in making them overflow in praising and blessing God. We first receive and then respond.

"HE BLESSED THEM."

When the Apostle Paul allowed his pen to express the responsive blessing Godward which awakened in his heart, he wrote, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"; and then immediately added that which showed it was responsive—for God’s blessing had preceded it—" Who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavens in Christ." The receiving goes before the responding, and the receiving is to continue even as the responding is also to continue in the grace and power of the Holy Spirit. We receive by the Spirit and we worship by the Spirit. The Lord blessed the disciples, but further it is said, "While He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." From thence, as we have seen, He sent down the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus was blessing them as He ascended, and that attitude of blessing His own is still unchanged. The declensions and revivals of the centuries that have intervened since then have not altered Him. Jesus Christ is the Same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever. He gave Himself for our blessing, He lives for our blessing, and He will rejoice in our blessing for ever.

It is not surprising to read that the disciples worshipped Him. Now and again we find them rendering homage to the Son of God as the truth of who

He was came home to them. In the ninth chapter of John, too, we read of the man whose eyes Jesus had opened worshipping Him as the Son of God after He had been "cast out" by the religious officials of that time. It is a great privilege to know the Son of God and to be with those who worship Him. He does not refuse their worship, for though a real Man, He is more, He is God as well as Man.

The spiritual house which is built up in relation to Him as the Rejected of men and the Accepted of God holds fast to Himself, even as we read, "Whose house are we if we hold fast," and our Lord Jesus Christ is the glorious Overseer of the house as Son. Therefore we may be sure of this, if He blessed His own as He ascended, He still continues to bless them.

"'Tis His great delight to bless us,—Oh, how He loves."

The effect upon the disciples at the beginning was, as we have seen—great joy filled their hearts, and they praised and blessed God; and as we behold by faith the risen, victorious Man, ascended into heaven, and receive the benefit and blessing which flows to us as a consequence, great joy will also be our portion at the end of the assembly’s history on earth, and we, too, shall be found together “praising and blessing God.”

Someone may say, “I can understand God blessing us, for it is written in Hebrews 7. 7, ‘The less is blessed of the better.’ It is difficult, however, to see how we can bless God.” The Spirit of God Himself has approvingly recorded the fact in the Word, but He shows that it is a responsive thing with us, as we have pointed out. The case given in Heb. 7. is to prove the superiority of the Melchisedec order of priesthood to that of Aaron. It is always true that blessing originates with the superior. It is just so in the case of those who belong to God’s “spiritual house” to-day, all their blessing came from God. The response
given is of such a character that it is acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ in the Spirit's grace and power. Blessing God in that sense may reverently be spoken of as ministering to His happiness! What an honour bestowed upon the redeemed to-day! Wonderful, indeed is this truth—we can bless God!

Shall we not seek that He may receive more from our rejoicing hearts? If Paul and Silas in the prison could sing His praises at midnight, when their feet were fast in the stocks, and their backs were sore,—if they in such circumstances were so filled with the blessing of the Lord which maketh rich that they "sang praises unto God,"—what a volume of praise and blessing He ought to receive from those who dwell in His house to-day.

"What love to Thee we owe, Our God, for all Thy grace, Our hearts may well o'erflow In everlasting praise!"

"CONTINUALLY IN THE TEMPLE.

Quite naturally the disciples returned together to the place of Jehovah's Name. It was from thence that offerings were to ascend to Him as a sweet incense. Filled with the blessing of the ascended Man, and filled with great joy, together they were found "continually in the temple" giving to God spiritual sacrifices, giving glory to His holy Name, as He had said,—He that offereth praise glorifieth Me.

The temple built by man still stood at Jerusalem, and though it was rejected by God as a den of thieves, it had not yet been actually destroyed by Titus, as was foretold; since then, however, those who have redemption in Christ through His blood, are growing to a holy temple in the Lord. The rejected One, Jesus Christ Himself, is the Corner-Stone, in whom all the building is fitted together. When that temple is complete it will be filled with the presence and the glory of God, and it will shine forth in divine splendour for the praise of God's glory. Meanwhile, however, the saints of God are builded together in the Lord for a habitation of God in the Spirit now, and He delights to dwell where their praises ascend. Even of old, He was addressed as "Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel" (Ps. 22. 3). How sweet it must have been to Him to receive at the closing days of that rejected house at Jerusalem, praise and blessing in spite of the unfaithfulness surrounding the disciples—praise, sweeter than had been heard there before! How much richer should the offerings be now that the house is built up in the Lord,—in Him who ever abides,—in Him who remains faithful for ever!

We need to remember that the house to-day is designated "a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2. 5), and that the praises which are there yielded to God are called "spiritual sacrifices," also that they are acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ. All is of a spiritual character, and worship to God to-day must be in spirit and in truth. This sets aside completely the religious buildings, organizations and entertainments with which Christendom abounds, and gives holy freedom to those who are gathered to the Lord to offer to God that which is pleasing to Him "by Jesus Christ," even though they be but "two or three." They offer "by Him," for He is over the house. No pope, priest or president is needed. Indeed, such only displace Christ, and put the worshippers at a distance from God, whereas in Christ they are made nigh through His blood, and the verse we have already mentioned shows that they are all priests,—"a holy priesthood," and in liberty and nearness they can offer to God.

This is important to-day when what is vital is being crushed by what is official; but we should always see to it that our hymns and songs of praise are Godward. The heart is turned directly to Him in faith and in the
energy of the Spirit. Probably most of religious singing to-day is manward; the house of God exists for His praise. In Ephesians 5:19 we are exhorted to make melody in our hearts to the Lord, and in Colossians 3:16, to sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. The praise should surely be none the less hearty, but increasingly so as God Himself is before us, knowing, too, that He finds pleasure in the offerings which we bring to Him by His beloved Son. As we reach the close of this wonderful day of grace—as we draw near to the moment of the Lord’s coming for the assembly—as the darkness deepens in official christendom—may we allow the blessing of the ascended, victorious Man, the Son of God, to fill our hearts with great joy, so that we may be found responding like the disciples at the close of the past day—“praising and blessing God.”

There was continuity also! Mark that word “continually”! We do not seek just a burst of praise and then a fall to the murmuring which is so prevalent on all hands! The declension need not hinder us; all that was foreseen of God, and still He exhorts us to offer “the sacrifice of praise continually” by our Lord Jesus Christ. There is no declension or failure with Him, and as He fills our gaze we shall even yet give to God the praise which is His rightful portion. Our Lord Jesus Christ is enough for us. “In Him” we are blessed,—“blessed with every spiritual blessing.” “By Him” we offer “the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips!” —“With Him” is our eternal portion,—as He said, “I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also”; and then nothing shall ever intrude to hinder praise and worship from flowing to God. Meanwhile, may we have grace at the end to be more like those at the beginning who were “continually in the temple praising and blessing God,” having seen the Man Christ Jesus ascend to heaven while He was blessing them.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON.

How wonderful the thought is, that it is in the revelation of Divine Persons and the circle of relationship and intimacy into which we are brought with them, that our portion is for ever—a portion that we are brought into already. It may occupy us a little from the Gospel of John to which we must turn for all this richest character of blessing.

Chapters 1–3 lay the basis, as all the varied glories of the Person of the Lord Jesus—all at least that belong to His manifestation here—come before us (chapters 1 and 2) and the essential work of God in the soul (chapter 3) by which alone our hearts opened to receive Him, whether on the side of earthly things, the new birth meeting the necessity of man's condition, or that of heavenly things into which the cross introduces. Then after this wonderful introduction, we have all the great elements of the Christian position brought out in the Lord’s ministry from chapters 4 to 7. The Spirit given from Christ as the power of life within, springing up into that heavenly relationship with the Father in which eternal life consists (chapter 4)—the Son quickening in a power of life that extends to the resurrection of the body (chapter 5)—the Son of Man in death
as the food and sustenance of the life (chapter 6)—and the Holy Ghost given from the glory of Christ to put more than all the joy of the feast of tabernacles into our hearts as a present thing (chapter 7), that out of the joy there might flow in testimony rivers of living water to the poor thirsty scene around us. Chapters 8 to 10 are supplementary, developing chapter 1. 1-4, the Divine Word that convicts in chapter 8 applied in power in grace (chapter 9) to open the eyes of one naturally blind, to the Person of the Lord Jesus in whom is life—the Word, Light and Life—and who on confessing Him, according to the light, is cast out of the synagogue, and into the company of the Son of God (who here only in the Gospels reveals Himself personally in this the full glory of His Person to anyone).

And now it is at this point—chapter 9 being used to illustrate the teaching of the Lord that comes out in chapter 10—the Lord having come into the Jewish fold to attract hearts to Himself out of Judaism, a clean break made with man and man's world, and all that was once recognized of God in it as a religion for man—"the camp" out of which Jesus and those who would confess Him are cast—it is at this point that we begin to find the circle of divine relationship and intimacy opening out to us. See chapter 10. 14, 15, reading the two verses connectedly thus, "I know My sheep and am known of Mine, even as the Father knoweth Me and I know the Father"; it is the wonderful character (I say not measure) of intimacy into which the Lord introduces us with Himself, i.e., such as He was in with the Father. In chapter 12. 24 He must die, to end all that was of the first man in death, to be able to associate us with Himself for this intimacy in the new place He takes as Man in resurrection.

In chapter 13. 1-8 He provides by His service for us, for our enjoyment of it now that He has departed out of the world to the Father; for when we might have thought that when He was gone it was all over, really it was only then begun in the full character of it; which is, I believe, the force of the Lord's words, "Touch Me not" in chapter 20. Mary thought she had Him back on the old ground, but the Lord was going to introduce her into an association and nearness and intimacy with Himself, impossible till He was risen and ascended, such as had never been known upon earth, and in which chapter 10. 14, 15 would be found fully realized.

In chapter 14, all from verse 16 being the effect of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, He comes to and He manifests Himself to one living of His life, and in whom that life is displayed in the love and obedience that constituted the life in the blessed Lord; and the Father and the Son make their mansions with such, before we go to have our place in their mansions (the word of verse 23 and verse 2 being the same). What provisions for hearts that miss Him in His absence from this world—the two things that constitute heaven's joy, Christ's presence (compare verse 3 with 18 and 21) and the mansions above brought down to our hearts in the path of the life we have in Him down here! In chapter 15 we have further the character of the Lord's love to us; it is that of the Father to Him, and to be enjoyed by us as the Father's was by Him, i.e., in the path of obedience. He gives us His own path, and the joy He had in the Father's love, now to be in us, and be full, as walking in that path we enjoy our place in Christ's love.

In chapter 16 He leads us higher still, verses 26-28 putting us directly before the Father, as the objects of the Father's love, in having a common object of love with the Father, in the blessed Lord Himself ("because ye have loved Me"). But the climax is not reached till chapter 17, where on the ground of verses 1-5 (the work and
its results for Him), He now claims to put us into all His own place and relationship with the Father (verses 6–13), providing, by passing on the words that belonged to Him in it (verse 3), for our full enjoyment of it (verse 13), and carrying us on to the given glory (verses 22, 23) in which He will display us to the world, and it will know that we have had the very same place in the Father's love that He had when He was here—and we are allowed to hear Him say it, while before that day verse 26 tells of how He lives to make known to us the Father's name, so as to bring more and more all the sweetness and power and joy of the love of which He was the object into our hearts, as the objects consciously of the same love, and He in us to be our strength to enjoy it.

With such a provision for divine intimacies and fellowship, shall our hearts be satisfied with anything short of an increasing realization of them? The position of the Christian, so infinitely beyond anything known upon earth before, is one thing, but how great the loss if we were to miss here the enjoyment of what it leads us into in such communion of divine joy.

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.
The Captives in Babylon. Chapter I.

WITH what sorrow of heart for the degraded condition of the people of God, and with what holy and wholesome fear, we contemplate the judgments of the almighty Lawgiver, in reading the opening verses of this prophecy of Daniel! At the same time we cannot but with worshipful hearts pay tribute to the patience and righteousness of the God of Israel: patience in His bearing for so many centuries with a people that, in spite of all the mercy and grace exhibited on their behalf, only knew how to be obstinate, thankless, contentious, and rebellious, from the hour in which He took them up when they were slaves in Egypt, until the day in which His sanctuary became defiled by the enemy, who poured through the gates of Jerusalem his victorious armies: righteousness that could not go indefinitely with a people that joined hand in hand with the nations that were the original inhabitants of the promised land, and whom they were to dispossess, on account of the abominations that they had practised. The patience of God may for a little while hold back the righteous judgments demanded by the wickedness of the creature, for though judgment is His strange work, a work in which He has no pleasure, still it is His work and when the time arrives in which, were there any longer delay, an impression might be given to His intelligent creatures that rebellion against His authority was neither offensive to Him, nor ruinous to the rebel, He is certain to show His wrath, for a false impression to His universe He can never give. He can no more act a lie than He can speak a lie. The lesson we have to learn is the truth, and no other lesson is set before us. The order of creation may appear to us in a way that is not really what it is, but this forms no part of the lesson that God is teaching us, and our ignorance of such things is no loss to us, neither is our knowledge of them the slightest gain.

The natural impression we have from the order of creation is, that the earth is a flat plain, and in the heavens above our heads are stored the light, the warmth, and the refreshment, that make life possible upon earth. And when we come to the Scriptures we
find no absolute contradiction of this. We are left, as far as these things are concerned, in our native ignorance. By the way in which He has placed us with respect to these things we are taught moral lessons, which are of more importance to us than astronomy, however interesting a subject it be. By the way in which the universe presents itself to our gaze we learn that every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1. 17). The lights in the heavens give us, as I have said, light and warmth; and they are for signs, seasons, days, and years; and the clouds drop down the rain, and water the earth, and therefore there is seed for the sower, and bread for the eater, and men’s hearts are filled with food and gladness.

When man learns the great truth as to the universe he is not morally bettered. The study of astronomy has made infidels, never believers; and there is nothing to hinder the greatest astronomer upon earth being the most immoral. The Scriptures are well piloted through numberless questions that are of no value to the soul of man. It is by the Lamb without blemish and without spot, who shed His blood for our redemption, that we believe in God, not through the knowledge of the starry vault. Astronomers have been infidels, and astronomers have been believers in Jesus; but it was not astronomy that made those infidels, but rather the conceit with which his little discoveries filled his foolish heart; neither was it astronomy that made these believers. It was pride of heart that made the infidel, and it was the grace of God that made the believer. The eternal power and divinity of God are witnessed in creation, but His heart of love is declared in redemption; and we love Him, not because He made the worlds, but because He first loved us (1 John 4. 19). And, indeed, the better we know the work of His love, the more we shall appreciate the work of His hands, and it is the knowledge of the work of His love that calls forth the worship of our hearts.

The longsuffering of the Lord with that guilty nation had come to an end. They had failed Him completely. In His purpose, with respect to His government of the earth, He had marked out a position of distinction and great honour for them, but they had proved themselves to be a foolish people, a nation void of understanding, and utterly unworthy of the trust He had purposed to commit to them, and which He had made known to them by His servant Moses. Their spot was not the spot of His children. They rather bore the marks and characteristics of the ancient and primal rebel. They were a perverse and crooked generation, children in whom there was no faithfulness. They had proved themselves to be all this before they ever entered the promised land. Of them He says: “Their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah: their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter: their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps” (Deut. 32. 32, 33).

Yet had He marked out a great place for them, as I have said. He calls to them in the love that they had so wantonly despised, and He says: “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people [the Gentile nations] according to the number of the children of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance” (Deut. 32. 7–9). Israel was to be the centre of the nations, a kingdom of priests, God’s peculiar treasure, through whom the nations would get light and nourishment; with God in their midst they would bear rule over the whole earth.
But all this failed through their going after strange gods, and now in Daniel's day power was in the hands of the proud Gentile. The throne of government was now in Babylon, and not in Jerusalem, and the people that should have borne rule over the whole earth were slaves by the streams of that idolatrous land. They might hang their harps on the willows and shed bitter tears as they thought of Zion, but they were back once more in the house of bondage, and under the iron rule of the heartless oppressor, and tears availed them nothing. The time to weep is when the evil presents itself to us, and when we feel within us the tendency to gratify our carnal desires, for then we may expect the intervention of God in our deliverance, that our feet may be kept in the pathway of His will. It is late, though not surely too late, to weep before the Lord when we have fallen under the power of the evil, and the hand of God is upon us in the way of chastisement. I say it is not too late even then to mourn before the Lord, but it would have been better and happier had we mourned before Him, when we felt the tendency to give the flesh a little gratification. If we weep and chasten our own souls we are not likely to require to come under the chastening of the Lord. At the same time, the circumstances into which our waywardness has brought us we cannot always expect to be altered, but if our souls are truly restored to Him we can count on His presence with us in the circumstances.

It was true for the captives brought to Babylon from the hills and valleys of Judea, the penitent and the faithful amongst them enjoyed no less the favour of God in captivity than they did in their own beloved land, for the compassions of God are above and beyond the best thought of even the human heart renewed by grace. Was it nothing to Him to behold the walls of Jerusalem broken down by the proud idolater, the holy vessels of the Sanctuary in the house of the idols, as trophies of their victories, and the people of His choice either slaughtered unmercifully or in the chains of slavery? From what spring did the lamentations of Jeremiah the prophet flow but from that of divine affection produced by the Holy Spirit of the living God? And what were such lamentations compared with the tears of the rejected Messiah, and the cry that came from His lips as He contemplated the sorrows that were yet to fall upon the beloved city? "How often," He says, "would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not." The woes that fell upon Israel were from a human standpoint heartbreaking, but from a divine standpoint infinitely more so.

God had brought the people out of the land of Egypt, and from the house of bondage, where they were compelled to make bricks, and find the straw for that work wherever they could. For the moment they were glad to escape the drudgery and cruelty to which they had been so long subjected, but before they had crossed the Red Sea their thankless and faithless hearts were crying out bitterly against the God of their salvation. He divided the sea before them, so that they crossed into the desert on dry land, and He overthrew the host of Pharaoh in the waters that had been their salvation. He bore with their rebellious ways in the wilderness for a period of forty years, and eventually brought them into the land, driving out the nations from before their faces, and that by signs and wonders innumerable. But what their fathers had been in the wilderness the sons manifested themselves to be in the land—a generation of rebels.

But for centuries in the land He bore with their lawless behaviour. He pleaded with them by the love He had manifested to them from the beginning of His intervention on their behalf. He hewed them by His prophets, He slew
them by the words of His mouth, He chastised them with the rod of the original inhabitants of the land, who were pricks in their eyes and thorns in their sides, He scourged them by means of the attacks of the nations, until from the head to the feet they were wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, which had not been bound up, neither mollified with ointment, and all to no purpose. He has to say to them: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will only revolt more and more" (isa. 1. 5).

And now they were captives in a strange land, outwardly disowned by the God of their fathers, to be dealt with according to the caprice of an autocratic and idolatrous monarch, and to shed fruitless tears at every remembrance of Zion. Surely the way of transgressors is hard. Yet is the Lord righteous, for their rebellion against His commandment had been great. The king and the seed-royal in the hand and under the power of the Gentile monarch, and the holy vessels in the idol's temple, bear witness to the righteousness of the God of Israel.

But the God-fearing remnant, while they have to suffer along with the rebellious on account of the sin of the nation, and indeed much more than the rebellious, for their faithfulness to Jehovah brings upon them additional suffering, are not left without the protecting hand of the God whom they serve; and in the case of Daniel and of his compatriots this fact is abundantly verified. They more than all others seem to have to suffer, but their sufferings only serve as an occasion for the manifestation of the power of God on their behalf. If the face of the Lord is against them that do evil, His eyes are over the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry (see 1 Pet. 3. 12). Whatever may be the external circumstances of the professed people of God, and however terribly His hand may seem to be against them, those that are faithful to His name and interests are ever the special objects of His protecting care and guardianship. Therefore we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Heb. 13. 6).

Neither Daniel nor his three friends will defile themselves with that meat that was furnished to them from the table of the king. The nation of Israel had been put under certain laws that regulated the food they were to eat, while the Gentiles ate whatever their souls lusted after. The Jewish food regulations had a typical bearing, and now that that order of things is over we are told by the Spirit in His Word 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" (1 Tim. 4. 4, 5). But this liberty was not accorded to the nation of Israel, who were still under the shadow of good things to come, while we have come to the substance.

Therefore these captives, at whatever cost to themselves, are determined to obey God rather than men. It might have endangered their heads thus to set the king at defiance; and this unquestionably would have been their fate, if it had come to the ears of the king that they had so done. Nothing but the direct intervention of God could have saved them. But their minds were made up, and they were thoroughly agreed that it was better to part with life than that they should trespass against the distinct commandment of the living God. This might have been viewed by those set over them by the king as stupid obstinacy at the very outset of their captivity, and by it they might have made enemies of those with whom they seem to have found favour. Besides all this, those who were responsible for their healthy appearance, when the day would come in which they would have to stand before the king, might have been condemned to death.

But it was no accident their being in
Babylon, and He who brought them there was watching over them, and had in His hand the hearts of those set over them, and their request for a time of trial with pulse and water for their nourishment was granted. And in the end, through the rich mercy of God, Melzar had no reason to regret the leniency he exercised on their behalf; they were fairer and fatter than all those who had eaten of the king's meat. They were in the hand of God, who took care of their bodies, for He had a purpose with regard to their presence in Babylon, and until that purpose was accomplished they were as safe from harm as are the elect angels in heaven. God filled the vision of their souls, and not Nebuchadnezzar. The king's wrath may be like the roaring of a lion, but when it is a question between him and the living God, the roar of the king is not heard in the soul of the faithful believer.

The witnesses for God in this world are never thrown upon their own natural resources. He maintains His own testimony by whomsoever He will, in His own method, and by His own power, for the natural resources of the creature are valueless in the struggle between light and darkness. We have only to do what we are told in His Word, and leave the consequences to Him. He is well able to take care of His own interests, and nothing that is left in His hands can go wrong. The difficulty is, that we get nervous about ourselves, and wonder what is going to happen to us; while if we only could leave ourselves and everything that concerns us to His care, and in obedience to His revealed will attend to His interests, how peaceful and happy we should be! A sparrow cannot fail to the ground without our Father; and we are of more value than many sparrows. If He is determined to have us here for Himself, an army of murderers could have no power against us; if it were His blessed will that we should seal the testimony committed to us with our blood, what does it matter? "Whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14, 8).

He had need of Daniel and his companions in Babylon, and whatever dangers might menace them as His witnesses, in Babylon they were to abide. And all the equipment that was necessary for the service with which they were to be entrusted came from Himself: "God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." By divine teaching these servants of the living God left far behind, in wisdom and understanding, all the magicians and astrologers that were in the whole realm of the king.

No man goes a warfare at his own charges. In the service of God we have not to make bricks without straw. A man may be very clever, but his natural cleverness would be very little service to him in conflict with the devil; in that conflict his cleverness goes for nothing Paul says: "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10, 4, 5). The carnal weapon was of no value in the work of the Lord, and therefore was it discarded by the Apostle. He had learned that all that is done for God in this world must be done in God's power, and therefore did he glory in infirmities, that the power of Christ might rest upon him. The disciples, though they got their commission clearly from the Lord before His ascension, were told to tarry at Jerusalem until they would be endowed with power from on high (Luke 24); and Peter speaks of those who had preached the Gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Pet. 1, 12). God's testimony is maintained by God's power.

It might have been thought that the
subjection of the earthly people of God to Gentile domination was as truly a loss to Jehovah as to the people, for the destruction of their city, and all else that happened to them, gave a kind of warrant for the notion that the gods of Babylon had triumphed, and that the God of Israel had suffered a humiliating defeat. When He spoke of destroying the people in the desert for their refusing to go up into the promised land, Moses pleads against it on the ground of the disastrous effect such a thing would have upon His name among the nations of the earth, who would say that He had destroyed the nation because of His inability to bring them into the land (Num. 14.). Also in Deut. 32. 26, 27 we read: "I said I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men: were it not that I feared the wrath of the enemy, lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord hath not done all this." He will not act in a way that shall give a false impression to His creature, and thus increase the darkness in which that creature walks. To enable the soul to find its way to God there is enough light in the darkest corner of the earth. Where men are in darkness it is because they prefer the darkness to the light, and not because there is no light shining. God never leaves Himself without witness. Surely there are greater and lesser degrees of light, but the least light in which men may be found is sufficient to lead them to feel after Him, and if they do, they will find Him; for He is not far from every one of us (Acts 17. 27).

The people of Israel were God's witnesses in the midst of a world wholly given to idolatry (Isa. 43. 10), but because of their unfaithfulness they had been removed from the exalted position in which they had been set to shine for Himself. But He never was left without a small remnant that were true to His name and interests, and here in the capital of this benighted monarch four of these lights are found brightly gleaming. The light that was despised in Jerusalem is now radiant in Babylon. Not that it was more welcome here, but one cannot doubt that some of those poor Chaldeans were illuminated by it; indeed we may be confident that the king himself came under the power of that heavenly radiance. The refusal of one nation to have the light may create the opportunity for another nation to be tested by it. The descendants of those people who, on account of their rebellion against the authority of God, were made to suffer such terrible evil at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, are seven centuries afterwards told by the great Gentile Apostle, when they had violently opposed the Gospel: "Seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 17. 26).

God is in no way dependent upon the good-will of the creature for the effectuation of His own gracious purpose. He can use the failure of the creature, his rebellious behaviour also, as well as his faithfulness, for the carrying out of all that He has in view, for defeat He has never known, nor can know. John the Baptist says to the proud Pharisees: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt. 3. 9).

Daniel and his companions are outwardly in the darkness of idolatry, and in the hands of the Gentile autocrat; but inwardly they are in the light of heaven, and in the hands of the living God, His servants accomplishing His gracious will, and giving light that adown the centuries has illuminated the souls of the faithful until this present day, and that will continue to do so, until the Son of Man shall come in His glory. Chapters 2-6 bring to our notice the prominent place in which these four light-bearers were placed, and how brightly that light shone in the midst of the prevailing darkness.
CORRESPONDENCE.

"Born of Water."

DEAR Mr. Editor,—

There is still a good deal of uncertainty in the minds of many as to the significance of the "water" in this phrase, used by the Lord in His conversation with Nicodemus. There are, I believe, four different interpretations given to it by evangelical Christians.

1. That "water" means literal water, and that the Lord was referring to baptism. Those who maintain this view do not necessarily hold "baptismal regeneration." If they did, I should not class them among "evangelical Christians." They consider that "born of water" is one thing, "born of the Spirit" quite another.

One of the ablest advocates of this view is Canon W. Hay M. H. Aitken. He says:—

"Our Lord proceeds to show that the birth is two-fold,—of water, of the Spirit; as I understand His words, outward by baptism into an outward ecclesiastical community, inward by the imparting of the divine Spirit into new spiritual relationship with God. As the reference to baptism in this passage has been a good deal disputed, I may point out, in defence of the view which I hold to be the true one, that in this very chapter we have a reference to the performance of baptism by our Lord's disciples, and that on so large a scale as to excite the observation of the disciples of John and of the populace at large. Hence the subject of this birth by water (a phrase not unfamiliar to Jewish ears in connection with the baptism of proselytes) would be much before the minds of all at this time. So that there are strong historical grounds for believing that this ordinance would be specially in the mind of Christ while He spoke. Hence the subject of this birth by water (a phrase not unfamiliar to Jewish ears in connection with the baptism of proselytes) would be much before the minds of all at this time. So that there are strong historical grounds for believing that this ordinance would be specially in the mind of Christ while He spoke. Further, it seems reasonable to conclude that, as two elements in this birth are referred to here, the one apparently external and the other distinctly spiritual, the former should refer to that which is external, as the latter refers to that which is distinctively spiritual. It seems reasonable and consistent that by an outward ordinance I should be admitted into an outward ecclesiastical association; as by a spiritual fact I am raised to a new and spiritual condition. . . .

"Now the outward birth by water is a thing that can be witnessed by the senses. Hence there is no room for doubt or uncertainty here. What we have most to concern ourselves about, therefore, is, Have we, or have we not, experienced the inward change of a true spiritual regeneration?"

2. Another view is that "water" in John 3. 5 is a type of the Spirit. Those who interpret it thus point out that the connecting particle καί, translated and, may with equal correctness be rendered even. The passage would then read, "Except a man be born of water, even the Spirit."

In support of this view it is urged that water is used as a type of the Spirit in chapters 4. and 7. Why not, then, in chapter 3. also? Moreover, after the mention of the Spirit, in verse 5, the idea of water is dropped, and in verses 6 and 8 we have simply "born of the Spirit," and not "born of water and of the Spirit." The typical language is dropped when its meaning has been made clear.

3. A third view is that the water is typical of the death of Christ in that aspect in which it cleanses, morally, from sin. This same Gospel (chap. 19. 34) speaks of the water that came out from the Saviour's pierced side. John also in his first epistle (5. 6 and 8) makes mention of the water in its typical bearing. Those who advocate this view hold that new birth is brought to pass by the Spirit applying the death of Christ to the soul so that moral cleansing takes place, answering to the once-for-all washing of John 13. 10.

4. Yet another view is that by the water in John 3. 5 is meant the Word of God. It is remarked that elsewhere water is expressly used as a type of the Word (Ephes. 5. 26), and that the Word of God is that by which we are distinctly said to be born again (1 Pet. 2. 23; James 1. 18).

Here, then, we have four very diverse views, none of them inconsistent...
with the faith of the Gospel. May I ask if any of your readers can contribute to a definite solution of the problem as to which interpretation is the true one? I hope that any letter sent to you on this subject will not merely state why, in the writer’s judgment, the interpretation that he favours must be the right one, but also why the interpretations from which he dissents must be erroneous.

Yours faithfully,

H. P. Barker.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Identity of the Personal Antichrist.

There is some difference of view in regard to the two beasts of Revelation 13, and the identity of the antichrist. This leads me to ask the following questions: (1) Are we in error in thinking that the second beast of Rev. 13. is the antichrist? (2) Do 2 Thess. 2. and 1 John 2. leave room for the thought that the second beast is the antichrist, but that having abandoned the faith of his fathers (regard for the Jehovah of Israel), he thereupon devoted considerable effort to the denial of Divine Persons as worshipped by Christians? (3) Or does it mean that before his manifestation as the antichrist, although born a Jew, he professes Christianity, but eventually apostatizes both from it and all that his forefathers held?—Clifton, N. J.

There can be little doubt that the second beast of Rev. 13. is the personal antichrist; the symbols used indicate this distinctly. He is like a lamb; he exercises priestly function, causing worship to be given to the first beast who is crowned with the insignia of royalty; he is a great miracle worker: he claims the power to give life; and assumes Divine authority, by his name and mark. The first beast in the chapter clearly has the symbols of the revived Roman Empire, the second verse also connecting him with the beasts of Daniel 7. 3-6, for he has the characteristics of the lion, bear, and leopard. That is to say, he is part of the times of the Gentiles, the fourth beast of Dan. 7. 7, and his sphere is political rather than religious. The beast and the false prophet of Rev. 13., however, are so completely identified in object and aim, that they may be viewed as one, and are so in 2 Thess. 2. The ‘man of sin’ in that chapter whose coming is after the working of Satan, includes both, for in verse 4 it is the first beast that is worshipped, no doubt through his image that has been made by the second, and set in the temple; and in verses 9, 10 it is the second beast who works the signs and lying wonders. Then, finally, the ‘man of sin’ is destroyed by the brightness of the Lord’s coming, but Rev. 19. 20 tells us that there are two persons so judged. 1 John 2. 18, is a moral application, “Now are there many antichrists”; the marks may already be discerned by the children of God, which will be found in the political and religious heads of Rev. 13. The first beast is an apostate from Christianity (1 John 2. 22), which he seeks to destroy (Rev. 13. 5). The second beast will be an apostate Jew, and both together will seek to destroy those who are faithful to Jehovah, and will once more re-establish idolatry (verses 7, 14, 15). The king of Daniel 11. 36, 37, is the same as the second beast, he is specifically ‘the antichrist,’ and in verses 38, 39, his action is described in making an image to the first beast, whom he honours as the God of forces.

[Cat. Goven.]
CHRIST, THE ETERNAL SERVANT.


I INVITE you to a quiet meditation upon the Lord Jesus Christ in the greatness and devotion of His heart as the Eternal Servant. We know that the Old Testament Scriptures are full of types of Him. He Himself tells us that Moses spake of Him, and in this 21st chapter of Exodus we have Moses speaking most definitely of Him as the One whose love has made Him a Servant.

It is very interesting to see where this law in regard to the Hebrew servant comes in. It follows the 20th chapter, where we have the ten commandments given. It might be asked, "Of what use was it for God to give a law that men did not desire and that they could not keep?" Well, if God had not had the Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful Hebrew Servant in reserve, it would not have been of much use, for it could only have put Him in the place of a Judge; it would have brought into manifestation the justice of His throne, while His heart of love would never have been known.

Yet it was perfectly right and in keeping with the claims of His throne that His will should be made known. God had to tell men what His will for them was; they had turned their backs on Him and were doing their own will, and that was a challenge to God's majesty. The world belonged to God, "The earth is the Lord's," and men in it are His responsible creatures, and He had, in justice and for the maintenance of His throne of government, to make known His will, and so we have the ten commandments, God's will for men here on the earth, summed up in these two sentences, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Men broke that law, and all through the generations to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ they broke it, and that which was ordained for a blessing became a curse.

Was it the will of God that the law should avail nothing? Was it to be set aside without being kept? No, God had His Man in reserve, and the Lord Jesus Christ came into the world to do the will of God. His first recorded words were, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" He delighted in the title of the "Sent One," He came to fulfil the law. In Matthew 5. He said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil. . . . Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." That word "fulfilled" means "filled out," the bringing out of all its beauties, the making manifest of what it really was in the thought of God. And the Lord Jesus said, every jot and tittle of it shall be filled out. Down to its smallest point, its perfection and beauty shall be manifested. When did that take place? It took place in the life of Jesus here below; He fulfilled, filled out, made manifest, all the beauties of the law—loving the Lord His God with all His heart and His neighbour as Himself. So that the law was not given in vain. God could call the attention of the universe, of the holy angels, and of the devil himself, to that one blessed lowly Nazarene, despised by men, without a place to lay His head; and could say, "There you see a Man in absolute obedience and dependence, bringing out in every thought of His heart, every word of His mouth, every act of His life, the beauty of My
The law of God has been made honourable in the sight of the universe by God's beloved Son, and its beauty thus livingly expressed will abide for ever.

The Hebrew servant had to serve six years, and after that he could go out free. His master's claims were finished and he was at liberty to go out and serve no more. The moment came in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ here below when that point was reached, when He as Man had fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law and He could have gone out free. The law, which was God's will for man on the earth, had got no further claim on Him because it had been fulfilled. When was that? When He stood upon the holy mountain, and when in the presence of His disciples He was transfigured; when His face shone like the sun and His garments were white as the light, then He could have gone out free, and then a voice from the excellent glory proclaimed Him to be the One in whom the Father had found His delight. The Father Himself bears witness to the fact that He was the faithful Hebrew Servant, who had not failed in one jot or tittle of the law. He could have stepped from that holy mountain to the throne of glory. As a Man He had fulfilled every righteous claim that God could have upon a man. He had loved the Lord with all His heart and His neighbour as Himself. Ah! but now something else came in. The Hebrew servant could go out free, but if he went out free he went out alone. And we come to that crisis in the history of the Lord on earth when the choice lay before Him. It came in John 12, where the Lord said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." If He went out free He must abide alone, but there was something in His heart that would not allow Him to abide alone, and what was that? It was love. His love to His Father, His love to you and me, carried Him beyond the law and made Him a Servant for ever. It is most blessed and wonderful to contemplate the Lord Jesus Christ at that moment. John 12 corresponds with the mount of transfiguration in the other gospels. He could say, "The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified." He also says, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour, yet for this cause came I unto this hour. FATHER, GLORIFY THY NAME." What led Him to say that? Love! Love that thinks not of self at all; love that places itself entirely at the disposal of the loved ones. No matter what that terrible hour contained, and He knew it all, He would go through it in His love to His Father and to us.

The Lord up to this time had been bearing witness in the midst of Israel, but now there comes a change. Greeks come up to Jerusalem, and they find out Philip, and say, "Sir, we would see Jesus," and Philip and Andrew bring them to Him. It was in that connection the Lord says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone." If the Gentiles were really to see Jesus, if any of us were to see Jesus, how must we see Him, and where? We must see Him taking up a service that the law did not lay upon Him, a voluntary service of love that made Him the Sufferer. We must see Him lifted up on the cross. Jesus would have been no use to us, He would not have been "JESUS" to us at all, if He had not gone to that cross. It is on the cross we see written, "This is Jesus"—the true Hebrew Servant with His ear bored for everlasting service.

The Gentiles could not be brought to God, Israel could not have been redeemed, the Lord could not have had His Church, there could have been no blessing for any one of us, if the Lord had not undertaken this fuller and deeper service. There are people who talk about the righteousness of Christ being imputed to us. The righteousness of Christ was the fulfilment of the
law for Himself, and that is, His own righteousness; if that had been all it was for Himself alone and He would have gone out alone, for it could not have been imputed to anybody. Something else was necessary if we were to be made righteous before God, and if Christ was to have us as an everlasting possession. To go back to the type, the Hebrew servant said, "I love my master. I love my wife, I love my children, I will not go free." He would not be alone, his love would not be satisfied unless he had companions, and he said, "that I may have companions I will remain a servant for ever." Then his master took him and his ear was bored, and henceforth, as long as he lived upon the earth, he carried about in his own body the mark of his servitude. The cross is the antitype of that, and when the Lord rose from the dead and came into the midst of His own, He showed His hands and side. Those wounds answer to the bored ear, they are the everlasting proofs of what His love has suffered, and the pledge that He will serve us for ever.

He says, "Father, glorify Thy name." His Father's glory was the first thing. Then there comes the answer, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." The Father had glorified His Name through the perfect fulfilment of the law in the life of the Lord Jesus, and in that which was infinitely greater than merely the fulfilment of the law—the revelation of Himself to men. He was going to glorify it again in the death of the Lord Jesus and His resurrection. He was entirely at the Father's disposal, and so could say, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the prince of this world be cast out." The world did not attract Him, for "all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father," and "if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him." The love of the Father was in this faithful Servant. He rejected the world and all that it could offer as evil, and chose to glorify His Father instead. That system of things in which men are trying to make themselves happy away from God, had nothing for the Father, and the Son had nothing at all in it. The prince of this world is cast out; he had been able up to this point to present the world to men and attract them by it, and enslave them by it. There is an old saying that every man has his price, and the devil knows that well, and he knows what attracts men, but the faithful Servant was not attracted by any of Satan's wiles. Satan was powerless in the presence of the Man who had no thought for Himself, who only lived to serve, and who would give up His life to serve for ever.

Then He says, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." He becomes the great centre of attraction. There are needs in the hearts of men, and He by His wonderful service of love can meet those needs. Man is a dependent creature; he must look outside himself for satisfaction, he was made to be dependent upon God and to draw his supplies from God, for God is the One who stretches forth His hand and satisfies the desire of every creature. Man has turned to the world for satisfaction, and that is the way the devil has triumphed; they turn from God, thinking they can find something better in the world. The Lord says, I am going to be lifted up, and if I be lifted up I will draw all men unto Me, and this He said, signifying what death He was to die. Being lifted up on the cross He becomes the great attractive Centre, the One through whom God meets the deep needs of the souls of sinners and of saints, and will meet the need of the saints for ever, for even in the glory we shall feed on Christ. In the glory we shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life that grows in the midst of the paradise of God, and there our souls shall be nourished by Him for ever and for ever. The countless hosts of ransomed sinners...
will find their hearts' full satisfaction in Christ; we shall never be able to dispense with Him, we shall feed on Him for ever, and His service, in the midst of the ransomed myriads, will be to dispense all the fulness of God.

"I will draw all men unto Me." Yes, He had to be lifted up for that, for He must bear our judgment. The One who kept the law in every jot and tittle of it had to bear the curse that rested on those who had broken it in every point, and He, who had lived that sinless life in holy subjection to the will of God, had to bear the judgment of those who refused the will of God. When we discovered our desperate need, when we awoke to the fact that we were sinners in the sight of God and had no hope in ourselves, we had to look for our salvation to Him who was lifted up, and He, blessed be His Name, did not fail us. We were drawn to Him and found that He was able, not only to answer all the claims of God against us, but to fill our hearts with peace and gladness. He served us there upon the cross. He died to serve us, and He lives to serve us still, and in serving us He serves His Father, and in serving His Father He serves us, for it is well for us to keep in mind that we belong to God, we are God's children. Hebrews 2. speaks of us as the sons of God and tells us that He is bringing many sons to glory. He is gathering them out of every clime on the face of the earth, lifting them out of the mire, bringing them by the Gospel to Himself. He has made the Leader of their salvation perfect through suffering, and He, the Lord Jesus Christ, will bring every one of them home to glory. God is doing it through Him.

Our great High Priest can never fail, and He can never die. He lives in the power of an endless life; but He does not live for Himself; He would not be alone; He lives for us, and He serves us with everlasting service. To His hands we have been committed, and because we are the children of God God could not have committed us into any other hands. It would not have been enough to put us into the hands of Gabriel or Michael. Only the nail-pierced hands, bored for everlast­ing service, can bear us through the
wilderness to the rest of God that is before us. It is the Servant who bears in His body the marks of “the love that suffered on the tree” that will carry us safely through, and His hands will never fail in their service. He said to Israel, “Can a woman forget her sucking child . . . ? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.” Yes, beloved Christians, and so are we engraven on the palms of His hands, and those hands hold us in everlasting safety; they are lifted up in intercession for us and in benediction over us—the nail-pierced hands.

Not only did the Hebrew Servant say, “I love my master,” but “I love my wife,” and here comes in a blessed fact, the Lord Jesus Christ is to have a bride. We read of the Lamb’s wife, and in order to secure for Himself that bride that she might be His companion for ever, He would not go out free. He would give Himself for us, give Himself that He might possess His blood-bought Church as His wife for ever, and so we get not only the individual aspect of His love in Paul’s words, “The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me,” but we get the other side in Ephesians, where we read, “Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for it,” and it is a great day in our spiritual history when we awaken to the fact that we have our part, every one of us, in connection with that which is so precious to Him, His Church. You have your part in connection with it, and I have mine, and we are all united together in one with every other saint of God on the earth, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, forming the Church, the wife of the Lamb, and the true Hebrew servant says, “I love my wife.” Is He serving it? Yes. Ephesians 5. makes that plain for us, “that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the Word,” and He “nourisheth it and cherisheth it.” Every bit of spiritual nourishment our souls get comes from Him. He is caring for us in that respect, caring for us that we may become more united in heart, caring for us, not merely as individual plants in the garden of the Lord, but that we may grow together as a body grows. The Lord’s service towards us is that we may all be growing up together, in unity and in love. As we know the love of Christ more, we shall be more united in heart. As we know the love of Christ more, we shall be more for the pleasure of His heart, as He sees that which is so precious to Him prospering spiritually. But every bit of spiritual prosperity, whether individually or in the Church of God, is the result of that faithful service of the One who would not go out free.

The 12th chapter of John seems to me to be very beautiful when put alongside that type in the 21st chapter of Exodus. Is there a present result of the service of the Lord Jesus Christ to us? Yes, I think we get it in the opening of John 12. The Lord Jesus Christ was sitting there, Lazarus was there, Martha, and the disciples. The Lord was in the midst of a company of people who loved Him, to whom He was the supreme object, for had He not lifted from them the dark shadow of death? He was there in the midst of them as the resurrection and the life, and they sat round that table with Him. As they sat there listening to His words, there came Mary with the alabaster box of ointment, and she broke that box and poured its precious contents on His feet, and the whole house was filled with the odour. Just a pattern of what we may have to-day. The saints of God gathered around the blessed Lord, the resurrection and the life, alive for evermore, the worthy object of their hearts, that worship might flow in sweet fragrance to Himself. How is that produced? Who was the one in that company that broke that alabaster box of ointment and filled the house with the fragrance of it? It was the one who knew more of the Lord’s faithful service to her
than any of the others. It is as we know Him, His continual service and love towards us, that we shall be able to respond to that love in adoration and in worship, so that He will get something even now as a result of service. "The labourer," says the Scripture, "is worthy of his hire." And if that is so, is not the Lord who labours with no other motive but His own love worthy of some response to His love? Yes, blessed be His name, He is worthy of homage and of praise, worthy by all to be adored.

We should not have been here to-day if He had not been serving us; we should certainly never gather to remember Him in His death if He did not serve us. It is His service to us, His present continual service to us, that keeps our hearts fresh in His things and enables us still to go on with what is pleasing to Him, and with one another.

"BEHOLD, I AM AGAINST THE SHEPHERDS."
Ezekiel 34. 10.

The chapter warns us against the evil ways of the shepherds and instructs us as to the right ways as set forth in Christ, the true Shepherd of Israel.

The first complaint is that the shepherds fed themselves and not the sheep. They took from the sheep, instead of giving to the sheep. They ate the fat and clothed them with the wool. Further, the diseased were not strengthened, nor were the sick healed, and they ruled with force and cruelty.

In this solemn indictment have we not a vivid anticipation of the ways of many of the prelates and priests of the Romish Church in the dark middle ages, and has it not its counterpart in many a quarter even in this 20th century? We may single out gross examples, but in a more refined way this sort of thing exists all around us.

May it be a warning to us all! When we think more of ourselves than of the great Shepherd, then we shall think more of ourselves than of the sheep. Christianity consists of self-giving, not in self-getting.

It was for this selfish conduct that the Lord said, "Behold, I am against the shepherds." The flock would be required at their hand; and as a punishment they would neither be...
allowed to feed the flock, nor feed themselves, the latter a condign chastisement indeed.

How beautiful to turn from these heartless, greedy, and cruel shepherds to see what the true Shepherd would do. He would seek out the scattered sheep. He would deliver them. He would bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers. Doubtless this will be fulfilled when the Lord gathers Israel, now scattered among the nations, back to their own land, and purifying the land by the great tribulation, and conferring the spirit of grace and of supplication upon His ancient people, they will keep for the first time in reality the great day of atonement, and welcome their Messiah—the Shepherd of Israel—and thus be kept in peace and security.

Under the shepherds of Israel—the high priests and elders—the Jews had been led to refuse their Messiah and crucify Him—hence the awful scattering, and the consequent refusal to allow the shepherds to feed the flock. Where have been the Jewish high priests for many a long day? They have not existed.

To apply all this to ourselves. Do we seek after the lost sheep to-day; do we bring back those which have been driven away; do we bind the broken and strengthen the sick? How much of the scattering there has been, and how little of gathering. The flesh scatters. It is the Spirit who gathers. Anyone can scatter, but it takes divine power to do the gathering.

And what a judgment will fall on the false shepherds, who feed themselves and not the flock of God. The Lord will feed them WITH JUDGMENT. How true this is to-day. Division comes. The power of gathering is gone. The Spirit is grieved, and it is no uncommon sight to see those who have been prominent in scattering reaping what they have sowed, and left almost, if not quite, in isolation in their closing days. May we pay heed to these things.

Next the Lord would judge between cattle and cattle (the margin of the Bible says, small cattle of lambs and kids); between rams and he-goats (margin, great he-goats). It was a question between the strong and the weak. What is the right use of strength but to protect the weak?

How was their strength utilized? Alas! not only to secure for themselves the good pasture, but to tread down the residue with their feet and make it unfit for food—to drink of the deep waters, but foul the residue with their feet. Do matters end there? Surely not. There is One that judgeth. He charges them with thrusting with side and shoulder and pushing the diseased cattle with their horns till they were scattered.

Is there not a searching lesson in this for us all? Is there not the tendency to treat with coldness and severity those who can be classed as “diseased”—to walk aloof from those who might be classed as weak and feeble? It is not wise to blink at facts. What cruelty and injustice have been practised in the name of Christ, perhaps not willingly and of intent, but often through mistaken ideas of faithfulness! These verses hit off many a situation that crowds in upon one's memory.

But the Lord comes in as the great Contrast to all this. Blessed Master! May we drink in of His Spirit. Jehovah will save His flock. He will judge between cattle and cattle. What a day that will be when once and for all the troubles, difficulties and divisions will be judged aright. What a day that will be! The hard spirit will be judged, just as softness that will make no faithful stand for the truth will be judged. One anticipates this day with eagerness. Each one of us who really desires to please the Lord must hail that day, when we shall see eye to eye with Him, when we shall say good-bye to everything that has not been
according to His will, and when all that has been of Himself shall be so recognized to His praise.

Jehovah in the day of our chapter will set up one shepherd over His earthly people, even His servant, David, that is Christ, their Messiah. A covenant of peace shall be made with them in that day, evil beasts will cease out of the land, the sheep of His hand shall dwell safely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods—just in the places which would have been dangerous and unsafe in the former times.

How beautifully the whole ends: "THERE SHALL BE SHOWERS OF BLESSING" (verse 26), and how tenderly the whole concludes: "Thus shall they know that I the LORD their God am with them, and that they, even the house of Israel, are My people, saith the Lord GOD. And ye My flock, the flock of My pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord GOD" (verses 30, 31).

What a comfort to us to-day that God is our God, and that we can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want" (Psa. 23:1)—to know Him as the "Good Shepherd," who "giveth His life for the sheep" (John 10:11); the "Great Shepherd," "brought again from the dead . . . through the blood of the everlasting covenant" (Heb. 13:20); and the "chief Shepherd," who will reward the faithful under-shepherds in the day of His appearing (1 Pet. 4:4).

The Lord is the Shepherd of Israel; He is also the Shepherd of His people to-day. May the under-shepherds catch the spirit and imitate the patience and graciousness yet faithfulness of their Master. It is said of such, "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 4:4). And Peter, who penned this by inspiration, could speak by personal experience of the tenderness and faithfulness of the Good Shepherd, for he had actually denied Him with oaths and curses, and yet the Lord had restored him after probing him to the very bottom of that which had led to his fall, and when restored actually chose Peter to be His mouthpiece on the great day of Pentecost. What a Master! What an example! Our hardness, our lack of patience, our many, many mistakes in this line may well humble us to the dust. How often we have, metaphorically speaking, chosen a powerful hatchet as our instrument for repairing the delicate mechanism of a watch.

The writing of this article will be well repaid if it leads to Ezekiel 34 being read again and again on bended knee in the Lord's presence, resulting in our receiving in fuller measure the spirit of the Good Shepherd. Everywhere the writer goes there is a cry for pastors—those who will minister in public and in private and in visiting to the beloved sheep and lambs of Christ's flock.

SPIRITUAL DECAY.

THE brown-skinned calabash pear is a well-known fruit in England and a general favourite. One needs, however, to be in the secrets of the fruit trade to know that there are two varieties of calabash pear on the English market, viz., the English and the Belgian.

In appearance and taste these two varieties are so much alike that sometimes even an expert fails to distinguish between them. But there is one very material difference. When decay sets in, the English pear begins to go bad on the outside, the Belgian pear at the centre.

(H. P. Barckr.)
Have we not here a forceful illustration of two kinds of backsliding, of what takes place when spiritual declension overtakes one who is truly a child of God? With some, the declension is at once apparent. Like the English calabash pear, they go bad, so to speak, on the outside. Their sin is open and unconcealed. Men regard them with scorn and say: "Here is one who professed to find a treasure that we do not possess. But how worthless the treasure must be, for he has so readily cast it away!" When we remember that CHRIST is the treasure that the Christian professes to find, we shall understand something of the terrible dishonour done to Him by the backslider.

Even more to be pitied, perhaps, is he whose case is illustrated by the Belgian calabash pear, whose decay sets in at the core, and remains unperceived and unsuspected. We read in the Proverbs of "the backslider in heart," and it is to such a one that we refer. Outwardly the life is correct, and the conduct all that can be expected; but inwardly there has been a change for the worse. Spiritual decay has set in, and is working its way into the very texture of the soul.

The symptoms are not at once visible to others, but they are there. They are real; they are intensely serious. Appetite for spiritual food is lost, and the daily reading of the Scriptures becomes an irksome duty where it is not entirely abandoned. Seasons of private prayer have lost their attractiveness, and communion with God has become impossible. Some sin unconfessed and unjudged; some sinful habit persisted in; some bit of worldliness that one is unwilling to abandon; some little fox that is left at large and which destroys the vines; some dead fly that is suffered to remain, though it takes all the sweetness from the ointment; some companionship clung to, though inconsistent with the companionship of Christ; some ambition cherished, though plainly unsuitable for one who is but a stranger and a pilgrim; love of money, love of success, love of display, love of self—how all these things war against the soul! And how the backslider drifts till there seems to be no power for repentance or recovery!

As a matter of fact, there is no power for either, save in the advocacy of our blessed Saviour. He alone can recall and restore. But the course of wisdom is clear for every backsliding child of God, whatever the character of his backsliding. He is bidden to return to his Lord, with true contrition of heart and words of humble confession. Let him not spare himself, but pour out his heart before God. Let him expect no sudden rush of changed feeling, no sense of spiritual exultation, no special uplifting of soul as the immediate sequel to his confession. But if his confession has been real, if he has honestly departed from the sin confessed, he may rise from his knees assured that God has forgiven him. If he lacks this assurance he may turn to 1 John 1. 9 and rest his soul upon its gracious words.

Reviving of the spiritual life will come in due time if the attitude of contrition and obedience to the will of God be maintained. But we have to be taught that we cannot sin with impunity. We must be made to feel that to walk with God is a privilege so great and high that to turn from it is an offence of a magnitude that it is impossible to exaggerate.

But mercy is always in the heart of God, and His restoring grace is as real and as free as His forgiving grace. He can give us back our songs in the night. He can grant the uplifting of soul for which we pray.

It is, however, necessary to understand that these things are not first in importance. More important than the recovery of our joy is our return to the path of obedience. To submit to the will of God is a greater thing than to have spiritual ecstasy.
The way of return and recovery is thus open. And this message has its application to us all. For who amongst us does not know what it is to have seasons of declension, when the affections grow cold, and our conscious walk with God is interrupted?

May God graciously grant us increased sensitiveness as to all that would lead to spiritual decay.

THE SEVENTH FROM ADAM.

There is nothing superfluous or redundant about the inspired Scriptures. Every sentence, every clause, indeed, every word that is there has its own purpose and reason. We often clog our remarks with meaningless, or at least unnecessary, verbiage, but never so the Word of God.

A striking example of this occurs in Jude 14, where we read, “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these...” That Enoch was number seven in the line of descent through Seth is a fact easily ascertainable from Genesis 5., but one may be tempted to wonder why Jude should expend even four words in calling our attention to that fact. Is there any point in it?

There evidently is. Seven is in Scripture the number of perfection and completeness, usually as regards that which is good, though sometimes in regard to what is evil. It was fitting, therefore, that of all the ten antediluvian patriarchs number seven should have been the one in whom faith and the life of faith came out in its completeness.

But there is more than this. If we refer to Genesis 4., and count the antediluvian patriarchs mentioned in that chapter, we shall discover the illuminating fact that number seven in the line of descent through Cain is Lamech. In chapter 5. the list through Seth is given to us, without comment other than their ages, until we reach Enoch, when the Spirit of God pauses to record certain details as to him. In chapter 4. the same thing takes place.

After Cain, merely names are given until the seventh, Lamech, is reached, when the Spirit of God turns aside to give us details as to him.

The line of Cain was composed of men in whom the flesh and the principles of the world found expression, whereas in the line of Seth God preserved a godly seed in men of faith. In both lines the man of outstanding character and power, the man in whom the respective tendencies found their complete expression, was number seven. In Lamech (chapter 4. 19–24) we have set forth the world in its main features: in Enoch (chap. 5. 21–24) the believer's pathway through the world. The order in which the two are presented by the Spirit of God is worthy of note, for it is the order consistently observed all through Scripture and explicitly stated in 1 Corinthians 15. 46: “Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.” First, that which is merely of man, and fails; second, that which is wholly of God, and abides. Hence that other word: “He taketh away the first that He may establish the second” (Heb. 10. 9).

The antediluvian age was pre-eminently an age of lawlessness. Death reigned “from Adam to Moses” (Rom. 5. 14), for sin abounded, yet there was no transgression, since there was no law to transgress. But not only this, there was also no divinely constituted authority in the earth. No one was as yet empowered to wield the sword of justice against his fellows as representing God. This was introduced when
postdiluvian conditions were established (see Genesis 9. 1-6). Under these earlier conditions every man was apparently a law unto himself, and this tendency reached a climax in Lamech.

In connection with this man of great originality and forceful personality three things are recorded.

1. He broke through the marriage ordinance as ordained by God at the beginning, when one man and one woman were united. Apparently Lamech was the first to set aside this and take a plurality of wives. What God had arranged was nothing to him! True, he only took two. From that to the state of things we find with a Solomon or an Ahasuerus may seem a great descent, but it was Lamech who opened the flood-gates! What led him to pioneer the entrance of this great evil into the earth? The lust of the flesh.

2. By the two wives he had a remarkable family. The second characteristic came out in his children, and the lust of the flesh eventuated in the lust of the eyes. One son became a pioneer in trade and commerce, for those who dwelt in tents and had cattle were the nomadic folk who did not settle down as tillers of the soil, but wandered with their beasts and became a people of trade and of transport.

Another son became the great pioneer in the arts and sciences. He was “the father of all such as handle the harp and organ,” thus cultivating the intellectual and æsthetic side of life. The third was a pioneer in craftsmanship. In his family, artificers in brass and iron were found.

A sister’s name is even recorded. The meaning of Naamah appears to be “pleasure.” She, evidently, true to her name, set forth the pleasant side of worldly life, and became a leader in worldly pleasure.

The “lust of the eyes” we must remember is an expression embracing not only the “lust of seeing” with the eyes of the head but with the eyes of the mind. It covers all that insatiable and restless spirit of inquiry which marks man away from his true source of knowledge—GOD. To-day men are more feverishly than ever pushing their investigations and bringing fresh worlds of discovery and thought within their field of vision, yet always is it a case of “ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth.” In Lamech and his family we see emerging from the earth as a trickling stream what is now a torrential river.

3. But not only was Lamech a pioneer in corruption as the first polygamist, but he was also a leader in violence. He was a tremendous egotist, and there comes plainly into view the pride of life. Verses 23 and 24 may not seem very clear to the ordinary reader of the Authorized Version; other translations, however, render it “I have slain a man ‘for my wound,’ and a young man ‘for my bruise.’” From this it would appear that some hapless young man inflicted some bodily injury upon Lamech, who thereupon revenged himself upon him by slaying him.

Generations before there had been Cain’s wicked outburst, and this brought him so manifestly under the condemnation of men and the judgment of God that for some centuries apparently men were awed into respect for human life. Again it was Lamech who broke through the restriction. And not only did he slay the young man, but after the deed was done he returned to his wives in a spirit of exultation and boasting. He gloried in the deed, and to give his wives an idea of his importance he made irreverent allusion to the divine protection thrown over Cain, by which men were not allowed to touch him—as stated in verse 15 of the chapter. He affirmed that if vengeance for Cain should be sevenfold, for him it should be seventy and sevenfold; thus ranking himself as eleven times more important than Cain!—truly the pride of life!
What is all this but just the elements of the world? "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2. 16). Upon these three things is the whole of the world system based. In our day we see them to well-nigh their utmost ramification, but in Lamech's day they were quite distinctly revealed.

Now, while Lamech was thus deporting himself in the earth about a thousand years before the flood, and breaking down the barriers which he let lose the torrent of human corruption and violence, so that ultimately it came to pass that "the earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence" (Gen. 6. 11), another man began quietly to pursue his earthly career. Enoch began to live, and after the birth of his son Methuselah, for 300 years he walked with God.

Of this remarkable man two things are recorded in Genesis and two in the New Testament—four in all. Let us note them, for we shall thereby be learning the true character of the pathway of the saints through the world as set forth in this "seventh from Adam."

1. "And Enoch walked with God." What a world of meaning is compressed into these few words! "Walking" signifies not rest but activity, whether of mind or of body. Enoch's activities of mind—in the way of intercourse and communion—his activities of service also were "with God." When Adam was in an un Fallen condition the Lord God had walked with him in the garden, as verse 8 of chapter 3 implies. Enoch, however, was in the midst of a scene of increasing corruption and violence; no longer was it possible for God to walk with him as once He did in an un Fallen creation, so Enoch walked with God. God Himself he knew: in God's things he lived and moved and had his being. In body he trod the earth that was no longer a place fit for the walking of the Lord God in the cool of the day: in spirit he moved with God in His own place, and amongst His own things.

He was, however, no recluse or dreamy mystic, for the record is that "Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." He entered into ordinary human life and knew all the usual trials and vexations as well as the joys of bringing up a family, and families in those days of vigorous longevity were usually large. In spite of that he walked with God, not by fits and starts, but with steady persistency for three centuries! A wonderful walk, the longest walk on record was that! Moreover, while walking with God in spirit, he walked amongst men in bodily presence and well knew their ways and their sins, and bore trenchant witness to God and against them. But this brings us to the second feature that marked him.

2. He witnessed for God. This we are informed by Jude, who has put on record for us the subject of his testimony: "Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints. . . ." Even at that early stage in the world's history a clear ringing witness was given to God's intervention in glory, an intervention which would bring conviction to the ungodly. Enoch did not spare his hearers. Ungodly they were both in deeds and words. The three-fold use of the word ungodly in Jude 15. is very striking. We do not read that Enoch had any converts, but his witness was evidently marked by the utmost faithfulness and power.

3. He was "translated" to God. The terse record of Genesis is that at the end of the 300 years "he was not; for God took him." This is amplified in the New Testament, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him" (Heb. 11. 5). Here we learn that faith was the energy in which Enoch walked with God, and in which finally he was
The Seventh from Adam

transported into God's presence. After three centuries of walking with God it must have seemed a simple and natural thing when one day "God took him," and Enoch exchanged his earthly dwelling for the very abode of God Himself.

Every word here is worthy of note. He was translated "that he should not see death." Was he then threatened by death? In the ordinary way it would hardly seem so, since his father lived 962 years and his son 969, and the average life of the nine antediluvian patriarchs excepting himself was well over 900 years. Again, it says, "he was not found," which infers that he was sought.

The language, however, is explicit: His translation took place "that he should not see death," which can hardly be the statement of the obvious truism that had it not been he would ultimately have died. No, it carries with it the glorious moral import that the power of God through faith could lift a man clean out of the domain of death. It could sustain him in spiritual life whilst walking through the sphere of death's operations, and ultimately forbid the touch of its blighting hand, and land his feet in the presence of God for ever beyond its power. It carries also, we judge, the inference that but for translation his death was imminent, that in fact he was translated just as the blow was impending. In other words, that Enoch was left by God in his path of faithful witness until the last possible moment, and then just as the lawless antediluvians, angered by his plain and fearless words, were about to silence the witness, and sought him in order to slay him, "he was not found, for God had translated him."

If we are right in so reading these words, Enoch's translation must have been a presage of judgment for the world, but also a public witness to the fact that God was on his side. This brings us to the fourth feature.

4. "He pleased God"—a thing which is impossible apart from faith. The world saw evidence of this in the fact of his translation. He had the testimony of it "before his translation" (Heb. 11. 5). Verse 4 tells us that before Abel was slain he had the testimony that he was righteous. Verse 5 that Enoch before he was translated had the testimony that he pleased God. One was right with God and he knew it. The other was agreeable to God and he knew it. Both knew on Divine testimony.

"He pleased God." After all, what more could be said than that? The life that can be summed up in those three words is the life worth living, even though, as in Enoch's case, it is a life that mightily displeases the world.

Here, then, sketched in the early dawn of the world's history, is a very complete picture of the world on the one side, and on the other, of the believer's pathway through the world to glory. Some fifty centuries have passed and the world has immensely developed. The young sapling of Enoch's day has become a gigantic tree. Its three main shoots as revealed in Lamech—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," have become three main trunks, each bearing branches and twigs innumerable. The great tree now shows signs of weakness. Shall we let you into the secret? The interior is a mass of decay and rottenness. The imposing tree is doomed. Upon it this sentence is written: "The world passeth away and the lust thereof" (1 John 2. 17).

Shall we lament it? No, indeed. Being what it is, the passing away of the world-system is a subject for rejoicing, and the above quoted verse does not close without adding, "but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." It is men of the Enoch stamp that will abide.

Enoch is peculiarly an instructive type for us. Just as Noah sets forth a godly remnant of Israel carried safely through the flood of judgment to the
renewed earth beyond, so Enoch sets forth the Church's path of obedience and witness, with translation at the end before the judgment comes. Shall not we, who live in the light of a far more wonderful revelation than ever Enoch knew, be imitators of his faith?

Depend upon it, our great business is to WALK WITH GOD, not to run before Him, nor to lag behind Him, but to keep pace with Him, rejoicing in Him as He has revealed Himself in Christ, and responding to all He has revealed, in the power of the Spirit who has been given to us. It is all a matter of individual exercise and faith.

As we walk with God so shall we witness for God, and please God. The end, thank God, is sure. We shall go to be with God, translated into His very presence.

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.

Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar dreams.

IN chapter 1. Daniel and his three friends are introduced to our notice as captives in a strange land, and under Gentile oppression. Their faithfulness to God, and His overruling providence exercised on their behalf, are brought before us in few words, but with great encouragement for our naturally timid souls; mention also being made of the fact that Daniel continued unto the first year of king Cyrus. In chapter 6. we are told that "This Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian." He and his three companions were of a hated, and at that time a humbled, race, and the high positions held by them in the kingdom, as well as their faithfulness to the God of their fathers, the only true God, increased to a very large degree that insane and bitter odium. They were endowed by the favour of God with more wisdom and knowledge than all the learned men in Babylon, and for this reason they ranked high among the lords of that mighty empire, and this itself was a sore grievance to those proud men. But they were there under the protection of God, and while he had need for them in that place, nothing could harm them.

In chapter 2. the time arrives when the testimony of these witnesses is to be brought under the notice of the king. What effect their faithfulness may have had upon Ashpenaz or Melzar is hidden from us, but that which is done in the presence of the throne cannot so well be hidden. Through these servants of the Lord the conflict between light and darkness begins in that idolatrous empire; and in the engagement the light-bearers seem to be in danger of destruction, along with the instruments of the power of darkness. But the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and underneath them are the everlasting arms. He will keep His servants in the background, until the utter worthlessness of the king's wise men has been manifested. He will not compete with those wretched imposters. He will let them exhaust the resources of their ingenuity. Then, when it is all over with them, and they are doomed to destruction by the fiat of the king, He will take the matter in hand. It is ever so with God,
and this principle of His intervention shines upon every page of the Divine revelation. Man's complete failure is first manifested, and then, and only then, is the power of God brought to light. We see this principle exhibited, among many other places and ways, at the Red Sea, at the Jordan, in Ephesdammin, but above all in the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; for it was when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God's activities cannot be mixed up with man's puny efforts. Light cannot mingle with darkness.

Nebuchadnezzar has a dream. One may be sure that he had had many a dream that had caused him little uneasiness, before this one came in to disturb his tranquillity. This dream, however, was like none of the others. It troubles his spirit, and causes his sleep to depart from him; and yet he cannot bring it to his remembrance. As usual, he has recourse to his considerable band of magicians, star-gazers, and dream-readers, that they might unravel this mystery, convinced that if any one could really interpret the dream, he would also be able to call it back to his remembrance. The interpretation of the dream was no more within the compass of the mind of man, than was the ability to make the dream known to the dreamer. These were his conclusions, and they were both just and logical. He is quite certain that, had they known the dream, they could have trumped up some artificial interpretation of it, with which the king would have had to be content, though often he seems to have been made painfully conscious of the bogus character of their interpretations (verses 8, 9).

The truth is, this was but a challenge thrown down by the God of heaven before these men, who represented the wisdom of the devil-deceived world, as His challenge goes forth verbatim in Isaiah 41.: “Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen; let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods; yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you.”

Who will enter the arena against Jehovah of Hosts? Who will pick up the gauntlet of the Almighty, thus thrown down in the courts of the Gentile autocrat? The magicians of Egypt tried a venture with Him in the courts of Ham, and suffered a humiliating defeat in the presence of their sovereign. Nearly six hundred years afterward, four hundred and fifty of the prophets of Baal entered the lists against one solitary servant of the Lord upon the crown of mount Carmel, and after having been ignominiously defeated, fell under the righteous judgment that their sin merited, at the brook Kishon.

Nebuchadnezzar had sacked the holy city Jerusalem, had pillaged the glorious temple of Jehovah, and had carried away captives innumerable to his own land; but in his royal palace he is now faced by something that baffles the whole resources of his kingdom. He cannot dismiss his dream from his thoughts, neither can his wise men help him to have the mystery unravelled. Filled with the fury begotten by defeat, and by a suspicion that his wise men are a pack of
deceivers, he will destroy them, as fell weeds that do nothing but corrupt the ground. And the decree goes forth from his presence, that all the wise men are to be slain.

The powers of darkness have had their opportunity. From its foundation they had had undisputed sway in Babylon. The present monarch had as well served their purpose as had his predecessors, and the siege and destruction of Jerusalem by his armies, placing the people of Jehovah at the disposal of the proud Gentile, had been the greatest of all their victories. There is now no power under heaven that would dare to stand at issue with Nebuchadnezzar for the empire of the world.

But after all how short is the triumph of the wicked! If the captive people are in Babylon, the light of God is there also. If the supremacy of the Gentile is established in the city of the Great King, the supremacy of the servants of God is established in his presence. In bringing the holy people into Babylon they brought there the living God, and on this the powers of darkness had not reckoned. But in every instance defeat dogs the footsteps of the enemy of God. And this should not surprise us. We should only be surprised if it appeared to be otherwise, for it never is otherwise, however we may be deceived by appearances.

We are told that "Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams." This was the gift of God to Him. It was not any inborn ability, as he himself acknowledges in verse 30. God had His own wise purpose in speaking to the king in a dream and vision of the night, and in allowing him to forget it, while leaving an impression upon his mind regarding it, that allowed no rest to come to his troubled spirit. God will give him to understand, that if he has triumphed over the people with whom He has identified His name, it has been with His permission, and not because He had not power enough to defend His name and interests. His infinite superiority, when compared with the gods in which the proud monarch had put his trust, must come clearly into evidence, and they must be seen to be defeated in every engagement.

The Chaldeans were very confident that the king was making a demand that could not be met by any man upon earth. They are sure that no man existed who could show the king's matter. None but the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh could meet the demand of the king: this is their final word to the man whom they feared above all men upon earth. Let come what may, they are compelled to admit their defeat, and thus, though unwillingly, add their testimony to the wisdom and might of the God of Daniel, when through him the king has both the dream and the interpretation made known to him. They have to acknowledge their helplessness. The whole resources of the king fail him. He may be angry, he may resort to violence, he may kill without mercy; but how will that avail him? When all the wise men in his kingdom have been slain, he will be no nearer the object of his pursuit than he was at the beginning.

How weak the most exalted creature is! and how apparent that weakness is, when the circumstances arise that bring the helplessness of the poor mortal to light! King David could slay the lion and the bear and the giant Goliath, but he could not save the life of Abner, nor punish his murderers, and he has to own it with sorrow, and say: "I am this day weak, though anointed king, and these men the sons of Zeruiah be too hard for me" (2 Sam. 3:39). The rulers of Israel could crucify the Saviour when God permitted it, in order to bring into effect His own gracious purposes, but they could not keep Him in the sepulchre; and the precautions they took to keep Him
there only made more manifest the power of His resurrection. When the cripple was healed by the disciples, through the power of the name of Jesus, they had to confess their helplessness before such a testimony to Him whom they had crucified, and at the same time the unabated and incorrigible wickedness of their godless hearts, saying: "What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it" (Acts 4. 16). Why should they have wished to deny it? They had set themselves in opposition against God and His Christ, and like Nebuchadnezzar they can do nothing but manifest their impotent fury. "Power belongeth unto God" (Psa. 62. 11), and it is at the disposal of all who are in the pathway of His will, and who feel their own weakness (2 Cor. 12. 9; Phil. 4. 13).

Daniel soon learns of the sad predicament in which, not only the Chaldeans, but himself and his three friends, were placed, but instead of being excited and nervous in the face of the death that threatened them, he discerns the purpose of God in this unusual circumstance. He sees that whatever impressions the nations of the earth may have received, through the apparent defeat of the God of Israel, and that by the gods of the nations—for in that way would the success of the armies of Nebuchadnezzar be viewed—His God was quite able to take care of His own glory, and the present circumstance was one created by God Himself, to show, for the blessing of those who were not wholly given up to the service of demons, His infinite superiority to the gods of Babylon. Hence the only request he makes of the king is for time, and says that he will discover the interpretation. He does not say he hopes to be able to unravel the secret, or that he thinks he will be able; no, he says he will, for he sees the intention of God in raising this question in the stronghold of idolatry. We are told in Prov. 25. 2 that: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter." But here is a mystery that neither the king nor his wise men can penetrate.

Daniel takes up the matter, being perfectly persuaded as to the result. But though he can speak so confidently regarding the elucidation of this secret, his confidence is not in his own power to penetrate into hidden mysteries, but in the living God who for His own glory will enable him to make known to the king what his visions were and the interpretation of them. Therefore he goes straight to his three friends, and requests them to desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret that neither he nor they should perish with the wise men of Babylon. He shrank from being involved in the destruction of those wise men, who, as Nebuchadnezzar told them, were in the habit of deceiving him, by the use of lying and corrupt words. If a servant of the Lord must by the command of his sovereign be put to death, he must surely desire that the cause for which he has to suffer may be well known, so that no one may be left under the impression that he suffers because he has been convicted of corrupt practices. Paul was exceedingly thankful that it had become well known that he was in prison for Christ, and not because he was an enemy of righteous laws (Phil. 1. 12, 13). The wickedness of the rulers of Israel numbered our Lord with the transgressors, and put Him on a gibbet between two thieves. It was then that Jesus said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23. 34). "Therefore," says God, "will I divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He hath poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53. 12). This, the crowning
act of man's wickedness, can never be forgotten by God. Moreover His followers are privileged to be despised and rejected as He was, but it is all joy when it becomes manifest that it is for Him that they are called upon to suffer. But when the witness for Christ is treated as a brawler, or a disturber of the peace, and the real cause of his suffering is hidden under a flourish of false accusations, the cup is a bitter one to drink.

The secret is made known to Daniel in a night vision. It is not a favour accorded to saints of this dispensation only, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us (1 John 5. 14), but was always true for the soul desiring to be faithful to God. "We know that God heareth not sinners," says the blind man, "but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth" (John 9.).

Daniel knew that he had the gift of interpreting dreams, but his reliance was not in the gift given to him by the favour of God. He does not fall back upon the understanding that God had given Him, as though having obtained the gift He could dispense with the Giver. He is as dependent upon God in the exercise of the gift, as he would have been had no such gift been bestowed upon him.

What a lesson this is for us! The gift conferred upon the servant, if it is to be rightly exercised, must be exercised in dependence upon the Giver. There must be no confidence in self. The blessed Lord gave power to His twelve apostles, to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons (Matt. 10.), and yet in one instance we find a demon refusing to recognize their authority (Matt. 17.).

The Lord lets them know that fasting and prayer are necessary for the successful exercise of the power He had bestowed upon them. I understand by fasting the most absolute distrust of self, and by prayer the most absolute dependence upon God. Which of us will question the ability of our Lord Jesus? Raising the dead seems to have been an everyday miracle of His. But at the grave of Lazarus we learn in what spirit He performed those works of power. We read in John 11. 41, 42: "And Jesus lifted up His eyes, and said, Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me. And I know that Thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me." Though God over all, yet had He taken the place of a servant, and His almighty power was therefore subservient to the will of the Father. The gift of God, whatever it may be, is not given to us to make us independent of Himself, but is to be used according to His direction; and every servant has to learn this, if he is to be a good and faithful workman.

The answer of Daniel to the favour bestowed upon him and his three companions is very beautiful. He blessed the God of heaven. His spirit is broken. It is no longer the God of the whole earth (Josh. 3. 11), the God of Israel, or the God of Jacob, but the God of heaven. In this expression is buried for the moment the glory of Zion, and of the people of His choice. But whatever be the power He may establish in Babylon, He will never take the whole earth through the Gentile. He would have taken it through the nation that He brought up out of Egypt, had they been faithful to Him; and through that nation He will yet take hold of the earthly inheritance, though for the moment power has passed out of their hands. This Daniel humbly acknowledges in the title by which he addresses God.

All wisdom and all might Daniel attributes to God. Folly resides with the creature. His very angels have been charged with folly. But all the activities of God spring from the wisdom and the love of His blessed heart. Man's ways are erratic, changeable, and capricious, for he is naturally
void of understanding, and having broken loose from his Creator he is out of all proper control, and is the sport of every evil influence. Therefore man's recovery for God is brought about by the entrance of wisdom into his heart.

The witnesses of God in this world are never thrown upon their own resources. He maintains His own testimony by whomsoever He will, in His own method, and by His own power, for the natural resources of the creature are valueless in the struggle between light and darkness. It is true, as we read here, that He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding; for until divine wisdom is implanted in the soul by the Spirit of God any endowment with which a man might be entrusted would only be used as a decoration for himself, and not for the glory of the Divine Giver. "To him that hath shall be given." But what he has, he has by the grace of God.

The very beginning of wisdom for man is in his coming to a sense of his accountability to God, and how he has failed to answer to that accountability; and as a consequence he fears to meet Him, yet because there is forgiveness with Him, he hastens to meet Him in a day of grace, rather than delay having to do with Him until a day of judgment. His sinful condition stares him in the face, and he owns that in the dust is his true place before God. This is excessively humbling to the pride of the natural heart, but it is a triumph of Divine grace over the conceit that is ruin to the creature. Apart from this work of grace in the soul there is no ability in us to receive Divine communications. Our Lord says to the Jews: "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word" (John 8. 43). They had no spiritual capacity for receiving spiritual communications; and besides this, there is an inborn aversion in the natural human heart to everything that is of God, and this militates against the understanding of the simplest words of eternal life. The Lord says to the Jews: "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin" (John 9. 41). If men only took the place of poor, ignorant, misguided know-nothings, it would be the beginning of light, life, and infinite blessing; and sin, to which they were subject, would lose its dominating power. But if people are determined to trust in their own ability to judge of all that comes before them, and that in spite of the warnings of their Creator, they must remain in their natural blindness, and in the bondage of sin. John says to the babes in Christ: "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it" (1 John 2. 21). Where there is found distrust of self, and a real desire to be taught of God, the state necessary to the reception of divine communications has been created, and progress in the knowledge of the Word may be anticipated.

It is this trust in the competency of the natural mind that explains how deplorably ignorant of the mind of God are the great majority of learned men who take the place of spiritual leaders in Christendom. They seem to have overlooked the fact that the things of the Spirit of God are hidden from the wise and prudent, and that not many wise men after the flesh are called, but that God hath chosen foolish things to confound the wise, in order that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1. 26-29). That which is preached in the Gospel to unconverted men—repentance and remission of sins, on the ground of the work of the Cross—may be understood by anyone to whom it is declared, and were it not for the hold the world has upon men it would be believed; but to enter into the deep thoughts of God, in which lies true and eternal wisdom, requires a work wrought in the soul by the Divine Spirit, and also that Spirit's indwelling.
THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST.

(W. Branwell Dick.)

Read Matthew xi. 25-30.

WHEREVER we turn in the Holy Scriptures we cannot fail to be impressed with the way in which the Holy Spirit ever seeks to keep prominently before us the greatness of Christ. The portion to which we now call attention is of more than ordinary interest because of its peculiar setting. Christ had been virtually rejected by the nation of Israel; even John the Baptist doubted as to whether He really was the Christ or not. All this must have touched the blessed Lord very deeply; and we can quite understand how He must have passed through, in His spirit, some, at least, of the experiences so strikingly described in Psalm 102., where we learn, as perhaps nowhere else, the exercises of His holy soul in the course of His pathway here.

It was "at that time," at such a moment that He whose heart always beat in unison with the Father's heart, and whose mind was at all times one with the Father's mind, so touchingly addressed the Father, saying: "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid the6re things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (verses 25, 26). Then it would seem as if for a moment He addressed Himself to the babes; those simple disciples who were soon to be introduced into new relationships; whose affections were to be transferred from earth to heaven, and who should have disclosed to them Divine secrets that had never before been divulged: "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father: and no man knoweth the Son but the Father." Here is an unqualified statement. Here we have in one sentence the Divine glory of the Son, which is and ever shall be infinitely beyond our ken. We know Him as our Saviour, and we love Him; we acknowledge Him as our Lord, and we gladly submit to His authority; we have proved Him our Friend, and as such we confide in Him; we salute Him as our Master, and it is our joy to serve Him; but between us and THE SON there must be, and there always shall be, an immeasurable distance.

"The higher mysteries of Thy fame
The creature's grasp transcend:
The Father only Thy blest name
Of Son can comprehend."

How delighted we are that so great a Person, One so excellent in majesty and in glory, is our very own precious, personal Saviour; and to Him who is so great, yet who stooped so low, we gladly sing:—

"Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou
That every knee to Thee should bow."

In this Scripture, as all through the New Testament, we find His Godhead glory and His glory as Man so closely interwoven, that it is, at times, difficult to distinguish the one from the other.

To no less a person than the Son could all things be delivered, yet it was as the One who became Man, went into death, and rose triumphantly out of it, that all things are delivered unto Him. Then only the Son knows the Father, therefore only the Son could reveal the Father, and He who is the Son, Son of God—God the Son, the Father's Well-beloved—came into manhood that He might tell out all the love of the Father's heart, and passed through death in order that we might be brought into the present and everlasting enjoyment of it.

See Him as once again He turned to the multitude; listen to the tender accents of His gracious voice, as from a heart that was filled with compassion He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (verse 28).
We come to Him, and He gives rest, not only by speaking the word of forgiveness, but by making known to us the Father's name and the Father's heart. This is followed by the precious words, "learn of Me." We sit in His presence and our souls find rest at His feet in the contemplation of the incomparable glories of His own blessed Person.

In chapter 12, we have some glimpses of this, for "He could not be hid." In verse 6 we hear Him say: "In this place is One greater than the temple." The temple was the shrine for the display of the Divine glory. So great had been the blaze of glory once that the priests could not stand to minister; but, alas! when Christ came, so far had things degenerated in the hands of man that the temple had become a house of merchandise. The Lord Jesus in His own Person superseded the temple, and in Him all the glory of God was displayed.

In verse 41 we read His words: "Behold, a greater than Jonas is here," and we see how Christ is the One in whom the power of God is displayed; yea, "the exceeding greatness of His 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" (Eph. 1. 19-21).

Further, it is recorded in verse 42 that He said, "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here." All the wisdom of God is set forth in Him. So we read in 1 Cor. 1. 24 of "Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Once again, as we view His manifold glories, as we meditate upon His greatness, we bow down in His presence and worship Him.

We pass on to chapter 16, and in verses 15 and 16 we find that in reply to Christ's direct question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter had learned this, as verse 17 indicates, by revelation from the Father. He acknowledged that He was Messiah, and He further confessed Him to be "the Son of the living God." This seems to carry us on to resurrection, and to suggest that He who in His own Person is God the Son, and who yet speaks of Himself in this very chapter as "the Son of Man" (verse 13) would on the other side of death be saluted as "the Son of the living God," and would commence the great work of which He spoke in verse 18.

Do not let us be misunderstood, He always was "the Son of the living God," but the revelation by the Father was preparatory to the revelation by the Son as to the great work to which He would put His hand, but which could not be commenced till He had gone into death, and had risen triumphantly out of it. We do not think Peter understood either the revelation of verse 17 or that of verse 18 till the Holy Spirit was given, and till the great truth of the mystery was communicated through the Apostle Paul. How clear his apprehension was then his epistles make abundantly manifest.

Now let us see what "the Son of the living God" would do; let us read verse 18: "And I also, I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My assembly, and Hades' gates shall not prevail against it" (N. Tr.). Here is the first announcement of that which lay so near to His heart. He who as God the Son was in the council chamber of eternity, and to whom that assembly was given by the Father; He who became Man that He might go to the cross and thus secure it for Himself—He says, "On this rock—not Peter, but Peter's confession of His Person—I will build My assembly."

Only God could say "I will." He, who through Moses uttered the sevenfold "I will" to the oppressed Israelites (Exod. 6. 6, 7), here speaks and says, "I will build My assembly."
Note the ring of proprietorship; observe the joyous tone. "The Son of the living God" is to-day building, building, building. Say not that there is nothing doing to-day. Since the day of Pentecost Christ has never ceased His work of building His assembly. What He builds will stand; there is no possibility of failure or breakdown, and when it is completed He will display the structure in all its magnificence to a wondering and admiring universe, and there shall be for God "glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the ages of ages. Amen." (Eph. 3. 21, N. Tr.).

In the beautiful picture of the kingdom which chapter 17. presents, we find that everything shall give place to Christ. In the transfiguration scene He was the central figure. From the "excellent glory" the Father declared His delight in Him, and He also demanded that He should be heard (verse 5). Every voice must be hushed, every ear must be opened when He speaks. Then as the disciples "lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (verse 8). Every person must, and shall, give place to Him; for He must, and shall, be supreme. Let us recapitulate:

1. Christ is "the Son" (Matt. 1. 27);
2. Christ is "greater than the temple" (Matt. 12. 6);
3. Christ is "greater than Jonas" (Matt. 12. 41);
4. Christ is "greater than Solomon" (Matt. 12. 42);
5. Christ is "the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16. 16);
6. Christ is the Father's Well-beloved (Matt. 17. 5);
7. Christ is supreme over all (Matt. 17. 5-8).

With this in mind let us read and ponder over the precious and familiar words (Matt. 18. 20). May they come to us with all the freshness of the first time: "For where two or three are gathered together unto My Name, there am I in the midst of them" (N. Tr.) We are aware that this verse is said to apply principally to a meeting for prayer, and its context does seem to suggest that that may be the primary meaning of it. We judge, however, that it is true of every occasion on which saints are gathered together in assembly. The verse has been well described as "The charter of the Church in all ages," and we believe it to be so. Who is the Speaker? The all-glorious Person, whose glories have been passed before us, we trust, by the Holy Spirit of God.

Still He has the assembly before Him. He who is the Centre of Divine affections, the Centre of the purposes of God, the Centre of heaven's worship, who will yet be the Centre of the universe, is to-day the Centre of the assembly. All over the earth it is to be found, for it consists of all who truly believe in His peerless Name. Varied may be the degree of acquaintance with Him, and meagre is the highest appreciation; but all who are His compose His assembly, and of that He is the Centre. It might be, and in many cases in this country at any rate, it would be, impossible to get together all the assembly in a given place; for even if it were physically possible, the will of man has, alas! rendered it morally impossible. There may be, however, "two or three" who seek to be true to Him, to answer to His mind, to keep His Word and not deny His Name. They may be obscure, despised, reckoned as of no account; they may be marked by much weakness, but if gathered together unto His Name He is there. He did not say two or three hundred, but "two or three."

Be of good cheer, ye feeble two or three, wherever you are; with Himself in the midst you want nothing more. They are gathered unto His Name. We much prefer this reading in the late Mr. Darby's New Translation, from which we have quoted largely in this paper. In His Name suggests that He is absent. When Parliament is opened, if His Majesty is not present it is opened by a Commission in his name. That means that he is absent. Our blessed Lord Himself gathers us unto His Name. His
Name is our rallying-point; it is the bond that unites us; its fragrance fills our souls and rises gratefully as an odour of a sweet smell to the Father; with all the authority of that Name those who are thus gathered are invested.

Then we have His Word: "There am I in the midst of them." He does not say, "There am I by My Spirit;" nor does He say, "There am I present to faith;" but He does say, "There am I in the midst of them." We respond to His call; we are gathered by Himself around Himself; we are abstracted from the world in every shape and form. Our eyes are closed to every sight of earth; our ears are closed to every sound of earth; our hearts are closed to every object on earth; we see HIMSELF, we feast our eyes upon His beauties and His glories; we apprehend something of His greatness; we hear His voice as He sings in God the Father's ear, and as He declares the Father's name; our hearts are lost in the wondering contemplation of Himself; we worship at His feet, and through Him we worship the Father.

May God in His infinite grace, and by His Holy Spirit give us an increased and an ever-increasing sense of the greatness of His beloved Son, our adorable Lord, that, as sharers of His delight in Him, we may know what it is to be worshippers before the Father's face.

"Worship, honour, praise and glory,Would we render unto Thee;
Heights unsearched and depths unfathomed
In Thy wondrous love we see!
"All Thy glory shines transcendent
In the Person of the Son,
Jesus Christ, Thy Well-beloved,
Who redemption's glory won."

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ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.
What is the Force of "Hades" as used in Scripture?

Would you infer that in Luke 16, you get two compartments in Hades—a great gulf fixed between, so that there is no passing between the two in the spirit-world, the occupants of the one in comfort and happiness, that of the other in suffering and misery? Also in 2 Cor. 5, where we read, "To be absent from the body" is "to be present with the Lord," if the spirit is in Hades what does this mean? In verse 17 we read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (or, "there is a new creature"). Would it be Scriptural to say that it is the new man, that which we receive at new birth, that is present with the Lord?

To get a right idea of Hades you must look at it as in relation to Death. Hades is not a place, but a condition. Death is not a place, but a condition. Hades is the condition of the SOUL without the body; Death is the condition of the BODY without the soul. The condition of the soul of the unbeliever is one of suffering and misery; the condition of the soul of the believer, one of comfort and happiness. "The great gulf fixed" is a symbolical expression signifying the truth of the eternal separation between the believer and the unbeliever without the hope of a second chance.

If you apply the test of Hades being a condition and not a place you will find that this is the Scriptural thought. One striking instance is found in Rev. 20. 14—"And Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire." This means that all the dead bodies being raised and the disembodied souls being re-united to the resurrected bodies, the individuals, who in their former state represented the conditions of Death and Hades, will be cast into the lake of fire. If Hades were a place then we should have the incongruous idea of a condition (Death) and a place (Hades) cast into a place (the Lake of fire). But keeping in mind that Hades is a condition and a counterpart to Death, all is simple and plain.

The whole of this and kindred themes have been dealt with in a pamphlet obtainable at our publishers, entitled,
"Shall not the Judge... do right?"

We advise you to procure a few copies and use them among your friends.

What we have said really answers the second part of the question also. Our correspondent can see the difficulty that believing Hades to be a place puts him in. Hades being a condition, that is of soul without body, the soul of the believer is happily present with the Lord. It is the believer himself, as identified with his soul, who is present with the Lord.

The condition is one thing; the place is another. The condition is a disembodied soul, the place—with Christ. Don’t mix up condition and place—keeping these thoughts clear in your mind will solve your difficulties in understanding these things.

It is true that "new creation" only obtains before God, but that is linked up with us as individuals, who have been saved by the grace of God. How this can be is in the hands of God Himself.

[...]

Colossians 1. 23.

In Colossians 1. 23 it is written that the Gospel "was preached to every creature which is under heaven." Are we to understand that our Lord’s command in Mark 16. 15, to preach the gospel to every creature was accomplished by the time Paul wrote his letter? It hardly seems possible.—BRONDESUBY.

The point of the verse to which you allude is not the accomplishment of the work of preaching the Gospel, but the scope that the Gospel embraced, the sphere to which it addressed itself.

In the previous dispensation God’s dealings of a direct sort were bounded by the limits of Israel. Even when the Lord was on earth limits were imposed, as in Matthew 10. 5 and 6. Now all is changed, and Paul writing to this Gentile assembly delights to remind them that the Gospel had for its sphere of opera-

Quickening, and the Sealing of the Spirit.

What is the difference between the sealing of the Spirit and the quickening of the Spirit?—or in other words, do both happen at the same time?—TRECYNON.

Quickening is the sovereign act of God. It is so presented in Ephesians 2. 5. In John 5. 21-27, the Lord Jesus claims that He sovereignly quickens even as the Father quickens, and this in regard to men’s souls as well as their bodies. Further, in John 6. 63, we read, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth.” We believe that the reference there is to the Holy Spirit, and hence the word should be printed with a capital “S” as above. By being quickened a man is made alive toward God. Apart from that he could not be sealed.

The sealing of the Spirit is a distinct-ively Christian blessing only possible after the Lord Jesus Christ had accomplished redemption and had been glorified (see John 7. 39). Men were quickened in the days before He came, but were not sealed at all. To use a homely simile, quickening is like preparing a house to dwell in; sealing is the Spirit indwelling the house He has prepared. Sealing takes place when we have believed the Gospel of our salvation as Ephesians 1. 13 states.

Clearly, then, they do not happen at the same time. Quickening must precede sealing.
THE BRIAR AND ITS BLOOMING. (J. T. Mawson.)

I have just received, in this far away corner of the earth, a copy of the October Number of that useful magazine Simple Testimony, and have read with pleasure and profit a paper in it by the Editor under the above title. I am sitting in a garden of roses, which silently yet luxuriantly are sending their response to the glorious shining of the sun. But not far away, just over the road in fact, is some rough land in which briars and other wild things are growing rankly. In these surroundings this paper on the briar has made me ponder, and that right deeply. What a contrast between this fragrant garden and that tangle of useless growth! The first is a thing of beauty and a joy to every eye, the latter is a pernicious plot and a pest. Yes, here is a lesson, here is truth to be learnt!

I and every other Christian once grew and found our whole life and pleasure in "this present evil world," we had our part in the pestilent growth of "ungodliness and worldly lusts," wild things were we, untrained and refusing all training, doing our own wills; fulfilling the desires of the flesh and the mind; by nature children of wrath. And over the way was the garden where the Master trained His roses, where His will was supreme, "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." I remember the time when I, a wild briar, looked over the fence and across the way and saw the beauty of the Lord's tillage, and realized the uselessness of my life and its hopelessness. I knew what the end must be to all the wild growth in which I had my part, for I had read in Holy Scripture that "that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned" (Heb. 6. 8). Yes, this present evil world must come under the judgment of God. "Behold the Lord cometh... to execute judgment," and every wild briar must be burned up.

I remember how dissatisfied I got with my life long ago, how disappointed I was when in spite of all my sighs and struggles I could not produce roses such as grew in the Master's garden, and my disappointment deepened into disgust as I learnt that it was my very nature that was at fault, so that I often addressed myself in some lines that I heard a servant of the Lord quote with considerable force at that time,

"Who knows thee well will treat thee with disgust:
Degraded mass of animated dust."

I learnt afterwards that all this exercise of heart was the result of the Master's interest in me. He had purposes of grace in regard to me, and these exercises were preparing me for a wonderful event that was to take place in my life, which was nothing less than being transplanted by grace to His own kingdom of grace. How it melts the heart and moistens the eye to consider the long-suffering of God with this world of iniquity, which still pleads with men in it who have no desire for anything but their own sinful wills, as it did with us who are now saved. He still holds back the well-deserved wrath and continues to take out of the world a people for His Name. He is still choosing those who by nature are briars and transplanting them to His own plot that He may there fulfil His own purpose in and through them. Apart from this sovereign mercy, neither I nor any other Christian would even have desired to have any place or portion outside the world.

"By grace we are saved," and of all such the Word says, "Ye are God's husbandry." What a joy it was to be
transplanted to God's garden, to find oneself standing in "the true grace of God," there to "grow in grace"; no longer under condemnation, but in Christ. The knowledge of that made me sing "Happy day." But God's plan was to do more than transplant us to His own plot. More was necessary than that; the briar growth had to give place to the true rose graft; room had to be made for Christ, the plant of renown, CHRIST had to be written in your heart and mine, and that was done in my case when I learnt that He had loved me and given Himself for me, that my salvation from a life of slavery and an eternity of woe had been secured for me by His suffering on the cross.

I remember when first I had a garden, and knew nothing of rose culture, how delighted I was when I noticed a most vigorous growth on a beautiful rose tree, I looked for many fragrant blossoms on that branch that seemed to lengthen by inches every day, but no roses appeared and those shoots which were bearing roses began to languish and cease to flower. Then I realized that this, to me, most promising growth was the product of the briar root and because it had not been ruthlessly cut away the tree had lamentably suffered, and not again that season did it put forth its former beauty. Self in us abides the same and will to the end, and if the life of Jesus is to be made manifest in our mortal bodies, there must be the mortification of our members which are upon the earth. We must be those who have no confidence in the flesh. Self judgment must be our rule. Many a promising shoot will have to be cut away, and we be made little of, if Christ has to be seen in us. Many of those bitter experiences in life when things that we cherished, and in which we could boast, those things that made something of us, were taken from us, were simply the Master's wise cutting down of the self-growth that Christ might be magnified in us. If we have been planted for the Master's pleasure in His garden we must be subject to His culture, or we cumber the ground. How often under that culture has our pride been checked and our vanity wounded, and this must continue to the end; the experience is not joyous while it lasts, the sharp pruning knife seems to cut into the very core of our being, but it is all meant to yield afterwards those peaceable fruits of righteousness, the fragrant roses that delight the Master's eye. Ah! let us yield ourselves to the Master's hand who ever uses the knife for our good.

So these three things have been and are taking place: (1) We were transplanted from the wild briar waste to the Master's garden when we were saved by grace; that was done once and for all. (2) Christ was grafted into our very hearts, that the beautiful graces that were ever perfect in Him might be reproduced in us. (3) There must be a constant cutting back, a crucifixion of that which is only of self, for as self flourishes what is of Christ in us must languish and decline, and this is to be a continual experience.

Hear what Paul says "I AM CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST" He had seen the righteous judgment of what he was as a wild briar at the cross of Christ, "NEVERTHELESS I LIVE." Grace had given him a place in God's tillage, the only place of true life. "YET NOT I, BUT CHRIST LIVETH IN ME." The life of the heavenly scion was seen in him and not the energy of the old briar. "AND THE LIFE WHICH I NOW LIVE IN THE FLESH I LIVE BY THE FAITH OF THE SON OF GOD, WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME." He brought forth the heavenly flowers in the joy of what he had learnt Christ to be; he responded to the bright shining of that love that had become wholly his life, glad to be nothing himself and less than nothing that Christ might be everything: that Christ might be magnified in him whether by life or by death.
Thank God that such a plant has grown and flourished in His garden; thank Him that it was grace that made Paul what he was, grace, all grace, as he himself confessed, "by the grace of God I am what I am"! And let us thank Him again that the grace that was sufficient for Paul is still within our reach. It has not changed or diminished, for it is in Christ who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Hence what has been may still be, and we whom grace has saved and planted in God's tillage may answer to God's good and acceptable and perfect will just as these roses that surround me to-day in this fruitful south land respond so fragrantly and beautifully to the culture of the one in whose garden they grow.

"THE SACRIFICE OF PRAISE."

(II. J. VINE)

Notwithstanding the declension in the assemblies which profess Christ's Name, by Him we are told in Heb. 13. 15 to offer "the sacrifice of praise to God continually." When depressing influences would rob God of such offerings—just as Israel's altars were desolated of old—it is good that those who know the redeeming work and the royal worth of our Lord Jesus Christ should be told to give to God just that which the Spirit moves them to offer up by the One who saves them to the uttermost, and to do so "continually," in spite of every effort of dark powers to drown or deaden the sweet tones of spiritual praise which are so pleasant to our God and Father. Any real revival among those who belong livingly to the assembly, which is God's house, has always been marked by this; but the Spirit would have it to mark us continually, and not only on special occasions.

"One string there is of sweetest tone Reserved for those who know His grace, 'Tis sacred to one class alone, 'Tis touched by one peculiar race; And pleasant is its sound of praise, Becoming well the saints of God; Should they refuse their song to raise, The stones might tell their shame abroad."

It also becomes the servants of the Lord as well as the saints. Neither care for the welfare of those who belong to God's house, the assembly, nor toil in the quarries of sin and dark-ness to win souls for Christ, nor circumstances of adversity in the path of service for His name, nor the opposition of the wakeful enemies of the truth, should be allowed to still the praises of the Lord. See the apostle and his companion initiating the work of the gospel and of the assembly in Europe! Behold them cast into prison with backs bleeding! Their feet are made fast in the stocks, the darkness of midnight is upon them, when,—Hearken!—"At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." Those praises were none the less acceptable to God because they ascended from a vile Macedonian jail. Should ours be less fragrant and plentiful now that we can come together in assembly around our living Lord in peace, with none to make us afraid?

The One who is in our midst says "I will sing!" Nor will He fail to do so! We may, but, blessed be God, our Lord and Leader continues to sound the praises of God, as we read, "I will declare Thy Name unto my brethren; in the midst of the assembly will I sing Thy praises" (Heb. 2. 12, N. Tr.). He makes God known to us and He sings praises to God. In other epistles Paul may address himself to the saints as an apostle, but in Hebrews Jesus is the Apostle, none other is to be thought of. He it is in whom God has spoken fully and finally to
us. He is also the one High Priest by whom we draw nigh to God.

We are told to “consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, who is faithful to Him that has constituted Him.” Yes, faithful and merciful too! Fail He cannot!

Greater than angels, He has seated Himself on the right hand of the greatness of the throne on high, having by Himself first put away our sins at Calvary;—greater than the heavens and the earth, the works of His hands. He shall continue still “the Same” when they are changed;—greater than man as seen in Adam, He, the Son of Man, after having tasted death for everything, is crowned with glory and honour;—greater than Moses, “counted worthy of greater glory than Moses,” He is now Son over God’s house;—greater than Joshua, He has passed through the heavens and leads His own into eternal rest;—greater than Aaron, He is after the order of Melchisedec, Minister of the true tabernacle which the Lord hath pitched and not man;—Aaron was priest on earth, Melchisedec was king and priest on earth, and it is said, “Consider how great this man was” (Heb. 7. 4), but it is said of our Lord who “sprang out of Judah” (verse 14); “If He were on earth, He would not be a priest” (Heb. 8. 4); He has gone “into heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us.” Fail! how could such an One fail? He remains faithful, as we have said, and He is over the house where the sacrifice of praise ascends continually, “Whose house are we if, indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end.” It is in Him we have boldness,—not in ourselves,—and access, too, in confidence by the faith of Him where He is. Faith makes good to us the things hoped for, as well as the things not seen.

The departure from first love in the assemblies, the degrading doctrines of libertines, and the downgrade principles and practices of lawless leaders, began even when apostles were on earth, and they have sunken deeper and deeper since. Nevertheless the path of the just shineth more and more till the perfect day, and the Son of the living God, glorified on high, encourages the praises of His own to ascend with increasing sweetness, constancy and volume meanwhile.

Is it not touching when we read down through Fm 22. to see the deep sufferings which the forsaken One of God endured upon the tree, and then near the close to find those words we have already mentioned: “I will praise Thee;” and again: “Ye that fear the Lord, praise Him;” and then: “My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation”? The Sufferer becomes the Singer, the One who knew sorrow beyond all others sings the song of songs, and, those who fear the Lord, tuned by His pangs and moved by His suffering love and sorrow, respond to the heavenly voice of the Living One and offer the sacrifice of praise to God also. He endured the cross, He suffered outside the religious camp, but He has gone into heaven now. Those who go forth to Him are exhorted therefore to “consider well Him who endured” so much. In His greatness and glory we are enjoined to consider Him again and again, but in the sufferings He endured we are told to consider Him well! It is this which tunes the souls of those who know His love to praise, and makes deep-toned worship flow forth. We know Him in the heights of His glory, we consider Him well in the depths of His sorrow, and offerings of praise follow.

“...heaven itself now to appear before the face of God for us.” Fail! how could such an One fail? He remains faithful, as we have said, and He is over the house where the sacrifice of praise ascends continually, “Whose house are we if, indeed we hold fast the boldness and the boast of hope firm to the end.” It is in Him we have boldness,—not in ourselves,—and access, too, in confidence by the faith of Him where He is. Faith makes good to us the things hoped for, as well as the things not seen.

The departure from first love in the assemblies, the degrading doctrines of libertines, and the downgrade principles and practices of lawless leaders, began...
into the holiest of a... in full assurance of faith, and look forward to be “with Him” when He comes again, and meanwhile “in Him” they are received into the favour of God their Father, through the work and worth of our Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son. The truth frees us from what hinders, and the Son gives us freedom indeed before the Father’s face.

Right at the close of the Old Testament, when God’s people and the priests of Israel were exceedingly depraved, those who feared the Lord were often together, and “HIS NAME” was their glorious theme! Fragrant, indeed, was it to Him, for He “hearkened and heard it.” The choice Gospel concerning the Son of Man introduces us later to those of similar spirit in Israel. That most excellent treatise of Luke shows to us those who thought and spake of Him, and that when failure abounded. Their subject was perfection, not imperfection and corruption. It has often been said that Luke’s Gospel illustrates Paul’s doctrine which frees us from the principle of sin and death and turns us from self to One in glory and life, so that the Spirit may make our hearts overflow with praise and worship, even as we are told in Ephesians and Colossians: “Making melody in your hearts to the Lord;” “Sing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” It is a matter of the heart going out to Him who loves us. In harmony with this Luke opens with burst after burst of praise as God’s Son, the perfect man Christ Jesus, comes forth. His mother is hailed with blessing; Mary magnifies the Lord and rejoices in God her Saviour; Zacharias, who maintained his priestly function in God’s house, blessed the Lord God of Israel, and the heavenly host praised God, and said, Glory to God in the highest; the shepherds praised Him; and Simeon, who waited for Christ to come, when He saw Him, blessed God and uttered his Nunc Dimittis in the temple, for his eyes had seen God’s salvation. And this precious book of Luke, set out “in order,” as we are told, giving us the record of the Man whose perfection excels all others (written as inspired of the Spirit accordingly, so that even a critic such as Renan admitted, “It is the most beautiful book that has ever been written”), shows us that great joy and rejoicing may be the portion of true believers,—the true circumcision,—“who worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh;” closing, as it does, by letting us see the disciples gathered together “with great joy,” “continually in the temple praising and blessing God” (chapter 24. 53).

Those who are redeemed by the blood of Christ, born again by the living Word of God, having come to the Rejected of man but the Chosen of God, are builded together a spiritual house to-day, a holy priesthood, to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God by Him.

"Then let our gladsome praise resound, And let us in His work abound."

It is because we have tasted what is heavenly that we are conscious of the presence of what is the opposite.

It is astonishing how very little place Christ has in the religion of the world—even when it is true. They will talk of holiness, piety, justification, etc., but Christ as a person whom the world has rejected is not in their thoughts.

In the measure in which the coming of Christ as a real hope went down, the church lost its character. It was just in the process of losing this hope, that it settled down into the world; and the measure in which a person settles himself for earth, he unsettles himself for heaven.
The tower, however, was not merely for such a contingency but was connected with their purpose to make themselves "a name," i.e., that their renown should be spread abroad in and dominate the earth. This brings us to the great feature which marked Babel at the outset, and which is stamped upon Babylon all through Scripture—the glorification of man. Clearly enough these early post-diluvians had no thought of God as the proper end and object of their existence, and hence they substituted themselves as such. It was "let us build us a tower," and

In the first place then we gather that, as at the outset, so now they distrusted the Word of God. At the outset God announced His judgment which would follow upon disobedience. Eve falling under Satanic influence did not believe that God would judge as He had said. Now God had announced that come what may He would not judge the world again by a flood consequent upon an interruption of the order of nature which He had established (See Gen. 8. 21, 22), and men did not believe that he would not, and consequently proposed to build a tower whose top should reach unto heaven.

By this proposition they virtually said—"Supposing that once more God interferes with our doings, and sends a flood of water rolling over our plain in the land of Shinar, let us take steps to circumvent His plans and frustrate His judgment." Unbelief thus was followed by rebellion against the anticipated judgment of God.

The tower, however, was not merely for such a contingency but was connected with their purpose to make themselves "a name," i.e., that their renown should be spread abroad in and dominate the earth. This brings us to the great feature which marked Babel at the outset, and which is stamped upon Babylon all through Scripture—the glorification of man. Clearly enough these early post-diluvians had no thought of God as the proper end and object of their existence, and hence they substituted themselves as such. It was "let us build US a tower," and
“let us make US a name.” Their course then is pretty plain. First unbelief, then rebellion against the feared judgment of God, followed by the setting up of themselves as the great centre-piece of the picture, so that everything on earth might contribute to their pleasure and glory.

All this leads to a fourth thing. These early pioneers were no barbarians, as the perpetrators of the great “higher critical” hoax would have us believe, but men of intellect and astute vision. The ante-diluvian age had been one of fierce and murderous individualism; theirs should be one of highly organized centralization. The cut-throat policy, when every man’s hand was against his neighbour, must cease. It must be replaced by the policy of men amicably combining to assert themselves and cast off the fear of God. Moreover, how could they, as individuals, achieve the mighty works they proposed? Only by combination, organization, and centralization could they hope to build their colossal and magnificent tower. It was a work, we may safely say, which no twentieth century contractor would dare to tender for. They truly did not carry their project far, but the pyramids of Egypt, which apparently date back to centuries not long after the flood, remain to show us what gigantic works were accomplished. So the days after the deluge became days not of the great and imposing I, but of the glorified and magnificent US.

Thus men began once more to lift themselves up in mind and achievement, and consequently the great JEHOVAH came down.” He saw their works and their projects. He recognized their unity expressed in the oneness of their language. He foresaw the possibilities and the ultimate results of this oneness, and from Him judgment proceeded—a judgment totally different from that which they had expected and were in process of arming themselves against. They were taken all unawares. By the simple act of confounding their language so that they did not understand one another’s speech, their combination, organization, centralization and their building enterprise instantly collapsed.

Their fear had been “lest we be scattered.” One single act of Almighty power, and “from thence did the LORD scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.” The thing was so patent that men themselves named the spot Babel, which means “confusion.”

It strikes us as not a little significant that those who have studied the subject (see, for instance, Young’s Analytical Concordance under Babel; Babylon) give a second meaning to the name, viz., Bab-il meaning “gate of God.” It looks as if there is here one of those plays upon words which are common in Scripture, and employed to fix the reader’s attention. Men thought it was “Bab-il” but it turned out to be “Babel.” They dreamed that they were going through the golden gate to deity, in some shape or form; it may have been in making themselves gods. In result, however, they had to painfully learn that their bricks and bitumen were but a slimy gate to folly and confusion.

The confusion so plainly manifested was an act of God in government. As, however, is the case with God’s judgments, it was exactly suited to the offence. Their thoughts, their actions, their tower and city all were confusion, though from the human standpoint all seemed to be symmetry and order. The fact is that nothing is order outside of God’s order. There may be extraordinary organization, and men may act with the unanimity and precision of a well-disciplined army, but if all this order is not of God and beneath His control it is pure confusion. Babel was pure confusion, and consequently CONFUSION was written upon it large by God Himself, in so plain a fashion that men have called the place Babel from that day to this.

To-day the world is more closely
following out the ideas which prevailed in primitive Babylon than at any other time in its history. Never was so much stress laid on organization and order, and in the irony of God's government never was confusion more plainly stamped upon the whole fabric of civilization. To show the way in which the principles set forth in Babylon are coming to a head to-day would be instructive, but we must not be tempted to digress.

A couple of centuries or so rolled, during which men learnt to accommodate themselves to the limitations imposed by diversity of speech and division into nations, whilst not abandoning the original principles of Babylon, and then Abram was born of the stock of Shem, and Genesis 12. abruptly begins with the announcement, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee ... so Abram departed." The world having been judged as confusion, here we have the call of God; an altogether new departure in God's ways. The two features that mark every call of God come plainly into view.

The call of God firstly means separation. Abram had to go "out of ... from ... from ..." It entailed the snapping of links—links not only of a national sort but those social and even domestic in character. By this time the infection of idolatry had spread from Babylon in many directions, and so we read, "Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood [i.e., the river Euphrates] in old time, even Terah the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took Abraham from the other side of the flood" (Joshua 24. 2, 3). Out of these idolatrous surroundings Abraham was called, and because of them the separation involved in the call was of a drastic and thorough nature. He who was eventually to be called "the friend of God" must not be left in any kind of friendship with the idolatrous world.

Just as the fact of Abraham's early surroundings being of an idolatrous nature is not mentioned in Genesis, so also no word is given to us there of the character in which God appeared to him when the call was given. We must go to the New Testament for this. Stephen commenced his final address with the statement, "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham." This great revelation was the starting point of his remarkable career.

Let us just visualize the situation. Abraham is dwelling in great Ur of the Chaldees. Archaeological discoveries make it plain that this was a splendid city of wealth and learning in those far-off days, a place where men were still making themselves "a name" and displaying their glory. In the midst of all this magnitude there appears before him the God of glory, i.e., God presented Himself to him characterized by the glory which is proper to Himself, clothed with that glory, if one may so speak.

How overwhelming must have been this revelation! What a revolution it must have wrought in Abraham's thoughts! How effectually it must have taken the glitter out of the glory of Ur! Here we have the secret of his remarkable life of pilgrimage and self-denial.

The separation of Abraham from his country, his kindred, and his father's house was not accomplished in a day. Years elapsed, and the final links were not broken until God further intervened and Terah his father died in Haran. Then Abraham stepped forth and turned his back upon the glories of the plains of Shinar for ever. He became the man of the tent and the altar. The tent proclaimed his dissociation from the mighty palaces as a pilgrim: the altar proclaimed his approach to and communion with God.
The call of God, then, not only meant separation but also designation. It meant that God called Abraham not only “from” but “unto.” He was called “unto a land that I will show thee.” To that land was he designated, and consequently that land is his. True, he never possessed it, not a square yard of it, save a few that he purchased with money as a burying-place for Sarah. Yet he will possess it all, taking it up in the coming age in the persons of his national seed, the elect Israel of God.

The land then was that to which Abraham was designated, and the knowledge of this was public property. But the God who appeared to him was more than the God of the land, or even than “the God of all the earth”: He was the God of glory, and Hebrews II. lets us into the knowledge of that which consequently Abraham had before the vision of his soul as a secret thing. “He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” He was amongst those who “declare plainly that they seek a country . . . they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city” (verses 10, 14, 16).

So after all Abraham had a city before him. Nimrod and his helpers started to build their city, the tower of which was intended to reach unto heaven—man ever attempts to work up to heaven and fails. Abraham had a heavenly city in view: God was its Builder and Maker not man, and consequently it has foundations which abide. The contrast was complete.

The object of the builders of Babel was to make themselves a name. To a certain extent they succeeded, for Nimrod “began to be a mighty one in the earth.” The call of God carried Abraham into a path far removed from the prowess and renown of these famous men. He started on his pilgrimage, however, with the Divine promise, “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing”; and God has been as good as His word. Even to-day, when faith is still at a discount, the name of Abraham is venerated not only by Christian but by Jew and Mohammedan also. That, however, is a small thing, but how great is the honour that God Himself should speak of him as “Abraham my friend” (Isa. 41. 8). Here is true greatness, greatness which abides whilst Nimrod’s tower and city are but a mass of shapeless ruins upon the plains of Mesopotamia and his rebel name is well-nigh forgotten.

Abraham became “the father of all them that believe” (Rom. 4. 11) and hence, as the next verse says, we are to “walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham.” We, too, have received the call; for to those same Roman believers Paul wrote of his own apostleship as being “for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ” (chap. 1. 5, 6).

Our place then in the world is after the pattern of Abraham’s. The heavenly hopes which were more or less secret in his day are clearly revealed to us and consequently the declared portion of our souls. The faith is preached amongst the nations, the effect of it where believed is to separate a people from the nations, but they are still for a time left among the nations, but responsible to walk among them as the called of Jesus Christ; for the way we know God is as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is even more wonderful and intimate than knowing Him as the God of glory.

Christian reader, what can the world offer us that is at all comparable with this?
THE MAN THAT WELL NIGH SLIPPED.
Psalm 73.

The writer opens this beautiful Psalm with a simple but blessed statement concerning God, and closes with a happy conclusion concerning himself. "Truly God is good" is the statement of the first verse; "it is good for me to draw near to God" is the conclusion of the last verse. Accept the statement and we must agree with the conclusion.

The statement, however, is not a general declaration of the goodness of God toward His creatures—true as that would be—but it is the assertion that "God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart." The great object of the Psalm is to prove the absolute goodness of God to His people in spite of the trying circumstances they may have to pass through, the sorrows with which they may be faced, and the sufferings they may be called to endure.

This truth, however, must be learnt experimentally. Hence the Psalmist recounts the experiences by which he learned these two great truths. First, that in spite of prevailing evil God is good to His people, and hence, the second truth, that, in the midst of prevailing evil, God is the resource of His people.

The Psalmist opens the story of his experiences by telling us that as he passed along his way, through an evil world, there came a day when his feet were almost gone, and his steps had well nigh slipped (verse 2). It is written, "Narrow is the way that leadeth unto life" and this was as true for the godly Psalmist in his day, as for the Christian pilgrim in the present day. A narrow path needs but a single false step on either side to miss the way. It is not necessary to commit some grave fault, of which others can take account, in order to slip from the narrow path. The path of the Psalmist was not marred by any gross failure that would have disgraced him in the eyes of the world; no angry and impatient words had passed his lips that would have betrayed the state of his heart, and yet he had well nigh slipped. Had we not his own confession none would have known this from his conduct and speech.

However in spite of all appearances to the contrary, he confesses that he had well nigh lost confidence in God. His feet had almost slipped from the rock (verse 26, margin). Moreover he lets us know how it came to pass that his confidence in God was so severely shaken. The secret comes out. He was occupied with evil when out of touch with God. Hence he had a limited and perverted view of the evil. He saw the prosperity of the wicked and he saw the adversity of the godly, and in result he envied the portion of the wicked, he deprecated the portion of the godly, and he well nigh lost confidence in God.

In verses 4 to 12 he draws a solemn picture of the wicked. We must, however, remember this is a description of the wicked as seen by a saint when, for the moment, out of communion with God; so that, while all that he says is true, it is not the full truth. Still it is true that the wicked are characterized by "pride" and "violence," "corruption" and "oppression." Not only do they persecute the godly, but they are blasphemers who "set their mouth against the heavens." They say God takes no notice of the affairs of men, there is no knowledge in the most High, and yet withal they prosper and increase in riches.

This then is the picture presented by a soul out of communion. The wicked
prospering, the godly suffering, and God indifferent. The government of God apparently clean gone from the earth.

In the following verses (13 and 14) he describes the solemn effect upon a godly soul of occupation with evil when out of communion with God. He is tempted to think it is all in vain to have a clean heart and innocent hands. What profit is there in restraining my thoughts, and refraining from wickedness, when after all the wicked prosper and I am plagued and chastened every morning?

There are two snares to which the saint is ever exposed and by which our feet can slip from the rock of heart confidence in God. One, by occupation with evil when out of touch with God, the other by indifference to evil under the plea of love. If like the Psalmist we are occupied with evil apart from God, we shall lose confidence in God. If we are indifferent to evil we shall become nauseous to God. Indifference to evil in the church is indifference to the glory of Christ. Indifference to evil in the world is indifference to the rights of God.

It was the first of these two snares in which the Psalmist was caught: the result being he was thoroughly cast down and depressed. He is tempted to think (for mark it is not what he says but his inmost thoughts that he is laying bare) that his godliness is all in vain, for apparently it only involves him in fresh sorrows morning by morning.

However, in this the darkest moment of his experiences, Divine affections assert themselves (verse 15), proving indeed that, though his steps had well nigh slipped, yet, Divine life was working in his soul. Hot and angry thoughts were rushing through his mind, but love to the people of God, the proof of faith in God, held his lips. He says, "If I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children." But though he puts a seal upon his lips, yet a turmoil of painful thoughts disturbs his inward peace. He knows not how to reconcile the goodness of God to His people with the suffering state in which they are found, while at the same time the wicked prosper (verse 16).

But there is a limit to the conflict of his soul. It goes on "until" he returns to that secret place from which in spirit he had wandered—"Until," as he says, "I went into the sanctuary of God" (verse 17). The sanctuary speaks of the presence of God. Outside the sanctuary he looks at evil without God, inside he views everything, and everyone, with God. What a difference this makes! Outside all had been viewed in relation to time, inside all is viewed in relation to eternity. The wickedness of men, the goodness of God, the prosperity of the sinners, and the sorrows of the saints are no more viewed in connection with the passing moment, but in relation to the great end to which all is moving. Man—ever short-sighted—can take but a short view: God, with His far-reaching vision, sees the end from the beginning. It is true the Psalmist still views the evil of men, but now he views it with God, and at once the momentary prosperity and passing triumphs of the wicked fade from his view, and he sees instead the fearful end to which they are hastening.

This, however, is not all, for in the sanctuary we learn many truths. Thus it is that he discerns a second great truth that, though God apparently takes little notice of the prosperity of the wicked, or even the afflictions of the godly, yet actually God and His government are working behind all (verses 18–20). Thus he is brought to confess, "Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction . . . Thou shalt despise their image." It looked, indeed, as if the Psalmist had been in the slippery places, for had not his steps well nigh slipped? and on the
other hand the wicked appeared to be firmly established on a rock, for did they not prosper in the world and increase in riches? Actually the godly soul was on the rock though shaking; and the wicked were in slippery places, though prospering. Viewing the prosperity of the wicked apart from the sanctuary the godly man was cast down; viewing the wicked from the sanctuary he sees, that in the end, they will be cast down. Away from God the prosperity of the wicked appeared very real and lasting, in the sanctuary it was but an evil and passing dream.

The sanctuary has, moreover, still deeper lessons for the soul. He has seen the true character and end of the wicked; he has discovered the government of God at work beneath things seen; now he must look beneath his outward walk and ways and learn the secrets of his own heart (verses 21, 22). The exercises come nearer home. If the sanctuary exposes the character of the sinner, it will also discover the hidden springs of evil in the heart of a saint. All is laid bare in the light of the sanctuary. "When my heart was in a ferment," he says, "then I was brutish and ignorant, I was as a beast before Thee" (verses 21, 22 N. Tr.). The brute beast acts without the slightest reference to God, and the saint is brought to own that if he leaves God out of his thoughts he will not only sink beneath what is proper to a natural man, but he will fall to the level of a beast.

Having plumbed the evil of his own heart, God can at once teach him brighter and happier lessons. For the sanctuary is a retired and sacred spot where the deep things of God can be unfolded to the soul. As indeed was the happy experience of another soul, in a later day, when she found the sanctuary of God in the presence of Jesus and, sitting at His feet, heard His word. The Psalmist has been led into the depths, he shall now ascend into the heights. He has learnt something of his own heart, and thus he is prepared to learn the heart of God. Never are we more ready to learn the goodness of His heart than when we have discovered the badness of our own hearts. The discovery of what is in us opens the way for the revelation of what is in Him. Hence the Psalmist's thoughts are carried away from all that he had been before God to delight in all that God was for him. He can say, "I was as a beast before Thee, nevertheless I am continually with Thee." When hot and bitter thoughts were raging in his heart, even then he was the object of God's unwearied care. He says, as it were, "God was out of my thoughts, but I was never out of His thoughts"—"I am continually with Thee."

Furthermore he not only had a place in the heart of God, but he was held by the hand of God, for he can say, "Thou hast holden me by my right hand." I wandered, I behaved like a brute, I let go of His hand, but never did He let go of mine. I well nigh slipped, yea, verily, I should altogether have slipped, but He held me by my right hand. His heart of love set me as an object before Him, and His hand of power held me fast.

Learning thus with great delight all that God had been for him in the past, in the day when his feet had well nigh slipped he can look on with the utmost confidence to all that God will be for him in the future. He can say in every step of the pilgrim journey, "Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel." No need for me to weary my heart in seeking to unravel all the perplexing questions of my pathway through this evil world, for God Himself will guide me; and at last, when the end of the journey is reached, when man's small day is done, and the day of glory dawns, "Thou wilt receive me" (verse 24).

Happy indeed for the saint who has so learned God in the secret of the sanctuary that he can say, His heart cares for me, His hand holds me, His
wisdom guides me, and His glory will welcome me.

He who knows God thus has found in God the satisfying portion of his soul. Not only is he an object to God, but now God becomes the one Object to him. He can say, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee." But what about the prosperity of the wicked, their riches and their ease which once he had envied? "Oh," the Psalmist would say, "speak no more of those things, I have been into the sanctuary, I have learned the heart of God and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Him." As we sometimes sing:

"I have seen the face of Jesus
Tell me not of aught beside."

But we may say, "You are evidently a poor weak thing in the midst of a world where all is against you." "I know it," the Psalmist seems to reply, "for I have learnt by bitter experience that my flesh and my heart faileth, for time was when my feet had well nigh slipped, but I have been into the sanctuary and I have found a resting-place for my poor trembling heart"—"God is the rock of my heart and my portion for ever" (verse 26, margin). The heart that was once envious of the wicked has found its satisfying portion in the heart of God. The feet that were almost gone are firmly set upon the rock.

Truly God is good to His people (verse 1); and it is good to draw near to God (verse 28); and the one who draws near to God becomes a witness before men. "I have put my trust in the Lord—God, that I may declare all thy works."

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.

Chapter 2. Nebuchadnezzar's Dream.—continued.

DANIEL is brought in before the royal dreamer, and the first thing he does is to direct the attention of the king to the God of heaven. By Him wisdom is given to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding. He knows what is in the darkness, and the light itself dwells with Him: He dwells in it (1 Tim. 6. 16): He is it (1 John 1. 5), and He alone can command it to shine (2 Cor. 4. 6). Daniel is in communion with the One who knows all things, and therefore the dream and its interpretation are no secret to him.

From the captive brought out of Judea, Nebuchadnezzar is now to learn something of the God of heaven, who had not formed one of the gods to whom he had previously done reverence. This God is the revealer of secrets, and makes known to the king what shall take place at "the end of the days." The days of Nebuchadnezzar were not of so much importance as were the days that were yet to come. The days in which Nebuchadnezzar exercised the despotic power, and the days that were yet to come before the presence of Christ, were days in which man was being tested in various ways. Nothing was being permanently established in the hand of man. Death had removed all whom God had raised up into a special place of prominence, and not only that, but it became manifest through the failure of all such, that no man was able to bear the weight of the responsibility of the position in which he was set, and as to men like the Babylonian monarch, their ignorant and idolatrous hearts made them willing tools of the devil.

It is thus the world goes on in its
blind unbelief, transgression, and rebellion against the authority of God, always confident that it is making decided progress toward an ideal state of glorious prosperity, unspeakable happiness, and permanent tranquillity. Man, according to the conceit of his own heart, has embellished the world; against certain pestilences he has waged successful warfare, he has so used the resources of nature that a famine in one part of the world can be supplemented by the abundance to be obtained somewhere else, and the facilities for the transport of commodities have very nearly reached perfection. He is determined to reach that which he is pleased 'to call "The Millennium"—though without God and without Christ—by his own efforts, and of success he is confident. "The end of the days," in his judgment, is to be the end of all his toil, the fulfilment of his lofty ambition, and the peace and contentment of the human race.

But is this the picture that the living God brought before this proud monarch when sleep had sealed his eyes to the glory that surrounded his royal bed? Is it a vision of man crowned with the glory of his achievements he is made to witness? or is it that which is the result of the wicked will of the rebellious creature, when power is placed in his hands by God? Is it progress upward to the very mountain of God? or is it the downgrade of corruption, disappointment, dishonour, and final destruction?

"The end of the days" I have no doubt refers to the closing days of this present age, and the introduction of the Messiah, by whom the intervention of God in righteousness and power will take place for the bringing in of an order of things in which He will have His satisfaction and rest (Job 19. 25; Deut. 31. 29; Num. 24. 15-25; Isa. 10.-12.; Mal. 4.); and this all the prophets have foretold. And what would take place in these latter days, God was about to make known to this Gentile king. But it must be through one of God's own servants that the communication comes. The wise men must now take a back seat, and hide their heads. What had they to do with the God of Daniel?

But first of all must Nebuchadnezzar learn that not only is his dream well known to Daniel, but also the thoughts of his heart before the vision was given to him. He had evidently been pondering upon what might be the future of his great kingdom in the hands of those who would succeed him. His gods had, in his estimation, shown him great favour, and even the God of Israel had been compelled to own their power and the might of his armies. But the future held mysteries. Who could throw light upon things yet to come? Was it not possible that this mighty power might yet crumble to pieces, and pass away like a dream of the night?

Daniel brings these thoughts of the king's to his mind: "As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter; and He that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass." So the dream is the answer given to those thoughts, and Nebuchadnezzar gets a complete survey of the character and career of the colossal empire, which was the pride of his vain and foolish heart. And he has to witness it, in its last and strongest, if not most glorious, form, broken to pieces by a power greater than itself, and scattered like the chaff of the summer's threshing-floor. And in the destruction of this pagan monstrosity, the nightmare of Gentile oppression shall pass away for ever.

Universal dominion is the purpose of God, and belongs, as far as the earth is concerned, to the Twelve Tribes, and they shall have it in the day of the manifestation and glory of their Messiah. But it has always been the dream of "The man of the earth," whatever might be his nationality. The first man we read of who sought to bring to pass this idea of world-
empire is Nimrod (the name meaning Valiant, or Rebel), and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel (Gen. 10.). But when the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel” (Deut. 32. 8). Israel set up in responsibility failed to secure the inheritance that was promised them on the ground of their obedience, but God will once again take them up, not on the ground of responsibility, but in grace, and they will inherit by the mercy and grace of God that which they could never have inherited by their own faithfulness, and with Christ in their midst they will answer to the purpose of God (Ezek. 37. 21-28; Jer. 51. 19-23).

How many men since Nimrod have sought to dominate the whole earth, and perished most miserably in the vain attempt? The lust of power is deeply inherent in the nature of the child of Adam. And if he could seat himself upon the throne of the world would he be satisfied with it? No, he would not be content with anything short of the throne of the Omnipotent, and would he with this be satisfied until he had destroyed every creature that God had made. Man is capricious in his ways, insane in his desires, cruel and merciless in his actions. Give him unlimited and irresponsible power and he will murder all about him, and in the end immolate himself.

This image gives us a picture of the whole times of the Gentiles, that is, the time during which the government of the world would be in the hands of the Gentiles, the Jews being scattered throughout the earth, and subject to Gentile domination. Nebuchadnezzar has the power directly from the hand of God, and therefore the head and beginning of Gentile rule is represented by gold. To him only is the kingdom said to be thus given. To Nebuchadnezzar the prophet says: “Thou, O king, art a king of kings, unto whom the God of the heavens hath given the kingdom, the power, the strength, and the glory; wheresoever the children of men, the beasts of the field, and the fowl of the heavens dwell, He hath given them into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all: thou art this head of gold.” Except the fish of the sea everything is put under the sway of this pagan ruler.

We may safely conclude that Nebuchadnezzar never truly apprehended the extent of empire that was put into his hand by the God of heaven, and that it never really dawned upon his proud mind that he had not his empire by right of conquest, by his own excellent generalship, and by the valour if his mighty army. To take his high position as a gift from a God who had hitherto been unknown to him, and of whom he was no servant, and to thus set at naught his own prowess in the field of battle, was more than his proud spirit could at present stoop to. But for the moment this cold douche of unacceptable truth could be overlooked. The prophet had told him his dream. The spectre of the night that had disturbed his tranquillity, but which had faded away from his memory, stood out once more in all its grim reality before his mental vision. Here was a man, as the Chaldeans had said, who had to do with “The gods whose dwelling is not with flesh,” and a very god he seemed to the king, though by his own confession his God had placed him at the disposal of his own capricious disposition. He can, however, now be certain that the interpretation of the dream shall be worthy of his whole trust.

In the image these kingdoms are not represented in their rapacious and destructive character, nor according to the special power that distinguishes them, but according to the different degrees of splendour that marked them. We see in each successive kingdom a gradual decline of earthly grandeur and glory, though no deterioration of strength, except in the feet and toes, in which clay was mingled
with the iron; this mixture considerably weakened the strength of the last kingdom. It is, I do not doubt, the introduction of the democratic element that to-day so enfeebles the whole fabric of law and order, that things do not hold together as they once did.

To go on the principle that the people are able to govern themselves, and to put the government of a nation into the hands of the people, is to plan and invite the nation’s destruction. One has only to look abroad, and the unrest, disregard of authority, existence of associations of men that set the law of the land aside, so that it has become a greater crime and more perilous to the safety of the individual, to attempt to ignore those associations than to break the laws of the kingdom, and along with this the robberies and murders that daily and nightly abound, the perpetrators of which are never brought to justice, crowd the vision.

The believer in Christ is not a politician. He is not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. He does not interfere with its plans, its purposes and its governments. He belongs to another world—the Father’s world, a world of light, life, holiness, righteousness, peace and love. To this world he has been called by the grace of the Gospel, and is being conducted by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. He passes through man’s world, a world that stands guilty of the murder of the Son of God, and which is amenable to the judgment of God. The devil is the god of it religiously, and the prince of it politically (2 Cor. 4. 4; John 14. 30; 16. 11), and the follower of the rejected Christ refuses to defile himself with it. He only desires a passage through it, for his way home to the Father’s house lies through it. He is willing to pay for all he gets on the way. He pays “Tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour” (Rom. 13. 7).

But his separation from the course of this world does not embarrass his perception regarding its true moral condition before God. Indeed it rather clarifies his mental vision, and gives him a more just estimate of its true condition, and of the sure judgment that awaits it. No but a devotee of dumb idols, and who thought that God was such an one as himself, could suppose this world to be anything but a hold of rebels against the authority of God? Who could suppose that He would allow a world like this to go on for ever?

No, the true believer in Jesus is the one, and the only one, who truly knows what the world is, and how sure the judgment is that awaits it. God may bear long with it—has borne long with it—but its judgment is not slumbering. The Judge is near at hand: “Behold, He cometh with clouds; every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him” (Rev. 1. 7). When He appears it will not be a day of grace and Gospel activity, but a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. For that day the follower of Jesus waits with patience, for he knows that in the end He who executes the just judgment of God upon the evil doer will bring in a new heaven and a new earth, in which shall dwell righteousness, and in that eternal home of peace and love he will find the consummation of all his desires and hopes and expectations.

Nebuchadnezzar was the head of gold: God had made him a king of kings, and the power and splendour of the kingdom centred in himself. Little is said of his kingdom; much is said of himself. As to the others that arise after him, nothing is said of the rulers; the kingdoms themselves are more in view. “After thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee.” Though the kingdom eventually comes into the hand of the son and also the hand of the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar, yet
neither of these are the head of gold, nor have they any place in the vision.

"After thee shall arise another kingdom." It is not said "another person." And after that another, and yet another. But all inferior to the first. The second is clearly the Medo-Persian, the third the Grecian, and the fourth the Roman. But none of them, though all powerful kingdoms, comes up to the first in royal splendour and glory. The Persian king was himself under the laws of his kingdom, which could be enforced in spite of his desire that they might in certain cases be set aside. The Grecian king was not altogether beyond the control of his generals. But Nebuchadnezzar was himself above all the laws of his kingdom. His rule was altogether despotic. "Whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down (verse 19). And this power he had directly from God, to whom alone he was answerable, though he knew Him not. God, who takes account of the actions of men, could deal with him if he abused the power that was committed to him, and with that proud monarch He did deal with a very strong hand.

The fourth kingdom, as represented by the feet and toes, refers to the Roman empire in its last form, when it shall emerge out of the abyss (Rev. 17. 8), and its end is to go into perdition, because as then established it is satanic, and beyond everything hither-to seen on earth idolatrous. In the League of Nations we see a fore-shadowing of that coming empire. Men have no idea of the source and nature of the thing they are striving after in their efforts to bring wars to an end. If the Gospel of the grace of God were believed, if professing Christians had any liking for the truth, they would not be deluded by the insane notion that democracy, and a confederacy of nations, could be the hope of the world. But having torn the Bible to pieces and cast it on the rubbish heap, and degraded the Christ of God to the level of heathen philosophers—as the Philistines placed the ark of the covenant beside the idol in the temple of Dagon—the divine decree is that they shall be given up to a strong delusion, to believe a lie, that they all may be judged who obey not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2.). If men will not have the truth of God, they cannot complain if He does not preserve them from the devil's lie.

Upon the feet of this imperial monster the judgment of God falls. The stone cut out of the mountain without hands smites the image on the feet, and the clay, the iron, the brass, the silver, and the gold, are broken to pieces, and become as the chaff of the summer threshing-floors, and the wind carries them away, so that no place is found for them, and the stone itself becomes a great mountain, and fills the earth. Whoever falls upon this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall it will grind him to powder (Matt. 21. 44).

We see this coming to pass in Rev. 16. 13-21; 19.; Zechariah 14. These passages all refer to the day in which the stone shall smite the image, and break it to pieces. It is the great day of God Almighty; and the place in which the battle shall be fought, and where the kings shall receive their righteous reward, is called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon. It will be the day of Jacob's deliverance, and of the utter destruction of all his enemies. It will bring to an end the times of the Gentiles, and introduce the reign of the Messiah.

And now the king has both the dream and the interpretation made known to him. In the midnight of his idolatrous career he is brought under the dealings of the living God. God speaks once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth not, in a dream, in the vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon
the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction, that He may withdraw man from his purpose, and hide pride from man (Job 33.). And this does not always do, and therefore, to effect His own purpose of blessing, He has recourse to more severe measures. If we were wise we would at once respond to the touch of His hand. But we are not wise, but very foolish indeed, and in our state by nature neither know Him nor the touch of His hand, and therefore must we often go on in our own way until a staggering blow leaves us writhing in the dust, and then, and only then, it may be, we shall wake up to the eternal danger to which in our headlong career we were hastening, and to which we certainly should have come had it not been for His merciful interposition in that which at the moment may have seemed to us a hard and unmerciful manner. He knows what He is doing, and He knows the kind of material He has to work with in us, and only the sorrows that are absolutely necessary to effect His purpose concerning us are we made to suffer, for He does not afflict willingly and grieve the children of men. May we know that however heavy His hand may seem to us to be, it is moved by a heart of the most infinite and tender love, and guided by a mind of unfathomable wisdom.

THE MALE IN THE OFFERINGS. (W. H. WESTCOTT.)

In the beginning the male was put in responsibility over the sphere allotted to him; and the female was given to him as a helpmeet, his like, to be of him and for him (Gen. 2.). Eve was brought to Adam, an individual upon whom he could set his affection and who could share his pleasures and privileges; yet not accorded the same responsibility.

It seems that in the institution of the offerings, this principle is recognizable; for where Christ is typified as answering the wide glory of God, as in the burnt-offering, or where He is typified as sin-offering for a whole community, or for a priest or ruler whose whole sphere of responsibility was affected by his sin, it is a male victim that is presented (Lev. 1. and 4.).

It should affect us that a leader erring is evidently a more serious matter among saints and before God than the erring of a simple soul who is led. How softly should "ministering brothers" who travel about, or "local leaders" who are more fixed, or "missionaries," walk; and how careful should they be in the example set before the people of God.

Moreover, when we find that in some detail or practice we have erred, and have soiled our whole sphere of responsibility and service, how much more deep and searching should be our self-judgment, and the sense of our indebtedness to the death of Christ which alone makes atonement for our wrong. Our want of instruction, our ignorance, is no excuse for the error. As in British law courts no one may plead ignorance of the law to cover transgression of it, so is the saint of God responsible to know the truth of Christ and to walk according to it in life, service, and worship. Sinning through ignorance required atonement.

Christ suffered for our individual sins, but He also became representative of man in every sphere of responsibility in which man has failed; bringing sweet savour by virtue of His atonement into the very place where had been the ill-savour of man's sin. His death was one and indivisible; yet the diversities of its application are many, and require our reverent exercise and study.
The Deity of Christ.

TEHRAN, PERSIA,
Dec. 9th, 1922.

DEAR MR. EDITOR.—Ever since I read your remarks in the issue of August, 1921, in answer to the assertion of a Christadelphian, that—

"The doctrine of the Trinity which always goes hand in hand with the pre-existence of Christ theory, is a mere figment of the human imagination, and the early Apostolic Church knew nothing of it. It was manufactured by uninspired men, and no one has yet been able to prove it from the writings of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms for the simple reason it is not there,

I intended to write you a few lines.

Such remarks were also made to me by Unitarians on my first visit to Europe, many years ago. Many other voices, with their conflicting, bewildering, and confusing opinions, were raised by different sects of Christendom, but they made no impression at all upon me, because such questions had been settled for me, by God, in the precious Bible, years before in my loneliness in that very dark city of Kurdistan, Senneh.

As you know I was a Mohammedan, born of a family of Mullahs, and naturally a very strict Unitarian who trembled at the thought of the Trinity; the very word when at first I heard it gave me a shock. I always cherished that anti-Christian system—Islam—which is worse than heathenism, because it contains so much of the imitation of the truth, and hence is very misleading, and had a vague thought of one God, a fearful Despot who created hell in order to fill it with men and Genii, until I became acquainted with the Bible, and its plain teaching on the Trinity. Though the word is not found in it, and if the Unitarians or the Christadelphians said this, they were right; yet the doctrine and the pre-existence of Christ is so plainly taught in the words of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, that an honest man, Jew or Gentile, cannot get away from it, unless blinded by the god of this world.

Such was I. I thought that probably the Christians by pious falsehood—as it is practiced among Mohammedans "to practice evil that good may come"—in translating from the Hebrew had inserted these things to justify their tenets, so I gave myself to the study of the Hebrew, and to my great surprise the truth of the Trinity and the pre-existence of Christ was much more emphatically taught and confirmed, for some thoughts were really very poorly rendered into the Persian. This as far it went was very well, but a personal need of a Divine Saviour had to be felt, and acquaintance and personal contact with Him was necessary, which alas, I had not until the grace which sought me and found me, opened my eyes and I saw my utter ruin and cast myself on His grace.

Then "I saw." Oh! the moment when like the man who was born blind, and healed by the Lord Jesus, to the question, "Dost thou believe in the Son of God," I quickly responded "Lord I believe," fell down at His feet and "worshipped Him."

Ever since that acquaintance I have known Him, and "Oh, how He loves." For over forty years, in spite of my many shameful failings and sins, I have found Him the faithful and true friend, the same unchangeable Saviour God, and when in your much favoured land, I saw varieties of schools of opinion and different sects going to their Churches and Chapels, rites and ceremonies, but this poor Kurd, and former Mohammedan devotee had no place and rites to go to; then like the Samaritan leper of old I turned to Himself and fell at His feet, and had like him the approval and commendation from His blessed lips that in doing Him homage I "worshipped God."

Ah, beloved brother, no arguments will do, or can convince; what is wanted is the personal need, then the acquaintance with Himself. Do not those whom grace has acquainted with Him, apart from any teaching and doctrine, own that He is the blessed Son of God, our Saviour God,
and that His ways with us—His tender heart, is enough and has been enough to satisfy us that He is God? Oh! among ten thousands He is the Chief. Who can separate us from His love? Oh, if men only knew Him, if they only could see Him as I saw Him, no more arguments would be needed. He is the Remedy of all ill, the only answer to all riddles, and I had thousands of them.

"The brightness of God's glory the express image of His Person" "by whom also He made the worlds" (Heb. 1.).

It was so sweet to hear my only brother, who with a rifle once followed me in the streets of Senneh to kill me for my apostasy, speak of the Lord Jesus Christ as "God and Saviour." He goes about from village to village preaching Him; and there are many more coming out of that big Unitarian system, Mohammedanism, who gladly worship and own Him Lord, a pledge of the coming day when our faithful God shall cause every knee to bow to Him and every tongue to confess Him, as Lord, to the glory of God, the Father, whose nature and attributes all were glorified, sustained, and justified, when Jesus made atonement for sin on that Cross of shame—my due place.

I was not at all surprised when later on I found out that the Jewish nation did hold the doctrine of the Trinity, and their Rabbis and better informed teachers taught it because they found it in their inspired Book both in the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms, "for the simple reason it IS there." What unbiased mind, when comparing words and claims of Jesus as the great "I am" "before Abraham was," with Abraham's wonderful Guest in Genesis 18. can doubt or fail to see the truth of His claim?

For those who are interested in the subject, and for the Unitarians and the Christadelphians, it will be worth while to read carefully a paper in the form of a booklet by the Rev. C. W. H. Pauli, called "The Great Mystery, or How can Three be One?" published by the Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews.

I may add that some other Hebrew tracts by the same Society fell into my hands while in Kurdistan, and though the Hebrew was too high for me, yet merely by going over the references in them in my borrowed Bible, (for I had none of my own and my New Testament I had to hide from house to house, for fear of being killed), I was immensely helped.

Yours affectionately in the blessed Lord Jesus our Saviour God,

M. Sa’eed.

“Born of Water”

DEAR MR. EDITOR,—I venture to make a few remarks on this important subject in response to Mr. Barker's letter in your January issue.

In taking up this subject as presented in the Scriptures we naturally turn first to John 19. 34, 35—

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

"And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe."

The deliberation and solemnity and emphasis with which the Apostle John draws attention to this wonderful sight is arresting. Evidently blood and water are the two evidences of the death of Christ. There is one happy characteristic of Bible exposition. If you start with a right interpretation you will find every Scripture bearing on the subject falling into line with that interpretation and confirming it. On the contrary, if you begin with a wrong interpretation every step only lands you into difficulties and instead of Scripture forming your ideas you too often have the spectacle of men twisting Scripture to suit their own ideas.

Let us start with the statement that we need, as Scripture shows us, a double cleansing, first from the guilt and then from the defilement of our sins.
Two Scriptures will prove that in each case cleansing is involved:—

"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

(1 John 1. 7).

This cleansing is clearly from the guilt of sin. The Old Testament says, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17. 17), atonement is completely effected by the blood. See the blood sprinkled on the mercy seat as typifying this.

But Scripture says that water, too, is a cleansing agent.

"Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with THE WASHING OF WATER by the word" (Eph. 5. 26).

We need to be cleansed not only from the guilt of sin, but also from its defilement. The blood does the former; the water, the latter, as this verse states.

That we are not speculating when we affirm that the blood and water which flowed from the side of the dead Saviour are symbolical, is proved by 1 John 5. 6, 8. There we are told that Jesus Christ came by water and blood; that is, His object in coming into the world was to effect, by His death, this double cleansing without which none could be in God's presence or blessed by Him. Further we are told there are three witnesses: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one. This Scripture disposes of the view "that 'water' in John 3. 5 is a type of the Spirit." The Scripture referring to the three witnesses adds, "And these three agree in one," showing that the Spirit is neither the blood nor the water, but bears witness to the great fact that Christ came by "water and blood."

It is true that Kai, the ordinary word for the conjunction and, may sometimes carry the thought of even, but it is always decided by the context, and only when the two things connected by Kai are equal to one another. The context would then be so plain that this would be obvious. In this case, however, 1 John 5. 8, plainly speaks of the Spirit and the water and the blood as three distinct witnesses, and seeing the water and the blood are put in conjunction, the verse is very convincing, that water is not here symbolical of the Spirit.

It is true that in John 4. and 7., water is typical of the Holy Spirit, but that type we believe is always connected with water in action. In John 4, it is "a well springing up into everlasting life" (verse 14); in John 7, out of the believer's belly "shall flow rivers of living water" (verse 38); in both cases we have water in action.

It is something internal—in the believer, refreshing and active; whereas water in its cleansing action is external in its application. This we shall see confirmed as we proceed.

But water in its cleansing action in Scripture is looked at in two ways. This is seen in John 13. 10.

"Jesus saith to him, he that is washed [Greek, 
\[\text{L}O\text{U}D\text{]}\] needeth not to wash [Greek, niptō] his feet, but is clean every whit."

Louo is a word which means to wash all over, to bathe; niptō signifies to wash a part as hands or feet. This is illustrated in the service of the priests in connection with the Tabernacle in the wilderness. On the day of consecration the priests were ceremonially bathed or washed all over with water (see Exodus 29. 4); whilst the brazen laver was provided where the priests might wash their hands and feet, when they went into the tabernacle to perform their sanctuary service.

This leads us up to John 3. 5. How can moral cleansing take place? If man's fallen nature is absolutely and irremediably evil it is evident that no attempt at amelioration of the flesh is of the slightest use. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," is definite.

What then is the remedy? How is a man to be morally cleansed? The Lord tells us plainly by new birth—

"Except a man be BORN of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3. 5).

There can be no moral cleansing of a man save by the introduction of this new birth. Canon Hay Aitkin's view is plainly faulty. Baptism certainly puts
the baptized into an outward ecclesiastical company, and the imparting of the Divine Spirit puts the believer into new relationship with God. But in our passage being born again is what is set before us. We believe that the Holy Spirit effects the new birth, but uses the Word of God as the instrument, or as Peter says, it is by the incorruptible seed of the Word (1 Peter 1. 23). Baptism is not connected with birth even by the Canon's showing; the Spirit produces the new birth, but the impartation of the Holy Spirit is something further. Surely the believers on the day of Pentecost were already born again; the Holy Ghost had prepared the house; whereas on the day of Pentecost the Spirit was imparted to the believers; in other words, the Holy Spirit occupied the house He had built.

If water meant baptism then we should have three witnesses; (1) The Spirit, a Divine Person; (2) the water, baptism, an ordinance; (3) the blood, a symbol of the death of Christ. What a jumble of ideas—a Person, an ordinance, a symbol! How all falls into line with the whole tenor of Scripture, as we have been considering it; (1) The Spirit a Divine Person, the chosen Operator of the Godhead, the sovereign Actor in the blessing of the believer, using means which are symbolized by (2) the water, symbol of that aspect of the death of Christ, which atoning for sin and condemning sin in the flesh, root and branch, sets God free to introduce the new birth, which morally cleanses the subject of it, and by (3) the blood, symbol of that aspect of the death of Christ, which speaks distinctively of atonement and the cleansing from the guilt of sin, as we have seen. How the whole hangs beautifully together. A Divine Agent and the means He uses brought before us, the two means in beautiful accord with and complementary to each other.

There is no difficulty is looking at the water in its symbolical aspect as (1) producing new birth as the Word of God in relation to the death of Christ through which life comes—a manifestation of God's love—and typified by the priests being washed all over with water; and (2) in its general cleansing character as the Word of God, though that is only applying in detail what is set forth in new birth, as even the spiritual teaching of baptism leads the believer to walk “in newness of life” (Rom. 6. 4), and this is typified in the brazen laver; whilst (3) water in its activity is indeed a type of the Holy Spirit in His activity not UPON the sinner, producing in sovereign favour the new birth, but IN the believer producing that which, coming from heaven, rises to its source (John 4.); or that which flowing from the believer is for spiritual refreshment in this barren scene (John 7.).

Finally what antagonizes the thought that “water” (John 3.) is literal water, is that it was literal blood and literal water which came from the side of a dead Christ, and that John, who witnessed this, gives both the water and the blood a symbolical meaning in his first epistle. 1 John 1. 7, tells us the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin; yet no one dreams that the Saviour's actual blood is applied to the sinner; in the same way Ephesians 5. 26, connects the water and the Word together—“the washing of water by the Word.” Canon Aitkin cannot have it both ways. If the water is literal in John 3. then the blood must be literal in 1 John 1. 7.

Canon Hay Aitkin is connected with a system that teaches baptismal regeneration. In common with the evangelicals in that system he stoutly refuses this popish figment, but is coloured, in our judgment, by the ritualism of that system to the extent of making “water” (John 3.), stand for baptism.

I trust the foregoing remarks may help to elucidate this subject. The whole tenor of Scripture makes it abundantly plain.

Yours, etc.,
A. J. Pollock.
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

1 Thessalonians 4. 14.

What is the meaning of "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him"? I have always understood it to mean that God would raise the sleeping saints and bring them along with the changed ones (1 Cor. 15. 51) back with Him to the Father's house. But I find that several Christians, to whom I have spoken about the coming of our Lord, say that it means that God will bring the spirits of the dead in Christ with Him from the glory to take part in the resurrection, and receive their glorified bodies. A little help from the Word would be appreciated.—BELFORD.

If you glance through the earlier parts of the epistle you will notice that each reference to the coming of the Lord is connected with His public appearing with His saints. Nothing is said of His coming for His saints until verse 15 of chapter 4. is reached. It was as to this that the Thessalonian believers were ignorant. The last verse of chapter 3. speaks of "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints."

All this makes it clear, we judge, that in the phrase to which you call our attention, the apostle alludes to God bringing the sleeping saints with Christ when He appears in glory. The succeeding verses reveal how this could be, and how it will be possible for the living saints also to be brought with Him in that day. Both classes will previously have been caught away to be with Him.

There is no reference to bringing spirits to receive glorified bodies, nor to saints being brought into the Father's house as the result of the Lord coming for them. The latter is, of course, quite true, but not the point of this passage.

None Good but One—God.

Would you please explain the seemingly difficult verses, Mark 10. 17 and 18, where our Saviour said in reply to the question asked Him, "Why callest thou Me good? None is good save One, even God"? (R.V.). It has often seemed rather strange to me that Jesus replied thus, whilst on other occasions He declared His Divinity and absolute Oneness with God the Father so distinctly.—BRAMPTON JUNCTION.

The explanation of this passage lies in the fact that our Lord was answering the young man according to His perfect knowledge of the underlying thought which led to his addressing Him as "Good Master." It was just because the young man whilst saluting Him as a good Teacher did not at all recognize His Deity that Jesus answered in these terms.

The Lord's words were virtually a repudiation of the goodness ascribed to Him if it were to be apart from a recognition of His Deity. He said in effect, "You patronize Me, and call Me good; but why? There is no goodness in mere man. No one has a title to the epithet 'good' but God. Do you acknowledge Me as such?"

If there is no one good but God, then beyond all contradiction if Jesus was not God He was not good. Here and there may be found the hardened unbeliever who denounces Jesus as neither God nor good. He is at all events consistent. The humble believer worships Him as both God and good. He, too, is happily consistent. That large class of unbelievers, however, who wish to belaud Jesus as good while denying His Godhead glory, saying He is good but not God, are hopelessly inconsistent, and condemned out of His own mouth. These words of our Lord clearly have them impaled upon the horns of a dilemma.
"Taking our Nature."

I am writing in connection with statements which I hear, such as, "The Lord Jesus Christ took our nature. He took bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." Is this right? I believe it lowers the glory of our blessed Lord.—PITENWEEM.

The subject to which you call attention is one that needs to be handled with great reverence and care. We should do well if we always alluded to it in the very terms which Scripture uses.

As to the first part of the statement; it is open to the objection that "our nature" as we now know it is a fallen nature. The Lord Jesus took on Him the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2. 16). He was God and He became Man. We also read that "the Word became flesh" (John 1. 14, N. Tr.).

We do not read that He took bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, and it is not a happy way of putting things since Scripture puts the matter the other way round, whether it be the type or the antitype (see Gen. 2. 23; Eph. 5. 30). In either case it is we believers being of Him and not He of us.

So many erroneous theories have been broached upon these deep and sacred themes that we do well to avoid all doubtful statements and keep very close to Scripture in the expressions we use.

The Two Accounts of Man's Creation.

Can you say what association Genesis 1. 26-31 has with Genesis 2. 7 and onward. The view taken by the higher critics surely cannot be correct?—WALKERVILLE.

We believe that the connection between these two accounts of man's creation is very simple. In Genesis 1. we have what we may call the general account. In the orderly sequence of God's work day by day we are permitted to see man's place in relation to the rest of creation. He is created at the end of the sixth day's work as the crown and completion of the whole, and he is made in the Divine image and after the Divine likeness and set in dominion.

In Genesis 2. we have what we may call the special account. Details are given us as to how God constituted him what he is and as to the relationships and responsibilities Godward in which he was set. Hence, that change in the Divine title. Elohim in the first case, and Jehovah Elohim in the second. Elohim is God's creatorial title. Jehovah His title of relationship. You certainly need not waste time over the views of the so-called "higher critics." They are as valuable as the views on a colour scheme of a man who is colour blind.

"The Gift."

What is "the gift" in 2 Corinthians 1. 11? Alford says it is "mercy."—WALMER.

It is not easy to pick out any one thing as an answer to your question. Reading the whole passage, however, so as to get the context in mind, we should feel inclined to say it was the gift of life as the fruit of deliverance from the death which had so nearly stricken the apostle during the time of trouble in Asia. This was, indeed, the result of the mercy of God coupled with the prayers of many saints, the Corinthians among them. We have not got Alford beside us to refer to, but we suppose that in saying "mercy" he had this in view. Mercy was, indeed, bestowed upon Paul but in the way of deliverance from death.
IN this chapter there are found in type two things that go together; the one is the righteous basis upon which God sets us before Himself, the other our fellowship together in that place. The antitype of the first is in the Epistle to the Romans, and the second in 1 Corinthians. It is the first time in the Bible that we read of the congregation. In the 3rd verse you get "the congregation of Israel"; in the 6th verse, "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel." Up to this time God's dealings in grace had been with individuals, and in Exodus with the elders of Israel, but now He sets Himself to gather a congregation about Himself, and that congregation was to be an assembly. The word "congregation" here carries the thought of unity, that which is corporate. Darby's New Translation has at this point a footnote showing that the Word translated "assembly" in the A.V. has the thought of "the actual subsisting congregation composed of all its members," while the word "congregation" is "more the congregation looked at as a moral whole, a corporate person before God."

The purpose God had in view in redeeming His people was that He might gather them to Himself, an assembly having one mind and purpose. In this chapter the basis is laid for that. God could not have an assembly in which He could have His pleasure, so long as His people were under a yoke of bondage in Egypt, a type of the world. They could not be for God or for one another until they were set free. We see that in the 5th chapter, verses 10-12. Instead of the people being gathered there, they were scattered, and they were scattered as toiling and labouring for a hard taskmaster, the Pharaoh of Egypt. The assembly of God now, if true to its character, is set free from the world by redemption, and is maintained in that liberty by the Spirit's power, but the sad thing is that the great majority of God's people do not see that they are not of the world, and are toiling to build up the world, just as Israel toiled in Egypt.

Question. In what way?

Israel made bricks to build up the great cities of Egypt; in figure many Christians are doing that to-day, they are making bricks to build up the world system. Professedly Christian assemblies, conferences and synods come together, not to discuss how they may hasten the day of God by gathering souls out of the world for His Name, or how they may build up in the truth the souls of those that are saved, but to take up social questions and discuss politics, and how to improve the world as it is; they are making bricks to build up the world system. The world has laid this heavy bondage upon them, that they should look after its morals, and help to straighten out its tangles, they are serving Pharaoh, and their labour is useless for the whole world lies in the wicked one, and is shortly to suffer the judgment of God. This world is in rebellion against God, and His way with it is to scatter it as at the tower of Babel, and His thought in regard to His assembly is gathering, that it may be one. The devil's intention is to build up and unite the world and scatter the assembly of God. Let us take care that we are working with God and not with the devil.

Remarked. You look upon what we have in the 14th chapter then, the deliverance, as part of God's thoughts
for them, and we have here that which is the foundation of it.

Yes, it was God's thought to bring them out of Egypt and gather them in one congregation. One of the first intimations in the New Testament of God's thought for His people is given in the Spirit's interpretation of the prophecy that came from the lips of Caiaphas, that Jesus should die to "gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." But for this they needed to be delivered from the world as His "out-called" ones. God sent Moses with a message to Pharaoh, saying, "Let my people go." He wanted them to worship Him, and over and over again it was clearly brought out they could not in Egypt be an assembly worshipping God. Egypt is the place of bondage, it is the world, and we have to be delivered from the world if we are to know our place in God's assembly and be worshipers of Him.

Question. Where do you get the thought of fellowship in the 12th of Exodus?

In the fact that they are looked upon as one assembly, and that in the 16th verse the feast of the Passover was to be "an holy convocation." A convocation was a gathering together of the people, and they were to eat in common the lamb roast with fire and the unleavened bread.

Remarked. It is essential that blood should be shed for God to lay the foundation of that.

The blood was the foundation, because of our sinfulness; it was necessary for our standing in righteousness before God, and it is upon that footing that we have fellowship one with another, as 1 John 1. 7 says, "If we walk in the light at He is in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." That statement is a very fine text to preach to the sinner, but it is given in that Scripture in connection with our being in the light and having fellowship one with another. It is the unfailing basis of our relationship with God and one another.

But before the blood was shed, the lamb had to be kept in the household, every household had that lamb before it for a certain period. The lamb that was going to bear the judgment, to die on their behalf, was to be before their eyes continually for this period.

Question. Does that refer to the Lord's life? His service here on earth?

Yes, it sets forth the Lord's life upon earth, and especially in John's Gospel. The first public witness that is borne to Him there is, "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." We trace His footsteps through the Gospel and learn the wonderful fact that the Lamb was without blemish, that He was the absolutely Holy One, perfect in His moral excellence. Every act and word of His would have an added significance to us if we consider them with the Cross in view. It is also interesting to see that the Gospel of John which begins with the Lamb of God, ends with fellowship. Take the last verse but one. The critics have tried all sorts of ways and means of getting round that verse. It has suffered in the hands of its friends too. Some who want to protect the Gospel have taught that the Elders at Ephesus, seeing that false doctrine as to Christ's Person was coming in, induced the aged John to write his Gospel, and when he had written it they put their imprimatur to it, and said, "We know what he is saying is true." But that is a very human interpretation of it. The Spirit of God had something much deeper than that before Him. The Gospel closes with the "we know" of the Epistle. The characteristic word of the 1st Epistle of John is, "we know," it is the certainty of Christian knowledge and fellowship. The subject of our fellowship is this Blessed Person, the Word of Life, who has shed His blood and revealed the Father, and so the Gospel links on...
with the Epistle. In the Gospel there is the testimony to the Holy Spotless Lamb of God, whose blood was shed; "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side and forthwith came there out blood and water. And He that saw it bear record and his record is true; and he knoweth that he saith true that ye might believe" (John 19. 34-35). And his record has not been in vain, we have believed. So the Gospel ends with "we know." We know in blessed fellowship the truth of this.

Question. Would it be correct to say the statement in John, "Behold, the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world," would take in the sin offering, but what of the second "Behold the Lamb of God"?

In the first instance witness is borne to Him in connection with the great work that He was to do, and in the second instance witness is borne to the Person as the One who can wholly fill the heart. At once two disciples follow Him when He is presented to them in that way. Don't you think it would greatly affect us as we read the Gospel, if the thought were in our minds continually that this One of whom we are reading, is to die as the Lamb, to die that we might be brought into righteous relationships with God and with one another?

Question. There is a verse in Peter which speaks of the Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world. If we had that before us too, as we read the Old Testament, would not that help us?

Yes, it may be that not one of those Israelites entered at all into the meaning of the lamb being kept up until the fourteenth day, but certainly God's eye was upon the lamb, and in that type He was setting forth the preciousness and the perfection of Christ to Him. Not many discerned the perfection of the Lord Jesus when He was here. Some did, as we read, "We beheld His glory." But the Father always beheld it, it was before His eye. So He said, "This is My beloved Son," and He was seen of angels also, though men saw no beauty in Him.

Question. It says in 1 Cor. 5: "Even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Is that what you mean to convey, that there must be the maintenance of what is due to God; absence of evil before there can be fellowship? You get fellowship in the 1st, 10th and 11th chapters. Were the Corinthians getting away from it by allowing evil?

They were losing the sense of the holiness of the place into which they had been brought. The judgment fell upon the Egyptians. The only way that the Israelites were sheltered from that judgment was by the blood of the lamb, which was the witness that God's judgment had fallen upon their substitute. God could not judge the evil of Egypt and allow His people to go on with that evil. He did not deliver them from the judgment that rested upon Egypt that they might indulge themselves in the evil that He had judged. There must be separation from the world and its evil if there is to be true fellowship in the things of God, because this fellowship is holy, even as God who has called us to it is holy.

Question. Is there not a difference between the two? You have the enemy outside, but what has been mentioned is moral evil,—what is inside?
The leaven is the evil of Egypt. It is that in which the flesh indulges, it was characteristic of Egypt, i.e., the world, but it ought not to be permitted in the Christian Assembly. There is the old leaven. I suppose that refers to what we were formerly in our unregenerate state, and then there is the leaven of malice and wickedness, things that characterize the world. It was working inside the assembly at Corinth and marring the fellowship there; we have to watch against it, and the thought of Christ as our passover helps us in this.

Question. Why is the eating of unleavened bread associated with the slaying of the lamb?

Leaven in Scripture is figurative of evil. Two things characterize leaven: one is, it corrupts, and the other is, it puffs up. Now both those things were most marked in the Corinthians, in which Epistle the Passover is introduced. It says they were "puffed up" (5. 2). Later on it says that knowledge puffed them up, they were very proud. There was the pride of the flesh showing itself. Then it corrupts. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (verse 6) and "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (chap. 15.). That which spoke of evil had to be cast out from their houses. That sets forth the holiness of the fellowship to which we are called, and in order to maintain that holiness there must be self-judgment. That comes out in the 11th chapter as well as in the 5th.

But let us have the truth clearly before our minds, we do not keep the feast of unleavened bread in order to become holy or to attain to the fellowship. "We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10. 10). The measure of our sanctification is that Christ was slain for us. Consequent upon that we are brought into the fellowship, we have our place in "the assembly of God sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. 1. 2). Nothing can make that more definite, more absolute. We keep the feast of unleavened bread of sincerity and truth because only by so doing can we be consistent with the place in which God has set us; not to attain to the position, but because grace has given it to us.

Question. I suppose the positive side of fellowship is feeding on the roast lamb, is it not? Leaven is that which would spoil it if allowed.

Yes, there was to be the feeding on the lamb roast with fire inside the house and the eating of the unleavened bread, and that was not a fast, as some people might imagine, it was a feast, and it was not merely a feast, it was a feast of Jehovah.

Question. There was to be the eating of it with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs. What would the bitter herbs signify?

Would it not be repentance and self-judgment? Repentance continued in the Christian life simply means self-judgment. There is a very remarkable thing which we must not overlook in connection with it, and that is the judgment was upon the firstborn. The firstborn was the one in the family who was to carry on the family traditions, and in whom the hopes of the family were centred. The firstborn being under the sentence of death, all that they could boast in as to the past or hope for in the future was under judgment. It was the obliteration of the family record. Their hope now was life through the death of the lamb. It means that nothing of the past that we may have built upon, nothing that we could set our hopes upon as natural men and women for the future, can give us any footing before God, in the first instance, nor can it be any help at all to Christian fellowship; it will not help the Assembly of God. That brings us to the end of 1 Cor. 1., "No flesh should glory in His presence"; "He that glorieth let him glory in the Lord."
Remarked. The assembly of God is built on Him who is the Resurrection and the Life. He has passed through death.

Yes, it is a new beginning. All that men could boast in naturally has been brought to an end by death.

Remarked. It is interesting in this chapter, too, that the Lord always says: "Thou shalt kill it in the evening." In God's sight there was only one lamb, although it was necessary to have several lambs, one for each family.

The evening was the end of man's day. He had been fully tested. The last test was the life of Christ. His death closed man's day. God has now a new day. Christ is the beginning of it, and happy are we if we have seen the end of our sins and ourselves in His death and have begun God's new day in Christ raised from the dead. There was no house too big for the lamb; that is, the Lamb of God is equal to every demand.

Question. Do you mind saying a word on the manner in which they had to eat, roast with fire and not sodden?

Roast with fire signifies the inflicted judgment of God, and the lamb roast with fire brings before us the Lord Jesus as the One who came under the judgment of God on our behalf. More and more is this being denied. Many talk of the sacrifice of Christ, but they use the term in the sense of giving up something or denying oneself for the benefit of others. They won't admit that the judgment of God was deserved by us, and that it was inflicted on Jesus when as our Substitute He suffered for us upon the cross. Now, naturally we would shrink from the thought of the judgment of God, and we should not find any food in that. Death is that which we shrink from, but here the lamb roast with fire, the death of Christ, in this special character under the judgment of God, becomes our food.

Question. How can that be?

Well, in the fact that He came under the judgment of God for us, all the love of God has been disclosed and also His own perfect personal love to us, and that becomes a feast to us, becomes the joy and delight of our hearts, and it is about that we can have fellowship, and our hearts together overflow with worship.

Question. In asking that, I was thinking of Christadelphians and such like, they could not have that at all, could they?

No, because they deny that the judgment of God was inflicted. They know neither His justice nor His love.

Question. Does the eating of the roast lamb in some way set forth what we have at the Lord's Table, the bread and the cup?

Yes. The Lord's Supper answers in Christianity to the Passover with Israel, and we are able to feed upon the death of Christ as that which has brought into evidence God's infinite, wonderful love, and upon Christ as the One who went into death for us. They ate the lamb roast with fire with the bitter herbs and the unleavened bread, behind the blood-sprinkled doors. It is often said, the blood was only for God's eye, and preachers often preach from the passage, "When I see the blood I will pass over you," as though that was all that God had said, but the blood was not only for God's eye, for God said first, "the blood shall be unto you for a token," and then "when I see the blood I will pass over you." It has something to say to you.

Remarked. The sprinkling of the blood was done by faith.

Yes, it was sprinkled by faith, but it spoke to the Israelites. The blood speaks in two directions. It spoke to the Israelites. And it spoke to God. When the Roman soldier pierced the side of Jesus and forthwith came out blood and water, there was a disciple standing there to bear record, and it says, "He that saw it bare record, and his record is true, that ye might believe."
Thus the blood of Jesus speaks to us, it bears witness as the great token of God's love. Yet God alone knows its value, for it is infinite. The Word of God speaks of it as "the precious blood."

**Question.** What does the 10th verse mean? "Ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire."

That which was consumed with fire went up to God as a sweet savour, so that really the thought is this; though you cannot fully and wholly appreciate the lamb roast with fire and assimilate it all, eat of it what you can. God appreciates it all; our limited thoughts of the preciousness of the Lamb, do not limit Him. What we fail to appropriate goes up as a sweet savour to Him. There was no refuse, nothing left over.

**Question.** What is the thought expressed in the fact that only the circumcised were to eat?

Circumcision was the mark of the covenant God had made with Abraham, and it sets forth in type the cutting off of the flesh. God had no blessing for man in the flesh, because as the 8th of Romans tells us, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Sin in the flesh, and, consequently, the flesh met its condemnation at the cross (Rom. 8. 3). In Christ who was cut off in death for us we are circumcised; that is, the flesh was set aside and judged and condemned in His death, not only for God but for us, so that we have no longer any confidence in it (Phil. 3.); in the teaching of baptism we get our answer to this. Christians are in the Spirit now, and God's assembly is not formed of men and women "in the flesh," but is formed of those who are "in the Spirit." We are all baptized into one body by the Holy Ghost. If we forget our circumcision (Col. 2. 11) we shall make a mess of fellowship as the Corinthians did.

**Question.** Would you say the 11th verse had any connection with the Lord's Supper? Their loins were girded.

That would set forth that the people who ate the Passover were a people going out of Egypt, and not going to settle down in Egypt. Their redemption had Canaan in view. They were bound for another land, and so we partake of the Lord's Supper, and show His death until He comes. We do not partake of it as those who are settling down in the world to make it better, or get as much out of it as we can, but as those who have turned our backs upon it. By it we have our absent Lord in view until His return.

**Question.** Do you think the 46th verse, the partaking of the one lamb in the one place, in type looks forward to the assembly, the one body?

Yes, it may. The Lord's Supper is the one assembly feast, and the feast of the one assembly; it must not be separated from the fellowship of the assembly. Then "not a bone of it shall be broken" is applied to the Lord Jesus Christ; when the soldiers came to break the legs of the thieves, they found Him dead already. There is also His mystical body, and while outwardly the assembly seems to be broken up into innumerable fragments, yet "there is one body" remains true to this day, and will for ever. It cannot be broken, and all those who stand before God on the basis of the shed blood of the Lamb are part of it. The One Spirit dwells in all such and they form the one assembly of God.

**Remarked.** That would be what Paul meant when He said, "Feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with the blood of His own" (Acts 20. 28, N. Tr.).

Yes, the Church of God is blood-purchased, purchased by the blood of His own Son. We can see the difference between Egypt and the congregation of Israel. Egypt was under condemnation, that is the world.
There was nothing in the Egyptians' houses but death, and in this world there is really nothing but death and judgment, but the congregation of Israel were blood-sheltered and redeemed. God was their protector, and inside there was life. They were feeding upon the lamb roast with fire with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, and to feed upon the lamb means life.

**Question.** Is not the chief thought in the Supper His death, not His life?

Yes, it is the Lord in death that we remember, but we know Him as the One who is alive for evermore. He is the Head and Centre of His assembly in resurrection life.

**Question.** Has the 15th verse any voice for us to-day? Eating the unleavened bread seven days?

Seven days covers the whole week. We are to be an unleavened company not on Sunday only but all the week. That is what 1 Corinthians 5. says.

**Remarked.** When he said, "Purge out the old leaven that ye may be a new lump as ye are unleavened," that would refer to their normal state before God, an unleavened company.

Yes, it means bringing your condition into correspondence with what you are before Him, and for that there had to be the purging out of the old leaven. They were to keep the feast of unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

**Remarked.** That is the whole week.

It is a feast and not a fast. We must not be all the time saying to ourselves, now "you must not do this," and "don't do that," our fellowship is not one continual "don't," that would be a fast, but this is a feast, the feast of unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Where do we find sincerity and truth? In Christ. Well, that means that seven days of the week we are to be feeding on Christ as the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, and as we feed upon Christ in that character, you may be sure of this, we shall not need the "don'ts" and "you mustn'ts." And sincerity and truth will characterize us. When a man is feasting and satisfied with Christ, he is not tempted by anything the world or the flesh can offer, and he will help the volume of praise to the Lord when gathered to remember Him in death. It is when we are not feasting the seven days of the week on the bread of sincerity and truth that there is a lack of praise and worship in the assembly.

**Question.** Would that have anything to do with what we have in Deuteronomy 26. as to the basket filled with firstfruits?

Yes, the heart would be filled and there would be something to bring to the presence of the Lord. I think we must see in this chapter that there is set forth in type the position in which we stand as a result of the death of the Lamb. We need to have it impressed upon us that all that God has done in His grace towards us is to bring us to Himself as His assembly. It is not a question merely of individual blessing. We have that; but God had this great purpose in view. He would bring us to Himself as His assembly, and if we are brought to Himself in that way, then we are an holy assembly, sanctified in Christ Jesus, as the 1 Corinthians 1. tells us. Thence the necessity of our being in a condition corresponding to that in which God has set us, because we must feel that if we are not according to God's own thoughts, we cannot be for His pleasure, and if we are not for His pleasure, what are we for?

**Question.** Would the place that the Lord chose to put His name in Old Testament times apply to the two or three gathered to His name to-day in a day of ruin?

Yes, I think that is the way the verse comes in in the 18th of Matthew. His name had always been there at Jerusalem; but in Matthew He was the King and rejected by Jerusalem, but He has a place on earth. Having
come to earth He cannot abandon it, He must have a place on it, and that place is where two or three are gathered together unto His Name. That is the place He has appointed for His people to meet with Him. We are going through the wilderness, but we have our place in that which answers to the land in the assembly of God, but we are going through the wilderness all through the week where we contract defilement, and I think it is important to see that when they partook of the Passover in connection with the wilderness, separation from evil was a necessity.

Remarked. You refer to the 9th of Numbers. In the 6th verse there it says, "There were certain men who were defiled by the dead body of a man that they could not keep the Passover on that day," but provision is made for them. Those that did not keep the Passover were not regarded as belonging to the congregation. Every one of the congregation and the stranger who was circumcised, all alike had to keep the passover. If they refused to do that they were cut off. Cutting off from the congregation of Israel would answer to-day to being outside this fellowship which is according to God. It was to be a holy convocation, that is, a coming together to this feast of the Lord. It was that which would draw them together, would draw them together in holy fellowship, for they had this in common they owed all their blessing to the lamb that had died.

Remarked. You mentioned that verse in John's Epistle, 1st chapter, "We have fellowship." I heard it expressed once that it was fellowship with the Father about the Son, and fellowship with the Son about the Father.

This 12th of Exodus does not carry us beyond the death of Christ, it typifies the communion of the Lord's death (1 Cor. 10. 11). But when we come to the 15th chapter, they sing the song of redemption, the thing they rejoiced most in there is that God had brought them to His holy habitation. What is there in God's holy habitation? It is the place where He dwells, the place where the Son dwells. The thing that fills God's holy habitation is divine life and love and we are brought to that, but the basis of it all is the precious blood, and the delivering power of God brings us there.

Remarked. So we have more to rejoice in than merely our deliverance?

Undoubtedly. That would be something to make us rejoice very greatly, deliverance from the power of Satan and the world, but then God wanted us for Himself, and that we might know Him and rejoice in Him as He is revealed to us by the Word of Life. We must be free from the world before we can enter into God's thoughts for us. They could not sing in Egypt, they sang on the other side of the Red Sea. The things that belong to heaven are the things that belong to the assembly.

Question. Ought there to be hymn singing at the Lord's Supper before the bread and wine are partaken of?

In looking back, Israel would partake of the Passover as a delivered people, and the assembly of God comes together to the Lord's Supper in the triumph of the Lord. If we enter into what the assembly really is we will come together in triumph. We are associated with a risen glorified Christ, and we shall come together in the joy of His victory, and it is thus we are able to look back and call to mind where He went for us and how He went, so that it seems to me that we should come into the presence of the Lord with a song on our lips and joy in our hearts, and then remember Him in His death for us.

Remarked. At the institution of the Supper they sang at the finish. They sang a hymn and went out.

That was a wonderful thing. I don't suppose the disciples entered into that singing. We sing on the victory side
the sea, the Lord sang on the other side. The Israelites did not sing with the sea rolling in front of them and the Egyptians behind them and the mountains on both sides of them; they sang when they saw their enemies dead on the sea shore, so we sing as a delivered people. The blessed Lord as He went into the deep waters for us raised a song of praise to God. That was His perfection. God was ever first in His thoughts.

THE LORD'S TABLE.

It would be an extraordinary thing to me if the Spirit of God sent us to the altar of Judaism or the table of demons to learn anything about the centre of the Assembly's worship—it's highest privilege on earth. It alters the whole character of it—from what God the Father seeks of us who have been blessed with all that love could give, into a place where He dispenses blessing.

But now I turn to 1 Corinthians; first to remark generally upon the very helpful division of the epistle, as long ago pointed out, at chap. 10. 16, in accord with the double character of the address of the epistle: (1) to the Assembly of God in Corinth, the sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by God's calling; (2) with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, which, though asumed to be prima facie, might not be.

In the first ten chapters, to verse 15, the apostle addresses the whole profession of His name; and thenceforward the true body of Christ found in it. No such warnings as are found in the first part of the epistle, as for instance in chap. 10. 1-15 and chap. 3., are contained in the second part. Now it is remarkable that it is only when the apostle brings in the one body that the Lord's Supper gets the character of the "Lord's Table," only so designated in Scripture. For that it is not to be separated from it, as though the Table and the Supper were different things, verses 16-27, and 21 show; where the "cup of the Lord" preserves in the most intimate way the connection. Founded on the communion of the blood, and of the body of Christ, partaking of the Table of the Lord (which is all that is said of it) is the answer of faith to our wonderful position as of the body of Christ, setting forth as we partake, what we are, with all that are Christ's, as one body; while chap. 11. is what we do, as answering to the deeply affecting desire of the Lord expressed through Paul, even from the glory, where He is. "This do for a remembrance of ME."

It lowers the whole character of the blessed institution to make it a question of food, support or bounty for us, when what gives it its character from the Lord, and for Him, is that having reached Him through identification with His death, we are afforded the opportunity of expressing in the unity of the body what He has become to us. It is the centre of the Assembly's worship, where with full hearts we may give back to Him in praise something of the fulness of what we have received.

For just herein lies the distinguishing characteristic of the Lord's Table, that in partaking of the one loaf we express the unity in which we have been formed with Christ and all who are His, which becomes the ground of the subsequent reasoning of the apostle, that if united on the ground of highest privilege, we are, as thus united, separated from all that is morally incompatible with it.

That which professes to be the Table of the Lord, which only recognizes the members of a sect or party, is thus proved false to the place Scripture gives it in the Assembly of God.

(J. A. TRENCH.)
THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST.

(Ed. Duns)

The sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ were varied in their character. He took that body which was prepared for Him to accomplish the will of God, and in so doing became the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. As soon as His birth was announced, the ruthless hand of man sought His destruction, and during His ministry again and again His precious life was sought, but they could not take Him, for His hour was not yet come. Man's hatred to the blessed Lord was held in check, until He said, "This is your hour and the power of darkness" (Luke 22. 53), then the enmity of the human heart came out in all its enormity, and although the Lord Jesus laid down His life of His own voluntary will, as far as man was concerned, He crucified the Lord of glory. Hence Peter, in the second chapter of the Acts, seeks to bring home to those Jerusalem sinners their guilt by charging them with His death.

He also suffered in sympathy with fallen humanity, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8. 17). Hear Him groaning, yea, weeping at the grave of Lazarus as He views the ravages sin had made, severing loved ones, and crushing their hearts; and in sympathy with the race, He "went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil, for God was with Him" (Acts 10. 38).

At His baptism, before commencing His public ministry, we hear a voice from heaven, saying, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke 3. 22). And when nearing the end of His pathway down here, on the Mount of Transfiguration we again hear a voice saying, "This is My Beloved Son, hear Him." His whole pathway was marked by one continual outflow of devotedness and obedience to God, and at this point, He, the perfect Servant, could have gone out free, death having no claim upon Him as the sinless One; but, instead, He, with Moses and Elias, spake of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, and like the Hebrew servant, could say, "I love my master, I love my wife, I love my children; I will not go out free." He, therefore, came down from the Mount, and steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, there to suffer and to die, in obedience to the will of God. His meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work.

Again, we see Him suffering in the garden in anticipation of the cross, offering up prayer and supplication with strong crying and tears, saying, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine be done. . . . And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22. 42-44).

The Holy Sufferer was now about to come into contact with sin; He who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, was now about to be made sin itself; He accepted the cup from the Father's hand, saying, "Not My will, but Thine be done."

He had been denied by a true disciple, betrayed by a false one, abandoned by all, and there on Calvary as the Victim, He was forsaken by His God, when bearing our sins "in His own body on the tree," and "made sin for us who knew no sin." That brought from Him the cry, "My God, My God, Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Ps. 22. 1). The third verse of the Psalm gives the answer, "But Thou art holy." There and there only did He suffer at the hands of God; there were depths in those sufferings during the three
hours of darkness which no human mind can enter into, known only to Himself and His God. Having exhausted all the wrath of God due to sin He cried as the Victor, "IT IS FINISHED." Redemption's work was completed, and in communion with the Father, He said, "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend My spirit, and having said thus, He gave up the ghost" (Luke 23. 46).

Thus we see the blessed Son of God suffering at the hands of men, urged on by the malice of Satan; suffering in sympathy with fallen humanity; suffering in anticipation in the garden of Gethsemane; and suffering as a victim at the hand of God on Calvary's accursed tree, "being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3. 13). "And man appointed His grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death, because He had done no violence neither was deceit in His mouth" (Isa. 53. 9, N. Tr.).

But God raised Him from among the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heavenly glory; thus showing that He was fully satisfied and eternally glorified with the work which He had accomplished; for in laying down His life in obedience to the Father's will He destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"; and delivered them "who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2. 14-15).

THE TIME OF THE END.

It is of much interest to notice among the children of God a widespread expectation of the speedy return of our Lord. This bright outlook seems generally to have arisen from regarding the calamitous events of recent years, the wars, famines, pestilences and earthquakes happening in the world, rather than the conditions found in the church of God. Desiring to see what Scripture has to say as to the state of the church at the time of the end I searched the passages bearing on this point, and was surprised to find a considerable body of evidence which would indicate that God may not be going to allow the present mixed state of believers and unbelievers to continue until the Lord comes, but may find means to bring about a separation between His own and the world. To make ready a people prepared for the Lord was the service of John the Baptist at His first coming. May God grant a similar work by His Spirit in these last days.

Now, let us review what Scripture affords on this subject. All believers in the Lord's personal return recognize that it involves the eternal separation of saints and sinners, but we may learn from the parable of the tares (Matt. 13.) that a separation of the wheat from the darnel takes place in the field, Le., the world, before the removal of the wheat to the heavenly granary. The Lord explains this as effected by the intervention of angels (the harvestmen of verse 30), surely not visibly, but acting by providential means. In a day of federations like the present it is not difficult to imagine how this might be accomplished, but it suffices for our present purpose to notice the word to the harvestmen, "Gather together first the darnel and bind it into bundles for burning."

In this case separation is effected by dealing with the wicked; but in the parable of the net, to which we now turn, the division comes by dealing
with the good. It is by the action of those who cast the net; they sit down upon the shore where the fish were caught, their work requiring deliberation, and gather the good into vessels, leaving the bad for the angels to deal with at the end of the age. The work of the fishermen bears a remarkable resemblance to the service of Jeremiah, chapter 15. 19, “If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth.” This testimony would be effectual in proportion as he kept the purpose of Jehovah before him.

Let us now pass on to the parable of the virgins. In this wise and foolish virgins are at first found together, but they are separated before the Bridegroom comes (the word “cometh” in verse 6 is not found in the best manuscripts), the words are quite plain, “while they went to buy the Bridegroom came.” And not till “afterwards” did the foolish have to say to the Bridegroom.

Further evidence of a separation to take place before the Lord comes may be found in Revelation 3., a chapter which foreshadows something of the history of Protestantism. In the address to the church in Sardis we find there had been a previous time of hearing Divine testimony and receiving it, so that a name to live had been acquired, but at the time to which the message applies the condition was one of spiritual death; nevertheless there were a few names in Sardis of those walking in undefiled garments. This implies that the company addressed was mixed, some having spiritual life, others, apparently a majority, being “dead.” We have already seen a similar condition in the three parables in the Gospel of Matthew, to which reference has been made. The question now arises, does this mixed state continue to the end? or is there any evidence of a separation between true believers and those who are only professors? The end presented in the Lord’s address is His coming as a thief upon the assembly which has lapsed from its original estate.

In this company there can be no true saints, for to such He can never be hostile; see 1 Thessalonians 5., where it is said, “Ye are not in darkness that that day should overtake you as a thief, ye all are children of the light and of the day, we are not of night nor of darkness.” As Mr. Darby puts it, speaking of the judgment upon these assemblies, “the saints will be gone before the execution of this judgment; so that it is not in the mixed body to which the Lord’s given judgment applies” (Coll. Writings, vol. v., p. 388). How long before His coming this wholly lapsed condition had existed we are not told, but if, as we shall shortly see, according to the prophetic interpretation, the Philadelphian assembly embraces the whole body of the faithful, the saints must have passed out of the Sardis state prior to what we speak of as the rapture (1 Thess. 4.). Mr. Darby says in the article already quoted: “In Philadelphia the church has become a remnant and the remnant is the church in God’s sight.” The present Modernist controversy supplies an illustration of the way in which such changes might take place.

We will now consider the address to Laodicea in which a mixed condition similar to that which we have seen in Sardis is contemplated. In the assembly as a whole no vital link with God existed; they had neither gold which speaks of acceptance before Him in Christ; nor white raiment, righteousness before men; nor eye-salve, type of the Spirit; and they are threatened with the most absolute rejection. Yet there were souls there beloved by Christ (the word used is “phileo,” which I do not think would be employed about those who had not divine life; in verse 9 we find the more generally used word “agapao”) with whom He was dealing in discipline. Such would surely be not spued out of His mouth. Thus, again, we find that at the time
of the end the mixed condition has ceased and Laodicea is rejected as a whole solemn and sorrowful issue of that which had a beginning worthy of remembrance (verse 3).

It remains to show from the terms used in the address to Philadelphia that the whole living church is contemplated, for the word "thee" in verses 9 and 10 could not stand for anything less than the whole company beloved by Christ (verse 9) and kept by Him out of the hour of temptation (verse 10).

In what way this separation will be manifested to the world, does not seem to be clearly revealed, but it is of deep interest to notice how in previous dispensations, in view of impending judgment an analogous separation has taken place: thus it would appear from Genesis 7. that Noah and his family were for seven days in the ark before the flood came. Perhaps it was during this time they were getting the animals into the ark. Again, in the case of Lot the delivering angel's word was, "I can do nothing till thou be come thither," thus making the security and separation of Lot from Sodom a condition of the exercise of the power of God in judgment. The Israelites were exempted from several of the plagues which fell upon the Egyptians. As soon as the spies had left her house Rahab bound the scarlet line in her window to indicate her separation from the accursed city. We have already referred to Jeremiah 15. to show how it was God's thought to separate the precious from the vile while the Prophet was announcing the destruction of the city. Not unlike circumstances attended the later siege by the Romans, when the Christians, warned by the prophecy of the Lord in Luke 21., fled to Pella, thus separating themselves from the guilty nation whose days of vengeance were just then beginning.

Two other illustrations are found in the New Testament. The first, to which reference has already been made, is found in Revelation 3.

Before Laodicea is finally rejected as nauseous to the Lord, the Philadelphian candlestick is seen shining brightly with the approval of Him who is the Holy and the True, quite apart from the other three assemblies which continue to the end. Lastly, in Revelation 18., after the fall of Babylon and before her destruction, we have the call, "Come out of her my people," thus placing those who responded, in unity and testimony before the world.

It may be objected to this view that it would prejudice in our souls the working of the heavenly hope, and the danger may be admitted, but that it would not necessarily operate injuriously is manifest from the case of Paul himself, who in Acts 20. foretold his departure and the attacks of grievous wolves upon the flock of God. Nevertheless, long after Acts 20., he wrote to the Philippians, "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour." From this we may learn that the Spirit of God would create in us a real dependence on heaven and heavenly things without limiting our faith to particular events; all will be fulfilled at the time of harvest, a period, not an epoch, to use the words of another.

Those whose faith lays hold of the order of events indicated in the foregoing will obtain thereby helpful direction in prayer and ministry, for if it is the will of God to revive His work before the apostasy of 2 Thessalonians 2. sets in, we shall have the immense privilege of working with God for His own objects, as did Jonathan in his day, and our prayers being in accordance with His purpose will assuredly receive an answer in His own time. Till then, the Spirit and the Bride say, Come.
RENUNCIATION AND COMMUNION. (F. B. Holt.)

It is a well-established fact in the Scriptures that the initiative always belongs to God. Illustrations of it abound. Turn where we will in the histories of men of faith and action in the service of God we find that the source of all lay in God Himself. The impulse in the strength of which they acted came from Him. The start of everything in each case was when some revelation from God, or as to God, reached them. The most striking New Testament illustration of this is the case of the Apostle Paul. The head of all his Spirit-energized activities was "when it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son in me" (Gal. 1. 15, 16). The most striking Old Testament illustration is the case of Abraham. All his remarkable life took its rise from, and was characterized by, the fact that "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts 7. 2).

REVELATION, then, is the mainspring of spiritual life in the believer. The life flowing from the revelation may be considered in a two-fold relation: one negative and one positive. Here again we may take Abraham as a striking example.

From one point of view, then, the whole life of that man of faith may be summed up in the one word RENUNCIATION. That was its negative character—renunciation as regards the world.

His story in Genesis begins with the statement, "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (12. 1). These, according to Acts 7., were the words with which "the God of glory" appeared unto him. The revelation and the renunciation were as cause and effect. The latter was possible in the strength and joy of the former. The glory of Ur of the Chaldees paled before the God of glory. In eagerly stretch-
Abraham's part. Though the senior, he gave place to Lot and yielded to him first choice in the use of the land, saying, “If thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left” (verse 9). In result, Lot chose the well-watered plain and left Abraham on the less fertile hill-tops.

In Genesis 14, we find Lot carried captive by the confederate kings, and read of Abraham’s remarkable victory and the recovery not only of his nephew but of other persons and goods captured from Sodom. The grateful king of Sodom said, “Give me the persons and take the goods to thyself.” Now note Abraham’s answer: “I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine” (verses 21-23). The patriarch is in the happy conscious knowledge of the “Possessor of heaven and earth,” hence the goods of Sodom had no peculiar attraction for him. He could firmly yet happily twice utter the decisive words, “I WILL NOT.”

In turning his back upon Ur of the Chaldees, with its idolatry and worship of the powers of darkness, we see Abraham renouncing the devil and all allegiance to him. In these subsequent acts we see him renouncing the world in its various forms; whether as an abiding place of settlement and ease, or a place of fertility and prosperity, or as a provider of every object of utility or ornament, but all debased by the service of sin.

Another great act of renunciation lay ahead, apparently as severe in its testing as any which had preceded. It sets forth in type the renunciation of the flesh. The promise of the seed had been given and Abraham’s faith had embraced it, but impatient for its accomplishment, he sought for its fulfilment “after the flesh,” and Ishmael was born. Fourteen years afterwards the promised seed appeared in the person of Isaac.

Abraham’s heart yearned over Ishmael. His cry was, “O that Ishmael might live before Thee!” And not only so, but Ishmael was circumcised, and thus outwardly was the mark of the Covenant put upon him (Gen. 17. 18 and 25). All was, however, unavailing. It had been said of Ishmael, “He will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him.” A wild, intractable and quarrelsome fellow he remained—fit type of the flesh, for as James says, “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” (chap. 4. 1). Ishmael’s term of probation ended, however, when he proved himself to be not only wild, but a despiser and a mocker in regard to the promised seed, Isaac, who was a type of Christ. Then came that word which is so illuminatingly commented on in the New Testament, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son: for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac” (Gen. 21. 10; Gal. 4. 21-31).

Thus in type we see the final testing of flesh by the presence of Christ. The flesh simply mocks HIM: hence there is no good thing in the flesh, and the flesh must go!

Here was a severe test for Abraham. “The thing was very grievous in Abraham's sight because of his son.” Yet he responded to it. The renunciation was made. “Abraham rose up early in the morning”—here we see the energy of his faith—“and took bread and a bottle of water, and gave it unto Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, and the child, and sent her away” (Gen. 21. 11, 14).

In type, then, we have seen Abraham renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and we might well suppose that there would be no further renun-
ciation beyond. Yet one further act of a supreme sort remained.

Genesis 22. is the record of it. Isaac, the seed, with whom were bound up all the promises, was left with his father. The divine word now was, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering." The story of this chapter is well known. Isaac is in type yielded up to death only to be received again as though risen from the dead. So Christ, once known after the flesh, is henceforth known no more after that orcer.

The believer's links with Him are of a spiritual order and in resurrection, and because of it, "henceforth know we no man after the flesh" (2 Cor. 5. 16). When Abraham thus yielded up the promised seed, we may say that the crowning point of his path of renunciation was reached.

If, however, revelation was the spring and starting point of his career, and renunciation its prominent feature in a negative way, on the positive side it was a life of most blessed COMMUNION with God in the light of the revelation He had made of Himself.

In the chapters, Genesis 12. to 22., we have the record of no less than nine occasions when God appeared to Abraham and put Himself into communication with him, and other occasions are also recorded when Abraham put himself into communication with God, either in worship or prayer. This was a wonderful record, only the history of Moses is comparable with it. God not only blessed Abraham but let him into the secrets of His dealings with men as His "friend."

The blessing that rested upon Abraham was very great. It more than recompensed him for all the renunciations he made. If he gave up earthly prospects in Ur, he became an inheritor of blessing that should ultimately spread out to "all families of the earth" (12. 3). If he yielded the fairest parts of the land to Lot, directly afterwards came the word, "Arise, walk through the land in the length of it and in the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee" (13. 17). If he totally refused the smallest recompense from the goods of Sodom, there came immediately the word, "Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward" (15. 1). If he had grief as to Ishmael, he presently heard the words, "I am the Almighty God: walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (17. 1). If he ultimately yielded up not only Ishmael but Isaac, he got that great promise as to THE SEED, in whom all the nations of the earth are to be blessed (22. 18).

A most elevated and striking example showing the intimacy of Abraham's communion with God is recorded in chapters 18. and 19., where he is let into the secrets of God's governmental dealings with the cities of the plain, and the Lord Himself says, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" adding "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord." What in the Old Testament bespeaks greater intimacy than the further record, "But Abraham stood yet before the Lord, and Abraham drew near and said . . .", and again, "The Lord went His way, as soon as He had left communing with Abraham"?

Read carefully the whole passage beginning with verse 23 of chapter 18. and continuing to the end of the chapter. Note the blending of deep reverence and simple familiarity in Abraham's remarkable pleadings; and then remember that all that he says is concerned not with himself nor any purely personal interest, but with the reputation and glory of the great "Judge of all the earth," in the first place, and with the deliverance of Lot and his family and the plight of the sinners of Sodom, in the second.

Thus did Abraham have communion with God about His things, rising out of his own littleness into the holy
elevation that marks them, and thus as a privileged intercessor he gained the title, afterwards conferred, of "the friend of God."

And God treated Abraham as a friend; for we read, "It came to pass, when God destroyed the cities of the plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow" (19. 29). Abraham had not definitely asked for this. Still, in pursuing his intercession until he had obtained the promise that the cities would be spared if only ten righteous were found within, he doubtless had Lot and his family in mind. There were not found ten righteous, but all the same God answered Abraham's prayer in the spirit of it by rescuing the one man who could be spoken of as righteous.

Genesis 22., which shows us the climax of Abraham's renunciation, equally gives us the climax of his communion, for there pre-eminently we see him as the man of faith moving amidst agonizing circumstances with the serenity which comes from a clear intelligence of the mind and ways of God. What but spiritual understanding, the fruit of communion, could have prompted such a word to the young men who attended Abraham and Isaac as, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you"? This was no remark made at random under the stress of the moment, as Hebrews 11. 17-19 shows. He "offered up Isaac ... accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead."

In those days life and incorruptibility had not "come to light" as they now have through the Gospel (see 2 Tim. 1. 10), yet as the fruit of communion and intercourse with God Abraham knew Him as the God of resurrection.

A little later comes Isaac's question as to the lamb. Abraham calmly answered, "My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering"; uttering thus, possibly without knowing it, a prophecy the scope of which went far beyond the immediate matter in hand. It became one of the great Old Testament predictions of the coming of the suffering Messiah, so greatly amplified when Isaiah 53. came to be written. Again we may say, how full and elevated must have been the communion which expressed itself in this calm certitude of faith! In very deed, God did not hide from Abraham the thing that He was about to do.

A third exhibition of faith and communion was seen in Abraham naming the place Jehovah-jireh—the Lord will provide. The spot became "the mount of the Lord," the site of the future temple.

It was all this that called forth the special approbation of heaven. "Thou hast obeyed My voice " was the Lord's commendation, for true communion always has its fruit in obedience. In connection with this there was that giving of the Divine oath as well as of the word—those "two immutable things" of which such important things are said in Hebrews 6. 13-20.

Clearly, then, Abraham held communion with God, even about things which were not in his day the subject of public revelation. He rejoiced in the coming Lamb of sacrifice, and in resurrection, in the city which hath foundations, and in the heavenly country—but all as a matter of anticipation, and held as a secret between his own soul and God.

We to-day are come to these things (see Hebrews 12. 22-24). They are fully revealed. The Lamb of sacrifice has appeared. Resurrection has come to pass in Him, being established beyond all dispute and now announced as an integral part of the Gospel. What glorious light, what heavenly privileges, are the portion of the Christian!

But what about our communion? Do we let God talk to us about these things in His Word and by His Spirit?
given to us? Do we responsively talk to Him about them? Or are all our communications Godward occupied with our own trials and troubles and needs and wants?

Depend upon it, communion and renunciation go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other. As we are in touch with God, so are we out of touch with the world, and vice versa. To happily embrace both is the way of joy and power and blessing.

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.
Chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar's Image.

WHAT a poor, weak, foolish, and conceited creature man is at his best estate altogether vanity (Ps. 39. 5)! Not always the wise and noble of the earth are set over the kingdom of men, but God gives it to whomsoever He will, and sets over it the basest of men (chap. 4. 17). It might have been supposed that this proud autocrat had been taught a lesson, by means of the defeat of his magicians, that he would not readily forget, and that henceforth the God of Daniel would be the only God that would have place in his thoughts. Abundant testimony had been given to the supremacy of the living God above all the gods that he had previously served, but yet will he venture into the arena in a trial of strength with the God he had acknowledged as "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings." The madness of the human mind away from God is incomprehensible. How all the dealings of God with the mere child of nature bear witness to the great fact, that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"!

Where there is no moral foundation in the soul how easy it is to quiet conscience, and to forget the reality and power of the Most High, even after He has brought Himself manifestly before our mental vision! Nebuchadnezzar is bowed at the feet of Daniel to-day, as a slave before his master, acknowledging Daniel's God as the God of gods, and to-morrow he will set up a god of his own, and will cast the three friends of Daniel into a furnace of fire, because they refuse to do homage to this nothing that he in his ignorance and pride has created.

This is man! It is both reader and writer. By nature we are all clay of the same lump—poor dupes of the devil, and in the things that relate to our responsibility to God as ignorant as the beasts of the field. For a moment we may be overawed, as we are confronted by some special manifestation of the reality of His existence, and of the fact that He takes account of our doings in this world, but the natural heart refuses to receive any lasting impression, and we quickly drop down into our normal state of God-forgetfulness. A God all-powerful, and who had wisdom beyond the gods with which he was accustomed to have intercourse, was all that the God of Daniel was in the estimation of Nebuchadnezzar. He was awed in the presence of the wisdom with which Daniel was endowed, by that Being of whom hitherto he had no knowledge.

But his accountability to that God for the way in which he conducted himself down here does not seem to have entered into his darkened understanding. His return to his dumb idols is both rapid and thorough. The impression made upon him by this signal intervention of the God of heaven is soon gone, and when gone it is as completely gone as though it never had been.
“Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold.” He is completely in the hands of the devil. In committing dominion to the Gentiles, which in the purpose of God belonged to Israel, He makes known to the king the changes that would take place while the times of the Gentiles were running their course, until the Christ should take the government of the world into His own hands. God does not usually put people into a place of privilege and responsibility without telling them how things are likely to turn out in their hands. When He had brought Israel out of Egypt and then they were about to enter into the land of promise, He makes known to them how thoroughly they would corrupt themselves, and how their abominable behaviour would compel Him to drive them out of the land, as He was about to drive out the nations that had the land in possession, and how He would scatter them among the nations of the earth. And before the apostles of our Lord had left this scene, He has put it on record how that the professing Church would depart from the faith, and in the end would have to come under His judgment. So also must this proud Gentile hear of the judgment by means of the stone cut out of the mountain without hands that would bring Gentile dominion to an end upon the earth.

But though the dream and the interpretation were both given that the king might know that Gentile domination must one day cease to exist by the judgment of God, no lasting good seems to have been effected by means of the light granted to him. The devil uses it as a means of increasing the natural pride of his heart, and of giving his headlong career on the way to perdition a greater impetus. He used the serpent of brass, which was made by Moses in the wilderness, and which typified the lifting up of the Son of man on the cross, to lead the wayward people into idolatry. And by engaging the vain thoughts of this monarch with the glorious position he occupied, as represented by the head of gold, and hiding from his mental vision the deterioration of the successive kingdoms, as well as the utter destruction of all by the judgment of God, he leads him to make an image to the empire over which he had been placed, and to compel under pain of the most horrible death every one to do homage to it.

And when we turn to the Apocalypse we find this thought conceived in the head of gold coming out into manifestation in the feet of iron and clay. There an image is made to the beast—the revived Roman Empire—and every one who will not do homage to the image of the beast must be killed (Rev. 13.). In the thought of the Gentile rulers nothing is of any importance but the kingdom. Everything must be sacrificed to the expansion, grandeur, and greatness of the kingdom under which men live. God and the relation of men to Him are of no account. A religion is of course felt to be a necessity. In an autocracy it must be a state religion, and individual conscience is little, or not at all, tolerated. Generally speaking where democracy prevails men may have whatever religion they like or none at all where this is preferred. But whether the government is autocratic or democratic religion must be subservient to the state. It is a kind of decoration for the kingdom, and is used by the devil as a silencer to the conscience, for man must serve a God of some sort. But, regarding the individual's relations to the powers that be, conscience toward God cannot be tolerated. The conceptions of the head become conspicuous in the feet.

But in carrying out the projects and purposes of this world the witnesses of God have always to be reckoned with. They are the irritating substance that vexes the godless fellowship of the world. Its best laid plans are either frustrated or marred by their obstinacy. They are always in the way, a brake upon the wheel, or a barrier in the path
of human prosperity, as this is understood by men. They are not governed by the same thoughts that govern the rest of men. And the worst of it is that they seem to be insensible to the praise or blame of the multitude. They do the best they can for the country in which they live. They pray for kings and for all that exercise authority. They cannot be accused of riot, nor are they movers of sedition. They are quiet, inoffensive, and law-abiding, if the law does not come in between their conscience and God, but, if it does, their subjection to it comes abruptly to an end. At all cost they will obey God rather than men. In all this I am speaking of the people of God as in complete subjection to His holy Word. Alas! not as many are actually found in the disorder that exists in the professing church of to-day. In the chapter before us we have a fine example of this determination to be true to the living God whatever might be the consequence to themselves. These three men along with Daniel were resolute against partaking of the food from the king's table; if anything they are more resolute now in the matter of the idol. The appalling insolence of the man, in whatever exalted position he might be found, who by the threat of a horrible death would attempt to drive them from their allegiance to their Creator, produces nothing but abhorrence in the souls of these three faithful men of God. The outrageous, ignorant, and wicked conceit of this crowned worm of the dust, instead of terrorizing them into obedience, so bedwarfs both himself and his little brief authority, that they tell him plainly that they are not even careful to answer him in the matter, and they also declare their determination neither to serve his gods, nor to worship the golden image that he had set up. God would have every man honoured to whom He commits power and authority. We are to honour the king, and in this neither Daniel nor his three friends were found at fault. But when to obey and serve the king would sever my relations and responsibility to God, he loses his position as king to me, and becomes in my estimation nothing but a poor slave of the devil, and to his commandment I have no respect.

The boldness of the apparently weak servant of God, when his loyalty to his Master is put to the test, has always been an astonishment to the mere worldling, and exasperating to the rulers with whom he has to do; and the very helplessness of his position has the tendency of making his insubjection all the more aggravating, because it is powerfully forced home to the souls of those that exercise authority over him, that it is not he that is powerless but themselves. The silent dignity with which our Lord met the accusations and the insults of His persecutors caused the Roman governor no little astonishment, and it was not the Divine Prisoner but the judge in his judgment-seat that felt how utterly weak and contemptible he was. And when, in a later day, the rulers of the Jews were confronted by Peter and John, the two "unlearned and ignorant" disciples of the Lord, they marvelled at their boldness (Acts 4. 13). And now, when three of the servants of the same Master have in manifest friendlessness and weakness to stand for the truth of the one living God, and that in opposition to the most powerful monarch in the world, threatening with the most awful death that his infuriated mind could invent, they avow that they have no need to study the answer they are to return to such a demand on his part. Upon his own head must fall the consequences of his diabolical act. And all that he could do was little compared with the power of Him against whom he was waging his insane warfare. He could at the utmost but kill the body, but God would destroy both body and soul in hell (Matt. 10. 28). And even the body is beyond his power to injure, unless it is allowed by God.

Here is the will of this conceited
idolater thwarted. Here is rebellion lifting its head in his otherwise peaceful kingdom. If it had not been for these three, in his estimation, fanatical obstructionists, everything would have freely moved along to the goal at which he determined to arrive. They were the brake upon the wheels of his universal empire, that was peacefully rolling onward to glory. The bare audacity of these three recalcitrants fills the king with madness, and he gives commandment that the furnace of fire shall be made seven times hotter than it had been made. And into the furnace the most mighty men of his army cast the three witnesses of the living God. This he, no doubt, supposed would be the end of the present opposition to his will, and would furnish an object lesson for others who might afterward be mad enough to dispute his authority.

Our Lord has forewarned us that in this world we shall have tribulation. It cannot be otherwise, for the believer is here in subjection to the will of God, and on earth, as I have already indicated, whether the form of government be autocratic or democratic, it is the will of man that is dominant. In the former it is the will of one man that is dominant, and in the latter it is the will of the people that is supposed to rule. With neither is it the will of God. We are told that whoever resists the power resists the ordinance of God (Rom. 13. 2), but that is in things within the sphere of its authority. It has no right to force the subject into rebellion against God. When the time comes that Antichrist will attempt to force all men to worship the image that he shall set up to the Roman empire, God declares that "If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name" (Rev. 14. 9-11).

In every kingdom upon earth throughout the whole history of the world, the servants of God have had to make their decision between obedience to certain enactments of the state under which they lived, and the specific commandments of the living God on whose behalf they were here below. And this must always be until the kingdom of God shall come in power, and His Christ shall reign, and then "Judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it" (Ps. 94. 15). But until then the servants of God must find themselves, if they are faithful, subjected to persecution, imprisonment, and even death itself.

Laws are made for the safety of the community, and in making them it is no question with the legislators what the will of God is, but what they themselves consider good. But with the servant of God it is altogether the Divine will that is to be the rule of his life. He also knows right well that this is best for the creature; hence in every way he is encouraged to travel on this line whatever it may cost him to do so. He can very well afford to leave the results in the hand of the righteous Judge of all. It may entail imprisonment and even death itself to him, but if that be the will of God for him, he will be supported through it, and the Lord will be with him in the trials he may have to undergo. Flesh may well tremble at the thought of that torture which the ingenuity of the fallen creature, under the inspiration of the devil, can invent, and the heart may faint at the bare prospect of having to undergo the horrible ordeal, but when the dread moment arrives, and we find Him by our side, the chariot of fire that is to transport us to our heavenly home becomes the most welcome sight that ever gladdened our vision.
In the midst of the furnace of fire the three witnesses walk unharmed in the company of the Son of God. Surely to them this must remain a never-to-be-forgotten moment. Never previously had they been so wonderfully privileged and so highly honoured. How veritable, indeed, is His holy Word which says: “In all their afflictions He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them” (Isa. 63. 9). When in front of that fiery furnace they were being bound in their coats, their hosen, and their hats, and their other garments, to be consigned to that raging volcano that opened its mouth to devour them, they had the support of the Almighty God; but in the furnace itself they had not only His support but His company. The cords that bound them and the men that gave them to the fire were both consumed. The fire did nothing but set them free from their bonds. And now, instead of three men being quickly reduced to ashes in the flames, Nebuchadnezzar sees four men walking about loose in their midst, and the form of the fourth, he says, is like the Son of God.

Thus is Nebuchadnezzar faced with the intervention of the living God on behalf of His faithful and beloved servants and smitten upon his brazen forehead by the gauntlet of the Almighty in answer to his impudent challenge: “Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hand?”

In this battle he is utterly defeated. He has lost some of the best men of his army. He himself is humiliated in the presence of his nobles, he has to accept defeat in the sight of the representatives of the various dependencies, who were gathered together to do homage to his god of gold, which is now fit for nothing but the melting-pot. He sees himself beaten and abased in the plain of Dura; and he is compelled to accept it, and to confess: “There is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” He sees how well able the living and true God is to safeguard His own glory in a world of rebels, who are blinded by the very darkness in which they love to walk, and who are driven by the devil into insane conflict with Omnipotence. Surely His compassions are the wonder and study of all who know Him, and the way in which He gives witness to all men of His power and goodness of heart, and of His longsuffering toward those whose evil ways are to Him a constant provocation, is marvellously astonishing.

The trial of strength in this instance, as in all others, was between God and Satan. But the spectators are numberless, the celestial hierarchy, the denizens of the infernal regions, and those over whom the proud Gentile monarch had sway. And all this spiritual drama is enacted in the province of Babylon, for the enlightenment of a world steeped in ignorance of the true God, and which desired none of His ways. The light of God came into Babylon with His afflicted, down-trodden, and captive people, and brightly it shone in the midst of the deep darkness. What effect may have been produced in the souls of the multitude who were gathered together from every quarter, we know not. It may be that many, when they saw the hand of God, and knew that now the golden image must be consigned to the crucible, that the precious metal may be put to other and better uses, may have welcomed the saving light, and have cast away their idols as things of naught and for ever after bent their knee to Jehovah only. If this good effect followed. Daniel does not put it on record.

As to Nebuchadnezzar, the decree that goes forth from him is indicative of nothing but a mind overawed by the unexpected and marvellous intervention of God on behalf of His devoted servants, and of a heart unaffected by the mercy extended to him and his kingdom. With him the true God is as yet nothing but one with the many, though the most powerful of all. But God has not yet finished with this idolatrous autocrat.
AWAKE!

AWAKE! Awake, sleeper!
Thy Saviour, thy Keeper
Is calling to thee from the dead to arise;
For the Star of the Morning,
The blue dome adorning,
Is waiting to light up thy slumber-sealed eyes.

How bright is its shining!
The clouds of night lining
With glory celestial—a glory renowned:
Dark Golgotha’s horrors,
Its searchings, its sorrows,
For thee hath a crown incorruptible found.

Then awake from thy slumber!
Why longer encumber
Thy spirit with earth and its perishing joys,
Its pastimes, its pleasures,
Its moth-eaten treasures;
Its fancies, its follies, its tinsel, its toys?

Arise from thy dreaming,
From men and their scheming;
From darkness to light, from the false to the true;
From the dead thou abhorrest,
To Him thou adorest;
From fetters to freedom, from old things to new.

Let not this world bind thee,
Let not its god blind thee,
Let not drunken drivel the voice of Christ drown;
Of faith rise defender,
And never surrender,
Hold fast, lest another inherit thy crown.

Awake! Awake, sleeper!
The darkness grows deeper,
And wrinkled with wrath is the forehead of heaven,
And soon shall be falling
God’s vengeance appalling,
And rebels accursed from His face shall be driven.

From glory eternal,
From regions supernal,
In love to thy soul is His call sent to thee;
Let not this world’s clamour,
Its glitter, its glamour,
So wilder thou neither canst hearken nor see.

By virtue and glory,
By His deathless story,
By all that He suffered to ransom thy soul,
By His cross, by His dying,
By His might death defying,
To life art thou called, then make haste to the goal.
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Deeds Done in the Body.

What are we to understand by 2 Corinthians 5. 10, and Romans 14. 10? Will the deeds done in the body before and after conversion be manifested?—E. L. C.

Both the passages to which you refer speak of the same moment. All of us without exception shall stand before Christ's judgment seat. In Romans the point is that we should therefore not be concerned as to others and waste our time in correcting them, but rather be concerned as to our own individual responsibility to our Lord and theirs.

In Corinthians the body is in question. The early part of the chapter shows that we have full assurance as to the glorified body which is to be ours in resurrection. Still, while here we are at home in the body—our present mortal bodies—and we "labour" or "are zealous" to be acceptable to the Lord; and that because we know we must "appear" or "be manifested" before the judgment seat of Christ. That manifestation will involve the "receiving" of the things done in the body, either in the way of reward or of loss.

These statements are comprehensive and unqualified. It does not say that the manifestation will only concern things done before conversion; or only things done after conversion; or only things done after conversion which we have not judged and confessed to God at the time.

We accept these unqualified statements just as they stand, and we rejoice that everything is coming out, and we shall start on our bright and blissful eternity without one crevice of our whole career being left in the dark.

The Faith.

Would you please make clear what that FAITH is for which we are earnestly to contend, and which was delivered to the saints?—A SEEKER AFTER THE TRUTH

You must of course distinguish between "faith" and "the faith." The former is that simple taking of God at His Word which substantiates what God promises, and gives conviction of things not seen. It thus lays hold of and turns into reality in our consciousness the real things which God makes known to us. The latter is rather the revelation of all those real things which faith lays hold of.

In other words: faith is the hand that grips what is proffered by God; the faith is that which is proffered by way of revelation. In the coming day of glory the things themselves in all their actuality and fulness will be ours—they are ours now by faith as revealed.

"The faith," then, is the whole circle of revealed truth. It is permanently enshrined in the pages of the New Testament. Thus it has been delivered to the saints, and for it we are to contend. Was such contending ever more necessary than it is to-day?
IN order to get the full significance of this type, which is one of the most important in the Old Testament, let us notice in verse 4, "the tabernacle of the congregation"; in verse 9, "the congregation of the children of Israel"; in verse 13, "the tabernacle of the Lord"; in verse 20, "the congregation," and "the sanctuary of the Lord." Whatever may be the teaching of this type, it had as its special object the maintenance of the holiness of the sanctuary of the Lord and of the congregation of Israel. The ashes of the red heifer were applied to individuals who had become defiled, but it was because each individual had his part in the congregation and was identified with the Lord's sanctuary. "The congregation" sets forth in type our fellowship together, while "the tabernacle of the Lord" speaks of what we are as God's dwelling place. The tabernacle which was the dwelling place of the Lord in Israel was the centre of gathering and the bond of fellowship for the people. The Lord had separated the people to Himself, they were to be holy unto Him, hence they had to be cleansed from all defilement. This ceremonial cleansing is typical of the moral cleansing that we must never neglect if we are to be kept suitable to the place of privilege in which grace has put us.

Question.—Will you explain more fully how we are God's dwelling place?

Ephesians 2. 19-22 states it very clearly. We who were once "strangers and foreigners" to all Divine privileges are citizens of the heavenly city, and members of God's household. In those two statements we might bring in the thought of the "congregation"; but we are a building also, and that building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. That has in view the completion of the church when it will appear as the holy, heavenly city. But verse 22 states that we are now builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Question.—Does that include all believers?

It includes all who have heard and believed the "gospel of your salvation" and so are sealed by the Holy Ghost in Christ (Eph. 1. 13).

Remarked.—But there are some who claim to know, and they say that not all believers are sealed by the Holy Ghost.

If they mean that some who have believed on the once dead but now risen Lord are yet unsealed, they have either never had the truth or they have given it up. Notice in the verse we are considering it states, "In whom," that is in the Lord. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in thy heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10. 9). All in that verse are "in the Lord." They have come under His authority truly, and the Spirit seals them so that they are now an habitation of God "in the Lord" and "through the Spirit." This passage has all the saints on earth in view, but 1 Cor. 3, looks upon Christians in any given locality as God's dwelling place; verse 16 says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Being brought together under one Lord, and indwelt by one Spirit, brings us into one fellowship.

Question.—Do you connect fellowship with the Lordship of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit?
The Lordship of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit are the beginning of it, but the truth of the one body comes in, and for that we must know Christ as our Head. Then we are children of God, and we know the Father and the Son. Christians have fellowship together in the whole range of revealed truth by the Spirit. But I think that Numbers 19. would give us specially the Corinthians side of it, though I would not shut out I John.

We are God's dwelling place and as such we are formed into one fellowship. The book of Numbers is the wilderness book, and it is here that we get this instructive type and not in Leviticus where all the other sacrifices are. In the wilderness Israel were in danger of being defiled, and here in the world, which has become the wilderness to all who have come out of Egypt and have the heavenly Canaan in view, we all are more or less in contact with what is defiling, hence the need of purification. We have not here expiation for sins or guilt, but purification from defilement.

Question.—Is there any significance in the animal being an heifer?

Yes, I think there is. The two great offerings that set forth Christ objectively—the Burnt Offering and the Sin Offering—had to be male animals, the first sets forth Christ offering Himself in the unreserved devotion of His heart to God, wholly for us; the second sets forth His sufferings for our sins, and our faith reaches out to Him in this twofold aspect of His sacrifice in which full atonement is set forth. But when the animal was a female, it is typical of a subjective effect being produced in us. The first clears us before God, the effect of the second is to be in our consciences and hearts, it has to do with the condition of our souls.

The cedar wood and hyssop, cast into the burning, speak of man in his dignity and his meanness; from the highest to the least, all alike are under condemnation. The scarlet sets forth the glory of man. All was tested at the cross, the best—the princes of this world—crucified the Lord of glory. It is evident after that, that nothing that man is naturally, nor all the glory in which he boasts, can have a place in God's sanctuary, or bind together or build up the saints of God in Divine fellowship. It is clearly put in I Cor. 1. 29-31. After stating that God brings to nought the things that are—man's wisdom and glory—he says, "That no flesh should glory in His presence. . . . That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Now notice verse 4, "Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times." The tabernacle was the place where all the light that shone at that time was, for the presence of the Lord was there; and before it Israel assembled, it was the place of their fellowship, and it was there that the blood was sprinkled seven times. It seems that we have here in type I John 1. 7, "If we walk in the light as He is in the light." Israel were never in the light as we are, but they had in the tabernacle what light there was. We now are in the full light of God, revealed as Father in His beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and in that light we walk together, we have fellowship one with another. But how can that be? How can we joy in and before God and be in happy fellowship one with another who were once full of sin and have in us still that which is ever ready to turn us from God? The answer is "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." The blood is there, and it has given us purified consciences and a perfect footing in the light. The blood is equal in efficacy to the full shining of the light, and where the blood is, there the sins are not. Think of God's infinite abhorrence of sin, and the claims of Divine justice against it, the blood has met all that. With consciences set
free from the sense of guilt, and with hearts filled with the love that provided the blood with this end in view, we can rejoice in God as our Father and we can rejoice in Him together, for here we have fellowship one with another. God has called us to this fellowship, and it is the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Question.**—If the blood was efficacious what was the need of the ashes and the running water?

In the answer to that question we see how a believer's sins are dealt with. It is a great question, what shall a believer do who has sinned? and the popular answer is, He needs a fresh application of the blood. No, he does not; once for all the question of his guilt has been met by the blood. He will never lose the place that the blood has given him before God. What he needs is the sprinkling with the waters of purification in which are the ashes of the red heifer.

**Question.**—Before going on to that will you say something about touching the dead body, or the bone, or the grave (The dead body, etc., sets forth the corrupting things of this world through which we have to pass. We may take up these things thoughtlessly, or be snared by them in an unwary moment, or a Christian may deliberately for the gratification of his flesh come into contact with them. In any of these cases he has sinned. But cases are also indicated where it would be impossible to avoid contact with a dead body, and this would set forth the coming into contact with the world and sinful men in daily business. It cannot be avoided, it is defiling nevertheless. This is not sinful, but if the waters of purification are neglected it soon will be, for it does not take long to drag a Christian down to the world's level if he forgets that he is identified with the sanctuary of the Lord; but as he remembers that, he seeks the waters of purification and he is preserved.

**Question.**—Now what are the ashes and the running water?

The ashes were the remembrance of the sacrifice. They were the evidence that the victim had been consumed by fire. They are typical of the fact that Christ died for us. "Christ suffered for our sins." The running water would speak to us of the power of the Holy Ghost. The two together speak of the fact of Christ's sufferings for us being brought home to our consciences and souls in the power of the Holy Ghost. That produces pain of heart for having tampered with the things of this present evil world, to deliver us from which He gave Himself. It brings us to confession before God, and He is faithful and just to forgive us, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1. 9); thus we are restored to communion. It is not that God requires a fresh sacrifice to meet the fresh sin. He has found all that He required in the One Sacrifice for ever. But we need to be afresh reminded that our sin cost our Lord Jesus the sufferings of Calvary, and thus we are brought to a right sense of what sin is. Only thus are we cleansed from all unrighteousness.

**Question.**—But in the case of a business man who cannot help coming into contact with the world and who is not conscious of having sinned, how is he affected by it?

Well, he feels that there is that in him to which the world appeals and he finds his spirit dulled, and that he has not been able to escape the defiling influences of the world. But as soon as he can he retires to the clean place where the ashes are, and finds relief and refreshment in thoughts of the love that brought Jesus into death for Him. Such thoughts given by the Holy Ghost have a sanctifying, purifying, effect upon him. He makes use of the water of separation.

**Question.**—What is the clean place?

The clean place sets forth the presence of the Lord in your own chamber.
You seek His presence in secret. You do not carry your dulled, defiled spirit to the sanctuary—in other words, the meeting—or you will affect others adversely. You go to God, and everything is brought out and settled there; it is there that your heart is separated from the things that ensnared you, or that threatened to do so, and in the sense of the never-failing grace that restores you, you are able to take up the privileges of being in the sanctuary of the Lord, and of fellowship with the saints.

Question.—What is the meaning of the third and seventh days?

They speak of a double action upon us. First our consciences must be awakened to bring us to the confession of our sin, then follows the second, the assurance of a Father’s forgiveness. We can only understand what sin is as we see the Cross in God’s presence, and we learn that it is only because of what He has found in that Cross that He can forgive and restore us to communion.

Question.—Would “let a man examine himself and so let him eat” answer to “the clean place” in connection with the Lord’s Supper?

Yes, I should think so. You use the water in the Lord’s presence, or allow Him to use it on you. We can all see the need of it, and of the blessedness of it too. It would give us a deepened sense of our own nothingness, but a greater sense of the love of Christ. It would greatly help us to “glory in the Lord,” and it would make us more watchful. We should not only confess the sin, but we should judge the root from whence the sin sprang.

The dead body or the bone set forth all that the world can give us, it has nothing but corruption and death, and we are not to love the world, neither the things that are in it, for “if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him,” and he is disqualified for his place in fellowship.

Question.—What do you mean by that?

The man that neglected to purify himself was “cut off from among the congregation, because he had defiled the sanctuary of the Lord; the water of separation had not been sprinkled upon him, he is unclean” (verse 20). A man is lost to fellowship who goes on with the world, and he is unfitted for the presence of the Lord. He may still attend meetings and be outwardly in fellowship, but he is useless. Demas who loved this present world could not go on with Paul, and if there were more power nowadays, such would either have their consciences so thoroughly exercised that they would seek the water of separation in the Lord’s presence, or they would not be able to remain outwardly in fellowship. With many the crash comes at last, and excommunication is necessary. The man who neglected this cleansing defiled the sanctuary. I take 1 Cor. 3. 17, to be an extreme case, “him shall God destroy.” That I believe would be the bringing in of doctrines and practices that would destroy the temple of God. But we must remember that His temple is holy, and if we love the world and go on with its pursuits and ways we are altogether incompatible with God’s holy temple, and in our measure we defile it.

It is a solemn consideration. The neglecting of this cleansing was the great sin. We are always liable to contract defilement in the world, but God has made a full provision for this, and it is always and immediately available. The great sin lies in neglecting this provision of grace, for it means that the holiness of God is not understood, His sanctuary is despised, and fellowship is not appreciated.

Question.—Will you say something about the open vessel?

We have to keep the cover on our souls. If we keep our eyes and ears open to every folly and sin we are unclean. We must withhold our eyes from
beholding vanity, and keep our ears closed from listening to sin; and the best way to do that is to have Christ for a covering for the eyes, and have our ears open to His voice. We touch the dead body often in the things we read, and things we see and hear. How often we find evil things that we have read, or seen, or thought, come back to us at the most sacred moments. We need the water of separation for these. And to be preserved from them we need to think of the things that are true and honest, and pure, and lovely, and of good report. In that way our vessels will be covered and we are preserved.

Question.—What about the tent?

The world gets into our homes. Those who stay at home are as liable to become defiled as those who go out into the world.

Question.—Who is the clean person who sprinkles the unclean?

"If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal. 6. 1). Sprinkle the water with the bunch of hyssop; that is, do it in self-judgment. Then "ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13. 14). A man must be out of the ditch himself if he is to clean the mud off his brother. But if we keep sensitive consciences we shall not need others to intervene. Let us all see to it that we have the vessel of running water with the ashes close at hand for our own use. If we know what it is to be intimate with the Lord, and know the joy His presence yields, we shall be conscious of the least shade of distance—so it used to be said by a beloved brother—and it is true. To cultivate intimacy with the Lord is the great thing.

Question.—John says "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Do you get the Advocate in this type?

No, I do not think so, but no type contains the whole truth. Moses was Israel's advocate when they sinned. Jesus Christ is ours, and He exercises His advocacy on our behalf when we sin. It does not say, when we confess, our confession is the result of His advocacy, and not the cause of it. He never loses sight of us and is ever serving us because of the great love He bears toward us. In Him we have life and spiritual health and joy, and that is better than the death and corruption that the world gives. We ought not to have any difficulty in choosing between the two. Let us keep in mind that we, as believers indwelt by the Spirit, are the temple of God, He has brought us into this close relationship with Himself, and we are members one of another; then we shall cultivate in our lives the things that are suitable to these relationships, and shall feel the need of, and not neglect, the water of separation.

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THE OVERCOMER: HIS PATH AND PORTION.

(J. R. Stephens.)

Revised Notes of an Address on Judges 1. 16; Jeremiah 35. 12-19; Hebrews 13. 7-14; Revelation 3. 11-13.

There have been overcomers in the path of faith in every generation. This beaten track is clearly defined in Scripture from Abel onward (Heb. 11. 4). If anyone aspires to be an overcomer in this day he treads the same path as faithful men of God pursued in every age before him. He will certainly have a considerable acquisition of light denied to such as went before in earlier dispensations; still the path is the same.
It is a great privilege to be an over­
comer in a day of ruin, when every­
thing outwardly has failed. It was 
comparatively easy in the early period 
of the church's history to move on in 
this pathway. But in a day of de­
parture from the truth, when giving up 
instead of going on predominates, all 
the power of God becomes indis­
pensable to the overcomer if he is to be 
sustained. The Pentecostal times are 
over; when it could be said, "With 
great power gave the apostles witness 
of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; 
and great grace was upon them all" 
(Acts 4. 33), yet that is what we want—
to be marked by power and grace. 
Who would not, then, seeing these 
qualities are ever at our disposal, be an 
overcomer in the twentieth century?

Let us look at some of the moral 
features of the overcomer, as we have 
them delineated in the Holy Scriptures. 
In Judges 1. 16, we find the record of a 
people who left the City of Palm Trees 
for the Wilderness of Judah. It was a 
strange step to take, for a city of palm 
trees is a place of comfort, and the 
wilderness the very reverse. Such a 
course is against nature, yet it indicated 
dependence upon God. We look for 
this in the overcomer, and it is a sure 
mark upon all who answer to that 
name. If you and I are to be over­
comers in this world we must be pre­
pared to leave the settled order of 
things here and step into the wilder­
ness, into the path of His will.

But who are the Kenites? What 
do we know of their origin? They are 
a most interesting people, a gentile 
community which had formed the 
closest possible links with the nation 
of Israel. Doubtless, their fathers had 
heard of Jehovah from Moses, when in 
the house of Jethro the priest of 
Midian, that man of God found a haven 
of rest, after his renunciation of the 
glory and splendour of Egypt. They 
were off the same stock as Zipporah— 
Moses' wife. A stranger in a strange 
land, he, the future deliverer of Israel, 
doubtless opened his heart to these 
Midianish inquirers, telling them of 
the promises to Abraham, Isaac and 
Jacob, and of the land flowing with 
milk and honey they were to possess, 
and of the glories that were to be given 
to that nation, although at the moment 
they were down-trodden slaves in 
Egypt. That tale moved them to a 
longing desire to be associated with 
such a favoured people. But they 
were gentiles, and outside the pale of 
Israel and the promises that were given 
to the patriarchs: "Aliens from the 
commonwealth of Israel and strangers 
from the covenants of promise" they 
were. In a similar plight were we 
when the grace of God met us. How 
can we sufficiently magnify the grace 
that has taken us into favour in the 
Beloved?

There came a day when Moses, who 
followed the lowly calling of tending 
Jethro's sheep, led his flock to the 
backside of the desert and came to the 
mountain of God. There Moses took 
his stand, and looked around him to 
survey the purposes of God in relation 
to Israel. And what happened to him 
there? The angel of the Lord appeared 
unto him and there he received Divine 
communications. Ponder that fact, 
fellow believer! The backside of the 
desert leads to the mountain of God. 
From this high elevation you can cast 
your eyes around, and discover the full 
range of God's purpose in relation to 
Christ. Who would not be prepared 
to stand on that holy eminence and be 
engaged with the all-varied wisdom of 
God? This will enable you to say—

"Begone, vain world, thou hast no charm 
for me;
My captive soul has now its liberty;
I listened long to thy vain song, and 
thought thy music sweet,
And thus my soul lay grovelling at thy 
feet.

Everything in the world will then have 
lost its charm over you. We are not 
of the world, but a heavenly people 
predestined for glory, and meanwhile 
pilgrims and strangers here, passing on 
to the rest of God."
Well, the children of the Kenite, Moses' father-in-law, were so moved by the report of the pleasant land that, at Moses' invitation, they left their own country at the exodus of Israel, accepting the wilderness conditions imposed upon them on the way to Canaan. When Israel came into their inheritance the God of Israel would not forget them, and so later you find them going out of the city to the wilderness, in company with the children of Judah. It was a voluntary act, but they were in good company. They were associated with the royal tribe.

What I want to ask each one of you is, Have you left the established order of things here? Have you been led outside the town, like the blind man of Mark 8, who was warned by Jesus after receiving his sight—"neither go into the town." This is the place of separation to the Lord, where you learn the lesson of how you can be a fully qualified witness in the place where He has been refused. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Galatians, speaks of a similar experience: "But when it pleased God who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His grace . . . immediately I confessed not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem . . . but I went into Arabia, and returned again into Damascus" (Gal. 1:15-17).

"In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found;
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All His grace shall there abound."

If we turn now to Jeremiah 35, we get a further view of the same people. We need not stop to trace their genealogy from the priest of Midian via the Kenites of Judges 1, to the Rechabites of the chapter before us. Sufficient it is to say, they are a later branch of the same family, displaying the same characteristics as were manifested in them more than two centuries prior to Jeremiah's day. The prophet, as commanded of Jehovah, was to bring them into the House of the Lord, set wine before them, and invite them to drink. How do they answer his suggestion? "We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye nor your sons for ever." This was their emphatic answer! The critic might have said: "Why, what harm can there be in drinking wine? Do you not know the prophet of the Lord invites you to partake?" To this they had but one answer. They might be called "bigots" or anything else: there was to be no deviation from the path of obedience, whatever the consequences. What a rebuke this was to Israel! The word of Jonadab was held in high esteem, but the word of Jehovah was set aside as being of no account: "But ye harkened not unto me" was the sad reflection of the God of Israel in bringing the sin of that nation to their remembrance.

When the world offers you its society, child of God, if you answer with a firm "No," you are an overcomer. Remember Demas! He was overcome. "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4:10). There are many such to-day! The pleasure and society of the world is prized, instead of seeking after heavenly things. Well, are we to be true Rechabites or otherwise?

Besides abstaining from wine, they reveal another strong characteristic which is important for us to observe. Jonadab, the son of Rechab, had further commanded: "Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard; but all your days ye shall dwell in tents: that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers." Is there not a voice to us here? How does this compare with your record and mine? The Rechabites built no house, sowed no seed, nor planted vineyard. Why? Because they were to maintain their distinctive character continuously in the land where they were strangers. A house could only be a hindrance to a people whose dwelling was in the wilderness. Here to-day and away to-morrow—a
tent suited their manner of life admirably. Abraham had his tent and his altar, content like the Rechabites to be a stranger and a pilgrim until the inheritance should revert to him and his seed, however long he had to wait. Are we as the children of God characterized by the tent and the altar? thus proclaiming our heavenly character as strangers here. The joys of earth—wine; the comforts of earth, seen in a permanent dwelling—a house; the society of earth—the city: do we set them all aside? Paul was willing to suffer the loss of all that he might have Christ as his gain. Let us heed the Word, laying it to heart in the fear of God.

There were Kenites, alas! who had a different conception of life upon the earth compared with the sons of Rechab. And there are those to whom we may be related in the flesh—our own kith and kin—who despise the stranger character which should mark each saint of God to-day. You remember Balaam's parable in Numbers 24, and what is said of the Kenites there: "Strong is thy dwelling-place, and thou puttest thy nest in a rock." This is the very reverse of a tent—dwellers of the earth, possessing a strong dwelling-place. They are not to be easily dislodged, but you cannot write "permanent" upon anything under the sun. The idea we gather from a nest in a rock is the eagle's eyrie where human hand or foot may not disturb the inmates of that strong habitation. But what does the Word of God say: "Nevertheless the Kenite shall be wasted until Asshur shall carry thee away captive. . . . Alas! who shall live when God doeth this?" (Num. 24. 21-23). No son of the fallen Adam can build a dwelling-place that will defy God. But we are a heavenly people.

Jeremiah's final word to the sons of Rechab is exceedingly important. They stood firm when tested; and did not yield a single point, and here is their reward: "And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites. . . . thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever" (Jer. 35. 19). Let us seek to emulate the spirit of these devoted men, and our reward shall not be less than theirs.

Now turn to Hebrews 13. 7, 8. These verses in the New Translation run: "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the Word of God; and considering the issue of their conversation imitate their faith. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and to the ages to come." Do we have in our remembrance those who have spoken to us the Word of God? Do we stand by their teaching? The Rechabites held their fathers and their instructions in high esteem. Surely it becomes us to accept no lower ground. If we go back fifty years, I am persuaded the saints in this city were a more separate company than they are to-day. We have forgotten this exhortation: "Remember your leaders," we have not considered the issue of their conversation, nor followed their faith. To use the simile of Jer. 35, there has been a drinking of wine. Instead of going out from the "city" to the wilderness we have accustomed ourselves to "city life"—hence the lack of power in our midst. We have changed, but, thank God, we can turn to "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and to the ages to come." There is permanency here. Yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Keeping the eye on that unchanging One, all will be well, and divers and strange doctrines will find us immovable.

You will observe where the path trodden by the Son of God led to in the Scripture before us, "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate" (v. 12). The gate was where the rulers sat. In Psalm 69. 12—"They that sit in the gate speak against Me," was His complaint. This is the pathway the overcomer is invited
to tread. "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." Without the gate—politically. Without the camp—religiously. I wonder if we are prepared? Not outside to this company or that, but unto Him. In the Old Testament Scriptures there was the place where Jehovah had set His name. This was the centre of attraction for the godly in Israel—"mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually" (2 Chron. 7. 16) was His assurance. But to-day a Person, not a place, is set before us. Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him. Why are we to do that? Because our Lord is outside, and here have we no continuing city, but we seek the coming one. Oh! how wonderful this is! In the first chapter of Judges there is a people that leave the city for the wilderness, but in Revelation 3. we behold the overcomer leaving the wilderness for the city. Marvellous change! We turn our back on the city to-day. Why? Because we have the coming one in view.

Before this heavenly city appears, man outside Eden took the initiative, and there rose up from the earth his conception of a city. It was taken cognisance of in heaven. God answered man's defiance by confounding all his plans, sending him abroad upon the earth where have been further developed the rebel instincts of his nature. The city yet in prospect is connected with the highest and greatest of all the purposes of God. It will be the eternal dwelling-place and repository of Divine holiness. The final witness of the triumph of God and the complete supremacy of good over evil shall be seen in that city which descends from God out of heaven (see Rev. 21. 2 & 10).

When that gets possession of your soul you will be well content with the reproach of Christ here. "Behold, I come quickly, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" is the encouraging word to the overcomer. You will not have long to hold fast—Christ is coming. The world cannot understand you if you go in for heavenly things. We are nevertheless in the secret of the will of God—hold fast, let men say what they will. There is a significant word in 1 Corinthians 7. 29: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short." Whatever we are engaged in here is but short-lived. Whether weeping or rejoicing the time is short. Your tears will soon be dried up, dear believer, and if permitted of God to rejoice, do not be unduly elated over anything in this world, for the time is short. We are looking for the day of God—that eternal day. Can you not then hold fast for this brief moment of time? You are soon to be released from the tension now upon you.

"Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out." Do we know what it is to be in separation to His name here? Have we gone forth to Him without the camp? Then we are going in to go out no more! You who are accounted as useless for the world-structure to-day to be made a pillar in that holy shrine! Wondrous grace! "And I will write upon him the name of My God." You have perhaps had some strange names written upon you here—"bigot," "exclusive," "narrow-minded," etc. What an exchange—"The name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name."

Oh, then, let this stimulate you, and give you energy to pursue the pathway of the overcomer, and you are assured of the overcomer's portion in the day of Christ's glory. "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (Rev. 3. 13).
THE ELECTION OF GRACE.

THE Scriptural doctrine of election, if it be taken up in a merely intellectual way, is beset with many difficulties. It appears on the surface of things to come into instant collision with the equally Scriptural doctrine of man's responsibility to God. In the past, great schools of opinion have been formed around both doctrines, and fierce controversies have been waged. To-day these controversies have waned, still many of those who do not go to the extreme length of such an obsession with one side as to deny altogether the other, but rather admit both, find considerable difficulty in putting both together in an intelligible way.

Romans 9., 10. and 11. are the great New Testament chapters on this important theme. The Apostle Paul is maintaining that in this age, having set Israel as a nation on one side, God has elected to extend mercy to the Gentiles. He consequently proceeds to show that God has uniformly acted in electing mercy; that Israel themselves would have been long ago destroyed as a nation had God not elected to have mercy on them after the sin of the golden calf; and, further, that they owed their original existence as a nation to that same election, in Isaac being chosen and not Ishmael, in Jacob being chosen and not Esau (9. 7-13).

In establishing, therefore, the truth of election the apostle carries us back to Genesis, to the son and grandson of Abraham. In these two men the principle of it was set forth. A comparison of the chapters in Genesis with the verses in Romans 9. is very illuminating.

First, in order, both historically and morally, comes Isaac. The apostle quotes the saying recorded in Genesis 21. 12: "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and his inspired comment on this is: "That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."

The flesh can produce nothing save what is flesh. This fact was plainly declared by the Lord Himself (John 3. 6), and His death was the total setting aside and condemnation of flesh, its judicial end. Still God knew its character from the beginning. He knew it was a corrupt source and therefore a source of nothing but corruption. Hence He passed by Ishmael, the child of the flesh, and His election rested on Isaac, the child of promise, the son who had his origin in the resurrection power of God as expressed in His promise of earlier years.

The first illustration of election, then, clearly instructs us that God chooses what is of Himself, and this involves the passing by of what is not of Himself but merely of man, man's will, or man's energy. This is doctrinally stated as regards ourselves: "The sons of God . . . which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1. 12, 13).

All this lies on the surface and is simple. The difficulty comes in when we remember that even believers were as much of the flesh as others; we are only "of God" as "born of God," and that God's election long preceded our new birth. In other words, we were not elected of God because born of God, but born of God because elected of God.

This leads us to remark upon the inspired fitness of Scripture in setting Isaac before us as primarily a type of Christ, and only secondarily a type of ourselves. The Lord Jesus was essentially the Son of promise, and just as Isaac was born on a resurrection principle, so He came into the world not according to the laws of nature, but according to the operation of the Holy Ghost, and "the power of the Highest" (Luke 1. 35). The Virgin Mary was the vessel chosen for this wondrous entry of Him, whose goings forth had been from the days of eternity,
into human life—a life so totally corrupted in us, but so perfectly spotless and holy in Him. He, therefore, is prophetically saluted—"Behold My servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42.1). Truly, here is One elect, because God chooses what is of Himself.

The first man Adam and his race are like Ishmael, fallen, wild, untamed, and untamable. The second Man, the last Adam, is the chosen of God because of His own intrinsic perfections, but we who are of His race, who are in Him, are also the elect of God. In Colossians 3.12–14 we are exhorted to "put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved," all those beautiful traits of character which were seen in full measure and in perfect harmony in Christ Himself, who is in surpassing measure "THE ELECT OF GOD, HOLY AND BELOVED."

Thus far as to Isaac; but now turning to Jacob we find the apostle in Romans 9. pointing out the peculiar features of his case. Both he and Esau were children of one mother, and produced at one birth, for they were twins; Esau having first place by a few moments, according to nature. Again, however, God set aside the first, and selected the second, saying, "The elder shall serve the younger" (verse 12). The inspired comment on this in the preceding verse runs: "For the children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth,"—showing us thus that God chooses because of what HE IS IN HIMSELF, and not because of what men may be as expressed in their works.

This brings us at once into the presence of that inscrutable mystery that lies at the heart of all divine truth. Turn where we will, whether to the material creation with its unsolvable problems, or to the questions that centre around the existence of Satan and sin, and their entrance into this world, or to the exercise of God's sovereign will and choice, which is now before us, we ultimately in our inquiries come to the facts so strikingly set forth at the close of these three chapters of Romans. In God's wisdom and knowledge there is a depth of riches that must always be beyond the sounding-line of the creature, however exalted. His judgments must be unsearchable, His ways past finding out to us (See II. 33–36). There, then, we have to stop, and rest on the assurance that because He is good all His arrangements and elections must be good also. "Thou art good, and doest good," said the believer of Old Testament days (Ps. 119.68).

God's election of Jacob, and consequent passing over of Esau, brought out another thing, viz., the wisdom and rightness of God's choice is always revealed in the after history, and thus His election always justifies itself in its results. Before Esau and Jacob were born the Divine word was "the elder shall serve the younger." A thousand years after their careers were over it was put upon record, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Mal. 1. 2, 3; Rom. 9. 13).

Had the choice been left to us in the early years of their career, we should have probably selected Esau with practical unanimity. His surface characteristics would have appealed to us. Without a doubt the average unconverted person would choose Esau rather than Jacob at any time, during their lives or a thousand years after. But not so the child of God. He perceives with God that though marked by many a surface blemish there was that in Jacob, fruit of God's work, which was of God, and, therefore, lovely and to be loved. God's choice is "not of works," i.e., of man's works, but "of Him that calleth," i.e., of His own work. God's election and God's work go hand in hand. Why they go in any particular direction and not in another is a question utterly beyond
our creature minds; nor should we be capable of understanding God's reasons, if He condescended to tell us,—so we verily believe.

But there is one thing of which we may be sure: God's choice is always "the election of GRACE" (Rom. II. 5). That God elects to judgment is an idea reached as the fruit of human reasonings upon this matter, which so completely transcends our reason; it is never so stated in Scripture. The Scriptural presentation of the case is that all are totally ruined with no point of recovery in themselves, and that God chooses to have mercy on some and, consequently, in them to work with life-giving power.

Though God does not elect for judgment, He does sometimes harden the hearts of wilful rebels. He may even pick up one such and "raise him up" (Rom. 9. 17), i.e., exalt him to a place of great prominence and renown, as with the Pharaoh of the Exodus, in order to make a salutary example of him, and declare His own power and renown through all the earth. That, too, He does not only for His own name's sake but also for the blessing of men. It was ruin for Pharaoh but it was salvation for Rahab and her household who had heard of the fame of God's mighty hand, and, doubtless, it was salvation for many more besides. Pharaoh was one of those "vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction"—it does not say God had fitted them, they had fitted themselves by their sin and rebellion; there were also "the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory" (verses 22, 23). Here Scripture does present God as the originator and worker. The vessels of mercy were such by His work.

The fact is, and let us gladly bow to it, God has the right to do what He pleases; and what He pleases, that will He do. Men may oppose, and God will judge. He may here and there harden an opponent's heart until he makes a most conspicuous fool of himself as did Pharaoh, and God will then glorify Himself in the presence of man's folly; but His election is always for blessing, and of grace; it is the expression of His mercy, so strikingly set forth in the latter part of Romans II., just before the doxology which closes the chapter.

The difficulties which envelop this subject largely vanish if we begin with the full acceptance of the truth that man is a totally lost creature with no point of recovery in himself. In Romans 3. 10, 11, the word "none" is thrice repeated. We all easily acquiesce in the first, "There is none righteous." Still for an unrighteous man there is hope if only he recognizes his estate. Alas! "There is none that understandeth." That being so the only faint hope lies in a man being in some way attracted Godward so that he may begin to understand. Alas, once more! "There is none that seeketh after God." Then hope is dead as far as man is concerned!

Do we all really admit this and recognize its force and implications? If so, we shall at once see that there is no hope save in God's electing mercy. There will never be any movement towards Himself and His blessing save as the fruit of His own work.

The parable in Luke 14. sets this forth. The supper was amply provided. It pictures the provision of grace, the result of Christ's work. All was, however, unavailing as far as recipients were concerned save as the fruit of the exertions of "the servant," picture of the Holy Spirit. Every soul that actually enjoyed the supper was there as the result of the servant's work. Christ's work provides the blessing, but none taste it save as coming under the sovereign work of the Spirit of God, and He acts in harmony with the purpose of God and the election of grace.

Let us bless God that we, too, have come into the embrace of that electing mercy, which first showed itself forth in the cases of Isaac and Jacob so long ago.
MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.

Chapter 4. The Humbling of Nebuchadnezzar.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR has another dream, and this time it remains so deeply engraven upon his memory that he is able to tell it to his wise men just as it had appeared to him when he lay asleep on his bed. But they were no more able to interpret the dream now that they had heard it, than they were able in the first instance to make known the dream. God was speaking in a language that they understood not, however learned they might be; neither did God intend that they should understand Him. The interpretation of the language in which God was speaking to the king was not to be understood by men steeped to the centre of their souls in the worship of demons. What had such men to do with the living God? Is He going to give them the impression that they can have to do with demons one moment and with Himself the next?

Rather the opposite: He is letting them know that He cannot allow Himself to be mixed up with their abominations. He has His own in Babylon who fear and reverence His name, and these must be the interpreters between Himself and their king. “His secret is with the righteous” (Prov. 3. 32), and “He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets” (Amos 3. 7). But how could an idolater be in intimacy with the living God?

It is astonishing how quickly the faithful servant of the Lord passes out of the minds of the great people of the earth. The worldling does not understand the man of God, and therefore is he out of mind almost as soon as he is out of sight. One would have thought that the fact that Daniel was able, not only to interpret the king’s dream, but to bring it back to his memory after he had forgotten it, a feat which was admitted to be beyond all human power, would have ensured his remembrance by the king, should a similar circumstance ever arise again. But it was not so in this instance, and it was not so when the writing on the wall terrified his grandson. The men of this world will avail themselves of all the help that the man of God may be able to give them in the things of earth, but with him they can never feel themselves at home. There is a great gulf between the worldling and the man of God, and neither of them is perfectly happy in the company of the other. Hence whatever service the servant of the Lord may be able to render in a moment of difficulty, both himself and the service rendered are soon forgotten. If the world could only serve as well, or half as well, its service would be greatly preferred. The man of God cannot be well brought to mind without God Himself being also brought to mind, and this fact awakes the conscience and disturbs the tranquillity of the soul, and therefore only in the greatest extremity is the servant of the Lord appealed to. At other times he is utterly forgotten.

Hence Nebuchadnezzar’s wise men must first have a try at the interpretation of the dream, and only upon their manifest failure does Daniel come into the mind of the king. And in the ways of God this strange oversight only serves to bring into greater prominence the solemn truth that the God who put this monarch into such a position of power and splendour is the one true and living God, who raises up, and casts down, and does what He pleases in His own universe. It is only when all human resources fail that God comes in with deliverance for His fallen and devil-oppressed creature.

Nebuchadnezzar tells the tale of the pride of his heart, of his utter abasement, of his bestial condition, and he tells it with a brokenness of spirit...
that manifests a soul subdued in the presence of God. And he tells it to "all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth." He does not hide the humiliation to which he was subjected by the God he had dishonoured and despised. He would have the whole earth know the signs and wonders that the high God had wrought toward him. And he seems to tell it with a heart grateful for all the sorrows through which he had been called to pass. We do not read of any human being that, either previously or since, has been ever reduced to such a state of bestiality.

In the mercy of God a limit was placed to his madness, and his kingdom was made sure to him "with a band of iron and brass." By the power of God, who at the beginning had given him the kingdom, it was securely held for him while its degraded ruler, with a beast's heart given to him, herded with the cattle of the field, his hair like the feathers, and his nails like the claws, of a fowl. And thus for seven years he continued to exist, until he was ready to own "That the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." The kingdom would be restored to him when he learned that the heavens rule. "All this happened to king Nebuchadnezzar."

No wonder Daniel seemed to be stricken dumb when the royal dreamer had set before him the visions of his head. For one hour he was astonished, and his thoughts troubled him. How was he to tell this proud potentate of the evil and degradation that was ready to fall upon his crowned head? He has to be encouraged by the king to open his mouth, and disclose to his unhappy listener the doom that awaited him from the hand of God. But he was there as the mouthpiece of God, and the language in which He was speaking to the king must be faithfully translated, whatever the result might be.

But he cannot allow all this to come upon the haughty despot without tendering him some wise and wholesome advice. If he is in the presence of the king in the stead of God, he will faithfully present God to him in His true character as merciful and gracious, and as One who does not afflict willingly, and as One who has no pleasure in the execution of righteous wrath. "Wherefore, O king," he says, "let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity." We have no evidence that the king paid any attention to this faithful and friendly advice, advice that put his head in danger, for it was a reflection upon the way in which the king had used the power committed to him by God. Still he must be made to feel that the evil comes upon him on account of his own conduct, and that he might find a way of escape from it, by moderating his wilful and merciless ways, and ruling according to righteousness and kindness of heart.

If God causes counsel like this to be given, we may be certain that He does not intend to proceed to execute the threatened judgment if the counsel is taken to heart and the ways of the sinner become agreeable to His gracious mind. Nebuchadnezzar must be made to see that God takes account of all that goes on upon earth, and that He holds all accountable for the way in which they act in the various relationships in which they are placed by Himself. Surely it was just as true in Nebuchadnezzar's day as it is to-day that He desires that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2. 4), but it sometimes takes very severe measures to bring men to a sense of their own sinfulness and nothingness, and to lead them to the understanding that they cannot be allowed to assume that they are masters of their own actions, and responsible to no one; for unless their responsibility to God were admitted they could never be brought to acknowledge themselves transgressors.
Nebuchadnezzar had gods many, who by himself and his subjects were worshipped and served; and yet when his idolatrous will was thwarted by three of the servants of the living God, the state of his proud spirit is manifested, in that he says to them: "Who is that god that shall deliver you out of my hands?" At the bottom of his heart there was the conceit that no god existed that was stronger than himself.

The dream and its interpretation do not seem to have had any very lasting effect upon the proud monarch, for at the end of twelve months it seems to be as full of his own self-importance as ever: "At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon." His heart and mind were full of his dignity and grandeur, and of the glory of his kingdom. The fell weed of his own miserable vanity still flourished in the congenial soil of his corrupt ambitious nature: "The king spake and said, Is this not great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?"

How utterly infidel and degraded the human heart is! Perhaps he thought that the consequences of his iniquitous career, of which he was forewarned by his dream and the interpretation by the prophet, would never come. Long it seems to have been delayed; perhaps it will never come at all! It is a dishonour to the Lord, and destructive to our own souls, to suppose that because God is infinitely patient, and gives men an opportunity to repent, He is indifferent to a life of evil-doing. Yet this is often the natural thought: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccles. 8. 11). The lesson set before him by the living God has not been learned, nor does the king seem to have applied his mind to the task, and now the hour has struck for the execution of the sentence that has been so long delayed. The height of his ambition has been reached, and from the giddy eminence he surveys the greatness of his inheritance, which was committed to him by the Sovereign of the universe, and attributes it all to his own creative genius. He will rob God of the glory that is rightly His, and now the proud position in which he stands does nothing but make his fall all the more terrible. "While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee. And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will. The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men: and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws."

Suddenly had the bolt from the blue struck that imperious ruler. Suddenly was he headlong hurled from his proud position. His gods have to stand by and witness the almighty blow, that strikes their devoted servant upon his forehead, and sends him reeling down into the deepest depths of degradation; a degradation into which, possibly, no human being had ever previously been stricken. His kingly honour was departed from him. His lords and courtiers are aghast at the violence of his terrific fall, the meanest of his subjects stare in wonder at the abasement of their monarch; high and low give him a wide berth; the beasts of the field alone give him companionship, and he finds them congenial company. The dews of night, the winter's frosts and snows, the summer's heat, and all the changes of the seven years must be known by him ere the day of his redemption shall come to pass. Let
him tell the tale of his own recovery, return to reason, and reinstatement in his kingdom.

"At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes to heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou? At the same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and His ways judgment: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

What a magnificent recovery! The hand that smote him, and hurled him from his proud position into the dust of degradation, is the very hand that lifts him up out of the mire of the bestial condition into which he had been made to sink for his eternal good, and that reinstates him in his former earthly glory, but with the light of the knowledge of the Most High in his heart, which was infinitely better than all the riches of the universe, even if those riches could have been granted to him.

"At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven." To what other place could he lift them? The God against whom he had so fearfully offended is the only One to whom he can look with any degree of confidence. Would he not have fled to hide his wretched condition from one of the meanest of his slaves? Whither under heaven dare he direct his gaze? Were there no place but earth from which to expect consolation and encouragement, would his degradation not have been utterly insupportable?

The dark cloud that had for seven years rested upon the heart and mind of this merciless autocrat is at last dispersed, and while yet in the midst of the beasts of the field his understanding returns to him, and he comes to realize that however heavy upon him the hand of God had been, it was all for his good; and with a will subdued, a mind enlightened, and a heart softened by grace, he blesses the One who had smitten him.

Is it not so with us all, when in our natural state the light of God penetrates into conscience and heart? And what a faithful picture of this, and of the grace of God that gives a glorious welcome to all that turn to Him, even when still bearing all the tokens of the degradation into which their rebellion against Himself had brought them! Brought to the realization of the wretched state in which all by nature are, his first thought is to return to the God he has sinned against. Valueless are all his boon companions to him now. No one can help him but the God he has slighted and despised. He says: "I will arise and go to my father." Blessed resolution! He comes, and is received into the arms of eternal love.

The path that Nebuchadnezzar had to tread to the end that he finally reached was rough, thorny, and humiliating, but it led into the region of everlasting light; and here all the darkness, the stumbling, the fighting against God, came to an end. If the previous part of his reign was gloomy, turbulent, oppressive, self-willed and superstitious, the remainder could not be but calm, cloudless, refulgent in the light of the knowledge of God, at least as far as he himself was concerned.
He had learned something of the infinite compassions of the God he had so grievously insulted.

And it is with such a God as this we have to do: cruel for a moment, in order that He may be henceforth and eternally kind. He does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; and if He is compelled to afflict, it is His love that compels Him, for it is to do good in the latter end to those over whom His rod had been lifted.

In this madness of the king we have powerfully forecasted the true character of the succeeding Gentile monarchies; they neither recognize, nor have they knowledge of the true God. Their eyes are not lifted to heaven, from whence, and from the One who sits there, they derive their kingly authority. In their judgment, they have acquired their royal inheritance, and their autocratic position, by virtue of the prowess of their armies, and by the same means they retain all that they have won! All that they can stretch their sceptre over upon earth is their inalienable right, and they owe it to no higher power than the power that lies in their own right arm!

The three powers that succeeded the head of gold—the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman—were all pagan, and though there be in that which represents the Roman at this present moment an acknowledgement of God, the assertion is made that the ruler holds his position by no other power than the will of the people, which goes to prove that the madness of the Powers continues; and it will continue until the lesson is learned "That the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men." Then autocracy and democracy shall both come to an end together as far as the kings of the earth are concerned, for the now rejected Christ shall then sit upon the throne of His glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. In that day democracy shall have vanished for ever, for above every other form of government it is the most infidel.

As regards the kings of Israel, they were chosen of God, and responsible to rule in the acknowledgement that they held their kingly authority from Him, and if they did evil He made them to suffer for the evil that they did. They were to have the law of the Lord ever before them, and they were to read therein all their days, in order that they might learn to fear Him. The heart of the king was not to be lifted up above his brethren, nor was he to turn aside from the commandment, either to the right hand or to the left (Deut. 17. 14-20).

But in committing authority to Nebuchadnezzar, God does not enter into relationship with Him, nor with the people over whom he ruled. He had used him as a rod, wherewith He had chastised His wayward people; but He does not directly undertake to instruct him in the laws of His kingdom. He is kept pretty much at arm's length, and not even told that he has the kingdom from God, until by Daniel, who interprets his dream, he is informed of the fact. He was given no book of instructions, as though he were the servant of Jehovah. The true God is the God of Daniel and his friends. It is a hard lesson for a proud heart to learn that his relations with God are of such a nature that he must be kept at a distance until he learns how utterly unsuitable he is to the holiness of the Divine presence. But if a soul is ever to be in right relations with God, this has to be learned. God will not associate Himself with the demons that were served by this king and his courtiers, nor will He give either him or his miserable hucksters of lying inventions the impression that they can be rightly viewed in any other light than in avowed antagonism to Himself. It is impossible that God should lie.
Nor is it different in regard to the succeeding monarchies. Lust of conquest and the rapacity of wild beasts characterize every one of them, and when they are portrayed before Daniel in the visions that were granted to him, they exhibit nothing but the characteristics of the wild beasts of the earth, without any sign of a recognition of God or of responsibility to Him. Their state is set forth in the madness of the head of gold.

Read the history of the kings of Israel and Judah, and you will find that though rebellion against God and abominable idolatry were a constant provocation, yet in His infinite grace He ceased not to strive with them by His prophets and to discipline them by the incursions of the surrounding nations: rebuking, chastising, forgiving, pleading, until they had so wearied Him with their sins that He was compelled to remove from them the kingly authority that He had so graciously bestowed upon them at the beginning, and to put it into the hand of the idolatrous Gentile. But with the Gentile He does not connect His name, His throne, His prophets, His interests, nor His authority. The king is not "The Lord's anointed." God is not in any public way the God of the earth but the God of heaven. He is certainly not the God of the Chaldeans nor has He His seat in the city of Babylon. It is the times of the Gentiles, with the beast's heart, and the beast's characteristics.

And this state of things must continue until "The Lord hath performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem" (Isa. 10. 12), then, "The heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against Me, therefore hid I My face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword " (Ezek. 39. 23), "and the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore" (Ezek. 37. 28), and "I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezek. 38. 23). This shall be the result of the dealings of God with the nations. They shall know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomsoever He will. Viewed from the human side, kingdoms are generally laid hold of by corruption, violence, bloodshed, and often murder; but behind the scenes, into which the gaze of man cannot penetrate, the purposes of God are being accomplished, and that even by the wickedness of the ambitious creature, instigated by the devil. Neither the cunning and malice of Satan nor the guilty ambition of man can counteract the intention of God, but everything that they do must serve to bring it to pass.

He would not be God if His poor erring creature could circumvent His wise resolve. The way in which men may arrive at the height of their ambition may be, and often is, very reprehensible; but he could not arrive there at all if it was not allowed of God. It may result in the condemnation of the apparently triumphant creature, and it will if the position has been gained in dishonest ways, but no power of the creature could successfully militate against the express will of God.

Jacob got the blessing by deceiving his blind father, but he could not have secured it had it not been the will of God that it should be his. Had he known God better he would have left all in His hands, and he would have saved himself many a sorrow of heart.

What peace have all those that leave the ordering of their circumstances for time and eternity in the hands of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Father through grace!
THE ABODE OF GLORY or "THE GOOD-WILL OF HIM WHO DWELT IN THE BUSH."

The book of Exodus demonstrates how God can deliver a people, unmarked by any peculiarly attractive feature, from the hand of the oppressor, and by virtue of the exercise of His own sovereign goodwill, dwell amongst them in holiness and truth, and at the same time exercise towards them infinite mercy and tender consideration without the least sacrifice of that holiness.

Israel long endured the oppression of Egypt ere they cried to the only One who could effectually intervene on their behalf, yet no sooner did they turn to Him than their cry was heard, for He remembered His covenant, looked upon them and took knowledge of their state, and also provided a deliverer. (See Exod. 2.23-25).

To this chosen servant God appeared in a hitherto unheard-of way. "Let me now turn aside and behold this great sight," said Moses, as the Angel of Jehovah appeared to him, and "He looked and behold a thorn bush burned with fire and the thorn bush was not being consumed" (Exod. 3.2, N. Tr.). In this remarkable way Jehovah declared the purpose and manner of His intervention on behalf of the captive Israelites. At the same time He forbade Moses to approach nearer, commanding him to take off his shoes, as he stood on holy ground.

Here Moses learnt the devouring character of God's holy nature, the utter frailty of the people, as shown by the bush, and the grace of God that would dwell amongst such. Throughout the book there appears breakdown, failure and discontent, forming a dark background to the longsuffering grace and goodness displayed on their behalf.

Fulfilling His word Jehovah led out His people from the land of their oppression, and in doing so He assumed the same character as He had done with Moses at the beginning. "He was with them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night." He took His place before them in majesty and holiness, a solemn token to both friend and foe; a continuous assurance of His guidance, presence and power to Israel, and a warning to the Egyptians had they but realized it, for they already had had a tenfold experience of its terror.

But neither people gave heed to His presence! Each was occupied with the other; the Egyptians were full of boastings and confidence, and Israel was full of fear. Had they but grasped the significance of the cloud, how different would have been the state of mind in each. "They are entangled in the land," cried Pharaoh. "Let us alone," said the other. But Jehovah had already said, "I will deliver them," and that was final for faith.

In the passage of the Red Sea the presence of their God accompanied them in the cloud of glory—ample protection from both the watery walls and the hosts of Egypt! And how well this protection was finally appreciated is seen when on reaching the far side of the sea, they burst out in a paean of praise, singing, "Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" For the moment they fully realized that Jehovah was indeed with them: but hardly had the song died down, and the shades of Elim been left behind, than we hear once more the crackling of the thorn bush, expressing itself in querulous complaint as to the shortage of food, the hardness of the way, and the benefits they had when in the house of bondage. Still the gracious forbearance of God is shown in the most lavish way, accompanying the
display of His goodness with a manifestation of His glory, so that they might learn that He is Jehovah their God, for they must not presume upon that favour.

The strength of that tendency is seen in the ready way they put themselves under obligations to Him and in their promise in self-confidence to meet all His requirements, though they neither knew their extent, nor their own inability to do what they promised; consequently they have to learn what was true of themselves and true of God: viz., that "Our God is a consuming fire" and they but a mere thorn.

He now addresses them from the height of His majesty, speaking in trumpet tones, accompanied with thunders and lightnings, and at the same time withdrawing Himself from them, lest they should be consumed. Before such a manifestation of might they tremulously demand that God should no longer speak to them, but that Moses should act as their interceder. But if this be granted, the man of their choice must first be acceptable to God, and must also be fitted to represent them as mediator. No man can stand before God apart from sacrifice, hence we read, "And Moses . . . rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel; and sent young men of the children of Israel which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord" (Exod. 24. 4, 5). And again verse 8, "And Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people."

Thus God ratified their covenant, and they had an adequate representative in the glory, one to whom God could make known His demands in their fulness to the accompaniment of devouring fire in the eyes of the children of Israel. But no sooner was this new relationship established than the utter weakness and perversity of the people appeared in their most aggravating form, for they wholly rejected God and abandoned their own chosen mediator. "Make us gods, which shall go before us: for as for this Moses . . . we wot not what is become of him," they cried, after they had lost sight of him for a brief moment, during which he was actively engaged in their interests on the mount, for while they were dancing round the golden calf the terrors of Jehovah's hand were being held back by the efficacious interposition of their leader. In the face of such sin there can surely be nothing but immediate judgment. "Let me alone . . . that I may consume them." The fire was about to consume the bush!

How well it was for them that "A mediator is not of one." He is one that can place his hand on God and also on man, seeing that he has been accepted of both. Moses has the unspeakable privilege of presenting to God his own promises, purposes and nature as the ground for His continuing to go with them. Nor does such interposition fail. They were not consumed!

Acts 7. 42, 43 gives additional light on this part of their history. "Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven . . . ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of your god Remphan . . . and I will carry you away beyond Babylon." Though this was almost a national forsaking of Jehovah, yet there was a faithful remnant amidst such departure. There were those that "sought the Lord," and these had an opportunity to declare themselves, for when Moses realized that God could no longer go with them as they were, he established a new centre of gathering. He "took the tabernacle and pitched it . . . afar off from the camp, and . . . every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation" (Exod. 33. 7).

This bold and decisive step received
at once Divine approval, for the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door of the tent, and the Lord talked with Moses, and once again turned away the fierceness of His anger and promised to go with the people on the ground of the favour that the mediator had found in His sight; but it must be in an entirely new way, and one conformed to His own thoughts and glory. This plan had already been revealed to Moses, and now it is to be told to Israel, not this time with thunderings and devouring fire, but by availing Himself of their representative, giving a reflex of the glory in his face, to demonstrate that it was still concerned with the fresh start that was about to be made.

As a preliminary to these new unfoldings they were to consider that upon which His thoughts were ever set—His rest, typified by the sabbath (35. 2); thus every natural care and interest must be laid aside, and a sense of the rest of God take hold of them. The plan and how it was to be carried out is shown in the rest of chapter 35. They were instructed to bring a variety of materials, selected by God Himself. Just what was commanded, and nothing more, might be brought. Not the least valuable might be omitted, nor anything unnamed, no matter how costly, might be brought, for everything spoke of the excellencies of His Son, and of that God alone was the Judge. Out of these a dwelling place for God was to be constructed, so that He in holiness might be in the midst of His perverse people, and not consume, but bless them.

But where were those who had been so recently ensnared in a foreign land, poor and downtrodden, to find this store? Of themselves they had nothing, but God in His prevision had graciously provided for them, for in their departure from Egypt their oppressors had laden them with the very treasure that they were now asked to present for the work of the tabernacle. Everything that was offered was to be the outcome of the affections of the giver, and was to be a heave offering to the Lord, that is one that displayed the hearty co-operation of the giver with his offering. All those whose minds were in accord with Jehovah's delighted to contribute, each bringing what he had, and in accordance with his appreciation of the requirements of the Lord. Whether it were but the threads of fine linen, that spoke of the purity of the earthly sojourn of the Lord Jesus, the blue that indicated His heavenly character, or the purple that told of His right and title to universal dominion, all were equally valued. His holy offering for sin was expressed in the goat's hair, that animal being the one chosen to carry away the sins of the people into a land uninhabited, and also to be offered as a sin offering on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16.). Each of the metals suggested some aspect of His person and work, whilst the precious stones were a constant reminder of His outstanding glories.

The people as such, brought the fabrics and the metals, and it is noteworthy that all the men that offered, offered gold, whilst the chief men brought jewels and spices, and oil for the light. There appears in this, a suggestion that as the giver advanced in years, and in responsibility in the camp, there was a growing appreciation of the claims of the Lord. None were excluded from bringing the richer gifts, but the elders did so. How good it is to see a development in the acknowledgment of the claims of God as the years go by!

Besides the willingness shown in the giving, there is a beautiful display of wisdom in the way in which the gift was utilized, and in this wisdom the women are specially distinguished. "All the women that were wise hearted, did spin with their hands," and beyond this there were "women whose hearts stirred them up in wisdom." They spun goat's hair, of which the coverings for the beautiful curtains that formed
the top of the holy places were made. These speak in a twofold way of the death of the Lord Jesus. The hair itself was a reminder of the goat of the sin offering, and then the curtains testify to the exclusion of every trace of defilement from the sanctuary, in the same way as that death separates those it has redeemed from the present evil world. How fitting in this latter aspect is the labour of the women! They produced that which though scarcely ever seen (for these curtains were placed between the inside blue hangings and the ram's skins, being only visible as a narrow fold at the entrance of the tabernacle) was in every way effectual—unobtrusive, but well known to God.

Besides these three grades of givers, that is those that gave willingly, those whose hearts were stirred, and those marked by especial wisdom, there was the overflowing liberality of the whole congregation, for the people brought "much more than enough" for the service of the work (36.5). How gratifying is this response to the heart of the Lord!

After every part of the sanctuary had been finished by those who had been gifted for the service, they were all given into the hand of Moses, who put every piece, every cord, and pin in the place that had been appointed, and not only so, but each was made to fulfil its own peculiar function. The testimony was put into the ark, and the vail spread in the front, the table had its loaves, and the lampstand its lights, the fragrance from the golden altar arose before the beautiful vail, and the burnt offering on the brazen altar at the door declared the way of approach. After the priestly family had been cleansed in the brazen laver, the curtains of the outer court erected, and the doors closed, it is said, "So Moses finished the work."

Here, where every detail shed forth the light of the thoughts of God concerning His Son, where the fragrance of His name and the perfect acceptability of His sacrifice for sin rise as sweet incense to God, will He dwell! And as soon as the work was finished, He hastens, as it were, to add His seal of approval. "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle" (40.34). The distinction between "the tent" and "the tabernacle" should be observed. The former was that which could be seen from the outside, the latter is the inside place where Jehovah was pleased to dwell. Thus are the promises of God at the bush fulfilled. A holy God dwelt in the midst of a weak, perverse, crooked people for His satisfaction and for their blessing—a truly marvellous sight.

As long as they preserved their loyalty to Him, that presence indicative of power, grace and victory continued with them and was a centre from which the wisdom and the favour of the God of Israel would spread to the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills, and "the GOOD WILL OF HIM THAT DWELT IN THE BUSH" be known to the ends of the earth. But the cloud of glory that rested upon the tent was from henceforth to be the sole guide for Israel. That which had led them from the house of bondage, and through the waters of the Red Sea, and which shone in the face of their mediator in grace, was now to be kept in view, and they must regulate every future step of their wilderness journey by it. If it moved they must move, if it abode still so must they. The presence of Jehovah in their midst must regulate their every step. How happy for all when this is the case!

Since Pentecost there has been the counterpart of all this on the earth. God dwells by His Spirit in the midst of that which He calls His Assembly; a place where every whit is "of Him," where every detail shows forth His glory, and which is apart from the folly or wisdom of man. Christ has kept it, and will keep it to the end for Himself, to be a vessel for the display
of His graces and perfections. There, too, where His supremacy is undisputed, the priestly family of worshippers, graced in His own perfections, draw near to present to God the work and excellence that is in Him, and in that upon which everything else is based— the precious blood of His own beloved Son; and having learnt His preciousness to God they are privileged to come forth, and express in the world the impressions they have learnt of Him, and carry out every bit of service in the light of these great and glorious manifestations.

Thus is the life of the saint regulated. Everything is to be done in the light of the sanctuary, though he may, and will, find it a way "with thorns and briars overspread," yet he has the unfeigned satisfaction that he is treading it with God, and that he has his face to the rest of God.

But even in the wilderness there are two courses that may be followed! There is the one just mentioned, and the other which is pursued by those who take the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of Remphan for their guide. To all appearance there was little or nothing to distinguish them. Both ate the same food, and drank of the same well, and both faced the same direction, yet while one was set for the spot where He would set His name, the others were heading straight for Babylon (Acts 7. 43), the place of corruption, bondage and spiritual death.

The Scriptures indicate no middle way; one must either follow the Lord in the midst of the sanctuary or tread the course that leads ultimately to corruption of the worst type. Such as tread it become lost to the sense of their special place of favour in the eyes of the Lord, lost as a testimony to the God who has called them from the corruption of Egypt to be a peculiar people, not numbered amongst the nations, and who should represent Him in the way in which He has revealed Himself.

May each of us be stirred up both in wisdom and in love to be faithful to Him in the place in which He has set us, taking direction wholly from Himself. Weakness there is, yet also grace is paramount that the frailty of that which bears it is not seen.

This wondrous lesson was first learnt by Moses, at the back side of the desert, and it is alone with God, withdrawn from human influence and activity, that we too may learn it.

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ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Holy Spirit in John 20.

Would you mind explaining what our Lord meant, when he said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" in John 20. 22? Did they then and there receive the Spirit, and if so, was it the same Spirit that believers receive when they accept the Lord as Saviour? Also, was the descent of the Spirit in Acts 2 a special baptism for power, which only lasted during apostolic times?—STAFFORD.

We believe that the key to this admittedly difficult Scripture lies, firstly, in observing the exact expression which our Lord used, which is unhappily obscured in our authorized translation, and, secondly, in noticing the characteristic action which accompanied the words.

In the Original there is no definite article such as we have in the A.V. The Lord did not say, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," but "Receive ye Holy Ghost." The former would have been definite and specific and have implied the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself as the
Divine Person indwelling the saints. The latter is indefinite and taken in connection with the action of breathing "on" or "into" them, as it more correctly is rendered, would indicate that the Lord here presents Himself in resurrection as "the last Adam, a quickening Spirit" (1 Cor. 15. 45).

The first Adam did not become head of his race until he was fallen, and, consequently, to all his race he has transmitted his corrupted life and fallen nature. The last Adam did not become Head of His race until He had tasted death for everything and come forth in resurrection. Then His first action is to breathe into His disciples His own life and nature—life in the energy of the Holy Ghost—just as at the beginning God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and thus Adam became a living soul.

The gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost is to be distinguished from this. The Spirit had fallen in earlier times on people as a special indwelling of power lasting only for a time, as you truly remark. The descent at Pentecost was the personal coming of the Spirit, as John 7. 38, 39, had predicted. It carried with it a special endowment of power truly, and this power might wane, and has waned; but the Spirit Himself, the indwelling Person, remains.

THE TREE.

UPON a hill there stands a tree,
With golden fruit abounding,
From far and near one may it see
In all the land surrounding;
And some come early, others late,
To seek the precious treasure;
With eager zeal the boughs they shake,
And gather without measure.

But still the riches never fail,
That tree is never bare,
However much one takes away,
Yet fruit is always there.
What is this tree of wondrous fame?
Its place—where can it be?
Who hath beheld? Who guessed its name?
The BIBLE is the tree.

Translated from the German by H. WILSON, Inkongo.

My soul shudders at the thought of routine religion, formal service, dead devotion, mechanical goodness. What a mercy to reach the fresh springs, to feel a daily renewed youth, an anointing with fresh oil. For this I pine and pant. One gets driving on in the dark, as coachmen sometimes do when they are asleep on the box—dangerous work this! I know that I am safe in Christ, but I could fain suffer anything rather than become habitually of a slumbering heart. Better almost under the long whip of affliction, or feel the stings of conscience, or even the darts of the devil, than lie down in carnal security's lap to be shorn of one's locks by the Philistines.

SPURGEON.
THE IMPRISONED EAGLE.

I saw a pathetic sight when last in Scotland. It was a great eagle in a massive cage. The sun shining brilliantly in the heavens seemed to be calling to it to rise from the earth and rejoice in its natural element, and the royal bird in response to the call fixed its eye on the sun and spread its mighty wings and stooped for flight, and then, becoming conscious of the iron bars that held it a prisoner, it dropped its wings and lowered its head in apparent disappointment and shame. I watched that captive bird on that lovely summer afternoon with growing interest. Again and again the light flashed in its eyes as it faced the sun and lifted its wings in the futile endeavour to soar away to the upper air, and just as often its wings sank down and it bowed its neck, the most striking figure of depression and defeat that I had ever looked upon. And yet it had the desire for liberty, that was clear in the flashing eye, and it had the power for liberty, that was clear in the outstretched pinions; it was the cage that held it prisoner in spite of these.

The captive bird became a parable to me. It spoke to me of Christians, and, alas! how many such there are, who have the desire for heavenly things, which are their own things, for the Divine nature is in them, or they are not Christians at all; and they have the power also to rise up in thought and affection to where their true life is, for the Holy Spirit dwells in them, and yet as to the practical enjoyment of these things they know nothing. Some of them did once, perhaps, but not now, for they are held as prisoners to the earth. What is the cage that holds them? With some it is worldly, ungodly associations, some friendships or alliances formed, it may be for earthly gain, that has cribbed and caged and straitened them. The Christians at Corinth were in this plight, when Paul had to write to them, "O ye Corinthians . . . ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels" (2 Cor. 6. 11, 12).

Others have been encaged by the flesh, they are carnally minded, they have not understood or have forgotten that "we are debtors not to the flesh to live after the flesh, for if ye live after the flesh ye shall die" (Rom. 8. 12, 13). The lusts of the flesh have ensnared them, the things with which once they tampered have become settled habits, and it is when they would be free that they discover what captives they are. There are others who, like those over whom the apostle wept, mind earthly things; the love of money, it may be, holds them in a narrow cage, and in their lust for things below they have lost the joy of the heavenly hope.

The experience of these Christians is not unlike that of the imprisoned eagle. They attend meetings and listen to the Word of the Lord, and their hearts are stirred, they lift their eyes and catch a passing glimpse of what the Lord is, and their desires are quickened after those things that they know are really theirs, but they are held fast, and sighs instead of songs break from their sad hearts as they own to themselves, even if they hide it from others, the completeness of their defeat. They toss through sleepless nights upon their beds, with regrets and vows and prayers, but when the morning breaks they find that all their resolutions are unavailing. The bait with which the
The devil enticed them has been transformed into a cage that holds them; they are prisoners who should be the Lord’s free men, and they almost despair of ever again knowing the thrill of spiritual joy and liberty.

I am sure that what I am writing is the bitter experience of some who will read what I have written, and I can understand the eager question arising in their hearts—Is there any way of deliverance? Yes, there is, for the Lord is gracious. It is grace that gives deliverance at the beginning of the Christian life, and it is grace that can restore the liberty when it has been lost. And however terrible the backsliding may have been, God remains the God of all grace, and delights to forgive. This does not mean that He passes over the sins of His children as though they were nothing, but it does mean that in the Lord Jesus Christ there is a full propitiation for them all.

But on the side of the backsliding and entangled soul the conscience must be exercised, the more keenly the better. There is great hope in those tears and sighs, those “Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing.” They all show that the life in the soul has not been utterly crushed. There is no condition so terrible as that in which the conscience is seared and the soul past feeling, but when the heart is wrung by the sad backsliding it is evidence of a faithful Advocate with the Father, and a faithful Holy Spirit dwelling within—and the sighing of the prisoner goes up to God (Psa. 79. 11). All this should yield comfort and courage to the repentant heart.

There can, of course, be no deliverance unless there is the renouncing of the evil thing by the heart. It was the heart that was first attracted and ensnared, and there restoration must begin. An evil course may be abandoned for awhile under pressure or through fear of consequences, or because the opportunity for its pursuit is gone, but it will be surely taken up again when the fear is past and the opportunity returns, and the bars of the cage will be tripled in strength. The only hope is in the heart being purged from its evil way. This will be secured most surely by the remembrance of the Cross and what it means.

The Cross stands unchanged; it was and is to us the manifestation of an invincible and tender love; it tells us of a propitiation for our sins; of Jesus Christ the righteous, who met every charge that could be brought against us. The sins of our preconversion days were all atoned for there, and those sins in which we have indulged since that happy moment too; and Jesus, who bore all the suffering for us in that awful hour, now lives in the presence of the Father for us, our Advocate when we sin (1 John 2. 1). As we consider the Cross, there is forced from our wondering hearts the apostle’s cry, “The Son of God loved me and gave Himself for me.” Yes, even though that “me” is a shameful and wretched backslider.

Let it be freely owned, as it has been fully proved, that there never was any profit to any Christian who sought satisfaction in fleshly things; they only bring strife into the soul and bitter regrets. Minding the things of the flesh dishonours the Lord, gives the devil a temporary triumph, and more than wastes the precious time of the Christian and makes him the unhappy captive of the things he has run after.

On the other hand, all the peace and joy and satisfaction that any of us have known, and all true service to men and to God, have sprung from occupation with Christ. How blessed to know that He is as ready to restore those things if they have been lost as He was to give them at the first. Ah, but that should make the backsliding heart all the more ashamed of the backsliding, and that would bring it to the point of frank and unreserved confession. God requireth truth in the
inward parts; there must be no guile before Him, and there is no need for it, for He knows all, and will forgive all, when all is confessed.

"When I kept silence," said David, "my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long, for day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: [wonderful, faithful love!] my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity I have not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psa. 32. 3-5). Matchless grace this, that responds at once to this open confession of the truth before God. Nay, it is the grace of God that brings the heart to the confession of the sins, and then that same grace forgives. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

"Still sweet 'tis to discover If clouds have dimmed my sight, When passed, Eternal Lover, T'ward me as e'er Thou'rt bright."

The first step to liberty is for the heart to be brought to the realization of the sinfulness of the backsliding, and then in the sense of the unchanging grace of the Lord and of the Father to confess it; then is forgiveness sure. But where this is real to the heart, there will be along with it the knowledge that only by that grace that has forgiven the past can we stand in the future. Again and again will the soul be ensnared so long as any self-confidence remains. Our prayer in the sense of our helplessness should be, "Lord, be Thou my strength," and that is a better prayer than "Lord, strengthen me," when it is a question of things to which our foolish hearts are prone. Our safety lies in reliance on the Lord. Then the restored heart must avoid too much occupation with the past; if recalled it should be only to bless God for the grace that has pardoned it all; so that knowing that we have been forgiven much we might love much. But self-occupation is disastrous to progress and overcoming; there is neither strength nor liberty in it, and where there has been much backsliding there is always a tendency to it. True Christian liberty lies in joy in the Lord.

"He is altogether lovely, The fairest of all the fair; His glory eclipseth ever All glory everywhere. He is brighter by far and better Than the brightest and best of earth, In Jesus our Lord and Saviour Is everlasting worth."

The Spirit of God dwells in the body of each blood-purchased child of God to enable him to live in this glorious liberty, and when the heart turns with loathing from the evil way and returns to the Lord, whose love never changes, the bars of the cage that held it prisoner are torn apart and liberty follows. Then can the restored and liberated soul mount up on wings like the eagle.

"It may be that the unequal yoke that has ensnared some is a Christless marriage, and from that they cannot be free. Inexpressibly sad are all such cases; but there is hope even for such. Only let the disobedience to the Lord's express command be confessed, and the heart may be set at liberty, even though the cage remains. Let there be subjection of spirit to God, and the humble acceptance of His chastisement, and the husbands that obey not the Word may without the Word be won by the conversation [conduct] of the wives." (1 Peter 3. 1).

Grace is our one hope and strength. Where sin abounded grace did much more abound. It is greater than all our failure; it cannot fail. Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law but under grace, and there is forgiveness with the Lord that He may be feared.

But let no one suppose that forgiveness and liberty mean deliverance
from chastisement, or that grace protects us from reaping what we sow, or that God in His care for us will cease to discipline us. To expect this would show that the lesson had not been fully learned. Where the heart is fully recovered there will be a lowly acknowledgment of the rightness of all God’s ways in government, and an overflowing gratitude for all His grace.

THE KINGDOM AND THE RETURNING KING.

Notes of an address in Edinburgh on Daniel 7. 13-14
Matthew 13. 36-52 ; 16. 28; 17. 1-8.

It may be well to commence with taking a wide view of the truths that belong to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and particularly of the kingdom as presented in Matthew’s Gospel. In this gathering there will be present “babes” in Christ—those who have quite recently been brought to a saving knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ—the young in the faith. Then also there will doubtless be present those who have grown in the faith, spoken of in Scripture as .. young men .. those who are strong and spiritually robust, as having received into their hearts the unfoldings of the word of God, made strong by feeding upon the Word which God has given to abide in them. Then there will be present, it may be, those who are still more advanced, spoken of as “fathers” in the faith. John has simply one thing to say concerning these, but he says it twice. It is this: “Ye have known Him that is from the beginning” (1 John 2. 13, 14). They know Jesus! and, my dear friends, to know Jesus, the Son of God, is to know all that you need to know. We begin by coming to Him as our own personal Saviour, and we grow by the Word of God in the wonderful things of God, and also deepen in the knowledge of the One whom God alone fully knows,—for “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father,” i.e., in all the impenetrable depths of His holy Person; the Father only comprehends Him thus; but, nevertheless, we may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Himself increasingly.

So we purpose to speak for a few moments about the King and the Kingdom,—the Kingdom as the kingdom of heaven,—and to look at it in its commencement,—its lowly beginning; also as it is to-day in a state of mixture and confusion; and then finally in its glorious completion when the King shall shine forth in His glory above the brightness of the sun.

Only in the Gospel of Matthew have we the Kingdom designated as the kingdom of heaven! John never speaks of it in that way, indeed only two or three times does he mention the Kingdom at all. Mark never speaks of the kingdom of heaven, nor does the Gospel of Luke, but it refers to the kingdom of God thirty-two times. Matthew alone terms it the kingdom of heaven, and he does so thirty-two times likewise; 4 times 8, suggestive of this new world-wide order which was to be brought about, that had never previously been seen, but which was Divinely introduced in view of certain things before the mind of God.

Matthew speaks much of the Lord Jesus as Son of Man, but introduces Him as the King first of all,—as the Son of David (1. 1). As with the kingdom of heaven, Matthew speaks also thirty-two times of Jesus as the Son of Man. It is in Daniel we have the wonderful truth of the Kingdom in the form of the kingdom of heaven first indicated (2. 44), and Daniel in his night visions (7. 13) saw a Man,—one like unto the Son of man, brought to the
Ancient of Days, and to Him is handed over all the marvellous splendour and glory connected with the dominion and the Kingdom that is yet to be brought out in its fulness and display in this world; to that Man was given dominion and glory and the Kingdom, that all peoples—not only Israel—but that all peoples and nations and languages should serve Him, and it was said, His dominion is an everlasting dominion and His Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. Faith sees even now the One who is soon going to have publicly all that dominion and glory. We look to the throne of God and see Jesus crowned with glory and honour. We do not see the Kingdom and the glory brought in yet, but faith looks upward and says, Our Saviour is at the top! The One who has saved us is the One who is glorified on high, and the Man at the right hand of God who has redeemed us by His blood shall soon be supreme over all!

But this Kingdom (yet to be displayed) had a very humble beginning. John the Baptist said, it had drawn nigh. He called on the people to repent for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. He said in regard to that, “There is One coming after me,” and He pointed the people to Jesus. From his time began “the kingdom of the heavens,” as it is more correctly translated (II. II, 13). Up to John’s time was the law and the prophets; but now we see a lowly Man upon this earth,—Jesus, the Son of Man, seed-sowing! And, oh! what wonderful seeds the words of the Son of man are! They outstrip the ken of the greatest scholars from that day to this! Though simple, yet they are infinitely profound, and their fruits are everlasting.

The King, this meek and lowly Son of Man, was first the Seed-sower. Daniel viewed Him coming in His splendour and glory, but when Matthew discloses Him to our gaze for the first time, He had “not where to lay His head” (8. 20). He came down into this world by the way of the manger and the stable, and He left it by a cross of shame; but meanwhile seed was sown in many hearts before His final rejection, and He committed to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (not of the Church), and these he used in Acts 2. and 10.

Mark this, in chapter 13. 37 it is said the Son of Man sows good seed. This refers to persons who have received the Word. It is not because of their intellectual abilities that they are the good seed of the kingdom of the heavens, but because of their moral and spiritual qualities produced by the Word in them. In this day of boasted intellectualism and loose living we need young men and women of true moral worth, with character formed according to the Word of God, who, when a false teacher comes and suggests something that is a lie, will stand courageously for the truth of God, who will stand for the Word of God and witness to its Divine origin by word and work, lip and life, showing forth the fruits thereof in all meekness and lowliness.

Moreover, the Lord, knowing all, said to his disciples over and over again, The Son of Man must suffer. That was as necessary as the seed-sowing! How was a race of ruined sinners to be saved? How were we to be saved? The Son of Man came not only to set up the Kingdom in righteousness, but the Son of Man must suffer, and He suffered as none other did. He was spit upon, scourged, spitefully entreated, and put to death. It was an absolute necessity that He should die, if, on the one hand, the Kingdom was to be established, and, on the other, we were to be saved and all the blessing of eternal life was to be ours with the Father. He had to die, and blessed be His name, He went to that Cross and suffered for us. He never turned away back. He gave His back to the smiters. He hid not His face from shame and spitting, and
there on Calvary’s Cross the Son of Man was lifted up, and, my dear brethren, each believer can say, He died for me!

Truly He laid the foundation for the Kingdom; and having laid that foundation, and having sowed the good seed in His field, His enemy is at work now, as He foretold, sowing bad seed. Do not think so much of the devil as your enemy. He is that, but he is the enemy of your precious Saviour, as it says—the Son of Man’s enemy came and invaded His field and sowed the bad seed. The good seed are the sons of the Kingdom, and the bad seed are the sons of the evil one. That is their nature and character. Satan sowed the bad amongst the good, and the Word says, “Let both grow together till the harvest”; but what a mixture, meanwhile, of real and unreal! This, it should be remembered, is in regard to the wide sphere of Christian profession called “the kingdom of the heavens,” and not “the assembly” built by Christ within that sphere against which the gates of hell cannot prevail (16. 18).

If I had time I would have liked to go through the parables. There are at least seven which show the mixture that is in the kingdom of the heavens at the present time; but this mixture, this apparent outward confusion, has by no means got beyond the control of our Lord Jesus Christ. You may depend on it the confusion we see is no confusion to Him. He will see that all is eventually put right. It makes us all the more dependent on the Lord to recognize this. When we look around and see evil apparently going strong, let us remember He sees and knows all about it. And He says I will look after the final separation. My angels will attend to that (13. 41). ‘Let both grow together till the harvest,’ He has said. Then He will send forth His angels and they shall gather the bad into bundles. Darnel (the tares spoken of) is exactly like the real thing at first, but by-and-by the true character is seen, and so at the end the bad are put into bundles! Who are going into these bundles for the burning? Take the great bundle of anti-Christian teaching, which is neither scientific nor Christian, but is miscalled Christian Science!—those who deny the Deity of Christ and His atoning work go into that bundle! Yes! that is a big bundle, and it is being gathered in the field of Christian profession—“the kingdom of the heavens.” Presently all will be cast into the burning—that bundle and every other such system—and “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (13. 42); but before that takes place Jesus will gather the wheat into His barn. True believers will be caught up to be for ever with the Lord!

All this is made known to us that we may be intelligent as to the present state of things. Do not lose heart at the confusion in Christendom, but let us be rallied rather to seek together to follow righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart. This is the day when we have an exceptional opportunity of being true and loyal to the rejected King, to our absent Lord.

Having spoken of the past lowly beginning, and of present confusion, I would like to say just a little about the future glory. The Lord said, “There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.” Afterwards Peter wrote, “We were eyewitnesses of His majesty.” “We have not followed cunningly devised fables” (2 Pet. 1. 16). They saw His glory. He was transfigured before them, and there He gave in the holy mount a resplendent, living picture of the Kingdom in glory, as His face shone like the brightness of the sun, and His raiment became white and effulgent. The three honoured disciples who were taken apart by Jesus actually saw the coming glory, with God’s beloved Son the Head and Centre of it all. Oh!
that we may be so laid hold of that we may be taken up in Divine power and faith to behold His glory, and be led on in the excellency of the knowledge of the Lord! For this let us get much alone with Himself, and ask Him to prepare our hearts to receive what He has for us! What a glorious day it will be when He reigns as King over all the earth, and fills it with the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea!

When that voice from the excellent glory declared, "This is my beloved Son in whom is all My delight," it also added, "Hear Him!" May God grant that we may hear Him! The voice which thus singled out for us the beloved Son of God was such a voice, there was no language could express its heaviness. Peter says it was a voice from heaven,—"Such a voice" (2 Pet. 2. 17). And when they looked around they saw "Jesus only,"—Mark adds, "with themselves" (9. 8). He has not yet returned to set up the kingdom and glory publicly. This He will do very soon, after He has gathered the wheat into His barn, after He has taken the assembly—His body and His bride—to be with Himself on high for ever, but even now we can sing:

"O blessed Saviour, Son of God, Who hast redeemed us with Thy blood From guilt, and death, and shame— With glad rejoicing faith we see The crown of glory worn by Thee, And worthy Thee proclaim."

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

Notes of an address in Edinburgh on Exodus 32. 16; 2 Corinthians 3. 1-3.

It is a very sobering thought that for the carrying out of the purposes of God the work of the Spirit of God is as much an absolute necessity, in its own sphere, as is the atoning work of Christ. We certainly cannot do without Christ's finished work, nor can we do without the, at present, unfinished work of the Spirit of God. In the verses we have just read in 2 Corinthians, we find that there is a writing that is being inscribed in our hearts by the Spirit of the Living God. There is, of course, a great continuous work of our Lord Jesus Christ, a work which He is carrying on to-day, as it says in Matthew 16. "I will build My church," and this work He undertakes as the Son of the Living God. There is, of course, that mighty work as the Son of the living God, and then there is the Spirit of the Living God and that Spirit is at work and, thank God, has wrought in our hearts—I trust we can say has wrought in the heart of each one of us here.

Now in connection with this, the verse in Exodus 32. is worthy of careful note. "The tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God," that is, it was Divine writing upon Divinely fashioned material. Now that always has to be the case. All must be of God. Our very hearts must be prepared by the Spirit of God. If there is to be any work at all of a permanent sort it must be His work.

If you turn to Ezekiel 36. verse 26, you will find that speaking of how He will presently gather Israel to their own land under the new covenant, God says, "A new heart also will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the
stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." The children of Israel, of whom we read so much in the Old Testament, were, as to their hearts, terribly like the stone on which the law was written. There was something very appropriate in the law being written on tables of stone, for though you can smash tables of stone, you cannot stretch them or twist them as though they were rubber. The law was written upon tables of stone and was as inflexible as the substance on which it was written. Alas! Israel proved itself to have a heart of stone. The material was not there upon which anything could be written, and so in this book of Ezekiel the Lord as it were says, "I am going to re-create Israel, I am going to work by My Spirit so that they shall be capable of receiving what I am going to write in a coming day." Consequently He is going to have some new material on which to write.

You find again the same two things in Corinthians: first you must have the material, and secondly you must have the writing done by the very Spirit of God Himself. So we find the Apostle saying in verse 3, "not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." The Spirit of God has been at work in new birth, and there is in you a capacity to receive and retain the writing that He is about to write. Let me give you a very simple illustration. In my younger days I learned a lesson or two in connection with photography. You are going to take a photograph, and get all ready as you think for a good picture: the plate with its sensitized surface has been put in, as you suppose, and the exposure is made. Now, then, you go into the dark room, but what a disappointment! You pore over the developing dish watching the result. Alas! you have got hold of a simple piece of clear glass instead of the proper sensitized plate, and consequently there is no result whatever. You had a first-rate lens, a good camera, the subject was calculated to make a pretty picture, and the light was perfect, but there was no proper material on which the light would write. There was not that which was capable of receiving the impression. The word photograph is derived from two Greek words, and means "writing by light."

God lets His light shine upon our hearts that He may write His writing, but you must have the right material upon which to do it, and unless the Spirit of God has been at work within you producing that "inward man" which is of Himself, there is not the "fleshy table of the heart" on which Christ can be written; you are like the clear sheet of glass. When the Spirit of God has wrought, then indeed there is a capacity for receiving the shining of the light, and that Christ may be written upon us. He is the One upon whom the light concentrates. He is the light.

Remember, the fact that you have received the grace of God is no credit to you; were it not for the gracious work of the Spirit of God your eyes would never have been opened; but now it is the work of the Spirit of God to write Christ upon your heart. That is the point of this passage here. Christ is to be written upon you. The world cast Him out. God says, I will write Him upon the fleshy tables of the hearts of My people. Alas, alas! how often the excellent inscription is blurred and indistinct with us.

I learned another lesson as to photography, when I was a boy, from a certain old gentleman. He took me into his dark room one day, and I watched with great interest as he was developing a photograph: very quickly the dark parts began to appear, but a few moments later everything became quite indistinguishable and we could not make it out at all, so we put it into a fixing bath and then held it up to the light. It was a picture indeed, but of a most confused sort. Heads appeared in all sorts of unexpected places;
people and trees were mixed up in very awkward positions. What was the matter? "Ah!" he said, "I have taken two pictures on one plate!" It was a mix up, I can assure you. That is just like a great many Christians. They have been exposed to the clear shining of Christ; they have had the Word of God acting upon them, and then they go and very deliberately expose themselves to the world with its false light and seductive influences, and a strange mix up there is, like that plate which I remember so well.

Let us keep much in the light of Christ, for the work of the Spirit of God is to write Christ upon our hearts, so that consequently He may be seen in us and in all our ways. We need, therefore, to think much and often of Christ whilst not forgetting the work of the Spirit of God; that work which He carries on in our hearts. So we come to the last verse of this chapter in 2 Corinthians. You have Christ in glory, not a transient glory that shone in Moses' face, in connection with law and the Old covenant, the system of demand, but the abiding glory connected with grace and the New covenant, God's grand system of supply. Did you notice in that passage in Ezekiel, how God says, "I will," "I will"? It is God speaking of what He will do of Himself and for Himself. It is connected with a New covenant; not now God demanding of men what they ought to be for Him, but God saying what He will do for men Himself, and for His own glory.

According to the last verse of our chapter, we are, thank God, brought into the light of this glory. We look up by faith to that glory which tells of all that God is, of all that God is in Christ on our behalf. There is no vail over that glory as once was over the face of Moses. There is a transforming effect produced upon us, and thus is Christ written more deeply upon our hearts, that His likeness may be reproduced even in such as ourselves.

This is one of the great needs of the hour. It may be that we preach fairly clearly, but oh! that there may be a little more of this, a little more of the clear shining forth of the character of Christ written upon our hearts. Do you ever meet a Christian who strikes you at once as being Christ-like? It has a more powerful effect upon you than a good many eloquent sermons. That is the work of the Spirit of God. May we know more of Christ, and of this work of the Spirit, that we may be more like Christ.

Waiting.

WAITING, for the coming Saviour,
Waiting for Him from above;
Careful lest in our behaviour,
We should grieve the One we love.
Waiting, and while waiting, serving;
Girded loins, and lamps aglow,
Speak of diligent, unswerving
Witnessing for Him below.
Waiting, yes! He too is waiting
For that meeting in the air,
HIS deep love anticipating,
Heavenly joys with us to share.

W. M. RULK
MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.
Chapter 5. The Judgment of Belshazzar.

If God put power into the hand of the Gentile, and granted success to his armies, even against the nation of His choice, and to the overthrow of Zion that He loved, He does not overlook the pride of heart, the lust of power, the selfwill and violence of the rod that He uses for the correction of His erring people. The nations that time and again invaded His land, and wantonly destroyed life and property, were His instruments for the correction of His obstinate and stiff-necked people; but to do the will of God was far from the thought of any one of them.

God takes into account not only what men do, but their object in doing it. Jehu executed the judgment of the Lord on the house of Ahab, and on all his guilty partners, until not one of them remained alive. By his means also was the wickedness of Jezebel punished in Jezreel. But the severity in which he executed the just judgments of the Lord, and his own selfish reasons for his harshness, were far from being acceptable. Hence by the mouth of the prophet Hosea He says, "Yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hosea 1. 4). Assyria was the rod of His anger, by which He chastised Israel. But the rod boasted itself against Him who lifted it up, and hence do we read, "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed His whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of His high looks. For he saith, By the strength of my hand have I done it, and by my wisdom" (Isa. 10. 12, 13).

Nor will the repentance of the sinner, and his subsequent humble walk before God, always avert the governmental consequences of his misdeeds. That king David deeply repented of his sin in the matter of Uriah the Hittite is to the glory of God plainly stated in His Word; but he has to suffer in his own family for that cruel exhibition of autocratic power. Manasseh may have found mercy and forgiveness of his wickedness, but Judah, as contributory to his provocations, must suffer the consequences from the hand of God, as it is written in 2 Kings 23. 26, 27: "The Lord turned not from the fierceness of His great wrath, wherewith His anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked Him withal. And the Lord said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there."

In the government of God, children have to suffer for the sins of their parents, and nations for the sins of their rulers. Men may murmur against this, and characterize it as injustice, but the fact remains, that should a man squander his inheritance and abuse his body, his children will have to suffer for it in want and weakness. But this does not extend beyond this present life, and the sorrows here on earth are but shortlived. No man will be made to undergo the judgment of Gehenna for the sins of others, but only for those he himself has committed. And as a way of salvation has been opened up for all, and entrance into a sinless, sorrowless world of unspeakable happiness, what else can be done with the man who refuses to avail himself of a place and portion there, but cast him out? Any observant soul can see the fact verified in numberless instances, that the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children, and that mercy is shown to the descendants of them that love God and keep His commandments.
The dynasty represented by the head of gold comes to an end in the death of Belshazzar. It is not only that the king himself is judged on account of his profanity, but an end is brought to the kingdom in its primitive and superlative glory. The way in which Nebuchadnezzar abused the authority that was committed to him by the God of heaven could not be forgiven. In unfathomable grace and as regards eternal relationship with God, it could be, and was I feel persuaded, but the kingly position could not be continued beyond his grandson. God had promised that the kingdom would be continued in his family unto the third generation (Jer. 27. 7), and He keeps His word, patiently bearing with their oppressive and idolatrous ways, until to bear any longer would have been to give the impression that He was indifferent to their flagrant acts of conscienceless tyranny and wickedness; and at the last it was only when openly insulted and challenged to combat with the powers of darkness that He intervened in judgment.

It is impossible to imagine that the dreadful sins of which Nebuchadnezzar was guilty could have been overlooked by God, for the Judge of all the earth will surely do right. For his devilish idolatries, his determination to destroy out of his kingdom every faithful witness of Jehovah, as well as on account of the atrocious deeds of his successors, his dynasty had to be brought to an end, though the sin of which Belshazzar became guilty was sufficient of itself to bring down the judgment that fell from heaven upon his insolent head.

The ways of God in His providential dealings with men are both wonderful and untraceable. But if we were only able to search them out we would see how accurately all the actions that men do are weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, and how a fitting and just chastisement is meted out to every offender; and how, though it be true that the iniquities of the higher authorities are often visited upon those over whom they are placed, each human being receives according to his works. And in His government He makes no distinction between His own people and the godless world, except that the judgment may be more severe upon the former, for He had taught them better. But no judgment for His own reaches into eternity.

Ten of the Tribes of Israel were rent from Rehoboam, and in 1 Kings 11. 11 we are told it was for the sin of Solomon, but verse 33 of the same chapter says it was for the idolatry of the people, and in chapter 12, we find the exciting cause was the tyrannical spirit in which the imperious Rehoboam met the people, when they prayed him for a more gentle rule than that which had been imposed upon them by his father. Had we only that which is said in 1 Kings 11. 11, we would conclude that it all came to pass on account of the sin of Solomon, and had we only verse 33 of the same chapter we would conclude that it was for the sin of the people, and had we only that which is recorded in chapter 12, we would be certain to put the evil which befell the nation to the despotism of Rehoboam. The fact is the sin of any one of the three parties named was quite enough to bring all the mischief that was done, and therefore is the responsibility of the matter left at the door of each. Let me, however, say again that this judgment is only governmental, and does not always reach into eternity, though in some cases no doubt it does, for "Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand, and they that are otherwise cannot be hid" (1 Tim. 5. 24, 25).

Belshazzar was well acquainted with the dealings of God with his grandfather, and this fact makes him all the more responsible. Where much has been, much must surely be required, and as Belshazzar began his reign with a greater degree of light than did his
grandfather, his godless conduct becomes all the more reprehensible. Except the testimony rendered by the heavens and the earth, and whatever might be gathered from the providential dealings of God with the creature, Nebuchadnezzar had no light whatever, until He brought the captive Jews from Jerusalem, and came into contact with Daniel and his three confederates. But this could not be said of Belshazzar, for the ways in which God had brought Himself to light through these His servants was not hidden from him. Therefore must more be expected from him. But his evil doings witness to the sorrowful fact, that he had not in the least profited by the things of which he was made cognizant.

But does man ever really profit by light graciously given by his Creator? What effect upon Israel had the mighty works that they had witnessed in the land of Egypt, or in the wilderness, which were done in their sight by the mighty hand of God? Except where divine and sovereign grace wrought in the hearts of men like Joshua and Caleb, as far as any lasting and good effect was produced, the works might just as well have never been done. And what has the Spirit of God to say regarding the descendants of that people, when the Saviour had been in their midst doing works that no man had ever previously done? This only, "though He had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on Him" (John 12. 37).

"Beshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand." Was he not every inch a king? Was he not head and ruler of the most powerful kingdom on earth? Was he not supreme even among his assembled lords? Had not his gods been most favourable to him? Was he not firmly established upon his glorious throne? Who could estimate the wealth with which he was surrounded? Had not the God of Israel, that once had triumphed over the Egyptians, been utterly defeated before the gods that he honoured? Then he would celebrate the discomfiture of that God, whose devotees he held as slaves to the praise of his gods throughout his vast dominions!

"Belshazzar, whiles he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein." The gauntlet is thrown down before the throne of Jehovah. The carousal is intensified as the holy vessels of the living God are borne into the vast assembly. The noise of the intoxicated singers praising the gods of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, and stone, rises like a mighty hurricane, and the house trembles with the roar of drunken revelry.

The drunken revellers thought not of the madness of Nebuchadnezzar and of the humiliation which he suffered at the hands of the God of Israel! They did not recall the fiery furnace and the contempt thrown upon the wrath of the king by that same God whom they despised! We may picture that assembly of drunken sensualists, brutalized with the gratification of their sensual appetites, applauding the coarse and blasphemous boasting of the crowned autocrat and director of their debauchery. And yet all that this man possessed, from the throne on which he sat to the breath that was in his nostrils, he owed to the clemency of the One whose glory he was so terribly and provokingly outraging. The madness of Nebuchadnezzar expressed itself in one way, the madness of this monarch in another.

But suddenly a firm and throttling grasp is laid upon the king's revelry; and the silence of death falls upon the whole terror-stricken assembly. Upon the wall before the king the part of a man's hand is seen tracing letters and words upon the plaster. The coun-
tenance of the king is changed from boastful hilarity to abject terror; trembling lays hold of him, and his knees smite one against the other. He cannot read the writing, nor can any of the company that feast with him. In vain are the Chaldeans, soothsayers, and astrologers called in; they could neither read the writing nor make known the interpretation, though for the man that could do this there was scarlet clothing, a chain of gold for his neck, and a position of third ruler in the kingdom.

But help is at hand. That which God had caused to be written was not to remain on the palace wall as an unmeaning and undecipherable spectre of fear. It was meant to be read and understood. But the king and his nobles must also learn whose hand it was that traced those words on the plaster of the king's palace. They must also be brought to a sense of the madness of their carousals, and of the gravity of the insult offered to the Writer, in bringing the holy vessels taken from His temple, and putting them to such corrupt uses, as to drink wine out of them to the honour of their gods, and they must learn how powerless are the gods whose prowess they had been praising, when met by the might of the Most High, and when the hour for the execution of judgment upon the workers of iniquity has struck.

The tidings of this terrible apparition, the consternation of the king, and his lords, and the failure of the wise men to throw any light on the matter, reaches the ears of the queen, who at once thinks of the Hebrew captive Daniel, and coming into the banqueting hall, reminds the king that such a person still exists in the kingdom. She says: "Let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation." Evidently whoever else had forgotten him she had not, nor was her confidence in his ability to unravel the mystery in the least shaken by his present obscurity. Then was Daniel brought in before the king.

The indignation of that devoted servant of the Lord is aroused, as he witnesses the insult that had been offered to the God of Israel by this inflated worm of the dust. He does not make the slightest attempt to conceal his contempt both for him and his gifts, as in his ears are recited the honours that are to be heaped upon the man who will interpret this startling and terrifying mystery, that had so abruptly intruded itself into their midst, and so completely put an end to their intemperate gaiety. He answers with an abruptness that betokens a mind incensed, saying: "Thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another, yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation."

Not thus had he answered Nebuchadnezzar. As he contemplated the dark and distressful shadow that was to fall athwart the life of that monarch he was filled with compassion, and says: "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies." But in this case his indignation is so aroused by the dishonour done to the living God that for the moment the imperious and autocratic position occupied by this monster of iniquity seems to be lost sight of. But just on this account is his behaviour in the most perfect harmony with the judgment that was at that moment hanging over that trembling sinner. Nebuchadnezzar had been in gross darkness, and therefore to be pitied; but Belshazzar was sinning against the light that had shone in God's dealings with that king.

And all this is brought to the mind of this unhappy monarch. The high position into which his grandfather had been lifted by the grace of the Most High, his subsequent degradation on account of the pride of his heart, are briefly and graphically described, as is also the end and object of all the dealings of God with him: " till he knew that the Most High God ruled in the
Then the profanity of Belshazzar is forced home upon his conscience, and then what made his sin all the more flagrant: "Thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this." "And the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written." His kingdom was numbered and finished; he himself weighed in the balances, and found wanting; the kingdom divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. A veil is drawn over his last moments. God fulfils his word to Daniel, and "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."

The judgment of heaven follows hard upon the sentence inscribed upon the palace wall. Its execution was swift, sure, merciless, and thorough. His gods cannot save him, even if they would, though the devil shows no compassion even to his most devoted servants. With what pomp had Belshazzar come into that banquet hall! Secure in his proud position the crowned centre of the thousand satellites gives the order for the banquet to begin. They eat and drink to the honour of the king and of the gods that he served, while almost within earshot a mighty foe is approaching, that will turn their intemperate boasting into shrieks of terror and the groans of dying men.

How marvellous are the ways of God! How righteous are His judgments! And what a sense of security and rest of heart the knowledge of his intolerance of evil gives! Rebellion against His authority, oppression by those in high position, and the lawlessness of those who rise up against lawfully constituted rulers, must ever be met by the judgment deserved, though long and patiently He may bear those evils. His hand had fallen heavily upon His people, who were raised up to be His witnesses in an idolatrous world, because of their faithlessness. But He knew how to safeguard His own name and reputation, and how to preserve His glory from going to another. The Gentile was but the rod by which He disciplined His people, and if that rod boasted itself against Him that lifted it up, He knew how to show it that it had no power of its own. He will have the Gentile authority obeyed even by His own people, for that authority was set up by Himself, but if in his pride of heart the Gentile will oppress that people, or seek to turn them away from Himself, he must suffer the consequence.

In this present day the gods of the Chaldean may be scoffed at, and those who serve such deities may be viewed as in gross darkness, and doubtless they are. But are not many returning to this state of things with terrific speed? What about all the honour that is being given to crosses, crucifixes, images, saints and angels, and baring the head to a building set apart for the service of God? I am likely to be told that this is practised because of that which is represented by such things. But did the images of silver and gold that the Chaldeans bowed to mean nothing? There was nothing represented to the mind by such things? To put confidence in anything but the living God is idolatry. Even covetousness is said in Scripture to be idolatry (Col. 3:5), for it is an evidence that something has displaced God in the affections of the heart. It is God who puts down one, and sets another up, though to put trust in Him is contemptible in the estimation of this godless world.

To bring God into anything to-day is viewed by most people as a remnant of bygone dark ages. Belshazzar may have tried to make himself believe that the ascription of dominion, honour and power, rendered to the living God by his imperial grandfather, was but a remnant of the madness of those seven sorrowful years, during which he was driven from the dwellings of men, and that the gods that countenanced and
ministered to his degraded appetite were the only gods that were to be served by king or people. It is difficult to believe anything that is objectionable to one's nature, but exceedingly easy to believe that which testifies of a god endowed with passions like ourselves, and who therefore cannot judge them, or even rebuke them, in the creature.

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF "THE NEW JERUSALEM"?

A WELL-KNOWN Christian teacher, for whom we have great respect, told his audience recently that after much careful study and thought he had come to the conclusion that "The New Jerusalem" was composed of a selection of Old Testament and New Testament believers, chosen because of their attainment of holiness to be "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." He attempted very little explanation as to how he had arrived at this conclusion, though he did allude to verse 12, where we read that on the twelve gates of the city were the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. He contended that it was a literal city, yet symbolizing its inhabitants; so possessing two meanings, one literal, the other symbolic. He also took Revelation 21.1 to 22.5 as referring to the eternal state, not in relation to a brand-new heaven and earth, but to our present earth, not destroyed but purified by fire.

A few remarks on this chapter may be interesting and profitable. It is quite evident that Rev. 21.1-8 sets before us the eternal state. At the end of the preceding chapter and linking on with our Scripture we read of the earth and heaven fleeing away, and no place being found for them; of the second resurrection affecting the wicked dead; of the great white throne judgment and its effects, as seen in chapter 22.8. With the passing away of the earth and heaven we are ushered into eternity. Time is connected with the "two great lights" (Gen. 1.16), which are set in the heavens for "signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years" (verse 14). With the disappearance of these, time ceases, and eternity begins.

But we affirm that Rev. 21.9 to 22.5 brings us back to time, and shows us the church, under the symbol of a city, in administration during the millennium.

It must be remembered that Revelation does not give us a straightforward vision in chronological order, and this going back to go over the ground, leading up to the point aimed at, is not a new thing in this book. Note, first of all, the different way in which the New Jerusalem is presented. In Rev. 21.2 we have The Holy City seen as A BRIDE ADORNED FOR HER HUSBAND, whilst in Rev. 21.9 and 10 we have the bride, the Lamb's wife, seen as THE HOLY CITY.

It is in the consideration of this difference that we get light as to the chapter. In the former case the church is presented in the Bride character; in the latter in the city character; whilst in both this identity is carefully preserved.

Believers are looked at under different symbols in Scripture; such as a flock, a body, a city, a bride. We are not an actual flock of sheep, but the symbol sets forth the care the Lord takes of His own, just as the Shepherd cares for His sheep (see Psalm 23. and John 10.); nor are we an actual body, but in the symbol is set forth the truth as to the living connection between
Christ and His saints, just as members of our bodies are in close and necessary relation to each other; nor are we an actual city, but as such expressions as metropolitan city, city hall, city fathers, city finances, set forth the idea of administration, so the church set in administration under Christ is symbolized as a city; nor are we an actual bride or wife, but the symbol sets forth the most intimate nearness and love, and sharing everything in common.

Now we come to the statement that the New Jerusalem is a selection of Old and New Testament believers, who as "overcomers" are fit to be incorporated as the Bride.

Why should the symbol of a bride be chosen to represent a selection of believers, chosen on the ground of conduct? Is it customary amongst men to put the women on probation, only selecting her as a bride if over a course of years her conduct is up to a certain standard? No. The Christian teacher naively admitted that he could not tell us what degree of holiness was necessary to obtain this selection.

Eph. 5. 25-33 gives us the true idea as to the Bride. Though the word—bride—is not mentioned in the passage, yet the whole setting of the passage warrants us in thus viewing it, for the relationship of Christ and the church is used to enforce the earthly relationship of husband and wife. Here there is no thought of a selection, which would mean a mutilated church or Bride. Christ loves the church, the whole church, gives Himself for it. It is all what He does. He loves, He gives Himself, He sanctifies, He cleanses, He presents it to Himself, a glorious church.

Shall the spots and wrinkles be removed as the result of so much holiness on our part, or as the result of infinite love on His part? Will that love not deal with every spot and wrinkle? The most holy among the believers would fall short of perfection, and if we are on these lines, God will only have perfection.

Is it to be like entrance to some institution? Some have clothes very dirty, and cannot be admitted; some have only a few spots and a few creases, and these can be removed, and the wearers admitted. Is this like the Lord?

Further, if the Bride is made up of a selection, the Bride being the Bride for the whole period of the eternal state, it means that the believers outside of this selection will never form part of the Bride. They have been part of the flock, and of the family, and of the Body of Christ, but will not be of the Bride, according to this teaching. But Eph. 1. 22, 23 tells us that "the church...is His [Christ's] body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." If the church is His body, His body (comprising all believers, as the speaker admitted) is the church, comprising, then, of necessity, all believers; and if the church is presented by Christ to Himself a glorious church without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, it is the whole church, the Bride of Christ, the product of His love in death, the object of His love in glory.

Be it remembered that the question of reward stands, not in relation to the eternal state, but to the kingdom of heaven. Rewards will be awarded when the King returns to earth to reign. See the plain teaching of Matt. 25. 14-30; Luke 19. 11-27.

It is this mixing up the results of the judgment-seat of Christ with our heavenly portion which is all of grace that is responsible for this serious confusion of thought.

It may be helpful now to notice the marked similarity between Revelation 17. 1 and 21. 9. In both cases the actor is one of the seven angels which had the seven vials. It seems as if the vision brings us to the end of their work, which is necessary for the introduction of the church upon the scene,
which we know will not take place till she takes her position in connection with the millennium.

In Rev. 17. et seq. we see the false bride judged, making way for the true Bride to be displayed—an occasion for great joy and rejoicing. When set before us as the Holy City, what light do we gather that this represents the church, the whole church, not a selection and certainly not embracing one of the Old Testament believers?

First, notice verse 14. The City had twelve foundations, and in these foundations the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Now Ephesians 2. 20 speaks of the church being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This clearly indicates that the Holy City, as that which is reared upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, refers to the church and the whole church, not a selection, and certainly settles the point that the Holy City is not the Jewish Bride, as some assert.

Then, why are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written on the twelve gates of the Holy City? The teacher alluded to thinks this means a selection of Old Testament believers. But why a selection? The names of the twelve tribes do not hint at a selection. Ordinary Scriptural usage of terms indicates that the twelve tribes must mean all Israel.

The meaning, we believe, lies on the surface. It is well known that the gate, in oriental parlance, is the seat of judicial authority. Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; that is, he became a magistrate or judge. Boaz went up to the gate to settle the question of who should redeem the inheritance. Absalom stood beside the way of the gate to intercept the litigants and steal their hearts from David. “Establish judgment in the gate,” we read in Amos 5. 15, whilst we all remember the great promise of Christ, “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it [the church]” (Matt. 16. 18).

We gather, then, that the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, being written on the twelve gates of the Holy City, is a symbolic way of stating that Israel will in the millennial day be judged by the church, and not as giving a selection of Old Testament believers a place in the Bride.

If this be so, it proves that Rev. 21. 9 to 22. 5 sets forth the church in millennial administration, for in the eternal state there will be neither Jew nor Gentile—these time distinctions are not carried into the eternal state. Further, verse 24 speaks of nations and kings. There will be such in the millennium, but not in eternity. In new creation there is neither Jew nor Gentile (see Col. 3. 11; Gal. 3. 28) and it will be all new creation in the eternal state.

Rev. 21. 1-8 and 1 Cor. 15. 23-28 are the two striking passages referring to the eternal state. 1 Cor. 15. speaks of the Son delivering up the kingdom to God, even the Father, whilst in the millennium He is the King—King of kings and Lord of lords. Then in Rev. 21. 27 it speaks of keeping out of the Holy City defilement, or whatsoever works abomination or lies. We know there will be evil on this earth during the millennium, though suppressed, or if occasionally showing itself at once sternly dealt with, but at the end of the millennium it bursts forth in its last mad, hopeless rising against God, only to meet its final doom.

But in the eternal state neither in the new heaven nor on the new earth will there be sin to be kept out. No tears, no sorrow, no cry, no death—all speak of the complete absence of sin and the absolute purity of the eternal state, where God shall rest in the complacency of His love.

Finally, chap. 22. 2 speaks of the leaves of the tree of life being for the healing of the nations. There will be no need of healing in the eternal state, where all things are made new, when nothing but the stainless new creation
will characterize the scene, but in the millennium there will be need of healing. We think this healing is of the mind and soul rather than of the body. The tree of life speaks of Him who said, "I am . . . the Life," and through whom life alone comes.

We believe to make the Bride a matter of attainment is very serious. It is the introduction of the Galatian error. Every Christian should stoutly stand for the truth of the grace of God, which gives us our place in the Body of Christ and the Bride of Christ.

It is serious to make the Bride a selection of believers, thus giving us a mutilated church, instead of the whole church of God; Paul could write to the carnal Corinthians, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11. 2). All the Corinthian believers were included in this.

It is serious to drag in the Old Testament believers, without any warrant whatever. This destroys the distinction between the Old Testament believer and the Church of God, so clearly stated in Scripture.

Lastly, as to the Holy City being a literal City as well as symbolic of the church of God, if this is pressed, to be consistent, the Bride, the Lamb's wife, must be a literal woman as well as symbolic of the church. The logic is the same in both cases. The symbol illustrates the literal. It is the symbol of something, and the symbol cannot be that something, or else it would not be a symbol. We believe the Holy City is symbolic of the church in her administrative place in the millennium, even as the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is symbolic of the church in the nearest place of affection with her Lord in the eternal state.

The Christian teacher suggested this present earth would not be destroyed, but purified by fire. Reading passages bearing on the subject it looks as if the new heaven and new earth would be brand-new. You cannot speak of a renovated thing as a new thing, and an earth purified by fire would be simply renovated. Rev. 20. 11 speaks of the earth and the heaven fleeing from the sight of Him who sits on the great white throne, and no place being found for them. A renovated earth must have a place found for it. Rev. 21. 1 speaks of the first heaven and the first earth being passed away, whilst Peter writes of the heavens being dissolved and the elements melting with fervent heat, the earth and the works that are therein being burned up.

The point is not a vital one, save that we believe all will be new creation in the eternal state. Old things are to pass away (2 Cor. v. 17); all things are to become new.

May the Lord help us all in the true understanding of these things.

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That Blessed Hope.

"Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."—Heb. 10. 37.

The yearning, oh, the yearning,
My absent Lord to see!
The watch for His return ing,
My soul keeps constantly.
With ever deeper longing
I measure His delay;
For all my hopes are thronging,
Around His Advent Day.

E. R. V.
It is evident that the primary application of these words has passed away with the circumstances that gave occasion to them, never to find their parallel. But I am persuaded that a very real and solemn application of them remains to us. Often as we turn to the familiar scene, precious to all that love Him, we find it yields some fresh aspect of blessing.

Testimonies were accumulating at this point in the gospel, on the part of God, to the glory of Him whom men despised and the nation of Israel abhorred. The sickness of Lazarus had been to "the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified thereby"—in the midst of death manifested to be the resurrection and the life. Just now He was to be presented to the daughter of Zion as her King, coming sitting on an ass's colt, while multitudes greeted Him with "Hosanna; blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord;" so soon indeed to be changed into the cry, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him." The Greeks, too, desiring to see Jesus, was the occasion of bringing out that He was Son of Man, and bespoke the day when He should be glorified as such, in a wider sphere of glory that belonged to Him than as Israel's King. And this threefold testimony to the glory of His person was ordered of God as the answer to the definite rejection of His words and works in chapters 8. and 9. (See 10. 25, 37, 38.)

Still there was that which lay nearer to the heart of the Lord. There was a path He was about to enter, necessary indeed to the full manifestation of His glories that had been borne witness to, but in which He should be glorified in a deeper way in glorifying God (13. 31) and laying, in the cross, the foundation for the accomplishment of God's eternal counsels. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." His death was full in view. Had it not been very present to His heart when He walked with Mary to the tomb of Lazarus? Feeling the sorrow and desolation of death that was upon all, but as none else could, He groaned in the spirit, and was troubled. Jesus wept!—precious tears of perfect human sympathy, of Divine love that had come down thus to have its part to the full in human sorrow! "Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself cometh to the tomb!" Was not that deeper groan the expression of how He felt that which had brought in the sorrow—sin the source of it all—entering into this as He alone could, for He was in the way Himself to be made sin, and to endure in infinite depths of sorrow, the judgment of God that was due to it? Yielding Himself up to death for the glory of God, He was the perfect object of the Father's delight, and would even give Him new ground for it. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again."

Was there to be no testimony of this deepest character of His glory? Impossible that it should be wanting! But how shall it be rendered? How blessed the fruit of His grace that had prepared a suited vessel for it in one, if there was to be but one, who in heart entered in any measure into the true character of what was transpiring. It was Mary—she who had learned to know Him as no one else seemed to have known Him in the Gospels. Her heart, formed by the object of God's heart, in the instincts of this communion, anticipates what lay deepest in
His, even before it had found expression in His words. She felt, what perhaps she could not have defined to any; the shadow of His death was fallen upon her while men were compassing it, and He could say in giving Himself up to it, "Now is My soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy name." The secret of the Lord was with Mary, as with all who fear Him; and so, with intelligence of the suited moment, she took "the ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair." "Because of the savour of thy good ointment, thy name is as ointment poured forth." So it was that day—"the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

But what is especially before me, in seeking this little word with the Lord's beloved people, comes out in the way He expresses His estimate of the act of devotion, in contrast to the thoughts of His poor disciples who understood nothing. "They had indignation, saying, to what purpose is this waste?" Judas adding, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? 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." He will receive no more the anointing of our hands; He has passed beyond the reach of such, though not beyond the expression of our love. Yet there is a sense in which His own will have Him for ever, and in a more blessed way than they had Him while He was yet with them upon earth. The part that Mary chose by His grace we know shall never be taken away from her. Still there is a way in which we have Him now in this day and scene of His rejection that we shall never have Him in glory. There is a fellowship of His sufferings, more intimate and sweeter if possible, than the fellowship of His glory. What if we were to miss it? This is what affects my heart. If Mary had failed to seize that last night, to render love's adoring testimony to His preciousness, she never could have recalled it through eternity. How exquisitely suited to the moment that testimony to the perfect fragrance of His death before God, whom men counted worthy only of a malefactors' cross. She had come beforehand to anoint Him for His burial. How soon the opportunity would have been for ever lost! It is not that love will not find new and as perfectly suited ways of expressing itself to Him in the everlasting glory; but it will not be in the way in which He looks for it now, and misses it if wanting.

For has He not come, and died, and risen again, to win our hearts for Himself? Does He not state it as the express object of the grace that has brought us the full and free forgiveness of our sins? "When they had nothing to pay He frankly forgave them both. Tell Me therefore which of them will love Him most?" He looked for nothing short of this to be the effect of that grace. It sufficed to distinguish the forgiven one in Simon's house, even before she knew all that His grace had come to bring her. "Seest thou this woman?" He had not seemed to notice her before, but now He recounts every token of her love, for it was precious to Him. Is it thus with us? I put it to myself as I do to you. Can we, as His forgiven ones, be known in a cold, heartless world as plainly as she—even by love that seeks to lavish its expression on this precious Object; our life this, and nothing else? "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." He looks for it in glory, and makes so much of what nothing but the love that drew it forth would appraise as of any worth. Not that the action of this dear woman in Luke 7, is to be confounded with the outwardly somewhat similar one of Mary of Bethany, as though it were of the same order of
intelligence. But they were alike as the expression of love, of real devoted attachment to the person of the Lord Jesus, that gave what they did, its spring and perfect suitability and acceptance, each in its own place and measure. The former, the first awakening and fresh gush of love, as when first He attracts the heart to Himself by all His blessed grace; the latter, the fruit and expression of the deep-tried experience of what He is in Himself, the heart satisfied, that marks and in itself constitutes the growth of the believer.

We love Him, then, because He first loved us. And can it be that we shall not seek to express it? But do any ask, How can we know what would suit Him now? Ah! love finds it out, because it studies its object, as Mary did, sitting at the feet of Jesus. Thus she gained the instinctive intelligence with which she acted. Thus the Lord says, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." The possession of intelligence of the mind and will of the Lord is the first-fruit and proof of love. And love needs to be guided by the intelligence it thus gains in order to express itself acceptably to the Lord. Mary of Magdala needed it when she conceived the thought of carrying away the dead body of the Lord. To what end? But she loved Him, and this detained her in the place where she acquired the intelligence in the richest way. Then again, love has its own way of expressing itself, that no mere intelligence could imitate, the word indicating generally, that obedience is that way (1 John 5. 3; John 14. 21, 23; 15. 14). But into how many innumerable details the principle enters, love finding its joyful liberty only in carrying out His will under His eye, into every particular of the life; love giving its peculiar character and acceptance to the obedience.

The very way we have Him now as in the presence of the world that has cast Him out, affords constant opportunities that love will be quick to appreciate and seize, as Mary did, to express itself. In the glory there will be no self to deny, no cross to take up, no world to refuse; no breaking of the dearest ties of kindred; no misjudgment of fellow-believers to face; no loss of any kind to encounter for love of Him. All hearts will flow together to Him there. Now, according to His word, any or all of these things supply the test of our estimate of Him, afford the privilege of proving what the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord is to our souls, as he found it who could say, "For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse."

Alas! in the base treachery of our hearts it is too easy to escape it all. Go with the ordinary profession of His name; use the security that infinite sovereign grace has given you from judgment to come, to settle down at ease in the world that has rejected Him; do good to men, as with the ointment sold for so much and given to the poor; these things will gain for the Christian the favour and esteem of the world, and the reproach of Christ will be unknown. But at what incalculable loss His touching words remind us, "Me ye have not always."

When the glory is come "His servants shall serve Him," perfectly then, as surely as we shall "see His face," love finding new ways to express itself to its Object in the glory; but if He came to-night to take us into it, never if we have missed it here, would He call us to go forth to Him outside the camp bearing His reproach; never ask again, "This do in remembrance of Me," leading our hearts to announce His death; never look for us to be identified with His interests in the Church and His testimony to the world. All this and much more is over for ever, and the opportunity past if we miss it now. "Me ye have not always."
Oh to know the power of these words to stir up our souls to more devotedness that will make the most of days numbered as they come, and so quickly passing, never to be recalled! Oh to be found for Him, in the face of everything, accounting anything in which we taste the fellowship of His sufferings our greatest present gain and glory!

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"THE MAN CHRIST"

IT is not possible, nor would one presume to attempt to explain the perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ; but in a day such as this, when the truth of His holy spotless Person is being treated so rudely and blasphemously, it will be helpful to consider one or two Scriptures concerning Him.

The opening verses of John's Gospel, the opening verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Philippians 2. 6-11, John 6. 38, John 8. 58, and many other passages show that He was the SON OF GOD—God's equal, who had become flesh, taking upon Him the form of a servant. Thus He came into the world to do the will of God His Father (Heb. 10. 7).

His perfect holy spotless life was all for God His Father alone. Men and women were blessed by Him in His pathway, but this was incidental to His service to God. His life was one of perfect evenness before His Father. He could say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8. 29), and the Father could open the Heavens and declare, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3. 17).

Before His birth, in the wonderful annunciation by the angel in Luke 1. 35, we find the words "that Holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."

He was thus marked out as different from all other beings before His birth. All other mankind since Adam have been born in sin and been sinners by nature, which, alas, has only too well been made manifest by their lives.

But the Lord Jesus was ever the Holy One. He knew no sin (2 Cor. 5. 21). He did no sin (1 Peter 2. 22). In Him is no sin (1 John 3. 5, Heb. 4. 15). He was altogether apart from sin and in Him there was not anything to respond to sin.

He was God manifest in flesh (1 Tim. 3. 16), and "God cannot be tempted with evil" (James 1. 13). The Lord Jesus Christ could not sin, for God cannot sin, and He is and ever was God. As a Man He put Himself into subjection to the Father, and in man's relationship to God, He was the obedient Servant, unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2. 8).

God's requirement of man is obedience. In this Adam failed, as has every man and woman born into the world since; the only exception being the Lord Jesus, who rendered absolute and perfect obedience to God in every detail of His life on earth.

How many have been drawn into error by the false teaching abroad to the effect that the life of the Lord Jesus is an example to all men. Such, however, is not so. He did not come to teach sinners how to live for God. By no amount of development or cultivation is it possible for a sinner to live for God. Nor did He come to enter into the circumstances of the sinner in his conflict with sin. There never was any possibility of Satan overcoming the Lord Jesus; although as
a real Man (sin apart) He experienced the opposition of Satan and suffered in it. On the other hand, there is no possibility of the sinner overcoming the sin within him or the forces of sin around him, for he has no strength to do so, nay rather he is by very nature only able to produce sins.

The Lord Jesus did not put forth His Godhead power to defeat Satan, but "He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2. 23). He ever counted solely upon God His Father. He accepted all things from His hand, and in the path which He had chosen, He passed through it all in absolute dependence upon God. He looked to God His Father to remove the circumstances or sustain Him in them. He never altered one, although He could have done that at any time; but then He would have departed from the place He had taken of a lowly dependent Man before God. In all this He showed the proper place of man before God.

Further, the Lord Jesus did not come into the world to enter a contest with Satan, but having taken upon Himself Manhood and the place of a Man, He was met by Satan and He bound the strong man and spoiled His goods (Matt. 12. 29), thus defeating Satan by His entire dependence upon God, and by the Word of God.

"By weakness and defeat
He won the meed and crown,
Trod all our foes beneath His feet
By being trodden down."

He was a man of an altogether different order from that which Satan had met before. He was the last Adam, the Lord from Heaven, and it is only to those who are in the last Adam that His life is an example.

So far as sinners are concerned, He came to die for them. He could not live for them, for His life was but the light which showed up the awful condition of all men. He laid down His precious life to save them.

All that remains for the sinner is to take his place before God as one worthy only of death; unfit for God; unfit to live, and with grateful adoring heart to lift up his voice in thanksgiving to the Lord Jesus Christ for giving Himself, and to praise God for His wonderful love in giving His only begotten Son.

Now the believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is called to live in the power of another life, in the pathway marked out by our blessed Lord—the path of obedience, the first characteristic of which is holiness (1 Peter 1. 15).

It is to saints in this pathway that the life of the Lord Jesus becomes an example, and wherever reference in the Scriptures is made to the Lord being an example in His suffering in temptation (as Heb. 2. 18, and 4. 15, also 1 Peter 2. 20–25), the Spirit of God always had saints before Him. The one who is born of God, and sealed with the Spirit and who consequently is in Christ Jesus, meets with the opposition of Satanic hosts in his pathway. The Lord Jesus has trodden the way before (sin apart) and He can and does enter into the temptation of the saint, and gives His priestly grace. He has nothing but His death for the man in the flesh, the sinner, but all His priestly grace is now put forth for the man in Christ, and for him His example stands.

As sinners we come to Him and own Him as our Saviour. As saints we own Him as Lord and Head, and then seek by the power of the Spirit given unto us to walk in obedience to Him, to His praise and glory.

Christ now lives at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and the life of the saint is hid with Him in God. All in Christ are part of the new creation where old things have passed away, and all things have become new, and all things are of God. His life on earth is the blessed example for the saint left here on earth for His praise and glory, and our power for this is all in Himself through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us and leads our hearts out to the Lord Jesus where He now is.
ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

After the Lord Comes.

At the gospel meeting last night it was pressed upon those present that should the Lord come that night and they were unsaved they would be eternally lost and without hope. Is this correct? I know the church will be completed before His coming, and the heavenly blessings that belong to this dispensation will be lost, but will there not be the gospel of the kingdom, which they may believe though they have neglected the gospel of His grace to-day?—KINGSTON-ON-THAMES.

It is quite clear that after the translation of the church God will not leave Himself without witness, but will raise up those who shall be heralds of the kingdom so soon to be established. “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24.14). “This gospel of the kingdom” was a message familiar to the disciples to whom the words were spoken, and is therefore quite distinct from the gospel of the death and resurrection of Christ, of which at that moment they knew nothing.

But though this is so, we believe that the statement as to which you have doubts is quite justified, for in 2 Thess. 2. we read of events which will transpire after the translation of the church which will involve the removal of the “letting” or “hindering” power (verse 7); as a kind of counter-blast to the heralding forth of the kingdom, Satan will raise up the lawless one marked by “all deceivableness of unrighteousness” and God will act in governmental retribution towards those who have trifled with His former message—“they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. and for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth. but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (verses 10-12).

This clearly teaches us that those who have heard the truth in the gospel to-day, will, if the Lord comes and finds them unsaved, fall under the power of the lie. The truth saves; the lie damns. Furthermore it plainly says, “that ALL might be damned who believed not the truth”—so there are going to be no exceptions.

This is a terrible prospect indeed for the neglectors of the gospel, and it is well to faithfully proclaim it by way of warning.

The World to Come.

Moses was naturally trained for man’s world, but had to learn that natural eloquence, force, and decision of character, position, and influence had to be ruled out and unlearnt, that he might be the man of God he afterwards became. The forty years of man’s erudition in Egypt had to be unlearnt in the forty years at the back of the wilderness in the land of Midian. So the powers of the world to come displaced the powers of the world in which he moved, and in utter dependence upon God alone he was used for his mighty service.

I should think this will be one of our hardest lessons to learn. That our offspring should be famous in the world to come we are quite ready to hope; but that they should come to renounce power, pleasure, and position here because of the displacing power of the world to come (and I may say, of the reproach of Christ and the affliction of the people of God) is a severe test to which we more slowly rise. Hebrews 11. illustrated the influence of the world to come on the present life of men and women like ourselves.

W. H. W.
THE GUM TREES AND THE STORM. (J. T. MAJOR.)

A GREAT storm has just swept over this part of the land in which I am staying, and its track is marked by giant gum trees lying shivered and broken where once they reared their proud heads to the heavens. As I viewed these magnificent trees overthrown by the tempest I felt that they held a silent lesson for me if only I were wise enough to learn it, so I set myself to discover why these had fallen and why those had stood when the great test came suddenly upon them. Here is one that has brought down others in its fall, lying across the roadway and far into the adjoining paddock; its length cannot be less than 150 feet, its girth 15 feet; but yesterday it stood, and seemed as likely to stand against any storm as any of its fellows; now it lies there, its history as a tree finished for ever.

The cause of its overthrow was easily found. Through some flaw or wound in the bark of its great trunk not far from the ground, white ants had penetrated to its very heart silently and unseen, day after day, they had eaten out its strength just where it was most needed. A casual observer would have seen nothing wrong with it twelve hours before, its leaves were as green and its great limbs as strong as any other, but when the trial came the secret of years was revealed, the giant had been white-anted, and it could not stand the test, and great was the fall of it. The storm had broken it at what seemed to be its strongest part.

White ants are little things; you could crush a thousand of them with one stamp of the foot, but their work is deadly. I thought of certain things that are to the Christian what the white ants were to that tree, things which are often allowed a place in their lives, little things chiefly, some secret self-indulgence that grows day by day into a habit; some self-pleasing that does not seem to matter much at the time, but which really comes under one of these three heads, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life—these are the things that are the undoing of many a promising life. Every human heart has a proneness to them, as each one of us knows right well:

"No infant's changing pleasure.
Is like my wandering mind."

There is one thing certain, and that is that at the beginning of every evil course the conscience will be active. The Lord above us who loves us, and the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, will see to it that conscience rings the alarm at the first appearance of these "white ants" that would destroy our spiritual life and testimony, and then it is easy to resist the invaders. If the alarm is silenced and the desire to please oneself prevails, and the invaders gain an entrance, it will not be so easy next week or next month to deal with them, and then a double work will need to be done; they must now be turned out, as well as kept out. Exercise of soul before God and repentance and confession only can affect this, and we must remember that spiritual ground is more easily lost than won. How often we excuse ourselves to ourselves for these little things, and because nobody sees them or suspects them we think it does not matter. Outwardly things are the same, the spiritual vigour does not appear to be much diminished, and we forget that God sees, and that the inner life is being slowly but surely sapped. Then at last comes the storm, for Satan sees and knows what others do not, and he
chooses his time with consummate subtlety, and then—! What should we do if the Lord were not gracious! May God give us deliverance from evil. Oh, let us pray "Deliver us from evil," and may we be watchful and self-judged before Him in little things, and never forget that the Lord is gracious.

But more is needed than diligence in resisting these invaders; if all our time were taken up in self-judgment and watchfulness, our lives would not be joyous and fresh as God would have them. And we must beware that we do not confound self-occupation with watchfulness; nothing hinders Christian life and growth and makes us such easy prey for the devil's snares as self-occupation. It is in occupation with that which is good that we overcome evil. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things... and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4. 8, 9). These things are in Christ, they are heavenly things, and we are to fill our minds with Christ, and God will be with us, our shield from evil things without, and our great reward to satisfy our hearts within. Every exhortation to watchfulness in the Word of God is needed by us, and woe to us if we neglect them; but the surest protection from all evil is to rejoice in the Lord and to keep ourselves in the love of God.

But here there lies another tree, almost as great as this white-anted giant, not broken off six feet from the ground, but literally torn up by the roots. We marvel at the force of the wind that could do a thing like that, but the solution of the marvel is easy. The roots of the tree were widespread, but they had not struck deep into the soil; the visible growth and foliage were far in excess of the secret unseen growth, the tree had not much depth of earth. My brethren, we must give heed to this if we are to stand and withstand the assaults of the devil. We must be rooted and grounded in the truth and in love, and for this we must know the Word and live by it; it must be in our souls and not in our heads only, or the time will surely come when the shallowness of the work in us will be discovered. Nothing can be of greater importance to us than a secret history of soul with God, for it is in secret that our roots strike deep into the grace in which we are planted, and we learn that our security lies in Him and not in ourselves, and so we are preserved when the test comes.

Every tree that I examined that fell in that great storm had one or other of these two defects: either their strength had been sapped by these tireless insects, or their roots had not struck deep in the earth, and I pass on to others the lesson that they mutely taught to me. Finally, "make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof" (Rom. 13. 14).

MAN'S DIPLOMACY AND GOD'S DISCIPLINE.

IT is a remarkable fact, to which attention was called in this magazine not long ago, that Jacob is designated a "plain" or, as the word is elsewhere translated, "perfect" man (Gen. 25. 27). The reference is, we believe, to the deep underlying current of life-purpose which characterized him. On
the surface his life was marked by innumerable eddies and cross currents: no other of the patriarchs had so chequered a career as he. Yet the redeeming feature in his case was that from his early years he set his mind upon the Divine blessing connected with the birthright, and that blessing —though possibly he but very dimly apprehended it—centred in the Christ who was to come. Consequently he maintained the pilgrim character and went on dwelling in tents, when Esau adopted the line of things formerly favoured by Nimrod, and became a "cunning hunter."

In this we may compare and yet contrast Jacob with David. The comparison exists, because, as Psalm 132 shows, David too, had a deep underlying purpose in his life from his earliest years. He conceived the purpose in boyhood days at Ephratah and never turned aside from it through all his afflictions. His great idea was to "find out a place for the Lord." This doubtless was one great reason, perhaps the great reason, for his being called "a man after God's own heart." The contrast lies in the fact that while David's purpose was "a place for the Lord," Jacob's was a blessing for himself. Still the blessing Jacob sought was God's blessing, it was at least a part of His purpose, and hence Jacob was in that sense a perfect man.

Of all the patriarchs, indeed of all the characters we have portrayed in Scripture, Jacob stands out as the diplomatist. In his case the field of operations was not found in the affairs of state or nations, but in the smaller matters connected with himself and his household. Still the modus operandi in either case is the same. The very word diplomacy is derived, as a dictionary will show, from a Greek word which has as its primitive meaning a paper folded double; and hence it carries to this day the suggestion of artful management or manoeuvring, of seeking one's own cause with paper folded double so that the opponent cannot see all that is written upon it. This of necessity involves a strain of selfishness running through all one's actions.

Thus it was pre-eminently with Jacob. He was an inveterate diplomatist until near the end of his career, always scheming, always seeking his own ends in clever ways. Concurrently we see God dealing with him in discipline, bringing him to an end of his cleverness and finally bringing him to the desired haven, that is, to the end that God himself proposed, which transcended anything that Jacob had before him.

A brief survey of Jacob's diplomaties cannot fail to be instructive, since we all possess his nature that loves to scheme for the attaining of its own ends, though not all possess his ability.

In Genesis 25. we have recorded the transaction with Esau over the pottage of lentils. The birthright was made the subject of a commercial transaction. Esau revealed himself as a "profane person" (Heb. 12. 16), saying "what profit shall this birthright do to me?" Jacob revealed himself as one who, though valuing the birthright, regarded it as a subject of barter, and to be purchased as cheaply as possible. Esau despised the birthright and lost it, but on the other hand there is no evidence that Jacob obtained it as a result of this sharp practice. Rather he obtained it in spite of it.

In chapter 27. is recorded the artful way in which Jacob, instigated by his mother, deceived his blind father, and supplanted Esau in the matter of the blessing. He lied both by word of mouth and in action. This episode was overruled of God to bring home to Esau the folly of his profanity and its irrevocable results. As for Jacob, he certainly got the patriarchal blessing, which had, as Heb. 11. 20 shows, an element of faith in it, and was according to the purpose of God. Yet he did not get Divine blessing by diplomacy of this discrepant order; he
got rather a disagreeable chain of consequences that entangled him in lifelong difficulties. He came definitely under the discipline of God.

The first effect of this discipline was to send him forth from home a fugitive to Haran. Though suffering in this way, however, God had dealings with him in a dream, as chapter 28. records, and Jacob had dealings with God. God's dealings with him were in pure grace, revealing what He would be on his behalf. Jacob's with God, were still on the lines of selfish diplomacy. If God would be with him and give him the good things of this life, then he would serve God. God was to him as yet but the Source of supply for all the food, and clothes, and protection and care he needed! Can we afford to throw stones at Jacob in this connection? Are there not thousands to-day whose "Christianity" does not consist of much more than that God is good to them, and they find comfort in Jesus amidst the trials, and needs, and perplexities of life, and they expect to go to heaven when they die!

In chapters 29., 30., and 31., we have the record of the years of Jacob's sojourn in Haran, which resolved itself into a duel of diplomacy between Jacob and Laban his uncle. In the government of God, Jacob found himself in the hands of a man of even greater selfishness than himself. There was an extraordinary fitness about God's discipline in the matter of his marriage. He was deceived as to the two daughters of Laban, just as Isaac had been deceived by his two sons, only Isaac was blinded by age, and Jacob by the peculiar marriage customs of the east. Laban, according to Jacob's complaint, changed his wages ten times. Jacob got his own back by cunning artifices connected with the breeding of Laban's cattle, and according to the complaint of Laban's sons had "taken away all that was our father's." Thus the contest was waged until again God intervened in a dream and made known to Jacob that it was He, rather than Jacob’s stratagems, that caused the cattle to pass from Laban to him, and calling him out of the whole unpleasant business back to Canaan.

This at once brought Jacob into the presence of the original trouble, the anger and resentment of Esau. Chapters 32. and 33. record his skilful diplomacy in view of this emergency. They also show how unnecessary it all was, for the God who had warned Laban the Syrian not to touch Jacob had been before him again and softened Esau's heart. It was in connection with this experience that a climax was reached in God's dealings with him. The Angel of the Lord, in human form, wrestled with him until daybreak. Jacob resisted until he was crippled. When crippled in his own strength and clinging, instead of wrestling, then "He blessed him there." Thus symbolically was the great lesson conveyed, and there began to dawn upon Jacob the light of this fact: that no wrestling, whether diplomatic or physical, can achieve the results that flow from dependence upon God and His power.

That Jacob did begin to learn this is evidenced by the end of chapter 33. where we find him building an altar and calling it "God, the God of Israel." His thought still had a selfish bent. It was still what God was for him. Still it was what God was for him, as a prince with God prevailing through weakness and dependence. He called it not "El-elohe-Jacob" but "El-elohe-Israel."

Looking back over these diplomatic schemes of Jacob, thus hastily sketched, we perceive that one feature marks them all. Each was a failure. Even where the aim before him was in itself not unworthy, and the methods adopted not wrong, all his schemes proved to be just so much unnecessary trouble, for God had been before him and acted on his behalf.

From this point onwards Jacob's diplomacies fade away, though his
troubles do not. In the government of God he has to reap what he has sown till his latest hour. Still he meets these disciplinary events in another spirit, and when later (chapter 35.) he is called of God to go up to Bethel he shows he now has some sense of the holiness which becomes God’s house, and he calls the altar he builds there “El-beth-el” or “The God of Bethel,” i.e., “The God of the house of God”—not now God in relation to himself, even as Israel, but God in relation to His own house.

Jacob’s broken spirit is very manifest when presently he reaps back into his own bosom the harvest of deceit which he had sown in regard to his father Isaac, and is himself bitterly deceived by his own sons as to Joseph. Years after, when the glad truth concerning his beloved son reached him, together with the call from Joseph to travel to Egypt, and that call had been ratified by a word from God, he goes down in simple faith in the word that had reached him, and without the least attempt at ensuring his safety or prosperity by efforts of his own. Hence, conscious of the blessing of God he is able to stand before great Pharaoh and bless him instead of craving a blessing from him.

Last of all we come in Genesis 48. to that remarkable scene alluded to in Heb. 11. when we read, “By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.” His eyes were closing upon the world which had been the scene of so much scheming on his part, and so much chastening on God’s, for he was a dying man. His eyes of faith, however, were never more keen in their vision. He saw the real position in regard to Ephraim and Manasseh; and placing his right hand upon the head of the one whose name meant Fruitful, and his left hand on the head of the other, whose name meant Forgetting, he blessed them.

In the light of what has since been revealed we can see in this action of the dying patriarch a meaning of which he could not have been conscious. In figure there was the taking away of the first that the second—the fruitful one, a type of Christ—might be established.

But why should it be recorded that Jacob was “leaning upon the top of his staff”? Is it not that we might see in his bodily weakness, and consequent dependence upon outside support, a figure of that which now marked him spiritually? At last in conscious weakness he had exchanged diplomacy for dependence, and as a result of this happy exchange, his sun, after a stormy day, was setting in a blaze of glory!

Dying, dependent, and with the “Fruitful” man filling his mind’s eye, he became a worshipper. He rose at last as the fruit of God’s discipline to that which really was God’s purpose for him. It is noticeable that all through Genesis 48. he is named Israel, for he was displaying the characteristics of “A Prince of God” at last.

In chapter 49. Israel the worshipper becomes the prophet of God, and in blessing his sons speaks of things which have to do with Christ in both His sufferings and His glory.

The great value of Jacob’s history lies in the fact that he so faithfully portrayed human nature as it exists in a saint of God. His foolishnesses are ours. His inveterate tendency to scheme with diplomatic cleverness to accomplish his ends, and even to reach ends which were right and part of the purpose of God concerning him, is just the tendency that is ours. Hence God’s disciplinary dealings with him are very indicative of His dealings with us.

Happy it is for us if we, too, reach the end which he reached as a dying man. And happy, thrice happy, are we, if we reach that end in the midst of our careers, and before we come to die.
"WHAT is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" is a question asked in the Song of Solomon. What say you, dear fellow-believer, to this question? It is an important one, for in the answer to it lies the true reason of the Christian's confidence and hope. The Apostle Paul would doubtless have replied in some such words as he wrote to the saints at Colosse, in the verses we have just read. In one way the epistle to the Colossians is greater than the epistle to the Ephesians, for while in the latter the wonderful workmanship and structure of the church, the body of Christ, is described; in Colossians the glories of the Head are predominant; and it is the greatness of Christ the Head which fills the body, this being formed for the display of His pre-eminence.

The Word of God reveals various titles and honours that belong to our Lord, and these may be likened to the cutting of a beautiful diamond with its numerous facets. The skill of the diamond cutter has been exercised so that the beauty of the stone may be admired. Every name, every title of Christ is like a fresh angle upon the diamond, designed to bring out His inherent beauties, that we may view them in the light of God, whose delight they are. Some of these are gathered up in the chapter before us.

In verse 13 He is spoken of as "God's dear Son," or more expressively "the Son of His love"; this I will venture to call

THE GLORY OF RELATIONSHIP.

We have been translated into His kingdom, but for the moment let us leave aside the consideration of this blessing, and gaze at the glory of God's beloved. Its resplendence sets Him far, far above all those whom men may call beloved; none can compare with Him in this respect, He is the Son. In the past ages of eternity He dwelt in that holy, blessed relationship. His eternal place was in the bosom of the Father, knowing all the secret purposes of love, knowing all the depths of the Divine counsels, all the good pleasure of God's will. It is in that character the Son has come forth to make the Father known, and the disciple who pillowed his head on the bosom of his Master, has said, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." We beheld it, said John, we discerned it, when others saw no beauty, that they should desire Him. We saw His glory as the beloved Son, the One indeed in whom all the Divine counsels found their centre, for whom every thought of God had its purpose, which ranged forward into an eternity as limitless as the eternity in which He had ever lived in the Father's love.

But pass on to verse 14 and behold the glory that He, the Beloved of the Father, has won, its brilliance heightened by contrast with that which we have been considering. It is

THE GLORY OF REDEMPTION.

Think of all that Christ was to God, and then turn your thoughts to the darkness and woe of Colgotha. Think of the eternal glories of the Son, and then of His precious blood shed that we might live. We may well be amazed at the journey that brought Him ever downward, until He could go no further, for there was no further to go, He had reached the bottom. There indeed was the love of God told out in the depths, in all its magnificent extent. Never will the realms of glory, the breadth and length and depth and height of the vast universe of bliss, express the love of God, like the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. There was a
glory that was set before Him in the past eternity, and He won it by the blood of His cross, won it in shame and dishonour, in darkness and death. Alas, that to-day so many are disposed to slight the cross, but to do so is to take the fairest gem from His crown, to hush the chorus of eternity, to silence the song of the redeemed. Hark, as it bursts forth, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood." When the saints surround Him in glory, the first note that reaches His ear will be in praise of His redeeming love.

But the glory of redemption far exceeds our needs, for it involves the whole question of sin as it affects the nature and majesty of God. When our Lord was about to leave the supper table for the garden of Gethsemane, we hear Him saying, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." Pause a moment: do you understand His words? What is glory? Perhaps the simplest definition of it is, the shining, or showing forth of excellence. Take all the excellence of whatever you please, and display it, that is its glory. Hidden in the rosebud is the scent and colour of the flower, but when it opens in the sunshine, then is displayed the glory of the rose and its excellent fragrance is manifest. So was the excellence of God hidden, until the glory of redemption was won after such a fashion, that all the attributes of God, His love, holiness, truth, majesty, judgment, the rights of His throne, were perfectly displayed, without any contradiction between them. I venture to say that this alone makes our Beloved excel every other. All man's schemes of salvation are based upon the contradiction of the attributes of God. They set His justice against His love, His mercy against His holiness. But not so when the Son of God won the glory of redemption, for then every quality that is in God was shown forth in absolute and perfect balance.

In verses 15-17 Christ is seen as "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature." To Him belongs

THE GLORY OF CREATION.
The title "first-born" does not mean in any wise the first who was born, but that He is pre-eminent in excellency of dignity and power. For because by Him all things visible and invisible were created, the first place must belong to Him in the sphere He has formed. The importance of this is, that amongst the intelligent beings who fill this creation, He, the image of the infinite unseen, makes God known, and this is the great end for which He holds it together. Verse 16 should read, "In Him were all things created," then "all things were created by Him," and lastly, they were created "for Him." He did it by Himself, creation is the work of the Son. He did it for His own pleasure and purpose, and in doing it, He did it in Himself, that is, He put His own stamp and character upon it. As an artist leaves upon his work the evidence of his own individuality, so that it is at once recognized as his, so creation bears witness of its Creator, the Son of God. Men have not eyes to see it now, but when the day of display comes, every whit of it will utter glory, as Psalm 148. clearly shows.

Yet another glory rises before our gaze in verse 19—

THE GLORY OF REVELATION.
It pleased the Godhead, that all the fulness should dwell in Him; this is an assertion of His absolute deity, but also of revelation, for compared with a similar verse in chapter 2. 9, we see that the fulness dwells in Him bodily. None but One who is God could reveal God, and abiding in flesh here on earth, in mercy, in compassion, in suffering, as He laid His hand upon the leper, as He unstopped the deaf ears and opened the blind eyes, the Son of God has expressed by word and deed the very heart of God. The light of what God is like shone for every man. Alas, that
men should have seen and hated both the Son and the Father!

But He is also (verse 18) "the first-born from the dead," and in this title is THE GLORY OF RESURRECTION. Surely the most wonderful victory ever achieved was when the Prince of life, the Son of the living God, shattered the forces of death, led captivity captive, and tore the sceptre of the domain of death from the grasp of him who had so long possessed it, and to-day He stands in the glory of risen life, with the keys of hades and of death in His pierced hand. The absolute authority in the realm of death belongs to Christ. None enter that domain but at His word, and when He pleases. He can take out of it whom He will.

Then, lastly, we are brought to the top stone, verses 20-22—

THE GLORY OF RECONCILIATION.
The Godhead is working through the Son, in order to reconcile all things to itself. The great day for that has yet to dawn, when sin will be banished for ever from the universe of God, never again to dishonour His name throughout the history of eternity. God will be all in all, and the Lamb of God will have the glory of accomplishing it. Meanwhile the power of it is in evidence, in those already reconciled in the body of His flesh, through death, already joying in God, having received the reconciliation (Rom. 5. 11).

What was it that brought your soul into harmony with God? Was it not this, that like the man who was born blind, your eyes were opened to see the Son of God as the sent One of the Father? In this lies the secret of rejoicing in the Lord always, in this the power of eternal life, and by this great fact Christ will accomplish the reconciling of all things. For He is Head of His body, the church, and through His church He is going to reap the answer to His request of John 17. 23: "I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me." The glory of God that shines forth from the city, the bride, the Lamb's wife, is the witness that the Father sent the Son. The universe will see it, the world will behold it, the nations will walk in the light of it, the kings will bring their honour to it, heaven's hallelujahs will resound in praise of the marvel of marvels, that in the fulness of Divine love, "the Father sent the Son."

Blessed results must follow for those in whose hearts these glories of the Lord are enshrined. There will be the filling with the knowledge of God's will (verse 9); then fruit will be produced in the daily walk, and growth in the knowledge of God (verse 10); then in connection with the glorious power of the Head, there will follow strengthening unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness (verse 11); and lastly, worship will rise to the Father who has called and fitted us for such an inheritance (verse 12).

Is the question answered for you, "What is thy Beloved more than another beloved?" Have you learnt to know Him in these glories? If so, His name to you is above every name, He is the chiefest among ten thousand, yea, He is altogether lovely.

Ishmael was sent into the desert with a bottle, but the bottle dried up, and Ishmael was athirst: but we read of Isaac that he lived by the well Lahai-roi. . . . The saint does not drink of the stream far down in the valley, warmed by the world's sun, and mired by the world's sin, but he drinks at the well-head, where the current leaps up all cool and living from the great deep.

[C. H. S.]
SOME DISTINCTIONS OF THE SON OF MAN.

Notes of an Address in Edinburgh on Psalm 8, and other Scriptures.

We will now briefly look at some of the peculiar distinctions which belong to our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of man, and turn successively to various Scriptures which show development of teaching in relation to His glory in this character from Psalm 8 and onward. We have already had very helpfully set before us many glories that belong to Him in other characters.

The human race, a race of sinners since Adam fell, was subject to judgment and banishment from God, but the Son of man, as promised, came; and He, who was also the Son of God, settled upon the cross the stupendous question of sin. He harmonized all the marvellous attributes of God in regard to the blessing of men, and God was glorified in Him. Hence, when Judas had gone out into the night, He said, “Now is the Son of man glorified.” Yes, glorified in the very place where He glorified God, and God has, as a consequence, exalted the Son of man to the throne. God was glorified in Him at the cross; the Son of man is now glorified in God Himself in the highest pinnacle of glory!

But that One, now glorified, brought to us the revelation of God—He is the Revealer. And, then, on the other hand, He has redeemed us by His precious blood—He is the Redeemer. Not only are we redeemed from sin, but to the God whom He has revealed. He has set us thus in His holy presence as reconciled now, so that we can joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ by whom we have received the reconciliation.

Now let us think of Psalm 8. David, you remember, looked abroad at night, and as he considered the heaven, the moon and the stars that God had established, he raised this question in his mind before God—“What is man that Thou art mindful of him? and the Son of man that Thou visitest Him?” It is sometimes said in answer to that question—man is a sinner; he has dishonoured God, degraded His holy Name, and dragged His glory in the dust; thus showing up the awful state into which he had got. Now, while that is true, it is not the answer of Psalm 8., neither is it the answer of Hebrews 2. Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and set over the works of God’s hands is the answer.

This being first indicated in the 8th Psalm, we are there specially pointed to the beasts of the earth, the fowls of the air, and, what is a step further, the fish of the sea, as being under His dominion. Of course, the further statement that all things are put under His feet involves far more than that. Truly, all the earth was to come under His dominion as well as the cattle, the fowls, and the fish of the sea. Even when He came down on earth and a question was raised about paying the temple tax, He could command a fish and it obeyed Him (Matt. 17· 37). Dominion over the fish of the sea was not said by Daniel (2. 38) to be given to imperial Nebuchadnezzar!

But what did David know about the fish of the sea? He was accustomed to look after the sheep! That is how the Modernists and Higher Critics talk. Rather should they ask, what does David’s God know about them? Far more than the best of scientific scholars! He made them all, and He made David write those words, “The paths of the seas,” long centuries ago, and men
have only just found out that fish have their paths in the seas, just as we have ours on the land! God has set the Son of man over all. He has put everything under His feet.

This gives a general statement which is extended from (1) Psalm 8. to (2) Hebrews 2. 5-10, then to (3) Ephesians 1. 22, and to (4) 1 Corinthians 15. 27, 28. These extensions from the creature of the earth to the millennial redemption glory, and then to the heavenly and universal, also, finally, to the eternal, with the distinctive place of the Son, may be illustrated by picturing to ourselves an ivory box suitably crowned; this, when opened, discloses first a copper box, which may be taken to signify the earthly dominion of the Son of man, as brought before us in Psalm 8.

Now notice how the Spirit of God carries us on to something further in Hebrews 2. There it is said, He has not put under angels the administration of the next age, "the age to come," but under Man. We are told in the end of Hebrews 1. that angels are servants on behalf of the heirs of salvation in the present age. They are created a little higher in order than man; and we are told that Jesus was made a little inferior to them as Man, in view of redemption. But mark how afterwards angels are seen to be attendants upon man, for when the Son of man comes in His glory all the holy angels will come with Him. The redemption of Israel will then have come, and the millennial kingdom will then have been set up.

This brings us to a further box within the copper one, to a silver box signifying this, for all is placed under His feet. Not only the cattle, the fowls, and the fish, but His kingdom and dominion will be complete. He will be the "Prince of the kings of the earth."

From Him the law shall go forth as Administrator of the whole world. He shall "judge the world in righteousness," and what will He do? He will make men sing for very gladness! In Psalm 41. His enemies ask, "When shall He die, and His Name perish?" Hallelujah! The answer is given in Psalm 72., "His Name shall endure for ever: His Name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed . . . and blessed be His glorious Name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory: Amen, and Amen."

We must, however, go a step further. Within the silver box we discover a golden one, and, to arrive at the centre of all, that, too, must be afterwards opened. The Spirit of God carries us to heavenly heights in Ephesians 1., where again Psalm 8. is quoted. Our Lord Jesus Christ is there seen as raised again from among the dead by the surpassing greatness of the power of God, and set at His right hand in the heavenly places above every range of authority in the universe; all things being put beneath His feet in this age, as well as the coming one. To what heavenly majesty does this take us?

But now, let us notice a glorious fact. He is Head over all these things to the Assembly which is His body. Not only Head of the assembly, but Head over all this vast range of glory to the assembly. Do you often ponder this fact, that being saved, sealed by the Spirit and brought into the body of Christ, you are livingly linked up with the Man at the right hand of God, who is set over all? You are vitally united to Him, and to share with Him in the glory over which He is the Head. Yes, you are, through grace and power Divine, a member of His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

We come now to our last Scripture. We might imagine that we could not get beyond the golden glories just
spoken of! We opened the covering box of crowned ivory, also the copper and silver boxes; and now within the golden box we discover a resplendent diamond of surpassing beauty—the Person Himself, who is set over all! It says in 1 Corinthians 15. that there is but One in the vast universe who is not put under the Son of man. What? Is there then an exception to the completeness of His supremacy? Of necessity, “He is excepted, which did put all things under Him.” Who is that? The eternal God Himself! He is the only exception.

What a place for Man! But that Man first settled the great question of sin at the cross, and glorified God in so doing, when, as Son of man (which Adam, the first man, was not) He came to seek and to save. Though He suffered, and was spitefully entreated by the religious and political leaders of Israel, yet He spoke of the time when He would come in His kingdom in glory. It is striking that among the precious stones connected with the Assembly the diamond is not named (see Rev. 21. 19, 20). It is the first of minerals, the hardest and most beautiful, and is therefore reserved as a symbol in relation to Christ (see Exod. 28., etc.).

“His beauty shineth far above Our highest note of praise.”

For He who became Man is none other than THE SON. This is the Person in whom all centres.

We are told in 1 Corinthians 15. 24, that the end will come when He will give up the kingdom to Him who is God and Father, having brought everything into subjection unto Himself, and into order through His mediatorial work. There will not be a disturbing element then for ever and ever, blessed be God! Not a thought or motion contrary to Him who is holy, and who in His nature is love. God Himself shall be “all in all.” “ALL,” objectively and subjectively. “ALL,” transcendentally and responsively. The ever-blessed GOD Himself all to us, and in us all.

Finally, let us replace the boxes; but retaining the diamond, we place it upon the crown of the ivory box, which covers those of copper, and silver, and gold. His glory is set “ABOVE THE HEAVENS.” All things are put under Him! To this height of supreme majesty are we brought, and we find all centring in the Son, who became Man—the Son of man—now the Head of the vast universe of bliss, resplendent in His personal glory.

But now, mark! as we behold Him supreme in that heavenly splendour, having as Man upon earth taken the place of subjection to God (though still the Son), we see Him retaining that wonderful place eternally. In His life here He added, we may say, a fresh distinction to Himself by the things that He suffered, for He “learned” one thing in this world, as Hebrews 5. 8 tells us, “though He were Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered” (N. Tr.). We, too, necessarily suffer; but we learn much in and by the suffering. It is the school of moral instruction, the university where we study at the present time. But the Son, having as Man taken the lovely place of subjection to God, is seen as Head of the universe and yet a Man subject to God for eternity, retaining that distinction for ever and ever.

What a thought! But why subject? Why should the Head of that vast universe be in subjection? Because all under Him is now answering to the mind of God without one single thing to disturb, and God Himself—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is all in all. What could tell us the story of the devotedness of Christ like this? The story of the glory of His rich grace will be declared as no saint or angel could tell it, as we see Him there, subject to God for ever and ever. Eternal praise be to His great and holy Name!
MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.

Chapter 6. The deceived king, and the servant of the living God.

THE various phases of the times of the Gentiles, as set forth in the image that Nebuchadnezzar saw in the night vision, are seen in the power and splendour that are theirs according to the thought of God, and not in the decay into which some of them eventually fell. Belshazzar was a poor creature compared with Nebuchadnezzar; and though he became heir of the inheritance that was his grandfather's, and that, as we have seen, by the will of God, he is not said to be the head of gold. The first ruler seems to have been that: "Thou art this head of gold" (chap. 2. 38). Anyhow we see that dynasty, which is represented by the head of gold, set aside in the death of the King Belshazzar, and the kingdom taken by the Median Darius, a man far advanced toward the ordinary limit of human life. As regards the account we have of his doings, he does not seem to have been a man of evil disposition, or such a slave to the idolatry that characterized the Gentile nations, though far from possessing the forceful character of the head of gold. It could not be said of him: "Whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive." He seems to have been as truly bound by the laws of the kingdom as was the meanest of his subjects. He was not altogether an autocrat; hence it was not impossible for his lords to get the better of him, if he were not extremely watchful. He seems to have had some insight into the character of men, for he set Daniel above all the subordinate rulers in the kingdom, "and thought to set him over the whole realm."

This at once aroused the envy of the princes, and they set about to compass his ruin. But as far as the business of the kingdom was concerned their plotting was fruitless: "They could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error of fault found in him." He did the business of the king as under the eye of God, and therefore was he no eyeservant, but realizing that in all that he did he was serving the Lord, he did it from his heart, and did it well.

May we not take a lesson from this? A captive taken out from the midst of the flames that destroyed the house of God, and that reduced the best part of the beloved city to ashes, and brought in chains to a foreign land to be dealt with according to the humour of the monarch who held him captive, and yet faithfully serving the king that had done this evil, and now, after many years of captivity found serving his successor—what an example for the people of God in all ages, and in all circumstances!

In whatever circumstances we may find ourselves, if we are there through no fault of our own, we may rest assured that those are the best circumstances that we could be in for the glory of God, and for our own advancement in the knowledge of Himself; and in such circumstances we can always count upon Him for grace to sustain us in them, and to enable us to serve Him. We may not think our lot a favourable one for service in the interests of our Lord, but we could not be anywhere without His permission, and we may be confident it is just where He wants us. Paul might have supposed that a Roman prison was but a poor place for the exercise of his apostolic gift; but the service that he was enabled to
render to the saints of God in that prison has enlightened, encouraged, and nourished the people of the Lord for nigh two thousand years. John might have thought, when carried a prisoner to Patmos, that the hope of serving the Lord was now at an end; but from that lonely prison came The Revelation of Jesus Christ, that not only sets before us the history of that which professes Christ's name, from the hour of its fall until it becomes so nauseous to His palate that He will spue it out of His mouth, but also shows us the whole history of His dealings with this evil world until it all disappears in the judgment that He executes, and a new heaven and a new earth is brought in, in which righteousness shall have its everlasting dwelling-place.

If we could only realize the great fact that He has His people here for His own ends, and that we are here as His witnesses, to be here just as long as He desires, and in whatever position in life that in His infinite wisdom He considers best, be that master or slave, prisoners or free men, sickness or health, poverty or riches, there would be no dissatisfaction with our lot, no murmuring nor complaining, but, knowing that His way is best, we should go on with contentment and rest of heart.

There seems to have been many an up and down in the life of Daniel at the king's court. He is brought into a position of importance when something comes to pass in the life of the king of which his wise men have no solution; and then he becomes greatly honoured. But again he seems to be unknown until another similar circumstance arises, and once more the wise men are baffled regarding the interpretation. But every means is tried before he comes into mind, and then he appears as one comparatively unknown. One would have thought he would have been the first to be called in to meet the difficulty. In certain occasions he was indispensable, but he was not the kind of man that suited the godless court of the idolatrous Chaldean. He was not at home with the lords of Babylon, nor were they at home with him. He was no companion for such men. The living God, who was everything to Daniel, was utterly unknown by them. All that Daniel did was done with reference to Him, and all that they did was done with a view to their own selfish interests: "What concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" (2 Cor. 6. 15). Surely none at all. In connection with the affairs of the kingdom those satraps and presidents could not very well act apart from Daniel, for he was in high favour with the king; but when business was done, he, I can imagine, was done with them. He doubtless would have as his friends the godly among his own nation, but apart from them he would plough a lonely furrow. And this must be so in every dispensation: the friends of God and the friends of the world cannot go on together. You cannot mix oil and water.

In this chapter we have a faint fore-shadowing of the man who is spoken of in 2 Thess. 2. as "The man of sin" and "The son of perdition," who is to arise after the church has been called away. He is said to oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. This man will be the masterpiece of the devil. His coming, we are told, "is according to the working of Satan in all power and signs and wonders of falsehood, and in all deceit of unrighteousness to them that perish, because they have not received the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this reason God sends to them a working of error, that they should believe what is false, that they all might be judged who have not believed the truth, but have found pleasure in unrighteousness." (N. Tr.). Tested by the truth of God, they refuse it; tested by the lie of the devil, they receive it.
Men, even with the Bible in their hands, know very little of the evils that lie before them. They fancy that they are quite competent to take care of themselves, and they will have none of God's interference. They have done without Him in the past, they are doing very well without Him to-day, and they will let the future take care of itself. A few are not absolutely irreligious, but still may be found on the first day of the week at some so-called place of worship. But what do they hear when they get there? the Gospel, thank God, in some instances, but more often a political harangue—the Bible torn to pieces—the rights of men defended—creation queried—the fall of man ridiculed—the atonement blasphemed—accountability to God derided—evolution affirmed: and every other abomination of infidelity set forth by men who are as ignorant of the Word of the living God as they are of their nakedness in His presence. The truth they had no love for, and when the lie comes they will receive it with ready heart and mind.

But of all this departure from God and the Word of His grace we have been well warned, so that it cannot take us by surprise. Paul tells Timothy to “Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For 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” (2 Tim. 4. 2-4). But the greatest fable that ever existed, or is possible to exist, and for the reception of which christendom is to-day preparing itself, and under the power of which it shall fall, is that which shall be introduced by that lawless one, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thess. 2. 8).

Shadows of that coming evil are thrown upon the prophetic page in many places, and they are not wanting in this book of Daniel. In chapter 3, we get one phase of that terrible day depicted. When that day comes an image shall be set up of the revived Roman empire, and the king in Jerusalem, who shall be false prophet to the head of that empire, is the one who shall cause that image to be made; and he shall give breath to that image, so that the image shall speak, and cause those who do not worship it to be killed. This false prophet shall deceive those that dwell on the earth by reason of the signs and wonders that he shall do, even to that of calling down fire from heaven in the sight of men. And all shall worship the beast whose names have not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the slain Lamb.

In Scripture we have stated the great bald facts of the case without the political reasons that men may give for the introduction of such a state of affairs. Very plausible reasons, I have no doubt, men will be able to advance on behalf of all this, so that those who refuse to submit to such idolatrous practices will be considered, and that by sober-minded people, as stupid, obstinate, and unreasonable; and their extermination be regarded as well-merited punishment, or at least a political necessity. This certainly would be the judgment of all who recognized no higher power than that of the state.

Let no one imagine that in the days described in Revelation 13, every human being will have gone stark mad, and that there will be no sober judgment anywhere on earth. The safety and welfare of the community, the binding of the people together as one man in the defence, and for the advantage of the state, the subordination of individual conscience to the will of the majority, and in that case to the will of the rulers, and to all that they may feel free to introduce,
will have the tendency of deadening the conscience to the claims of God. It will be man arrogating to himself supreme authority, and professedly acting for the welfare of society, hence any opposition to the ways and means by which this good is to be brought about will appear as nothing but downright mulishness, requiring to be dealt with by a strong hand. It will be a repetition of the three Hebrews in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar when he would have compelled them to the practice of his idolatry; and the witnesses for God will have no more mercy shown to them in the day that is coming than they received at the hand of the Gentile monarch.

In Belshazzar's profanity we have foreshadowed another phase of the evil that shall be developed in the last days, and especially in the sphere of Christian profession, only in all this time of tribulation the true church will be with Christ in heaven. It is not only the persecution of all that refuse to worship the beast, but the beast's direct antagonism against God Himself. We read in chapter 7. that God, and not only God's witnesses, shall be the object of attack: "He shall speak great words against the Most High." He is characterized by blasphemy against God, as well as a determination to bring the saints of God down to the level of his idolatrous supporters.

We are not told what arguments those conspirators used to give a semblance of necessity for such a royal decree, as the one they desired Darius to establish and sign. However, the unsuspecting monarch falls an easy victim to their devilish plotting. It was a terrible position for any man to assume, and Darius did not previously seem to be greatly characterized by the pride or arrogance of his predecessors. But we must remember that in every man there is a desire to arrogate to himself Divine prerogatives, and therefore when put into a place of authority, with every one about him taking the lead in loading him with fulsome flattery, it is difficult to refrain from aping Deity, where an opportunity is furnished for so doing.

But the path of the servant in the presence of all this is exceedingly simple, though in appearance it may seem to be bristling with insuperable difficulties, appalling dangers, and even death itself. But this is just wherein the faithfulness of the Lord is proven by the trustful saint. Our Lord calls the attention of His friends to the only fear that should govern their lives, when He tells them not to fear Him who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell (Luke 12. 4, 5). In the presence of the most appalling circumstances that we may be called upon to face, we have only to go forward in the pathway of the will of God, as though there were no opposing forces marshalled against us, leaving Him to carry out His gracious will, well assured that whatever then takes place is from His own hand, and is always best.

Daniel, well knowing that the decree had gone forth, goes on as usual. His demeanour is not marked by insolent swagger on the one hand, nor by any nervous timidity on the other. He went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime. By his manner of life no one could have learned that such a statute existed. The matter was between God and Darius, and there he leaves it, as one that was in no way concerned about it. It could make no alteration in the ways of this servant of God; he did as he had done aforetime.

He could serve the king, and do all as though doing his work to God Himself. But the privilege of communion with God regarding His interests upon earth, and his prayer for the holy city, towards which his windows were opened, were not to be relinquished at the bidding of any
human being, however exalted he might be. In the favour of the king he might, if he set God at defiance, live his little earthly life in comparative happiness and questionable honour, but that would be poor compensation for the loss of the favour of Him whom he delighted to serve, and to whom both the king and himself were accountable. The enjoyment of the favour of God now, and the imperishable joys of eternity, were not to be bartered for a proud position at the court of this Median monarch; and therefore he wisely concludes that to love his life now would be to lose it, but to hate it now would be to keep it to life eternal (John 12. 25).

Well would it be with us were we always so definite in our decision for Christ! This present life has a powerful hold upon our souls; and the enmity of the world against the Son of God, of which we are very well aware, and which we fear to arouse, causes us many a difficulty regarding the line of conduct we on certain occasions should pursue, which we would not have were we more whole-hearted for Christ. Where the eye is single the whole body is full of light (Luke 11. 34), but where the eye is evil—has a cast in the direction of this garish world—all is darkness within, and the path of the Divine will is hidden from us. This is a sorrowful state to be in, but it is, I am persuaded, well known to both reader and writer. How sad it is to have to make such a confession!

Now those spies of the prince of darkness have found their opportunity. Their plot has worked magnificently! The foremost man in Babylon, the servant of the living God, the favourite of the king, is a law-breaker. He is numbered with the transgressors. No power on earth can save him. The king may weep in secret, but his tears serve but to manifest his own helplessness. He is powerless as is the meanest slave in his kingdom. The law of the Medes and Persians has been the undoing of him. He can now see through the villany of those unscrupulous men. By his own act he is bound hand and foot. The thirty days of his godhead has but begun when he finds himself a helpless slave in the merciless hands of knavish and unprincipled men, who delight to remind him of his impotence, and who have no sympathy with him in his miseries.

The sin of the king was great, and he must learn that, in the government of God, sin is sure to bring its own punishment upon the head of the guilty, whoever that guilty person may be. He may be angry with himself, angry with the laws, and doubly angry with those wretched men who had brought him into such a perplexing situation. But what avails it all? His anger, no more than his regrets, can put away his guilt, nor can it relieve him from the consequences of his evil act. Daniel must be given to the lions. This is the inflexible law of the Medes and Persians, this the law-abiding mind of the monarch gives assent to, this the whole body of the plotters insist upon: the king has to give way.

But his resource, and he has a resource, is not where we should expect such a man to have it. He says to Daniel: "Thy God whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee." The testimony that Daniel was, through the grace of God, privileged to render in the court of this monarch had borne fruit, and in connection with this sorrow that had fallen upon Darius the fruit is brought into evidence. He is assured that Daniel's God will not now abandon His faithful servant. Could we think that there was no element of faith in this man's confidence in the God of Daniel?

But the law must be vindicated. The degree of the king cannot be set aside, or altered in the least, even though it be the death of the most faithful servant of the state. By the king's own commandment Daniel is brought, and cast into the den of lions.
And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

And can we read all this without thinking of One who in a later day, and on account of His faithfulness to His Father and God, was numbered with the transgressors, and went down among lions (Psa. 57. 4; 22. 13), but who, when pierced through by the horns of the unicorns, was saved from the lion's mouth by the same power that delivered Daniel? Surely we have here a faint foreshadowing of our Saviour's night of sorrow, when He was delivered into the hands of sinners, and when the dark cloud of Divine judgment swathed itself about His cross of woe; and when, with never a comforter, and God-forsaken, He drank the bitter cup of wrath to the dregs, went down to the grave that was closed with a stone, and sealed with the signet of recognized and God-given authority.

We are not told what kind of a night Daniel had in the den. This we do not require to be told, for with the light of Divine favour in his soul, the angel of God standing guard upon the safety of his person, and the wild beasts of prey crouching at his feet, we can well imagine the volume of praise that would be poured forth from his heart, so truly satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord; and if for a time, as sleep passed over his wearied frame, his prayers and praises were silenced, it was only to awake again and find the angel of the Lord still on guard, the wild beasts still in the dust before him, and the den filled with the evidences of the presence and loving-kindness of God. It was surely a night never to be forgotten by this beloved servant of the Lord.

And what kind of a night was passed by his diabolic accusers? Of this we have no record. It may well have been a night given over to revelry and rejoicing. The hated witness of Jehovah was now a repast for the hungry lions: his day was over! The favourite of the king would no more be a constant irritation to them, as he had been. A night of great gladness it would indeed be to them.

But what about his royal master? In fasting, restlessness, and sleeplessness he passed the dark and weary hours. Accused by his conscience, wounded in his spirit, betrayed and humiliated by his trusted servants, trapped by his own hell-invented decree, and become murderer of the most important and best beloved minister in his kingdom, he tosses upon his bed in the most wretched condition imaginable, and by the first streak of day he is found at the mouth of the lions' den, crying with a most lamentable voice: "O, Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?" And Daniel: "O king, live for ever. My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before Him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt." What a glorious morning for the unhappy king! and what a morning of bewilderment, humiliation, and terror for Daniel's foes! They had travailed with iniquity, conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. They made a pit, and dug it, and fell into the ditch that they had made. Their mischief returned upon their own head, and their violent dealing came down upon their own pate (Psa. 7. 14-16). They fell easy victims to the rapacity of the hungry beasts of prey. How true it is that "He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (Job. 5. 13).

And does not this second decree of Darius give us good reason for hope that, like Nebuchadnezzar, he also was brought to the knowledge of the true God? He calls the whole earth to
witness his decree: “That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: FOR HE IS THE LIVING GOD, and steadfast for ever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth, and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in the earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.” His confession of Daniel’s God as the living God is marvellously encouraging. And this but shadows forth the day when the deliverance of Daniel’s people shall bring the nations to the knowledge of Jehovah (Ezek. 37. 21-28). Indeed, this will be the result of all the dealings of God with His earthly people, for yet the rejected Christ shall have the throne that is His by right, and His name in that day shall be excellent in all the earth. “His name shall endure for ever; His name shall be continued as long as the sun; and men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen, and Amen” (Psa. 72.).

All the petitions of the Son of Jesse shall then be fulfilled. He asked life, and got it, even length of days for ever and ever (Psa. 21. 4). He asked concerning His own, the men the Father gave Him out of this world (John 17.), and Him the Father hears always. And He shall yet ask concerning the world, and shall have the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Psa. 2.). Then shall He sit securely upon the throne of His glory—and “The prayers of David the Son of Jesse are ended.” Lord, hasten that glorious day!

UNDERSTANDING THINGS.

An Address given to Christian Students at King’s College, London.

“Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, and call understanding thy kinswoman.”—Proverbs 7. 4.

It is not an uncommon thing for the nouveaux riches to become ashamed of their poorer and less fortunate kinsmen. Some even go so far as to disown the relationship. It is a contemptible and unchristian thing to do, and against this very attitude, with respect to wisdom and understanding, we are warned in the verse that I have read.

The warning is not unnecessary, for some Christians seem almost to take pride in superficiality, and to treat understanding as an unwanted “poor relation.” Hence the injunction not to do this. We are to hail wisdom as our sister, and not be ashamed to claim relationship with wisdom in spiritual things.

To be without understanding is mulish, and we are bidden, “Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding” (Psa. 32. 9). Yet we have heard Christians join lustily in singing:

“I am not skilled to understand
What God hath willed, what God hath planned.”

Which is as if they sang: “I am just like a horse or a mule, though directly forbidden to be.”

Moreover, there is an apostolic injunction which is violated by those who sing, “I am not skilled to understand” (that is, if they feel that what they sing is really true): “In malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Cor. 14. 20).
If it were indeed a matter of skill or of scholarship, there would be a valid excuse for those of little ability and for those whose educational advantages have been limited. But, as we shall see, neither skill nor scholarship enter into the question. One may be a babe in these things, yet be rich in spiritual understanding.

The great Earl of Chatham once accompanied a Christian friend to hear a famous preacher of his day, Mr. Cecil, who on that occasion preached on the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. After the sermon, the great Statesman confessed that he could make neither head nor tail of it, and asked his companion if he thought that anyone present would understand it.

"Why, yes," his friend replied, "there were many plain, unlettered men and women, and some children too, who understood every word of it, and heard it with joy."

That we may be numbered among those who have this understanding, a heavenly anointing is given to us who belong to Christ, "an unction from the holy One" (1 John 2.20), the Holy Spirit, who is to us the key of all knowledge. It is when the Holy Spirit, dwelling in us, is grieved that we find ourselves lacking in understanding. Far from being a thing to avow with complacency, we should be heartily ashamed of ourselves if we have to say, "I am not skilful to understand."

Let me enumerate four things as to which we Christians should certainly have understanding.

1. Understanding as to the Scriptures (Acts 8.30). You will recall the arresting question with which the evangelist Philip hailed the Ethiopian officer of state. He was reading a chapter of Isaiah, and Philip asked him if he understood it. That—the understanding of it—was the important matter. The officer felt that he lacked the key that would open to him the meaning of the passage. This key the evangelist at once put into his hands when he "preached unto him JESUS."

To have the Lord Jesus in mind, and to read the Scriptures with reference to Him, remembering that He is the great subject of their testimony, is the way to understand them.

The mere reading of the Scriptures is not enough. They do us little good unless we understand, in some measure at least, what we read. Hence the emphasis laid on understanding in that great Psalm, the 119th, which is full of the importance of the Word of God from beginning to end:

"Make me to understand the way of Thy precepts" (verse 27).

"Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy law" (verse 34).

"Give me understanding, that I may learn Thy commandments" (verse 73).

"I have more understanding than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation" (verse 99).

"I understand more than the ancients, because I keep Thy precepts" (verse 100).

"Through Thy precepts I get understanding" (verse 104).

"I am Thy servant, give me understanding" (verse 125).

"Give me understanding and I shall live" (verse 144).

"Give me understanding according to Thy Word" (verse 169).

To give understanding, for the purpose of reading His Word aright, is a thing the Lord delights to do. We have the record of His doing so, when risen from the dead, to His peasant disciples. "Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24.45). And with them, as with the two on the Emmaus road, the secret of understanding the Scriptures was to find in them "the things concerning Himself" (verse 27).

In the Palace of Justice, at Rome, there is a certain saloon, the ceiling, walls and floor of which are covered with frescoes in a strange, grotesque
manner, giving the visitor no impression so vivid as that of utter lack of harmony. One seems to be standing in the midst of a bewildering mass of confusion. But on the floor of that saloon there is just one spot where, to one standing upon it, everything falls into place, and the artist’s conception stands out perfect in perspective and beauty. Does the Scripture appear lacking in harmony, just a confused mass of history, prophecy, doctrine and precept? It must do so, from every viewpoint but that of Christ as the One who is the subject matter of it all—of the Old Testament, as well as of the New.

2. Understanding as to the Times (1 Chron. 12. 32). The times, of course, in which the various generations of the human family have lived, continually vary. Even within the limits of an age, or dispensation, the character of the times changes. The days in which we live are not as those of our grandfathers, and God would not have us to be without understanding as to their character.

It is not a mere question of knowledge; it is a matter of applied knowledge, of which the verse in 1 Chron. 12. speaks. The men of Issachar referred to "had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought TO DO."

It seems that here we have a case in which we must reverse the old maxim, "An ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory." Substitute for "theory" understanding, and you have something, an ounce of which is worth a ton of practice without it. Practice is valueless if not guided by understanding. It is understanding that gives the right orientation to practice.

This principle was fully recognized by the Persian king who "said to the wise men, which knew the times . . . What shall we DO?" (Esther 1. 13, 15). Deeds were to take shape from the knowledge that dictated them.

If, then, we desire that our practice should be consonant with the will of God, we must be men who have "understanding of the times." This will save us from being tainted with the strange admixture of Judaism and Christianity, the relics of former times mingled with those of the present, that enters so largely into the texture of much of the religion of to-day.

This leads me to the third point:

3. Understanding as to the will of the Lord (Eph. 5. 17). Perhaps, without exploring the immediate context of this passage, we may turn back to the first chapter of the same epistle, where the will of God is spoken of in a very wonderful three-fold way:

The good pleasure of His will (verse 5).

The mystery of His will (verse 9).

The counsel of His own will (verse 11).

(a) "The good pleasure of His will" carries our thoughts on into eternity, when all that God has planned will be brought to fruition. It is His will not to have His home filled with glorious servants, such as the angels, but with those who stand in a nearer relationship, with sons, the chosen and beloved companions of Christ. In this God will eternally find His good pleasure. Oh, for a better understanding of this marvellous purpose!

(b) "The mystery of His will" does not take us so far, but leads our thoughts to the time of the coming kingdom, "the dispensation of the fulness of times," when everything in the universe will find its centre and sustenance in Christ. In times past God gave prominence to many men as His agents: to Adam, to Noah, to Abraham, to David, to Nebuchadnezzar, but each of them failed in connection with what was entrusted to them. All that was broken in their hands will be gathered up and committed to Christ, centralized, we may say, in Him. This is the great secret, the mystery of God's will.
The counsel of His own will brings our thoughts back to the present, when God is working, working according to the plan of His eternal designs. It is a source of strength and comfort to bear this in mind. There is a pattern, a design, that God has in view, and His work, however desultory it may sometimes appear to us to be, is directed to the completion of this pattern. Our everlasting blessing is to bear this in mind.

There is a pattern, a design, that God has in view, and His hand to-day is dexterously at work to bring it all to pass. Our destiny is indeed in wise and skilful hands.

4. We now come to the fourth subject as to which we are expected to have understanding: the heart and nature of God Himself. "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me" (Jer. 9:24). God is now fully revealed in the person of His Son, and this revelation is brought to us in the Gospel. Thereby we are instructed as to all that God is, and we are brought to know and understand Him. Truly this is something to glory in! What honour can for a moment compare with it? For an insect to become the valued, intelligent, and intimate friend of a philosopher would not be such a marvel. That, however, would be impossible, for no man could put his spirit into an insect. But God has given us His Spirit that we may understand and know Him. I am sure that none of us appreciate this honour as we should.

It now remains for us to seek an answer to a very obvious question: How may we become the possessor of the priceless boon of which we have been speaking? How may we achieve the secret of true understanding?

An incident from the Gospels will help us. In Mark 8:21 we are reminded of the painful inability to understand that marked even the closest associates of the Lord Jesus when He was here. "How is it that ye do not understand?" He asks, and one almost feels the throb of pained surprise in the question. The narrative that follows, that of the townsman taken to the country, seems to be put in the place that it occupies in the sacred story just to show us how understanding is to be obtained.

There is a blind man at Bethsaida. He lacks the power of sight, truly a picture of those who lack understanding. The Saviour takes him by the hand. That is the first step towards sight and understanding—to be taken in hand by the Lord. It calls for a definite act of submission on our part. We must put ourselves into His hands, and for ever renounce all confidence in our own skill or knowledge.

The first thing that the Lord Jesus did for this man whom He had taken by the hand was to lead him out of the town. Consider the significance of this. Bear in mind the truth of the old saying, "God made the country; man made the town." The "town" stands for what is of man—his works, his thoughts, his devices, his ambitions. Now to gain our spiritual sight, our understanding in Divine things, we have primarily to be led away from all this. We are naturally engrossed with the things of the "town," not necessarily bad things, but things connected with earth, in which God has no part. Someone has likened our souls to omnibuses which respond to every beckoning finger on the street.

To have real spiritual understanding we must resist this tendency. Do you say it is difficult? True; but the Lord can lead you in this way if you suffer Him to take you by the hand.

We observe next that the Lord Jesus spit on the blind man's eyes. What can be the significance of this extraordinary action? To spit upon a person is to belittle him and bring him into contempt (compare Numbers 12:14). And this is what the search for wisdom and understanding will entail for us. It will bring us no
honour among men. What we esteem they reckon to be foolishness. We shall be belittled in their eyes as those who turn from substantial things to pursue a will-o'-the-wisp. In saying unto wisdom, "Thou art my sister," and in calling understanding our kinswoman, we shall be incurring a reproach akin to that which the haughty mete out to those of their own social class that consort with persons of humbler position. Is it worth while? When we remember that the understanding that we seek is priceless, beyond the value of rubies, and that among desirable things it has no peer (Prov. 3. 15), we shall not be long in answering this question. And our answer will be an emphatic affirmative.

Follow the narrative of the blind man further. The Lord puts His hands on him, and he begins to see. The dim outline of things is commencing to dawn upon his eyes. A further laying on of those mighty hands, with an upward direction given to the restored power of vision, brings clear sight. We learn from this that the power of Christ (administered during His absence by His Holy Spirit) works in us, and gives us clear vision which at the first takes the form of uplook rather than outlook. We look up and behold with the opened eye a transcendent Object—Christ in glory. We have now reached the secret of all true understanding, for in Him* are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2. 3). To study Christ is to trace wisdom to its fountain-head, for in Him all the great thoughts of God are livingly set forth. And having Him thus before us as the Sum of all knowledge, our whole outlook, our manner of life (even in its minute details), and our actions will be affected thereby. Understanding and wisdom now direct our steps and become rule to us.

But there is ever present with us the tendency to lower our eyes from this transcendent Object and to fix them afresh on earthly things. So let us note that in the narrative the man, with his sight now restored, is warned against returning to the town (verse 26). Our aloofness from "the course of this age," and from the spirit of those things in which man is predominant, must be maintained. Otherwise we run the risk of having the tragedy of Samson re-enacted in our lives, losing the clearness of spiritual vision which once we had, and becoming the sport of those who once envied us for what we possessed.

We are conscious that we need help in the things of which we have been speaking. May we not help one another in a very real way by prayer? We may pray for one another as Paul did for Timothy: "The Lord give thee understanding in all things" (2 Tim. 2. 7), and as he did for the "saints and faithful brethren" at Colosse: "that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1. 9).

* The possibility of an alternative translation of this passage does not affect the truth that we are seeking to emphasize.

Rest, perfect rest, so calmly peaceful, still
As deep deep mountain pool unreached by wind,
Such is the portion of the souls that find
In Christ a hiding-place from every ill.

For, like unto the everlasting hills
That stand around His loved Jerusalem,
So God surrounds His own, and ever fills
With His own peace the soul that trusts in Him.

(H. Souter)
"THE REPROACH OF CHRIST." (P. COCKBURN)

The eyes of the whole civilized world have lately been turned to Egypt, that land of oppression, cruelty, and idolatry, fit type of Satan's own kingdom of darkness and death. What a commentary on the present state of the world-system, that men of culture and intellect should be found with feverish energy rifling and disturbing the musty relics of a buried past. Were it not better to leave such things in the oblivion to which the righteous judgment of a holy God has consigned them? "The land of Egypt shall not escape," says Daniel. Why stir up the muddy waters of a cesspool of iniquity? Will the treasurtes of Egypt make up for the loss of the Son of God? Will they bring back Jesus to a sinful world? Ah, no! the world will see the Saviour no more until it sees Him coming with His mighty angels, taking vengeance on them that know not God.

The world is still seeking "the treasures of Egypt," just as it did when Moses, the man of God, turned his back on them, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." Time has rolled on, but God still has a people here, and their lot is still one of affliction and reproach. Do we know anything of this beloved fellow-Christian? Do we know what it is to endure, "as seeing Him who is invisible"? Instead of burrowing in the earth for dead men's bones, are we seeking the things above where Christ sits at the right hand of God?

If we are to esteem the reproach of Christ as great riches, who shall appraise for us the value of the "things above"? What a blessed portion is ours! We are not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. The path before us leads not downward into the dark recesses of demon worship, but upwards to scenes of eternal glory—to the bright home of everlasting light and love.

"O Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait; The sky, not the grave, is our goal."

Have we in real earnest taken up the cross daily to follow that blessed One who had to say down here that reproach had broken His heart? Have we deliberately "refused," like Moses, to have any advantageous association with the kingdom of darkness—with man's day? While the poor world gropes its way in a "darkness which may be felt," may we know what it is to have the light of heaven as the dwelling-place of our souls, as it soon shall be the eternal home of our bodies also.

"Lord, Lord, Thy fair creation groans, The air, the earth, the sea, In unison with all our hearts, And calls aloud for Thee."

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Man's Responsibility.

I would like help on man's responsibility with regard to the Gospel. Will he appear at the judgment of the great white throne for not believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, and when there be judged for his sins? When the Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross was He there as the substitute for all mankind, or only for the elect? Please also explain 1 Cor. 15. 3; 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15; 1 Tim. 2. 6.—COATBRIDGE.

Men universally are responsible to hear the Word of God and believe it. The fact that they universally are fallen and perverted, and hence do not of themselves either hear or believe, does not absolve them from this responsibility.
The Gospel is to be preached “for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His name” (Rom. 1. 5).

Unsaved men will ultimately appear before the great white throne, and there be judged “out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (Rev. 20. 12). If they in their lifetime heard the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, they will doubtless be judged for not believing it, as a crowning sin amongst their other sins. If they had not heard, they could not be judged for not believing it. Scripture never states what is sometimes asserted, viz.,—that Christ has borne everybody’s sins except the sin of refusing the Gospel, and hence that in the day of judgment men will only be judged for rejecting Christ.

The death of the Lord Jesus had a double bearing. Firstly, Godward, as meeting the demands of His nature and His throne. It was a propitiatory sacrifice, and offered on behalf of all. Consequently thereupon there comes forth the Gospel offer of pardon to all.

Secondly, His death had a bearing manward, as to its practical result. Here, however, there is a very definite limit. “All that believe” are justified, and only all that believe. These can speak of Him as their Substitute. He was not substitute for all mankind, but only for all that believe. And as a matter of fact “all that believe” are “the elect.”

The explanation of the three Scriptures you name lies in the foregoing. In 1 Cor. 15. 3, it is “Christ died for our sins”; i.e., not everybody’s, but believers’, for substitution is in question.

In 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15, it is Christ “died for all” in the propitiatory aspect, and this proves that all were dead. But there is also the mention of “they which live” and these of course are the same persons exactly as “all that believe” or “the elect.”

In 1 Tim. 2. 6, it is again the propitiatory aspect which is before us. It is a question of God and men, and Christ as the Mediator between. and He “gave Himself a ransom for all.” i.e., all mankind, and hence it is that the testimony flows forth, and men are responsible to receive that testimony, and he who receives it “hath set to his seal that God is true.” He is a believer, and thus proves himself to us to be one of the elect.

“Three Days and Three Nights.”

Does Scripture support the common thought that the crucifixion of our Lord took place on a Friday? If so, will you please explain Matthew 12. 40.—SELLS, ARIZONA.

That the crucifixion of our Lord took place on Friday, can be shown from Scripture in the following way.

It is clear that it was on the day preceding the Sabbath, because the Jews did not wish the bodies to remain on the cross on the day following, because it was the Sabbath (John 19. 31).

Again, the women beholding where He was laid, prepared spices, etc., and rested the Sabbath day (Luke 23. 54–56).

The day following the day on which the passover was killed was a special Sabbath (Lev. 23. 7), on this occasion it coincided with the usual weekly Sabbath, for the next day was the first day of the week (Matt. 28. 1). We have now to ask, How then was our Lord “three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt 12. 40)?

The answer is that the expression is a Hebraism, that is, a Hebrew idiom expressed in Greek words, it would simply convey to Jewish ears the idea of 3 days. According to the Talmud, a day and night together make a ‘night-day,’ and any part of such a period is counted as a whole. Thus in our Lord’s case, the three ‘night-days’ consisted of three hours on Friday, the whole of Saturday, (the Sabbath) and the beginning of Sunday before dawn. Mark 8. 31 says “after three days” but it is evident that when the Jews quoted these words to Pilate, they understood them to mean on the third day, for they only asked for the sepulchre to be guarded until the third day (Matt. 27. 63, 64).
"BORN OF WATER AND OF THE SPIRIT."

Notes on the subject raised in the Correspondence page of the January issue of "Scripture Truth."

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (John 3:5).

A STATEMENT so momentous to every one of us as this is will be best understood by being considered in the setting in which it is given to us in the Word of God. All the words of our Lord Jesus Christ were fitly spoken and they shine in consequence as apples of gold in pictures of silver, and if we are to catch the full significance of them we must pay due regard to the circumstances in which He uttered them.

Naturally we should have thought the words more applicable to the sinful woman of chapter 4., for her case was so evidently bad that a new birth appeared to be her only hope, but instead, the best man in the most religious city on earth was chosen to be the hearer of this tremendous truth, and if it was proclaimed to the best, it is applicable to all. None is exempted from this solemn necessity who would enter God’s kingdom; whoever fails of this, whether Pharisee or sinner, must remain outside of it for ever, for there is no difference as to the nature of men between the best and the worst, however diverse may be their ways and it is the nature of man that is in question here. If this is understood the truth will grip with a greater power and we shall have a clearer sense of what “born of water” means.

We cannot question the sincerity of Nicodemus. In seeking that night interview with the Lord Jesus he acknowledged that things were not right. He probably had a keen sense of his own inability to live up to his own standard, and felt a need in his soul that all his religion had failed to touch, and, attracted by the works of the Lord, he hoped that He would at least be some help to him, and to the condition of things prevailing at the time, having in view the improvement of man as he was, on the assumption that he was capable of improvement. But the Lord anticipated all such conceit as that, and exploded every such notion by the astounding statement, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” That was not the statement of a mere teacher, as Nicodemus supposed the Lord to be, who was handing on a message with which he had been entrusted. It was the word of Him who had weighed every man in the balances and found all wanting, and who had said long before, “The end of all flesh is come before Me.”

If there had been one chord in man’s fallen nature that would or could have responded to God’s touch, He would out of that chord have developed eternal harmonies; if there had been any fibre in that which is born of the flesh that was untainted and holy, and subject to the will of God, there would have been in that fibre a basis of life which under Divine culture would have grown into a glorious kingdom for God, but there was none. There is no part of the flesh that is not flesh, and being flesh it is all corrupt. “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no
soundness in it; but wounds and bruises, and putrefying sores; they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1. 5, 6). And a stronger statement than that is made by the prophet Jeremiah, which shows us that the flesh is not only corrupt but incapable of cure. "Thus saith the Lord, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous. There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up; thou hast no healing medicines" (30. 12, 13). These things were said of the best the race of men could produce when tested under the best conditions, and they reveal the state of all. And if the language of the New Testament is less graphic, it is not less emphatic. It tells us that "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6. 63) and "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8. 7, 8).

We are endeavouring to find out the extent of the ruin in which sin has involved man, in order to understand what the Lord meant when He said, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The ruin is clearly and conclusively stated in these passages quoted from the Word of God. They show us that man in his sinful, fallen condition cannot and will not be subject to God, and so is, and must be, outside God's kingdom for ever unless he is born anew. We question not that there is an amiability, a generosity, a kindliness, and a certain nobility about many men, showing what man must have been when first he came from God's creative hand, made in His image and after His likeness, and before sin, with vandal malice, marred the work of God. But all that belongs to the sphere of his relationship with his fellows, and the best of that is spoiled by selfishness and sin, it does not enter into his relationship with God, and nothing can be right if a man is not right with God. At the very centre of the being of every man by nature SELF is enthroned, and his own will instead of God's controls him: the flesh, which is his nature as a sinner, is not obedient to the law of God, nor indeed can it be. He was made for God's glory, to be a vessel in which the good and perfect and acceptable will of God might be displayed to the universe, but having fallen, and being now a sinner by nature, God's will is irksome and hateful to him; it is his very nature to run counter to it, and he is not a subject in God's kingdom, but a rebel against it.

The nature of a thing cannot be changed. The Ethiopian cannot change his skin, nor the leopard his spots; men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles; a corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit and it cannot bring forth any other. So also is the flesh, and that which is born of it is flesh, and "the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, HATRED, VARIANCE, EMULATIONS, WRATH, STRIFE, heresies, ENVYINGS, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they that do these things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5. 19, 21).

Then, since this evil nature in man, that he inherits as a child of Adam, cannot be changed, a new birth is an evident necessity, if he is ever to be delivered from it, and take his place in God's kingdom in glad submission to God's will. He must have a new life and nature as diverse from the old life and nature as light is from darkness, but God alone can bring about this supernatural birth, He alone can impart a new life, and He can only do it in righteousness, and that involves the setting aside in judgment the old nature of self-will and disobedience, and of everything that would challenge His supremacy; and this brings us to the meaning of "born of water."
The first time that water is mentioned in Scripture is in Genesis 1., where the earth is shown to us, not in its pristine glory as created by God in the beginning, but a fallen earth, shrouded in darkness and wholly submerged by the great waters, a fitting figure of man in his fallen condition—ignorant of God and lying in moral and spiritual death; but the Spirit of God was there, brooding over and moving upon that scene of death. It is interesting and instructive to notice that the water and the Spirit are brought together in relation to the physical new birth of the earth, as they are in relation to the spiritual new birth of men. The former will help us to understand the latter.

What I want to emphasize in this connection is, that, whatever it was that had plunged the original creation into the state of chaos in which it appears in Genesis 1. 2, the waters of death and judgment had passed wholly upon it before the Spirit of God began anew, but when He did move, those very waters that had extinguished apparently all hope of life became by the Word of God a life-giving element, and they brought forth swarms of life (Gen. 1. 20). Out of death came life.

Coming to the flood of waters in Noah's day, I must lay stress upon the fact that it was here that God said, "The end of all flesh is come before Me." The incorrigibility of man in his natural condition is here declared, and this answers to John 3. However great God's long-suffering with man may be, this judgment has been passed upon him. The flood was the execution of that judgment upon that generation, and the actual removal of it from God's sight is typical of the great truth that we must all learn, and the sooner the better—that man in the flesh will not do for God, for he is not subject to the will of God, neither indeed can be; the judgment of death has passed upon him, all that he is as according to the flesh must pass out of God's sight for ever, for it cannot please Him. There must be a new beginning. "Ye must be born again."

The great thought in the water, then, is the setting aside of what man is by nature as a basis of blessing for him; it is the judgment of death on a man as being in the flesh. This I am persuaded must be recognized in John 3. 5. It is the end of a man, the end of all his hopes of evolving any good out of himself, but it is God's beginning. But how God can begin with blessing in connection with a man lying in moral and spiritual death, and under God's judgment—for "death [as the judgment of God upon what man is by nature] passed upon all men for that all have sinned"—can only be understood at the cross. From the riven side of the Son of God, hanging dead upon the cross, there flowed forth blood and WATER. And the only Gospel that tells us this is the Gospel which declares that a man must be born of water and the Spirit. The blood was for the expiation of sins, and has special reference to that which God's justice demanded because of our guilt. The water has a peculiar application to what we are by nature rather than by practice. It is death—not our actual death, but Christ's death for us—which has set God free to take us up for blessing, setting aside what we are by nature and giving us a new beginning and a new nature by the Spirit. By it the ground is cleared of what will not answer to God's will to make way for the new life and nature which is altogether of Himself.

But John 3. 5 does not bring to our notice what has been done for us, but what is done in us. It tells of the subjective work wrought by the Spirit of God in a man, without which the work done by the Son of God for him would be in vain, as far as he is concerned. And this brings us to the way it has been done. We read of the washing of WATER BY THE WORD (Eph. 5. 26). The truth that opens the eyes of a man to his true condition, and leads him to repentance and self-abhorrence, is the Word of God. It cleanses him morally from the old life, makes him turn from it with loathing.
Thus he is cleansed by the water. He has now God's thoughts about Himself and is well prepared to receive God's thoughts about Christ and to rest in Him as his only hope. "Now are ye clean," said the Lord to His disciples, "through the word which I have spoken unto you." He did not say, "through the blood I shall shed for you," for He was not speaking of their sins and justification, but of their sanctification for fruit-bearing, of a life and nature which was new to them, the life and nature of the true vine, clean and not corrupt, which was in them all through His Word. Elsewhere the Word of God is spoken of as the incorruptible seed, which liveth and abideth for ever, and in this character it carries with it all that Christ is and has done, but in John 3:5 it is the Word in the power it possesses to turn a man from what he is by nature to accept God's judgment upon what he is by nature, so that with repentance and self-judgment he turns to Christ. The Spirit works with and uses the Word as water to this end, and the man emerges from his native darkness and self-satisfaction into light, and faith in Christ. It is not the old nature that does this, not even the old nature changed, but a new nature the man has by the operation of the water and Spirit, for that which is born of the flesh is flesh and will always remain so until death brings it to an end, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that can never be destroyed. The water sets aside the old and the Spirit introduces the new. The water in the passage is not baptism, nevertheless when the truth of baptism is developed there is that in it which answers outwardly to what the passage teaches. Take, for instance, Romans 6:4, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." There is the disappearance of the old and the manifestation of new in figure.

We have indeed great need to consider these words of the Lord, and to be led into a fuller conception of their solemn and profound meaning.

THE PEARL.

Notes of an Address in Edinburgh on Matthew 13. 45, 46.

Wide indeed will be the extent of the glorious world kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ of which we have just been singing:—

"Outstretched His wide dominion,
O'er river, sea and shore,
Far as the eagle's pinion
Or dove's light wing can soar."

The passage we have read directs our attention, not exactly to the extent, but to that which may be spoken of as the very gem of that kingdom, and I am confident that as we reach in the understanding of our hearts, to what Christ will find for Himself in that great and glorious dominion, we shall better appreciate the results for God and man, flowing from the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Our attention has already been directed to Matt 13 and we have seen the work of Satan, mixing up and confusing good and evil and so bringing to pass the disorder only too evident in that which bears the name of the Church. No sadder or more appalling history has ever been written on this sin-stained earth than the history of "the Church," so-called. It has been written in the blood of God's saints, and the persecutions and martyrdoms enacted under the name of Christianity, have rivalled all that the pagan world inflicted upon those who named the name of Christ. But although in the land where our favoured lot is cast such things are no longer done, Satan is none the less active in a more subtle
The parable we have read likens the kingdom of heaven to a pearl of great price. A certain merchantman was seeking goodly pearls and discovered this one. It was not his as yet, but he saw its worth, its beauty, its perfection, and he desired to possess it. The parable brings before us the great thought of the Church as it existed in the eternal mind of God — its CONCEPTION.

In Eph. 3. 11 we read of something purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord — namely, to form that which would be so precious in the eyes of Christ, upon which He would set such value that, like the merchantman, He would consider it worth while to sell all that He had to buy it. The conception of the Church had not its beginning in the region of time, and in its fulfilment it belongs to eternity.

Then it is ever characterized by oneness in the Divine thought; it was one pearl of great price. There is something exceedingly beautiful and suggestive in the thought of a pearl. You may divide and separate treasure — a thousand pounds might be distributed amongst as many persons, but you could not so treat a pearl without spoiling it. One it is, and one it must remain, if it is to be of any value to its possessor. Then again, like the pearl, the church was only to be obtained from the depths. It had to be sought for and purchased. The conception was there, how was it to be brought to pass? Oh! the mystery of love. In those eternal ages it was that Christ loved the church, and for the superlative excellence He saw in it, for the glory that would redound to God by it through endless ages, He sold all that He had. He laid aside His glory, He took the bondman's form, He passed by the throne of David, He went down to death, even the death of the cross, and there in that hour of sorrow He purchased the right to bring into actuality, that which had been conceived in the Divine mind.

In Matt. 16. 16 the Lord uses another figure, in order to show what His death and resurrection would bring to pass in respect of the FOUNDATION on which He would build His church, against which the gates of hell should never prevail. I need scarcely say that Peter is not the rock; he is but a stone in the building; the rock is seen in his confession of Christ as the Son of the living God. Great importance attaches to this title. It involves that He the Son of God was triumphant over all the forces of evil and death. Evil had come to its head; Satan had done his worst in crucifying the Son of God. Death that never opened its prison house to any of its captives had claimed Him as its Victim, and for three days the Son of man was in the heart of the earth. But His resurrection changed everything, and in victorious power the Head of the new creation came forth, the holder of all power in heaven, on earth, and in the region of death. It was then that He commenced to build His church upon the one foundation of His glorious person, He to whom alone the title can apply that He is the Son of the living God.

Now let us consider what may be called the INAUGURATION (1 Cor. 12. 13). "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body." The church was inaugurated at Pentecost, and on that eventful day there was formed on earth by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, one body united to a Head in heaven. It was this which brought the church into actuality. Speaking of this baptism, the Apostle Peter said, that Christ being by the
right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, had shed forth this; He shed forth the Holy Ghost to form His church. It was like the precious ointment alluded to in Ps. 133. which being poured upon Aaron's head went down to the skirts of his garments. The anointing was upon the head in heaven, and in that anointing every member upon earth was involved; without distinction of Jew or Gentile, bond or free, all have been made to drink, to be common partakers in, one Spirit.

But is the maintaining of anything so precious to be left in human hands? No, its

CONTINUATION

is supported by the same "one Spirit." Alas! the saints of God have been scattered as sheep upon the mountains; nevertheless the fact abides under the eye of God, as surely as at the commencement that "there is one body." The church in its responsible position on earth has failed to continue in the goodness of God like the previous dispensations; but beneath all the confusion, that which was conceived in eternity, founded upon Christ victorious and inaugurated in the power of the Spirit, abides; it continues. Here is the resource for faith, for although the bond of peace has been broken, the unity of the Spirit is unchanged. Christendom is constantly trying to manufacture a unity out of the broken fragments, and giving up every precious truth in the process. Faith seeks not to make, but to recognize and abide in the unity which God has made, with all those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart, a single affection.

Eph. 4. describes how that from the Head in heaven there flows an

ADMINISTRATION

for the whole body. The gifts given, the ministry provided, are for the edifying of the body of Christ; and besides this, flowing from the Head, to and through each member is a supply of truth, of grace, of love, of power, and the direction of all this sufficiency is under the absolute control of the Head; its source is in heaven, not on earth. In the practical working of this, there is great danger of drawing from other sources, not individually holding the Head, and failing to recognize that in Him is our whole resource.

Eph. 4. also tells us that there is for the church one

DESTINATION.

There is one hope of our calling (verse 4). The Lord said to His disciples, "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in Me." Listen, "In My Father's house are many mansions," many abiding places, many circles of blessing, formed for the pleasure of the Father, of whom every family in heaven and on earth is named. The church has an altogether new place amongst them, created by the going of Christ to the Father: "I go to prepare a place for you." To be with Him, and like Him, in all the blessedness of sonship, this is the destination which will be reached at His coming (John 14, 3).

Just one point more as to the manifested result.

GLORIFICATION.

What is the purpose for which the Son of God came forth, to purchase, to build His church? and for what object is she called with this high and holy calling? First, that in the ages to come God may show forth the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2, 7). Through the church shall be understood by all intelligences what is the character of the grace of God. Through all the ages of ages glory will redound to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. An end far beyond our blessing, although it enhances it by the wealth of glory bestowed. Secondly, in the church shall be made known the perfections of Christ, He
will be "glorified in His saints and admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1. 10).

The church, which is His body, is the gem of the kingdom, the pearl of great price. It is for the completion of this church that God is waiting and working through the years. The kingdom cannot be brought into display without it, and so he bears in longsuffering with the sin of the world, with the terrible failure and sad history of the church in men's hands, with all the weakness and waywardness even of those who know His name, that He may bring to pass His masterpiece of grace and glory. Christ also will find in the church for which He sold all, the response of love, a bride adorned for her husband. At the same time shall she fill His kingdom with the light and knowledge of His glories, displayed in her who is the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.

DIRECTIONS FOR DIFFICULT DAYS.

(W. Bramwell Dick.)

Notes of an Address in Edinburgh on 2 Timothy 1. 6–14; 2. 7, 8, 15–19, 22; 3. 14–17; 4. 5–8.

As we hear the precious truth unfolded from time to time, and we are exhorted to maintain it, and also to practise it, I can understand the question arising in many minds, How is that to be done in a day such as the present?

We are undoubtedly living in the "perilous" or "difficult" times described in chapter 3. i of this epistle. Verses 2–4 indicate some of the characteristic features of such times, and these may be summed up under three heads, Lovers of Self—Lovers of Money—Lovers of Pleasures. We may well thank God that He has given us such a clear statement of what to expect, and such explicit direction as to our path in such circumstances.

The epistle is pathetic inasmuch as it was, I believe, the last one penned by Paul, and because he has therein to chronicle much failure in the church, and departure from the truth on the part of those who had heard the Gospel from his lips, and who composed assemblies of saints which he had been instrumental in forming. It is very beautiful to observe, however, that notwithstanding this the epistle has the clear, ringing note of victory from beginning to end. Happy in the ultimate triumph of the Lord Jesus Christ, and restful in the knowledge that the truth, unchanging and unchangeable, would be as effective in the last days as in the first days, he sought to encourage Timothy in his day, and ourselves in this day.

We may safely infer from chapter 1. 6–7 that Timothy, a young man, and Paul's son in the faith, was in danger of getting under the power of that which had already set in, and of becoming inactive. Hence the encouragement of this veteran servant of God to "stir up," or "rekindle," the gift of God which was in him, and the assurance that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear," or cowardice, "but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." Then comes the stirring call: "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord."

We read of not being ashamed of the Gospel, and I am sure every true Christian in this hall is proud of it. We hear of not being ashamed of Jesus, and though we do not find such an expression in Scripture, it is, I do not doubt, true of all here; but here it is "the testimony of our Lord" that is
in question. What is that? In the first place, let us say, it is nearly two thousand years old, and it is as really "the testimony of our Lord" now as it was at the beginning. That might not suit some of our learned friends who call for something that they style "up-to-date." "The testimony" is always up-to-date, and it is the so-called modernists who are hopelessly out-of-date.

Then let us recall how on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) the Apostle Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, concluded his remarkable address by saying: "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucied, both Lord and Christ" (verse 36). He called attention to the fact that God had promptly reversed the world's verdict.

The world rejected Him—God accepted Him.
The world crucified Him—God exalted Him.
The world gave Him the lowest place—God gave Him the highest place.
The world gave Him a crown of thorns—God gave Him the crown of glory.
The world gave Him a mock sceptre—God has given Him the sceptre of the universe.

There sits upon the throne of God the One whom God has made both Lord and Christ. He is there as the great Administrator of all the counsels and purposes of God. Now see the effect of this declaration. The people "were pricked in their heart and said, What shall we do?" (verse 37) Peter replied: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (verse 38). Then and there three thousand souls left the ranks of those who had refused God's Christ, enrolled themselves under His banner, bowed to His lordship, submitted to His authority, and, by baptism, avowed their separation from the world. Thus was "the testimony of our Lord" established, and thus it abides now.

In 2 Tim. 1. 8 the inspired penman adds the significant words: "Nor of me His prisoner." There is reproach connected with "the testimony," and it involves suffering. Some person may say, "I am not prepared for that, I fear I could not stand the suffering." Quite true, nor could any one in himself; but there is placed at our disposal THE POWER OF GOD (verse 8) and there is no lack of that; then our feet are set on the bed-rock of THE PURPOSE OF GOD (verse 9) and nothing can alter that; and further we are connected with One who has laid low every enemy (verse 10), and before whom no opposing force can stand, so that we are mightily encouraged.

Chapter 2. is no less inspiring, and shows how in every way the Lord would lead us on. Perhaps you will allow me to quote verse 8 as it is found in a very excellent translation:

"Remember Jesus Christ raised from among the dead, of the seed of David, according to my glad tidings." We are called upon to remember, not so much the fact of His being raised, as the Person who was raised. In eating the Lord's supper we remember a Christ who died; for this combat we remember a living Christ who has triumphed over death. It would seem as if here the apostle unfurled the banner of the Truth, and emblazoned thereon we see, "REMEMBER JESUS CHRIST, RISEN!"

Sometimes we may get despondent and become overwhelmed by departure, declension, difficulties, and then we "Remember Jesus Christ," and every thing becomes different. He has vanquished every foe; He is in the place of triumph and of glory; every promise has been established in Him, and will be carried out by Him. In this confidence we will seek to show ourselves
"approved unto God" (verse 15), we will shun those who "overthrow the faith of some" (verse 18), and we will be kept in peace, knowing that "the foundation of God standeth sure" (verse 19). We have passed through extraordinary times during the past decade. Thrones have been overthrown, and everything of this world has been shaken, but "the foundation of God standeth sure." Terrific attacks have been made upon the truth. Its enemies try to force an issue by claiming victory, but the "foundation of God standeth sure," and no power on earth or in hell can ever move it.

That which our blessed Lord is entitled to expect from us is loyalty to Himself, and to His Word. This means that, on the one hand, we will "depart from iniquity" (verse 19) and, on the other hand, we shall seek to "follow righteousness, faith, charity [love], peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (verse 22). The Christian who seeks to be true to the Lord will not have to plough a lonely furrow. He will find those who have a similar desire. When Elijah, after his splendid triumph for Jehovah, had a fit of depression, he said, "I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (I Kings 19. 10). He might have added under his breath, "and what will happen to the testimony then?" With what astonishment he must have listened to Jehovah's reply: "Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (I Kings 19. 18). "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and if we are seeking to be found in the path of His will, we shall have His approval and the company of those who wish to follow Him.

We come now to the close of chapter 3. "Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned" (verse 14). I am told that in the last lap of the race, a runner is strongly tempted to drop out. How the enemy works to induce us to drop out in what seems like the last lap of the Christian race, and the final stage of the Christian warfare. How good of our blessed Lord thus to encourage us to CONTINUE.

Some one may ask: "Have we not got to adapt ourselves, and our thoughts, to the altered circumstances, and the so-called scholarship of the day?" No. We must not lower the standard one iota. It has been related of a young officer, that in some war he saw an opportunity to capture a position. He seized the standard, took a few men, rushed forward, and succeeded in planting the standard on the spot that had been held by the enemy. His commanding officer, with more regard for red tape than appreciation of valour, sent an order to bring back the standard; but the young officer, greatly daring, sent reply: "Bring your men up to the standard, I cannot bring the standard down to the men." So in our case there can be no retreat, no compromise, no concession to the enemy, no matter in what garb he may clothe himself. Timothy has reminded us of how, when, and from whom he had learned the Holy Scriptures. "From a child" he had known them, instructed by a pious mother and a devoted grandmother.

Here is encouragement for Christian parents and Sunday School teachers. Store the minds of the young with the Holy Scriptures in their simplicity and purity, inculcate reverence for, and unquestioning belief in, the Word of God. Do this knowing that "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (verse 16). The story of creation? Yes. The story of the Fall? Yes. The story of the flood? Yes. The story of Jonah? Yes "ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God." Thank God the Scriptures stand to-day, and will stand, because "the Word of the Lord endureth for ever" (I Pet. 7. 25).

"His Truth at all times firmly stood, 
And shall from age to age endure."
Just a few words now on the closing chapter. Timothy was exhorted in his day, and we are exhorted in this day, to "PREACH THE WORD" (verse 2), and in verse 5 to "watch in all things" and to "do the work of an evangelist." Then we listen to Paul's closing words, and how heartening these are. We venture to quote from the translation already referred to: "I am already being poured out, and the time of my release is come. I have combated the good combat, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth the crown of righteousness is laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will render to me in that day; but not only to me, but also to all who love His appearing" (verses 6–8). He, so to speak, says, "So far as I am concerned, I am about to lay aside the sword, and in His presence to await 'that day' when from His hand I shall receive 'The crown of righteousness.'" That crown was not for Paul alone, but it is also for "all who love His appearing."

My dear friends, it is for the appearing of our blessed Lord that we wait. We feel, do we not—that it is very near, and I am sure I express the desire of every heart when I say, "May we be kept true to Him till He come for His Name's sake."

"WHEREIN I SUFFER TROUBLE." (C. N. Snow.)

TROUBLE is upon every hand. Sometimes it descends upon men in the righteous government of God as the fruit of, and retribution for, their evil. Again, in the ways of God it is general and universal in a world where sin holds sway. Then for the saint of God trouble also. The thief, it is true, went straight to Paradise, but this was the exception; the rule is not so. Good it is when as with Paul the trouble is "for Jesus' sake" in a life wholly devoted to the Lord. The apostle's own words were these:—

"Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer even unto bonds; but the Word of God is not bound. Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory. 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: if we deny Him, He also will deny us: if we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot deny Himself" (2 Tim. 2. 8–13).

When Israel (Numbers 13. and 14.) had "despised the pleasant land," they were told they were to reap the consequences of so doing; that their fears should be all fulfilled, that according to the forty days in which the spies had searched the good land (which it certainly was), for forty years they should bear their iniquities; and "Ye shall know my breach of promise" (14. 34). They should there, in the wilderness, be consumed and die, Caleb and Joshua alone excepted.

Hearing this, "the people mourned greatly" (verse 39). But they will escape the consequences of their unbelief! Early in the morning they are up and "into the top of the mountain" (verse 40): "Lo, we be here, and will go up into the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you;
that ye be not smitten before your enemies" (verses 40-42). And so it was: they presumed, and were smitten and "discomfited even unto Hormah." Let each read the passage of Holy Writ, which surely is able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

In this case we clearly see the working of trouble as a direct governmental consequence of sin, and it may help us to understand better the apostle's "Wherein I suffer trouble." He connected together Jesus Christ of the seed of David "raised from the dead according to my gospel" — and "trouble." Here is indeed what has the appearance of anomaly, but it is a fact.

Hymenæus and Philetus may have thought they knew all about the resurrection, but they evidently did not know about the trouble. The holy salt of verses 10-12 was not found in them. "I endure"; "If we be dead"; "If we suffer." Their lives apparently soared in lofty comfort in the calm serenity of pseudo-Christian ethics. But it is "JESUS CHRIST RAISED FROM THE DEAD"; and the only fitting complement to that word, "WHEREIN I SUFFER TROUBLE." Somehow, these two complementary statements had become divorced from one another; and what had they in place thereof? "Profane and vain babblings... ungodliness... their word will eat as doth a canker... who concerning the truth have erred... and overthrow the faith of some." This is the background and setting of the apostle's statement that "The foundation of God standeth sure."

His soul was "upright" (cf. Hab. 2. 4). He could not go so fast as his fleet-footed contemporaries. His view was lofty—incomparably more so than theirs; but, strange to say, while their circumstances found peace and plenty, he found trouble; and may we not say accurately, plenty of it?

What was wrong with Hymenæus and Philetus and the rest of their easy-going followers? "Iniquity" is what the apostle plainly stigmatises it as; and at the same time he casts the soul in the presence of these things upon the sovereignty of God: "The Lord knoweth them that are His," binding also upon us the solemn obligation to "depart from iniquity."

Have we a proper sense of the evil of attempting to make Christianity an easy-going religion, of ethics perhaps, but mainly of philosophic speculation? Have we regarded the severance of the faith of a risen Christ from the path of trouble, allowed by God in His holy ways, with sufficient seriousness?

Still the foundation of God abides! In Numbers 14. we read, "Nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp." And in chapter 15., after the failure is manifested, Jehovah encourages Israel to persevere, giving them ordinances to be observed when they came into the land of their habitations (verse 2).

What, then, is the apostle's path? "Therefore," says he, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." "He that believeth shall not make haste."

Trouble did not move his heart, nor shake his faith; he "knew whom he had believed"; and with steadfast heart and firm footstep, rejoicing in the Lord as ever, he, like Caleb and Joshua, pursued to the finish his course; and by his steadiness thus in suffering, secured the deliverance and blessing of many a weaker-backed brother than himself. Let us be his imitators.
"IN ROMANS 7."

"IN Romans 7." These words have been used to describe briefly the condition of bondage in which many sincere souls who love the Lord Jesus are found.

They have believed on Him through grace, and perhaps know that their sins are forgiven them "for His Name's sake." But they realize that they are not what they ought to be, and that they are not what they hoped to be after they were converted.

Earnestly they have tried to do what is right, but they have broken down time after time. They scarcely know what to think, and are afraid, it may be, that they are not truly converted. They long to keep the law of God and to be holy, but they do not accomplish this. Failure succeeds failure until they are almost ready to give up in despair, being hopeless of ever reaching the end they have set before them. Their desires are right but their doings are wrong, so while they would not give up Christ for anything yet they cannot understand where they are before God. Theirs is A GREAT DISTRESS indeed.

Now what is the cause of their trouble? Is there any explanation which can be offered to account for their sad condition? Thanks be to God there is. And, as we shall see, it is He Himself who has provided a way of escape.

A brief consideration of the passage referred to may be helpful to some of those in this spiritual bondage, and may be used by the Spirit of God to give them light.

Will you please read Romans 7.—the whole chapter—and the first four verses of Romans 8., before going further with this paper?

The tunnel is a dark one, but it has its end in glorious day. The experience is bitter but the knowledge gained is beneficial. And, moreover, it is necessary to pass through the experience before abiding rest and fruitfulness are reached, for no one gets rid of the power of the flesh and of bondage until he knows what the evil of the flesh and the pains of the bondage are.

Now it must be evident to every thoughtful believer who is passing through the tunnel that he has part in A GREAT DISASTER which has occurred in man's history. It cannot be that man is as he was made, for he was made "very good" by the hand of a faithful Creator. No! he has fallen from his first estate. He is not "upright" as he was created. Every man to-day is part of a ruined race. Our first parent's sin has left an awful entail of evil, and we were born with a bias against God and against that which is of Him. And nothing we have done or can do can alter the character of that evil principle "the flesh," "sin in the flesh," which we find within us. More and more we shall discover that it is an incurable evil utterly and unchangeably contrary to God.

Of it, the Lord Jesus said, "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6. 63). Chain it or train it as we will it breaks out into action again, like "Legion," of Mark 5. 4, who could not be bound or tamed.

The result of all the painful and grievous experience of the soul "in Romans 7," is that he finds that he cannot please God, he is "sold under sin." The law which is holy, and just, and good, as he recognizes, says, "Thou shalt not lust." It prohibits the working of the evil within the man, but it stirs up that evil by the very
prohibition. And then the sin within manifests itself openly, and is shown to be “exceeding sinful.” Like a man in a morass, as it has been said, the more he plunges about the lower he sinks. So with the believer in this condition the more he struggles the worse is the plight in which he finds himself, until he is brought to say, “I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Romans 7. 18).

“No good thing.” Once he stood for his own uprightness and excellency, as Job who clung so long to his own righteousness and would not let it go; but who, in the presence of the holiness of God, cried, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42. 6).

“No good thing.” The flesh is hopelessly evil in its nature, and nothing good can be produced from the corrupt tree.

Severe is the lesson but all-important. God has “condemned sin in the flesh,” and the believer has to be brought to condemn it too, and thus to say “Amen” to what God has done in the judgment of the evil.

Then

A GREAT DISCOVERY

is made, which is to have a wonderful effect upon his spiritual advance. The troubled soul learns that he himself is distinct from the evil within him (5. 20). He learns that he has a new nature which loves the good and which hates the evil, while “the flesh” within him hates the good and loves the evil. But he is on the side of the good though the evil is too strong for him. He sees that it is no more he that does the wrong but sin that dwelleth in him.

This is a great step forward. But, alas! helpful as it is, this discovery is accompanied by the bitterness of knowing that he has no means of releasing himself from the horrible bondage. All his earnest efforts are in vain, and at last he gives up in despair, crying, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

He is like the prisoner of old who was chained to another prisoner, when his partner in trouble died. He was bound to the corrupt and corrupting corpse. He could not escape from it, it was ever with him, hideous and loathsome. If he were to be set free another must liberate him.

So it is that the cry is made, “Who shall deliver me?” It is not now, “what must I do?” He has found that he is powerless. Another must succour him.

Then out of the depths of his deep distress he sees

A GREAT DELIVERER.

God, Himself, has intervened in His power on his behalf, and he exclaims, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (7. 25). He sees that he is “in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8. 1). Though in “the flesh” there is still no good thing, yet for him there is no condemnation as he is before God in Christ Jesus.

How has it come about? God has sent His own Son to become a sin offering at the cross. In that offering when Christ was “made sin” God condemned sin in the flesh.” He, then, is not looking for any improvement in it, He has condemned it utterly, He has judged it root and branch. But Christ has died and the believer has died with Him, has died from under the dominion of sin and the claims of the law. Now Christ lives again beyond the death and judgment for sin, and the believer is alive in Him. And he has become “dead to the law by the body of Christ” by Christ having died, in order that he “should be married to Another, even to Him who is raised from the dead,” that he “should bring forth fruit unto God” (7. 4). We are dead with Christ and risen with Christ. He is our life, we live in Him. He is our new husband (see verse 2), our new Object and our new power by the Holy Spirit. “The law of the
Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death” (8. 2).

The gloom and the tunnel are past, the gladness and triumph are reached. Blessed, indeed, is this Christian liberty.

**MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.**

**Chapter 7. The Four Beasts.**

**IN** the dreams and doings of those three Gentile kings, is brought to light that which would characterize the whole times of the Gentiles, and the way in which the faithful witnesses of God would be tried and tested by the idolatry, profanity, and blasphemy of those whom God had raised up into the throne of the world, and also the ability of God to deal with those crowned potsherds of the earth, and to deliver His afflicted servants, when His ways with the various self-willed monarchs have been accomplished, and His beloved people have learned their lesson.

And a record is made of all these doings for the encouragement, not only of our poor faithless and timid hearts, when we might find ourselves in similar circumstances, but also for the enlightenment and confidence of those who shall be similarly tried, after the present dispensation has passed, and the church of God is no longer here. Then shall the descendants of those very people, who found themselves under the godless domination of Nebuchadnezzar, find themselves under the authority of a more idolatrous and blood-thirsty autocrat than was this vain-glorious head of gold. Such will require all the consolations of God, as recorded in this book, and all other books of holy Scripture; and I have no doubt they will, by the Spirit of God, be turned to these writings. Meanwhile are our hearts encouraged and strengthened, as we witness the moral courage and unconquerable determination of those Hebrew captives in a strange land, and under the authority of one who had absolute power over life, and everything that was theirs, except their immortal souls.

And when we witness the spiritual vigour with which those feeble few stood in the path of these crowned vessels of self-will, and how utterly gone from their hearts was the fear of anything they could inflict upon sensitive flesh, are we not ashamed of ourselves that shrink from an evil word or a scornful look?

With all our hearts we can, and I trust do, thank God for the peace and the privileges we enjoy in this favoured land; but we must remember that the natural, fertile, and fruitful soil of Christian life is in the sphere of this world's enmity, and in suffering for Christ. Just as faith is the gift of God to us, so is also suffering for Christ (Phil. i. 29). May we ever do our best to live at peace with all men, but may we, along with this, esteem it an immense privilege, if through grace it be granted to us, to suffer a little for His sake.

It is only in the first six chapters that we have recorded the dealings of God with those Gentile monarchs, and the way in which He speaks to them through His witnesses. Nebuchadnezzar is apprised of the passing away of the kingdom given to Him by the God of heaven; and in his seven years' madness is intimated the atheistical character of governments during the time of Gentile rule. He himself, under the mighty hand of God, becomes truly humbled, and learns his lesson: “That the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to
whomsoever He will." The profane and presumptuous Belshazzar, detected in the midst of his accursed revelries, falls upon the sword of the victorious Mede and dies without mercy. Darius, who was entrapped by his wicked advisers, seems to have learned that the God of Daniel is "The living God," while those who sought to destroy the servant of the Lord die like Belshazzar, in their sins and without mercy.

In all these things we may learn what a wretched creature man is without the knowledge of God; and how utterly foolish and presumptuous to pit his finite wisdom and strength against His, whose wisdom and power are infinite. And the folly of this shall still more be seen when the work of God is ended, when His rest has come, and we have entered into it. How fully shall then be manifested how infinitely superior He has shown Himself to be, and that throughout the whole history of the fallen creature, to all the puny efforts that have been made by the enemy to circumvent His plans! When all is over both friend and foe shall have learned that the creature, however powerful he may seem, is nothing but a creature, and that God is God.

Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, Darius, have all passed away, and their glory and greatness have disappeared with them. They appear for a little moment before our mental vision, not that we might learn something about them that could not be found in others of the race of Adam, but that we might see the shadows of the events that shall come to pass immediately before and at the appearing of Christ, when He shall come to judge this world in righteousness; and that seeing those shadows we might learn to keep ourselves apart from this present course of things, and that our confidence in God might be greatly increased. Nothing that transpires in the whole creation disturbs the serenity of His presence, who dwells in light unapproachable, and nothing can disturb the peace of him who commits the keeping of his soul to God.

If anything could have disturbed the eternal tranquillity of that holy sphere in which He dwells, it would have been the conceit, presumption, and wicked daring of Nebuchadnezzar, whom He had raised to such an eminence of earthly splendour, and of those who followed him. The victory He had allowed Nebuchadnezzar to gain over Jerusalem was, in the estimation of that monarch, nothing but an indication of his own military skill, and the superiority of the god he worshipped, ever the God of Israel. Therefore the vessels of the house of the living God must be laid at the feet of the god who had helped him in his wars.

And in the presence of this blasphemous affront the living God is absolutely quiescent. No angry lightnings shoot forth their fiery arrows. No earthquake threatens the destruction of throne and city. Everything goes on as usual. The tranquillity of heaven is undisturbed. God sits above the waterflood which foams at His feet, and when He is pleased He can bring its raging to an end. He well knows how to handle His own creation, and how to humble the pride of His creatures, and He can well afford to wait His own time, so that His purposes may be accomplished, while His impatient people may be murmuring against His inactivities and seeming indifference regarding their destiny, so that they may be ready to cry out: "Carest Thou not that we perish?"

The provocation that He receives from the rod wherewith He chastises His wayward people, though He cannot view it with anything but abhorrence, cannot hasten by one moment the judgment by which He will avenge the insult. What a God He is with whom we have to do, and who has made Himself fully known to us in His Son Jesus!

From this chapter until the end of the book, the communications of which
we have a record, are made to Daniel himself, not by means of the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, of which he became interpreter, nor foreshadowed by the persecutions to which he and his three friends were subjected. The dreams of the first king set before us the times of the Gentiles, portrayed in the four kingdoms that represented those times under the eye of God. And one can very well understand the uneasiness that must have filled the mind of Nebuchadnezzar when he contemplated that "Great Babylon" falling into other hands than those of his descendants. But the exercise of soul produced by the communications of the Lord is often of very short duration. After being made aware of the fleeting character of all human glory, he is found wallowing in his wretched idolatry worse than ever.

The kings and rulers of the various kingdoms in the sphere of Christian profession have an open Bible in their hands, that tells them of the sin of this world in the rejection and murder of the Son of God; of the world as now under judgment, and of the appointed day in which that judgment shall be executed; of the Gospel which is God's way of delivering souls out from this world, and from the impending judgment; of the great fact that believers are a heavenly people, and not of this world any more than Christ is of it; of the fact that friendship with this world constitutes one God's enemy; and though all this is brought continually to the notice of the earthly authorities, how quickly does it pass away from heart and memory! Not a vestige of it seems to remain, except the shadow of a fear that darkens to an extent the joys of life. This was so with the Gentile monarch, it was so with the Roman governor, Felix (Acts 24. 25), and the tendency with every human being is to slip away from the revelation of God. This we should lay to heart, and seek grace from God that we may be able to hold fast His word.

In the great image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream the four kingdoms are presented according to the splendour that characterized each of them, distinct deterioration in grandeur and glory is manifested from head to feet, except that in the last mentioned not splendour but strength is attributed to it. But the first, or head of gold, is directly set up by God, while the others take the kingdom by right of conquest.

But in this chapter they are viewed according to their own true origin, nature, and propensity. They are wild beasts. They have no living link with God. They are without any intelligent relationship with Him. They arise out of the tumultuous agitation of the population of the world, and that agitation the work of the prince of the power of the air. The four winds of heaven, we are told, strove upon the great sea, and out of that storm-tossed waste of lawlessness arise four beasts different one from the other; all beasts, the various characteristics of which are well known to us, though with endowments not natural to the beast itself.

I do not doubt there is a certain element of truth in the devil's assertion, that the kingdoms of the world are at his disposal, and that to whomsoever he will he gives power and kingship. Our Lord does not dispute his audacious claim, but He will have nothing from the devil. Power and glory He will have from the Father, but from no one else. That the devil is a powerful being, and that he can give power to others, we see from Scripture. I need scarcely say that God does not give power to any creature to do evil, or to use it just as he pleases. Satan has not one atom of power but what God has given him, neither has any other creature; but that power is to be used in the service of God who gave it. The adversary can do nothing except by the permission of the Lord, and only that His wise purposes may be carried out with regard to individuals or nations is this permission given. There-
before must the thought of the heart be manifested in the day of judgment, for one might have in his heart to serve God, and might be hindered by the devil; another might be on his way to do evil, and God might turn him away from his object. To build a house for Jehovah was a good thought of David, and he is commended for it; but he was not allowed to carry out his thought. Solomon was the man chosen for that work. Sennacherib, King of Assyria, and his servant Rab-shakeh thought to work evil against Jerusalem, but the Lord turned both of them back by the way which they had come, and the king comes to his end as he was begun in worshipping his god, being slain by his two sons (2 Kings 18. and 19.).

The liberty granted to Satan shall soon be brought to an end. At the present time, for the accomplishment of the all-wise purposes of God, his sphere of action is a wide one, and he uses it with all the craft and subtlety with which he is endowed, and his wisdom seems to be beyond that of any other creature. But his wisdom became his folly when he matched his creature might with his omnipotent Creator. When permitted of God he can raise up tribulation for the saints, and bring them into deep waters, but beyond a certain limit he cannot go. And just because the saint knows that power belongs to God, and that no adverse power can do anything but contribute to the carrying out of the mind and thought of God, he can view all the evil that crosses his path as coming directly from the hand of God, leaving Satan out of his reckoning altogether. How good it is to be in the hand of One who is infinite in wisdom and might, and to realize that He is our Father, and that He loves us with a love that is both boundless and eternal!

It is not difficult to see that the four beasts that come up out of the sea are the four kingdoms that are set forth in the image of gold, silver, brass, and iron. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. The kingdom embraced the majesty of the lion and the swiftness of the eagle, with the might of both combined. None of the powers that arose after Nebuchadnezzar could equal that which God gave into his hand, and set him over. It takes the head among wild beasts, and the head among the fowls of heaven to set forth the might of the kingdom that was his. But the eagle's wings were eventually plucked, and the wild beast lost its ferocious and terrifying appearance. There came a day in which Babylon lost its power among the nations of the earth.

The second beast was like a bear, higher at one side than the other, for though at the first the Mede was the leading power, the Persian very quickly became dominant. Because of this it is presented as rising above its primitive level. Cyrus the Persian raised it into a position of great prominence by his clever generalship, and by his conquest of Babylon. But the bear, while its ferocity is clearly depicted by the fact that in the mouth of it are three ribs, has neither the majesty, the activity, nor the dash of the lion. It is more unwieldy and awkward in its movements, but characterized by unsatiated conquest and rapacity. It was said to it: "Arise, devour much flesh."

The third beast does not lack rapidity of execution, for it has upon its back four wings of a fowl, but its flight is not the sublime and lofty flight of the eagle, but that of a much meaner bird. It has, however, four wings instead of two. It has also four heads; absolute authority was not vested in one head only. To it dominion was given.

Whatever be the nature and character of these beasts they are as truly ordained of God as was David, the King of Israel, who was anointed with the holy oil. As energized by their own self-will and rapacious disposition, they devoured countries, subdued kingdoms,
and possessed thrones. But behind all that man could see, there was the hand of God working toward the fulfillment of His wise designs, and neither they nor their armies could go one inch beyond what was permitted to them by Him. In putting upon the throne of Egypt the Pharaoh who oppressed the children of Israel, the devil may have supposed that himself was the instrument that brought such a thing to pass, but God says to him: "For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth" (Exod. 9. 16; Rom. 9. 17). This rebel against the authority of God, and oppressor of his poor people, was raised up to the throne by the intervention of God, being one, I suppose, who had no title to it. Neither man nor the devil has power to accomplish anything apart from the permission of God. What a comfort this truth is to our cowardly souls!

As to the fourth beast, there was not any beast in field or forest that resembled it. It is like nothing that ever was created. As regards political and kingly power, it is the devil's masterpiece, as popery is his masterpiece religiously. It is the same beast that in Revelation 13. 1 is said to arise out of the sea, and in chaps. 11. 7, and 17. 8, is said to ascend out of the bottomless pit. To him the devil gives his power, seat, and great authority. He combines in his own person all the brutal characteristics of the first three beasts. This beast was like a leopard, his feet like a bear's, and his mouth like a lion's (Rev. 13. 2). Both in Daniel and in Revelation it is said to have ten horns, but in the latter Scriptures it is also said to have seven heads, and upon the horns ten crowns, thus manifesting it as an empire composed of ten kings, with an emperor in the midst possessed of despotic authority.

I have no doubt that the little horn spoken of in Daniel, which came up among the others, and before whom three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots, is the beast to whom Satan gave his power, seat, and authority. It is the one that dominates the empire, and that is the beast of Revelation. The beast is said to arise out of the sea (verse 3) and out of the earth (verse 17), but added to these apparently conflicting statements, we have in Revelation that he ascended out of the abyss. How are we to reconcile these seeming contradictions? The power of the devil acting upon the masses, who are always in opposition to whatever government may exist, produced a state of things that favoured the rise of such a person as is described as the beast. By the people he would be hailed as just the sort of person needed to bring order out of chaos.

Man in his natural fallen condition will not, if he can help it, be in subjection to any authority. Hence there has always been a good deal of murmuring against the existing government. Every man wants to rule over all the others, but not to be ruled over himself. And all this comes from the notion begotten in the heart of man at the outset, and which occasioned his fall. The devil suggested to man that he had a selfish and jealous-minded Creator, and that to rebel against His authority, act on his own behalf, take of the fruit of the forbidden tree, would be to thus exalt himself to equality with God. And though his attempt to exalt himself brought him under death and the domination of the devil who had deceived him, nevertheless the notion that he is his own master, or at least should be, has never left him.
"THE LOVE OF CHRIST CONSTRAINETH US."
(H. Wilson, Inkongo.)

The thoughts of a hunted David went back to the countryside,
The well-known fields of his father, and longingly he sighed,—
"Oh, for a drink of the water from Bethlehem's crystal spring."

But that favoured spot around
The Philistine troops were found,
And the sigh, indeed, seemed useless of the chosen but fugitive king.

But three of his band had heard it; three mighty men were they,
Right to the village fountain they boldly cut their way,
Then back again with the water, braving the spear and sword.

But their efforts of love seemed wasted,
The water remained untasted,
'Twas precious, indeed, but David poured it out before the Lord.

Their efforts had not been wasted. The heart of the king was glad
With true appreciation for the faithful love they had.

At last his foes were defeated, and David was crowned,—and then
Their work was well rewarded,
And these three men applauded,
As three of the very chiefest of David's mighty men.

The house of Simon the leper had welcomed a much-loved Guest,
And glad was the Lord to enter, and find in that home a rest.

Then Mary brought precious ointment and poured it upon His head.
'Twas love for the Lord that moved her,

But, ah, the critics reproved her,
'The poor should have had the money, 'tis ten pounds wasted,' they said.

The Lord is no longer with us, but down from His throne above,
He looks upon His people, and speaks to them of His love.
And when, with hearts responsive, they show they love Him too,
In spite of the critics' voices,
The heart of the Lord rejoices,

And He never forgets an action of love His own may do.

We may not be brave or mighty, we may be poor and weak,
And when we speak of the Saviour, may tremble as we speak.
And always there are critics who scold and disapprove.

But if the Lord approves us,
No criticism e'er moves us,
Or hinders our enjoyment of the Saviour's changeless love.

We have no costly ointment; our gifts, indeed, may be
More like the widow's farthing than that at Bethany;

But let us seek to please Him, by act and gift and word.
When His supreme devotion
Sets loving hearts in motion,

There's not a gift or action too small to please the Lord.

He soon will come to His Kingdom. Oh, what a glorious day,
When kings will bow before Him, and all shall own His sway!

Oh, how we long for the Saviour to have His rightful place!

Lord, teach us more than ever,
That love which changes never,
That we may love Thee better until we see Thy face!
ABSOLUTE DOMINION.

THE lives of the patriarchs as recorded in Genesis are of great value to us, since they illustrate God's ways in grace and government with men of like passions to ourselves. Two of them are of much less interest than the others from this point of view, viz., Isaac and Joseph. Yet these are just the two that stand out pre-eminently as types of Christ; and the main object of the Holy Spirit's record of their history is evidently to give a foreshadowing of Christ in His sufferings and glory rather than to illustrate God's ways with His people.

Isaac is spoken of as the "only son" of Abraham, for Ishmael, the son after the flesh, did not count. Joseph was the beloved son of his father. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children (37. 3). The details we have of Isaac's life are mainly concerned with the events which typify Christ as the chosen Seed, in death and resurrection, and the way in which, as the Risen One, a bride of His own kindred is found for Him. (Chapters 22. and 24.). We have much fuller details of Joseph than of Isaac, and all seem designed to show how the One who was cast down and sold by his brethren according to the flesh, and even abased among the Gentiles, is to be exalted to a place of absolute dominion amongst them, and become not only the nourisher of His brethren, but the Saviour of the world.

In chapter 37. we see Joseph as the rejected one of his brethren. He suffers in passivity. In chapter 39. we find him in Egypt and the hour of his activity is come. First of all he is active in the comparatively small and secluded sphere of Potiphar's house and possessions, and he at once comes before us as a man of skilful and powerful hands, so much so that his master, finding in him a treasure, allowed all that he had to be mani-

ulated by him. The record runs:—

"His master saw . . . that the Lord made all that he did to prosper in his hand . . . and he made him overseer over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand . . . and he left all that he had in Joseph's hand; and he knew not ought that he had, save the bread which he did eat."

Joseph was in humiliation and obscurity, yet his abilities could not be hid. The power of his hands was such that everything naturally fell into them and he became the overseer or administrator. Everything in Potiphar's house took its direction from him.

It is not difficult to trace an analogy between this and what marked our Lord Jesus Christ when He appeared in humiliation amongst men. He stepped into our little world with its limitation and obscurity. No sooner did He come forth to serve than His power became manifest. "He could not be hid" (Mark 7. 24), and wherever He went He proved Himself the Master of the situation and things simply lapsed into His hand. The Gospels are the record of this, particularly the Gospel of Mark.

In the case of Joseph it is emphasized that he was what he was by the blessing of Jehovah (39. 3 and 5), and if the blessing of Jehovah was upon Potiphar's house it was "for Joseph's sake." So too with the Lord Jesus. He "went about doing good . . . for God was with Him" (Acts 10. 38), and the blessing of the Lord was manifested amongst men as never before: healing, deliverance from all kinds of evil, and spiritual life visited them, but it was "for Jesus' sake." It is noteworthy that though all Joseph's career was marked by Divine blessing it is at this point, when he was in servitude and obscurity, that it is mentioned, and
that not once only but thrice. In the case of the Lord Jesus it was during the time of His lowly service in the restricted sphere of this world, that His mission and work had the appearance of failure. It was just then that He had to say in the words of the prophet, “I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment is with the Lord and my work with my God” (Isa. 49. 4). But Jehovah had just said, “Thou art My servant ... in whom I will be glorified.”

The career of Joseph in Potiphar's house, in spite of the blessing that attended it and the physical perfection that marked him—it says, “And Joseph was of a beautiful form and of a beautiful countenance” (39. 6, N. Tr.)—was suddenly cut short, and as the victim of false accusation he was thrust into prison. The end of chapter 39. tells us of the result of this apparently disastrous reverse. “The Lord was with Joseph ... and the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph’s hand all the prisoners that were in the prison; and whatsoever they did there, he was the doer of it.”

Joseph was simply irresistible! Placed in servitude he became the factotum in the house of his master. Cast down into prison, his feet “hurt with fetters” since he was “laid in iron” (Psa. 105. 18), once more all things fall into his hands. The enchained prisoner becomes the ruler of the prison. The official keeper of the prison found in him such a treasure that he gave him full powers and “looked not to anything that was under his hand: because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper.”

From Joseph we turn to the One whom he prefigured, and surely our hearts are moved to worship. Our Lord Jesus Christ, too, had His career of service cut short. As a victim of false accusation He entered into the prison house of death and to all appearance its shackles were made fast upon Him. Yet He only entered into death and the grave to prove Himself once more the Master of the situation. Instead of being enslaved by them, He subdued them to Himself. The keys of death and hades passed into His hands. He led captivity captive, though this was not manifested until He ascended on high. We may truly say that whatsoever was done in that gloomy domain, “He was the doer of it”! not a soul there but has passed into His hands. “For to this end Christ ... died ... that He might be Lord ... of the dead” (Rom. 14. 9). He has proved His power in the lowest and darkest place.

Reverting again to Joseph we learn how God in His own time publicly vindicated him. His powers could not be permanently hid, and in the hour when Egypt's potentate and wise men were alike troubled, and baffled, and helpless, he proved himself to be to Pharaoh both wisdom and power. He knew what was impending; he knew what to do, and he was the man to do it. That which had been true of him in his obscurity, and even in his abasement, was now true of him in his exaltation. Everything in Egypt's wide dominions lapsed into his hands, “and Pharaoh said unto Joseph, see, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt, and Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and PUT IT UPON JOSEPH'S HAND” (41. 41, 42).

Joseph had now reached the zenith of his glory. According to his word all Egypt was ruled, and to him every knee had to bow. Pharaoh “made him Lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; to bind his princes at his pleasure; and to teach his senators wisdom” (Psa. 105. 21, 22). His dominion thus was absolute, subject only to the king in his throne, and upon his hand there reposed the signet ring of authority and it became true again that “whatsoever they did there he was the doer of it.” Wielding the executive power of the kingdom he
subdued all things in the realm to Pharaoh, as chapter 47. 13-26 shows.

How strikingly all this foreshadows the coming glory of Christ. Risen and ascended He is already glorified at the right hand of the Majesty on high, but that is a private thing, unknown by the world. The hour of His public glory approaches when He will come forth to this world as the great Administrator on God's behalf. All judgment will be committed to Him; He will, as it were, hold the signet ring upon His hand, and not one executive act will take place without Him; the result of all being the subjugation of all things to Himself, so that ultimately God may be all in all. Then shall be fulfilled that other word in Isaiah 49., “Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel, and his Holy One, to Him whom man despiseth, to Him whom the nation abhorreth, to a servant of rulers, kings shall see and arise, princes also shall worship, because of the Lord that is faithful, and the Holy One of Israel, and He shall choose Thee.”

Though the day of Christ's glory seems to tarry, we wait for it with confidence. It is the determinate counsel of God. Joseph's advancement and glory seemed to tarry long. All seemed failure and gloom, “Until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him” (Psa. 105. 19), then at one mighty bound he leapt from the prison to the throne. His mighty hands at last wielded the sceptre. All was of God for, as his father Jacob said in his prophetic blessing of his sons, “His bow abide in strength, and the arms of his hands WERE MADE STRONG BY THE HANDS OF THE MIGHTY GOD OF JACOB” (49. 24). We wait for Christ with a double assurance inasmuch as we are cognizant of His present glory in private at the Father’s right hand. As we wait we can rejoice.

“Sing His blest triumphant rising,
Sing Him on the Father's throne,
Sing, till heaven and earth surprising
Reigns the Nazarene alone!”

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Priesthood, Cleansing, and the Holy Place.

Kindly reply to the following: (1) In the sin offering of Leviticus 4. 3-12 the anointed priest that has sinned brings his offering to the door, lays his hand thereon and slays the bullock. Is it the same priest who passes within to sprinkle the blood before the veil? (2) Why should the conditions for cleansing be different in Leviticus 4. 3-12 and Lev. 22. 1-9? (3) Numbers 18. 10 reads, “In the HOLY OF HOLIES shalt thou eat it.” Young's Concordance gives the same word in Exodus 26. 34 “mercy seat in the MOST HOLY.” Yet Leviticus 10. 17, 18, reads, “wherefore have ye not eaten...in THE HOLY PLACE.” Is the holy place of verse 17, which is not in italics, the same as the holy place of verse 18, which is in italics, and occurs twice? Leviticus 6. 16 and 26 agree with Leviticus 12. 17 as the word place is not in italics and it clearly refers to the court, whereas in Numbers 18. 10 it is the holiest of all; but into this the high priest alone entered once a year.—AUCKLAND.

QUESTION 1.—Yes, in the case of the anointed priest sinning he himself was to slay the offering, but he did not do so in the character of priest, priesthood only begins when the blood has been shed. In every other case of sin the priest had nothing to do until the offering had been slain. Thus the distinction is kept between the act of our Lord in offering Himself and the mediatorial work which He carries on in heaven, on the ground of His death.

Question 2.—The difference between Lev. 4. 3-12 and Lev. 22. 1-9, is, that the first is a case of sin in which guilt has been incurred; the second is a matter of defilement, contracted accidentally, or
which could not be helped. Still the priest was unclean, and needed the self-judgment typified by the washing of water, for us the word. The sin offering of Lev. 4, shows that nothing can meet the case of guilt but the shedding of blood.

Question 3.—The Hebrew word for "holy" is "Kodesh"; and for the intensive "most holy" the word is repeated in the plural, "Kodesh Kodeshim," which might be translated "holiness of holinesses." This expression is used for the sin offering (Lev. 6.25 and 10.17), for the incense (Exod. 30.36), and for the altar (Exod. 29.37), and in our version is rendered "most holy." That which we speak of as the Holy of Holies is "Kodesh Kodesh," rendered "the holy sanctuary" (Lev. 16.33). The "Kodesh Kodeshim" stamps with the character of holiness all that was offered to or connected with Jehovah. So Num. 18. 10 does not mean that the sacrifice was to be eaten within the veil, but was to be considered in the light of the place where the ark was. J. N. Darby's translation renders the verse, "As most holy shalt thou eat it," and the Revised Version, "As the most holy things shalt thou eat thereof." The same words are used in verse 9, "hallowed things." Nothing was eaten within the veil, nor in "the holy" before it; the court was the place where this was done; comp. Lev. 6.26 with Num. 18.10. Thus in Lev. 10.17 "The holy place" is the court, the first "holy" in verse 18 is the first part of the tabernacle, the second "holy" is clearly from the context "the court," but as there is no article before the word it might be read "In holiness ye should have eaten it."

J. Green.

2 Corinthians 11. 4-6.

Can you say something to elucidate this passage?—particularly as to the last clause of verse 4 which is rendered in J. N. Darby's translation "bear with [it]." Then again in verse 5 "the very chiefest apostles" rendered by Alford "those overmuch apostles." To whom does this refer, to "he that cometh" of verse 4, or those spoken of in verse 14, or such as Peter, John, etc.? Also, what is the meaning of the end of verse 6, which is rendered rather differently in various versions?—WALMER.

At the end of verse 4 there is no word for "him" or "it" in the Greek, so that it is a matter of judgment as to what word shall be inserted to complete the sense in English. From the context we suppose that "it" is the better. The word "bear" occurs three times in verses 1-4. "Bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me," and he adds that if those who had been amongst them diverting their minds from simplicity as to Christ had brought a "Jesus," a "spirit" a "gospel" different to the true which he had ministered they might well bear with his laboured solicitude on their behalf. So we understand the passage. The reference to the "chiefest apostles" we believe to be to such as Peter and John, i.e., to those who genuinely were such, not to men who falsely assumed such dignity.

As to the end of verse 6, the difficulty again arises from the terse, vigorous language in which the apostle was relieving his deep feelings. It runs literally "in everything making manifest in all things to you." The Authorized Translation interprets it as referring to the apostle himself. Since, however, in the previous part of the sentence the Apostle refers to himself as "rude" (idiotes, the word from which we get "idiot" in English) in speech but not in knowledge, we should judge that it is to the great matter of knowledge, i.e., the truth, that he refers. This is the view taken in J. N. Darby's N.Tr., "in everything making [the truth] manifest in all things to you."
The "Great House."

I should be greatly obliged if you could inform me if the "great house" referred to in 2 Timothy 2. 20 refers to the world at large or to the professing church?—ILFORD.

It refers to the professing church. If it referred to the world at large the passage would contradict the teaching of the parable of the wheat and the tares in Matthew 13. In the world "the children of the kingdom" and "the children of the wicked one" are to be left together. Here there is a separation enjoined in verse 21.

In 2 Timothy 2, the case in point is the false doctrine of Hymenaeus and Philetus. The principles involved are stated in verse 19. Verse 20 supplies us with an illustration of what the Apostle is speaking of, and verses 21 and 22 give the application of the principles and the illustration. The doctrine of Hymenaeus and Philetus was being promulgated not in the world but under cover of Christianity, and to outward and professing Christianity the "great house" refers.

"All Israel shall be saved."

In your June issue a question was answered in which you quoted 2 Thessalonians 2. 12, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth." While I agree, as it is in the Scripture, I would like your view as to how this relates to Romans 11. 26. "All Israel shall be saved." A Jew who has heard the gospel and either rejected it or neglected it, does he have a second chance if he is left behind after the Lord has come for His Church?—EAST DULWICH.

If you carefully read the whole of Romans 9., 10, and 11., you will find that the apostle is dealing with Israel's national place and destiny. He shows that in this dispensation God is still saving an elect remnant while the nation is set aside (11. 5). When the next dispensation is reached, the "fulness of the Gentiles" will be "come in" (11. 25), i.e., God will have completed His work of visiting "the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His Name" (Acts 15. 14). Then it will be no longer a case of a few Jews being reached here and there, and converted to Christianity, but of their being reached with a nation-wide salvation. Nothing partial or sectional will take place; it will not be something for the two tribes as distinguished from the ten, nor for the ten as distinguished from the two, but "ALL ISRAEL shall be saved"—not "every Israelite shall be saved."

Nothing in what we have said above clashes with 2 Thess. 2. 12. There the point is God's governmental dealings with ALL who believed not the truth as set forth in the Gospel, be they Jew or Gentile, for the "all" is only qualified by "who believed not the truth"—it is all who having heard the truth have not believed it. For such there is no second chance and no escape.

Since yours is not the only question we have received arising out of that answer in our June issue, and several correspondents write under the impression that we taught that no one at all is to be saved after the Lord comes for His own, we take this opportunity of correcting this idea, and slightly amplifying our previous reply. Many will be saved, as the Book of Revelation shows, only not those who have previously rejected or neglected the present Gospel of God's grace, as 2 Thess. 2. shows.

Weight, not numbers.

A devoted servant of Christ once said "weigh your converts, don't number them." That was what Gideon had to do, or rather the Lord did it for him. Thirty-two thousand warriors answered the summons, but three hundred only were so eager for the fray that they were content to lap the water instead of going on their knees to drink. Let us not look at numbers but at condition. A handful with the Lord is better than a multitude relying on organization, numbers, wealth, or any arm of flesh.
"LET US DRAW NEAR."

Notes of a Bible Reading in Melbourne on Hebrews 10. 1-25.

This chapter gives us the climax of the epistle—our entrance into the holiest as sanctified and consecrated priests.

**Question.** What is the holiest?

It is the presence of God, the place of our worship. The holiest in the tabernacle in the wilderness was where God dwelt, and in it there was nothing visible to the eye but gold, and the sprinkled blood of the sin offering. The gold spoke typically of the shining of God's own glory, and the sprinkled blood spoke of the blood of Jesus which was shed for us, when He offered upon the cross one sacrifice for sins. That blood meets all the claims of God's glory—it is equal in its value to every claim that God could have against us, and because of it we can appear in the presence of God without any fear.

**Question.** What is the difference between "the throne of grace" (chapter 4. 16) and "the holiest"? I notice we have boldness for both, and the great High Priest is mentioned in connection with both.

The throne of grace is the place of prayer and supplication; the holiest is our place of worship.

The throne of grace is where we obtain grace for our needs in the wilderness; the holiest is where we behold the glory of God. In connection with these two great things we have the two sides of the Lord's priestly service. Notice how He is introduced in Hebrews 4. He is a great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens, but He is JESUS; He has carried into the glory the same tender, compassionate heart that was His when here, and so He is able to sympathize with us in all our infirmities and sorrows, for He was tempted in all points as we, apart from sin. He is also the Son of God; along with His sympathy there is Divine power in Him, and in consequence He is able to succour and sustain His saints in every weakness and difficulty. We have but to look up to the glory into which He has gone to secure heavenly grace and mercy in the time of need. He ever liveth in this character to make intercession for us, so that we can say, "If when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5. 10). This is present, every-day salvation, so that in spite of difficulties and opposition and every trial of our faith we may be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." The death of Christ has given us an undeniable title to heaven; the life of Christ ensures our safe conduct there.

But that is all on the side of our need. There is the other side to the Lord's priesthood: He is "a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man" (chapter 8. 2), and it is in this way that He is presented in chapter 10. 21: "An high priest over the house of God." He controls that house, all the ordering of it is in His hands, and He is there to bring us into it suitably to the holiness and glory of it, so that there, being one with Christ, God might have delight in us, and that we might delight in God and bring the incense of our worship to Him. All the grace of the High Priest flows out to us with this end in view.

**Question.** What is it that gives us boldness to enter into the holiest?

That is what comes out in the
chapter. There are three things clearly indicated, the will of God, the work of Christ, and the witness of the Holy Ghost. The Godhead is engaged to give us a title, and fitness and confidence to draw near.

Remark. That shows how great is God's desire to have His saints near to Him for His own joy. Ephesians 1. says "that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love . . . according to the good pleasure of His will."

Yes, the will of God lies behind all the blessing, and that will is our sanctification, i.e., that we should be separated from every evil unto Himself. This is very little understood. Christians are glad to know that their sins are forgiven and that they are saved from hell, but they do not seem very keen on drawing nigh to God. But this is the will of God, and for this Christ suffered. The end in view was to bring us to God.

Remark. That was the purpose that God had in view before ever sin came in, according to verse 7.

Yes, before the works of creation the Son was with the Father, as Proverbs 8. tells us. But God could not delight in us when we were far from Him, submerged by sin, and in Satan's power. We had to be brought out of that condition to Himself. It was His will that this should be done, but who could do it? The answer is given to us here. Anticipating all the curse and ruin that sin would bring in, the Lord said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." What that will involved for Him we can see when His sweat was as it were great drops of blood in Gethsemane, and He cried, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

Question. Why do the words, "Lo, I come to do Thy will O God," occur twice in this chapter?

Probably in the seventh verse we hear what took place in heaven's counsels long before the world was. "In the volume of the book it is written of Me" would I think confirm this. In the ninth verse it would seem to present the Lord's actual coming into the world; I should connect this with "A body hast Thou prepared Me" in verse 5. It was when the sacrifices and offerings under the old dispensation had proved to be of no avail to put away sin and bring men to God that He came to take away the first—the whole system to which those sacrifices belonged—that He might establish the second.

Question. The one offering of Christ has accomplished what all the old sacrifices could not accomplish. Was that offering the fulfilment of the will of God?

It was necessary in order that God's will might be fulfilled, His will was our sanctification; this has been effected by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once. Under the law the sacrifices were perpetual; now the sanctification is permanent. The priests of old could never rest in the tabernacle, there were no seats amongst its furniture, but this Man after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. The one offering has met every claim of the throne of God, it has made a full and eternally effectual atonement, and by it He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Question. Who are the sanctified?

The fourteenth verse should answer the question. They are all those who are identified with that one offering. The sons of Aaron at their consecration had to lay their hands upon the head of their offering, indicating by that act that it was their only hope; their sins were transferred to it, and it became a sin offering for them; it stood for them, and its value was put down to their account, for it suffered in their stead (Exod. 29.). This sets forth typically what Christ is for us.
We know that we have no merit to offer to God; not by our works could we be saved or sanctified, so we have put our whole confidence in Christ, we placed our hands in faith upon Him, and we know that He was made sin for us. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, our judgment passed upon Him. Is that offering that He made enough? Well, the answer to that is that He has sat down at the right hand of God in the very throne that must otherwise have judged us for our sins. Nothing could bear clearer witness to the fact that God is satisfied with that one offering. We stand in perfect acceptance on the ground of its value in God's sight. And we learn from another scripture that righteousness is now ministered to us from the very throne whence we could have expected nothing but judgment.

Question. What does it mean when it says that He has perfected us for ever? I do not think any of us feel perfect. It is not a question of perfection in the sense of sinlessness, or of self-satisfaction. If a man says he has no sin, he deceives himself, but nobody else, and the truth is not in him (I John 1. 8); but we are perfected as to our standing and acceptance before God. We learn the perfection of the offering made for us by the fact that Christ has sat down at the right hand of God; we are accepted on the ground of that offering. If any flaw can be found in it, then a flaw can be found in the righteousness that is ours as a result of it, but as it is perfect, by it we are perfected. He was made "sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5. 21). When this truth is brought home to our souls, all fear is gone, our consciences are set at rest, we can feel at home in God's very presence. We have no more conscience of sins, and so need no other offering, in contrast to the worshippers under the old dispensation who had to bring offerings continually.

Question. Is the witness of the Holy Ghost in verse 15 the same as the witness in Romans 8. 16?

No, in Romans 8. it is a subjective witness, something that goes on within us. Here the Holy Ghost bears witness to something outside of us, to something done for us. He bears witness to the work and glory of Christ by the Word of God, by what God has spoken, part of which is, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." This witness is as indispensable as the will of God and the work of Christ if we are to draw near with a true heart and full assurance of faith. Apart from it we should shrink from God's presence, but when we believe the witness of the Holy Ghost we can sing:

"Assured by faith we enter now
Thy presence, where, most blessed God,
Thy glory rests upon His brow,
Who brought us nigh to Thee by blood."

Question. Is it the witness of I John 5. 6, where it is said, "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth," and verse 8, "There are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water and the blood; and these three agree in one"?

It is more on that line. Take the hymn from which I have just quoted:

"'Tis Jesus fills that holy place
Where glory dwells, and Thy deep love
In all its fulness (known through grace)
Rests where He lives, in heaven above.

"Yet, midst Thine own the Spirit still
Bears witness of His glory there,
And from the sphere which He doth fill
Brings knowledge of His fulness here."

The Holy Ghost bears witness to us of the love of God and of the glory of Christ. He has come forth from the glory to make it attractive to us. He first bears witness to the fact that all our own sinfulness and unfitness for the presence of God has been fully met by one perfect offering, then teaches us that God's own love is the source of all that He has done in order to bring us near, and that Jesus is both
the perfect offering and the measure of God's love to us. If our hearts are affected by the witness of the Holy Ghost as to these great facts, we should like to be in God's presence, and that is the holiest.

Remark. And God's perfect love has cast out all fear of being there from our hearts.

Quite so. We are not now like Adam and Eve who hid away from God's presence because they were conscious of guilt, and knew that they had no covering before Him; our guilt has been purged away and we are clothed with righteousness and salvation (Ps. 132. 9, 16), just as the sons of Aaron were clothed in their linen garments at their consecration, for 'Ie are God's priests. David said, "O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me to Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise Thee, O God, my God" (Ps. 43. 3, 4).

I do not suppose David knew how marvellously God would answer his cry; that the only-begotten Son would be sent forth as the light and the truth as we see Him in John's Gospel, and that the Holy Ghost would come to make that light and truth real and precious to us, so that God Himself has become infinitely attractive, and hence we can only be satisfied when near to Him. It is this that makes the holiest a place to be desired and draws us into it. And while we should be there with the deepest reverence, we should be in happy liberty.

Question. Is the entrance to the holiest individual or collective?

It is collective. By that I do not mean that we may not be worshippers as individuals. I am sure that John worshipped in Patmos, but God's delight is to have His saints together, and as gathered the Lord Jesus is the great Priest over God's house to lead their praises in the presence of God and offer up their worship according to His own perfection. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is (verse 25); we shall miss the holiest if we do.

Question. What is worship?

Worship is the result of the heart being absorbed with an object greater than itself. It is the overflowing of the heart in the presence of the love and glory of God as revealed to us in Jesus. We do not think of self, or our sins, or even our blessings. God and Christ entrance our souls.

Question. Would you say that if we are thinking merely of sins forgiven we are not in the holiest?

Well, in the holiest sins are remembered no more. But the blood is there. Where the blood is the sins could not be, but the blood is the eternal witness to what it cost to put them away. We can never forget that. We dwell upon the love of God in the holiest, but "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4, 10). We are not occupied with our relief from the burden of sins in the holiest, we have something greater, and that is the love that devised the relief, and the glory of God which took occasion of the sin to manifest itself in all its fulness. We cannot worship God apart from the death of Christ. The Old Testament types make this clear. The blood in the holiest emphasizes it. It would be presumption on our part to attempt it. For we do not know God apart from the death of Christ.

The consecrated priests had to have their hands filled with what spoke of Christ and His sacrifice. So that it is in the holiest that we remember the Lord in His death. We have Him in death in remembrance before God.

Question. Some say that the remembrance of the Lord in His death is
preparatory to our entrance into the holiest. What do you say to that?

If the blood were not in the holiest, they might have some ground for such a notion, but since it is there, they have none. Does not the blood speak of Christ's death? And was it not there upon the golden mercy seat? Then its value is as great as the gold; God has put the gold and the blood together—His glory and the death of Christ. His glory would never have been fully known by any intelligent creature in the universe, certainly not by sinners, but for the death of Christ. Then do not let us put asunder what God has joined together. The place to remember the Lord in death is the presence of God—the holy of holies—and when we do, it will be sweet incense to Him.

Question. But if God forgets our sins, may we do the same?

It does not say that God forgets them, it says He remembers them no more, and the difference is important. I might owe a heavy bill to a tradesman, and He might forget all about it and not present it for payment. That does not cancel the debt. But if He presents it and I pay it, it is done with. He does not send it to me again. He remembers it against me no more. The sins were not forgotten, the full account of them was rendered for payment at the cross, and the blood of Jesus has obliterated the dreadful score. Justice is satisfied, and the question will never arise again. Our sins and iniquities are remembered no more.

Question. What was the significance of the rending of the veil of the temple?

Simply that the system to which it belonged was done with; it had served its purpose and God set it aside. God rent it as you might rend a worn-out garment for which you had no more use.

Question. You do not think then that the veil was rent for God to come out to us or for us to go in to Him?

No. God was not in the temple to come out. The Lord had already said, "Your house is left unto you desolate." Christ Himself was the true temple. God was in Christ, but Christ was not so recognized by the Jews. He was not in the temple but on the cross, cast out and rejected by those who boasted in the temple. The true veil was His flesh, and that was rent in death. Then God came out to us in the fulness of His love, and we can go in to Him by this new and living way—the death of Christ. The rending of the veil of the temple was the removal of the first that He might establish the second.

Now we have "a true heart," i.e., a heart that has one object, "We love Him because He first loved us" would give us the meaning of that; and "full assurance of faith" is the confidence that the witness of the Holy Ghost has given us. "Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience," has been brought to pass by the blood; and "our bodies washed with pure water" has in view the washing of the priests at the time of their consecration.

Question. Is that the once for all washing or is it the washing of the feet of John 13?

It is the once for all washing. "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet," and "now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken to you." It is really the new birth, we have been separated and cleansed from the old life and evil nature. It all passed under God's judgment at the cross, and by the Word of God this has been brought home to our souls, we are clear of it morally, for we have got a new "I" that delights in God.

Question. But we need to have our feet washed constantly, do we not?

Yes, the priests had to wash their hands and feet at the brazen laver before going into the tabernacle, so we
according to John 13, need to have the defilement that we are always contracting in the world removed from us. In connection with the Lord's Supper we are told, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat." We have to judge ourselves. We cannot enter into and enjoy the holiest apart from this. We should be exercised as to how far we are answering to God's will for us in this respect. His will is perfect, good and acceptable, and if He has revealed it to us, it is that we should delight in it. If He delights to have us near Him, it ought to be our delight to draw near and enjoy this great privilege. The dignity of it is past all understanding. People look upon it as a great honour to be commanded to appear at Court to meet the King, but here God invites us to draw near and take up our place in His Court, and that not as temporary guests who pass in and out for one brief hour, but He has made His presence our home, and at so great a cost. And on our side there has been given to us the Spirit in whom we have the capacity for the place.

Question. Is there any special time in the meeting for entering the holiest?

I do not think so. There must be a suitable condition of soul for it. Not all who are at the meeting are conscious of the presence of God. How spiritually alert we should all be if we were, and what rapture would be ours. What would happen to us, do you think, if we actually saw the Lord in our midst?

Remark. We should be filled with adoration and worship.

We should, and if we came together in true condition of soul and in faith that would characterize our meetings. If we bring the burdens of the week to the meeting and our minds are filled with our own concerns, our domestic or business trials, we miss it, and hinder others.

Question. How can we escape these burdens?

The Lord is our great High Priest to raise us above them. Aaron wore upon His shoulders the names of the twelve tribes of Israel when he went into the presence of God. That typifies for us the fact that the Lord, as the great Priest over God's house, is able to bear us up above all pressure when by faith we are associated with Him as sons of God in His house. We want more faith, faith must be in exercise. Hebrews is the great epistle of faith. If we commit ourselves to our great Priest, His grace and power will support us inside as worshippers, and then we shall be able to come outside as witnesses, bearing His reproach.

Question. If a Christian sins, he is unfitted for the holiest. What must he do?

For an answer to that question we must go out of Hebrews to 1 John. The Lord's service as High Priest is for those who are going right, to preserve them from going wrong. But if any man does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. The result of His advocacy is that we are made conscious of our wanderings. Then, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). There would be no confession without the advocacy of Christ, and there can be no forgiveness for restoration to communion and the enjoyment of our privileges without confession.

Finally, let us remember that if we have been sanctified for sanctuary service by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, we are one with the Sanctifier. "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2:11). That is a wonderful statement of truth that calls for special consideration.
THE COMING GLORY.

The sufferings of Christ were the necessary basis of His coming glory. The glory is the fruit of the sufferings (I Peter 1:11).

In Matthew's Gospel we see the Lord accepting the fact of His rejection by His own nation; and knowing that His rejection involved His death, He retired into the presence of His God and Father, saying, “I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matt. 11:25-27). Every thing was now lost to His people on the ground of the old Covenant, hence the kingdom takes another form.

In chapter 13. we get its seven similitudes. Christ begins anew, and sows the incorruptible seed of the Word with its blessed result of fruit for God. Again He sows in His field—the world. The enemy also sows seed of a different sort, its result being only evil. Now we have good and evil growing up together, which cannot be separated until the harvest; evil developing into a great tree in which the fowls of the air (indicative of evil) dwell; the hidden leaven corrupting the three measures of meal till the whole was leavened; leaven in Scripture being always symbolic of evil. The treasure in the field sets forth Christ buying the field—the world—for the sake of the treasure in it. Surely it is out of the world He is taking the joint-heirs for that coming day of glory. The pearl of great price sets forth the church. “Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it”; and the net cast into the sea of nations will result in good and bad being drawn ashore, the good put into vessels, and the bad cast away as worthless.

The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son (John 5:22), and He will now begin that work in regard to Jew, Gentile, and the professing church. From Matt. 24. 29 we get the Lord's coming in relation to the Jews. What a sad future for the many as they pass through the time of Jacob's trouble, the great tribulation, yet a godly remnant of them will preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the nations for a testimony unto them, and then shall the end come. If the days were not shortened, no flesh could be saved, but for the sake of His elect He will shorten the days, and when likely to be exterminated He comes to their aid; and then, seeing like Thomas, they will believe and truly repent.

Next we get the Lord's coming in relation to the professing church in the parable of the virgins. While the Bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept, both the wise and the foolish; the Lord's return had been lost sight of, and the cry has gone forth, “Behold, the Bridegroom!” Then they all arose and trimmed their lamps, but the foolish lacked the oil. The wise had the oil in their vessels; they are indwelt by the Spirit of God. They being ready went in with Him to the marriage and the door was shut.

We then get rewards for faithfulness to the Lord during His absence, but to the mere professor there is only loss, he being cast out into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25.30).

Then we get the Lord's return in relation to the living nations. It is not a general judgment, as is often taught, but living people gathered before the tribunal of Christ, before the Millen-
nium is set up, to answer for the way they received the message of His Jewish brethren who proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom. Those who were favourable to the message will hear with gladness from Christ Himself, “Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” And those who refused the message will equally hear those withering words, “Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25. 31-46).

All these judgments will be carried out by the Lord Jesus Christ to clear the scene for the establishing of His Millennial reign.

The Kingdom had a large place in the thoughts of His people at the beginning of Christianity, so much so that the young Thessalonian assembly thought that those who were dying amongst them would miss that glorious time. To comfort and instruct them the apostle wrote to them the new revelation contained in 1 Thess. 4. 13-18, concerning the coming of the Lord into the air for the catching up of the saints, "whether dead or living, to be with Himself for ever.

Concurrently with the Kingdom now going on in mystery, i.e., in its hidden form, we have what Christ builds. On the confession of Peter in Matt. 16. 16, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Christ says, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” This was something then future, and until the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, it was not in existence—then the one hundred and twenty were baptized into one body by the Spirit and united to Christ the living Head in heaven.

What Christ builds, the gates of hades cannot prevail against; but although the enemy cannot touch what Christ is building he can produce a counterfeit, and that he has done. This false thing is now exalted up to heaven, but shall be brought down to hell, as is so graphically depicted in Revelation 18, in the judgment and utter destruction of Babylon the great, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth. We hear there the lamentations of those she had enriched, and also great rejoicings in heaven at her fall, “for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

The Lord will then be acting in power on the earth, and His judgments will be swift and decisive. We next get the judgment of the beast, and the false prophet, who deceived the whole world. Following that we get an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand, and Satan is bound for a thousand years. How blessed to know that, while the Lord is executing judgments upon all who are in opposition to Him (largely through angels who wait upon Him, and delight to do His bidding), those who were Christ’s at His coming, as we have already seen, shall be safely housed from all the judgments that are being executed.

But before He comes out in manifestation to the world with them, they shall all be manifested 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 (2 Cor. 5. 10). This manifestation is not to determine whether they are fit for heaven or not, for they were all caught up before He commenced His judgment on the earth, solely on the ground of the work of Christ, which alone makes them fit, apart from what they had done altogether; but the lives and doings of each one shall pass in review individually before the Lord Himself, who shall reward each for work done for Himself. “If any man’s work abide . . . he shall receive a reward; if any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss” (1 Cor. 3. 11-14). Every believer is saved by the work of Christ, and rewarded by Christ for work done
for Him. There may be some who have no good works to show, but they themselves “shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

We gather that now the marriage of the Lamb takes place, as we read in Rev. 19. 1–9. As the result of the true church being thus publicly owned in relationship with Christ, she is seen as the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, descending from heaven over the earth as the holy city Jerusalem. What a blessed and glorious time for the millennial earth when Christ and the church are thus displayed in brightest glory.

All the glowing prophecies of the Old Testament shall be fulfilled. On earth there will be life for evermore, with no lack of sustenance; also His healing hand shall be upon them. “He shall satisfy their poor with bread,” and “I am the Lord who healeth thee.” Glorious time! Every enemy put down by the power of Him whose right it is to reign; good and evil for ever disentangled. The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, “For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” But how much more blessed the heavenly side, the Church, the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, reigning in glory above. Then shall He see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied.”

At the end of this glorious reign of righteousness and peace, Satan shall be let loose for a little space, and as the fruit of his deceptive powers a final rebellion will ensue. This will be instantly crushed, and the final judgment of the great white throne will follow with its solemn result of everlasting punishment—not annihilation—in the lake of fire, the second death. “Then cometh the end . . . when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. . . . 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 [the Trinity] may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15. 24–28).

May the thought of all the glories of Christ that are before us keep His waiting people longing for His blest return, when all that has been put into His hands shall be carried out in power to the glory of God.

“All taint of sin shall be removed, All evil done away, And we shall dwell with God’s Beloved Through God’s eternal day.”

“A GREAT PRIEST OVER THE HOUSE OF GOD.”

These wonderful words are given by the Spirit for our encouragement. The value of His work and the grace of the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ are made known to us, so that we may boldly draw nigh to God by them: “having boldness by the blood of Jesus,” and “having a great Priest over the house of God” (Heb. 10. 19–21, N.Tr.), we can approach with the fullest confidence.

The offering made on the Cross to God was such that He can say of those who come to Him, “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more,” and the One who made that offering for us is so pleasing in God’s sight that He is now sitting at God’s right hand. As regards the sacrifice He has “sat down in perpetuity”: there is to be no repetition of it. And then, as regards those for whom He made that perfect offering, it is said, “By one offering He has perfected in perpetuity the sanctified.” The sacrifice is perfect and the result also. The worshippers once purged can be before a holy God,
having no longer any conscience of sins; and they honour the work of Christ thus, and show their faith in what God says as to it.

Under law this could not be. The offerings had to be repeated, and the remembrance of sins also. Those sacrifices could not take away sins, but only call them to mind annually. There was then no seat in the house of God, since the priest’s work was never finished. The work of Christ is done and done for ever, and He has sat down. What a blessed contrast is this to the sacrifice and the priest of old! Therefore we are told in Hebrews 10: 1.

1. “There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins” (26).
2. “There is no more offering for sin” (18).
3. “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (17).
4. “Once purged . . . no more conscience of sins” (2).

The second and third show that Christ has to make no further sacrifice for sin, and that God’s memory holds nothing against us now; while the first and fourth show there is no other sacrifice to turn to, and that the worshipper can now be in God’s presence happily. And, along with this, having such a great Priest over the house of God as Jesus, we may indeed approach with holy boldness by Him, and allow our rejoicing hearts to overflow in thanksgiving and praise to our God and Father.

Our great Priest has suffered as none other, and now He helps those that are tried, sympathizing with their infirmities, but also saving them completely as they draw near to God by Him, living for them, interceding for them, and encouraging them to enter where He Himself is in the holiest of all. No wonder the apostle says, “Such an high Priest became us.”

“THE HOUSE OF GOD.”

It is necessary to say a few words now as to the house over which our Lord Jesus Christ is. It is constructed in Himself as the rejected One of man, but the chosen of God. All true believers are built together in Him. The words, “the house of God,” occur three times in the epistles:

1. “Judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Pet. 4. 17).
2. “A great Priest over the house of God” (Heb. 10. 21).
3. “How to behave thyself in the house of God” (1 Tim. 3. 15).

And this last Scripture goes on to tell us that it is “the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth.”

Now the first sends us back to Ezekiel 9. for instruction. There we read the words, “Begin at My sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house” (6). Began what? Began to execute judgment! Why? “The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah was exceeding great,” and they said, “The Lord hath forsaken the earth, and the Lord seeth not.” All manner of idolatrous practices and abominations consequently were carried on in the courts and chambers of God’s house. “Therefore,” He said, “will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I pity” (8. 18).

He had not forsaken the earth! His presence was still in the house. Ezekiel, meaning “strengthened of God,” was empowered to see this! Jeremiah, too, had said, “Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy Name; leave us not” (14. 9); but they were incurably corrupt, and He would remain no longer. This caused Jeremiah great consternation, but Ezekiel was not allowed to mourn. Slowly the glory of the Lord withdrew, first to “the threshold of the house”; and even then “the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord’s glory” (10. 4), whether any but Ezekiel had eyes to see it or not. Afterwards “the glory of the Lord departed from...
off the threshold of the house” (18), and finally it “went up from the midst of the city” (11. 23).

The holiness of God's house had to be vindicated; therefore, as we have said, judgment began there. Nevertheless, the executors of the judgment who stood by “the brazen altar”—the place of sacrifice—were told not to come “near any upon whom is the mark” (9. 6)—“the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done” (4.). This illustrates what is said in 1 Peter 4. The righteous are saved, though it be with difficulty, because of the false state of religious profession all about them. Christ has borne their judgment. At “the brazen altar”—the Cross in type—He once suffered for their sins and brought them to God. Moreover, they have “the mark”—the Spirit of God; and though they feel the dishonour of the corruptions around, they have what those in Ezekiel's day had not—“the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God” resting upon them (1 Pet. 4. 14); and, though reproached they could rejoice with exceeding joy.

Both the tabernacle and the temple were called the house, and both were desolated. That, however, which is built up in Christ as the Head of the corner to-day, will abide and shine forth in glory soon. The right way, therefore, to learn from the tabernacle and the temple now is to see what the Spirit teaches concerning Christ in their wonderful details.

At the beginning of Ezekiel we see the glory of the Lord lingering before it departs from the house and city of His Name, but at the end we see the same glory returning in brightness and splendour!—“The earth shined with His glory” and “The glory of the Lord filled the house” (43. 1-5). That will take place when the kingdom of the Son of Man is set up on earth, and the new house is built at Jerusalem. Look, however, at the heavenly city, the holy Jerusalem, at the end of Revelation. There is no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple (21. 22). No longer hidden behind a veil, our God, fully revealed in Jesus, is there.

“Rest of the saints above, Jerusalem of God, Thy golden streets have trod?

* * *

God and the Lamb shall there
The Light and Temple be,
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery.”

“THE LORD GOD.”

That day of glory is surely drawing nigh! The time when we shall be glorified with Christ for ever is fast approaching! But what is our present portion? It will be Himself then—what is ours now? The same as then—HIMSELF! That one word expresses it; but who can tell us all that it does express? Who can unfold all that it enfold? Nevertheless, He Himself is our present and eternal portion. He that dwells in Divine love now dwells in God (I John 4. 16), and that will be true for ever. “God is love.”

Let us learn again from Ezekiel. When the judgment fell, and the glory was departing, the Lord said, “Son of man, thy brethren, even thy brethren, the men of thy kindred, and all the house of Israel wholly, are they unto whom the inhabitants of Jerusalem have said, Get you far from the Lord: unto us is this land given in possession. Therefore say, Thus saith THE LORD GOD: Although I have cast them far off among the nations, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little Sanctuary [or, rather “a Sanctuary for a little while”] in the countries where they shall come” (11. 15, 16). Those who held the right place, the place of Jehovah's Name, were in a hardened state, and thrust the real aside; but “THE LORD GOD” would not fail them.
If they lost the material house at Jerusalem, they had Himself, who is greater than the temple for a Sanctuary during the period of the scattering—the "little while."

Do we not read of "a little while" in Hebrews 10.—the second Scripture we cited? And is it not in the same chapter we are encouraged during this "little while" to "draw near" and to "complete assembling together," even though it becomes "the custom with some" to forsake this, and sinning wilfully follows—apostasy from the Son of God and His finished work, and insult to the Spirit of grace—yet, as the long-expected return of our adorable Saviour approaches, these things are to be maintained with increasing zest "by so much the more as ye see the day drawing near." The very things that religious men are apostatizing from are to be our encouragement to approach boldly, even into the holiest of all—the work and Person of our glorious Saviour, "the blood of Jesus" and the "Great Priest over the house of God," "The Spirit of grace," whom the apostates insult, will grant power and favour to those who honour Christ's work and Person by approaching boldly as worshippers. "By Him," therefore it is said, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name."

Full assurance of faith is needed for this. To draw near by any man-appointed leader or priest is to ignore the priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Even if the priest were of the family of Aaron (the only earthly family appointed to this of God) it could not be Divinely owned, for God has set this order of priesthood aside; and Jesus (after another order, the order of Melchisedec) having gone into heaven, is now the one and only High Priest Divinely provided for us. He was of the tribe of Judah as Man. If, therefore, "He were on earth He would not be a priest" (Heb. 8. 4). He was not of the priestly tribe or family, but He has gone on high for us, "a Son perfected for ever," "Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (6. 20), and "Such an High Priest became us" (7. 26). The earthly system of priesthood organized in Christendom sets this aside and does not become us. Truly all who are living stones in the spiritual house of which Christ is the Corner-stone, are also "a holy priesthood." He has washed them from their sins in His blood and made them "priests to His God and Father" (Rev. 1. 6), but there is no other High Priest but Himself.

We saw that He had opened the way for us to draw nigh, through the veil, "His flesh." Now in the third Scripture (1 Tim. 3. 15, 16), we read, "God was manifest in the flesh"; and again we read, "Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him. . . I am Alpha and Omega, saith the LORD GOD" (Rev. 1. 7, 8, N.Tr.). Israel will exclaim when He comes to her, "Lo, this is our God . . . this is the Lord, we have waited for Him." When He showed Thomas His hands and His side, he said to Him, "My Lord and My God." It is "THE LORD GOD" who says, in Ezekiel 11., I will be "A SANCTUARY." He has been manifest in flesh. He has tabernacled on earth. The fulness dwells in Christ on high, but "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh," He has dedicated for us "the new and living way," so that we may come into the presence of God with holy boldness and fulness of joy.

"WHERE DWELLEST THOU?"

To this question of the two disciples Jesus replied, "Come and see" (John 1. 39). And is He not saying the same to-day to those who desire to be near to Himself, to be in His presence? God is known in Him and He brings us to know God in the presence of God. And the final ministry of the Spirit is given that "your joy may be full" (1 John 1. 4).
The priests of Israel failed. Our Great Priest never fails. Christendom which professes His Name may become corrupt and apostate, but He remains in unchangeable perfection and faithfulness. Nothing, therefore, need be allowed to rob our hearts of their true portion. The Spirit has told us that men would make shipwreck as to faith, that some would depart from the faith to spiritism and satanic teachings, that the love of money would cause others to wander from the faith, that the profession of false-named science would also cause some to miss the faith, that difficult times should be present in the last days, that men should be lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God though they have a form of godliness at the same time, that men corrupted in mind would be worthless as regards the faith, that evil men and seducers should wax worse and worse, that some would turn the grace of God into lasciviousness and deny the only LORD GOD, nevertheless the same Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, has given us full instruction, that those who have been called by God's grace according to His purpose, may be preserved in Christ Jesus as the beloved of God the Father; that, abiding in the love of God, they may build themselves up on their most holy faith and look forward to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying meanwhile in the Holy Ghost.

Because of the corruptions we have named, judgment indeed begins at (or from) the house of God as we have seen. The Great Priest over the house of God nevertheless succours, sustains, and completely saves those who are "all of one" with Himself, those He is "not ashamed to call brethren," those who approach by Him who "worship by the Spirit of God, and boast in Christ Jesus, and do not trust in flesh" (Phil. 3. 3). Moreover, we are shown how to conduct ourselves in that house where God's presence is known and where the truth is represented and upheld.

The first epistle to Timothy was written that one might "know how to conduct oneself in the house of God, which is the assembly of the living God, the pillar and base of the truth. And confessedly the mystery of piety is great. GOD HAS BEEN MANIFESTED IN FLESH, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been RECEIVED UP IN GLORY " (1 Tim. 3. 15, 16, N.Tr.). All our behaviour is to be ordered in reference to the presence of God. What is pleasing in His sight is to characterize us until we, too, are received up in glory. Then, when the holy city shines forth in Divine splendour, everything will be ordered in practical perfection in reference to the immediate presence of God, for THE LORD GOD ALMIGHTY AND THE LAMB ARE THE TEMPLE THEREOF.

Meanwhile the present ministry on high of our Lord Jesus Christ as the great Priest over the house of God avails to maintain us in the present good of the presence of God. His finished work on the Cross gives us boldness to draw near, and His unfinished work, His present priestly service, enables us with confidence to be before our God and Father as glad worshippers, so that even now by Him our offerings of praise may be more and more abundant though the darkness deepens in Christendom; and, preserved in Him, we may value more highly the privilege of being in nearness to Himself, and thus yield to Him a return for His exceeding grace and His unchanging love.
The Sons of Korah.

(Read Psalms 88, 42, 43, 84. Num. 16. and 17.)

"Our light affliction which is for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

The history of the sons of Korah affords an interesting example of this Scripture. Korah was the ring-leader of the rebellion against Moses and Aaron (typically against Christ, as God's King and Priest). Moses exposed the hidden motive which actuated them, viz., that they desired the place of authority and honour for themselves. In answer to the intercession of Moses and Aaron, Jehovah in grace gave an opportunity for any who would escape the terrible judgment, which awaited all who were identified with the rebels, to do so by departing from their tents. In that solemn moment, the children of Korah had to decide between their father and the Lord. They responded to the invitation of grace, departed from their father's tent, and were thereby saved from sharing his judgment (Num. 26. 11).

We may gather from Num. 27. 3 and the Psalms quoted above, that they afterwards passed through long and deep exercises under the hand of God, on account of the reproach which was justly attached to their father's name. The very altar itself was, from that time, a witness of their father's sin, and a warning to all who would follow in his steps!

Could ever a soul history begin under a darker cloud? Those days of sorrow and loneliness, so touchingly alluded to in Psalm 84, as "the valley Baca" (or weeping), faith turned into a well, and proved them to be amongst the ways that lead to the blessedness of dwelling in God's house. They reached this blessedness by a long and painful path, and their appreciation of it was correspondingly great, as expressed in the words, "a day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

Finally, they became chief porters in the house of God (1 Chron. 9. 19), for who so suited as they to understand and sympathize with the exercises of those who long for the courts of the Lord? "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord."

They also became chief singers in the house of God (r Ch. 6. 32-37). In the days when their "tears were their meat day and night" as they remembered their past joy in the house of God, the ears of faith could still hear "the song of the Lord," if anything more dear to them than ever before.

The faith which took the first right step in Num. 16, and overcame all the sorrow and reproach which followed them, was rewarded with a special service and a special song, for which no other path would have educated them as well. Note how complete was the victory which their faith won over the atmosphere of their father's tent, as seen in the contrast between Num. 16. and Psalm 84.:

1. The altar a witness of Korah's sin—"Thine altars" "a house" "a nest."

2. Korah rebelled against authority—"My King."

3. God as a Judge—"God our Shield."

4. Korah rebelled against the priesthood—"Look upon the face of Thine anointed."

5. Korah sought a high position—"I had rather be a doorkeeper."

6. Korah had a tent of wickedness—"Than dwell in the tents of wickedness."
BENEVOLENT RULE.

At the present moment no one can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost (I Cor. 12. 3). The dying thief needed an eye illumined by the Spirit of God to discern, in the thorn-crowned Man on the centre cross, the Lord of glory. The princes of this world did not recognize the Lord of Glory, but the thief did and he said, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” Jesus is no longer on the cross, but He is still rejected of the world, and it is only by the Holy Ghost that His lordship is recognized and confessed.

When we speak of lordship, what is it that we mean? The meaning of the term can be briefly summarized in four words. It means in the first place absolute dominion, and in the second place benevolent rule. He who exercises lordship wields absolute authority, and his will is law to those beneath him; but at the same time he exercises that authority with benevolence for the good of those beneath his sway, otherwise he is not so much a lord as a tyrant. We speak of lordship as it is according to God, and as it will be realized in the Lord Jesus Christ, and as it was typically set forth in the history of Joseph.

When the skill and power of Joseph’s hands had carried him to the top, and within them lay the destinies of his brethren, and of all Egypt, then there came out the tender compassions of his heart, which expressed themselves in his tears. In chapters 39. to 41. of Genesis Joseph’s hands are prominent. Chapters 42. to 50. Joseph’s tears. In these latter chapters it is recorded that Joseph wept no less than eight times, viz.: 42. 24; 43. 30; 45. 2, 14, 15; 46. 29; 50. 1, 17.

It is not a little remarkable that there is no mention of Joseph weeping in his earlier years. We could have well understood it characterizing those days, when we remember the seas of sorrow and affliction through which he passed, and which well might have wrung tears from his eyes. His hard-hearted brethren even had to confess “we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear” (42. 21). They saw the anguish of his soul, but as far as the record goes they never saw his tears.

How reminiscent is this of that other expression in Isaiah 53., “the travail of His soul”—the soul of Jehovah’s perfect Servant, who, though the Man of Sorrows on earth, and acquainted with grief, is yet to be “exalted and extolled, and be very high.” In the days of His sojourn and suffering on earth He wept, but never for Himself. When going forth to crucifixion others bewailed and lamented Him, but He said, “Weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves.”

Joseph wept in the days of his glory and power, in the day when he was dealing in sternness with his brethren. Yet it was a skilful sternness he exercised toward them, its object being that they might be convicted of their sin, and humbled, and brought to self-judgment and repentance. This inward heart work was an absolute necessity. To have laden them with the corn of Egypt, leaving their hearts untouched, would have been a calamity. Their stomachs would have been satisfied, but their hearts left unreached and unaltered. This was not Joseph’s way. Absolute dominion was now his, but this power he would use not for their destruction but for their good both spiritually and physically.

The first time Joseph wept was when he perceived the first awakenings of conscience in the way of self-judgment in his brethren. They spoke among themselves, never recognizing Joseph
in Egypt's splendid governor, nor suspecting that he understood their speech. "We are verily GUILTY concerning our brother," he heard them say. Joseph "turned himself about from them and wept." They were tears of love and thankfulness, for he saw that his dealings were beginning to take effect, and raise in their minds questions as to the past that were bound to be raised ere his brethren could be happy in his presence.

A second time did Joseph weep when Benjamin his own full brother appeared. The tears sprang out of a sense of relationship. Of that relationship Benjamin was as yet all unconscious, but Joseph knew and was moved beyond words. "His bowels," we read, "did yearn upon his brother: and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there." Still as yet the work of conviction and repentance in his brethren had not reached sufficient depth for that relationship to be declared, so "he washed his face, and went out, and refrained himself." Thus he exercised patience in his dealings with them.

We are living in the hour which is characterized by "the patience of the Christ" (2 Thess. 3. 5, N. Tr.). He is exalted on high, and as the Lord over all He is rich unto all that call upon Him, whether Jew or Gentile. His brethren after the flesh, the Jews, are, however, still in unbelief and unconscious of His glory. Surely His bowels do yearn upon them, and some little reflection of that yearning we find in the Apostle Paul in Rom. 9. 1-5; yet the time has not come for the expression of His love and the acknowledgment of the relationship that exists. There must be a deep work of conviction and self-judgment first.

The next three occasions of Joseph's weeping are all found in chapter 45. In the latter part of chapter 44. we have Judah's touching speech on behalf of Benjamin. It revealed a great change in the disposition of the brethren. The old hatred against Joseph was gone, and in its place was a genuine care for Benjamin; the former indifference to the feelings of Jacob their father had been changed into the utmost solicitude on his behalf; instead of the spirit that would callously sacrifice Joseph, behold Judah prepared to sacrifice himself! The chastening of God had already had a profound effect, and the hour had arrived when at last Joseph's love could burst its barriers and declare itself.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself ... and he wept aloud ... and he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept ... moreover he kissed all his brethren, and wept upon them." Here we have the full and unhindered expression of Joseph's love, and in response thereto the repentance of his brethren reached its proper depth; "His brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence." Thus it will be in the coming time. The preliminary dealings of God with the children of Israel will produce a certain measure of conviction in their hearts, but it is when, according to Zechariah 12. 10, "they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" that "they shall mourn ... as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness ... as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Then "the spirit of grace and of supplications" shall be poured upon them. Yet, even so, what will be their feelings compared with those of the One whom they have pierced?

In Genesis 45. we do not read much of the tears of the brethren of Joseph. "Benjamin wept upon his neck," we read in verse 14, but that is all. As a matter of fact, Benjamin had of all of them the least reason to weep, for he was hardly implicated in their great sin. No, the great point is not the repentance of the brethren, but the magnanimous love of Joseph. He was saviour, for as he says, "God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by
a great deliverance." He was also lord, for he added, "and He hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt."

Joseph was lord. His dominion was absolute in that great domain. His dreams were verified. The other sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf; sun, moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to him. His brethren had said, "Let us . . . cast him into some pit . . . and we will see what will become of his dreams." Well, they had now seen!

But now that such power was in his hands, what use did he make of it? His word to his father, and brethren, and all their households was, "Come unto me: and I will give you the good of the land of Egypt, and ye shall eat the fat of the land" (45. 18). As exalted he was the minister of their blessing.

"Come unto me . . . and I will give you rest" were the words of the Lord Jesus, and as the context shows that rest is in the knowledge of the Father, of His love and purposes. It is available for our hearts to-day. Presently He will bring rest to a weary earth after the execution of the inevitable judgments of God. He will fill the earth with rest and contentment when the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Then He will minister to His people the good of the millennial earth, just as He now ministers to His saints of the good of heaven.

Our title to the heavenly things made known in the gospel is sure and without a flaw. It rests upon His atoning blood. We need, however, not only a flawless title, but to enter upon the good of the wealthy portion that is ours. It is to be ours in present enjoyment, by faith and the work of the Spirit of God.

After Genesis 45, we read three times of Joseph weeping. Once when meet-
trust Him with quite unshaken confidence.

Divine love is like a spring which bubbles up in some heat-bound plain because its source is in distant mountains with their eternal snows. In the fiercest drought it is unchanged, gushing forth the same as ever. Of such a spring we may say what Tennyson made the language of his brook:

"For men may come, and men may go, But I go on for ever."

The love of God which has been expressed in Christ flows forth upon us, yet its source is not in us but in God Himself.

How great the soul-liberty which lies in the knowledge of this fact!

PAUL’S MASTER PASSIONS. (A. J. Pollock.)

"Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9. 16).
"I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" (Rom. 1. 14).

\[WHAT\] a wonderful impression of Christ in glory at the right hand of God must Paul have received the day he was converted! "The light above the brightness of the sun" revealed to him glories that completely eclipsed, nay, that stood in sharpest contrast to, the glories of this world, which are like the soap-bubbles of the child, beautifully iridescent as they float in the air, but gone in a moment, leaving only a speck of dirty water to tell the tale.

Once converted, Paul was marked by two master passions—one, the proclamation of the gospel; the other, the teaching of the mystery of God to the saints. Behold him as he is presented to us in these two Scriptures! Would that they might affect us deeply.

See this man, eager, impetuous, dominant of will, his intellect like the edge of a razor, turned to God, and all that he was in powers of mind and body enslaved to the Christ, who had by that vision from glory captivated him. The stronger the love, the closer the bondage. The more intense the slavery, the more complete the liberty. Liberty to be completely absorbed and devoted to the will of Him who had subjugated his will—liberty to be the most abject slave, this indeed was liberty of the sweetest kind.

See him carrying the gospel to strange cities and distant countries as zealously, and more so, as when he persecuted the church of God. God was making Himself known in the gospel, and the only happiness and blessing for man lay in that knowledge; nay, the gospel was part of a scheme in which God was to glorify Himself in the display of His wisdom and knowledge. "Woe is me," cries the apostle, "if I preach not the gospel." He was debtor both to the Greeks—the civilized, the cultured, the aesthetic, the intellectual—who needed it and without it were absolutely undone, and to the Barbarians, who were sunken in depravity and sin, needing it not more but as much as the others. So Paul preached as long as God gave him breath.

Then see the great apostle on his knees. He was often in tears. He reminded the Ephesian saints how he
had warned them night and day with tears for the space of three years. He tells them how he served the Lord "with all humility of mind, and with many tears."

Here he is praying for the Colossians and for those of Laodicea, and for as many as had not seen his face in the flesh. How intense is his expression—"conflict"—anguish of mind and soul on his knees. He was not content that his converts were safe for heaven. He would that their minds might be carried on to all the thoughts of God's purpose revealed in Christ. Shall we not be affected by the sight of the apostle on his knees, his cheeks wet with tears, his frame exhausted by the intensity of the conflict in prayer?

On every hand to-day we see Christians giving up the truth, lowering the flag of testimony, adapting themselves to the altered condition of things, infidel almost as to God's power to maintain His testimony by spiritual means. Where to-day are there the men who would burn for their principles?

May there be with all of us "the full assurance of understanding to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." For this there needs much exercise and prayer. The gain will cost us much, but it is infinitely worth it.

The subjects are vast. We can only draw attention to them and pray that by so doing we may all be exercised.

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.
Chapter 7.—Continued.

I DO not suppose there ever was a day in which the masses were so hard to rule as the day in which we live. Russia groaned under the iron rule of the Czar, and now under the rule of the Soviet their cry of distress is heard throughout the whole world. Everyone wants to rule, and everyone wants that which others have, and if they cannot get it by legal means they will take it by a bloody revolution. But when the revolution has come to pass, how is peace to be established, seeing that the revolution has only brought about a more terrible state of oppression?

Jude in his short epistle speaks of the state of things that subsists to-day, and we see that the evil that abounds is traceable to the same source that brought about the fall of Adam and the ruin of his race. Jude traces the evil to those who denied the only Despot and Lord, Jesus Christ. The next thing we find is, they despise earthly authorities and rail against dignities. You may be perfectly persuaded that if a man will not submit to the authority of the Lord, he will not submit to any other authority, if he can avoid it. The whole world is seething with rebellion at this present time, and no one can tell what a day may bring forth.

What is wanted is a man that can tame, or at least subdue, the savage nature of the people; who will be able to take up the various questions that vex the world, and who shall compel everyone to submit to his dictation. And such an one shall be found in this beast, whose voice shall be like the roar of a lion, striking terror into the heart of the hearer; for we are told that his mouth was like a lion's. He shall have plenty of wisdom to deal with difficult questions, and power enough to cause his judgments
to be respected; for his teeth shall be of iron and his nails of brass; He will devour, break in pieces, and no one shall be able to resist him. This is the man the world is looking for, and this is the man the world shall get. He rises out of the sea, from the populace in agitation.

But he is also said to rise out of the earth, for the whole four kings and their kingdoms also are of the earth. They are not kingdoms that have had their origin in heaven. They are earthly, and belong to this present order of things in which the pride and self-will of man displays itself, and refuses to have any connection or relationship with heaven. God has His own sphere, and they have theirs! If He has interests upon earth, those interests are in their territory, and must, like everything else, come under their authority. As cradled in these principles the four beasts come to their thrones.

But as we have seen, in Revelation the beast is said to arise out of the abyss. Its origin is satanic. This is not said of any other kingdom that I am aware of. Of course this that we have here is a picture of the Roman empire in its revived and last condition. It comes out of the abyss, and goes into destruction (Rev. 17. 8). When it arises it shall dominate the earth; and all those who have settled down in earth, and have made their home here, in contrast with those whose hopes are all centred in heaven, and who look for the establishment of God’s kingdom upon earth, shall fall utterly under its power, and shall do it homage.

And we must not forget that the British Isles are in the sphere of that empire; and how soon most of the inhabitants shall be in the midst of this terrible state of things no one can tell. At present things in the political world seem shaping in the direction of the rise of this empire, and of the man who shall guide and control it.

Soon the saints of the Lord shall be called up to meet Him in the air, and the Spirit, who has been here on earth since Pentecost, shall leave the earth along with them. The devil and his angels shall then be cast down from their heavenly positions, and this empire shall become the sphere of their accursed operations. The beast, the willing tool and vessel of their devilry, shall open his mouth against God, to blaspheme His name and His tabernacle, and those that dwell there.

There is another beast that rises out of the earth, who is not mentioned in this seventh chapter of Daniel, but comes before us in chapter 11. 36. He is the one spoken of in Thessalonians as the man of sin, the son of perdition; “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sittheth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2. 4). He is spoken of in John’s first epistle as the antichrist, and we have his rise and his activities in Rev. 13. 11-16. He is evidently the king in Jerusalem, and he plays into the hand of the Roman emperor. Thus in that day there shall be a trinity of evil, all completely of one mind, and determined to banish every recognition of the true God from the earth. The objects of his special animosity and persecution will be the believing Jews, who then shall be God's witnesses in a world, from which the saints of this present dispensation have been withdrawn to heaven, and, as I have already said, the Holy Spirit shall have gone with them.

From heaven where he now has his seat, the devil shall have been cast down, and his angels along with him, and he full of great fury, knowing that his day of liberty to do evil is very near its close. In that day it shall be woe to the earth as under stable government, and also to the lawless masses that revolt against all authority; “Woe,” says the Spirit of God, “to the earth and to the sea,
because the devil has come down to you, having great rage, knowing he has a short time” (Rev. 12.12 N. Tr.).

It has been said that wickedness never is wise. We might add that this goes without saying, for the extreme height of folly is for the creature to set himself up against his Creator. The fallen creature, whether man or the devil, has often shown himself very crafty and inventive, and often his inventive powers have been so astonishing that they have staggered himself, though the inventions of men have often been the result of mere accident; but whatever they be, the result is to exalt man in his own imagination, and to make him think he is himself a kind of God, if not the only creature that is altogether supreme.

How appalling it is to contemplate a creature, once as perfect as infinite wisdom and goodness could make him, fallen so low as to be the incorrigible enemy of God (Eccles. 3.11; Ezek. 28.11-19); his wisdom corrupted, his beauty disfigured, and his primitive position absolutely irrecoverable! “A short time” to carry on a losing battle with the almighty God! “A short time” to work wickedness in a world that he has already plunged into ruin! “A short time” to destroy the creature made in the likeness of God! “A short time” in which to spread brutality, bloodshed, and murder in the earth! “A short time,” and then, what? A millennium in the abyss; and after that another “short time” in which he shall lead the whole world in revolt against God: after that “The lake that burns with fire and brimstone” for eternity.

And this is the being that men follow! This is the being with whom the king of Jerusalem, and the emperor of revived imperial Rome, shall form their infernal alliance! And all for “a short time” in which to wear a crown, rule a kingdom, oppress the world, and compel a little worship from their fellow-men! “O, the utter insanity and wickedness of it all! Eternity! Eternity, sunless, moonless, starless, Godless, Christless, joyless, hopeless! And how terrible to have to contemplate the awful certainty, that two men at least shall come into it a thousand years before the devil and his angels for whom it is prepared!

When this terrible Roman empire is revived it will be the pride and boast of its citizens. It will be dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly. The people of the empire will turn devil-worshippers, because the devil shall give his power and authority to the beast. The little horn that shall eventually rule the empire will, I have no doubt, be the very kind of man the world is in quest of. He will have intelligence, power of penetration, and his words like the roar of the lion. He will be well to grapple with the questions that agitate the minds of men to-day. He will not have any great difficulty in dealing with either the capitalists or the labourists. The action will as quickly follow the word as the sound follows the explosion of a magazine, and woe betide the soul that resists his authority! Men are seeking such a man to-day; and in that day, which is not far distant, he shall be found.

But God is the special object of attack by this trinity of evil. This evil man shall speak words against the Most High. Great things and blasphemies shall proceed out of his mouth. As regards the other kings, the first three, God was not so much the object of attack as were His people; but here it is directly against God in the heavens that this man’s railing is directed. He does persecute the saints that stand for the rights of God during this time of trial, and who are spoken of as “the saints of the most high places,” as it has been pointed out that “Most High” in verses 18, 22, and the first mentioned “Most High” in verse 25 are plural. These saints stand for the rule of God in the heavens during the
time in which this is denied by the earthly rulers, and that which Nebuchadnezzar had to learn was "that the heavens do rule" (chapter 4. 26); and in the end all the nations of the earth shall have learned this. Against the witnesses to this truth, which in that hour will be of most vital importance, the wrath of this trinity of evil is mainly directed, and under the persecutions to which they will be subjected they shall be worn out. It seems as though none would be left alive. But then it shall be: "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Rev. 14. 13).

But the wrath of this fourth beast is altogether directed against God, though the saints have to suffer because they are His witnesses upon earth. He opens his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (Rev. 13. 6). The heavenly saints having now their dwelling-place in heaven, and the devil having been cast down to the earth, he is absolutely powerless to reach them. He can only open his mouth and include them in the blasphemies that he utters against God.

But determined to have his revenge, and having no longer access to heaven, he will put forth all his power to prevent God having any place upon earth. He makes war with the saints, prevails against them, destroys the saints of the high places, changes times and laws which are connected with Jewish worship, and seeks to destroy out of the earth both the Name of God, and everything that relates to that Name.

And for the moment it will seem as though he would accomplish his infernal will, for everything on earth that does not submit to his authority falls before his merciless sword. Our Lord tells us that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24. 22). If those days were lengthened out over the twelve hundred and sixty days, there would be no saints of God to enter the millennial earth: all would be destroyed. But the coming of the Ancient of days, judgment committed to the saints of the high places, the arrival of the appointed time, and the kingdom taken possession of by the saints, shall put an end to the reign of this terrible trinity of evil. The kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heavens, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most high places; that is, I have no doubt, the Jews shall be given the authority of the kingdom under the reign of the Messiah, and peace shall be brought to the earth.

The advent of the Ancient of days puts an end to kingdom and reign of the fourth beast. The Stone cut out of the mountain without hands strikes the image of Nebuchadnezzar's dream upon the feet of iron and clay, and the glory and power and strength of them are in a moment reduced to powder, and are as the chaff of the threshing floor, which is carried away by the winds of heaven, and the remembrance of them ceases from the earth. A kingdom is established under the reign of the Son of Man, and the wearied earth is rejuvenated by His glorious administration.

The trinity of evil is no longer dreaded. The head of the Roman empire and the antichristian king of Jerusalem, or, in the words of the Apocalypse, the beast and the false prophet, are both cast alive into the lake of fire, and the devil that deceived them is imprisoned for the space of a thousand years in the abyss. The nations also must give account to the King for the way they behaved toward the servants of the Lord who had gone out with the Gospel of the kingdom during the terrible reign of the beast. Their attitude toward God and His Christ is
seen in the way they treated His messengers, and by this are they judged. His enemies perish in the everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels. Those who at the peril of their lives cared for those messengers, and thus manifested their affection for the coming Messiah, are saluted as the blessed of His Father, and called to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the world’s foundation. His enemies get that portion which was never contemplated they should merit, and His friends which had been prepared for them, when the foundation of the earth was laid. How thoroughly the ways of the creature justify the counsels of the Creator! Every way that the responsible creature takes has its legitimate end, and is unalterable in its consequences; for in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to the Gospel preached by Paul, God shall render to every man according to his deeds: “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and 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: for there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2. 6-11). Grace that saves the believing sinner does not alter this principle, which is inherent in the very nature of God.

How it comes to pass, where there is none righteous, and none that do good, any can be found characterized by patient continuance in well doing, might well seem to be a mystery, but this is fully gone into in the rest of the Roman epistle, in which the believer is seen, not only to be justified but to have justification of life (chapter 5. 18), that is, to be in the life of the One in whom we are justified, also by the death of Christ to have got our freedom from sin’s domination, so that we have the privilege of reckoning ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (chapter 6.), and also the Spirit given to us as the power of the new nature and life, in order that we may produce righteousness.

The truth is, the salvation of God is a perfect salvation, a work worthy of Himself. It is not a patchwork of the old order; there is no tinkering with the old nature, no attempt to disinfect the evil from the flesh; it is new birth, new life and nature; sins put away, and the nature that the sins sprang from condemned in the unspiring judgment of the cross; it is life, relationship, and being, in the last Adam the heavenly Man, with the Holy Spirit given to dwell in us, as the power by which all our new and eternal relationships with God are enjoyed.

By this work of God, both for us and in us, power is given to us that enables us to seek by patient continuance in well doing the glory, honour, and incorruptibility, that are set before us in the Gospel; and thus by the practice of righteousness we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (Rom. 6. 22). Truly that which we are we are by the grace of God; but those that are saved by that grace come under its blessed teaching, and are characterized by denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present evil world (Titus 2). Where people do not submit to the Gospel they remain under sin’s dominion, and by such nothing but sin is produced, and therefore in the judgment they cannot escape the consequence of such a life, for God does not depart from the principles that must ever characterize a righteous judge. The way of escape is through faith in Christ; for Him who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might
become the righteousness of God in Him, and such do not come into judgment, for

"Payment God will not twice demand, Once at my bleeding Surety's hand, And then again at mine."

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

The Great Commission.

Is our Lord's command, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," to be applied to all the church, or was it a command to the eleven only? And if so, is there anything to suggest that they fully carried out this command? Does Colossians 1:23 do so?

To what extent is the church responsible before God to the heathen? If individual believers should be specially sent, what would correspond to the Spirit's call as in the case of Paul and Barnabas, in the present divided state of the church?

Am I right in thinking that a man should not leave his secular calling unless very definitely led of God?—BLACKHEATH.

Our Lord's command to preach the Gospel was addressed primarily to the eleven. You quote the account given in Mark 16., and as far as the record of that Gospel is concerned we might suppose it only applied to them. They were to preach "to every creature," or "to all the creation." The message was to be no longer confined to Israel. The last verse of the chapter tells us that "They went forth and preached everywhere," which means, we judge, not that they actually preached in every nook and cranny of the inhabited earth, but that they obeyed the instructions and preached to all sorts and conditions of men, no longer discriminating between Jew and Gentile.

In Matthew 28, we have another account of this great commission and there clearly enough the Lord had in view the eleven and all the servants of the Lord who should follow Him, for He said: "I am with you all the days, until the completion of the age" (N. Tr.). Luke's account of the commission is still more general in its bearing. It is that repentance and remission should be preached "among all nations," without any definite statement as to by whom it should be done.

We think, then, that the answer to your first question is that though the command was primarily to the apostles, it applies also to all who serve the Lord.

As to the way in which the apostles carried out these instructions, we have the last verse of Mark's Gospel already referred to as well as Col. 1. 23. But neither of these verses asserts that the work was fully done by the apostles. The rendering of this latter verse in the New Translation is: "the glad tidings . . . which have been proclaimed in the whole creation which is under heaven." That is, as we understand it, it had been freely proclaimed to all men and not restricted to the Jews. Still there had, of course, been a most thorough and widespread preaching of the Gospel, especially by the Apostle Paul, as Rom. 15. 19 asserts.

The formal preaching of the Gospel is in the hands of those gifted by the Lord for such work. Still all Christians are responsible by some means or other to propagate the faith. In that sense the Church is responsible for the Gospel to the heathen. The Spirit's call to Paul and Barnabas as recorded in Acts 13. 1-3, was of a very special nature. By it there was the formal inauguration of missionary work amongst the Gentiles. We hardly suppose that such a call has been repeated.

Still those who preach the Gospel should ever be much cast upon God for guidance as to their movements, whether at home or abroad, and it certainly needs a very definite leading of God for anyone to abandon his secular calling to give all his time to the work of God.
NOTES FROM ADDRESSES.
Given in Australia.


The servant of the high priest would hold a commission from his master to go with Judas into the garden and lead that multitude that went forth to take the Lord Jesus captive. He would carry the warrant for His arrest. How astonished Peter must have been when Judas stepped out of the throng and put the traitorous kiss upon the Master's cheek. He did not know how to deal with Judas, but he had no hesitation as to how to treat Malchus when he, vaunting himself in his temporary authority, laid hands upon the Lord, and in the name of the high priest directed the band to make Him their prisoner. At such audacity the natural indignation of Peter flamed up hotly, and drawing his sword he aimed one mighty blow at the dastard, meaning to lay him dead at his feet, cleft through the skull.

It was new work for the fisherman, he had not been trained to wield a sword, and that misdirected energy only resulted in the loss of an ear to Malchus and the exposure of Peter's folly. No, that was not the only result, there was another. "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world," the Lord had said, and those works were not yet finished, and that light was still to shine amid the deepening gloom. Hence, with a word of gentle rebuke to Peter, He stretched out His hand and touched the severed ear and healed it. The last act of those tender hands ere they were bound by His hardened captors was to heal the leader of them. The audacity of Malchus and the impetuosity of Peter only served as an opportunity for the continued manifestation of the absolute goodness which in Him was to triumph over all evil. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" are the first words recorded as having come from His lips in this Gospel of Luke in which alone is recorded the healing of Malchus. That business was blessing and not judgment; it was healing and not a sword. And "the acceptable year of the Lord" in which such incomparable, invincible mercy was displayed has continued until this day.

That last miracle wrought in such circumstances, and so calculated to move any heart and open any eyes not utterly hardened and blinded by sin, had no affect upon the multitude; it does not seem to have impressed even Peter at the time, but it did afterwards. Could he ever forget it?—when instructed by the Holy Spirit he learned the glory of that submission to suffering which he had seen in his Master, and the blessedness of that grace that was in Him that returned only good for evil, and that could not be provoked by any insult to retaliate in kind. There can be little doubt but that this very incident was in his mind when he wrote his Epistles and dwelt upon the sufferings of Christ and exhorted the saints to "follow His steps," the steps of the One who suffered patiently in the path of God's will, and so was infinitely acceptable to God. Ah! that was the secret that lay behind it all. He sought not His own ease or glory, He valued not His own reputation or contended for His own rights, the glory of God was His purpose; to finish His work and to be acceptable to Him was His very life. And so Peter, who recalls those sufferings and tells us of them so
tenderly, also tells us that “He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (2 Pet. 1. 17). To be pleasing to His Father was enough for Him.

Brethren, as we consider how patiently the Lord suffered, are not our souls moved and drawn to Him? It is not because crowns of glory shine resplendent on His brow that we love Him and adore Him. No, we rejoice and are exceeding glad because of His exaltation, yet it is that lowly pathway of sorrow that ended in the cross that has bound our hearts to Him with unbreakable fetters. Suffering love has claimed us and made us His disciples TO FOLLOW IN IHS STEPS. And as we are partakers of His sufferings, happy are we, for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon us (1 Pet. 4. 14). In such a path we are acceptable to God, for it is the path that the feet of Jesus trod.

We shall be tested continually. Yes, tested by our brethren as well as by the world, and the test may be more severe from within the Christian circle than from without it. Ah! how ready are we to draw the sword and slash away when we think that we have been wronged. To draw the sword, too, not in fancied defence of the Lord as Peter did, but in our own defence, and how many we have wounded and harmed, who only can be healed by the touch of the Lord, by the bitter spirit of resentment and retaliation which so often rises up within us. May the Lord pardon us for all such un-Christ-like conduct. This is the day in which we may suffer for Christ's sake, in which when we are reviled we may bless, and overcome evil with good, and so follow in His steps. The grace that transformed Peter from what we see him to be in Gethsemane to what he was when he wrote his Epistle can transform us also, and it will if we consider the ways of the Lord as He considered them, and learn of Him as taught by the Holy Ghost, for grace and the knowledge of the Lord Jesus are inseparable. Peter who had learned the lesson well linked them together in the last exhortation that he ever gave to the church: “But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

Faith and Love.—Mark 15.

It is encouraging to see that God always had in reserve some to bear witness to His Son and to do Him honour, and sometimes they were brought forth from most unexpected quarters. Such were the Gentile sages from the East at the birth of the Lord, and Mary of Bethany with her box of spikenard in view of His burial, and the dying malefactor amid the hours of suffering on the cross, and now more surprising than all when the Lord had yielded Himself to death.

The Roman centurion could not be charged with any bias in favour of the
as that they would BELIEVE. And surely if He could do that it would be a proof of His power." But if the centurion had listened to such reasoning, which it must be owned was quite logical, he would have gone to his home when his day's work was done still a pagan. But faith, not reason, moved him, and where the devil thought he had blinded every eye that might have discerned the glory of the Lord, and silenced every tongue that might have spoken for Him, the chief man on the spot that day speaks out, and the death of the Lord, which to priests and Pharisees was a proof that He was not what He claimed to be, was to the centurion the revelation of the truth. And it is here that all true faith finds its birth. We must begin with Christ crucified; there is no faith according to God's reckoning apart from this. The Jew stumbles at it, and the Greek scoffs at it. Blind reason will not have it, but faith confesses that Jesus who died is the Son of God, that the cross is the revelation of God's love to men and the one way by which they can be brought back to God. The centurion carried from that scene, in which he had participated, a light that nothing could quench, for he carried away faith in the Son of God.

Then came Joseph, and he was an honourable man and a counsellor. If he had considered his reputation amongst his fellows he would have stayed at home that day, but all thought of self is abandoned, the secrecy of his discipleship must end, and that when naturally we should have thought that he would have been most anxious to conceal it. If the Lord had come down from the cross in response to the challenge of the priests, he might have been bold and said, "I knew all the time who He was"; but it is when He hangs dead, apparently utterly defeated, and when Peter and the other disciples have forsaken Him and fled, that this nobleman comes forth boldly and craves His body. He was the man whom God had held in reserve, and his love for the Lord now brings him into the open and makes him bold to face the world that had rejected and crucified his Lord.

It was God's plan, and nothing can frustrate His plans. "They had made His grave with the wicked," as Isa. 53:9 should read. A rough hole into which they would have cast His precious body, along with the corrupting carcasses of the thieves, had been dug; but now that His work was done indignities must cease, no more dishonour must be done to Him, He is "with the rich in His death." His burial is honourable, and in the new rock-hewn tomb of an honourable man, and though only a few were the mourners, the angels of God were there to mark the place.

But what I want to press is the fact that Joseph identified himself with a dead Christ. The centurion confessed Him—that was FAITH. Joseph identified himself with Him—that was LOVE. Only the love that reckons neither scorn nor danger, that flings aside all thought of self, could have made Joseph bold to crave from Pilate that dead body. Henceforward he would be known as the man who had taken his stand for the crucified Nazarene, and that act would most surely break every association that he had with with priest and Pharisees in former days.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper and eat of the loaf which speaks to us of the dead body of our Lord, of His body given for us, we identify ourselves with His dead body as Joseph did. I know of no better illustration of it. It is true that we know Him risen, exalted, triumphant, and as such He gave His presence to those who are gathered unto His Name, but the broken loaf carries us back to that moment that brought Joseph of Arimathaea to light. It is a dead Christ that we recall, dead in His love to us, and in eating that loaf we identify ourselves with Him in His death as Joseph did. It is love
in our hearts responding to the love that was in His that moved Him to die for us. May it be real with us, constraining us gladly to accept the consequence as Joseph did.

This is a great test for us; I might say it is the greatest test of all. Faith confesses His greatness, it owns the truth as to His person; but love can only be satisfied with identification with Him, and if He is despised, cast out, and dead as far as this world is concerned, then we will throw in our lot with Him and share His reproach and accept for ourselves the place that they have awarded Him. There was one man more honourable than all in the eyes of God the Father that day, and that man was Joseph; but men of the same mind are maintained by the grace of God to this day and will be to the end, for it is still God's plan that His Son, though despised and rejected, should be loved and honoured, and nothing can thwart His plan. May we each be one of these.

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.

Chapter B.—The Course of Empire.

WHEN we come to this vision that appeared to Daniel we find that it was given him in the third year of the reign of Belshazzar, and that in the vision he is away in the province of Elam, in the fortress of Shushan, and by the river Ulai. The river here seems to symbolize the armed forces of Persia in their restless energy of imperial conquest. The ram which he saw, which symbolizes the Medo-Persian kingdom, stands before the river, observing and directing its movements. The ram is seen pushing westward, northward, and southward, and no beast could stand before it, neither could any deliver out of his hand. Moreover he did according to his will, and became great. There does not seem to be in him any recognition of God, or of one supreme Being, whose rights should be respected upon the earth. One is in measure astonished at reading this, because of the honourable mention that Cyrus has in Isa. 45., though there He does say, "I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known Me." Later in his career than the point in which Daniel is made to see him, he may have been brought into the light of the knowledge of the Lord. And this thought gets some confirmation from what is said to him, with reference to his assault and capture of Babylon: "I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the Lord which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel." Here, anyhow, the ram that symbolizes the kings of Media and Persia (and Cyrus the Persian was the higher horn) does according to his will: no higher authority seems to be recognized.

The first king we read of in the Word of God is Nimrod, and the beginning of his kingdom was Babel; and it seems as though his ambition was universal dominion, for the object in view in the building of the tower of Babel was to have a centre of government, control and supervision. The tower was never completed, nor shall universal dominion ever be achieved by any man, until He comes to whom the whole creation of right belongs. To Him, and to Him alone, shall every creature in heaven and on earth be made subject.

The thoughts of kings from the beginning have always run in this channel of world empire; but so far every attempt to reach this coveted
position has resulted in disaster to the aspirant. The greatness, the influence, the honour, the dignity, and the glory of the various kingdoms of the earth have been that which rulers have ever sought to safeguard and advance, and hence come the wars and fightings, the bloody battlefields and broken hearts. And sometimes when success seems to have crowned the efforts made to secure the sceptre of the world, and the hand has been stretched out to grasp the prize, it has been dashed aside by some unforeseen event, and he who grasped at too much has lost everything. Nimrod could not battle against the confusion of tongues, nor keep Asshur from going out and building Nineveh (Gen. 10. 9-11).

And the devil is very well aware of what men are after, and he has not a little to do with the disposal of the thrones of this world. The prospect of an easy method by which our Lord might possess the kingdoms of the world was the bait he used in attempting to decoy Him from the path of obedience, which He had taken for the glory of the Father. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them: "and saith unto Him, All these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4. 8, 9).

It might be thought that the devil was in this instance over-estimating his powers, but our Lord does not dispute the pretension he makes. He may have a hand in the setting up of by far the greater number of those that have reigned, but I question that he had any hand at all in placing either David or Solomon on the throne of Israel. Nor can he place any monarch upon a throne without the permission of God. And God has His own wise purpose in view even when he allows Satan to have his way in putting a sceptre into the hand of a man. In whatever way we see a man rise up to occupy a throne upon earth, it is our privilege, and bounden duty, to recognize that ruler as established by God in the place of supremacy, irrespective of the means he may have used to arrive at that exalted position. He will have to give account to God for the way in which he exercises the authority that has been placed in his hands, but our position is to recognize him as God's minister, set there for our good, and as one that does not bear the sword in vain.

The conquest of Babylon by the Medo-Persian is passed over here, for we have it in chapter 5. The Persian empire is successfully assailed and overthrown by the king of Greece, the he-goat that came from the west, and which is characterized by a notable horn between his eyes, and by rapidity of movement, also by the fury with which he attacked and destroyed the power of the ram, casting him down to the ground and trampling upon him: An old grudge against the ram was what evidently led to this terrible exhibition of hostility.

Not with the history of the numerous wars in which the ram or the he-goat had engaged does the Spirit of God occupy us. The only things regarding the ram thought worthy of record are his ambition, his might, and the fact that his activities were the result of his own will. And as to the he-goat, he is said not to touch the ground in his going. As this feature indicates, he leapt from victory to victory, and became exceeding great. But just when he had reached the zenith of his power, the great horn becomes broken, and in its stead came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. But in the interpretation of the vision we are told these were not in his power.

Out of one of these four horns there arises a little horn, which became great, and which the Spirit of God at once shows us is engaged with the people of God, and with the land of that people. And here where we might least expect it, the people are designated "The host of heaven." They may have fallen into a weak, humble, and
...down-trodden condition, but we must take His estimation of them, nor judge of them as they appear before the eyes of men. The moment they crossed the Jordan, the angel with the drawn sword in his hand spoke of them as the Lord's host, of which he was captain (Josh. 5. 14). They have ever the supreme place in the mind of God, as far as the earth is concerned. It was the purpose of God that they should occupy the supreme place in the government of the world, and they shall yet have it. It was this fact that sustained the faith of David, when Goliath struck terror into the hearts of the people, when gathered together to war with the Philistines. He is utterly astounded at the fool-hardiness of a man who, whatever he might seem to be in the eyes of men, was in the estimation of faith but a poor worm of the dust, who had defied "the armies of the living God" (I Sam. 17. 36). The people might be trembling in their armour, but they were the Lord's host, and that was enough for David.

We get the same power of faith in Joshua and Caleb, who saw the sons of Anak as grasshoppers, because they viewed them in relation to God, whereas the rest of the spies, who went up with them to search the land, saw themselves as grasshoppers in the sight of the sons of Anak (Num. 13.). In all cases it requires faith in God, if we are to lay hold of the high position to which His grace has called us. The privileges of His people are always great, for with lavish hand He gives His blessings, but it has ever been very little that they have been able to lay hold of and enjoy their privileges. Israel were told that one of them would chase a thousand (Josh. 23. 10), through faith in the living God, who fought their battles. But through their departure from God they were to find themselves to be very much weaker than their enemies, for one of their enemies would chase a thousand of them, and two would put ten thousand to flight (Deut. 32. 30).

Still are they His chosen people, and when His own time comes He will turn them to Himself; and they shall be manifestly His host, when the day arrives in which they shall have to deal with His and their enemies. Then "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" (Micah 5. 8). But this time has not yet come; for however great the sorrows of this people have been, and are, the waters they shall have to pass through shall be still deeper than anything which they have hitherto met.

This little horn casts down some of the host, and also of the stars to the ground. The rulers of the nation become obnoxious to this man’s pride of heart, who like every other autocrat is unable to bear the slightest resistance to his will from any over whom he is victorious. Nor does he stop with this exhibition of his despotic tyranny. He sets himself against the prince of the host, and takes away from him the continual sacrifice, and casts down the place of his sanctuary. By reason of transgression a time of trial is appointed to the continual sacrifice. The truth also is cast down to the ground, for nothing seems to withstand this little horn.

Were the people of God in a state pleasing to the Lord this would not happen to them, but the time referred to here has the last days in view, though that which happened to them by the cruelties inflicted by Antiochus Epiphanes may serve as a foreshadowing of the things that will come upon them with greater severity under the Antichrist. For their rejection and crucifying of their Messiah they shall be made to pass through unparalleled sufferings, though they seem as though they already had suffered more than falls to the common lot of men.
I have no doubt that Daniel was very confident there was much underlying this vision, much that did not appear on the surface, about which God would have him greatly enlightened. Hence his desire to know its meaning. And this is conveyed to him by the angel Gabriel. In the interpretation we learn that the doings of the little horn in the vision are but a faint foreshadowing of that which shall take place through the conduct of a power that shall be established in the east, as the Roman power shall be in the west, and by means of another power, not his own, he shall prosper and destroy. An offspring of the great destroyer, the devil, his object shall be to destroy every vestige of the name of God upon the earth, but he shall be broken without hand. Christ will deal with him at His appearing. No human hand shall deal with him. The sword that shall lay him low shall proceed out of the mouth of the Lord. What a life of rebellion against God! and what a solemn ending to the life of a responsible creature! May our ways upon earth not be directed and energized by our own wills, but by the holy will of God. This only is the safe and happy way for the creature.


We refer to them because “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). We trust we shall see as we proceed that as the Lord gave guidance to His people in that day, so He makes known His mind to His children in this day, and as there was “the place” then, so there is “the place” now.

Turning, then, to chapter 12, we find, in the first instance, that when the children of Israel came into the land, their attitude to the existing religion thereof was to be one of uncompromising opposition, and they were to be characterized by unflinching fidelity to Jehovah.

Their enemies had had “places” where they had “served their gods,” but for them there should be only

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"The place which the Lord shall choose." They were not to choose for themselves; the Lord was to choose for them. The place which He should choose was to be the place of “His habitation” (verse 5). In other words, His house would be there, His Name would be there, and there was He to be known. They were warned against following the bent of their own will, or preferring what they might have chosen (verses 13, 14), and they were instructed that the place of the Lord’s choice was to be the rallying point for them. Herein there is for us a lesson of the first importance.

We are living in days when the word “toleration” is the slogan of the religious world. It is said, in effect: “It does not really matter to what we belong, where, how, or with whom we worship; we are all bound for the same place, and it will be all right in the end.” Then there are those who have got light beyond this, who look abroad and see many different companies of true Christians sincerely seeking to
answer to the revealed truth of Holy Scripture, and they say: "They seem to be all pretty much alike, and it makes little difference where we are found." Had an Israelite been tempted to argue thus, he would have heard a voice saying unto him: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest: but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee" (verses 13, 14). We judge that the Lord is no less careful, and our path is no less clear, in this day.

Why should this be insisted upon and repeated with such constant reiteration? We may be sure the Holy Spirit never indulges in needless repetition. If "the place" was to be "His habitation," that meant that the Lord would find pleasure in surrounding Himself with those whom He loved, and whom He had chosen to be "a special people unto Himself" (7. 6-8). So now our blessed Lord loves to gather His own around Himself, and to take His place amongst them. We wish to give Him that joy but where? "In the place which the Lord shall choose."

Verses 21 to 25 show the gracious and tender consideration of the Lord. Some might, from various legitimate causes, be prevented from reaching that place. Such might enjoy communion with Him where they were; but a limit was put upon that, the "holy things," the "burnt offerings," had to be offered at "the place which the Lord shall choose." There are devoted saints in these days who are bedridden, or in other ways are prevented from being gathered with their fellow-believers, and such may know the sweetness of communion where they are. It is, however, when assembled together around the Lord Himself, that, as nowhere else, His love is apprehended, His preciousness is appreciated, and true Spirit-begotten worship rises through Him to God the Father's ear.

Some say, "We can enjoy the Lord at home; we can worship in our own room." We have known those who living in a spot where the Lord had "much people" preferred isolation to fellowship, for such verses 26–28 have a solemn admonition.

In chapter 16, there is again the injunction to adhere to "the place which the Lord Thy God shall choose to place His Name in" (verses 5, 6). This chapter may be summed up by verses 16 and 17. The males were looked upon representatively. The three feasts were the outstanding feasts in the Israelitish calendar, and have a very real significance for us. As we consider them we are at once reminded of the Lord's Supper, and of that which the Lord would have us to learn from that sacred feast. "The feast of unleavened bread" is inseparably connected with "the passover." We begin with redemption. So in the Lord's Supper we remember a dead Christ. We recall the settling of the great sin question, the accomplishment of the mighty redemptive work; we see how God's glory has been maintained, the majesty of His throne has been upheld, the righteousness of His character has been vindicated, the love of His heart has been revealed, the basis has been laid for all His purposes to be fulfilled, and our adorable Lord has secured for Himself that upon which His love was set. There is, however, the "unleavened bread" connected with this, and in this chapter it is called "the bread of affliction" (verse 3). Never must we forget that it was our sins that made that work a necessity. This will prevent flippancy in manner and in language when gathered to remember Him.

"The feast of tabernacles" points on to Israel's glorious future; it indicates the ultimate triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ. In eating the Lord's Supper we contemplate His victory in all its fulness—not simply as applying to Israel, but as that which will be consummated by His delivering
up the kingdom to God, even the Father . . . "that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15. 24-28). We announce His death "till He come" (1 Cor. 11. 26), which means not only that this precious remembrance will go on "till He come," but that we have in view His coming to put the top stone to the work, the foundation of which He laid at the cross (Rev. 21. 1-8).

The central feast was "the feast of weeks." That is figurative of Pentecost, and speaks to us of the coming of the Holy Spirit to take up His abode in God's house, and in the hearts of God's children. When we eat the Lord's Supper the Holy Spirit carries our thoughts backward, leads us into the ever deepening apprehension of all that the work of Christ has secured for God and for us; and He carries our minds forward to the coming day of glory. When He has His own way with us, we cannot be "empty;" we shall give to the Lord of that which He has given to us; we will realize that it is a "feast," and our souls will rejoice. Surely all this is a great incentive for us to seek the place of the Lord's choice, to know

THE PLACE AND THE PURPOSE.

Shall we now turn to the last book in the Old Testament, Malachi 3. 16, 17? A thousand years had elapsed between the time of the instructions which we have been considering, and the period herein indicated. Alas! ruin had come in. The people who professed His Name had turned away from the Lord, and so completely had they been lulled to sleep by the enemy that they were unconscious of their deplorable condition. It seemed as if all had gone, and there was nothing left for God. Yet amid the darkness there is a glimmer of light. "Then"—with all the emphasis upon the "then"—"Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." It is doubtful if the word "often" should be there; it is omitted in the Revised Version, and also in the French Edition of the excellent translation by the late J. N. Darby. It would appear to have been characteristic of those that feared the Lord to speak one to another. They may have been few, very likely they were feeble, and probably they were despised, but they "feared the Lord," they "thought upon His Name," and so grateful was this to Him that He "hearkened." He stooped to listen—"and heard;" He ordered the "book of remembrance" to be written, and He said, "they shall be Mine."

Closely connected with this is Luke 2. 25-38. Fifteen hundred years or thereabout, had rolled by since that of which we read in Deuteronomy. There had been from the day that Malachi wrote no intercourse between God and the mass of His people. The failure, to all outward appearance, was complete. Two are named in these verses. They were in "the place," and they revered "the Name" of the Lord. Had they been asked, "Why do you cling to the place?" would they not have replied, "Because it is the place which the Lord has chosen to place His Name there?" They "feared the Lord," they "thought upon His Name," nor were they without companions, for Anna "spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." "The secret of the Lord" was with them; they were waiting for the first coming of Christ, and when He came they constituted the true worshippers. All this confirms the fact that God never leaves Himself without a witness.

When we think of the present-day application of that which we have been considering, our thoughts turn to that very familiar but priceless word in Matthew 18. 20: "For where two or three are gathered together in [or, unto] My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

Here we still have "the place"—"where"—and the Name—"My Name." Whereas in that which we have been considering we have the
place and the purpose, here we have THE PLACE, THE PERSON AND THE PURPOSE.

May not our blessed Lord have had in view a day of declension and departure such as the present when He uttered these words? They are equally true of two or three hundred, or two or three score, but He came down to the minimum when He said "two or three." Why do we see here and there two or three passing by grand religious edifices, not mingling with the crowds who resort thither, not invoking the aid of college-bred men, not adopting a form of service, but coming together in the simplest possible way? They may suffer in work, in business, and in other ways. They may be lightly esteemed even by those who profess faith in Christ. What is the secret? Is it not that the Lord has attracted them to Himself, that His Name is the only Name that they seek to own, that they desire to respond to His gathering call, that they wish to give Him the joy that He seeks in this way, and that they long to have the joy of His company?

Some person may say, "That sounds all very nice, but in the confusion that exists can we insist that there is a place?" There was in the olden times, when they came into the land with flying colours, and all was well with them; there was in Malachi's day when the failure was great and the sky was black; there was in the day of Simeon and Anna when the night was at its darkest. There was also in the day of the Assembly's pristine freshness and purity; there was in the day of failure at Corinth, and, as we have already remarked, our Lord's words recorded in Matt. 18. 20, lead us to expect that there will ever be a place where His Name shall be placed, and where He Himself shall be found.

Does some one ask—where? We venture to reply that if we are moved by the affection, and actuated by the desire of the inquirer in the Song of Solomon, we shall learn where. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou makest Thy flock to rest at noon" (1. 7). When we find the Person we shall reach the place, and we shall find Him not by our intellect, but as our feet follow our heart, the heart being set upon Him and Him alone.

In closing we invite attention to the last book in the New Testament, Rev. 3. 7-13. If we accept the review of the seven Churches in Asia as being a survey of the entire Church period from the day of Pentecost until the coming of the Lord, may we not assume that amid the corruption of Romanism (Thyatira), the deadness of Protestantism (Sardis), and the utter ruin of Christendom generally (Laodicea), Philadelphia stands out as representing those who will be found just before the Lord's return, who fear Him, who think upon His Name, who speak of Him, and who will be found watching when He returns? They are marked by "a little power," but the Lord takes account of them, and He is able to say to them, "Thou hast kept My word, and hast not denied My Name" (verse 8). To them, Himself, His Name, and His Word are everything, and if despised and looked down upon here, he assures them that He will yet demonstrate that they are the object of His love (verse 9). We may be sure such will not escape the notice of the enemy. If he can induce them to give up, and to go with the majority, how glad will he be. If he can make the road seem rough, the night of Christ's absence long, and the difficulties great, some may drop out by the way. To counteract this there comes the encouraging word of the Lord Himself: "I come quickly: hold fast what thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (verse 11 N. Tr.). No need to say, "Behold," They are expecting Him, waiting and watching for Him. This hope it is that has separated them from the world in every shape and form, and that has
called them to the outside place in company with Himself.

Only a few more steps, only a little more roughing, and then travelling days are done; He Himself shall be our Object, His Name our boast, His love our theme for ever and ever.

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter?

1. The Lord calls us to entire separation from the world and its religious systems.

2. He has chosen a place where He has placed His Name, where He seeks for Himself the joy of calling His own together around Himself.

3. His Name is to be the only rallying point, His Name is to be the bond, and His Word the only recognized authority.

4. His fear ever before them, love for His Name filling their heart, those who are attracted to Him will find delight in speaking of Him to one another.

5. No matter how dark the night, how difficult the path, or how small the number, such can at all times count upon His support.

6. The Holy Spirit is here to guide such into and maintain such in the path of His will.

7. The promise of His speedy return will encourage such to be loyal to His Word and true to His Name.

We are persuaded that in these closing moments of the church's history, nearly twenty centuries after its inception, the Lord would seek to revive this in the hearts of His own, so that there may be a real gathering out to Himself now. Surely we all desire to answer to His call, to have His approval here, and His smile when we see Him face to face.

THE HOPE, AND ITS EFFECTS. (F. B. HOLE.)

DURING Old Testament times hope was pre-eminent. Faith, of course, was there, as Hebrews 11, so strikingly shows, and love also, but that which was revealed so as to present an object to faith was but small and partial, and every saint had his eyes directed on into the future. Hebrews 11, while emphasizing faith makes this element of hope very plain, as may be seen if verses 10, 13, 14, 16, 20, 22, 26, 35 and 40 are read.

The appearing of the Saviour in humiliation, that He might accomplish redemption, has fulfilled many an Old Testament hope and prediction, and in Him the great Object that fills faith's vision has been discovered. By that epoch-making event a whole range of things that were matters of promise have been translated into matters of accomplished fact, and thereby they have been removed from the category of hope and placed upon that of faith. To these things the saint of to-day does not look on, he looks back upon them instead.

But though this is so, hope still remains a very potent force with the Christian, and many things remain to be fulfilled. Hope is no longer pre-eminent as once it was; indeed, we may say that faith and love have stepped out beyond it; still it abides with faith and love as 1 Corinthians 13. 13 reminds us. We are “saved in hope” (Rom. 8. 24, N. Tr.), and our hopes are sufficiently pronounced for Christianity itself to be designated not only “the faith,” but “a hope.” We refer to Hebrews 7. 19. In the New Translation the passage runs thus: “There is a setting aside of the commandment going before for its weakness
and unprofitableness (for the law perfected nothing), and the introduction of a better hope by which we draw nigh to God."

The law introduced hopes of a sort, but they were connected with a system that necessarily prohibited access to God. Christianity has introduced the one great hope, which hangs upon the great High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, who is shortly to come forth from the presence of God. But meanwhile He is in the presence of God, and as there on our behalf, crowned with glory and honour, He gives us title to draw near and maintains us in our access to God. When He comes forth again, at His second Advent, we shall begin to see our hopes fulfilled.

The Christian hope is not something of an advanced nature to be apprehended only by those of ripe experience. It lies at the very beginning of things. The Colossian believers heard of it "in the word of the truth of the Gospel" (1. 5), and the Thessalonians were still an infant assembly when Paul wrote to them his first epistle, in every chapter of which he speaks of the coming of the Lord. There were details of His coming concerning which they needed further instruction, but the fact of His coming again was known to them from the hour of their conversion, for it could be said of them, "Ye turned to God from idols . . . to wait for His Son from heaven" (1. 9, 10).

A very large number of those who will read these lines are in this respect like the Colossians and the Thessalonians. A century ago it was far otherwise. Then the coming of the Lord, the proper hope of the Christian, was very largely ignored altogether or else was relegated to a future so hazy and far distant that it excited little or no influence as a hope. Now it occupies a prominent place in the minds of most evangelical Christians, and has for many decades been preached with increasing conviction and clearness. Some of our readers who are of an older generation may be able to look back to a moment subsequent to their conversion, when the truth of the imminent, pre-millennial coming of the Lord shone into their hearts as a hope, and began mightily to influence their lives, but the great mass of those who are younger have heard about His coming from the outset. It, perhaps, played a part in producing exercise which eventuated in their conversion, and it has never burst upon them with quite that thrilling power that a genuine hope conveys. The writer of this article stands in this latter category himself.

The danger with us, then, clearly is that we may hold the coming of the Lord as an item in our theology without it being a hope, potent to influence our lives.

We earnestly ask for close attention to this point and for an honest spirit of self-examination and self-judgment. We challenge especially every Christian young man or young woman as to whether they are "like unto men that wait for their Lord," and, consequently, shaping their course through the world's present gloom in view of the day that will be manifested when Christ appears, or whether, while avoiding its gross sins and excesses, they are conforming to the world's ways and spirit, and seeking their own things rather than the things of their Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need not go outside 1 Thessalonians 1, for clear evidence as to the effect of the hope upon the Thessalonian believers, and the marks it left upon them and upon their lives may serve as very useful tests to us if we wish to examine ourselves upon the point.

The Gospel came to these believers of primitive days, "not . . . in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance" (verse 5). The heralds of it amongst them, Paul and his companions, were men of a most unusual "manner" in
their grace and devotedness, and they preached the Gospel with uncommon power and fulness. Jesus, the Son of God, risen, in heaven, and coming from heaven was their theme (verse 10).

Embracing such a message in faith great moral results at once appeared in them. Divine life was now theirs, and it began to manifest itself. An extraordinary revolution took place in their characters. New life meant a new nature; and a new nature meant transformed characters. Things now appeared in them personally that had never been there before—things not donned outwardly as an article of raiment, but rather produced outwardly as the fruit of the working of life within, as the feathers of a bird or the leaves of a tree. Faith and love and hope were working in their hearts (verse 3).

Each of these three things, however, had its own appropriate manifestation. Faith expressed itself in work; love in labour; hope in patience, or endurance. God could see fully and appreciate the faith and love and hope—the things wrought in them. Man could see and consequently "remember without ceasing" the work and the labour and the patience—the things manifested by them as a fruit of the work within.

It has been said that God has more to do in us than by us, and the remark is profoundly true. What, then, about the work of God in us? Shall we test ourselves? Have we the spiritual fibre to do so? Look at the young people of the world, viewing them in the most favourable light, as they express themselves in their most innocent pleasures; what marks them? We should answer by naming a trio of things which are very opposite to the trio of Thessalonians 1. 3. Absence of fixed principle—egotism—a gay recklessness, begotten of a feeling of insecurity as regards the future, no vision beyond the immediate present, and a determination to exploit that present for all it is worth.

Brother or sister in Christ, is the hope burning brightly in your soul? Faith gives you an Object that instantly fixes your course across this world. Love delivers you from a self-centred existence, and sets you at the happy task of labouring for Christ's glory and the good of others. Hope steadies your soul, and nerves you with the absolute certitude of final victory and glory, and so you endure. Again, we ask, is the hope burning brightly in your soul, or are you, while perhaps quite nicely carrying out all the outward observances of religion in meetings and the like, largely living an insipid, aimless existence, much centred on self, and bent upon extracting as much mild and lawful pleasure from the world and the earth as you can?

Not only was there this work wrought in the Thessalonian believers, but God took them up and made of them something for His glory and the furtherance of His interests, as the later verses of the chapter show. They became:

1. "Followers of us, and of the Lord" (verse 6).
2. "Ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (verse 7).
3. From them "sounded out the word of the Lord . . . in every place" (verse 8).

Again we find three things. The first defines what they were made as regards the Lord. The second, as regards their fellow-believers. The third as regards the world.

As regards the Lord, they became followers or imitators. They were attached to Him as His disciples, and they began to walk in His ways and manifest His character. This they did not as mere copyists, but because they now possessed His life and nature.

As regards their fellow-believers, they became examples. All those who believed in Macedonia and Achaia could
find in them a practical exemplification of the grace that the Gospel brings and promotes in those who receive it.

As regards the surrounding world they became advertisements of the power and efficacy of that word which they had believed. From them the word of the Lord "sounded out," and in every place their faith towards God was "spread abroad," and that to such an extent that no testimony was needed on the part of the apostle.

All these three characters were now worn by people who came out of very unpromising surroundings. The Thessalonians are in Acts 17. contrasted unfavourably with the Bereans, who are said to have been "more noble than those in Thessalonica." The main part of the Thessalonian inhabitants were "Jews which believed not, moved with envy" and "lewd fellows of the baser sort."

Let us again test ourselves at this point, and ask each one, What is the character that I wear? Is it that of a follower of the Lord, and consequently an example and an advertisement of His grace? Or am I a follower, though in a modified and inoffensive form, of the fashions of the world, and consequently an example of poor and anaemic Christianity and an advertisement of warning to all who have eyes to see?

The last verse of our chapter carries the story of these early Christians one further step forward and shows us how, having turned to God from idols, with these remarkable results flowing therefrom, they were waiting for Christ with full expectancy, and meanwhile were serving the living and true God. When hope burns brightly the service of God is diligently pursued. And the converse is equally true.

It has been supposed by some that the hope of the coming of the Lord is an unpractical and visionary thing, that those whose hearts are filled with it are thereby left idly standing and "gazing up into heaven" like the "men of Galilee" (Acts 1. 11). It is possible, no doubt, to misuse the Christian hope in this fashion, but its use is far otherwise. A proof of it lies in the very Scripture alluded to. It was His departure into heaven that for the moment rooted the disciples to the spot and left them gazing upwards. Directly their hearts were assured of His actual and visible coming again by the testimony of the two angels, they returned to Jerusalem, and in the rest of Acts 1. we find them continuing in prayer; in Acts 2. and onwards they continue in preaching with overflowing results. With this 1 Thessalonians 1. agrees.

"Ye turned . . . to serve the living and true God." The words we have italicized just describe the normal and proper life of the Christian. The service of God is every Christian's business. We may hold the doctrine of the second advent and be cold and lethargic to a degree in that high and holy service, and at the same time we may be very active in the pursuit of earthly pleasure; but if His coming holds our hearts as a burning and shining hope it will be far otherwise: we shall be diligent servants of God.

Shall we close by once more testing ourselves? What is the aim and purpose of my life? Serving something or somebody I certainly am. Am I serving the living and true God or my own ease and convenience, my own whims and pleasures? Is the truth of the second advent of Christ to me a mere doctrine, a matter of theology, or is it a bright, an inspiring, and a compelling HOPE?
THE FATHER'S LOVE.

THE love of God the Father to God the Son is revealed for our souls' blessing and enjoyment, and furnishes food for our thought and delight now while on earth as it surely will for ever when we joy with Christ in His home of love, the Father's house. Knowing the value of the redemption work of Calvary, and standing in the blessed results of it with our sins blotted out and our conscience cleared from every charge, we are at peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we are free and at leisure to have our hearts engaged with God's thoughts of His Son through whom all our blessings have come to us.

The first declaration of that love was made at Jordan after our Lord's baptism by John the Baptist. In "fulfilling all righteousness" He took His place with the godly remnant who were baptized in Jordan, confessing their sins. He, the Sinless One, thus linked Himself with these sinful but repentant ones in taking their first right step. But at once He was singled out from all, as heaven opened upon Him and the Father's voice was heard saying, "Thou art My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mark I. 11); while the Holy Ghost, as a dove, descended and abode upon Him.

May we not say that this declaration was in view of all his previous years spent in the privacy and retirement of Nazareth, while He awaited His Father's word to go forth in the ministry of grace and goodness. Through all those years He was growing up as a tender plant and as a root out of a dry ground, and His perfect subjection and obedience were His Father's delight. The incident in the temple—where for a moment the veil was drawn back—tells us where the Son's delights were found. "How is it that ye sought Me?" He asks. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" It was this that held His holy thoughts. The circle of the Father's interests was that in which He moved. With what joy those words were uttered. With what joy those words were heard. And if His "Father's business" should be His subjection to His parents He would go to Nazareth and remain with them there.

And this was the testimony at the close of His ministry even as it had been at the beginning. On the holy mount He was transfigured before the astonished disciples: Moses and Elias appearing in glory to speak with Him concerning His departure to be accomplished at Jerusalem. Peter rejoicing in the vision and wishful that the glory might be detained, proposes three tabernacles, one for the Son and one each for the honoured servants. But the glory will brook no such thought. The glory-cloud covers them and the voice of the Father from the cloud says, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." Moses and Elias must pass. They have no glory by reason of a glory that excelleth. The Son has come, and all others must be hidden. He must be heard, and all other voices be hushed in His presence. And this looks back upon His whole pathway of diligent, faithful service. His every step had been for the glory of His Father. His steps were those of the good man ordered of the Lord who delighted in His way.

The love of perfect complacency is before us in these passages in order that we may learn the Father's deep delight in and affection for His Son.

And this love which was thus expressed on these two occasions was known and enjoyed unhinderedly through His goings. In John 3. 35 we read of Him, "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." He was the object of the Father's fullest pleasure, for in everything He stood for the Father's interests.
and glory, as we read, in chapter 1., He—"the only-begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father"—had come to declare Him. In chapter 2. His zeal for His Father's house consumed Him, and alone He would cleanse the temple from all that was offensive and derogatory to His Father's glory there. In chapter 4. He is seen going through Samaria to find a worshipper for the Father and so meeting all her need and freeing her in the presence of the giving God that she might be happy in His presence, the well of water in her springing up to everlasting life. And so it is throughout this wonderful Gospel. It is the Father's honour He seeks, the Father's words He speaks, the Father's works He does. The Father's glory is ever before Him and He can say, "He that sent Me is with Me, the Father hath not left Me alone, for I do always those things that please Him."

Again in John 5. 20, and this time from His own lips we read, "The Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth." That perfect love of complacency was ever His joy. In the sense of the Father's love He moved from scene to scene of His way, supported in the midst of every ill, and retiring into that love as a place of refuge from every storm and conflict which He experienced in His path amid man's scorn and hatred. He had come to do His pleasure, as it had been written of Him, "I delight to do Thy will, yea Thy law is within My heart."

Then in view of the cross He could say, "Therefore doth My Father love Me because I lay down My life that I might take it again" (John 10. 17). Now He who had ever been loved was giving a new motive for that love. His obedience was to culminate in death. In order that the Father's will might be accomplished, He would go down even to Golgotha's gloom. It was the Father's will that many sons for Himself and many companions for the Son should live before Him. But for this the Son must go into death. From this, in His perfection, He shrank, for it involved His being forsaken of God. But in His perfection He went on until the work given Him to do was finished.

Now we know Him risen—raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. Blessed answer to all that our Lord had known of shame and ignominy here. "Of righteousness, because I go unto the Father," He could say in view of that place of honour in which we know Him. For that glory has welcomed Him now as it saluted Him before on the transfiguration mountain.

But still we are to know Him as "The Beloved," and our souls should rejoice to know Him thus, and to learn that to the praise of the glory of the grace of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we are accepted in Him as "the Beloved" (Ephes. 1. 6). His place of nearness is the only true measure of ours. We stand before His Father as our Father, before His God as ours. We are for ever associated with Him. He and we (who through His redemption work are for ever cleared of every charge) are identified. May we not say, as our hearts delightedly rejoice in this, that Christ is never seen apart from His own, and that His own are never seen apart from Him.

And again, if we turn to Colossians 1. we learn that we are called to give thanks to the Father for all that which He has wrought for us . . . "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love." Happy are His own who are brought under such a sway. The Son of the Father's love has rule, a rule of love over all whom the Father translates into His kingdom, there to rejoice with Him in all the fatness of His house.

Well then may we rejoice now in the Father's love to the Son as we wait to dwell in the home of that love for ever.
Behold this wondrous city! Awed I stand,
And gaze upon its greatness and its glory.
What streets, what houses rise on every hand!
What riches, might and wisdom lie before me!
Vast structures, monuments with turrets grand,
And spires of noble churches tower o'er me.
How great MAN is!
What power, what wisdom, and what might are his!
Contrivances, inventions without measure,
Aid him to live in luxury and pleasure.

But stay! I look around and soon I see
That all the glitter only serves to cover
Much that is bad; sorrow and misery,
Envy, dissatisfaction I discover.
The pleasant sights and sounds, the luxury,
Do not remove the sin, but gloss it over.
And all around,
Evil and greed, and sin and want are found.
In spite of every pleasure and attraction,
The heart of man has not found satisfaction.

The idle rich is there. For self he moves,
To him there's naught apart from self that matters.
And past his gate there's many a beggar roves,
Slouching along in filthy rags and tatters.
The parasite is there, the man who loves
To prey on others; what they earn he scatters.
Full are the jails,
Disease is rampant, and one's spirit fails
On looking round. In spite of man's endeavour,
Sin still exists, and is as vile as ever.

I leave the city, leave it far away,
Not sorry that my visit there is ended.
Far from the haunts of men I wend my way,
And stand before a FOREST, vast and splendid.
What beauty, what luxuriant display,
What lovely tints and shades so richly blended!
My hopes beat high;
"Perfection I have found at last," I cry.
What work more perfect and what beauty greater
Than that which God has made, the wise Creator?

I enter.—What a sight it is I see!
Some fell destroyer must have been before me.
Prone on the ground there lies a mighty tree,
Which, rotting fast, reveals a direful story.
Above its mates it rose in majesty,
Towering aloft and crowned with verdant glory.
A lightning flash,—
Down came the giant with a mighty crash,
A dozen others likewise ruined through it.
Its very majesty it was that overthrew it.
What is that sinuous form, which, like a snake,
Around yon mighty trunk goes twisting, turning?
A tiny creeper once, it did forsake
The shady groves, its lowly station spurning;
Its upward way around the tree did make,
Which now, too late, its fell design is learning.
Tighter it binds,
Throttling the tree as round and round it winds.
The tree is dying; in the next rough weather
Down it will crash, and both will rot together.

Amid the gloom, ferocious beasts of prey
Go softly prowling where the densest bush is;
The monstrous python shuns the light of day,
And winds about among the tangled rushes.
Fierce ants and stinging insects wend their way
Under and on the ground, on trees and bushes.
My hopes are gone;—
Indelibly I find DEATH stamped upon
All things down here, whatever be their station.
Ruined is man, and with him all creation.

* * * * *

I leave the forest as I left the town,
With groaning spirit, sadly disappointed.
Bible in hand, I wearily sit down,
And read about that blessed ONE, appointed
Saviour and Lord; the ONE whom angels own,
The ONE to whom God's holy prophets pointed.
And now I see
A scene of triumph and of victory.
God's word must stand, His work will be completed,
Righteousness be displayed, and sin defeated.

I gaze in spirit on a CITY fair,
And oh, the joy it gives one's soul to view it.
The curse is gone, no stain of sin is there,
The shadow of grim death ne'er passes through it.
The Lord is there, and His redeemed ones share
His glory. Nations bring their honour to it.
Christ is enthroned,
And universally as King is owned.
In all the earth is spread the wondrous story
Of peace and love, and God's eternal glory.

Dread war is ended; peace without alloy
And glad content are known to every nation.
All greed and hatred gone, there's naught but joy,
Not for man only,—but the whole creation
Will cease to groan, and will at last enjoy
The blest result of reconciliation.
Not heaven alone,
But this our earth will then be brought to own
That God has triumphed, He who changes never,
Whose word is sure, and doth endure for ever.
Praise ye the Lord, for it is good to sing
Praises to Him who all the sorrow healeth.
Great is our Lord, the everlasting King,
Who calls the stars by name, their number telleth.
Praise Him ye Forests, let His praises ring
Ye saints, to whom His blessings He revealeth.
Ye stars of light,
Ye sun and moon, and all the angels bright,
Praise ye the Lord. Let all things in creation
Sing praise to Him, the Author of Salvation.

A ROYAL PSALM.
Notes of an Address given in Glasgow.

THE numerous titles of Psalm 45, would indicate it to be a right royal psalm. It was for the chief musician, and the measure to which it was to be sung was called "The Lilies." Sung by special singers, the sons of Korah, it is both a psalm of instruction regarding the King and a song of love to the King.

The first verse is the preface in which the writer speaks of himself as having:
1. A bubbling-over heart.
2. A worthy subject.
3. A ready tongue.

Think for a moment of the beautiful resurrection story of Luke 24. As the Stranger drew near those two disciples on their way to Emmaus, their sad countenances showed Him that they had burdened hearts. But when He talked with them and opened up the scriptures concerning Himself, their burdened hearts became burning hearts. Later on when He went in to tarry with them, the One whom they had invited to be their guest became their host, and in the breaking of the bread their eyes were opened and they saw JESUS. Then their burning hearts became bubbling-over hearts, so that forgetting the lateness of the hour about which they had been anxious a little while before, they returned that night overflowing with the news—"the Lord is risen."

The subject of this psalm is "THE KING," the One whom we know as "JESUS," because the things here predicated of Him are true of no mere mortal man, not even a Solomon in all his glory; they are only true of Christ, our Lord and the coming King. He is a worthy subject indeed.

Then the readiness of the psalmist's tongue would indicate the happiness which his subject caused him. And well might we Christians be happy in the contemplation of Christ and be characterized by song. Let us ask ourselves whether we are giving to men a correct impression of Christianity. Mohammedanism has no song, for it has no Saviour. Pessimistic Buddhism has no note of joy, although recently an attempt has been made to plagiarize from Christian hymns, and thus graft upon that gloomy system something of the joys which belong only to the Christian.

The psalmist now addresses the King, and praises His beauty, His grace, and His blessedness. He does not say he is the fairest of the children of men, but he is fairer than the children of men. Not only is He pre-eminent, but He is absolutely unique because He is more than man.

"Fairer than all the earth-born race,
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;
Replenished are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart,
God ever blest! we bow the knee,
And own all fulness dwells in Thee."
Grace was indeed poured into His lips at the moment when as the young Prophet of Nazareth He stood before His fellow-villagers, and in the beautiful language of Isaiah proclaimed to them His mission in this world—to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Grace was poured into His lips when standing in that temple court thronged by worshippers celebrating a feast typical of the earthly blessing He would introduce, yet rejected by the very men who were conducting the feast, He said, “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink,” and “out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The hands of the officers sent to arrest Him were stayed, and they had to utter the testimony, “Never man spake like this Man,” Simon, the Pharisee, might scowl as he saw the sinful woman come into his house, but she had come to see a fairer than he; and from His lips grace was indeed poured into her heart as she heard those words, “Thy sins are forgiven thee, thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace.”

God has blessed Him for ever and ever. Wherein does that blessedness consist? The word “blessed” means “happy,” and the living Word of God and the written alike declare that the Persons of the Godhead find their happiness, their blessedness, in the blessing of sinful man.

From the contemplation of His beauty and grace the psalmist then passes on to a different side of His character. We often think of the gracious man as one who is soft and weak, but no. “Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty.” The word “most mighty” can be translated “hero” and here we have true hero-worship. Glory and honour are the attributes of majesty, but almost the last thing we would look for in an earthly king is meekness. Meekness-righteousness (here combined without conjunction) are only found in the One who called Himself meek and lowly. He is to “ride prosperously” and His right hand has to “teach him terrible things.” We read in the Revelation how the heavens are to be opened, and out of them there is to come riding on a white horse One named Faithful and True, who is going to judge in righteousness, and in His forehead is His name, “King of kings and Lord of lords.” Contrast that picture with the one given us in Matthew’s Gospel: “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass” (Matt. 21. 5). The King was there in meekness, in grace; and yet He was riding on to deal righteously with sin, and to die on the cross that there He might for ever put it away.

We get in verse 5 a vivid picture of a battle as the arrows fly and the enemies fall. It has been said that the arrows of His judicial wrath are sharp; the arrows of His providential goodness are sharper; but the arrows of His subduing grace are the sharpest of all. Look at that proud enemy of His making his way to Damascus, every breath a threat against the saints of God, his heart full of hatred to the name of Jesus. But the arrow of conviction reaches the heart of the King’s enemy, the arms of rebellion are laid down, and the cry rises from the proud heart of Saul of Tarsus, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” Those arrows of subduing grace are still piercing to the hearts of the King’s enemies and winning rebels to His service.

Before the war, Giovanni Papini, a rabid atheist in Italy, wrote a blasphemous book entitled “The Memoirs of God,” which might easily have earned him imprisonment in this country. But out of evil has come good. During the awful cataclysm of war his eyes have been opened to see that there is no hope for man save in the Christ; and now his pen has been used to write the story of Jesus for his fellow-
countrymen. It may be said of him as of Saul of old that ‘‘he now preaches the faith which once he destroyed.’’

The statement, ‘‘Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,’’ must have been a strange enigma to the readers before Christ’s time, because while this King is addressed as God, further on it says He is to be anointed by God. Like all the enigmas of the Old Testament, this finds its solution in the person of Christ, who is ‘‘God over all, blessed for ever.’’ The One who was in the form of God and equal with God, emptied Himself, took a bondsman’s form, became obedient even unto death, and has now been exalted by God to His own right hand. Doubting Thomas, seeing the wounded hands and side of his Lord on the resurrection day, learned the truth and hailed Him as ‘‘My Lord and my God.’’ And there, too, in resurrection power and glory, we can learn that the once humbled crucified Jesus is our Lord and our God.

The throne is His. Mighty empires have arisen—Rome, Greece, Carthage, Napoleon’s empire—and they have passed away. Even in our own day we have seen mighty kingdoms and empires crash to their downfall.

‘‘The glories of our blood and state Are shadows, not substantial things; There is no armour against fate, Death lays his icy hands on kings. Sceptre and crown Must tumble down, And in the dust be equal made With the poor crooked scythe and spade.’’

But His empire is for ever, bearing the stamp of eternity.

Why must these kingdoms fade? Because they are neither founded on nor ruled in equity. But the sceptre of the Lord Jesus Christ is a right sceptre. He rules in equity. His kingdom is also established in equity. ‘‘Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest lawlessness.’’ We see His love of righteousness, His intense hatred of iniquity, when He died on Calvary’s cross. The blood of the Lamb slain is the foundation on which His kingdom is based. ‘‘Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.’’ We rightly think of Jesus as ‘‘The Man of Sorrows,’’ but let us not stop there. He is the Man of joy, the Man of exultation. Just as His sorrows were deeper than those ever felt by mortal man, so His joys are proportionately great. As we draw near to the cross and see Jesus suffering for righteousness’ sake, we see sorrow indeed. And now He has been anointed with a greater measure of gladness than all His fellows.

A sceptical poet has said,

‘‘O pale Galilean! Thou hast conquered, And the world has grown grey at Thy breath.’’

This is a lie. It is not the pale Galilean who has changed the world and made it sad; it was a sad weary world into which Jesus came. A current saying a short time before the birth of Christ was that ‘‘the best thing of all was not to be born, and the next best to die.’’ But Jesus causes our hearts to bubble over with the joy and gladness which fill His own heart. ‘‘All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad.’’

People are known by their garments, and in ancient days especially a man’s profession or occupation determined what garments he wore. Hence in Scripture ‘‘garments’’ speak to us of characteristics or official position. In whatever garments—that is, in whatever office—we view Christ, there is nothing but fragrance, whether we see Him robed as King in the purple of dominion, or clad in the white linen garment of the priest, or in the flowing mantle of the prophet. Indeed, all the crushing, the bruising of the cross, only caused the sweetness of that fragrance to be better known.

As King He has His attendant courtiers. ‘‘King’s daughters’’ are
among His honourable women. How great the honour, how high the privilege, to be even the humblest of those royal attendants!

"... His state
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest.
They also serve, who only stand and wait."

Each one of us, whether called abroad, or left at home, may enjoy and value this glorious service.

From this point onward the psalmist speaks about the King's bride; and though the primary application of this may be to Israel or Jerusalem, yet it is equally true of the church, which Paul tells us in Ephesians 5. is Christ's heavenly bride. Her ear must be won first. "Hearken, ... consider, and incline thine ear." Then her heart is won, so that, forgetting everything else in listening to the voice of the Bridegroom, she leaves her father's house, forgets the claims of her people, and is wholly for the King.

It is a searching question for each one of us who form that glorious Bride as to how far we have answered to this happy state of things. If we have answered and are weaned from all else but Christ, then it will be true of us that "the King shall greatly desire thy beauty." This beauty is not only external beauty, "Her clothing is of wrought gold," but there is inward purity, she is "all glorious within." God desires truth in the inward parts. "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it; ... that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." No trace of defilement, no sign of age; for His own satisfaction, as well as for hers. "She shall be brought unto the King." This is the presentation day, and with her glad companions she finds her home in the palace of the King.

Then in verse 16 we have the offspring. "Instead of the fathers shall be the children." While the failure and weakness of the church should rightly exercise every godly person, the thought in this verse should act as a corrective to those who dishonour God by dwelling too much on the broken condition of things. God has never left Himself, nor will leave Himself, without a testimony, even in the darkest days.

The feelings of the enemies of Christ when they saw Him on the cross might be "When shall He die, and His name perish?" Even the inspired prophet might say, "Who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living." God's answer is, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

Thus the psalmist, who, with a bubbling-over heart, begins with an individual song, a solo, finishes with a universal anthem, a hallelujah chorus. The seer, John, was privileged in his vision to hear that chorus sung by the thousands and thousands whom no man could number, and he learned that its theme was the Lamb slain for our salvation. That Lamb, who is our Saviour and our Lord, theme even now of our songs, will soon be praised without ceasing, when we

"... hear His voice, and see His face,
And know the fulness of His grace."
SPIRITUAL DECLENSION AND ITS REMEDY.

(A. J. Pollock.)

THERE are many at the present time who are much occupied with the declension of the Church of God to-day, and without doubt there is much to cause concern to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. My present object is not to call attention to the decline, but to pass on what has been suggested to me through the Scriptures as the cause and the remedy, as also what should be the attitude of the servant of God in the midst of that which would otherwise only depress and cast down.

In the twelfth chapter of his first book, the prophet Samuel calls upon the people to witness to his faithfulness. This they readily do, and Samuel responds by saying, “It is the Lord that advanced Moses and Aaron and that brought your fathers up out of the land of Egypt. Now therefore stand still, that I may reason with you before the Lord of all the righteous acts of the Lord, which He did to you and to your fathers.” Having got their ear, Samuel then rehearses their backslidings of the past and reminds them how, when there was repentance and a crying to God, He came in and raised up the faithful men to lead His people—Moses and Aaron when they were slaves in Egypt, and later on Jerubbaal (Gideon) and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel. Is it not refreshing to see how in spite of terrible failure, God was ever ready to respond to the cry of His people, when they repented and turned to Him?

But the day came when Nahash, the king of the children of Ammon, came against them, and Samuel has to remind them of their attitude then. “Ye said unto me, Nay; but a king shall reign over us: when the Lord your God was your king.” Thus the people fell from the position to which God had called them, they were not satisfied with God’s provision in the person of His prophet, Samuel; they demanded to be like the nations around, who had a visible head in the person of their king. Is not Ammon a type of the flesh, and in demanding a king—a visible head—did not the people of Israel show preference for the arm of flesh, thus virtually saying that God, as King, was not enough, and evidencing that faith had broken down? And that when God’s faithful servant, Samuel, was yet among them, to whose great faithfulness they had witnessed. Such, alas! is the human heart.

What, then, was God’s message to them? Wonderful to say, one of encouragement, saying to them that if they feared the Lord, served Him, listened to His voice, and if they were not rebellious against the commandment of the Lord, then would they and the king who reigned over them continue to follow the Lord. Could any words be more gracious than these, though coupled with a word of warning that if they refused to obey His voice, the hand of the Lord would be against them?

But is that all that the prophet is bidden to do, to recall the people to their allegiance to their God and their King? No, Samuel again calls upon them to stand still (an attitude so difficult to human nature); to stand still and see the great thing that the Lord would do before their eyes. Then at the time of wheat harvest, when rain was unknown Samuel calls down thunder and rain, with the object of making them perceive and see that their wickedness was great which they had done in the sight of the Lord in asking a king. At the sight, we are told that the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel, so that
they ask him to pray to the Lord that they die not, saying, "for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king." How beautiful is Samuel's reply, "Fear not: ye have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart . . . for the Lord will not forsake His people for His great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you His people." Could the grace of God go further?

Such, then, is the gracious message that God gives to Samuel for His people, but what is Samuel's personal attitude? God is God and acts according to His nature—love—but what of His servant, who was but flesh and blood? The people had rejected Samuel in choosing Saul, and he might well have felt wounded and hurt to the point of refusing to go on with the people. But how beautifully he shows the spirit of Him who had called him, when he says, "As for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way." Faithful servant, with nothing of the hireling's spirit about him!

Can the servants of God to-day not learn a valuable lesson from this lovely incident in the life of Samuel? Without doubt much failure has come in amongst the people of God, caused by their losing faith in the competency of our Lord Jesus Christ as Head of the Church to raise up faithful men, and to conduct them safely through the many difficulties that beset their path. Rather have they sought someone of their own appointing to meet the enemy's attack, instead of humiliating themselves before the Lord and crying to Him to meet the foe in a way that He may choose. Servants of God, who have been slighted and set aside, have turned away at least in heart and assumed an attitude that suggests that things are past praying for, and have taken to scolding instead of continuing to persevere in prayer and to teach patiently the good and the right way. Thus they have fallen into sin against the Lord, who had called them to lead and instruct His people.

The aim of the chosen leaders of God's people has always been to recall and hold them together. What, then, surely is needed is faithful men of prayer, who, like Samuel, are able so to have power with God that they can bring His people consciously into the presence of His power, so that they shall fear Him and realize their departure: then to continue to pray for them and instruct them in the good and the right way. There is little doubt that it is easier, and there is less need for spirituality, to point out the evil than by positive ministry to recall God's people in the power of the Spirit of God wholly to follow the Lord—individually as Lord and Master, collectively as Head of His Church. May the Lord keep His servants faithful to the charge that he has called them to, and raise up other faithful men to lead His people aright in these days of declension and increasing difficulty!

In Winnowing Times.

We are fallen in winnowing and trying times. I am glad that your breath serveth you to run to the end, in the same condition and way wherein you have walked these twenty years past; it is either the way of peace or we are yet in our sins and have missed the way. The Lord, it is true, hath stained the pride of all our glory, and now, last of all, the sun hath gone down upon many of the prophets; but stumble not, men are men, and God appeareth more and more to be God, and Christ is still Christ.—Samuel Rutherford, September, 1651.
NOTES FROM ADDRESSES.
Given in Australia.

"And Peter."—Mark 16. 7.

WHY should the young man clothed in white who sat in Jesus' empty tomb have been so interested in Peter? Is it possible that angels are concerned about the backslidings of the disciples of the Lord? It would appear so from this incident. All the disciples had faltered and failed, and they all mourned and wept, and there was a message for them all; but Peter had travelled far upon an evil road; he had sinned more deeply than any other, and for him the angel sends a special word. Perhaps, as he thought on his ways, he so loathed himself that he was too ashamed to company with his brethren, and was isolating himself from them as though he were no longer one of them. If so, he had to be sought and found and the angelic message given to him; he had to be told that he would see his Lord again.

Was this heavenly visitant, who held that empty tomb in the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, acting upon orders received from his Lord when he added to his message "and Peter"? Without a doubt he was. When the Lord rose up triumphant from the grave and set the angel there in what had been once the stronghold of now vanquished death, He must have told him thus to speak to the women who were already on their way to that sacred spot. And if so, how impressed he must have been with the grace of his Master when he realized that His first thoughts in the hour of His victory were not the vindication of His own glory or the destruction of His foes, but of His weak and weeping disciples, and above all of Peter. We are not able to say definitely how things affect the minds of angels, for we are but men, yet we may well suppose that this would give that young man in white, and many another angel, fresh cause to wonder and to adore their most adorable Lord.

The angels are His servants, they do His bidding, they have their place in connection with His house and His ways of grace with men. There is joy in their presence over one sinner that repenteth (Luke 15.); they take a deep and special interest in the manners and conduct of the Lord's disciples, even in the way those disciples dress (1 Cor. 11. 10); and they learn the manifold wisdom of God as they see it expressed in the church (Ephes. 3. 10). Consequently I do not think that I am exaggerating at all when I say that they are concerned about the backslidings of the disciples of the Lord. The young man in white did not deliver his message to the women as a sort of soulless automaton, his heart went with it. This is clear from the way he sought to still the fear in their breasts and to strengthen their faith by showing them the empty tomb and reminding them of the Lord's words. He was concerned about them all, and especially about Peter, for he was more likely to be swallowed up with sorrow than the rest. And the angels, which are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that are heirs of salvation, must be interested in the welfare of those to whom they minister.

The angels of God care for the disciples of the Lord, and I do not doubt that they marvel at the love of God to them, and are more than amazed that they should so often sacrifice their greatest joys for sinful things, that they should turn away from their Lord and often deny Him, and become backsliders, as Peter was. But again, with what keen interest and
joy they must watch the Lord’s ways of grace until restoration is complete. That is, of course, because they have but one interest and that the Lord’s glory, and the interest that they show is the effect of their seeing the love that the Lord bears to those who are His. The angel would not have been so concerned about Peter if the Lord had not been concerned about him, and the angels would not be so concerned about you and me, and the way that we live, and the things that we pursue, if the Lord were not concerned about us. The master of a great house may have thoughts and interests of which his servants know nothing, but suppose a child of the house is dangerously ill, or has strayed away from home, then if they are true servants and the master is a true master, they are all deeply interested. The master’s concern affects them every one. So it is with our Lord and the angels who are His servants.

Ought we to be less interested in each other than the angels are interested in us? Surely not. And especially since we may do what they cannot do. They cannot restore the backslider; as far as we know they have no part in this work, but we ought to wash one another’s feet (John 13.), and “if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6. 1). But suppose there is a backslider who secretly mourns his departure from the Lord, but finds his brethren, as he supposes, coldly indifferent towards him, who thinks, perhaps, that no one is concerned about him. Let me say to him: “Though men seem careless of your welfare, the angels are not; they are interested, and they are interested because their Lord is. The restoration of your soul to the joy of salvation and communion with the Saviour is of deep concern to them because they know that this is the Lord’s desire and because the Lord’s glory is involved in it. Banish at once from your mind the thought that nobody cares, and let the angel’s words, ‘and Peter,’ speed your feet along the way of repentance to the Saviour who has not ceased to love and care for you, and whom through grace you still love or you would not be secretly grieving about the loss of His company and the joy that it gives.”

“On the Morrow after the Sabbath.”—Lev. 23. 11.

I want “the morrow after the Sabbath” to sing its joyful song to your hearts, and to teach you its triumphant lesson. I do not suppose that the children of Israel understood its blessed import; probably even Moses had but a feeble conception of what it involved, for the greatest day in the week to them was the Sabbath, a Sabbath that could only be attained to after a week of toil; and because all their labour was faulty, because they were sinners all, and by no labour of their hands could they remove their guilt, they never truly enjoyed a Sabbath, and the morrow after the Sabbath could only mean to them, unless they possessed faith’s vision, the beginning of another weary round of futile toil. But on this special morrow after the Sabbath of which our Scripture speaks, they had to bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest unto the Lord. Ah, we may now rejoice in that which they did not understand. The morrow after the Sabbath was the first day of the week, and that day was the resurrection day; it was the Lord’s Day, and the sheaf that was waved before the Lord was typical of Christ Himself, the First-begotten from the dead.

The work is done. “It is finished.” Wonderful words! Wonderful moment
when they broke from the lips of our Lord Jesus before He bowed His head in death! May we not reverently say that all heaven would be thrilled by that cry; that to the utmost bounds of those celestial realms it would be carried, and that with it would go a deeper joy than had ever before been known even in those joyful regions? Then followed the Sabbath, the day in which the Lord lay in the sealed tomb. We do not know how heaven was occupied during that day when the Lord of life lay in death, but we do know that His disciples on earth spent the hours in mourning and in weeping, for so Mark tells us. But the morrow after the Sabbath changed everything. They were able on that day to look into the tomb without fear, for their Lord had come out of it. He had vanquished death and broken the dominion of Satan, and gained a great victory for God and for His people. The morrow after the Sabbath speaks of life out of death, of a vast harvest for God from even death itself; for Christ is the Firstfruits, and afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming. It is the beginning of a new creation in which all who believe the glad news have their part, and in that new creation they begin with rest and peace that they could never have secured by their own labours.

"Not the labour of my hands Can fulfil Thy law's demands."

Nor could our tears and regrets, nor even our repentance, have cleared us from guilt before God's holy throne. But the finished work and the precious blood have done it, and here we rest. Yes, we find our Sabbath our rest in what Christ has done. Every question that could cause us to shrink away in sinful fear from God was answered upon the cross for the glory of God, and we have rest and peace in consequence. But the morrow after the Sabbath gave a definite and undeniable proof of this, and more, it gave us back our Lord, alive from the dead. So that we have more than a finished work for the salvation of our souls, we have also a living Saviour for the satisfaction of our hearts. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

The morrow after the Sabbath was the day of the Lord's victory. On that day the infernal hosts, the powers of darkness, shrank back defeated into their native night. No longer did the devil hold the power of death. Our Lord has triumphed over him and annulled his power to deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. The keys of death and hell are in the hands of Him who died, but lives again for evermore.

The morrow after the Sabbath was the day of the Lord's vindication. He had been scorned and rejected by men. His words had been the subject of their jests. They awarded Him a malefactor's cross, but God raised Him from the dead. Thus did Peter in the power of the Holy Ghost urge the truth upon the guilty Jews. "You crucified Him," he cried, "but God has raised Him." And His resurrection was His vindication. It was God's answer to the way that men treated Him.

Because of the morrow after the Sabbath we live and have a living hope. All who sleep through Jesus will rise again, of this we are assured in God's infallible Word. "If we believe that JESUS DIED AND ROSE AGAIN, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. 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. 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: 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” (1 Thess. 4. 14-17). With this hope in our souls we can say exultingly, “Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Yes, the morrow after the Sabbath was a joyful day, and the triumph and gladness of it abide for us to this day; and it lifts up our eyes to the future, when in eternity the whole universe will rejoice in the results of the victory of Christ, and the eighth day—the eternal day—shall be a Sabbath (Lev. 23. 39), an unbroken day of eternal rest.

"FAITH" AND "THE FAITH." (H. J. VINE.)

FROM the days of Abel right on to the present time there have been men of faith, but it was not till Christ came that the faith was “delivered to the saints.”

Previous to that, we are told, they were “kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed” (Gal. 3. 23). We are now exhorted to “contend” for it, and, when in possession of it, to “continue” in it, for many are departing from it in these last days, just as God’s Word foretold. Such apostates show by so doing that they are devoid of faith, even though they once professed the faith.

The word faith occurs but twice in the authorized version of the Old Testament. First, in Deuteronomy 32., it is said that God’s earthly people would turn away from Him, and lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation, provoking Him to anger by their vanities, so He would hide His face from them, “for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith” (20). The second is in Habakkuk, where we are told of a time of great poverty and distress, in contrast to the plenty and fatness spoken of in the first Scripture. This period of need became the occasion for faith to shine, so Habakkuk finds strength, salvation and joy in God, so he sings his song to the Lord with a lofty tone, whilst he walks upon high places, and looks forward to the day that “will not tarry,” and, meanwhile, he says, “The just shall live by his faith” (2. 4).

The first Scripture shows that the professing people of God in seasons of prosperity may become faithless and forget God, and the second that in times of trial the qualities of faith may shine with a special lustre. In Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews, the Spirit cites the words from Habakkuk, and this alone shows their immense importance, emphasizing, as they do, a distinct fact in each of the three citations. Moreover, James 2. 5 indicates that faith is enriched by the testings of difficult times, inasmuch as they cast us upon God Himself, so it is written, “The poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.” Consequently, it is said, “My brethren have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons,” for an opulent man professing the faith may be poor indeed as regards faith, and even be devoid of it altogether.

Whatever profession may be made, it is impossible to please God without faith, but when we have faith it may be increased, and we may become “strong in faith.” Hebrews 11. begins by telling us that it makes real to us the things hoped for and the things not seen, and then gives the names of many who “obtained a good report through faith”; but chapter 12. opens by pointing us away from this cloud of witnesses to Jesus Himself, who is both the Leader and Completer of faith.
We are to look with steadfast contemplation upon Jesus, and not upon those who are but witnesses to the power of faith, for He is the only Leader in this and also the only Perfecter of faith. He has Himself trodden the whole path in flawless perfection through shame and suffering, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God. We are therefore told to "consider Him well." Herein lies the secret of enrichment in faith, and as we do so what we sometimes sing will be increasingly true of us,—

"Like Him in faith, in meekness, love,
In every beauteous grace;
From glory into glory changed,
Till we behold His face."

Under law this spiritual or moral transformation was not possible, but the faith is now revealed, and our Lord Jesus Christ is its Centre. It is "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." It is also spoken of as the "one faith" and "the faith of God's elect," "our faith." True liberty is connected with it,—liberty to behold the glory of the Lord, and where there is faith the Spirit enables us to do so. Moses had to veil his face when it reflected only a measure of glory, for God's earthly people could not look thereon. The law was given by Moses, but both grace and truth subsist to-day through Jesus Christ. Liberty and not bondage is therefore ours now, and the faith which centres in Christ is the faith in which we are told to "stand fast." It is the faith which a bigoted religionist once sought to destroy, but which, after being touched by the grace and power of our Lord Jesus Christ, he zealously preached till the end of his days (see Gal. 1. 23, etc.).

"FAITH."

Having made the above general remarks, it is necessary to speak more in detail. In one connection faith is contrasted with works of law, and in another with sight. Now Ephesians 2. 8 tells us that faith is "not of ourselves," but is "the gift of God." When we possess that gift, it may be said to be ours, as we read, "Thy faith hath saved thee." How, then, does it come to us? Romans 10. 17 answers the question,—"Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God." A report, God's Word, brings it to us. The first man recorded in the Old Testament to "believe" is Abraham. God pointed him to the starry heavens on high and made him a promise (Gen. 15. 5), and "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Rom. 4. 3). The Gospel of God comes to men to-day, pointing them to God's Son, who has died for our sins, who has lain in the grave, who has been raised again by God for our justification, who is now exalted at God's right hand, and of the one who receives these glad tidings it can be said, "His faith is counted for righteousness." He is justified on the principle of faith.

Faith is not the portion of all, and bad and evil men will always try to hinder the spread of the Gospel of God's grace, nevertheless "the household of faith" will be enabled to maintain its testimony till the Lord returns, both in their experience and in their life. God's present administration is in faith, and at the very start, when the Gospel of God first reaches us, His righteousness in setting us right with Himself is revealed on the principle of faith to faith (Rom. 1. 17), and "the obedience of faith" is the result of this. No mere obedience to religious rules without this can give pleasure to God. We "walk by faith," and our service is the "work of faith" when carried on in the energy of faith which "worketh by love." And in the warfare of faith we need its "shield" as well as its "breastplate," and thus we shall be marked, not by self-confidence, but by the boldness of faith, for our armour is provided by God.

Now the apostle said to some of the household of God, "Your faith growth exceedingly," and the disciples once asked the Lord to increase their faith,
so we read also of the faith of the saints at Corinth increasing, and of the "progress and joy in faith" of the Philippians. This shows that development is to be expected and not decline in faith. How is this to come about? If it comes to us by God's Word at the beginning, surely it is by that same Word, which increases our true knowledge of God, that faith is also both sustained and increased. Without question we should desire to be rich in faith; but it must be remembered that it is a matter of the heart rather than the head. "With the heart man believeth," we are told, and it "worketh by love," as we have seen.

Faith makes real to us the things of God, which are brought before us by the Spirit in God's Word: the things that are to come and the things that lie within the veil are ministered to us, and faith appropriates them. The man who is merely natural, even if religious, cannot receive them, for as we read, "Faith is the substantiating of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11. 1, N. Tr.). Therefore, we come in this way even now to the wide range of the glory connected with Christ which shall soon be displayed,—to mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the universal gathering, to the assembly of firstborn ones; and we also enter in the same way into the holiest, where Jesus is within the veil, having boldness by His blood; and we offer by Him the sacrifice of praise to our God and Father as purged worshippers having no more conscience of sins.

"For freely God the saints can greet Where glory crowns the mercy-seat."

"THE FAITH."

We have seen that faith is the principle on which we are justified; also that it is the principle on which we receive the things of God; and that faith is in the heart, where it works by love. It has been said, that it is "light in the soul"; that, however, is insufficient to express the truth, though of course light is present, but it is rather the heart where this believing principle is, and both light and truth from God have to do with its presence there. It does much for the believer, and the believer can do much by it. Faith brought to Enoch the testimony that he pleased God, and by faith Moses forsook Egypt and endured as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith Rahab perished not, and by faith the walls of Jericho fell. It enriches the believer, and it enables him to do exploits. It is peace giving, and it is practical. It receives in, and it works out.

When, however, we speak of "The Faith," an expression often found in the New Testament, we are on different ground altogether. It was unknown in Old Testament times. It was revealed when Christ came, and not before (Gal. 3. 22-26). To the saints it was given at the beginning (Jude 3.). Many speak of Christianity when it would be better and safer to speak of that which the Spirit terms "the faith." It is for this we are to contend earnestly together, so that we may possess it in Divine power; for it is from this, even though men retain the name Christian, the Spirit expressly tells us, some will depart: "in the latter times some shall apostatize from the faith." Nevertheless we are not instructed to contend against them, but when they do this we are to unitedly possess the good which they forsake. The faith is said to be ours,—our "most holy faith," and we are to build ourselves up on this, praying in the Holy Spirit, keeping ourselves in God's love, as we await the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not easy to express in a sentence or two what the faith is, but it is clearly something which may be kept, for Paul said, "I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4. 7). It is also something in which we may be "sound," in which we are to "stand fast," in which we may be "established," in which we may "love" one another, and in which we are to "abide," for we shall be presented holy, blameless, and irreproachable
in the glory if we "continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel" (Col. 1. 23). On the other hand, it is equally clear that it is something which may be departed from as we have already seen. It is something which may be left after being once professed, for we read of those who aspire to be rich and "have wandered from the faith" (1 Tim. 6. 10). It can also be "denied" by bad conduct, it can be "missed" by making profession of false-named science, and it can be "cast off" by those who grow wanton against Christ. Seeing, therefore, it was "revealed" after the law period, and that it "was once delivered to the saints" at the beginning, we conclude that it is the whole scheme of God's revelation given in this present dispensation, the Centre of which is our Lord Jesus Christ, and in which true believers stand in abiding relationship with Him. Those who have faith will continue in it, and those who only profess it without true faith will not. It is similar to "the truth" so often spoken of in John's writings, though that is rather the exact expression of what is true in every sense, and none are of the truth or in the truth who are not born of God.

We need to be edified in the faith, to be nourished with the "words" of it, and to hold "the mystery" of it in a pure conscience. This being so, we shall be steadfast, and we shall not be unsettled by the inconsistent conduct of many who profess it. There is a striking verse in Isaiah 26.—"Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord" (10). It is the same in the profession of this holy faith to-day, some deal unjustly, and have no desire after the beauty and glory of the Lord. How different to others, who amidst many trials, "glorify the Lord in the fires," and "sing for the majesty of the Lord." The Holy Spirit designates the faith to-day as "the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory." It centres in this glorious Person. It is sustained by Him. And we are maintained in it in Divine energy and grace as His majesty and beauty are appreciated by us in faith.

"O Lord, Thy glory we behold,
Though not with mortal eyes;
That glory, on the Father's throne,
No human sight descries."

It is the eye of faith which sees it, and the heart rejoices in it, making our gladdened souls sing for the majesty of the Lord.

"OUR FAITH."

As this is increasingly true of us, we shall take up these words of the Holy Spirit, and use them with a tone of joyful triumph,—"Our Faith!" We have seen that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Leader and Perfecter of faith. Entering upon the path, we hear Him say, "Preserve Me, O God, for in Thee do I put My trust" (Ps. 16. 1). Going forward, He does not take the names of apostates into His lips, but to God He says, "Thou maintainest My lot. The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places. . . . I will bless the Lord." Then looking beyond the grave to resurrection and glory, He says, "Thy countenance is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." The Son of God finished His course to God's glory and is now Himself glorified on high, and He has given gifts from thence for the work of the ministry, "until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." There is just the "one faith" given of God to-day, and Titus was Paul's child according to the faith which is common to all true believers (1. 4), therefore with thankful hearts we can say, This faith is ours! and esteeming its Divine grandeur as given by God Himself, glorying in its Sustainer, the exalted Son of God, knowing that it is the Spirit who enables us to behold His glory, with exultation we may well sound aloud
Thus shall we continue and be enriched in the faith, not being moved away from the hope of the Gospel, but looking off unto Jesus from all else, and looking on, to being with Him and like Him for ever, we shall take up the verse where John but once mentions the word "faith" in his Gospel or Epistles, and say, "THIS IS THE VICTORY THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, EVEN OUR FAITH! WHO IS HE THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD?" (1 John 5. 4, 5).

THE CALL OF GOD.

(2 Tim. 1. 9; Romans 8. 28, 29; Hebrews 11. 8).

SCRIPTURE makes it abundantly clear that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are both "saved" and "called." We read in 2 Timothy 1. 9, God "hath saved us and called us with an holy calling." But while every true believer knows something of the blessedness of God's salvation, comparatively few enter into the joy of the calling.

Alas! it is feared, that with many, "calling" is but a term occasionally met with in Scripture, conveying very little definite meaning to the mind, and hence having very little power over the life. Yet nothing will so powerfully affect the outlook of a Christian, the manner of his life, and the character of his associations, as the realization of the call of God.

It must be remembered there is the deeply serious call to the sinner, of which we read in the story of the Garden of Eden when "the Lord God called unto Adam . . . Where art thou?" (Gen. 3. 9). This was calling a sinner to account for his sin. Then again there is the important call to the servant as when the Holy Spirit said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13. 2). Both these calls have their place in the ways of God, but it is neither the call to the sinner, nor the call to the servant to which we refer, but rather the call to the saint. That great call is the common portion of all saints, however slow they may be in responding and entering into the blessedness of it.

The call of God came to us in the Gospel by which we were saved (2 Timothy 1. 9, 10), though it may be at the time we but feebly, if at all, realized that God had called us. Naturally our first concern was salvation from the judgment of God, and rightly our souls were filled with gratitude for this great salvation. Little did we realize that God had something far greater before Him than the salvation of our souls, that God had a glorious purpose for us, and in view of the accomplishment of that purpose He had called us. Yet so it was, for, while the salvation of God has in view our deliverance from judgment, the call of God has in view the accomplishment of God's purpose. Thus we read
What a transcendent thought! God has a purpose for His people, settled before the foundation of the world, and in order to accomplish that purpose He has called us. He saved us because we needed saving. He has called us because He wanted us. Thus it is the privilege of each believer to say: "Though God is so great, and I am so small, yet God wants me, and wanting me, He has called me."

It will help us to understand the spiritual meaning of the call of God if we ponder the story of Abraham. He was the first of the Old Testament saints who was called of God. There were other men of faith before his day. Abel had suffered for faith in the world. Enoch walked by faith through the world: Noah was saved by faith from a ruined world. But not until Abraham's day do we hear of a saint being called out of the world. The world was one thousand eight hundred years old before God called a man out of it. A little thought will show the reason for this. Until the days of Abraham, things were not ripe for the call of God; for if God calls a man out of the world it means that the moment has arrived when manifestly the world is a doomed world, and that God has done with it. God may go on with it for a time, as indeed He has for long centuries, and in the ways of God a great deal may be worked out in it, but from the moment God calls a man out of the world, we may be certain that, not only the world has done with God, but that God has done with the world as such.

Moreover, the call of God not only means that God has done with this present evil world, but that the moment has arrived when God begins to reveal to faith the great secret, that He has another world in view—a world where all is according to Himself.

Thus the call of Abraham was an entirely new departure in the ways of God. And the new principle on which God commenced to work four thousand years ago, is the principle on which God is working to-day, though with the coming of Christ, His death, and session at the right hand of God, the call of God has been made known in far greater fulness and distinctness.

There are two aspects of the call both very definitely set forth in the history of Abraham. We read in Heb. 11. 8, that "he was called to go out," referring to the world that he was to leave behind. Then we read, "he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance." Here the new world into which he was called is in view. Stephen also refers to these two aspects of the call of Abraham, for he tells us that God said to Abraham, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee " (Acts 7. 3).

THE WORLD FROM WHICH HE WAS CALLED.

The tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis portray the terrible character of the world out of which Abraham was called. Three things marked that world. First it was an apostate world that had fallen into idolatry. This we know from Joshua's last words to Israel as recorded in Joshua 24. 2. He reminds them that their fathers, together with Terah, the father of Abraham, "served other gods." Idolatry shut out the true God by setting up gods according to man's evil imagination. It meant that man had apostatized from God, and that God was excluded from man's world.

Second it was a world in which man glorified himself, for they said, "Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven, and let us make us a name." It was a world that not only dishonoured God, but glorified man.

Finally the eleventh chapter ends with the gloom of death. "Terah
died in Haran." The world that excludes God, and glorifies man, is a world that is in the grip of death. Men may acquire great renown, like Nimrod who was a mighty one in the earth; they may build great cities like Asshur, or attempt to build a tower whose top shall reach to heaven, like the men of Babel, but in the end the mighty one has to bow before a still mightier, the city crumbles to dust, the tower becomes a heap, and death reigns over all.

Such was the world from which Abraham was called. A world from which God was excluded, in which man was exalted, and over which death reigned. And as the world was then, so is the world to-day. The present evil world had its commencement in the days that followed the flood. The Apostle Peter, referring to the world before the flood, calls it "the world that then was" (2 Peter 3. 6). That world has passed away for ever; but he immediately goes on to speak of "the heavens and the earth which are now." Here he refers to the world that commenced after the flood. And as it commenced in excluding God, exalting man, and feeding death, so it has continued, and so will it end in one last furious outburst of apostasy from God, exaltation of man, and the devastation of death.

Evidently a world of this character will not do for God. The word to Abraham in his day was, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house"; and the word in our day is, "Come out from among them and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6. 17); and in regard to the Babylonish corruptions of Christendom the word is, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18. 4).

This, however, is only one aspect of the call of God. There is, as we have seen, another and very blessed aspect,

THE WORLD TO WHICH WE ARE CALLED.

If the history of Abraham instructs us as to the character of man's world, it also gives us bright intimations of God's world. It will be remembered that Stephen commences his address before the Jewish council by recalling the history of Abraham. He says, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham." He does not say the God of earth, but the God of glory; that is, the God of another world—a world of glory. In Scripture the great thought of glory is God displayed. The God of glory implies the God of a scene where God is perfectly set forth according to His nature and attributes. Surrounded as we are, on every hand, by a world in which the evil of man's heart is displayed, from which God is excluded, where man is exalted, and death reigns, and with our sensibilities dulled by constant contact with such a world, we find it hard to realize the infinite blessedness of a world where God is fully displayed—where everything speaks of the love, holiness, wisdom and might of God, and hence a scene of perfect joy and rest, where sin, and sorrow, and death can never come. A world of glory such as this is the very antithesis of this present evil world.

But not only has this world been brought to light, but God's purpose to have His people in this new world of glory has been disclosed, for if the God of glory appears to a man it is in order that a man may appear in the glory of God. This, too, comes before us very blessedly in the story of Stephen. For if he opens his address with the God of glory appearing to a man, he closes by witnessing to the Man that appears in the glory of God. He "looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and in regard to the Babylonish corruptions of Christendom the word is, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Rev. 18. 4).
a new world of glory, and a new Man in that glory, and therefore One who is perfectly suited to a scene where God is fully displayed. Moreover, the Apostle Paul tells us that those who are called according to the purpose of God are predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8. 28, 29). As these truths gain an entrance to our souls, in all their greatness and grandeur, we begin to realize the exceeding blessedness of that call which introduces us to a world of glory, there to be conformed to the image of the Man in the glory. Well may we sing,—

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

Having seen the character of the call, as regards the world from which we are called, as well as the world to which we are called, we may well inquire what is THE PRESENT EFFECT OF THE CALL ON THE PEOPLE OF GOD?

Here, again, the history of Abraham will afford us rich instruction. It is evident that the call of God entirely altered the course of his life. Moreover, it is equally clear that this change was only brought about in the measure in which he responded to the call. The call of God became a test for Abraham's faith, just as indeed it becomes a test for each one of God's people to-day. Herein lies the test: Has the call of God in all its greatness, grandeur, and blessedness, such a hold over our affections that it becomes paramount over every other consideration? In the case of Abraham, God said: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee." This, indeed, was a severe test for Abraham's faith. Was the call of God of such supreme importance and blessedness in his eyes, that in obedience to the call he could leave entirely behind, country, kindred, and father's house? We know in the actual history of Abraham that, for a time, he was held back by his father's house.

In the case of Abraham he was called literally to leave the country of his birth, his kindred and his father's house. In the case of the Christian the call does not take this literal character, but none the less we are called to be morally apart from country, kindred and father's house. And, if morally apart, it may lead to the Christian being cast out from the political, social, and even family circle, as in the case of the blind man of John 9. In any case the moment comes in our history when we have to decide which is to be paramount, the mighty call of God, or the insistent claims of country, kindred, and father's house.

If we obey the call the effect will be threefold. First, we shall become strangers and pilgrims on the earth. It was so with Abraham and those associated with him. They heard the call of God, they saw "afar off" the blessed prospect unrolled before them in the promises that spoke of the heavenly country, and the city of God, with the result, that they, being persuaded of the promises, embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Secondly, having accepted the path of strangership, we shall become witnesses for God on the earth. And so with Abraham we read that, having become strangers and pilgrims, "they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." The man that declares plainly as a witness for God, is the man that answers to the call of God.

Thirdly, having answered to the call, and taken up the path of strangership, and thus declared plainly for God, we acquire fresh blessing for our souls and thus make spiritual progress in light. It was so with Abraham, he received no further light from God until he had answered to the call. But having responded to the call, God appeared to him for the second time, and gave him further light, speaking to him of
the Seed, and saying, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12. 7).

The vast vista of glory unrolled to faith in the call of God makes this world's fading glories look very small and dim. And if once seen in their true proportions it becomes no great hardship to leave them behind. And if "for a moment" the call of God may involve some measure of "light affliction" what matters it, since we know that on beyond there is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

May the call of God become so real, so definite, so great to each one of us, that, like Paul of old, we may say, "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 calling on high of God in Christ Jesus," and thus truly be able to sing,—

Called from above, and heavenly men by birth, (Who once were but the citizens of earth) As pilgrims here, we seek a heavenly home, Our portion in the ages yet to come.

MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.
God's Word and Daniel's Confession.

It is rather astonishing that in both the seventh and eighth chapters the vision is given to the prophet, and yet afterwards he required an interpreter that he might understand its meaning, though he is said to have had "understanding in all visions and dreams" (chapter I. 17). As regards the visions and dreams given to the Gentile, this is easy to be understood, for we would not expect God to put Himself in direct communication with an idolater. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him" (Psa. 25. 14), and "He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets" (Amos 3. 7). But here is Daniel, a man greatly beloved, and he has to be made to understand the vision that has been given to him!

God was bringing before him, by means of this vision, the history and behaviour of certain powers that would have in some way to do with his people, and hence there was still something to be understood by him, that did not lie on the surface of the vision. God loves to interest the hearts of His people in the things that are of interest to Himself. It was surely a grief to the heart of the Lord to witness the indifference manifested by His disciples regarding the place to which He was going, when He has to say to them: "Now I go My way to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou?" (John 16. 5). They were more concerned about the place He was leaving, than they were about the place to which He was going; but as soon as the Lord was glorified, the place to which He had gone was everything to them.

Daniel knew that God had little interest in the warlike activities of the kings of the earth, whoever they may be. That all men are responsible to Him for the way in which they behave themselves in whatever position they may be found in the providence of God, is a solemn fact, whether the position be one of authority, or of subjection; whether it be of poverty, or of wealth; and for their behaviour in the circumstances in which they may be found, they must give account to Him; for in whatever way, or by whatever means, they may have reached the place in which they are, they are there by the ordering of God, though on their side it may have been by wickedness they arrived there.

God takes account of the doings of
all His creatures whom He has set in relationship with Himself, but this does not mean that the behaviour of a king has more interest to Him, than has the behaviour of the subject. A position of authority may, and does, carry more responsibility with it, for in such a position there is more power for doing either good or evil, than there is in the position of the subject; but God has no more interest in the life of the one than in that of the other, though in His government of this world He has more to say about the life of the king than He has about the life of the subject; neither does He put on record the histories of kings or of kingdoms, any more than He does the histories of the common people, except where they may be found connected with His interests upon earth, which largely centre around the nation of Israel; and where this is the case He has much to say about them, whoever they may be, and will have more to say about them in the day of judgment.

Daniel was a man "greatly beloved," and one to whom great understanding was given, and wisdom also, and to whom wonderful revelations were made; yet we learn from God's ways with him that what we can learn by the study of His Word by means of prophetic writings, we cannot expect to receive in any other way. God has put on record the things He desires His people to know and understand; and to us has been graciously given the Holy Spirit, who inspired His servants to put on record these communications, and who is the power by which we may become acquainted with them. He has not cast us upon our own fancied ability to receive them intelligently, even when He has so wrought that a record of them has been made.

In Daniel's study of the sacred Word, while under the domination of the proud and victorious Gentile, he, by the leading of the Spirit, had been directed to the prophecy of Jeremiah, where he found that seventy years were to be accomplished in the desolations of Jerusalem. And here we may learn a very valuable lesson. Most of those who have been brought to faith in Christ would be glad to be better acquainted with the holy Scriptures, and perhaps we have cried to God about it, and desired to be led into deeper knowledge regarding the thoughts of His heart. But we may not have taken the means that He has placed before us, that we may lay hold of the coveted treasure. We are informed that "the soul of the slothful desires, and hath nothing"; and how constantly are we being made to experience the truth of the saying? But "the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." God has, in His great grace and love to us, made manifest the thoughts of His heart; and we have a record of them, and if we desire to know them, according to the strength of that desire will be our study of them. Let us learn a lesson from Daniel.

The captive finds from the holy Word, that the time for the ending of the desolations of the city of the great king had drawn nigh, and he turns to God in prayer that there might be a fulfilment of that which was written. Not that he had the least doubt about it, but he was in the mind of God as to the accomplishment of His ways upon earth, and how His acts, either for blessing or otherwise, are consequent upon the prayers of His people. I will not weary the reader with many passages of Scripture, but will refer him to Ezek. 36. 37; Zech. 12. 10; Rev. 8. 3-5. One might have supposed that the time for confession of sins, and for prayer for deliverance, was now too late, that God would carry out His purpose, and fulfil His Word apart from the prayers of His people. But these are only the thoughts of a careless heart. He has set man in dependence upon Himself; and that dependence is expressed in prayer, though none but His own people acknowledge this fact. He also
carries out His gracious purposes with regard to His own, or with reference to His dealings with the nations, in answer to the expressed desires that ascend to Him from faithful hearts; and in His dealings with this world He does not set aside those that are His witnesses on the earth. His spiritual people are in His mind, and that which they see needful for His honour and glory, they appeal to Him about, and the answer comes in His own way, and sometimes in a way in which it is least expected. Still, it does come, and in response to their fervent supplications. May we ever keep this in mind. We are here on earth, and in one way very much like other men, but we are in the mind of heaven, and in charge of His interests, and His ears are open to our supplications. But it is only as we prayerfully study His holy Word that we can approach Him with any measure of intelligence.

But if Daniel approaches the heavenly throne, realizing that the bright sun of deliverance for the holy city was about to break through the dark cloud of his people's captivity, and if a joy fills his heart at the prospect, he must take into consideration in the presence of God that which had caused the vapours of the Divine displeasure to spread themselves so thickly across the azure dome of heaven. He cannot take the deliverance as a matter of course, any more than he could take that which had befallen his people as being the result of the fitful humour of a capricious autocrat. He is before the throne with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes, ascribing righteousness to Jehovah, and confusion of face to the people to whom such favours had been shown.

Let us here learn our lesson. Daniel was a man greatly in the favour of God, and he was also a doer of His will, ready to give up life rather than disobey the Divine command, and yet is he very conscious of his imperfections and failures, though he is one of the very few of God's people whose errors are unrecorded. Still, of this I have no doubt: he was well aware of the evil that lay in his fleshly nature, and that whatever he was, as a faithful servant of Jehovah, he was that by the favour of God. Hence he takes his place along with the sinners of his nation, not towering above them as a faultless exception, but placing himself among them as clay of the one lump of fallen humanity, and as a fruitless branch of a degenerate vine: "We have rebelled against Him; and we have not hearkened unto the voice of Jehovah our God." He fully identifies himself with the nation.

There is a wholesome flavour about this confession coming from such a devoted servant of the Lord. There is no: "I thank Thee that I am not as other men." Such words would not fit into the lips of a man like Daniel. God, who "desires truth in the inward parts," finds it in the honest and heartfelt acknowledgments of this poor captive, and they are grateful to His holy ear. He has not one word to say on behalf of himself or of his nation, but he has a great deal to say on behalf of God, and on behalf of the honour and glory of His holy Name. That which he desires to have done for his nation in the way of deliverance is for the Lord's sake. He says: "Defer not, for Thine own sake, O my God! for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy Name." Splendid!

Heaven is moved! The ear of the living God is reached! The heart of the God of Israel responds to the cry of His faithful and devoted servant. He says: "While I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation." How perfectly fulfilled to Daniel was the promise: "While they are yet speaking I will
hear” (Isa. 65. 24) ! Gabriel is caused to fly “swiftly.” Daniel is not to be kept waiting. The assault upon the throne of the Highest is too resolute and powerful to be set aside. The agony of the pleader is not to be despised by a God of infinite compassion and of holy love. Swiftly is the messenger despatched with a message that gives a vision of the future until the day in which the Messiah shall take the throne of the world. He is told that seventy weeks are apportioned out upon Daniel’s people, and upon the holy city, to finish transgression, make an end of sins, make expiation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the holy of holies.

“A PEOPLE PREPARED FOR THE LORD.”

“The prepared people were very few numerically, and from a social and worldly standpoint were very insignificant, yet when the Lord Jesus Christ appeared in the humiliation which characterized His first advent they were there to greet Him.

It was particularly the office of John the Baptist to make ready that prepared people (Luke 1. 17). He was the chosen instrument of the Spirit of God, and by his preaching and the baptism of repentance things were brought to a climax, and godly souls marked by repentance and faith were manifested, just as also by his baptism the Messiah Himself was made manifest to Israel. Still, the process of preparation had been going on for long. The opening chapters of Luke give us a very attractive picture of some of these godly souls who had been prepared of God at a date nearly thirty years before John’s preaching. The book of Malachi gives us a glimpse at a similar generation of faithful saints some three or four hundred years previously.

The Lord Jesus evidently appeared at an hour when the world was seething with unrest and when a general expectancy of some great event swayed the hearts of men. Scripture bears witness to this feature amongst the people of Israel (see Luke 3. 15). Secular history seems to indicate a corresponding condition in the heathen world. This latter is easily explained. The devil, though not omniscient, is very farsighted and is a close observer of the Divine Word and of the hearts and ways of men. He knew when Messiah was to appear according to Daniel 9. 26, even though saints neglected the sacred writings, and remained as a result in ignorance. He consequently agitated the minds of men, raising up false prophets and false “Christcs” so as effectually to cloud the issue and confuse the inquiring mind. Moreover, he too had evidently been steadily working for centuries amongst the returned remnant of the chosen people, producing among them just that attitude of mind and that moral atmosphere that made the rejection of the Messiah when He appeared an absolute certainty. Just as there had been a work progressing in preparation for Christ, so had there been a work of preparation for Barabbas.

Now history has a remarkable way of repeating itself. This is not surprising when we remember that in all ages and under all circumstances man is just man, and God Himself immutably the same. Hence men are continually doing the same things and God is continually acting towards them
according to the principles of His holy and righteous government; the consequence being the repetition which is so frequently noticed. In keeping with this we find indications in the New Testament that there is a similar work of preparation in progress for the now near-approaching second advent. The same two currents are running swiftly in the course of present history. We do not for the moment pursue this side of the subject, and only mention it in order that with greater interest we may follow the course of the two totally opposed currents as they flowed before the first advent, and be better able to appreciate the light which it all sheds upon the path of the saint to-day.

Let us then first turn our thoughts to Malachi, whose prophecies were uttered more than a century after the return of a remnant of the captivity to the land of their fathers under Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Ezra. During these many years there had gradually supervened amongst them a haughty and self-satisfied spirit. They did not now drift off into idolatry as their fathers had done, but the devil darkened their thoughts by pride so that they were content to pursue the round of outward religious observances whilst their hearts were far from God. And not only this, but when the Lord remonstrated with them through the prophet and laid their sins at their door, they simply met such remonstrance with petulant and impertinent inquiries as to when they had ever been guilty of the sins alleged. They were utterly intolerant of criticism, and not prepared for one moment to admit that anything at all was amiss with them!

Note the following excerpts:—

"I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?" (1. 2).

"You, O priests, that despise My Name, and ye that say, Wherein have we despised Thy Name?" (1. 6).

"Ye offer polluted bread upon Mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee?" (1. 7).

"And this have ye done again . . . insomuch that He regardeth not the offering any more . . . Yet ye say, Wherefore?" (2. 13, 14).

"Ye have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him?" (2. 17).

"Return unto Me . . . saith the Lord of Hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?" (3. 7).

"Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee?" (3. 8).

"Your words have been stout against Me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against Thee?" (3. 13).

These extracts show that already the mass of the people were developing the frame of mind so strikingly described by the Lord Jesus as being like the children of the market places who say, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented" (Matt. 11. 17). When the Lord declared His love for them, instead of rejoicing, they merely asked wherein He had loved them, inferring thereby that they did not accept His assurance, since they considered His dealings harsh and that they themselves were but victims—injured innocents, in fact. When He plainly laid their sins before them, instead of repenting they simply declined to admit that any such sins existed with them.

Moreover, in all the profanation of the things of God which marked those days, the priests were the ringleaders (2. 1-10). Instead of leading the people to God, they "departed out of the way" themselves; they "caused many to stumble at the law," they "corrupted the covenant of Levi." Consequently no one would open the temple doors unless he made some
profit by so doing, and the people were infected by the same spirit, and if they contemplated bringing an offering, they carefully looked over their flocks so as to bring to the Lord the most miserable specimen they could find! And all the while they considered themselves in the pride of their hearts as being quite above criticism, and the weight of public opinion was altogether in their favour, for, said the prophet, "Now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up." (3. 15). Thus rolled on the current of religious iniquity that was to terminate in the cry, "Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas."

Another current, however, had begun to run its course, gaining its impulse from the Spirit of God. It appears to have been largely beneath the surface, and hence much less conspicuous, and to have had an appearance of but little strength, still it was there. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another" (3. 16). There began to be manifested a true remnant of God-fearing souls within the remnant of the nation that had returned from captivity.

Three things characterized these godly souls of Malachi's day:—

1. They "thought upon" Jehovah's Name (3. 16). A person's "name" sets forth what he is, it expresses also his reputation. These God-fearing folk cared for Jehovah's reputation. They cared for what He was, and judged of things consequently not by the way those things affected themselves personally, but by the way they affected Jehovah's name and interests. In short, they reversed the popular order and set Jehovah's interests in the first place.

2. They "served" God (3. 18). Their thoughts of Jehovah's Name found practical expression in service. They were not mere thinkers. This is a great point, for it is quite possible for the true saint whose mind is in the right direction to fall short of what is practical. To think without serving is nearly as bad and ineffectual as to serve without thinking.

3. They "spake often one to another" (3. 16). Speech as well as thoughts and actions came under Divine control. The heart being full, the mouth spoke, and intercourse and fellowship together in the things of God were enjoyed. All this was pleasing and acceptable to God.

Thus far does Malachi carry us. The two currents are plainly discernible. The second current terminated in the great confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

We leave Malachi and come to New Testament times, only to meet with the two currents again. The early chapters of Matthew resume the history of the first: the early chapters of Luke that of the second.

In Matthew 2. the scenes are cast largely among the grandees of the day. We move in thought amongst venerable priests and scribes of the Sanhedrim, and in the court circles of the godless Herod. What do we find? We find a state of things, which, had not Malachi's prophecy prepared us, we should have deemed well-nigh incredible. The Messiah, the long-expected Deliverer is born, and Jerusalem knows nothing of it! The months roll by and still not the faintest inkling of the great event has reached the religious or civil authorities! Presently, wise men from the East, semi-pagans in all probability, arrive in Jerusalem with the tidings, and proceed to instruct the men who were supposed to be the link between God and the people. Malachi had said, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge... for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts" (2. 7). Here, however, the priests had no knowledge to keep. Semi-pagans got the glad tidings of great joy before them and became the instructors of priestly ignorance. So long a time had elapsed between the Nativity and the news reaching the authorities, that Herod
had to fix two years as the limit in his vain attempt to ensure that the Messiah should be slain. Thus did God pour contempt on all the priestly pride which Malachi had reproved.

And this is not all. Consider the effect of the news when it came to hand. "When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." That Herod should have been troubled is not surprising; he was an alien on the throne. But the leaders of the veritable people of God and the people themselves were troubled also. Instead of hailing His advent with great joy, they were filled with consternation. It seemed to them an intrusion, a disturbing factor in all their schemes. They were not prepared for God to thrust Himself into the midst of their concerns. The current of Satanic preparation for His coming had greatly increased in volume. If the cry of "Not this Man but Barabbas" appeared a probability in the light of Malachi's indictment, it is now a certainty, and inevitable.

We turn to the first and second chapters of Luke, and what a contrast we find! Far from the ignoble strife of the madding crowd of Pharisaic and Sadducean religionists or the vicious courtezans of Herod and his court, were at least a few saints better known in heaven than on earth. Zacharias and Elisabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, the nameless shepherds caring for the flocks by night, were representatives of a larger number. How strongly that other current beneath the surface is flowing here is a people in touch with heaven! "An angel of the Lord appears to this one. Gabriel visits another. On a third occasion the angel of the Lord with a multitude of the heavenly host comes into evidence. By a few the advent of the Messiah was known before ever He came. His approaching birth formed the theme of conversation between holy women. When the great event was an accomplished fact, hardly an hour passed before the God-fearing shepherds were apprised of the fact. They needed no wise men from the East to inform them that the King of the Jews was born.

In this people we see the three characteristics mentioned by Malachi. They thought upon Jehovah's Name, as evidenced in the inspired utterances of Mary and Zacharias. They served God and spake often one to another, as illustrated by Anna who "served God with fastings and prayers night and day," and who, having actually seen the child Jesus in the temple, "spake of Him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." The characteristics are not only there but intensified, indeed things come to light which surpass anything mentioned in Malachi, for in Simeon the Holy Spirit was working with singular energy. Though as yet the Spirit could not indwell, yet He was upon him. Through the Spirit he had a revelation, and by the Spirit he was guided into the temple at the exact moment to meet the child Jesus.

As a consequence Simeon was a prophet. His words to Mary, the mother of our Lord, show that he foresaw the rejection and death of the Messiah, and they breathe a remarkable spirit of devotion and love. Here was this aged saint who had spent a long life "waiting for the consolation of Israel," and now just before his eyes must close in death he is permitted to see as an infant the One who is the fulfilment of his hopes. The actual day of Messiah's manifestation to Israel he can never hope to see. Might he not very naturally have bewailed his hard lot in having to die just as the fulfilment of his hopes was in sight? Yet as a matter of fact he simply said, "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace." Not only did he foresee the approaching tragedy of the Cross, but his heart's love centred in the Christ of God. If the Christ is to go, he is content to go. He has no wish to live if Jesus is to die!
Behold then a people prepared for the Lord morally: it remained for John the Baptist to baptize with the baptism of repentance and thus prepare them positionally. Just as in Matthew 2, we see Malachi's picture of the people reproduced in an accentuated form, so here is Malachi's picture of the remnant in an accentuated form, and they received the Christ with great joy. Simeon stands before us as a watcher for Christ; Anna as a witness to Christ. They were ready.

It is a thrilling story. How deep the interest, whether joyous or painful, according as we look on this side or on that! Yet our situation to-day is no less thrilling did we but know it. It is easy, however, to discourse upon what has been, or even upon what is yet to be, and alas! so difficult to realize and correctly estimate the situation that is.

We draw near to the close of the church's history. The coming of the Lord is nigh. The rolling tide of religious iniquity that is to terminate in apostasy, yearly grows in volume. More and more bold and blasphemous become the denials and negations of men who pose as religious leaders. More and more reckless and God-forgetting become the poor men and women of the world. And the saints? What of the saints of God? Is there a corresponding movement among them?

Let us narrow down this question to ourselves individually. If we do, it will certainly send us to our knees in the presence of God. The second coming is near. The two currents of which we have spoken are again plainly visible. Ask, Which of them bears on its bosom? Am I amongst the watchers and the witnesses? Do I stand with loins girt and ready for the Lord?

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

(Edward Wilmot Bechervoise)

Thy love beneath—a vast and buoyant sea;
Thy love, a breeze upon me, freshly free;
Thy love above (unsearched canopy)
An azure ether that enfoldeth me.

Thy love, O Christ! above, around, within!
O love! that shunned not, my poor soul to win,
To take my place, but bore my weight of sin—
Thou bid'st me to Thy glory enter in!

O Christ! expression of God's love, His light
To sons of earth, who walked in deepest night;
Unveiling of His image; glory bright;
Word of His thought; His wisdom; His delight;

To Thee be glory from all ages past!
All crowns of empire be before Thee cast!
To Thee dominion while all ages run—
All homage in the aeons yet to come!
THE LEVITE.

ALTHOUGH everything in the tabernacle was approved of God (see Exod. 40.), it was still necessary that the congregation should definitely know what was, and what was not, suited to His mind. If He were to dwell amongst them, they must act according to His wishes, which appear to have been made known to them in the first month after the erection of the tabernacle, for at the commencement of the second month (Num. 1. 1) the nation was counted tribe by tribe, and set in relationship to the holy place in their midst, and to its service, into which they had been so recently initiated.

This reckoning was taken, so that each man and each tribe might know his place, and be prepared to defend the rights and privileges that had been granted to him. "Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel . . . all that are able to go forth to war" (Num. 1. 2, 3). None within prescribed limits were exempt, neither poverty nor wealth, business nor family affairs, might be alleged as reasons for not standing for the claims of the Lord. All who benefited were called upon to defend their inheritance with their lives. But ere they might do this, or any other service, it was their solemn duty to keep constant watch on the cloud that overshadowed them, and to be regulated by its movements, neither to go before it, nor to lag behind.

Such is demanded from every saint of God to-day, for the care of His interests, the maintenance of Divine principles, and the testimony to a risen and coming Saviour, have been entrusted to the care of His people, and it is incumbent on every individual to see that, as far as it lies in his power, they shall be strenuously defended, suffer no loss, and that the whole range of truth as far as it is known shall be maintained in its purity, strength, and integrity. This is the responsibility of all, apart from family, service or office, and exercised under the direct guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Besides the defence of the rights of the Lord there was the ministration of the sanctuary to be provided for. This was entrusted to the Levites, as the representatives of the whole nation. They had been chosen in the first instance from amongst the others for their loyalty to Jehovah in a time of stress (Exod. 32. 26), and also as those that should be to God in lieu of the firstborn who were pronounced to be "holy to the Lord." They were thus separated from the rest of the nation, and for this reason were not reckoned with them, they did not go to fight, nor had they any inheritance in the land, though afterwards they were scattered through it in forty-eight cities, so that their influence should be felt everywhere.

On the other hand, they received tithes from the congregation, they encamped close to the tabernacle, though the rest of the people were commanded to remain at a great distance, showing that their links were rather more closely connected with the service of God than with the people. Yet they were very intimately identified with the latter, and this was very distinctively expressed when they took up their service.

At that time they were first washed and shaven, expressive of dissociation from their past; a meat offering was presented for them, and then in the presence of the whole assembly, hands were laid on them, making them representative of the whole. After this they were offered to the Lord by the hands of Aaron the high priest. When in this
way they were devoted to God, He presented them once more to Aaron for the service of the sanctuary (see Num. 8.). From this time the care of the holy things whilst the people were on the march was entrusted to them. They stood in the eyes of the congregation for what was due to God, and all their service was for and to Him, the sanctuary, and the priests, being connected with an order of things largely unseen, that which was alone conspicuous being the cloudy pillar, the perpetual sign of the presence of their God amongst them.

Two striking features of the Tabernacle should be here noticed. First, all was ordained in relation to God's presence in the camp of Israel, everything was subordinate to that presence, and everything was hidden from view. Then there was nothing that had relation to the nations around, or that corresponded to a testimony to them. Though all was hidden, and there was no access to the presence of God, yet it was not possible that He could dwell with them in any other way than that of a blesser, indeed the earliest promise to them was, "I will bless thee, and thou shalt be a blessing."

But though nothing was said of their being a witness to others, it is evident that God intended them to learn in His presence what He was, and impress others with what they had learnt. David realized this, and expressed it on many occasions. In Psalm 67. 1, 2 he prays, "God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause His face to shine upon us; that Thy way may be known upon earth, Thy saving health among all nations." Again in Psalm 48. 3 he says, "God is known in her palaces for a refuge," and again, "In Judah is God known" (Psa. 76. 1).

These things are given in the Old Testament for the guidance of those who live in this day of the Spirit, when all that was presented in figure has found its fulfilment, when that which was only partial is now complete, when that which was denied (i.e., nearness, approach, rest) is now the portion of the believer. Now the Son of God is come, and the Father has been revealed, and all the counsels of eternity made manifest, and consequently there should arise in the heart of each believer a spring of worship to the Father, and a spontaneous outgoing to those who are around of testimony to the grace and love that they have received and learnt, and that surely in a far fuller way than was ever possible in the days of partial light.

The tribe of the Levites were entrusted with privilege of a very high order in being permitted to care for and carry the sacred vessels of the sanctuary, which were typical of such mighty truths. All that was dearest to God was handed into their charge, since the whole system stood for the maintenance of the Lord's interests on the earth, and that in the midst of which He would find His rest.

The importance that God attached to this service is seen in the address of Moses to the children of Israel just before they entered the land of Canaan, which was not only a land flowing with milk and honey, but was also the place where would be set His Name, the spot that He had chosen. He was bringing them to the place where, in harmony with His own thoughts, they could offer their burnt offerings where He Himself had had a lamb provided for a burnt offering (Mount Moriah, Gen. 22.) and where grace had triumphed when all the righteous claims of Divine justice had been met (1 Chron. 21. 25-27), and where later, when in sovereignty He set aside Shiloh, His choice fell for the setting forth of the holiness of His Name (Mount Zion, Psa. 78. 68). Here they should sacrifice to Him, and in perfect liberty rejoice before Him, but at the very time of their rejoicings they are warned, "Take heed to thyself, that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth (Deut. 12. 19).
And why was this reminder given at such a moment? Was it not that in the midst of their enjoyment they were apt to forget the claims of God. They were to give the Levite one tenth of their substance, and the Levite had to contribute in like measure to the priest, whilst it was the prime duty of the latter to minister to the Lord (Exod. 28. 3). In the measure in which the Levites were deprived of their rights, the Lord was deprived of His, which in turn reacted upon themselves.

This is seen in all its grievousness at the close of their history. Their sad condition, their poverty, their weakness, are all traced to the solitary fact that the Lord had not had His portion, and they were invited to prove the truth of it. "Ye have robbed Me... even this whole nation. 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, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3. 9, 10).

There was thus the closest connection between the feeblest of the people and the worship of Jehovah, and it was essential that every link should be maintained efficiently, for on that depended the blessing of the congregation, of which His unsullied presence was the sole but sufficient guarantee, for it made them the most privileged and enriched people on the earth, for would He not open to them the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Mal. 3. 9, 10).

There may be asked whether there are to-day those who represent the congregation, the Levite and the priest. Such a question may be answered by asking, To whom is the defence of the truth committed? Surely to every child of God! Each is called upon to keep His word and not deny His name; no believer can be exempt from that, nay it is his joy to stand fast in the defence of the Gospel, and to maintain all that has been committed to his charge.

Then is it not equally a part of the Christian's inheritance to serve the living and the true God, as the Thessalonians did, and were commended for so doing this Levitical service? His service is the joy and privilege of all. There is thus given to each believer a solemn exhortation to see that that side of his Christian life is not neglected or starved. Each is responsible to stand for the defence of the truth and to attend to the interests of the Lord in the midst of His own who gather around Him, caring for His people, establishing their souls, feeding the flock, or encouraging them to stand fast in the Lord, by presenting to them the attractive features of the Lord Jesus as the One who had told out the secrets of the eternal love of God.

But beyond this there is an additional privilege conferred on all the children of God, and that is priesthood. Nowhere in the New Testament is it taught that the office of priest is confined to a special class of believer, indeed the very opposite is insisted on. The apostle Peter speaking to Jewish Christians particularly, but to all, actually says, "Ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (1 Pet. 2. 5), and again in the ninth verse he says, "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood;" that is to say, the believer has to-day greater distinctions as a priest than Aaron had, for his was not combined with royal dignity as is the present priesthood; and further, the song of the ransomed in heaven is "Thou hast made us unto our God a kingdom of priests;" and once more the epistle to the Hebrews exhorts the offering of sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of lips giving thanks to His Name.
It is thus perfectly clear that these three functions are combined in every child of God to-day, and also that there is a sphere of spiritual activity beyond service for the Lord. It is his privilege to approach the immediate presence of the Lord, bearing in his hands that which tells of the value and efficacy of the person and work of His beloved Son. Such approach is the inalienable right of every ransomed soul.

These rights accompany the reception of the Holy Spirit, for with Him comes every blessing and relationship and privilege that a child of God can ever know, though he may not at the time enter into all that has been made his, but as he grows in the knowledge of God and acquaintance with Christ, the blessedness of his possessions will become more and more apparent.

The natural order of appreciation of these privileges will be that the responsibilities of a member of the congregation must be well discharged ere one can enter on Levitical duties, and further, one could not conceive how God could receive His due when those of the assembly had been neglected, for surely it can be only from a company that is standing well in testimony for the Lord, that He can get that which refreshes His own heart. Yet it is the happy lot of the feeblest to be able to approach that spot where His glory shines for us without a veil, to know the bliss of His unclouded favour, seeing that he stands there robed in that which speaks of the worth of His beloved Son.

Should not then each saint see to it that each link of the chain that joins the lowliest phase of his spiritual life with the immediate presence of God is maintained in its strength, and that anything that would tend to mar its continuity should be removed, so that the fruit of the lips might be rendered to His Name. From such a company there will be a full and uninterrupted testimony to the world of the saving grace that is in Christ Jesus, and to the God who so loved the world as to give Him.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

After the Church is Gone.

In the September number the statement is made that "The object of his [i.e., anti-christ's] special animosity and persecution will be the believing Jews, who then shall be God's witnesses in a world from which the saints of this present dispensation have been withdrawn to heaven, and . . . the Holy Spirit shall have gone with them." I should like to ask, Who are the believing Jews?

If it is maintained that the saints of this dispensation, inclusive of believing Jews and Gentiles, shall have been withdrawn to heaven at the time referred to, is it not a difficulty to account for the presence of believing Jews? So far as I am able to see, the condition of Israel immediately prior to the Lord's coming to the earth in glory will be one of groping anxiety as shown in Isa. 59. 9-15. If this is the case, they would scarcely be in a condition to witness for God.—WESTCLIFF-ON-SEA.
will consequently believe and become witnesses and messengers in the service of God, and so come specially under the persecution instigated by the antichrist.

We believe this assertion to be quite correct and would refer you to the following Scriptures:—

1. The book of Revelation with its God-given threefold division as stated in chapter 1.19. “The things which are” cover the church period given prophetically in chapters 2. and 3. “The things which shall be hereafter”—or “after these things”—start with chapter 4. and continue to the end of the book. Now immediately the work of judgment commences, an elect people, “the servants of God,” are sealed. They are of the tribes of Israel. Others of nations and tongues are to come out of the tribulation into millennial blessing as the latter part of chapter 7. shows, but the sealed servants of God are of Israel’s race. Ye pass on to chapter 12., and in the vision of that chapter we recognize Israel in the woman who brings forth the Man-child—only it is Israel in her proper character invested with the symbols of authority; Israel as she is really seen in the godly remnant, who are the nation according to God. Now compare verses 6, 10, 11, 13, 17 and verse 7 of chapter 13. It is at least apparent that there is the most intimate connection between this symbolic woman, Israel, and those spoken of as “our brethren,” “the saints,” and “the remnant of her seed.” These godly souls, against whom the fury of the powers of darkness is spent, are not saints of the present dispensation but a remnant of Israel’s seed.

2. Matthew, chapters 10. and 24. The latter chapter is the beginning of the Lord’s great prophetic discourse. Verses 16–23 of chapter 10. fit in with it. The Lord was sending forth the twelve as His witnesses to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (verse 6). He instructs them as to their attitude in the face of persecution and says, “Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel till the Son of Man be come.” This remark could not have applied to them as individuals but as representatives of a class. But what class? Not of evangelists of the church dispensation, for that dispensation was not yet come, nor is the “church” mentioned in Matthew till chapter 16., but of the godly remnant in Israel who were stirred by the Spirit of God to await His first advent, and who will similarly be stirred to await His second advent. The twelve disciples were sent forth to inaugurate that mission among the cities of Israel. Then supervised the church parenthesis. The remnant yet to be Divinely stirred up will pick up the threads of that testimony in a coming day, and be “the elect” of chapter 24. and the “brethren” of chapter 25. 51–46. Upon the treatment of these “brethren” who are the messengers, everything depends, whether in the days that are past or the days to come, as seen in chapters 10. 40, and 25. 40, 45.

3. Daniel 12. 1–4. Here the great tribulation is plainly predicted. It is “at that time,” i.e., “the time of the end” (11. 33; 12. 4). Three things are stated as the outcome of the tribulation: (a) “Thy people,” i.e., Daniel’s people, the Jews, are to be delivered. (b) Many sleeping “in the dust of the earth,” i.e., lost formerly among the nations, shall awake. This is a national resurrection of the lost sons of Israel as also predicted in Is. 26. 15–19; Ezek. 37. 11–14. (c) “The wise” shall be rewarded. “The wise” here are without doubt those special sons of Daniel’s people Israel who have been the witnesses for God during the tribulation period, and who have been instrumental in bringing many to righteousness.

Isaiah 59., which you quote, is a striking confession. It is, as you say, the first cry of an awakening soul amidst abounding evil and conscious of the iniquity as their own. Viewed prophetically, the confession will exactly suit the first dawning of light on Israel’s formerly blind eyes. But then they will not stop there. The mass of the nation will doubtless not fully believe till they see the Lord; still that does not, we believe, lessen the force of the Scriptures to which we have referred you.

ERRATUM. The name of the author of Spiritual Delusion and its Remedy in our September Issue was wrongly printed as A. J. Pollock. It should have been A. F. Pollock.
OUR RESOURCES.

Notes of a Bible Reading in Brisbane, Australia, on John 14.

J. T. Mawson.

I AM sure that every one of us here would like to give pleasure to the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ; we should like to be both in our individual and collective life what He desires us to be. The question is, how can we? I think that what is unfolded in this chapter will help us. In it the Lord speaks to His disciples of the resources that would be theirs during His absence from them, and these resources abide unimpaired for us to this day.

Remark. We don't see the outward manifestations of power now such as they had in the beginning.

That is so. The sign gifts such as the gifts of tongues and healing have passed away, and attempts to revive them are not of God, and only lead to confusion, disappointment and depression, and disclose the unwarrantable assumption of those who make the attempt; but all that is vital remains. Nothing remains that might give us notoriety before men, but everything remains that is necessary to make us pleasing to the Lord. And if we love Him we shall be glad of this. The church at Corinth had the sign gifts, and strutted proudly in them, flaunting their powers in order to make much of themselves, entirely regardless of their carnal condition that was grieving the Lord. We do not wish to be like them. The church at Philadelphia possessed none of the gifts, but they earned the Lord's approval by their devotion to His word and Name. They were living in these chapters in John's Gospel, and so may we with the same result.

I want to lay stress upon the words "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me." We desire to be here for the Lord, and the desire is right, but if what we desire to be occupies our thoughts exclusively we shall never attain to our desire. If we put it first we are wrong, for we are putting the cart before the horse. The first thing is what Christ can be for us. It is really the only thing; everything else is secured by it. As my soul enters into what He is for me—my all-sufficient and never-failing Resource, able to fill and satisfy my heart, and take captive my whole being by His grace and love, it follows naturally that I shall be for Him. All that He can be for us is wrapped up in the words, "Believe also in Me." It is what He is and can do for us.

Simon Peter was full of what he could be and do for the Lord. The Lord had said that He was going away, and Peter had not yet received the vision that could look on to the glory. He was not yet ready to say, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." He thought only of prison and death, and he said, "Lord . . . I will lay down my life for Thy sake." And he meant it. He meant it as much as ever some of us have meant it when we have vowed on our bended knees to stand for Christ and serve Him with our whole hearts. Ah! but he had to weep out his disappointment and sorrow for broken vows and wretched failure, just as we have had to do, and will still have to do, so long as our great thought is what we can be for Christ instead of
what He can be for us. Peter was on
the wrong tack entirely, and the Lord
told him that he would deny Him, not
once only but thrice before the morning
dawned. No, Peter, your self-confi-
dence will betray you. You have to
learn that it is not Peter for Christ
but Christ for Peter. “Believe also in
Me.” On this plane we are safe and
on no other. Here we shall have
strength to stand, for He will be our
strength. No matter what our sincerity
and determination on the other ground
may be, we shall fail. Do you under-
stand that?

Remark.—Yes, I think I do.

Well, you must not be satisfied with
hearing the words, and being able to
repeat them correctly. You must get
the fact into your soul, for it is vital to
all spiritual life and victory. You will
fail, and fail, and fail, until you come to
this in your experience, and everything
will be unsatisfactory. It is not what
you can be for Christ, but what He can
be for you. You have been disap-
pointed with yourself, perhaps dis-
gusted, and are on the verge of despair.
To you the Lord says, “Let not your
heart be troubled . . . believe also in
Me.” Lift your thoughts and confi-
dence from yourself and centre them
in Me.

Question. But there is our side, is
there not? We would like to serve
Him and witness for Him.

Yes, and so we shall. If the Spirit
of God has given any of us the desire to
serve the Lord, He will also fulfil the
desire. We may bear fruit, and be His
disciples, His friends, His witnesses.
All that is in chapter 15., but chapter
14. comes before chapter 15. We have
to learn the meaning of His words,
“Without ME ye can do nothing.”
Chapter 14. is the “ME,” chapter 15.
the “YE.” The first is our unfailing
resource, the second the happy result.
We all gladly own that we have no
life except in Him, and we owe that
to His death for us. When it was a
question of our soul’s salvation we
were shut up to Him completely, and
He did all for us. But that was only
the beginning. “As ye have therefore
received Christ Jesus the Lord, so
walk ye in Him; rooted and built up
in Him.” As you began, so continue;
He was our all for salvation, He is still
our all for life, and grace, and power.
It is not what we are but what He is.
“Believe also in ME.”

But notice that first came the words,
“Ye believe in God.” All that God
had ever been to His people throughout
the ages and all that He ever would be
or could be, that, said the Lord Jesus,
I will be to you. His word is a faithful
word; it holds good for us in Brisbane
to-day. When God said to Abram,
“Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and
thy exceeding great reward,” it was
not what Abram could be for God, but
what God could be for him. So with
Jacob at Bethel, when God declared
what He would do for him, it was God
for Jacob and not Jacob for God.
When David said, “Although my
house be not so with God; yet He hath
made with me an everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things, and sure” (2
Sam. 23. 5), it was not David for
God—for he confesses how he had
failed, but it was God for David—there
was no failure there. So we find it all
through. There never was anything
stable except as it was based upon this,
and this ground of blessing is presented
with even more emphasis in the New
Testament. The Lord says, all that
you need in every way I will be to
you—I am the basis of your safety and
confidence; I am your Resource and
your joy, all is in Me. “Ye believe in
God, believe also in Me.”

Question. How are we to get the
benefit of that?

Faith must be in exercise first. It
is not sight now as it had been with the
disciples, but faith; and our faith will
be in exercise just in that measure in
which we know the Lord and cast off
self-confidence. Faith becomes active
and triumphant as we grasp the fact
that the great thing is Christ for us. Faith always overcomes. The devil has never been able to defeat one bit of true faith, for faith brings the Lord in. The second thing is, the Holy Spirit has been given to us; we shall come to that presently. But if we had nothing more this afternoon than this "Believe also in Me" we have enough to think about. When this is realized it changes everything, even our praying. We shall not pray so much, "Lord strengthen me," but "Lord, Thou art my strength, To Thee my weakness clings."

But there is more than what is individual here. Those disciples were representative men. They represented the whole company of God’s saints whose faith was to be centred in the Lord Jesus until He comes again. They were the nucleus of His assembly; and, drawn to Him as they were, they represented all who would yet own His Name and be gathered to Him as their Centre and Head. It was His intention during the period of His absence to have His own gathered to His Name, and He is here preparing His disciples for this. So in chapter 13. He serves them by washing their feet. Their hopes had all been connected with earthly glory, and with Himself as the Messiah who would reign on earth, but His rejection changed all that. The hopes of His assembly are heavenly not earthly. Their present portion is a heavenly one, for Christ is in heaven, and if His disciples were to have part with Him it must be in heavenly things. This is also true for us, and we need, as the disciples needed, to be cleansed from earthly thoughts and earthly things which only depress and defile, so that set free from them we may have part with Him, not now in the glory of an earthly kingdom, but in the joy of the Father’s love. The feet-washing sets forth this, and the Lord carries on this blessed service by His word to this day.

Then Judas, the traitor, had to go out. He could have no part in this new blessedness, only those who were bound to the Lord by bonds of life and love could enter here. Judas represents the unregenerate man—the flesh—who is so incurably self-centred that he would gladly sell his Lord in the hope of enriching himself. He had had power to work miracles, to cast out devils, and to heal the sick, like the other disciples; but he had no vital link with the Lord, and he went out. The unregenerate man has no place in the assembly that Christ builds.

Lastly, self confidence, such as Peter’s, had to be exposed, for that can be only a hindrance wherever it is. It is a perpetual menace to the peace and progress of the assembly. Then the Lord put Himself forward as their Refuge and Resource. He said later on, "I will not leave you comfortless [or orphans], I will come to you" (verse 18). An orphan is one who is without a protector or guide—without help or resource. And if we understand things we shall say, That is just what we are without the Lord, for we have nothing to boast in. We cannot say, like the Laodiceans, "I am rich, and increased with goods and have need of nothing." No, we are orphans, defenceless and destitute, if we have not the Lord. Well, to a company of nothings such as we are the Lord says, "I will come to you." And then we have everything, and we glory in the Lord.

Question. Is that similar to what we have at the end of I Corinthians 1? It seems to come in well here.

Yes, we are nothing, but the Lord is everything. If we keep that in mind we shall go on in happy, holy fellowship together, finding our common joy and help in the Lord. We could not have more than He is, for all fulness is in Him, and nothing less than Himself will do.

We must now pass reluctantly over the intervening verses to verses 15, 16 and 17. The Father would send the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth. It is by the Holy Spirit who has been given
to us that we enter intelligently and effectually into these things. It ought to be plain to us all that we cannot understand Divine things except as we are taught by the Spirit of God.

**Question.** Has not all the confusion in Christendom arisen from the fact that the presence of the Spirit is ignored?

Yes, what has been particularly lost sight of is the fact that the Spirit has come in relation to the absence of the Lord from earth and His exaltation in heaven. He has come from Christ in heaven, sent by the Father, to take care of us for Christ, to keep us in living contact with Him, and to unfold His glories to us. There are many who talk a lot about the Spirit, and of being filled with the Spirit, who are full of self-importance and spiritual pride, which is really carnality. A man who is full of the Spirit will be full of Christ. Christ, not self, will be his theme. But the first mark of a man who has received the Spirit and is under His influence is separation from the world. That comes out in striking fashion here. "Whom the world cannot receive . . . but ye know Him," said the Lord. The world and the "ye" are set in the most complete contrast. The "ye" to-day is the assembly, indwelt by the Holy Spirit, to which an unseen Christ is a living reality. Faith is the great principle of its life and activities, while the world walks by sight, and can only exist by what it sees, and feels, and handles. It is sensual. It has nothing outside the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. It is evident that the assembly, if it is to maintain its true character, must be separate from the world. It is evident that it has resources and a power that the world neither possesses nor knows. The world cannot help us in our life and witness for the Lord. Its principle of action and all its motives are opposed to what is of God. If we adopt them we must surrender Divine principles.

**Question.** Does the 15th verse show the difference between the disciples and the world too?

Yes. The world hated the Lord, and still does, as chapter 15. 18–25 shows, and it hates all who love the Lord. But His own love Him and show it by their obedience.

**Question.** What were the commandments that they had to keep?

Well, there were two specially—"Tarry in Jerusalem" and "Love one another." And they obeyed both. They were able to wait, and they waited in love and unity until the Father sent the Comforter. The hardest thing is to wait. It is easier to act than to wait; but this was the Lord's command, and it was enough for them. Israel in the wilderness could not wait when Moses went up into the mountain; and God looked down upon them and saw their disobedience. They were disobedient because they did not love Him. But in the case of the disciples the Lord could look down upon His own, and speak to the Father about them as those who proved their love to Him by their obedience to His commands. And to that obedient company the Father sent the Comforter. Now, those two precious features should mark us all. Love to the Lord and obedience to His commands; amongst such the Holy Ghost will be ungrieved, and harmony and spiritual progress will result.

Verse 26 shows us what is the great mission of the Spirit as far as the disciples of the Lord are concerned, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." He separates us from the world and fills us with Christ. He is as necessary to us on earth as Christ is necessary to us in heaven. And if we are to develop in Christian knowledge and grace and power we must pay attention to Ephesians 4. 30, which says, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of
redemption." We grieve Him when we are indifferent to Christ, since He has come from heaven to bear witness to Christ and to show us His glory. When Abraham's servant went to seek Rebekah to be Isaac's wife, Isaac was his one theme, and as long as Rebekah delighted to hear about Isaac the servant would be happy. But suppose she got weary of his talk and anxious to discuss some other matter, he would have been grieved; and the deeper his interest in his mission and in Rebekah as Isaac's bride, the greater his grief would be. So it is with the Holy Spirit. He has come as the Comforter to conduct us safely to the heavenly Bridegroom, and He delights to unfold His glories to us. In this 14th chapter he recalls the past, all that Jesus had spoken to His disciples (verse 26); in the 15th chapter He testifies of the present glory of Christ (verse 26); in the 16th chapter He shows us things to come (verse 13). But whether the past, present, or future, Christ is the Centre of all.

If we have ears to hear what the Holy Spirit has to say about Christ He is delighted, if we have not He is grieved.

**Question.** Would not every kind of sin grieve Him?

Of course. Yet sin in the believer is really the result of having grieved the Holy Spirit. If we walked in the Spirit we should not sin, and we walk in the Spirit as Christ is everything to us.

**Question.** What happens to us when we grieve the Spirit of God?

Well, we lose our joy, and we are powerless both in worship and service; we are wasting our time, and are in bondage to the flesh. But the Spirit of God does not cease His activities towards us. He is too concerned for the glory of Christ for that. He works to exercise our consciences and to show us our sinfulness and waywardness and the root of it all. But that is not happy work. It is not the normal work of the Holy Spirit. His work is to show us Christ. There is joy in that, there is no joy in showing us ourselves, however necessary it may be.

But even in the warning, "grieve not the Holy Spirit of God" there is a wonderful comfort. We do not grieve an enemy, we only grieve those who love us, and tenderly care for us. We may make an enemy angry, or vex a stranger, but it is the tender heart that is grieved by our conduct, and the tenderer and more loving the heart the more easily it is grieved. The Spirit of God loves us tenderly, and is keenly sensitive as to whether we respond fully to the love of the Lord Jesus or not. Hence He is easily grieved, but He never ceases His service of love to us.

**Question.** What is the meaning of "Comforter"?

It means one who comes to take complete charge of us—an advocate who has undertaken our case and will see it through to a triumphant issue. We are all like a child who has to take a journey through crowded streets and dangerous traffic; what she wants is a comforter, one who will take her hand and guide and lead her safely every step of her way, give her confidence and make her happy and see that her every need is met. Such is the Holy Spirit to us. But He is all this to us by keeping us in communication with Christ, He does nothing for us apart from Christ. He makes all there is in Christ real to us, and enables us to be in constant and effectual possession of our resources in Him. The Spirit of God would be grieved indeed if we made Him our object instead of Christ. He has come that Christ may be preeminent with us. He has come to maintain the rights of Christ in our lives.

Well, we have Christ as the Object of our faith and our never-failing Resource for every need, but He has been hated and rejected by the world and is no longer in it. Hence, we are carried in faith and affection outside
in hope; for we look for Him according to His word to take us actually out of the world to the Father's house, that where He is there we may be also. Then we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us, a new and heavenly power of which the world knows nothing, and this also means that our sphere of life and interests lies outside the world. We may live by the Holy Spirit in heavenly things, and may set our affections on things above where Christ sitteth. In that sphere there is peace. “My peace I give unto you,” the Lord said. And that is the sphere and atmosphere in which the assembly exists and thrives. If we desire to enter into what the assembly is, here we find it; a sphere pervaded by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit into which Christ comes and where He is everything, and where the Father's love and interest are known; for, notice further, how the Lord insists that the Holy Spirit would come forth from the Father. “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter” (verse 16). “The Holy Ghost whom the Father will send in My Name” (verse 26). “The Comforter whom I will send unto you from the Father” (15.26). All things that the Father hath are Mine; therefore said I, that He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you” (16. 15). The Father's interest in us is infinite. The disciples were the subject of intercourse between the Father and the Son. The Son would pray to the Father, and the Father would answer the prayer of the Son by sending the Holy Spirit. And this communion between the Father and the Son still abides. It may surpass our comprehension, but there it is. We are lifted into this circle of ineffable and Divine love. The Father and the Holy Spirit are engaged in our blessing for the glory of God's Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is exercising His love to us in all its unflagging strength and faithfulness as when He died for us.

But how are we affected by all this? Do we receive these great truths as information only, or do they affect our souls and form our character? Information is good if it results in the formation of Christ within us, and displaces self, and separates from the world. It can only do this as the Spirit of God works in us, apart from this it is a great danger, for our consciences may be quieted by the fact that we know things, whereas we really know nothing that is not made effectual in the reproduction of the truth in our lives. That is a solemn consideration for us all. The devil is crafty indeed, and one of his wiles is to make us satisfied with knowing about these things instead of knowing them in their transforming power; but the Spirit of God is greater than he, and the Spirit dwells in us, while the devil is only in the world, so that as we grieve not the Spirit of God all will be well with us.

And now our time is done, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God our Father, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with us all. We get in effect that threefold benediction in our chapter.

Behold, He Cometh!—Rev. 1. 7.

The exclamation is a striking one. The Greek word “ beho! “ means “See; look! ’ It is used to call attention quickly to some striking spectacle which suddenly breaks upon the gaze. As though one should say of some great sight appearing in the heavens before all eyes—“ Behold, the comet! ‘ Behold, the meteor! ” So here. Suddenly, in mid-heaven, without a second's warning is staged by God the most stupendous sight upon which human eyes have ever gazed—the outflashing, dazzling, awful splendour of the personal coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory.
GETTING READY FOR THE CLIMAX.

Looking abroad over the earth today we cannot fail to be impressed with the extraordinary spirit of unrest that prevails. It has permeated everywhere so thoroughly that no circle, whether national, racial, social, intellectual or religious has escaped its influence, and the most unthinking pleasure-lover that lives quite recognizes its existence. Many explanations of it are offered; the most popular being that of the intellectuals and leaders of modern thought, and of the false religious teachers, who assert that it is the sign of human progress and betterment; that it is the birth-pangs of a new age wherein a better order of man shall appear as the refined product of evolutionary forces, so that we may shortly expect the much-talked-of "superman" to materialize.

True Christians, on the other hand, are awakening to the fact that this unrest and these agitations are but the preliminary tremors that will usher in that hour when the Lord shall "shake, not the earth only, but also heaven." There is, consequently, amongst them also a movement, and an awakening to the coming of the Lord.

Now, just as we have in Scripture the historic record of how a remnant of Israel was prepared of God to welcome and receive the Lord Jesus when first He came, and also how the mass of the nation was hardened by pride, and, consequently, rejected Him and preferred Barabbas, so we find in the New Testament a prophetic record of how saints are to be prepared for His second coming, and of how the world is being prepared for the acceptance of Satan's counterfeit when he appears. We will refer to a few passages in the order in which they occur.

First, then, Matthew 25. In the parable of the Ten Virgins we have an undeniable reference to the Second Advent, and to the proper attitude which becomes the saints left on earth to await the Bridegroom. They are represented as "virgins," for the saint is properly speaking one who is separated from the world and uncontaminated by its corruptions and defilements; further, they are virgins who "went forth to meet the Bridegroom," that is, they publicly took the separate place with the Bridegroom in view. How fully this was verified in the early Christians may be seen in the opening chapters of the Acts, and in 1 Thessalonians 1. The Bridegroom tarried, however, and sleep supervened with all.

Then came an awakening. The cry at midnight was, "Behold the Bridegroom!" and, consequently, "Go ye out to meet Him." This resulted in the virgins arising, and trimming their lamps. The foolish discover their fatal lack too late. The wise are ready and go in. Here we have a prophetic sketch of what is in process of fulfilment, as we believe, in our own days. The expectation of the Lord's return has been revived, and He Himself has been set forth as the Object, and rallying Centre before the hearts of His saints, and there has been a reverting to the original position of the saints as a people separated from the world, and, consequently, a disentanglement is being effected; the wise are being disentangled from the foolish.

Here, then, in our first Scripture, we have the whole case in general outline. Two currents flowing in opposite directions are discernible, the one towards apostasy and doom, the other towards faithfulness and glory. In the one case we see represented that which is
outward and nominal, profession without reality in the absence of the Spirit of God. In the other we see that which is real, as possessing the Spirit of God, awakened from former lethargy and insensitivity to alertness and expectancy, and characterized by the three features already pointed out, but which we recapitulate if thereby they may be more deeply impressed on all our hearts.

1. Christ, the Bridegroom, is by the Spirit’s cry again set forth as the supreme Object. His coming is once more regarded as imminent, and therefore a matter of lively expectation. He becomes to faith the rallying Centre; “to meet Him,” and no other, is now their supreme desire.

2. The Spirit’s cry is, “go ye out to meet Him.” As originally they “went forth” before the lapse occurred, so now they must “go out.” They must revert to the position held at the beginning. No matter how comfortable and apparently sensible many of the arrangements they made for their period of peaceful slumber, all must be discarded for that which God originally appointed.

3. Christ, as supreme Object and Hope and rallying Centre, involves a work of separation and disentanglement. The line of cleavage became perfectly clear before the Bridegroom came. It was consummated and made irrevocable at His coming.

To some of our readers the above will seem commonplace enough as being merely a repetition of what they have long been instructed in and held; to others it may appear novel and open to question. To the latter we merely say, Search into Scripture further with us and see if it be not in accord with its general drift and tenor. On the former, however, we have to urge that their very familiarity with the truth of it may be their undoing. If those called out at the beginning lapsed into sleep is it impossible that we should do so? To ask the question is to answer it. The whole point here is one of the affections and heart-faithfulness. True, the separate position was taken, but as the fruit of revived affections and expectations. Is it worth anything, even if outwardly maintained, should those affections and expectations with any one of us once more lapse into slumber? *We think not.*

Here, as we have said, all is presented to us in a general outline. Nothing is said enabling us to judge of the exact mode of the separation effected, nor as to what are its boundaries, if we may so speak. For all such details we must go elsewhere, and particularly to the epistles of Paul to Timothy.

Before these epistles, however, come those to the Thessalonians, and in 2 Thess. 2. we have remarkable light as to the way the climax of evil will be reached after the fulfilment of 1 Thess. 4. 13–17, which is referred to in 2 Thess. 2. 1 as “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” and “our gathering together unto Him.” Three things stand out very clearly in that chapter, which we will summarize as follows:—

1. Intense human activity, bringing man to a climax. There is to be “a falling away”—an apostasy. This means great activity in the region of mind. The thinking of religious man-kind will be subverted. There is to be a perfect landslide in religious thought, obliterating all the old landmarks. Or if, perchance, old terms are retained, they will be emptied of all their old meaning and given new values totally destructive of the old,—just as in a landslide trees and other objects are sometimes retained upright and alive, but totally uprooted and removed from the old positions. Further, this great movement is going to produce a man, as so often before in the world’s history, and in this “man of sin,” this lawless one, human wickedness will, in that hour, find its highest expression.

2. Intense Satanic activity, bringing the powers of darkness to a climax. The
coming of that wicked one is to be "after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders." The forces of spiritual wickedness will then be let loose on the earth, and hence "all deceivableness of unrighteousness" will be exerted towards "them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." Miraculous powers are, indeed, to be again manifested in connection with religious professions and claims, but they will proceed from Satan, and be used to blind his dupes effectually.

3. A Divine fiat on God's part, putting His seal upon man's climax unto its destruction. What men will proudly regard as the enduring monument raised to celebrate man's glory, turns out to be the dirty sepulchre wherein it is to go to corruption, and God puts His seal upon that sepulchre by the sending forth of "strong delusion" as an act of His holy government, and no man can roll away the stone when once that is done.

What a climax! What a picture! Let us gaze at it steadily until its reality sinks into our souls. We shall then turn away from it on the one hand with desire and compassion for souls who may yet be rescued from the burning, yet, on the other, full of rejoicing that our links with it are cut. We shall sing with new emphasis,

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

even if it be the pomp and glory of the religious world that is in question.

Judging from the conditions which are now rapidly coming to a head in Christendom, the climax cannot be far off. Man's mental activity grows fast and furious. It seems to be well-nigh a point of honour with each oncoming generation to overturn and discard the ideas of the previous generation. The landslide has pretty clearly commenced, and Satan's interference is becoming a commonplace under the influence of spiritism and kindred cults. Let the saints be raptured to heaven and all would come to a head in an incredibly short space of time, and the God-sent delusion drop like a funeral pall over the minds of apostate men.

In 2 Timothy 2. 15 to 4. 5 we have a wonderful passage giving us light as to the development of evil in the sphere of Christian profession, and the path of a faithful believer, up to even "the last days." Here we trace the course of the two currents leading up to the climax. In chapter 3. 1—5 we see what will characterize the mass of Christendom just before the rapture of the saints. The form of godliness is retained. Its power is not only absent but denied; they are "lovers of their own selves," "lovers of money"—for so the word "covetous" may be translated—"lovers of pleasures, more than lovers of God."

The path of a faithful believer is simple and clear. First, again, comes separation unto the Lord. There is disentanglement. As disentangled the believer is left as "the servant of the Lord," who in all his service must display the character of his Master. He must always remember that he is not a lord but a servant of THE LORD, and meekness becomes a servant. Further, he suffers persecution and stands irrevocably on "the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture." He accepts all Scripture as God-breathed, and as sufficient to furnish throughout the man of God, and not merely the ordinary believer. The opening of chapter 4. makes it evident that not only does the faithful believer take his stand on Scripture, but he propagates it. He preaches "the Word." Note carefully the inferences that lie just here. If all Scripture is given that the man of God may be "throughly furnished unto all good works," then, firstly, no part of Scripture can be safely disregarded; and, secondly, no work—not even a so-called "Christian work"—is a good
work if it is not directly or indirectly sanctioned by Scripture. Further, the course of the apostle's revelations as to the last days, and his instructions to Timothy, show that to his mind the acceptance of "all Scripture" provided a perfect criterion and test. In the light of this, the attitude towards Scripture, of any would-be teacher, is final and conclusive; we need not trouble to investigate his further credentials if he fails on this point.

The course of the one current then runs from the profane and vain babblings of the time of Hymeneus and Philetus to the perilous times of the last days, the heaping to themselves false teachers, having itching ears, and turning to fables—all this ready for the terrible drama of 2 Thessalonians 2. The course of the other current is marked by "the vessel unto honour," "the servant of the Lord," living "godly in Christ Jesus" and suffering persecution, abiding in the things learned with all Scripture as the rock beneath one's feet, and, finally, preaching "the word." This leads up to "that day" and "the crown of righteousness."

If we turn from Paul to Peter and read chapters 2. and 3. of his second epistle, we find the same features under different forms. There are the false teachers, who, like the false prophets of old, privily bring in "damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them," and thus drag souls with them in the current of evil. They in so doing "promise them liberty"—this is exactly the great cry to-day, people are being "liberated" from bondage to "old religious ideas" and from "bibliolatry," the term they use for acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God—but really they engulf them in the corruptions of the world like dogs returning to their own vomit, or washed sows returning to their wallowing in the mire. They end by scoffing at the bare idea of a returning Christ, on the ground of the uniform and unvarying course of nature. This is, remarkably enough, exactly the ground now taken by the modern "scientific" scoffer; he believes in slow and orderly evolution, and denies the possibility of any catastrophic intervention of God.

On the other hand, Peter tells us of the "holy prophets," and bids us be mindful of their words and also of the words spoken by "the apostles of the Lord and Saviour"—in other words mindful of both Old and New Testament Scriptures. He points out that, knowing the truth and warned beforehand of what is impending, we should be marked by "holy" or "separate" conversation and godliness, and thus continue growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Finally, turning for a moment to John's writings, we find in Revelation 2. and 3. the prophetic addresses to the seven churches. The closing phases of the Church's history are Philadelphia and Laodicea. The very names are significant—"Love of the brethren," and "Rights of the people," respectively.

It is by love of the brethren that we show that we are born of God and have passed from death unto life, and also manifest our love to God Himself; and the "Philadelphia" of Rev. 3. bears the features that mark Divine life, and also the features that characterize faithfulness. Christ's word is kept; His Name is not denied; the word of His patience is kept. Translation to glory out of the hour of earth's great tribulation is the end.

At the present moment "the rights of the people" loom largely in all directions, and are now well established in the region of religion. We are in the age of "democratized Christianity." Political democracy finds all its authority in the will of the people. In that sphere there are no fixed standards of right and wrong. If the majority of the people want it, be it betting, intoxicants, opium, war, or anything else, it is politically right. If they do
Listed below are some of the paired words of the New Testament:

1. **χαλεπός**, used by Paul and Matthew.

   In 2 Tim. 3. 1 this word is used to describe the character of the times to be expected in the last days. They should be **perilous times**. R.V. gives "grievous." Men should be lovers of their own selves, of money, and of pleasures, rather than of God, and persecution should be the normal thing for those whose life should be not only pious, but pious after a distinctively Christian pattern.

2. **συναγωνίζω**, rendered "gathering together in one," is the word used also in Romans 13. 9 (its only other occurrence) and there translated "briefly comprehended" in A.V., and "summed up" in R.V.

   For my present purpose I use the expression "paired words" with reference only to words that occur but twice, and used by different writers. We must confine ourselves to a very few instances, but they shall be instances that are deeply instructive, as well as interesting.

   **I. χαλεπός**, used by Paul and Matthew.
The use of the word by Matthew (chap. 8. 28) adds force to the prediction in 2 Timothy as to the nature of the times. The two demoniacs are said to have been "exceeding fierce," so much so that none might pass by that way. Carry the thought of the fierceness of those demon-ridden men into the Divinely given forecast of the last days; days which, there is every reason to conclude, are already upon us. The times are so fierce that not one of us can possibly pass along our way, save by the help and power of God. There has always been peril for the faithful—peril of seduction from the path of fidelity, peril of persecution—peril has all through the centuries been chronic. It has now become acute. The times are fierce. They are like Nebuchadnezzar's furnace heated seven times more than it was wont. In the presence of such fierceness we have no help or defence but the Lord. If we are to pass along our way we must keep very near to Him, and He who showed Himself "walking in the midst of the fire" with the three Hebrew youths will be our Companion and Shield also, in the midst of these fierce and perilous times.


In 1 Cor. 7. 29 a form of the verb is used to describe the shortness of time. It is a plain, matter of fact statement. But what a fresh thought is brought into the passage when we observe that the same word is used (in its only other occurrence in the N.T.) in Acts 5. 6, for winding up the body of Ananias. What a forceful reminder of the shortness of time! Here is a man carrying out, with the connivance of his wife, a counsel of deceit. He little imagines what lies just ahead, but walks in as if everything were to go on as usual. Accosted by Peter he utters his premeditated falsehood, falls down a corpse, and is wound up by the young men and buried. It is all over; he is gone, dead and buried, when his wife, three hours afterwards, comes in.

What a commentary on the text in 1 Cor. 7! Let us lay it to heart, and remember to use this world and not abuse it, for its fashion passes away. With all of us life is but a vapour, a puff of steam. We are here to-day and gone tomorrow. Let us make the most of our opportunities, for the time is already wound up, swathed for burial, and will soon be gone altogether.

3. ἀμέριμνος, used by Paul and Matthew.

This is another word found in 1 Cor. 7. In verse 32 Paul expresses his desire that the Corinthian Christians should be "without carefulness" (A.V.) or "free from cares" (R.V.). But what will bring about, or help to bring about, this happy condition?

An answer is suggested by the use of the same word in Matthew 28. 14, which the R.V. renders: "We will persuade him and rid you of care." The thought is that some one else undertook all responsibility on behalf of the soldiers, and would see to it that no harm befell them in acting in compliance with the wishes of the chief priests. They would thus be "secured," or relieved of care.

Does not this very vividly remind us of the secret of being "without carefulness"? Some One else has undertaken all responsibility on our behalf, and thus rids us of all care as to what may befall us through acting in compliance with His wishes. We have not to consider consequences. Our blessed Lord has engaged Himself to bring us through, and while on our journey home to save us from all that we need to be saved from. How easy, when we consider this, to be "without carefulness"!


5. ἀλαλάζω, used by Paul and Mark.

I take these two words together, since they both occur in 1 Cor. 13. 1—the only time Paul uses them, and because the lessons derived from the
use of them elsewhere are so closely akin. The A.V. renders them “sounding” and “tinkling”—both words conveying the idea of useless, meaningless, discordant noise. This is what the loveless man is like, though his speech be as silver and his oratory that of a Demosthenes. Without love he is just an unpleasant noise.

Luke uses the former of the two words in his report of the Lord’s prophetic discourse (chap. 21. 25) for the roaring of the waves, a noise that may temporarily excite wonder, but which becomes monotonous and wearisome. It is a noise that effects nothing; no result ensues therefrom. Even so is the sounding of the preacher or teacher whose service is not the outcome of a God-wrought love in his soul. His powers of speech may astonish, but they do not edify; he becomes to his heart-weary hearers just a noise: harsh, discordant, meaningless.

The second of the words is used by Mark (chap. 5. 38) for the insincere wailing of the women, hired for the purpose, in the chamber of death. Matthew bluntly calls them “people making a noise” (chap. 9. 23). Browne, in his “Hebrew Antiquities,” describing the custom, remarks, “The wailing was loud and long (usually lasting seven days), and was kept up with the aid of professed mourning women.” Amos doubtless refers to such professional mourners when he speaks of “such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing” (chap. 5. 16). Jeremiah, too, speaks of the “mourning women” and calls them “cunning,” that is, clever at their art (chap. 9. 17).

Think of the hollowness of it all! One does not expect much depth of grief on the part of an undertaker’s man who assists at a funeral, but his sympathy is quite respectable compared with that of persons who gain their livelihood by making a wailing noise around the bed on which lies the corpse of some person whom they never knew. Wailing, indeed! Could insincerity go further? Yet that is the word used of the noise made by the man who speaks with eloquent lips without the love that is of God shining in his soul. He is just a nasty noise, a clanging cymbal.


The office of a bishop, or overseer, was, in Paul’s estimation, more than an office. It was a work (1 Timothy 3. 1). And the principal part of the work was to take care of the church of God (verse 5).

But how far was such care to go? In what spirit was it to be exercised? On what model should it be framed?

The only other occurrences of the word in the N.T. are in the lovely parable of the Good Samaritan, in Luke 10. 34 and 35. How did the Samaritan traveller take care of the wounded man? With the utmost gentleness and devotion. His heart was moved with compassion. With his own hands he tended the gaping wounds, abandoned to him his seat on the beast which he was riding, and saw him safely to a place of shelter. When forced to leave for a short time the object of his solicitude, he sees to it that his place is filled by another, that all the needed care may be forthcoming.

The double use of the word in verses 34 and 35 emphasizes the lesson. Here is the criterion for which we were inquiring. Does anyone feel called to undertake the good work for which an overseer assumes the office? Let him learn from the actions of the Samaritan in the parable the nature of the loving care that he is to exercise among the people of God. With self-abnegating love he is to seek out those who need his ministrations, gently to tend them, to watch over them, to be at costs on their behalf, to do all that a skilful and devoted nurse can do for a patient who is dependent on her care.

In a word, he is to take care of the church of God in a spiritual sense, as the Good Samaritan did in a literal
sense for the man whom he found stripped and wounded on the road.


A rather remarkable expression in James 1. 11 is that which refers to the man of wealth and his ways (R.V., his goings). The word simply means a journey, or a march, but in the N.T. it has the thought of a journey with an object. Moffatt, and the Editors of the "Twentieth Century New Testament" render the word "pursuits."

The man who has gained financial success, has, generally speaking, had it as his object, and shaped his course to his desired end. And, indeed, nothing is won unless it be aimed at.

The widely advertised Pelman system of mind-training lays it down as its first great rule that for efficiency one must have a definite aim in life. The successful man has had, and has, his, whether it be money, fame, skill, popularity, political achievement or social success. But all this is like the grass that withers in an hour. The successful man has grasped a bubble that breaks in his hand. He himself fades away in his goings, and his pursuits reach an untimely end.

The same word is used in one solitary instance in connection with our blessed Lord, when we read in Luke 13. 22, of His journeying toward Jerusalem. He did not move about the country in a purposeless manner. His journeys were always pursuits. And in going to Jerusalem (to which He had steadfastly set His face, Luke 9. 51), He had the deliberate object in view of suffering, being crucified, giving His life a ransom for many.

The use of the same word in James 1. 11 and Luke 13. 22 serves to throw into vivid contrast the selfish aims that move men to action, and the self-denying love that lay behind the goings of the Lord Jesus. And this should now and for ever endear Him to our hearts.

8. ἀθικῶς, used by Peter in a speech and in his first Epistle.

This word does not strictly come within the limits we have defined, except so far as its occurrence in the narrative given by Luke entitles it to do so. Its use shows us what an awful and terrible thing it was in the eyes of a strict and God-fearing Jew to do what Peter did, when he went to the house of Cornelius. It was an unlawful thing (Acts 10. 28). But that word had a meaning to a Jew which it hardly has to us. Peter uses it again in chap. 4. 3 of his first epistle, where both the A.V. and R.V. give "abominable" as its English equivalent. The idolatries practised by Gentiles who had thrown off all restraint were abominable. So also, in the reckoning of a pious Jew was the breaking through "the middle wall of partition" by such an act as that of Peter when he went to the house of Cornelius. This helps us to understand in some measure the virulence of the opposition with which Paul was confronted on every hand. In the sight of his brethren who were still under the influence of traditional Judaism, he was repeatedly guilty of abominable actions. Such is the way that the true liberty of the Gospel is viewed by those who are still under the bondage of law. And the use of the word in the two passages serves to emphasize the inability of the natural mind of man to apprehend and appreciate the gracious ways of God.

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It is superfluous for me to remark that, in suggesting this line of study, we have only touched the fringe of the subject, and that in the most cursory way. But it is a rule that has obtained ample recognition among Bible students that to interpret Scripture by Scripture, to compare one passage with another, is a sure way to attain to a measure of understanding. To this, even our little talk on the Paired Words of the Greek New Testament may contribute, with the help and blessing of God.
MEDITATIONS ON DANIEL.

The closing Prophecies.

The seventy weeks, as we see here, are divided into seven, sixty-two, and one. The seven weeks would be engaged with the restoration of Jerusalem. The street and wall would be built in troublous times. In the book of Nehemiah we have the account of this building, and the trouble that the builders were in through the enemies of the Lord. Let a soul be engaged in maintaining that which is of God on earth, and he will soon be made acquainted with the enmity of the world against all that he is doing. But let a man be what he may, and let him do what he will against the authority of God, as exercised on earth, and to which His people are here to bear witness, and it is sure to involve persecution as their portion from the hands of men: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” From this there is no escape, except by lowering the flag, and being on the best of terms with those who tread it in the dust.

After the sixty-and-two weeks—sixty-nine altogether—Messiah is cut off, and has nothing. His authority is disowned by men, though acknowledged by demons; His rights disputed; His life taken. At first they said: “We have no king but Cæsar”; and later on: “Not this Man, but Barabbas.” They accept a murderer, and crucify the Son of God. As come in flesh and blood, and presented to the responsibility of man, He has to say: “The things concerning Me have an end.” Rejected, He goes out of this world; accepted, the murderer and robber is brought in. That is man, not at his worst, but at his very best. They were the leaders of the world who crucified Christ.

Afterwards the city of Jerusalem and the temple are destroyed by “the people of the prince that shall come.” This, as we all know, was brought to pass by means of the Roman legions. “And unto the end, war . . . the desolations are determined.” The prince that shall come is to be the desolator; others no doubt, previous to his coming, but he is in the mind of the Spirit, the great desolator. The empire, of which he is viewed as head, began the destruction, and he will finish it. How Jacob shall emerge out of these sorrows we learn from the prophets, a remnant only shall be saved, or, as we read in chapter 12. 1: “Every one that shall be found written in the book.”

The majority of the Jewish nation shall place their trust in this prince that shall come, and make a covenant with him for the last week of the seventy; but their covenant with death shall be annulled, and their agreement with Sheol shall not stand, for from the north an overflowing scourge shall come upon them, and they shall be trodden down by it (Isa. 28. 14–22). Men make their covenants, their alliances, their ententes cordiales, and flatter themselves that all shall be well. But when they say, “Peace and safety,” then sudden destruction comes upon them, and that from a quarter least expected. This prince with whom they have made the covenant cares little for the scrap of paper upon which the terms of the covenant may be inscribed. The covenant is broken, and friendless Israel falls under the power of the desolator, until it can be said Jerusalem has received double for all her sins (Isa. 40.).

The desires of Daniel for more details regarding God’s ways with His people, and the answer of God to those desires are recorded in the two following chapters, ten and eleven, and again
we see how quickly the answer is sent to the inquiring mind, which is interested in that which concerns His interests upon earth. The glorious messenger which appears to him by the river Hiddekel, tells him: "From the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to humble thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come because of thy words." What an encouragement to us is found here! Our Lord says to His disciples: "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 11. 9, 10).

But we must learn that there is not quite an open and unobstructed highway between the soul and God. Writing to the Colossians, Paul says: "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh" (Col. 2. 1). Only those who are determined to lay hold upon the living God realize the spiritual forces that are at work to hinder access to His presence. Though it is by the Holy Spirit of God that we have access to the Father, Satan seems to have ability to raise up hindrances that require us to have energy to overcome. In this conflict our strength is useless. We have received the Spirit, and only by His power access for us is possible. The answer was sent to Daniel at the beginning of his exercises, but it was held on the way for one-and-twenty days, and then Michael, one of the chief princes, has to come to the assistance of the messenger.

The forces of evil that are arrayed against our intercourse with the living God are both numerous and powerful, and it would be foolish and dangerous to underrate them. But at the same time, though we require to watch unto prayer, and to watch in prayer, we have no need to be in the very least alarmed. "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you" (James 4. 8) is as true for us as it was for saints at the beginning of the dispensation. It is also our privilege to be constantly in the spirit of prayer to God, not merely because we are always needy, but because we love to be in intercourse with Him. May we ever avail ourselves of this inestimable privilege!

The messenger lets Daniel know that what he has to communicate to him refers to that which should befall his people at the end of the days. Three kings were yet to stand up in Persia, the fourth richer than all. Greece becomes his object of attack, so that when Alexander rises up, Persia becomes the kingdom he is determined to humble most of all. But no more than any of the others that went before him can he ward off the weapon of the king of terrors. Before him kings, armies, and civilians, have all to bow. This Grecian king leaves his kingdom to be divided toward the four winds of heaven, but not to his posterity does any part of it fall.

The special attention of Daniel is directed to the doings of two of those four, the king of the north, and the king of the south, and what a history of craft, plotting, diplomacy, deceit and war, have we to contemplate! Those two kings quarrelling between themselves, each seeking the undoing of the other; the king of the north carrying his accursed warfare into the holy land, invading Jerusalem, taking away the daily sacrifice, polluting the sanctuary, and placing an idol therein.

All these doings make manifest a remnant that know their God, are valiant on behalf of His interests, and stand up fearlessly in their defence. There are also among the people those who are wise, and who are able to instruct others; and they shall fall by the sword, and by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Some of the wise also shall fall, to try them, and to purge and to make them white, to the time of the end.
Next, we have “The king” introduced, the Antichrist, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped (2 Thess. 2.). He will do according to his own will, honour those who acknowledge him, make rulers of them, and divide the land to them. Against him the king of the north will come, and the king of the south shall push at him. But the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, and few countries shall escape his hand, but he shall come to his end, and none shall help him. The Lord Himself shall deal with him at His appearing.

Into these things it is not my purpose to inquire in any kind of detail. My object is to see what we can get for our souls in a moral way. All these matters have been gone into by many others, and there is nothing new to be said about them. The doings of the kings and rulers of the earth reveal nothing but pride of heart, selfwill, intrigue, cruelty, and opposition to God, whether that be before the cross of Christ, at this present time, or in the time of the closing woes of this earth’s history. In the mind of God Israel is the centre and head of the nations. At present for their manifold and wicked transgressions they are wanderers, and a despised people on the earth. But their Deliverer is at hand, and though the sifting process, through which they are bound to find their way to rest and peace under the reign of their Messiah, shall be more severe than anything they have yet experienced, out of it a remnant shall come, in the midst of which the Christ shall set His throne on the hill of Zion; and as the Lord rejoiced over them to do them evil, He will then rejoice over them to do them good.

Michael shall stand up for them when the day of their deliverance has come. The people shall come back from among the nations where they are now scattered. Not all of them shall reach the land, for the rebels shall be destroyed on their way thither: “I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah” (Ezek. 20. 37, 38).

In that day, the day in which their long-rejected Saviour shall take to Himself His great power, and shall reign, “every one that shall be found written in the book” shall be there under His everlasting protection, and Daniel shall stand in his lot, and see with his eyes the fulfilment of all that was shown to him in vision. How truly and well he was beloved of God he will then know better than ever he knew upon earth, as we also surely shall.

Our Lessons.

While we wait down here in patience, with the Bright and Morning Star before our souls’ vision, we learn our little lessons. Each day brings along its appointed task—

“A Father’s hand can never cause
His child a needless tear.”

There is a silver lining to every cloud. Let us be patient and attentive scholars in the Master’s school. We have a wise and loving Teacher. Every little task well learned is something more of Christ built into the soul, and something more of self displaced.

Presently God’s great thought for each one of us will be reached and we shall be perfectly “conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”
"A CHosen VESSEL unto Me, to Bear My NAME." Acts 9. 15.

(F. Bray.)

As clay within the potter's hands,
Fashioned and moulded as he will;
Transformed—a vessel bright it stands
For him to fill.

So Lord I would myself resign,
In Thy blessed pierced hands would rest.
Mine—full surrender; the joy Thine
To do what's best.

Oh Master Potter take this clay,
Hardened and rough, unpliable;
Fashion it, and in Thine own way
Make useable.

Just as Thou wilt so bend it Lord,
A vessel unto honour make';
One Thou can'st fill, and at Thy word
Thy message take.

Then fill me Lord with Thine own hand,
That from this vessel here below
Life-giving streams, at Thy command,
May ceaseless flow.

Complete the work Thou hast begun;
The glory be for ever Thine.
The joy to hear from Thee 'well done'
Shall then be mine.

THE THREE ORDERS OF LEVITICAL SERVICE.
Numbers 3.

"I WILL be sanctified in them that come nigh Me, and before all the people will I be glorified" (Lev. 10. 3). It was to this end, that the priestly and the Levitical families were chosen, and to which all their activities were directed, and in which they were sustained by the people willingly responding to the claims of the Lord in not forsaking the Levite (see Deut. 12. 19).

The service of Jehovah was divided into two parts, the Priestly, which was carried on inside, and the Levitical, which was outside; the first when the camp was at rest and the second when it was on its journey to the land. The priests, however, dominated the Levites, they were set over them; indeed, the Levites were the gift of God to the priestly family. The priests were for the people Godward, the Levites were they who bore the vessels, etc., in the presence of the congregation.

When at rest the Tabernacle was
set up so that Jehovah might "return to the many thousands of Israel," and the people be able to bring their offerings of sweet smell which were ever acceptable to Him, and in the undisturbed rest of the Sanctuary, where there was no hindrance to the outshining of His glory, and to the declaration of His Name, the priest might learn the thoughts and the purposes He had in view, and know how to direct every movement and activity of the camp.

When the camp set forward, and Moses said, "Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered," the priests transferred the care of the holy things to the Levites, who as far as was permissible presented them to the people. But the presentation was only partial, as each vessel, though covered, might yet be recognized and its significance appreciated; at the same time they were protected from prying eyes and from an unsanctified touch or interference, even from those whose duty it was to bear them.

The correspondence of this to what has been established in Christianity is most marked, except that in Israel the three classes were separate, whereas they are united in every believer, though he may not always avail himself of his right to draw near in full assurance of faith, or he may not support that which God would have him.

To-day the Sanctuary is open, our Forerunner has for us entered in; we may draw nigh to God; we are graciously permitted to offer the sacrifice, not of bulls or of goats, but the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His Name. We also learn, and this is supremely important, in that heavenly light where everything is seen in its true colours, the secrets of the mind of the Lord, what He has in view for the saint and the sinner, and also the way in which the Levitical service of the saint is directed and sustained. All service is to Him and for Him, and can only be carried out agreeably to Him as it is learnt in the sanctuary. The measure in which one is able to minister to God in the sanctuary is the measure in which one is able to present Him to those who look on, be they saints or sinners.

That the whole system established by God and placed under the hand of Moses broke down from the top to the bottom, that the people rebelled, that the Levite aspired to the priesthood, and that the priests offered strange fire to the Lord almost as soon as they had been installed in their office, does not in the least degree lessen the responsibility of those who are set in testimony to His Name; for it is most noteworthy that after the most complete collapse of the nation, when they resolved to return to Egypt, abandoning their place of privilege and nearness to the Lord, and forfeiting all their privileges as His people, and were willing to put themselves once more under the bondage of Egypt, He confirms His own promise to priest, Levite and people alike, saying, "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you" (Num. 15. 2).

Not only are the people thus assured that they will be brought in, in spite of their despising the good land, but the priesthood is confirmed to the Aaronic family against further encroachments of the Levites by the sign of resurrection (Num. 17.), while the Levites themselves are given anew to the priests. "They shall be joined unto thee, and keep the charge of the tabernacle for all the service of the tabernacle; and a stranger shall not come nigh unto you" (Num. 18. 4).

His purposes will ever be carried out and there will always be opportunities for faithfulness for all who desire it; though two only of those that left Egypt entered the land, there will be scope for all the new generation to uphold for God that which He
has sworn to bring to pass. "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Num. 14. 21). He will be magnified among the nations though every agency that He had established had resulted in nothing but disappointment.

The three branches of the Levitical service were carried out by the three sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari; they alone were commissioned to carry the whole of the tabernacle and its appurtenances.

To Gershon, the "stranger in a strange land" (Exod. 2. 22), was committed the blue curtains that told of the heavenly stranger and His perfect walk as Man, yet God; the scarlet ones that spake of His sufferings as the disowned but rightful Heir to the throne of Israel; and those of goat's hair that testified to His resistance to all the attacks of the devil. How appropriate was the allotting of the work! They and their burden proclaimed that they were strangers and pilgrims; that they sought a better country.

It is to such that the Apostle Peter addresses his epistles, for there will be Gershonites to the end. In 1 Peter 2. 11 he speaks to strangers and pilgrims; in chap. 2. 9 he says, "Ye are a chosen generation, ... a peculiar people, that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." They were to exhibit the blue, the purple and the fine twined linen. They were to glorify God (2. 12), thus showing forth the blue; and they were to follow in the steps of the Lord by suffering wrongfully yet patiently, and were to be partakers of His sufferings, thus showing forth the scarlet.

Later on in the epistle we get, "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin" (4. 1), and "whom resist steadfast in the faith" (5. 9). These are exhortations to that spiritual energy which turns aside the entrance of evil, answering to curtains of goat's hair, which preserved the purity of the tabernacle.

It is thus evident that Peter's epistles are addressed to the present-day Gershonite.

"And under the custody and charge of the sons of Merari shall be the boards of the tabernacle and the bars thereof, ... and all the vessels thereof, and all that serveth thereto, and the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets and their pins and their cords" (Num. 3. 36–37).

The boards of shittim wood covered with gold—the same material as the ark—when set upright formed the sacred enclosure where God deigned to dwell, and were figurative of the ransomed company clothed in the righteousness of God built together by the Holy Spirit to form an habitation of God. The truths here suggested are the salient teachings of the Apostle Paul.

In the first epistle to the Corinthians the saints are seen in their native weakness, and yet are said to be "the temple of God," whilst in the second epistle the golden covering is seen to overlay the frail wood. "We all with open face beholding ... the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. 3. 18). "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature [or, there is a new creation], old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Cor. 5. 17). "That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5. 21). Such is the gold on the boards.

But there is also the work of the Spirit in binding together into one whole, the component parts of the sanctuary. This is set before us in Paul's epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. "That ... He might gather together in one all things in Christ" (Eph. 1. 10). Both Jew
and Gentile are made one, and then we are "built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2. 22). In the Colossian epistle the saints are to be "knit together in love" (2. 2), and are exhorted to hold "the Head from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered and knit together, increased with the increase of God" (2. 19).

After the boards and the cords, the pillars of the court were the care of the Merarites. The enclosure which separated the tabernacle from outside influences set forth the unworldly and self-contained character of the people of God, and this character was maintained by the pillars that kept the curtains in their right places. The Hebrews were exhorted to remember those who had spoken to them the word of the Lord, and who were like pillars of the court, and to follow their faith. That which these leaders had brought before the Hebrew saints was precisely the exclusive character of the people of God and the sufficiency of Christ for every need, that is suggested by the court of the tabernacle.

At every stage of the way this epistle proves the succour, service and sufficiency that is found in the Great High Priest; it shows the folly of seeking anything outside Him, and the blessedness of approach to God through Him apart from any and every influence here. The vision of the Forerunner who has entered in for them, and the support of the Priest serving after the pattern of Aaron, though of the order of Melchisedec, are the great incentives to preserve the "out-of-the-world" character they are asked to maintain.

Thus the structural character of the burdens borne by the Merarites is reflected in the teachings of Paul, the great apostle of the Gentiles.

Merari means sorrow, and it needs but slight acquaintance with the Pauline writings to enable one to see how often this was his lot. "Even unto this present hour we both hunger and thirst and are naked and are buffeted and have no certain dwelling place" (1 Cor. 4. 11). "I would ye knew what great conflict I have for you" (Col. 2. 1) shows his intense agony of spirit for their spiritual progress. "All men forsok me" (2 Tim. 4. 16) is his plaint when he should have had the support of those whom he had succoured and comforted. Thus Paul was a true son of Merari.

Both the Gershonites and the Merarites were under the hand of Ithamar, the youngest son of Aaron, which seems to suggest that there was much in common between these two branches of service. And the parallel is borne out when it is seen that the writings of the Apostles Peter and Paul are to a great extent complementary. For while the latter develops the constitution and status of the assembly, the former draws attention to the graces and spiritual demeanour which should characterize those who have learnt the teachings of Paul.

The other branch of the Levitical family was the Kohathites, Kohath being the second son of Levi, the immediate ancestor of Moses and Aaron and the most honoured of all those who served the tabernacle. There were four branches of them, Amram (an exalted people), Izehar (shining), Hebron (a company), and Uzziel (God is strong). Their chief was Elizaphan (God is protector), and they were under the direction of Eleazar (God is helper), the eldest son of Aaron. Such were the features that God would have set forth in those that He selected to bear before others those emblems of His presence in the midst of His own chosen people. But though they were so specially distinguished their service was essentially levitical and there was an express command that they should not be cut off "from among the Levites" (Num. 4. 18). All service from the highest to the lowest bore one stamp in the eyes
of Him on whose account it was rendered.

Though they never saw nor handled these vessels, the nature of their burden was well known to them and they were responsible to preserve their sanctity, and shield them from indifference or hurt. The holy things that were made for the eye of God were too precious to be exposed to the gaze of the camp, and were presented to them only as it were in the merest outline under the cover of their special wrappings.

First came the ark, testifying of what God was in Christ—His grace, and His righteousness, His mercy and His truth—covered with the veil, then the badger skins, and then the heavenly blue exposed to the eyes of all. These features were borne witness to by the Apostle John, who could say, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father" (John 1. 14). He "manifested forth His glory" (John 2. 11). He is the One who "cometh down from heaven" (6. 33). He displayed "the glory of God" (11. 4). Here is seen the true Ark of the covenant.

The table of shewbread presenting the twelve loaves covered with frankincense before the veil which is before the mercy seat appears to set forth the saint borne up in righteousness in the presence of God and expressing something of what Christ was to Him, responding as it were to outgoings of goodness from the mercy seat. The other vessel of the sanctuary was the golden lampstand which stood on the side of the tabernacle opposite the table. There was no other light in the holy place than this to show the features of the veil, the golden covered boards, or of the coverings that formed the roof, and it is only in the light afforded by the Holy Ghost that the anti-types to these are known.

The writings of John afford the most eloquent testimony to all the excellencies found in our Lord Jesus, and also to the answer to them seen in the saint by the eye of God, for before Him they are responsive and shining in His light. "A new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in Him and in you: because . . . the true light now shineth" (1 John 2. 8).

This also is a marked feature of the seventeenth chapter of John. In His outpouring of heart to the Father the Lord Jesus could say: "I am glorified in them." "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." These are the curtains of blue and purple and fine twined linen, the graces of Christ seen in His people in the light of the golden candlestick. Then, when they are considered as bearers of a testimony to Him, He could say, "I in them and Thou in Me . . . that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me." All this is duly related by John as a true son of Kohath.

All the levitical service was directed by the priests, who saw that nothing was omitted and nothing duplicated, that there was no overlapping, and each part received its due attention. While it was a matter of supreme importance that the holy vessels of the sanctuary should be borne in the midst of the camp secure from interference yet seen of all, it was quite as essential that the boards and curtains should also be equally shielded. The service of the Lord would have been imperfect if the cords were loose or the hooks unattached. Unless the beautiful curtains were spread and bound together by the Gershonites, all the care of the Kohathites for the ark would have been ineffectual.

Perfect balance amongst all the servants and all the service is essential if the Lord is to dwell in the midst of His own in conformity to His will, for each should endeavour that there might be the unhindered shining forth of the light from over the mercy seat; that Jehovah might be in the midst in unabated blessing, and that the daily offering that He had established might
rise acceptably before Him. Every thing was co-ordinated to this end, so the Merarite and Gershonite were really at one with the Kohathite.

Every member of the congregation benefitted when the priest and the Levite fulfilled their functions well. A priest in nearness to the Lord was better able to instruct the Levite who thus became a more competent bearer of the vessels of the sanctuary, being more in accord with their significance, so that the people were more properly affected by their presentation of the Divine things. On the other hand there was also an upward effect and response, for a faithful people attended to the need of the Levite, who was thus better fitted to sustain the priest in his ministrations before the Lord.

When we come to apply all this to the saints and servants of God to-day, it may all be regarded as a counsel of perfection at a time when there is so little that even faintly corresponds with His wishes; but that does not for a moment lessen the responsibility of those who desire to fulfil His will and glorify Him. While there is so much departure we may still make it our aim to be intelligent as to what He has before Him to bring to pass, and to serve Him in the world according as He has taught us as priests in the intimacy and the seclusion of His presence in the sanctuary.

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Matthew 5. 3-12. and Ephesians 4. 13.

Could you please give help as to the present-day application of Matthew 5. 3-12; also as to the force of the word “till” in Ephesians 4. 13?—WALTHAMSTOW.

IN the opening words of His discourse on the mountain, the Lord Jesus pointed out the moral qualities which are approved of God and pronounced a blessing on those possessed of them. Not one of these qualities makes for success in the world as it is at present constituted, indeed He takes for granted that to be possessed of them would mean persecution, and therefore He further announced how God would ultimately intervene on behalf of such. The holy government of God is always in favour of the godly, though its action may often seem to us to be long delayed.

The truth which the Lord thus declared, is true in all dispensations. For instance, Abel and not Cain was marked by meekness, and yet Cain and not Abel apparently inherited the earth. The flood, however, wiped out the Cainite brood and released the earth from their clutches, and in the coming age Abel will shine forth in glory. Dispensations do, however, sometimes modify the compensations that are announced. In the final trials and testings of the tribulation period the meek who endure, and through much suffering are brought through into the millennium, will indeed inherit the earth in a full and literal sense; the Christian, however, does not look for this, his portion is heavenly. With slight modifications such as this, we believe the beatitudes apply as much as ever. 1 Peter 3. verses 10-15 are pretty clear evidence of this.

As to the word “till” in Ephesians 4. 13, it indicates, we believe, the full and final object in view. The various gifts are given from the ascended Christ for certain work with the final object that all of us may come “unto a perfect man, etc.” The apostle himself shows us how faithful he was to this great object when he writes: “Christ . . . whom we preach, warming every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. i. 28).
Dates given in Daniel.

Would you please explain why it records Nebuchadnezzar's dream as taking place in the second year of his reign when it is recorded in 2 Kings 24. 12 that the captivity took place in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign? Moreover, Daniel was not brought before the king for at least three years (1. 5) and according to 2. 13 he was appointed his place amongst the wise men when the dream took place?—NORTH SHIELDS.

The captivity did not take place all at once, but in stages. If you again turn to the chapters in Kings you will find that before the captivity of Jehoiachin, to which you refer, Judah was twice invaded as recorded in chapter 24. 1-2. The second of these occasions was when Jehoiakim at the end of three years had rebelled against Babylon. The first was when Nebuchadnezzar came up after utterly defeating Pharaoh-nechoh of Egypt at Carchemish, and Jehoiakim, who had been placed on the throne by the Egyptian king, had to become tributary to Babylon. Now since Jehoiakim reigned eleven years, the second invasion would be eight years before his reign ended and Jehoiachin's brief reign of three months and ten days took place. Knowing that Jehoiachin's captivity took place in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign it is easy to see that the second invasion in Jehoiakim's time was in Nebuchadnezzar's first year. For some years previously he had apparently been king jointly with his father as was customary in those days.

Now it was on this second invasion in Jehoiakim's third year that Daniel and his friends were carried to Babylon (see 1. 1, 2) and not when Jehoiachin was carried captive eight years later; so that he reached Babylon in Nebuchadnezzar's first year.

There remains the difficulty to which you allude in the latter part of your question, and as to this we can only suppose that though the course of education was to cover three years, and they were presented to the king "at the end of those days" (1. 18), yet that before those days were accomplished God brought Daniel forth into the light as recorded in chapter 2. Heathen kings may have their rigid customs and make their decrees, yet God calls forth His servants according to His pleasure and not according to their rules.

Born of God.

Will you kindly explain in your magazine whether the believer is born into the family of God or adopted, having in mind John 1. 12, 13, and Galatians 4. 5?—CLAPTON.

The former Scripture, to which you refer, clearly connects the place of children of God with being born of God. So also does a passage in John's epistle: "Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (1. 29; 2. 1). Note that in both these passages from John's writings the correct translation of the word is not "sons" but "children."

In Galatians, on the other hand, the word is "sons," and in the verse to which you refer, the words, "the adoption of sons" are the translation of one Greek word, which would be better rendered as "sonship." You must not, therefore, be misled by the occurrence of the word "adoption" in our Authorized Version.

Our place, then, as children of God is based upon a vital work of God within, by which we are born of Him, and not upon a mere act of adoption after the fashion of the legal act undertaken by some benevolent man when he adopts a poor and friendless child as his own.