

SCRIPTURE TRUTH

SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH: THY WORD IS TRUTH (John 17: 17).

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INDEX

A

Alpha and Omega	J. Houston	86
Answer to a Correspondent		255, 287
"As at the First"	F. B. Hole	117

B

"Be not Deceived"	F. B. Hole	65
Bible Study — Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi	F. B. Hole	
	10, 26, 42, 58, 75, 90, 107, 123, 139, 155, 171, 187, 203, 219, 234, 248, 267, 281	
Burning all Night	T. D. Bell	37

C

Christ Everything	J. T. Mawson	184
Christian Character	J. Stoddart	193
Christ, Son of God and Son of Man	J. Houston	55

D

Day of Manifestation, The	F. B. Hole	161
Discipleship	J. Houston	261
Divine Inspiration	A. J. Pollock	49
Dothan	G. R. Bell	88
Dying Embers		152

E

"Elect . . . unto Obedience"	F. B. Hole	149
"Enriched in Him"	F. B. Hole	225
Ephesian Doxologies, The	A. H. Storrie	153
Eternal Life	J. S. Blackburn	145
Exhortations of Scripture		151

F

Facts to stimulate Prayer		128
Faithfulness and its Reward	R. Thomson	164
Father loveth the Son, The	L. A. Anderson	279
Flesh and Faith	J. T. Mawson	240
Forgiveness, Justification, Acceptance	J. Houston	39
Fruits of the Gospel	J. B. Marshall	73
Further Thoughts on Prayer	Extracted	166

G

Greatness of Christ, The	R. Thomson	227
--------------------------	------------	-----

H

" He followeth not us "	I. Fleming	137
" His Decease "	J. T. Mawson	87
Holy and True	J. Houston	129

I

Importance of Prayer	Extracted	117
Impressive Word, An	J. T. Mawson	32
" In My Name "	F. B. Hole	169
Inspiration of Scripture, The	J. S. Blackburn	81

K

Keep the Fire Burning	J. T. Mawson	104
Keeping the Unity of the Spirit	F. B. Hole	273

L

Life and Godliness	H. Smith	51
Life and the Spirit	W. Kelly	233
Linen Cloth, The	R. Thomson	136
Lion and the Lamb, The	J. S. Blackburn	1
" Living Sacrifice, A "	J. S. Blackburn	21
Lost Diadem, The	F. B. Hole	17

M

Majestic Words	I. Fleming	100
" Moved with Compassion "	L. A. Anderson	115

N

"New Covenant in My Name, The	F. W. Boyd	6
" Not I but Christ "	(Poetry)	280

O

" Obedience of Faith, The "	F. B. Hole	264
" Occupy Till I Come "	J. T. Mawson	276
" Our Fellowship "	J. T. Mawson	245

P

Pattern of Christian Character, The	J. S. Blackburn	209
Philippian Doxology, The	A. H. Storrie	244
Preciousness of Christ, The	J. Houston	102
Progress of Christian Character, The	P. Hirst	229

R

Rejoice Always	J. N. D.	163
Result of the Ministry, The	F. B. Hole	97

S

Samson and Delilah	J. S. Blackburn	69
Separation from Apostasy not Schism	Extracted	216
Servant of the Lord, The	J. S. Blackburn	131
Sin of Schism, The	Extracted	199
Sovereignty and Responsibility	F. B. Hole	4
Spirit of Christianity, The	J. T. Mawson	257
Sufferings and Glory of Christ, The	J. Houston	241
Sufferings of this Present Time, The	F. B. Hole	214

T

Three Divinely Established Principles	F. B. Hole	33
True Humility		106

U

Unanswered Prayer	Extracted	178
-------------------	-----------	-----

W

Wall of the City, The	T. D. Bell	113
Where Are They ?	L. A. Anderson	182
Woman's Devotion, A	L. A. Anderson	263

THE LION AND THE LAMB

J. S. BLACKBURN

“WORTHY is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing” (Rev. 5: 12).

The question raised in our chapter is one which is surging around us in the world. Who is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing? For this, we learn from the answer given, is a part, at least, of the meaning of the question asked by the strong angel, “Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?” (Rev. 5: 2). The world has attempted many an answer to this question; and particularly in our own day it is ready to choose its men, and shower upon them glory and honour, and heap power and riches into their hands. If we enquire into the character of these men, we may find that they are men of pride, cruelty and unbridled ambition. Yet they have qualities that cause them to be hailed with enthusiasm, and then command an allegiance that almost amounts to worship.

But far above the strong currents which agitate the minds of the earth dwellers—the sea and its waves roaring and men’s hearts failing them for fear—there is a Throne. On that throne sits One who lives for ever and ever; He is ceaselessly adored by the hosts of heaven; and will finally rule in the kingdoms of earth. In the vision of our chapter, He is attended by the executors of His judgments, and surrounded by the completed company of the re-

deemed saints in heaven, and there is a ready answer in heaven to the question “Who is worthy to receive power and riches?”

Who has not been filled with wonder at the singularity of the figures used here? The seer wept much because no man was found worthy to open and read the great scroll of God’s will for the earth, but one of the elders, answering his grief, said “Weep not, behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda . . . hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.” His amazement, as he turned in response to the elder’s words, is preserved for us. “And lo . . . a Lamb, as it had been slain” (Rev. 5: 5, 6). And as He took the book out of the hand of Him that sat upon the throne, the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped the Lamb, and when the echoes of the new song had reverberated to the utmost limits of the universe, again the saints fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.

The reason for the Lamb’s worthiness, is that He was slain. That precious blood that has redeemed to God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, is the Lamb’s title to everlasting glory and exaltation. In addition to this, however, we surely have in the singular figures used, instruction as to the moral character of the Man whom heaven delights to honour. He is the **Lion** who has prevailed, and He is the **Lamb** who was slain. What volumes of precious instruction are in these two figures. In answering Samson’s

riddle, the Philistines said "What is stronger than a lion?" (Judges 14: 18). Again, in the Proverbs we have "A lion . . . is strongest among beasts and turneth not away for any" (Proverbs 30: 30). The lamb on the other hand is the emblem of unresisting weakness. In the case of the Lord Jesus this weakness was **meekness**, so that the Scripture says, 'He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth' (Isaiah 53: 7).

Are not the lion and the lamb in every man? How strong men can be for themselves; how utterly weak for God and this weakness is **not** meekness. Those men who in the world have been accounted worthy of great power, are men who in a pre-eminent degree, have been strong for themselves. A strong man is one who will not be turned aside from the road leading to the attainment of his object. Napoleon was such a man. No scruples of conscience, no bowels of human compassion, no entreaty of wife or friend, no opposition of puissant foe turned him aside, in the hey-day of his strength, from the ruthless directness of his path towards the chosen goal. To such a man men were willing to give power and riches. For such a man, men were willing to die, but toward God. . . !

The Name extolled in heaven, belongs to One who, in the manner of His life amongst men, was a lion, and turned not aside for any, in the things pertaining to God; while in the things pertaining to Himself, He was a lamb, unresisting; and

like a sheep before its shearers is dumb, He opened not His mouth.

We read of Him driven into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, in order that what was in Him might be made manifest. The tempter was the "strong man" whom none had spoiled for forty centuries. In that first temptation, the aim was to turn the Lord aside—not a startling glaring error, but the merest hairs breadth from the will of God; but such was His greater strength that He turned not aside. At the same time, what perfection of weakness for Himself is shown in that His power is withheld from ministering to the most elementary of material human needs, when another than His Father "showed it" to Him (see, John 5: 20). In all the parts of that life we can discern the same unique combination of strength and weakness. The prophet Zechariah tells how He was commissioned to the task in which He "laboured in vain," and spent His "strength for nought" (Isaiah 49: 4). "Thus saith the Lord my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter" (Zech. 11. 4). The Shepherd, prophetically recounting the manner in which He responded to the word, says, "so I fed the flock of slaughter, truly the poor of the flock" (verse 7, New Trans.) It was an apparently fruitless labour, for the Shepherd's staves, Beauty and Bands, were to be broken; the flock was the flock of slaughter; and would forsake the faithful Shepherd and cleave to an idol shepherd.

The Gospels contain the record of the unswerving vigour with which He pursued this commission.

“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every sickness, and every disease... But when He saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9: 35, 36). Such was His strength, yet when the disciples would call Him to receive the applause of the Capernaums, there was nothing in Him to respond to such a motive, and He stretches out toward those “other cities” intent only on the purpose for which He came forth, (Mark 1: 37).

Above all, this strength and this weakness are shown, as the end approaches, when the prince of this world, who had left Him for a season, comes with marshalled hosts of darkness, to turn Him aside. The Spirit of Christ had said aforetime by the prophet “The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back” (Isaiah 50: 5). These words describe a positive putting forth of strength, how He gave His back to the smiters, and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, how He set His face as a flint.

“Firmer than Carmel’s might,
When the long-leaping tide
Shivers its thousand shafts of light
Far up his patient side.

His will unshaken stands
Though that wild sea of wrath,
Upsurging to its utmost bands,
Breaks foaming in His path.”

And ever joined to this strength, there is the perfect weakness of the Lamb. We see it in His rebuke to Peter, who like us was weak, when it was time for strength in watching with the Master; and strong, when the Master was to be weak as a lamb led to the slaughter. We see it in circumstances in which one of man’s strongest impulses—the impulse to justify himself—is awakened, in that He was silent before Pontius Pilate. We may see it, with amazement, when those twelve legions of angels were not allowed to smite the despisers of their Lord.

“Lo, sheathed in shining light
Heaven’s wondering warriors
stand,
With pinions clothed for downward
flight,
Waiting their Lord’s command.

But never comes that word,
That night knows yet no dawn,
And still must each impatient sword
Sleep on each thigh undrawn.”

“He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth.” (Isaiah 53: 7). Such was the character, here on earth, of the Man who is the theme of heaven’s praise. What shall we say to these things? What immense value in the sight of God, that there are on earth where the Lamb was slain, many who, by reason of the grace that has saved them, and of the blood that has redeemed them, are in the mind of heaven! What grateful incense ascends to the Father’s throne, when here on earth the feeblest saint gives expression to the praises of Jesus! And shall we not seek so to adore this mind of Christ,

that we also may become, on the one hand "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding" in the things

of the Lord, and on the other the reflection of the meekness and gentleness of Christ?

SOVEREIGNTY AND RESPONSIBILITY

F. B. HOLE

THAT God is sovereign and that man, though fallen, is a responsible creature, are two facts that stand out clearly in the Scriptures. It is when we study these two facts in their implications that we run into intellectual difficulties. It is easy to lay such stress on the one as almost completely to ignore the other. The two extremes are known as Hyper-Calvinism and Arminianism.

Hyper-Calvinism is that system of religious thought that sees little else in Scripture than God's sovereignty in election. The responsibility of man is so little thought of, if not denied, that he is reduced to a mere puppet. He is a plaything in the hand of fate. If he is elect, he **must** be saved, come what may; if he is not, he **must** be damned, and there's an end of it.

Arminianism, on the contrary, sees little else than the fact of man's responsibility, often to the total exclusion of God's sovereign and gracious work by His Spirit in the souls of men. Man is a free and unfettered being in the exercise of his own will: hence anything is lawful that will persuade him to exert the force of his will in the right direction.

The Hyper-Calvinistic spirit is fatal to all zeal and energy in the work of the Gospel. Those who

possess it necessarily and logically decry such energy in every possible way. Men are spiritually dead: why preach to dead men? Why say, "Repent!" to men who can't repent? or "Believe!" to men who can't believe? Moreover, is not God able to look after His affairs? Does He require our busy interference in the saving of His elect? Supposing we compass sea and land in our zeal for souls, not one **more** than the elect will be saved; and if we fold our hands and do nothing, not one **less** than the elect will be saved. Masterly inactivity is then the only possible policy, and all the energy of the servants of the Lord is only so much unprofitable waste of time and breath.

One wonders sometimes why this kind of argument seems to be only used against evangelistic effort. If valid at all, it is just as valid against all forms of Christian service. Is not God able to care for the souls of His elect without our endeavours to edify them? Will not the sovereign work of the Spirit in building up their souls progress without the labours of pastors and teachers, or such small efforts as producing this magazine? The exponents of such ideas seem blind to the fact that they are cutting the ground from beneath their own feet.

At the present time the Arminian

extreme is perhaps the more frequently held by truly Christian people. They feel the need of sinners and rejoice in the glad tidings of forgiveness through the crucified and risen Saviour. The great question now is, how best to get at sinners and persuade them into a definite act of their own will, in accepting Christ and choosing life. The more in earnest such Christians are, the greater the danger of their using questionable or even unscriptural methods. The great end, which they feel they must reach, is considered by them to sanctify the means employed.

The practical results of this are very different from those of the other extreme. There all is stagnation: here all is movement and apparent success at the beginning. We are concerned however with the **ultimate** results. At the close of a large mission in London, a good many years ago, the pastor of a large chapel had over 50 names given to him of people who professed conversion. The pastor was a warm-hearted, evangelical man, but a year or so after he sadly confessed he could only regard one as truly converted. Thank God for the one! But how sad that nearly fifty should be led on to a wrong road in order to direct one into the right.

Let us by the grace of God maintain firmly **both** these great facts—God is sovereign in His gracious actings: man, though fallen, is a responsible creature and addressed as such. The truth of Divine sovereignty is plainly stated in Scripture. Read such passages as John 6: 37-44; Romans 9: 10-24; Ephesians 1: 4; 1 Peter 1: 2. Equally plain is man's responsibi-

lity. Read such passages as John 3: 16-18; Romans 2: 6-16; 1 Peter 4: 5-6. Let us then accept both, even if as yet we do not see far enough to discern exactly how they fit in with each other.

We may however discern this—that man's will, if he is left to himself **never** turns toward God. The fall has given it a permanent twist away from Him. This is definitely stated in Romans 3: 10-12. It is stated first of all that "there is **NONE** righteous;" that is, none "right with God." Yes, we might say, that is true, but surely some people are more sincere and understanding than others, and so these get converted. Not so, for there is "**NONE** that understandeth." This makes man's plight much worse — nobody right, and nobody understands their desperate position. But again we might say, Yes, but surely some will have an innate sense — a kind of intuition — that they need God, and so begin to seek after Him. But once more, not so, for, "there is **NONE** that seeketh after God."

This word, "**NONE**," thrice repeated, closes every avenue of deliverance if man is just left to himself. God must intervene. In other words, God must exercise His sovereign action on a man's behalf. He must work by His Spirit in the hearts of men, if any are to seek after Him and His salvation. This He does, as pleases Him, when the Gospel is faithfully preached, since it pleases God, "by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1: 21).

If any would say to us, If God in His electing mercy is pleased to save

this one and that one, why should He not elect and save all? — we have no answer to give. What lies behind His decisions is not revealed to us, who are but His creatures; but He has revealed Himself to us in Christ, and so we are sure that what He decides is right, and ultimately all will see how right it has been.

Instead of seeking to probe into the secret of the Divine decisions and acts, which are beyond us, let us more diligently and fervently publish abroad the Gospel, since He has revealed that through **this** He is pleased to save those that **believe**, as the result of the work of the Spirit of God in their hearts.

“THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD”

F. W. BOYD

GOD made a covenant after the flood with mankind in the person of Noah. This great covenant revealed God's own knowledge of the wickedness of man, while it also revealed His own goodness.

The flood had not improved mankind; hence, “the Lord said in His heart . . . the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8: 21). But instead of foretelling another flood in judgment, God said, “While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” So that, there are established conditions, vouched for by God Himself, for the benefit of man. This was based upon the burnt offering that Noah had brought.

In that offering, “the Lord smelled a sweet savour,” or as the margin has it, “a savour of rest.” In the burnt offering Christ was typically presented to God, not so much as accomplishing atonement, for the earth had just emerged from the judgment of the flood, but

rather offering Him in all His perfection, His sinlessness, His grace, His strength in the face of evil, His power to deliver those in bondage. In short, He was presented in all those moral beauties, which are in such vivid contrast to all that characterizes fallen man.

Consider now the covenant as it affected mankind. First he is assured of food, and secondly, his headship over creation, given at the outset in Genesis 1: 28, is confirmed. Moral issues however are never far away, when we have to do with a holy God, so we are not surprised to find the responsibility of government is placed in Noah's hands, as the new head of the human race, so that order may be maintained on the earth for God.

The injunction is given, “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” This is the more remarkable in that no such order was given before the flood. In fact in the case of Cain a mark was set on him by God, and although he was a murderer he was not to be

killed. In those days man was left under the control of his conscience. The new ruling after the flood was divinely given instruction, preceding the Mosaic law by many centuries. These injunctions were developed in detail under the law, but we should realize that it was given to Israel as a nation and was basically religious, whilst the covenant with Noah was given for all mankind. The death sentence was not a matter of revenge nor a question of religion. It was a matter of order and right, as before God.

If now we turn to the covenant of law through Moses, we see similar moral standards and the holiness of God clearly reflected, but we see more of His heart made known; as for instance when He said, "I will make My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy;" and again, "The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Exod. 33: 19, and 34: 6).

Though this covenant was not universal, like that with Noah, but with Israel only, yet moral government and religious matters stand side by side. Man's duty, because he is the creature of a holy God, is stated. His relationship with his fellows is carefully and extensively laid down, even to compassion for the fatherless, the widow and the stranger. Then the complicated range of sacrifices and rites was enforced, which, as we learn in the New Testament, had typical meaning, often referring to Christ, though some were concerned with

ceremonial matters, which now are obsolete.

However there are important features to be noted. The first is that it was made between God and a people already recognized by God as His own: a people redeemed and delivered out of Egypt, saved from the destroying angel by the blood of the slain lamb, sprinkled on the door posts and lintel. The second we have already referred to. The moral conduct demanded is based upon the holiness of the God they worshipped.

The third is that writing played an important part in the giving of the covenant. The law was written originally by the finger of God, but Moses could not carry such holy work into an idolatrous camp without destroying either the camp or the tablets. He took upon himself the responsibility of the decision, and broke the records. However God accepted this and commanded Moses to return to Sinai with new tablets, on which this time the law was written by Moses. Then the glory of God overshadowed the scene, and the face of Moses shone with reflected glory when he descended the mount.

The sacrifices and ceremonial cleansings must be considered as the counterpart of the law. It laid down the rules for man to be holy, but by his very nature man is unholy and unable to keep it. The demands of the law must therefore be met by sacrifice. The offering taking his place, the transgressor can be forgiven, as laying his hand on the victim and confessing his sin, atonement was made. The practical cleansing, needed to complete the

work, was seen in the instructions as to the Red Heifer, given in Numbers 19.

We know that in actual fact the sacrifices were not adequate for the putting away of sin, and could only be tokens offered in faith until the perfect sacrifice was offered. We have the plain statement that, "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10: 4). This had to wait until, "once in the end of the world [ages] hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. 9: 26).

The Apostle Paul summarized the ineffectiveness of the law for justification when he wrote, "the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good . . . but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7: 12-14). He also epitomized the effectiveness of the work of Christ — "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness . . . that He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3: 24-26).

On the propitiation accomplished by Christ the New Covenant is based, and it is prophesied as to be for Israel's blessing in a future day. Its terms are stated in Jeremiah 31: 31-34. It will be all a question of what God is going to do. Instead of making demands upon men from the outside, God will work on the inside, dealing with heart and mind, and thus ensuring success in their blessing.

The blessing that is prophesied is for Israel, but we may well ask how

and where do we benefit today? The Lord Himself settled this matter, when He instituted His Supper for us before He suffered. Paul too, the Apostle to the Gentiles, spoke of his companions and himself as being made, "able ministers of the new testament [covenant]." As they ministered a new company was formed—the Church, composed of all who believed the message, whether Jew or Gentile, Thus in result it was quite removed from Jewish privilege.

Let us consider the Lord's Supper for a moment. The Lord not only presents Himself in death in the elements, but also draws attention to its results. He links the New Covenant with His shed blood, of which the poured out cup is the symbol. We pass from the Old Covenant with its physical details to the invisible and spiritual realities of the New Covenant.

First, it is the death of Christ that has made the forgiveness of sins possible. Sin is the great obstacle to man's real blessing, and no man can surmount it in his own strength. As for God, He cannot compromise with that which violates His own nature. We understand of course that, God being absolute Wisdom and absolute Goodness, His will is that which constitutes real blessing for man. To our shame and misery, we think that we know better than God, and so prefer our own puny wills.

But in the second place, it is by Christ's death, of which the loaf and the cup are emblems, that the heart of God is told out. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners,

Christ died for us;" and again, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things" (Rom. 5: 8, and 8: 32). To that love we respond in the Supper.

But let us remember that the Lord in His earthly ministry had no time for hypocrisy and shallowness. How often is the celebration of the Lord's Supper little more than a hollow service, and the lives of the participants a denial of their professed faith. Even when artificial phraseology is not used, how often a formula may be developed, consisting of certain hymns and certain accepted ideas, expressed glibly in prayer. Is this one reason why the Lord linked the observance of His Supper with the New Covenant?

However it is not our present purpose to write at length on the Supper, but a question remains. The blood of Christ has been shed: are there to be no results in us? We may say, "I have believed on Christ, and therefore I partake of His Supper. But have we considered the other characteristics of the New Covenant? In 2 Corinthians 3, the Apostle Paul spoke of himself as also writing, but on the fleshy tables of the heart and not on stone. The idea again is that of a complete moral change. Paul is found zealously writing, not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God; and what he wrote was not the commandments of the law, but Christ Himself. The idea is that each

Christian should be morally like Christ—a living epistle of Christ. In this way He is to be seen—"known and read of all men."

The Spirit of God brings us not into a place of bondage, as did the law, but into a place of liberty. We are set free to gaze on the Lord Jesus in His present position: beyond death as the judgment of sin, in resurrection, in supremacy and glory in the presence of God. The whole glory of God shining in His blessed face. As we thus become occupied with Him we become like Him. Beholding the glory of the Lord, we become like Him; are changed from glory to glory as by the Lord, the Spirit.

To summarize:—we are epistles of Christ since He is being written on our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is a progressive change from glory to glory—a moulding of our very moral fibre: an increase in holiness. The perfections of Christ Himself are set before us as the measure; and the work is effected in us by our beholding the glory of the Lord—His graciousness, His faithfulness, His holiness, as well as His personal and acquired glories.

This change is the purpose of the New Covenant; consequently it is one of the objectives in the mind of the Lord, when He instituted His Supper; and when He said, "This cup is the New Testament [covenant] in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

TWO lessons in type:— Abraham said, "I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet" from the world, (Gen. 14: 23). Moses said "There shall not an hoof be left behind" in the world (Exodus 10: 26).

BIBLE STUDY—DANIEL

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters I: 1 — 2: 44)

ISAIAH, whose book we have been considering, prophesied in Judah both before and also during the reign of the God-fearing Hezekiah, when under his influence things seemed outwardly to be better. Yet the prophet had to reveal the hidden corruption under the surface. In our Bibles his book is followed by that of Jeremiah, who was raised up of God to speak for Him in the last sad days of Judah's history, when things were hopelessly bad and beyond recovery, and the blow fell on them through Nebuchadnezzar.

The seven nations of Canaan had formerly inhabited the land and done horrible things in it: so much so that God sent Israel against them under Joshua with orders to exterminate them. But now the Lord has to say through Jeremiah, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and My people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?" (5: 30, 31)). What God did through the Babylonian king "in the end thereof," Jeremiah had to see and experience to his deep sorrow. We may get some idea of the depth of his grief, if we read the book of Lamentations, which follows his main prophecy.

This book is followed by Ezekiel, who was carried amongst many others into captivity in the days of Jehoiachin some years before the final crash fell on Zedekiah, which

Jeremiah witnessed. In the land of his captivity he saw in vision the glory, which marked the presence of God, departing from temple and city, and if God was gone, all was lost.

Yet each of these three prophets predicted God's future intervention in a way that would be altogether new. Isaiah, as we have seen, foretold things that should be absolutely new, even, "new heavens and a new earth," brought about by the twofold advent of the Messiah; first as the humbled Servant, to suffer for sins, and then as the mighty Arm of Jehovah redeeming in power what He had first redeemed by His blood.

Jeremiah follows, predicting that these new things will be established, not on the old covenant of law but on a new covenant of grace. Let verses 31-34 of his 31st chapter be read and note how again and again, "I will," appears, rather than the, "If ye will," of Exodus 19: 8. In this New Covenant God is going to act according to His own thoughts and purposes in grace, based on the work of Christ, as unfolded by Isaiah.

Ezekiel completes the prophetic outline, that is given to us by these three major prophets. In his 36th chapter he foretells the New Birth that will take place with a remnant of Israel before they enter on millennial blessedness, and his next chapter speaks of how they will be

spiritually quickened, and brought into a new order of life.

This brings us to Daniel, who raised up by God just as the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21: 24) began under Nebuchadnezzar. He was enabled of God to give us a prophetic outline of the course of these times, during which the Messiah would be cut off. Hence tribulation is to be the portion of the people, but with the hope of deliverance at the end.

Daniel's prophecy falls quite simply into two parts after the introductory chapter, which relates the courageous stand of Daniel and his three companions against the taint of idolatry, and the way God honoured it. From the point where the Chaldeans spoke "to the king in Syriack" (2: 4), to the end of chapter 7, this language of the Gentiles is used, and Hebrew is only reverted to as we start chapter 8. Thus the historical details and the prophecies that relate to the Gentile powers are written in the Gentile language. Then in the five chapters that complete the book things are revealed to Daniel that mainly concern his people, though details as to the nations are referred to.

Three times did Nebuchadnezzar and his servants come up against Jerusalem, when the three kings, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, fell before him. On the first of these occasions, Daniel and his three friends were carried captive amongst a number of youths of royal or princely birth, who were considered to be of exceptional intellectual capacity—the pick of the nation in wisdom and understand-

ing. The astute Babylonian king intended to fortify his position with the cleverest men of conquered nations, working them into the army of magicians — the men who trafficked with demon powers, and gave him guidance by their occult practices.

So Daniel and his friends were to go through a kind of college course that would make them to be "cunning in knowledge, and understanding science;" the "science" being doubtless connected with those "curious arts," mentioned in Acts 19: 19, as practised in Ephesus at a later date. If the great Babylonian monarch could increase the number of men, who could give him supernatural wisdom and guidance, his power would be further increased.

Hence their food and drink was to be of a special and prescribed course from the king's table: the very best of the land, and doubtless of a kind that was connected with idolatrous rites. And further, by the prince of the eunuchs each had his original name discarded. They had come under new ownership, and this was signaled by new names of idolatrous origin and significance. Such was the position in which Daniel and his companions found themselves.

Reaching verse 8 of chapter 1, our thoughts are arrested by the words, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself." A great statement this! Had he not so purposed, no Book of Daniel would have found a place in our Bibles. Notice in the first place that the Spirit of God in the record disowns his heathen name, and uses his original one, which means,

“God is judge.” The man evidently lived in the light of his name, and so we notice, in the second place, that he purposed, not in his head, the seat of intelligence, but rather in his heart, the seat of affection Godward, before whom he walked. This is the kind of purpose that stands firm and does not vary.

Then, in the third place, notice that it was **defilement** that he was determined to avoid. From a material standpoint the food was pure without a doubt. It was the spiritual defilement he had in view, since Babylon was the original hot-bed of idolatry. His three friends are not mentioned in verse 8, but if we turn to verse 18 of chapter 3, we discover they were entirely of the same mind and purpose as he was.

Let us take very seriously to heart the lesson that confronts us here. The secret of Daniel’s remarkable power was his **purposed separation** from the evil world that surrounded him. He knew its defiling power and he refused it. Some five centuries after his day its true character was fully and finally exposed in the cross of Christ as He Himself said, “Now is the judgment of this world” (John 12: 31). We now live in the light of this fact, and we know that it is dominated by Satan, who is “the god of this world” (2 Cor. 4: 4); hence a purposed separation from the world is more necessary for us than it was even for Daniel.

There was with him however not only great firmness of purpose but also a wise and humble spirit in making it known. God had acted on his behalf, bringing him into favour

with the prince of the eunuchs and with Melzar his subordinate, yet he did not presume on this and speak haughtily. He rather stated his desire, and presented his prayer that he and his friends might be fed on the plainest of food for ten days as a test, and on the result of this the situation should be stabilized. God was with them and as a result they were delivered from the defilement that otherwise would have been theirs.

From this incident let us learn a lesson. Separation from defilement is ever God’s path for His saints, but much depends on the spirit they display as they take it. If taken in a harsh or haughty spirit, rather than a meek and lowly spirit, the testimony to others will be nullified. If our spirit in taking it is marked by, “Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou”—the spirit that marked the Pharisees of our Lord’s day—we shall be helping on the evil from which we profess to be separating ourselves. Daniel and his friends sought their separation, and maintained it, in the right spirit.

Consequently God was with them in a truly remarkable way. Not only were they fairer and fatter in their bodies, but in knowledge, skill, learning, wisdom they excelled all the others who had their portion of the king’s meat; and as for Daniel, he was granted a supernatural understanding in visions and dreams, by which in those days God often made His mind known.

When tested before Nebuchadnezzar the verdict was clear. The magicians and astrologers were men

who trafficked with the powers of darkness in order to possess knowledge beyond the powers of ordinary men, and compared with these the four men, taught of God, were ten times better. There is nothing surprising in this. Indeed the same thing meets us in more emphatic form in 1 Corinthians 2, where we read that the princes of this world knew nothing of God's wisdom, so much so that they "crucified the Lord of glory." Whereas the simplest believer, indwelt and controlled by the Spirit of God, judges, or discerns, "all things."

Before passing from chapter 1, we may remark that this question of food contaminated by idolatrous practices was acute among the early Christians at Corinth. They were instructed as to it in Paul's first epistle to them, chapters 8, and 10: 25-31. Meat sold in the markets or supplied in a friend's house they could eat without raising any question; but if they were definitely informed that it had been offered in sacrifice to idols, they were to have none of it. In this the Christian keeps clear of idolatrous associations just as Daniel and his friends did.

With the sensational rise of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar the times of the Gentiles began, and chapter 2 opens with the statement that as early as his second year that great monarch had a remarkable dream that troubled him much; and well it might, for in it lay a God-given revelation calculated to humble him. He lost his sleep and, what to him was worse, he lost also any recollection of his dream. He turned naturally to the Chaldeans and their associates, who trafficked with

demon powers; demanding that they should recount his dream as well as give its meaning.

This demand, with the threat that, if they failed to answer to it, they should all be destroyed, does at first sight seem savage and unreasonable. On second thoughts we may remember that just about that time there were false prophets and diviners even in Jerusalem, as we see in Jeremiah 29, whose predictions and explanations failed, and so it doubtless had been with the diviners of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar may have thought he had now a fine opportunity to test these men that surrounded him, and would wish to control him with supernatural understanding as they claimed. If they claimed to give supernatural interpretation of dreams, surely the same supernatural power could reconstruct the forgotten dream! This would verify the claims they made. And if they could not verify their claims, he would wipe them out of his kingdom!

Daniel and his friends being classified by the Babylonians as being amongst these "wise men," they were included in the decree issued by the furious king. The action of Daniel and his friends is instructive. They did two things. First, there was Daniel's humble supplication to the king for time, with the assurance that an answer would be forthcoming. This assurance revealed **faith in God** on the part of Daniel, and that of very remarkable strength. Second, having obtained this brief respite, Daniel and his fellows gave themselves to **prayer** that the secret as to the dream might be revealed to them.

So here were these four men, surrounded by the grossest form of idolatry in the world's greatest city, yet so truly separated in heart and ways from it all as to be in touch with the "God of heaven," to the point of receiving communications from Him. The secret they prayerfully sought was revealed to Daniel in a night vision. He saw by night just what the king had seen by night some days before. Others had been enabled to interpret dreams—Joseph for instance—but to duplicate a dream, so that what appeared before the mind of one man by night should be exactly repeated before the mind of another man a few nights later; this none can achieve but GOD. And in no servant of His does God perform this miracle but in one who was thoroughly separated to Him from the defilements of the surrounding world.

The first thing that Daniel did was to bless God and offer praise to Him, as shown in verses 19-23. He was indeed living in an epoch, when God had been changing "the times and the seasons," and also removing kings, and setting up kings, showing that wisdom and might are His. The removing of the kings of David's line and the setting up of Nebuchadnezzar had been acts of God, and Daniel bowed to this and even blessed God in the acknowledgment of it. He blessed God too that He imparted wisdom to those who had been given understanding to receive it, and in particular that the desired secret had been made known unto him.

"Times and seasons" as relating to the earth are first mentioned in Genesis 1: 14. We have the exact words here, and we meet with

them again in Acts 1: 7 and 1 Thessalonians 5: 1. It is clear that this expression refers to God's dispensations and dealings **on the earth**. In Acts 1, the disciples were **not to know** the **time** of God's dealings. Yet the Thessalonians **did know** the **manner** of God's predicted dealings, and the order in which they would transpire: indeed they **knew this perfectly**, though they were ignorant of the coming of the Lord for His saints, as revealed in the previous chapter. But then, that coming has to do with a **heavenly** calling, while "times and seasons" relate to the **earth**.

The dream being revealed, Daniel is quickly brought before the king, and at once disclaims any virtue, as resident in himself. He referred the king to the God of heaven, who reveals secrets, and who intends to make known to him the future course of Gentile dominion, that had commenced with his overthrow of Jerusalem and its king. Nebuchadnezzar was plainly told that God had thus acted for the sake of Daniel himself and his fellows, and that he might realize that he had to do with a God who knew the most secret thoughts of his heart and mind. In verses 31-35, the dream is related to the king.

We pass on however to consider the dream, as its meaning is unfolded by Daniel, beginning with verse 37. The golden head of this great image of excellent and terrible brightness was Nebuchadnezzar himself. He wielded absolute power, unfettered and unlimited, as no one before had known, nor has any one since, and which we believe will only be equalled by the predicted

“Beast” of Revelation 13, and exceeded by the Lord Jesus, when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords. The Lord Jesus will judge and rule in equity, but it was far otherwise with Nebuchadnezzar, for, “whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive” (5: 19), as Daniel himself recorded.

The Babylonian empire, magnificent as it was, only dominated the stage in the world's history for a short time. Under Belshazzar and his father it fell from its proud pre-eminence. It was so much dependent upon the power and glory of Nebuchadnezzar that no subsequent king is regarded, and in verse 39 we read, “after thee shall arise another kingdom” which was to be inferior in its character, described in the dream by the breast and arms of silver; and this again superseded by a third kingdom, designated by the belly and thighs of brass.

The lessening value of the metals indicated a deterioration in the quality of the succeeding powers. We may think it a hard saying, but autocracy is the Divine ideal in government, to be realized in righteous yet benevolent perfection in the millennial reign of Christ. It is worthy of note that in this chapter Daniel more than once speaks of “the God of heaven,” indicating that this first Gentile monarch of supreme power held his authority as delegated from heaven. This is the fact, we believe, that underlies the instruction of the Apostle given in Romans 13: 1. The existing power of his day was the fourth, mentioned in our chapter, but the Gentile powers that exist, whoever they may be at any given moment, hold

their authority as delegates of “the God of heaven.”

The second and third empires are passed over with slight mention and our thoughts are concentrated on the fourth, which was to be characterized by strength, as set forth by the iron. The Roman empire did indeed break in pieces and subdue the civilized earth, and lasted in its unified form for centuries. Though its unity was dissolved, as we know, it is viewed in the dream as existing in some way until its final development in a ten-kingdom form at the end of its story, when clay will be found mixed with the iron; and in result the kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle.

The mixture of clay and iron aptly symbolizes this, for they are substances entirely different in character. Iron is a metal, of less value than gold, though stronger; clay is non-metallic, and its figurative use in Scripture indicates what is human in contrast to what is Divine: see Job 10: 9, and 33: 6; also the references to man being like clay in the hands of God, who is the Potter.

The dream indicated therefore that the fourth empire in its last days would have “kings,” to the number of ten, and that though still strong there would be an element of brittleness, induced by the introduction of a human element—what in these days we call democracy; which was defined by a noted man as being, “Government of the people by the people for the people.” Nothing is more uncertain, and therefore brittle, than the will of the people. It seems quite certain therefore that we are living in the

days contemplated as being the closing stage in the history of the image.

Upon the feet of the image the stone fell. The stone is described as "cut out without hands;" that is, apart from man having anything to do with it—not human but Divine in origin. The first prophetic reference to the Lord Jesus as the Stone is in Genesis 49: 24, when old Jacob, in blessing his sons made a parenthetic exclamation, "from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." Under this figure He again appears in Isaiah 28: 16, and so on into the New Testament.

In the dream we are considering, the stone is interpreted as "A kingdom, which shall never be destroyed," but we know who the King of that kingdom is going to be. Just as the "vision" of Habakkuk 2: 3, which will surely come and not tarry, is found in Hebrews 10: 37

to be centred in a Person, (for the "it" of Habakkuk is turned into "He" in Hebrews), so the "kingdom" which Daniel mentioned as predicted by the "stone" of Nebuchadnezzar's dream is found to centre round a Person, who is God's "King of kings."

We know Him as the "Living Stone," and to Him we have already come, as we are reminded in I Peter 2: 5. We are His already, and we partake of His nature as "living stones," and so are built up, as under His authority, into that spiritual house and holy priesthood, as indicated. When as the King of that coming kingdom, predicted in Daniel 2, He falls in judgment it will be completely to **demolish**. While we wait for that, we know His attractive power, the effect of which is to **build up**. How great the favour and blessing of knowing Him thus!

"WHEN I AM WEAK, THEN AM I STRONG"

(2 Cor. 12: 10)

PEOPLE often say, "I want to feel that I am strong." What we need is to feel that we are weak; this brings in Omnipotence. We shall have a life of feeling by-and-by in the glory: now we are called upon to lead a life of faith. What saint but knows from the experience of the deceitfulness of his own heart, that, had we power in ourselves instead of in Christ, we should be something? This is what God does not intend. . . . When God is about to use a man, He makes that man feel in himself most consciously nothing. . . . Can we not, almost invariably, trace our failures to self-confidence? When a believer thinks that he is going to do a feat, his failure often becomes ridiculous. God must abase that which is proud and lifted up.

J.N.D.

IN I Peter 1: 6, we read of " manifold temptations," that beset us; that is, temptations in great variety. Do we not know it to be so? But then do not forget that in the same epistle Peter speaks of " the manifold grace of God " (4: 10). That grace can carry us through, and its variety is as great as the tests that face us.

THE LOST DIADEM

F. B. HOLE

TO say that an outstanding feature of the present time is the almost universal spirit of unrest is to utter merely a platitude. The thing is so obtrusive as to be patent even to a frivolous mind.

Clashing of interests, conflict, upheaval and unrest are no new things in the earth. When, since the entrance of sin, did they not exist? Admitting this, however, we venture to affirm that the present epidemic of unrest and upheaval has assumed such proportions that it may justly be termed the leading feature of the age: and further, with the Bible as our guide, to anticipate that it will increase yet more.

The unrest existing today has about it two features that are worthy of notice:

(1) **It is practically universal in its extent.** Every country of note is afflicted with it, and most smaller countries as well. Of old it was more manifest in barbaric lands; now it is more pronounced in the civilized and richer nations. The civilization may be Eastern and ancient as in China, or Western and modern as in America and Britain: it matters not. The iron rule of Communism, slaughtering millions of human beings to attain its purpose, may appear to have abolished it; but beneath the surface it exists; and in lands of greater freedom the wind of agitation and upheaval blows strongly. It may soon become a hurricane.

(2) **The unrest today is touching every department of human thought**

and activity. It never did this before. Empires have risen and flourished and decayed, while repose has rested upon the world of philosophy and the applied sciences. Today violent changes are marked in all directions. Men's minds are working with almost superhuman energy in formulating new ideas and theories — social, political and theological — and in the manufacture of wonderful contrivances.

What does it all mean? That is the question which surely must be uppermost in the mind of every sober observer. For the Christian, who bows to the Word of God, and accepts the light it sheds, there is no difficulty in discovering the answer. Human histories give us at the best imperfect details of a few of the happenings of time; the Bible alone reveals to us the golden thread of Divine purpose, running through all history. Let us attempt to discern this by the guidance of the Holy Spirit of God, and so obtain the Divine answer.

Most of our readers are aware that before the Flood government did not exist. That age culminated in such violence and corruption that destruction was the only remedy — see Genesis 6: 1-13.

On the cleansed earth government was instituted in the person of Noah — see Genesis 9: 1-6. After the break-up of Babel, the authority seems to have departed from the main line of Noah's descendants, and each separate family began to range itself under its own tribal head, and the idea of king-

ship arose. There was no fresh development in regard to government on God's part until He called His people Israel out of Egypt, that He, the great Jehovah, might exercise authority in their midst.

The moment He chose for doing this was most significant. Egypt, almost the oldest of the nations, had risen to the highest point of her glory, having expelled the alien dynasty of "Shepherd Kings," and become united under the rule of powerful and warlike native Pharaohs, who carried their conquests to the Euphrates. Then it was that God asserted His right to His people, and smote the oppressor a heavy blow, which evidently was the beginning of decline for that empire. He carried His people, in spite of their perverseness, into the land of promise. Jehovah claimed that land as His, taking possession of it by His people. He claimed it as His, in token that the whole earth is His. Twice is He spoken of as "Lord of all the earth" in connection with the passage of the Jordan — see Joshua 3: 11, 13.

Arrived in the land of promise, the people tired of being peculiar, in having God alone as their invisible Leader, and they clamoured for a visible human king. This, though a serious departure from God, was permitted, and after they had bitter experience of the man after their own hearts, God raised up David, the man after His own heart, placing him as a shepherd over His people, and extending his kingdom by crowning his arms with success. The diadem — which was indeed not that of Israel only, but of the

whole world — was placed upon his brow and confirmed to his seed. For a brief time it was worn by him and by Solomon his successor.

Then came the inevitable story of decline. The kingdom was divided, only the smaller portion following the wearers of David's diadem; and they declined in power, as the departure, in spite of occasional, God-given revivals, became more and more pronounced.

At last the end came. Zedekiah, the last wearer of the diadem — though perhaps he wore it only in name — added treachery to his many sins, and dishonoured the name of his God. Whereupon, as recorded no less than three times in Scripture — 2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 52 — Jerusalem fell before the Babylonians, and the dominion passed into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. Thus "the times of the Gentiles" set in.

Just at this time by the pen of the prophet Ezekiel remarkable words were written. As the diadem; which was, be it remembered, not of Israel only, but rather of the whole earth, fell from the brow of the last, apostate prince of David's line, struck thence by the hand of God in retributive judgment, these words were written. They are so important that we reproduce them in full.

"And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith the Lord God: Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn,

overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until He come whose right it is; and I will give it Him" (Ezek. 21: 25-27).

How wonderfully illuminating! How revealing, the beam of light here thrown over the dark pages of human history since that day! The diadem has indeed been removed, and if a comprehensive history of the world could be compiled, it would prove to be but a record of the various efforts of men and nations to exalt themselves and seize upon the diadem, and of the sure and skilful way in which, when they appeared to have achieved their object, God has abased and overturned them.

A vision of this was granted to Daniel, which he has recorded in chapter 7 of his prophecy. It confirmed the dream previously given to Nebuchadnezzar, recorded in chapter 2. For a brief moment it seemed as if the diadem was to belong to that great king. But exalting himself above measure, he was painfully abased in abject madness, as recorded in chapter 4. Not long after, his great Babylon fell and was overturned. So too it was with the succeeding empires — Persian, Greek and Roman. Each ran its day, and each was overturned at the end.

Since the dissolution of the Roman Empire, no great empire, holding practically the civilized earth in its grip, has been permitted to arise. True, nearly a century ago men began to talk of a British Empire, for Queen Victoria had been proclaimed Empress of India. All that is passed however; and its

dissolution — if an empire really did exist — proceeds steadily. Two great wars of world-wide dimensions have taken place; and today both Asia and Europe resemble armed camps. The diadem of the earth is lost; it is "no more." Powerful nations, that wish to regain it, hesitate; fearing lest in overturning others, they overturn themselves.

The present state of extremely unstable equilibrium cannot, however, go on for ever. Not a few are aware of this and talk vaguely of a coming "Armageddon," meaning by this a great conflict which will embroil the whole civilized earth. They appear to forget that when this word is used in Revelation 16: 13-16, what is predicted is not a frightful conflict of man against man, but rather the bold and impious hurling of the united forces of men against God. It is more than possible, however, that these warnings of coming ills do herald the near approach of the real Armageddon. Their words, like those of Caiaphas in John 11: 49-52, may mean more than they themselves are conscious of.

New forces of great strength have arisen in these later years. In lands, where some form of Christianity still lingers, they centre themselves around the idea of "the brotherhood of man" based on "the universal fatherhood of God." The new, progressive, humanistic theology, Unitarianism, Socialism, are all branches of this root idea. More imposing still is the atheistic Communism, which now dominates the minds and actions of great nations, containing about a third of

the human race. All this in the hands of Satan may well prepare the way for the last great federation of mankind, to get ready for Antichrist.

Some may wish to observe that the Messiah, to whom the diadem really belongs, has already come. He has indeed: but not to assert those rights, but rather allowing man to have his hour, and the power of darkness to assert itself, that He might accomplish redemption by His death. Satan, who profanely has usurped the diadem, actually offered it to Him during the temptation in the wilderness. He refused it, and chose not that short and easy cut to glory, but the toilsome road that lay through death and resurrection — “ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24: 26).

He did, however, plainly predict the coming of another prince, who would accept a diadem — purporting to be the true diadem of the earth — from the hands of Satan. “I am come in My Father’s name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive” (John 5: 43).

In the days of the coming great trinity of evil — the dragon, the beast and the false prophet, of whom we read in Revelation 13 — it will seem as if at last Ezekiel’s prophecy was reversed and nullified. Men will have federated themselves into such a condition of so-called “brotherhood,” that it will only need the appearance of an unscrupulous “superman,” to seize the reins of power, and institute the

most monstrous tyranny the world will ever witness. Let that state of things be reached, and what can save men from the net they have cast for their own feet? Yet a vast majority may even glory in the tyranny established. They will say, “Peace and safety,” thinking that at last the diadem is recovered so permanently, that no more overturnings need be feared.

But, “when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them” (1 Thess. 5: 3). The last line of Ezekiel’s prophecy will find sudden fulfilment. The last great overturning will take place in the true Armageddon. First, both the beast and false prophet and their armies will be destroyed by the sudden appearing of Him, “whose right it is.” Shortly after, as we judge, the imposing northern powers, Gog, the prince of Rosh, Meshech, Tubal, and their many allies, will have the tremendous overthrow, predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39. The last and decisive overturning will have taken place.

In that day the long-lost diadem, brilliant then, not only with the gems of creation, but with the brighter jewels of redemption, will be seen upon the head of the once rejected Man of Nazareth, our adorable Lord Jesus. Thence it will never be removed, for though at the end of the thousand years of His righteous reign there will be the rebellion engineered by a released Satan, as foretold in Revelation 20: 7-10, this **uprising** will be instantly crushed, so that it never will become an **overturning**. Upon His sacred brow the diadem will have

found its permanent, its eternal, resting-place.

In view of these things, what shall we say? Let us in the first place not be disturbed in mind, as we view the unrest and the spirit of upheaval which fills the earth today. Let us rather be concerned that we keep flying the flag of true testimony to Christ, and the Gospel which is centred in Him. God does not vary His plan of action as men invariably have to do. The instructions given by our Lord at the outset still stand good — the Holy Spirit has come and we follow the first disciples, as He said, "ye shall be witnesses unto Me" (Acts 1: 8).

Then further, let us not join

hands with the world nor aid its schemes and movements, which, though they may not know it, are paving the way for Antichrist. Let us abide in communion with the Father and the Son, when our attitude towards the men of the world will be as the Scripture directs: we shall, as much as lies in us, "live peaceably with all men," and instead of being overcome of evil, "overcome evil with good" (Rom. 15: 18, 21).

Lastly, we shall treasure in our hearts the thought that all the unrest and overturning is only, "until He come." Shall we not turn our eyes toward the sun-rising of that long-looked for day, and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"A LIVING SACRIFICE"

J. S. BLACKBURN

THE "Will of God" is the objective set before us in Romans 12: 1, 2. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2: 17). In these words we catch a glimpse of the conception of doing the will of God. Why does he that doeth the will of God abide for ever? Because the will of God is the source of the river of all existence. It is the cause of all things: the progress of all things: the end of all things: **the will of God**. The pen of the apostle John is dipped in stark reality. In brief, hammer-stroke words he pictures the two forces in competition for your life: the world and its lust against the will of God. The grandeur of the proposal that our lives should serve the will of God is in-

disputable. But will it satisfy us? Will it be irksome? Will it leave us with the sense that we have missed something worth while? Will we have the sadness of knowing that our lives have been mutilated and incomplete? The epithets alone, added in Romans 12: 2 to describe the will of God, answer the questions.

The will of God is **good**. The word here does not mean primarily good in the moral sense, but rather as we use the word when we familiarly enquire, "What's the good of that?" Some persons conceive pleasure as their good. Others conceive wealth as their good. To do the will of God is the Christian's highest good. All existence serves the will of God and to do that will

is to be in absolute harmony with the deep springs of the universe. For this reason "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4: 18).

The will of God is **acceptable**. This does not mean that the Christian life is a bed of roses. There will be chastening: and no chastening seems joyous, but grievous. But this is largely to purge our hearts and to bring us more into conformity with the will of God. One of the gleaming gems of this passage is the double occurrence of the word "acceptable." What our living sacrifice is to God, so is His will to us. It is pleasing and in the highest and most inclusive sense acceptable. It is pleasure which never to eternity brings a tinge of pain as its consequence. His yoke is easy and His burden light.

The will of God is **perfect**. In its application to our lives, nothing needed for a perfect or complete life will be missing. It is often feared that abandonment to the will of God will give the feeling of missing something which others seem to enjoy. The complete life, the abundant life, the life which includes every element of permanent satisfaction — this is the will of God.

How perfectly is the will of God expressed in the Saviour's life. "Thy will be done," He taught His disciples to pray. "Not everyone that saith unto me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father" (Matt. 7: 21). Looking round when His mother

and brethren were announced, He spoke of, "Whosoever shall do the will of My Father" (Matt. 12: 50). In Gethsemane, when with strong crying and tears He prayed to Him who was able to save Him out of death, His word was "Not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22: 42). "Lo, I come, . . . I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. 40: 7, 8).

"This is the way the Master trod. Shall not the servant tread it still?"

The one great all-inclusive watchword for us is to be, "he that doeth the will of God." It includes worship and witness. It includes the Gospel and the Church. It includes the home and the workshop. "He that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

We have to face the question, **Conformed or Transformed?** In the two sentences which complete this brief passage, the basic exhortation of the second sentence is in the words, "by the renewing of your mind." This renewing of the mind leads to two results. They are:—

- (1) To be transformed;
- (2) To prove what is the will of God.

Here then we meet the two claimants for our lives: on the one hand conformity to the world, and on the other transformation and proving the will of God. The two words "conformed" and "transformed" are most important. Let us note carefully that both words contain as one syllable the smaller

word "form" or "shape." The whole contrast between them is in the meaning of the word "form." In "conform," the word means a shape taken from without, with no necessary connection between the material and the shape. Moulded articles and articles shaped on a lathe are examples of this kind of form. In "transform" the word means a shape determined by and characteristic of the inward essential nature. Plants and animals are examples of this kind of form. While retaining their characteristic shapes, they are changed by the power and increase of the life within. An example of this change is the metamorphosis by which a caterpillar becomes a chrysalis and a chrysalis becomes a butterfly.

What is the significance of all this in the passage? Our lives are not to take shape from the world in which we are placed. It is necessary to look this question of conformity to the world straight in the eye. Conformity to the world is not essentially a matter of its glittering attractions. Imagine two fish discussing an attractive morsel approaching them. Unknown to them it is bait. It has been the subject of careful thought on the part of the fisherman (a) to give it the maximum appeal and (b) to hide the hook. If they could converse we might imagine one fish saying to the other "Leave it alone: it looks nice: but it is a trap." The other replies "How can there be any harm in such an attractive object: I like the look of it: it appeals to me." The first answers again "There may or may not be much harm in the thing itself: it is what it hides which is harmful."

There may or may not be much harm in the things themselves which attract us, but the world is by attractive things making its appeal to us to take its shape. In its true character, this age has clearly marked characteristics according to the New Testament. (1) It was launched on its way by crucifying the Lord of Glory, because its leaders were ignorant of the wisdom of God. (2) It is now ruled by evil spiritual powers. (3) It is evil and dark and will become more evil and dark. (4) It will end under the vengeance of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming. Such is the world. In its very nature it is the foe of Christ and Christ's people. **But,** it is seductive. Its blood-stained hand wears a velvet glove. Its Satanic countenance is changed to resemble an angel of light. It is the cares of this age which choke the life produced by the incorruptible seed of the Word of God. It was this present age which so enthralled Demas that he loved it and gave up his service with Paul. The men and women of this age are lovers of pleasure because they are not lovers of God. A lover of pleasure cannot be a lover of God. To be the former is to take shape from the world. "Be not conformed to this world" is an exhortation to continued action. It could well be read, "Keep on, keep on, and never cease to be on your guard against taking shape from the world."

In like manner, the positive exhortation is "Keep on, keep on, never grow slack in continuing to be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Concentrate on the inner man, the inner life. This is

the way to control the shape of the outward behaviour. As the inner life of the spirit grows and develops so the outward behaviour will be changed: **and** we shall be able to discern what is the will of God. The power to discern where lies the will of God, in the various choices which present themselves to us in our lives, is the outcome of a renewed mind.

How is the mind continually renewed? This can only be by the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Our thought processes are in practice made anew under the influence of the Spirit and the Word. This verse says to us, "Concentrate on what is inward and of God, and by this means a transfiguration will be seen. Daily refresh your mind at the fount of Holy Scripture, and pray that by it your mind may be renewed. This is the way to know the will of God." There is no other way.

This continuous transformation is, however, in our passage dependent on another act. We are called to give — an act — our bodies, "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." It is our reasonable, or intelligent, service.

How striking is this phrase — a **living sacrifice**. An observer might have reflected on the ancient sacrifices of Israel: "These are dead animals. All their value as sacrifices is in their death because God must be propitiated. What if a living body could be given to God with equal unreserve, so that as a living body, He might use it for His will?" Ours is the privilege of yielding our bodies, just as completely as though, like Isaac, they

were placed on the altar, so that henceforth they may express His will. Our bodies are the means of expression of the mind within. We, fully persuaded in our own minds, are to yield our bodies, so that they may be the means of expression and the instruments for the accomplishment of God's will. The yielding of our bodies as a living sacrifice, is the real basis of our proving the will of God.

In reading chapters five to eight of the Epistle to the Romans, a sincere and earnest mind will go over the chapters—the contrasted reigns of sin and grace — the contrasted services of sin or of God, — the contrasted controls of the flesh and the Spirit — and enquire where and what is the definite instruction to act? Gathering up all the precious truth of these chapters, concerning what has resulted from the sacrifice of Christ, **here is the exhortation**. It is foreshadowed in the instruction, "Yield yourselves unto God" (6: 13). But here it is in its climax, in its completeness, gathering up the blessing of all that has gone before — "Present your bodies a living sacrifice."

A young man may say, "One day I am going to be a preacher." But in order that you may be of service to God at all, God wants **you**, your body, impelled by your mind, as a living sacrifice, handed over to Him for His use, and without this altar-fire your service will be of little use to Him. Another may say, "I am not very bright and clever, what could I do?" There is no knowing what God cannot do with an instrument wholly yielded to Him. Some say, "We

need evangelists — we need pastors." **You** may be the evangelist. But nothing can be done until you present yourself a living sacrifice, so that God may achieve His will through you.

The Mercies of God are that which impel to this, which is a logical service. C. T. Studd meant exactly that, when he said, "If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him." With strict and rigorous logic he laid down the premises of the compassions of God and drew the conclusion of the sacrifice of C. T. Studd.

At the same time it is first and foremost a service of love, a service of the heart. In the words "I beseech . . . by the mercies of God," Paul intended to appeal to the heart; as in the words of Isaiah, "Speak to the heart of Jerusalem."

The "mercies of God" in the plural draw attention not only to what Shakespeare called "the quality of mercy," but to the repeated acts of God's compassion which form the substance of the

teaching of the previous chapters. The climax of this is in the end of chapter eight. Note how characteristic of God's new covenant way is the order. God does not say to us "Give me your body and I will give my Son and bind you to Myself so that nothing shall ever separate you from My love." There is first the most absolute assurance of God's love to us and then the call, "I beseech you **therefore** to present your bodies." I call attention to two great facts from Romans 8 in which are concentrated the compassions of God.

First, God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things." That God has given His own Son, **must** include every conceivable good.

Second, "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." Then can any conceivable thing separate us from the Love of Christ? These things move the heart. Beware of indulging in the luxury of **emotion** unrelated to **action**. "I beseech you . . . present your bodies a **living sacrifice**."

THE SECRET

AN American Christian said to a Korean pastor, "How many do you get out to your prayer meetings?" "About 80," replied the pastor. "Why you are no further along than we are," said the visitor. "We get that many out ourselves back in California on Wednesday evenings."

"Oh," said the surprised Korean, "if you are talking of the Wednesday night meeting, we get 800 out for that. I thought you meant our daily dawn prayer meetings. About 80 of our people come at 5 o'clock every morning to pray."

That was characteristic of Korean Christians in the city as well as in the country. Where there is such prayer there is power.

BIBLE STUDY—DANIEL

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 2: 45 — 4: 9)

IT is indeed a solemn thought that judgment has at last to fall on the imposing image, that represents Gentile dominion on the earth, and crush all to powder. It should have a sobering effect on us all, as we realize that **nothing** of all man's pomp and power and outward glory is going to remain. Not only are the iron and clay ground to powder, but the gold and silver and brass also. The wind of God will sweep all away as chaff. The God, who will do this, is **GREAT**, and He was making it known to this king, who was great in the eyes of men. The greatness of God guaranteed the certainty of the things the dream foretold.

This should remind us of what we read in 1 Corinthians 1: 19, and 2: 6, where the Apostle's words inform us that not only powerful Gentile kingdoms are to be swept away, but that also the intellectual princes of the earth and all the wisdom they represent will come to **nothing** in the day when God rises up in judgment.

This revelation, that reached the king through Daniel, had an immediate effect upon him, as we see in the closing verses of the chapter. Instead of being angered by this prediction of ultimate disaster, he was made acutely conscious that he was in the presence of the supernatural — a power was in evidence that he had found wholly wanting in the Chaldeans and his magicians. Only, true to his heathen upbringing,

he was mainly concerned with the man in whom the power was displayed. He did indeed acknowledge that Daniel's God was "a God of gods, and a Lord of kings," but the worship he offered was directed to Daniel, rather than to the God, in whose name he spoke. So we see here an illustration of what is written in Romans 1: 25, that the heathen "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

So Daniel was not only worshipped but also made one of the chief, if not the very chief, of the advisers and rulers under the king, and at his request his three companions were also greatly elevated. They went at one bound, so to speak, into high positions of prominence. And did this wonderful display of Divine power have a salutary and lasting effect on Nebuchadnezzar?

The next chapter shows quite conclusively that it did **not**. How long an interval there was between the events narrated in chapters 2 and 3, we are not told, but we cannot resist the impression that there was a connection in the mind of Nebuchadnezzar between the image of his dream and the gigantic image, that he caused to be made. The image of his dream only began with a golden head, which represented himself. It was followed by a great image, which should be **all of gold**.

Since the ancient cubit was the length of the human fore-arm — anything from 18 to 22 inches — this image must have been at least 90 feet high, with a breadth of 9 feet. The immense store of gold, which enabled the king to do this, may not have equalled the supply that came to Solomon, yet it shows that the "times of the Gentiles" began with a great display of power and wealth and glory. And how will the period of Gentile dominion end? The answer to this we find in Revelation 13. Another mighty king will arise, and another great image will be made. If we compare the two scenes, we note many resemblances, and yet a significant contrast; in the fact that, as we read in the last chapter, it was "the God of Heaven" who gave to Nebuchadnezzar "power and strength and glory;" whereas the coming great king, who is named "the beast," will obtain "his power, and his seat, and great authority" (Rev. 13: 2), from "the dragon;" that is, from the devil himself.

The resemblances are equally striking, and bear witness to the fact that the sinful tendencies of poor fallen man in all ages are just the same. By the God of Heaven Nebuchadnezzar was granted much power and glory, so at once he used it to glorify himself in this gigantic golden image. Many different peoples were under his sway, each with their many gods, whom they worshipped. Now let them, while retaining their local deities, have a kind of "super-religion," which would have the effect of binding them together under his sway. Hence the cry of the herald, begin-

ning, "O people, nations, and languages."

Moreover these ancient monarchs knew how to influence the masses. Music exerts a very subtle influence on the human mind, whether it be of the cultivated and classical type or the lowest productions of the heathen world. Indeed, the lowest type seems to produce the most intoxicating effects; as witness the uprising in our land of the type, known as "Rock-'n-roll," which is recognized by those who have lived among the heathen as the type used in the "devil-dances" of savages. Under the influence of this kind of music people, and especially the young, behave as if they were intoxicated.

So, to move the mighty concourse of people to worship the golden image, and thus pay homage to the mighty king, "all kinds of music" were played. The penalty for non-compliance was the dreadful one of being cast alive into a burning fiery furnace.

Very similar things are predicted in Revelation 13 for the end of the age, but with even more striking accompaniments. Instead of all kinds of music, the false prophet will have power to give life and speech to the image of the beast, and those who refuse to worship will be killed. The statement that there will be power to give "life" to the image is indeed a startling one, but we must remember that at that time there will be "the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (2 Thess. 2: 9, 10).

As we read on in our chapter, we learn how God changed Nebuchadnezzar's word and thwarted his determination. As we read on in Revelation, we learn in chapter 19 how far more drastic and eternal judgment, though longer delayed, will fall upon the beast, who is personified by the image that is to come, and on the false prophet, who will promote it.

Of all the lusts and desires that are resident in the nature of poor fallen man, the most deep-seated is the desire to glorify, even to the point of deifying, himself. At the outset he fell to the seductive assertion of Satan, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3: 5). The adversary did not of course state that they would know good, without being able to achieve it, and evil, without being able to avoid it. Ever since, self-exaltation has been the ruling idea in our world. Thus it was with Nebuchadnezzar. For the moment he was the apex of the pyramid, and beneath him, acting in his support, were, "the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasures, the counselors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces;" and this eight-fold description of important personages is given twice in our chapter, as if to impress us with the solidity of the pyramid of which he was the apex. From this apparently unchallengeable position the great king issued his decree, which was in effect a God-defying one. And God took up the challenge through three devoted servants that He had in reserve.

Remarkably enough Daniel is

not mentioned in this chapter: a fact that should be of encouragement to us. Why not mentioned, and where he was, is not revealed; but it is encouraging to know that in the absence of a servant of striking courage and power, God can take up and use with great effect servants of lesser gifts. Daniel's three companions did not possess his gifts of understanding as to dreams and prophecies, but they did share his devotion to the one true God, which entailed a thorough-going separation from the abomination of idolatry. Hence when the multitudes, from the highest to the least fell down to worship the image, they stood erect. They exemplified the principle stated by the apostles in Acts 5: 29 — "We ought to obey God rather than man."

Their enemies at once reported this to incite the rage and fury of Nebuchadnezzar. The king did at least enquire if the reported lack of action was true, and then issued his ultimatum, coupled with the insolent question, "Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?" The reply of the three Jews was a memorable one.

If memory serves us aright, this is the first case on record where a servant of God has been threatened with the direst form of death penalty, if he did not deny his God and forsake his faith, though a prophet like Elijah was threatened by Jezebel. There have been many such cases since. In chapter 6 we have the case of Daniel. In the history of the early church we read of many who were thrown to the wild beasts because they would not deny their Lord and Master. Many a "here-

tic" went to the fires in our land, as well as in Spain under the Inquisition; and we believe not a few have done so in our day under the iron hand of Communism. But, as we have often noticed, the first case is a very memorable one, and the stand taken rings through the centuries.

In the first place they asserted that their God was able to deliver them. They exalted His power. In the second place they did not hide the fact that for reasons of His own He might not deliver them. And then, in the third place, they stated with the utmost decision that were He not pleased to deliver, they would NOT forsake their God by worshipping the king's golden image, in the honour of gods that were false. "We will NOT serve thy gods," was their decisive word; and in result they were greatly honoured by their God.

We shall, however, do well to remember that the seductions of the world are more damaging to our testimony than its opposition and its threat of disaster or death. At the end of his life the Apostle Paul had to write, "Demas hath forsaken me," and he did not follow this by saying, "being fearful of the world's threatenings," but rather, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. 4: 10). Paul had just before written of, "all them also that love His appearing;" knowing that the appearing of the Lord Jesus will usher in a world very different from the present one, and that is wholly according to God. Demas fell before the seductions of the present "world," or "age," and that surely is the dan-

ger for us — the Christians of English-speaking lands, who are largely exempt from the persecutions experienced elsewhere. May God give us that decision of character that marked the three Hebrews, so that faced by seductions we may say, "Be it known . . . that we will NOT . . ."

Pursuing the narrative, we note the complete change in Nebuchadnezzar, as compared with the picture presented at the end of chapter 2. Then he was on his face in the presence of Daniel, and to fall on one's face is to efface oneself in a figurative way. Now he is on his feet and so full of fury that his very face was transformed with savage resolution. Not only are the three men, who have defied his will, to be thrust into the fire, but the furnace is to be seven times hotter than what was the ordinary thing. As a consequence the mightiest men of his army were to fling them in. Thus the judgment fell. The deed was done.

And then the hand of God began to appear. The judgment fell, but it was upon the most mighty of Nebuchadnezzar's famous army, and not upon the three defenceless Jews. The first thing the proud, impious king saw was his mightiest men slain by the furnace he had so excessively heated up. A humiliating sight for him! The next thing he saw was four men walking, free and unhurt in the midst of the fire, the very outskirts of which had slain his finest soldiers. The fire, that was death to them, was not only preservation but liberty to God's servants. They were flung in "bound," but now they "walk,"

for the only things consumed were their bonds, and they had a heavenly Visitor with them.

In the presence of this astounding miracle the furious king was subdued. The dream of chapter 2, which Daniel had expounded, had moved him, but though he learned that he was the golden head of the dream image, he had not taken to heart the fact that the supreme earthly position that he had reached was granted to him by "the God of heaven." If he had, he would never have boastfully asked, Who was the God that could deliver out of his hands? The God of heaven, who had given him his dominion, had accepted his challenge, reversed his word, quenched the violence of his seven-fold heated fire, and made visible His presence with those who were to have been his victims.

The king recognized that there was something Divine and God-like about "the form of the fourth." The way in which he expressed his conviction was doubtless controlled by God. Before this, Balaam had said things that he never would have uttered apart from Divine compulsion. After this, Caiaphas uttered things that had a different meaning to that which he intended, as recorded in John II: 51. So it was here. Nebuchadnezzar recognized that God had intervened and manifested His presence with the men he had sought to slay, and he used just the right expression, though not understanding the true force of it. While it is the Father who forms the purpose, it is the Son who manifests and acts. This we learn when the New Testament is reached.

The miracle was so complete that their garments were not affected, not an hair of their heads singed, not even the smell of fire was attached to them. The king had fully to recognize the hand of God, and acknowledged His mighty power. Still he did not advance beyond knowing Him as "the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego," just as, at the end of chapter 2 he acknowledged Him as the God of Daniel. He did not acknowledge Him as his God, though he pronounced severe penalties against any who spoke against Him. This great man, with whom the times of the Gentiles began, had yet a deeper lesson to learn.

This we find as we read on into chapter 4, where a remarkable change in the narration takes place. We are permitted to read what, at a later date, Nebuchadnezzar himself caused to be written and published to all the many nations and languages that were beneath his sway. In it he made known the dealings of God — whom he now called "the Most High God" (New Trans.) — with himself personally. It was a story of his own complete discomfiture and humiliation at the hands of God; and therefore the very fact, that he should publish the story abroad, indicated a great and fundamental change in his own mind and attitude.

The preface to his story, and especially verse 3, is very striking. He mentions first "His signs" and "His wonders." We live in an age that is characterized by faith. The Apostle Paul could write of a time, "before faith came," and again of a time, "after that faith is come"

(Gal. 3: 23, 25). Signs that appeared to sight had a special place before the epoch of faith began. But it is also a fact that, when God inaugurated a fresh dispensation, He authenticated what is new by signs of a miraculous nature. It was so when He brought Israel out of Egypt, and the law epoch began at Sinai. It was so in supreme fashion when He manifested Himself in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ; and again when the church age began, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles. So it was, as we see here, when the times of the Gentiles began.

The particular sign and wonder that Nebuchadnezzar is now about to relate is, as we see, very humbling to himself. In one hour his mighty kingdom departed from him, though presently restored. In contrast to this, he confessed God's kingdom to be everlasting. Though he may not have in any full measure realized it, two or three generations would see his dominion, typified by gold, fall before another dominion, typified by silver. God's kingdom, he acknowledged, abides through all generations. This he confessed before he narrated the experience that made him realize it. God had to act toward him in judgment.

Before acting, God issued a warning. This is ever His way. There was warning through Noah before the flood. There was warning for Pharaoh before the judgments on Egypt. There was warning for Jerusalem through Jeremiah before the city fell to the Babylonians. There is warning today as to the judgments that will

fall when the church age is closed. So it was here with this powerful individual. God warned him by means of a dream. His first dream might well have lifted him up, for he was the head of gold. His second dream warned him of a complete casting down.

The warning came just when the king seemed to have reached the very climax of his prosperity. His many warlike expeditions were over; his great conquests completed. He was at last at rest and flourishing in the palace of his magnificent city. As we all know, dreams are strange and unaccountable things. As sleep fades, and the mind begins to resume its activities, unusual things may flit across its awakening consciousness. It is not surprising therefore that God has been pleased to make known His thoughts and purposes to men by means of a dream, especially in times of urgency and importance. It is remarkable, for instance, that in the first two chapters of Matthew's Gospel, we get God speaking in a dream no less than five times.

As the result of this second dream Nebuchadnezzar was again troubled and afraid. He was conscious that it proceeded from the unseen world, and had in it a message for him; yet God's previous dealings with him had left no permanent impression, for in his trouble he again thought first of the magicians of various kinds and the Chaldeans, and when they failed, Daniel was brought in as a last resort.

We notice, however, that though Daniel was consulted, the king addressed him under the heathen

name that had been given him. In both verses 8 and 9 we find, "Belteshazzar," which he states was "according to the name of my god," for Bel was one of the great gods of Babylon. Moreover, in keeping with the heathen name that he used, he only recognized that in Daniel was, "the spirit of the holy gods." The true God — "the God

of Heaven," — who had given to him his great dominion, was as yet unknown to him.

This we have, be it remembered, by his own confession, before he proceeded to relate the dream, which made him afraid, warning him of the blow that was impending from the hand of God.

AN IMPRESSIVE WORD

J. T. MAWSON

"**WE** wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6: 12).

Reading the above verse, I was made to realize that this conflict is a far more serious affair than we generally think it to be. It is not a matter of individual conflict with Satan only, but that the powers of darkness are marshalled to oppose the whole Church of God on earth — the "all saints," of verse 18. The Christian who is alive to this cannot have a lesser circle of interest than the whole Church, for the Church is one; and if the enemy makes a breach anywhere, he has been victorious just there.

Suppose I should stand and my brother should fall, is that nothing to me? It surely ought to be, even though I may be so limited in my

affections that I am unmoved by it. If I am unmoved, it only proves that I do not know the character of the conflict, and that I am taking but little part in it.

It is by his wiles that the devil works: he allures the saints of God by what is popular. He entices them from their stand for Christ and the truth by some specious doctrine, or by some element of worldly religion that is not Christ. How he must hate the Ephesian Epistle, and one of His wiles is to make Christians think that the truth in it is too high for them.

Every man must take the armour for himself, but he must not think of himself only. He must pray for all saints, and for the telling out of the mystery of the Gospel — not the Gospel only, but the **mystery** of it, which is that Christ and His Church are one.

THE SON OF GOD

Light without shade, love without measure,
Theme for the Universe, set for God's pleasure;
Infinite Wisdom, the Word became Man,
Dying for sinners — Jesus, God's Lamb.

THREE DIVINELY ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES

F. B. HOLE

THE existence of divergences of thought and judgment amongst Christians is a frequent source of much discouragement and weakness. No acute observation is needed to perceive their mischievous effects today. In the Epistles of the New Testament we find frequent allusions to the existence of such troubles in the early church; together with inspired instructions, which, if followed out, effectually counteract them.

We make no apology for referring our readers to these instructions. The need is all too urgent on every hand. The matter may seem small upon the surface, but it is very easy to "fail of the grace of God," and consequently there is found through some small divergence a "root of bitterness" which, springing up, troubles us all, "and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12: 15). A great conflagration may proceed from a little fire, as the Apostle James has reminded us.

In Romans 14 the Apostle Paul has laid down three very definite principles, which directly bear upon such matters. And further, the statement of the principle is in each case followed by an exhortation which shows its practical bearing.

The subject of the chapter is the importance of receiving one who is "weak in the faith" (verse 1). Such will have defective thoughts as to many things, and they are not to be received in order to start arguing with them over points of

difference. Such argumentations would indeed be "doubtful disputations," or the "determining of questions of reasoning." Those who are strong have to remember that the "weak" brother is weak not in his reasoning faculties but in his apprehension of "the faith." What he needs therefore is some larger understanding of the whole truth of God. If this be patiently ministered to him, many of these questions will settle themselves.

The chapter gives us some indication of the nature of those questions which agitated the primitive church. There were: (1) **Questions as to meats** (verse 2). One man was assured that he might eat all things. Others had scruples: some going so far that they would only eat herbs. (2) **Questions as to days** (verse 5). One man specially regarded certain days. Another esteemed every day alike. Both these matters of dispute would be most acute where Jews and Gentiles freely intermingled in the same assembly. There were also (3) **Questions as to "things offered to idols,"** for this, we gather, is what is signified by the word, "unclean," in verse 14. The same point is brought before us in 1 Corinthians 8, and 10: 19-33, for this was a matter that continually would have been raised. Some with knowledge might go as far as sitting at meat in an idol's temple (8: 10). Others, bidden by an unbeliever to a feast, might be disposed to go (10: 27); or even in buying their meat in the market (10: 25), this question might be

raised, for much of the meat offered for sale was the flesh of animals killed in connection with heathen sacrifices.

In each of these cases no definite instructions were given from the Lord. He evidently intends that each disciple shall act according to his own faith, and thus profit by the individual exercise that will be created thereby.

First and foremost then in Romans 14 stands the great principle of

LIBERTY,

which is stated in verses 3 and 4 in connection with the questions as to the eating of meats. When divergences of judgment arise, our first natural impulse is to start interfering with one another. He who eats will despise him who eats not, for such scruples appear to him narrow-minded in the extreme. He who eats not will judge and condemn the eater, unable to see his freedom in any other light than unwarrantable licence.

“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?” asks the Apostle. A pertinent question indeed! The thing that is really unwarrantable is neither the apparent narrowness of vision of the one nor the apparent breadth of licence of the other, but the assumption of judicial functions that belong alone to the great Master of us all. To that Master we stand or fall, and indeed we may count upon His support, as the latter part of the verse encouragingly states.

Do we all realize this? Fully as-

sured though we may be that we have the Lord’s mind on some particular point it is not ours to legislate for others. The Lord insists upon His rights in dealing direct with His own servants, and we are to keep our hands off them. The business of each one of us in these matters is to have to do with our Master, and to consult His word, and thus to reach assurance in our own minds as to what is His will as to our own course.

This principle of Christian liberty is summed up in the words, “**To his own master he standeth or falleth**” (verse 4). The exhortation based upon it is, “**Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind**” (verse 5). To reach such full persuasion will entail, for each sincere and true-hearted servant, much prayerful searching of the Scriptures.

This brings us to the second principle laid down, which is that of

RESPONSIBILITY

of a direct and stringent sort to the Lord Himself. It is evidently of more importance that a saint should act with loyalty in regard to the will of the Lord as he knows it—even supposing his knowledge of it is defective—than that he should have a more perfect knowledge of that will. We write this with verses 6 and 14 before us.

The former verse shows that he who regards the day or eats as the case may be, does so **unto the Lord**; and he who does not regard the day or does not eat, refrains equally **unto the Lord**. The mind of the

Lord is one, and cannot therefore lie in two opposite directions; but in acting or not acting, both alike were governed by loyalty to the Lord as far as they understood His mind, and this was pleasing to Him, and counted for more than correctness of understanding.

The latter verse shows the importance of thus acting in accordance with one's light, not in regard to the will of the Lord objectively, as verse 6, but in regard to its subjective effect upon one's own conscience. If, believing a certain thing to be unclean or wrong, I yet indulge in it, my conscience is defiled. It is unclean to me, whatever it may be in the Lord's estimation.

These things are stated, not to put a premium upon ignorance, nor to discourage our diligent enquiry as to what the will of the Lord is as to such matters, but the very reverse. We are to enquire, and being fully persuaded as to what the Lord would have us do, we must act in reference to Him. Thus He will be thanked and honoured, whether we eat or regard the day, or whether we do not. We are the Lord's and to Him we live. He, by death and resurrection, has established His Lordship over both dead and living. Before His judgment-seat we all shall stand. These things are stated in verses 8-10.

In that solemn hour, "every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (verse 12). In these words we get a dogmatic statement of our second principle. Each shall give account of himself, and not of another. Our responsibility is direct and personal, solitary and alone. Upon this is based the ex-

hortation, "Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (verse 13).

The liberty which is ours in Christ is, then, to be held in connection with the responsibility which is ours toward Christ. Each believer is so directly accountable to the Lord that he must not be interfered with by other believers, nor must he interfere with them.

Is, then, the attitude of each saint and servant of Christ towards his fellow-saints and servants to be one of lofty detachment or superiority? By no means. The Apostle now introduced a third principle to complete the balance of truth—that of

FRATERNITY

The chapter opens with, "Him that is weak in the faith." We soon discover that he is "another man's servant:" he is "the Lord's." In verse 10, we discover that he is our "brother," and this is alluded to again in verse 13. Verse 15 dwells upon this fact in more detail. There he is said to be, "**thy brother . . . him . . . for whom Christ died.**" This is a very clear and dogmatic statement of the third principle.

Here we have not only the fact that this brotherhood exists, but that it rests upon the death of Christ as its basis. Looking upon our brother in this light, we cannot be indifferent to his welfare. He is an object of the love of Christ, which carried Him even to death. If Christ loved him thus, what shall our attitude towards him be? Shall we

grieve him, or cause him to stumble? Shall we flaunt our liberty—that liberty which is ours, as an unchallenged right, according to the early part of the chapter—before him in such a way as to destroy his good conscience? No, indeed! We shall walk towards him “charitably” or “according to love.”

We shall recognize, moreover, that these questions of eating, or regarding days, of meats sacrificed to idols, and feasts, and shambles, and the like, are, after all, of minor importance. The kingdom of God does not consist of such things, but of “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost” (verse 17), and hence these are the things to be diligently pursued as of prime importance. It is therefore good in the sight of God that we should maintain a spirit of yieldingness in regard to the minor matters, rather than imperil righteousness, or peace, or the spiritual joy of saints, by standing on one’s rights. Liberty may be mine, but it is well to waive it for the sake of fraternity, so long as responsibility towards the Lord is not impaired thereby. This is emphasized not only in verse 21 of our chapter but also in 1 Corinthians 8: 9-13, and 10: 23-31.

In Corinthians the Apostle summed it up by saying, “all things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient.” In the light of this we must ask ourselves not only, “Have I liberty to do this thing?” but also, “Is it expedient that I should claim and use my liberty in this case?”

Connected, therefore, with this third principle we have the exhortation, “**Let us therefore follow after the things that make for peace,**

and things wherewith one may edify another” (verse 19). Our attitude is therefore not to be merely the negative one of avoiding friction and discord, and damage to weaker brethren by the yielding up of one’s liberties on certain occasions, but also the positive one of earnestly pursuing all that makes for peace and edification. In so acting, a certain amount of self-denial will certainly be called for, and there will be times, especially for the “strong” believer, when he will have to hold his faith in private before God, and keep in check its manifestation in acts before men, as verse 22 infers.

Let this verse be carefully considered, especially the latter part of it, and we shall see that such a check upon the strong believer is a wholesome thing for himself, since in the exuberance of his faith it is easy to overshoot the mark to some degree as he embraces his liberties. If any of us have done this, we shall probably agree that as a consequence in our calmer moments we have been uneasy, and perhaps condemned in our consciences, over things that we have permitted ourselves to do.

Romans 14 may be a chapter that many of us are inclined to skip over in our reading. The writer has to confess that in his lengthy period of Christian life and experience, he has no recollection of ever hearing an address given upon it. Yet it is full of most important instruction, which, if assimilated and practised by us, would be of great benefit to the church at large, and nip in the bud many divisive forces.

So may we earnestly entreat our readers to lay it to heart in very definite fashion.

BURNING ALL NIGHT

T. D. BELL

THE fire of the brazen altar, which stood before the Tabernacle, was to burn all night, bearing thus throughout the night the character of the burnt offering. This is emphasized in Leviticus 6: 9, where Darby's New Translation reads, "This is the law of the burnt offering: this, the burnt offering shall be on the hearth on the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be kept burning on it."

As we read the details of the burnt offering in Leviticus 1, the words of our Lord, recorded in John 12: 27, 28, may come freshly to our minds. It was for this that He had come to that solemn hour, and in it His one desire was, "Father, glorify Thy name." The whole burnt offering, every part of which, was exhibited, exposed, perfect, upon the altar, and then all consumed, speaks of that hour, and of that one perfect offering to God.

The work of Christ upon the cross, viewed as the sin offering, made full atonement, settling for ever every question of our sins and guilt. The peace offering aspect of His work brings us—now in relationship with God in the value of the sin offering — into communion with Him about it. In contrast with this, the burnt offering stands alone: it is all for God. The presence of sin with us marks the occasion of its being made; but it is the death of Christ, viewed as answering alone to God's glory.

The meat offering sets forth, we may remember, in contrast to all

these, the manifold perfections of His one life as lived here. Recalling the features, thus presented to us in the offering, and remembering that these are part of the things written aforetime, and "written for our learning" (Rom. 15: 4), this burning all night of the burnt offering has an interest for us today.

As we read the details of the offerings, we see the people in relationship with God and His will that every feature of that relationship should be expressed in the light of the altar: in type, the cross of Christ. How varied these features — sin, trespass offerings, meat and peace offerings, and burnt offerings. Priest, Levite, people, all are seen in relation to the offerings and the altar. How all-embracing it is: the priest in the day of his consecration, the cleansed leper, as he takes again his place in the camp, are each seen; and what consecrates the one and restores the other, comes to light there on the altar.

Night comes and all movement ceases, but one thing goes on without cessation — the savour of that one offering of Christ. During the day it was applied in different ways: now when all are at rest it still rises to God. The cessation of all other activity leaves the way clear for the burnt offering throughout the night.

All this is typical. We must ever remember that the One who suffered on the cross is now the risen Christ in heaven, and access in Him is secured for all who are His. This gives its character to the present day of highest privilege and blessing. Are we not prone however, to

have our thoughts of the cross of Christ centred exclusively on how it has met our souls' need. It has done so, perfectly and eternally, thank God! but how infinitely greater is the fact that God rests in it: a sweet savour of rest, it ever is to Him.

Each heart that is moved towards Christ knows the greatness of His love, and responds to that in answering affection. As we experience this, the feebleness of our apprehension is felt, for it is in His presence that we rightly see this. How good to remember that there is One who alone can fully know it, and He ever rests in His love in all that came into expression at the cross of Christ. Like the ocean it is beyond our measurement, but He knows it all.

And further, though we may find joy in it, moving us to praise and thanksgiving — and how sweet to experience them — yet this ever ascends to God. The sweetness of that offering abides, and the Father's full delight in the One who made it. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again" (John 10: 17).

Leviticus 6: 12 speaks of the morning, and as the day started the burnt offering was first to be placed upon the wood, and the priest was to "burn thereon the fat of the peace offerings." Let us note that the burnt offering started the day, and next upon it the fat of the peace offerings was seen burning. As it ascended to God in the sweetness of the burnt offering, and the priest

and the offerer ate their portion of the same offering, how the movement of God's heart comes to light. As soon as morning comes He would have us before Himself, in communion with Him about all the holy perfection of that one offering. "The Father seeketh such to worship Him" (John 4: 23), tells us of that desire of the Father, while "they began to be merry" (Luke 15: 24), speaks of the eternal joy of that communion.

The peace offering has the widest range of communion; the priest and people eat of it, and too, how varied is the response brought about by that communion. The "wave breast" and "heave shoulder" presenting in turn the love and power brought to light in that offering, are presented and eaten, it is the priest's portion. Lack of power, failure of response Godward may often be confessed today, but does not this show the divinely ordered way of true response? The desire of the Father is to draw us first into the joy He has in Christ, which brings out a true response. How true it is that praise and worship are the fruits of that communion.

The sweetness of that burnt offering ascending through the night has much to say as to God's dispensational ways today. As human guilt reaches such proportions we may wonder; but here is God's patience manifested. The Jews borne with so long, after their national rejection of Christ, professing Christendom too, and above all, each of us, knowing the love of the Father's heart and the preciousness of Christ, have to bow before Him, in

the consciousness of the patient grace, that bears with us so long.

What is it that lies behind it all? What maintains in being all that is around us today? Is not this the answer — the sweetness of that one

offering of Christ on the cross, which is ever ascending to the Father? It burns before Him throughout the long night that was ushered in by the rejection of the Saviour.

FORGIVENESS, JUSTIFICATION, ACCEPTANCE

J. HOUSTON

IT might appear to the casual reader that these three blessings presented in the Gospel, are much the same thing, and that there is no call for differentiation. The Apostle Paul, in preaching the Gospel, did not view them as the same thing: he laid them down as fundamentals, with due regard to their meaning and order. He proclaimed forgiveness of sins to sinners, and then declared the truth of justification to believers. Finally, he taught the truth of acceptance in the beloved Son of God, as the exclusive work of God's sovereign grace, carried out for His own pleasure, and not merely for the sinner's relief from his wretchedness and misery.

If we refer for a moment to Acts 13: 38, 39, we see that the Apostle Paul, speaking to the Jews, in reference to the risen Christ, declared that through Him there was preached to them the forgiveness of sins. Then he added that all who believe are justified from all things. He was referring to sinners, when he spoke of forgiveness, and to believers, when he spoke of justification. Sinners are forgiven; believers are justified. These are not necessarily two classes, since sinners, who have received forgiveness through faith

in Christ, become believers, who are justified by faith.

So forgiveness comes first; then follows justification, in progressive order. All culminates in the acceptance, which we have in the Beloved, as we read in Ephesians 1: 6. This is the calling that has reached us in the Gospel; to be holy and without blame before God in love, as His sons, who are in the Beloved, and therefore near to God as He is near and dear as He is dear.

But after these general remarks, it may be well to look at our subject in a little more detail.

(1) **Forgiveness.** The root meaning of forgiveness is release. Release from a burden, debt, bondage; from anything of sin that causes the sinner grief and sorrow. He is greatly burdened by his sin: he has a great debt to face: his life is crushed by sin, so that his burden becomes insupportable. In such a case he may well be called, "a miserable sinner." The penitent's prayer is all he can say, with bowed head and stricken heart — "God be merciful to me, a sinner." God is merciful, and quickly answers the sinner's cry. He is slow to judge: quick to forgive. To use Scriptural

language, He runs to receive returning prodigals.

It is God's prerogative to forgive sins. None but He can do it in an absolute sense, and when He so acts it is not a question of the quantity of their sins or of their gravity, but of the surpassing riches of His grace, as is so clearly stated in Ephesians 1: 7. A Saul of Tarsus, the chief of sinners, found redemption in Christ's blood and forgiveness, in a measure that far transcended all his sins, bad as they were. His sins were great: God's riches of grace **infinitely** greater.

Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. On the third day He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, and from thence the Holy Spirit was sent down, witnessing to the truth of God's forgiveness; saying, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10: 17). This full and free forgiveness, secured by the death of Christ, and announced by the Holy Spirit, lies as the basis of New Covenant blessing; as it also lies at the basis of the Gospel. Thank God, for this message to sinners, such as we all were!

(2) **Justification.** The meaning of this word is simply — to make or declare just, or right. Abraham and others in the Old Testament, were made just, or esteemed to be just, by God. Their faith secured this for them; hence justification is by faith. Paul proves this in Romans 4. If it be asked, How can a sinner be accounted just, when he is unjust himself? We have to answer that according to the teaching

of the apostles, the sinner is first of all forgiven when he believes the Gospel, and as a believer he is justified. It should be kept clearly in our minds that justification is not acquired by the sinner but is imputed, or reckoned, to him when he believes the Gospel.

Herein is all the difference. Any righteousness, which one could acquire for oneself would be self-righteousness, proceeding from self, by self-effort, through the medium of the law, and would be pharisaical, wholly abhorrent to God, who calls such righteousness "filthy rags" (Isa. 64: 6). What God imputes to the believer is called, "the righteousness of God." This is reckoned by God and not in any sense whatever earned by man. It is "the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all," — that is, it is available for all: and it is "upon all them that believe" (Rom. 3: 22) — that is, it rests upon believers as an actual possession.

When God justifies the believer, he stands clear of all condemnation and even judgment. Christ, who knew no sin, has been made sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5: 21). Hence we can say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" (Rom. 8: 33, 34). Justification therefore clears us from every charge, and lays the ground for our settled peace with God. It is a blessed thing to be not only forgiven, but also justified; and further a blessed privilege to be accepted of God in Christ Jesus.

(3) **Acceptance.** When God's world tells us, as it does in Ephesians 1: 6, that we are "accepted in the Beloved," who is "the Son of His love," it is our part to believe it with much thankfulness. It can indeed be laid down as basic that we get no part in anything of blessing revealed in Scripture, until we do believe it. God has the fullest blessing for **faith**, but nothing for unbelief. We believe on the Son and enter into life and acceptance; but there is nothing incompatible with Divine love in the statement that unbelief incurs the wrath of God, as plainly stated in John 3: 36.

The first thing we may notice as we consider our acceptance in the Beloved is that we have "the adoption of children," or "sonship," in God's Son, in whom our acceptance lies. As His Son is, so are we in Him. We are near to God as the Son is near; and dear to God as the Son is dear. The very love where-with the Father loves the Son, such is His love to us, as we see in John 17: 26.

Our most holy faith, as Christians, rests upon a sure foundation, which is Christ. By Him we have the forgiveness of sins: by Him justification from all things; and in Him, the Beloved, the Son of God's love, acceptance in surpassing grace, and that **for God's own plea-**

sure. The Gospel, as taught by the Apostle Paul, aims at nothing less than perfection — to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1: 28).

Perfection of course is not in nor of ourselves; it is in Christ Jesus. We must make no mistake about this. Christ alone is perfect, and in Him alone are we perfect. So Paul aimed in preaching the Gospel to have his converts "perfect in Christ Jesus;" thus magnifying the grace of God.

The Lord Jesus, when He sent forth His disciples to preach the Gospel of the kingdom, reminded them that they had "**freely received**," and therefore they were to "**freely give**" (Matt. 10: 8). This then is a principle, laid down by the Lord, applicable to all Gospel preaching. Paul freely received grace, and freely he gave it, as a pattern Gospel preacher. When he was about to visit the Christians in Rome, he wrote to them, "I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come **in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ**" (Rom. 15: 29).

Oh! that in this day many such preachers were raised up and sent forth, preaching "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ!"

WHAT is our attitude in regard to the Holy Scriptures? It challenges our understandings, but let us not approach it from an intellectual standpoint; but rather as a spiritual exercise. To borrow the phrases of a well-known servant of the Lord — Let us, read it **through**; pray it **in**; write it **down**; work it **out**; and then pass it **on**.

BIBLE STUDY—DANIEL

F. B. HOLE

(CHAPTERS 4: 10 — 6: 10)

IN verses 10-17, we have Nebuchadnezzar's own account of the dream that made him afraid. We have only to read these verses to see that there was in it a strongly marked element of the supernatural. Not only was there a visitation from "a Watcher and an Holy One," but also a decree, endorsed by "the Most High," who "ruleth in the kingdom of men." The king could only turn to Daniel, addressing him as **Beltshazzar**, "according to the name of my God." The Babylonian gods are mentioned satirically in Isaiah 46: 1, "**Bel** boweth down, **Nebo** stoopeth." So, though he hoped for enlightenment from a man, "in whom is the spirit of the holy gods," we are not surprised that before the Most High he was afraid.

In verse 19 we see that Daniel himself, to whom the meaning of the dream was at once revealed, was also afraid and troubled, for he realized it warned the king of impending chastisement from the hand of God — a stroke of the severest kind.

Let us briefly review what had preceded this dream. The times of the Gentiles began when Nebuchadnezzar reached the zenith of human splendour, wielding autocratic power in unparalleled fashion. By an earlier dream he had been warned that though he was the head of gold in the great image, deterioration would set in, and at the end the dominion, vested temporarily in

him, would be crushed to powder under the judgment of God.

How little this affected him we see in the next chapter. The dearest passion in the heart of fallen man is that of self-exaltation. So the great king has made the gigantic image, which all are to worship, and woe betide him who does not! Again God intervened. He gave courage to three of His servants, who braved the king's wrath and his furnace, though seven-times heated. In result, Nebuchadnezzar was defeated. God simply made a fool of him in the presence of vast crowds of his peoples. Had this any permanent effect upon him for good?

The chapter we are considering shows that it had not. He is still the same self-glorifying man. Consequently God will act in an even more drastic way. The first intervention was addressed to his intelligence — his understanding of the future. The second was a display of the Divine power, which publicly humiliated him. Still no permanent alteration, though for the moment he was deeply impressed. So now the kingdom of "gold" will be left intact, while he alone is dealt with.

This second dream concerned a great tree. Elsewhere in Scripture great men and nations are likened to imposing trees — Ezekiel 31, for instance — so the figure was not an unusual one. Daniel at once

saw that the king himself was portrayed, and the judgment that was to fall on him. God will not strike him personally until warning has been given. This indeed is ever His kindly way. He did not send the flood on the world of the ungodly until ample warning had been given; nor captivity upon Israel until they had been fully warned by the prophets. Today we live in an age very near to judgment, as to which warning has long been given. Are we sufficiently aware of this? When the Gospel of grace is preached, is the note of warning sounded with sufficient clearness? We sadly fear that it is not, but rather avoided as an unpleasant theme.

The warning given today may be disregarded by most, even as it was by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel courageously warned him and even counselled him to alter his ways, as we see in verse 27. But the warning given was not heeded, nor the counsel given followed. Even then, God waited twelve months before His judgment fell.

Walking amidst the splendours of Babylon, the king experienced a moment of supreme pride. Everything around him spoke of his "power," his "honour," his "majesty." The ruins of Babylon are remarkable even today, and men of understanding have reconstructed in picture form the marvels they must have contained. As we looked at the picture, we could only say that if it was at all accurate then none of our present cities could rival it. The king filled with pride, felt himself to be exalted above measure. Then the blow fell.

From a pinnacle of glory Nebuchadnezzar was now degraded to the level of a beast, indeed almost beneath that level; and in that miserable, bestial condition "seven times" passed over him. It was no passing affliction but a protracted one, though it is not indicated here whether "times" means years. Elsewhere apparently, it does.

An element of prophecy enters, we believe, into this story, for it is a remarkable fact that a "beast" appears at the end of the record concerning Gentile dominion, when we come to Revelation 13. The last man who will hold that supreme place, and who will be crushed by the appearing of the Lord Jesus in His glory, is described as a "beast." He will not be a demented one, as was Nebuchadnezzar, but he will be worse because dominated by Satan, never lifting up his eyes to heaven but always down to the earth. And further, if we are right in identifying him with "the prince that shall come" of Daniel 9: 26, 27, his career will cover the "week" of years, mentioned in those verses — the equivalent of "seven times."

There is a contrast however, for the beast of the last days goes to his doom in "a lake of fire burning with brimstone," whereas Nebuchadnezzar at the end of his seven times was restored to sanity and to his kingdom. And further, this time something effectual does seem to have been wrought in his soul. Not only did he lift up his eyes to heaven with the understanding of a man but he blessed God, giving Him His title of "the Most High." Now the first time that

this great name of God occurs is in Genesis 14, where Melchizedek is called a priest of "the Most High God," who is therefore, "Possessor of heaven and earth."

Some understanding of this fact had now entered the heart of Nebuchadnezzar, as we see in verses 34 and 35. This opened the king's eyes to the fact of his own nothingness, for he confessed that, "all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing;" and if ALL, then himself among them. He recognized also the supreme power of God in enforcing His will in heaven and on earth. In the presence of the greatness and the power of God, he at last recognized his own nothingness and impotence.

At last Nebuchadnezzar had learned his lesson, and made public acknowledgement of the God of heaven, and therefore the discipline of very severe sort, through which he had been passed, was removed and he was restored to his kingdom in a chastened spirit. His public confession and praise of "the King of heaven," is recorded in the last verse of our chapter. To Him he ascribed "honour," "truth" and "judgment," in all His dealings. Never had a man been more lifted up in pride than this king, and never had a proud man been more signally abased.

Let us not forget the abasing power of God. We often dwell upon the grace of Christ, as mentioned in the Epistle to the Hebrews, but let us not forget that not only is He able to sympathize, "able to succour," and "able to save," but also, "able to abase." He did

it effectually with Nebuchadnezzar, and evidently for his spiritual good. He will presently do it far more drastically with the "beast" of Revelation 13, as we see when chapter 19 of that book is reached. The pride of man, generated by his scientific advances and consequent wonderful achievements, is increasing. It will reach its climax ere long. Then Nebuchadnezzar's confession will be demonstrated as true in overwhelming fashion — "those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

The period of Babylonian supremacy was comparatively brief, and the "head of gold" had to give place to the "beast and arms of silver." As we begin to read chapter 5, we find ourselves transported to the last hours of that period. The great city was still marked by scenes of wealth and much voluptuous splendour.

Years ago, learned critics claimed that the Book of Daniel was largely legendary and written several centuries after the events it related. Belshazzar, they regarded as an imaginary figure, since they found no reference to him in extant records. Later however his name did appear on a clay tablet that was unearthed, so this assertion, like a great many more of their unbelieving assertions, was shattered as the archaeologists dug in these ancient ruins. It appears that in accordance with an ancient custom he was associated with his father in the kingship, and that his father being elsewhere at that time, he was virtually king in Babylon just as it fell before the rising power of Medo-Persia.

Whatever may have been the permanent effect upon Nebuchadnezzar of God's dealings with him, his successors displayed all the arrogant splendour of his earlier years. Belshazzar's name began with the name of Babylon's god; the gorgeous feast with a thousand of his lords, together with wives and concubines was typically heathenish. Inflamed by wine, he had the golden vessels, that had years before been taken from the temple in Jerusalem, brought before them, so that gloating over them, they might publicly dishonour Jehovah, and praise their many false gods of metals, of wood and of stone. He deliberately flung down the gauntlet before God, who at once accepted the challenge.

This, we believe, is always God's way. He does not act in judgment until the evil is fully manifested. It was so with the Amorite nations, as shown in Genesis 15: 16. It was so with the kings and people in Jerusalem, as testified in 2 Chronicles 36: 11-20. It will be so again in the sad history of Christendom, as predicted in Revelation 17 and 18.

Thus it was in that great festive hall in Babylon, and in result we have one of the most dramatic scenes on record. No legion of angels appeared, no visible display of Divine power: just the fingers as of a man's hand were visible, writing four words on the "plaster of the wall," just, "over against the candlestick," where they were most visible. The proud king was reduced to a shivering mortal, and his lords astonished.

As we ponder this scene our thoughts turn in two directions.

They travel back to Exodus, where we read of the law being given, written with "the finger of God" upon tables of stone. It was fitting material for stone cannot be twisted or bent, though it can be broken. Here the finger of God is connected with demand upon guilty men. Then our thoughts travel on to John 8, where the guilty woman was brought by conceited Scribes and Pharisees to the Lord Jesus for condemnation. He did not condemn her: and why? Well, He gave an indication of the reason by stooping to write on the ground, and this He did twice, as if for emphasis. He stooped to write in the dust of the temple, for He had stooped from the heights of His glory, "into the dust of death" (Psa. 22: 15), so that the righteousness of God might be maintained and His love fully expressed. Here then we have not the finger of **demand**, but rather, as we may say, the finger of **dust**.

But now in Daniel we again have "the finger of God," and we find it to be the finger of **doom**, written on plaster, that easily crumbles. God manifested His presence by showing the tip of His fingers, and it scared the life out of Belshazzar. When the final hour of judgment arrives and "the dead, small and great, stand before God" (Rev. 20: 12), what will be their feelings? We are reminded of that word, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10: 31).

Once more the wise men of Babylon were called in, but only to display again incompetence and ignorance. We are told that there was nothing unusual about the four words. They were not words taken

from some unknown, barbaric tongue, but, being on that occasion God's words, they were quite outside the understanding of these servants of the world and its false gods. The fact, stated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2: 14, is strikingly illustrated. As "natural" men they had no power of understanding the things God had written.

The whole scene was now transformed. Belshazzar had moved from profanity to prostration, and the whole company had descended from gaiety to gloom. Into this chaotic scene came "the queen," as stated in verse 10, and in the next verse she refers to Nebuchadnezzar as "father" of Belshazzar. Not infrequently "father" is used in Scripture for "forefather," and thus clearly it was here. She was evidently the queen-mother, and most likely a daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and consequently possessing a much clearer remembrance of God's dealings with her father, as well as of Daniel and his God-given understanding.

What is quite evident is that, years having passed, Daniel had dropped completely out of public notice. In court circles his name was so unknown that the queen had to give a full account of him and of his powers, though she still treated them as being "the wisdom of the gods." Daniel is lifted from his obscurity, brought before the king and promised great honours if he could interpret the words. The reason why he was promised the **third** place in the kingdom was evidently because Belshazzar himself was only the **second**. The **first** being his father, who was at that

moment elsewhere.

Daniel's answer, recorded in verse 17, is very striking. Previously, as recorded at the end of chapter 2, Daniel had accepted the honours placed upon him, now he treated them with disdain. The meaning of the four fateful words had evidently already penetrated to his heart, and he knew that Belshazzar was rejected of God, and his kingdom about to crash in ruin, so his proffered honours were worthless.

Before the interpretation of the words, God gave through Daniel the clearest indictment of the Babylonian empire, as summed up in Belshazzar, the existing head of it. The king was reminded of God's dealing with Nebuchadnezzar, which humbled him. Belshazzar had knowledge of this but had ignored it, and had exalted himself even more blatantly against "the Lord of Heaven," by bringing the golden vessels that had been in the temple, where once His presence had been manifested, and glorying over Him, in praising the demon powers that were represented by his idols. This brought things to a climax, and the first of the "overturnings," predicted in Ezekiel 21: 27, was at hand.

By the writing on the wall a warning was given, though only a few hours were to elapse before the blow fell. The word, NUMBERED was twice written, as if it was a point to be emphasized. The God, who can number the stars, as well as the hairs on a human head, had observed and numbered the proud sins of the Babylonian empire. The word, WEIGHED showed that Belshazzar himself had been tested and

condemned. By DIVIDED, the immediate overthrow of the empire was announced.

The warning produced no change in Belshazzar, for he invested Daniel with honours, as though his kingdom was to continue, and that in spite of Daniel having renounced them. He wore those honours for just a few brief hours, for that night the predicted judgment fell. Darius the Median took the city and the kingdom, and Belshazzar was slain.

Thus came to its end the first of the great empires that are to fill up the times of the Gentiles. It gives us, we judge, a sample of the way in which God has caused the others to be overthrown; though the fourth, the Roman, is to be revived, and its component parts brought together again, that it may decisively and finally be destroyed by the personal appearing of the Lord Jesus, since it was under the Roman that He was mocked and crucified. Then it is that man's great empires will all of them together, be blown into nothingness, "like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors." When the writer was young it looked as if there was to be a stable British "empire," for about a century ago the late Queen Victoria, of happy memory, had been proclaimed "Empress of India." A short century has proved that the term, "empire," was a misnomer, and the word has been dropped.

The Medo-Persian empire now became the dominant world power, and Darius became king in Babylon. It appears that historians have difficulty in identifying this man. It may be that he was only a vassal

king, under the suzerainty of Cyrus king of Persia; but this is a matter that need not detain us. In the Babylonian section of the new empire he arranged things as he saw fit, and again we find Daniel promoted to a place of great power. The hand of God was in it, though on the human side two things may have been in his favour. First, he was not a native of Babylon. Second, Darius almost certainly would have heard of the dramatic scene in the palace, just before he captured the city that seemed so impregnable, and thus of Daniel's superhuman understanding.

The scene brought before us in chapter 6 is very true to human life and nature. Daniel's exalted position filled the hearts of lesser men with envy and hatred. If possible, they would destroy him. This purpose of theirs brings to light a remarkable testimony as to his character — "he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him." As a result they concluded that no attack on him would succeed unless it were made, concerning the law of God.

Here we must pause, and consider our own ways. What point of attack does each one of us present to those who in an antagonistic spirit survey us critically? Very frequently, we fear, we present more points than one. Hence the constant exhortations to a life of godliness, that we find in the Pauline epistles. To the Philippians, for instance, he urged, "that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the

world; holding forth the word of life" (2: 15, 16). If we today, as well as the Philippians nineteen centuries ago, can be thus described, crooked and perverse folk who wish to accuse us, will have to base their attack on the word of life, or the way in which we hold it forth, rather than on our personal ways. Let us each be very much exercised as to this matter.

The presidents and princes were shrewd men. They knew the power of flattery and how men love to exalt themselves. Hence they suggested to Darius a decree of self-exaltation; practically deifying himself for the period of a month. Into this trap Darius fell, and we learn in connection with it that in this kingdom of "silver" the power of the monarch was not so absolute as in the kingdom of "gold." Nebuchadnezzar did just what he liked without curb laid upon him. The Medo-Persian kings had to consider their captains' and counsellors' advice, and a law, when once promulgated, could not be altered. The law was signed, by which under pain of a terrible death, any who feared the God of heaven, should be cut off from Him for thirty days. In principle he was doing again the great sin, attempted in chapter 3. Nebuchadnezzar demanded worship through his golden image. The method of Darius was far less spectacular, but equally against God. For all practical purposes there shall be no God but Darius for thirty days!

In chapter 3, Daniel is absent, and courage was given to his companions to stand firm in their allegiance to the one true God, and re-

fuse to bow down to the image. In the present chapter the three companions are absent and Daniel alone is seen. Exactly the same spirit is seen in him. They would not for one moment bow down to worship a god of man's devising. He would not for one day cease to pray to the true God, whom he knew. They acted negatively, defying the king's command to worship Satanic powers. He acted positively, maintaining contact with the God of heaven, though it involved defying the command of Darius. In both cases God stepped in, and miraculously sustained and delivered His servants in a way that exposed the folly of the kings.

Darius indeed was quickly made to discover his folly. Daniel made no sensational protest; he only went on doing what had been his custom. Three times each day he knelt before God with thanksgiving and prayer, and he made no secret of it, since he did it with windows open, and thus all could see.

But why did he have his windows open "toward Jerusalem"? Read 1 Kings 8: 46-50, and the reason is plain. He believed God would answer that petition in Solomon's prayer, so he fulfilled the stipulation that the prayer should be made, "toward their land . . . the city which Thou hast chosen." Such was the record in the Scriptures. In obedience he fulfilled it, and went on fulfilling it in spite of the king's decree.

Let us seriously ask ourselves if we are as observant of Scripture as Daniel, and moved by it to obedience, as he was.

DIVINE INSPIRATION

A. J. POLLOCK

IF four well-known authors were to produce independently of each other a biography of some world-wide celebrity, we should be immensely surprised, did we not find discrepancies, and even contradictions, as we compared one author's account with those of the other three. They would doubtless obtain their information from the same sources, and would present their subject in a more or less different light, which may not be fully true. A well-known author recently wrote, "No man can sit down to write without bringing to the task the preconceptions, which spring out of his own character and experience." This is invariably the case, when we examine the writings of men.

But when we come to the Scriptures of Truth how different everything is. David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23: 2). Again he testified, "The Lord made me understand in writing by His hand upon me" (1 Chron. 28: 19). The Apostle Peter wrote, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. 1: 21): the Apostle Paul testified, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3: 16).

We see this very markedly in the writings of the four evangelists: each having the Lord Jesus Christ as their Subject — His birth, life, public ministry, atoning death, glorious resurrection, and triumphant ascension to God's right hand. Nothing short of a miracle

could have preserved them from discrepancies and contradictions. That they were thus preserved, leads us to the only possible conclusion, that the writers were **Divinely inspired**, and that the real Author was **GOD HIMSELF**. It has been said very truly, and that by a man, who was no friend to the Christian faith, that it would have been impossible for these four men to have invented such a wonderful life, if our Lord had never lived it.

And further, when we remember who these four writers of the Gospels were, we are the more amazed. The Apostles, as they stood before the Jewish Sanhedrim, were described as, "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4: 13). They had been to no seats of learning. They were by no means well-known authors. Matthew was a "publican," one of the hated officials who gathered in taxes under the Romans. Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, whose mother opened her house for prayer, as recorded in Acts 12, and later with Peter, as mentioned at the end of his second epistle. Luke called, "the beloved physician," the only Gentile writer in the New Testament, and with Paul at the end of his days, as recorded in 2 Timothy 4: 11. John, a simple fisherman of Galilee.

These were the men, chosen by God to indite the Gospels, in which the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, the unveiling of facts and doctrines, the knowledge of which could only come by Divine revelation, is all made known in perfection. They write without dis-

crepancy or contradiction. The Person they report never withdrew an error, never corrected a faulty remark, never apologised for any statement made. In any incidents, mentioned by two or even three of the writers, any differences noted are always found to be complementary and not contradictory. These are features utterly unknown in all the literature of all the ages, and can only be accounted for by their production under the full inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

Each Gospel has its own distinctive character, as often pointed out. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus was presented to Israel as their promised King. In the Sermon on the Mount, He stated the principles of conduct that should mark His subjects, though He anticipated His rejection. The parables of the kingdom of heaven give a prophetic outline of what will happen during the ages; while finally the establishment of the kingdom at the end is indicated, with the King Himself on the throne, judging the nations.

Mark presents the Lord Jesus as the devoted Servant of God, doing His will during His sojourn on earth, though His glory as the Son of God is carefully guarded, both at the beginning and at the end, (1: 1, and 15: 39). Consequently in this Gospel the acts of our Lord are the prominent feature, rather than His words.

Luke emphasizes the Manhood of our Lord, and the grace of God displayed in action and in word. So we have the preaching of grace in the synagogue at Nazareth, followed by the gracious acts of chapter 5, by the parable of the Samaritan, and

those of chapter 15, as also the incident of the Pharisee and the publican and the conversion of the dying thief.

John wrote his Gospel at a later date, when the Christian faith had become widely spread, and when the enemy was sowing evil doctrines about the Person of our Lord. The Gnostics asserted, for instance, that the Lord was never a real Man upon earth, but only an apparition. Hence we get the magnificent opening of his Gospel, asserting the God-head glory of the Word — “The Word was with God, and **the Word was God,**” and also that, “**the Word was made flesh,** and dwelt among us.” Thus our Lord became a true Man, yet never ceasing to be what He ever was from all eternity. So at the close, when Thomas who doubted was finally convinced of His resurrection, he exclaimed in holy rapture, “**My Lord and my GOD.**”

So in conclusion we emphasize again the fact that the four Gospels in themselves provide us with an indisputable proof of the inspiration by God Himself of the Holy Scriptures — in one word, their **perfection**, in striking contrast to all that emanates from the minds of men, however learned and able they may be.

It is surely not to be wondered at that God should supply us not only with this fourfold record of the life of the Lord Jesus, but also with the revelation of His counsels in Christ for His own eternal glory, and for the blessing of men — of Christ's present Headship of His body, while it is still on earth, and of what will be established when the hour arrives for His coming again.

LIFE AND GODLINESS

H. SMITH

IN the Second Epistle of Peter the Spirit of God addresses believers, who, with the Apostle, are marked by "like precious faith." The Apostle warns us against "false teachers," that will be found in the Christian circle; for he says, "**among you;**" and he foretells the corruption, that will mark Christendom "**in the last days**" (2: 1; 3: 3).

Let us remember that the Apostle is not describing heathendom, but the condition of Christendom, in which our lot is cast, and as it exists in our times; for who can doubt that we live in "the last days"? — the awful condition of which is so vividly portrayed.

The terrible nature of this corruption is brought home to us by the illustrations and figures used to set it forth. We are carried far back to "the angels that sinned" to find a parallel to the rebellion against God of Christendom. "The world of the ungodly" before the flood, is used to illustrate the violence and corruption in Christendom. The wicked lives and "filthy conversation" of the men of Sodom and Gomorrah are used to set forth the moral degradation that exists in Christendom. The history of Balaam is referred to as setting forth the "covetous practices" that prevail in these last days. To find figures, that adequately set forth the return of Christendom to the conditions of heathendom, the Apostle uses the figure of a dog returning to its vomit, and the washed sow to her wallowing in the mire.

But there is another side to this

solemn picture. The Apostle not only warns us of the evil but, for our comfort and encouragement, he shows that in the darkest moment of the last days it is still possible for the individual believer to escape the corruptions around and live a life of godliness. Moreover, he encourages us to live this life by setting before us the **promises of coming glory**, to which the path of godliness will lead.

So that we may say, the two great themes of this second epistle are; **first**, setting before us the life of godliness, by which the believer passes on to glory; **second**, warning us against the awful corruptions of Christendom, which are leading on to judgment. A brief consideration of the way these things are presented in the epistle will make this clear.

In chapter 1, the Apostle first sets before us the life of godliness and the glory of the kingdom to which it leads. In chapter 2 and chapter 3, down to verse 10, he brings before us the different forms of corruption and the judgment to which they lead. Also, in chapter 3, we are warned not to be carried away by scoffers, who, taking advantage of the longsuffering grace of God, pursue their lusts and deny that any judgment is coming. Finally, having been thus warned, we are again exhorted to live the life of godliness and to grow in it.

In his Second Epistle to Timothy, the Apostle Paul wrote in the same strain. He warns us that "in the last days" Christendom would have "a form of godliness," but "denying the power thereof." If he press-

es upon us the path of separation, he also warns us that, having taken that path, we are to "flee youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, love, peace."

Some centuries ago, Protestantism judged the gross evils of Romanism and separated from them. Again, Nonconformity may deplore certain evils in Protestant nationalism, and separate from them. The Brethren, so-called, may rightly condemn evils found in Romanism, Protestantism and Nonconformity, and take a path separate from them; but let us remember that neither Protestants, Nonconformists, nor Brethren will escape the governmental judgment of God simply because they have separated from what is evil, because contrary to truth. Unless the inner life of godliness, consistent with the outward path of separation, is maintained, all outward position, however correct, will be of no avail.

If then we desire to escape the corruptions of Christendom, and live the life of godliness, we shall do well to consider the rich provision that God has made to enable the individual believer to live this life in the midst of the appalling evils of the last days.

Firstly, let us note that the solid basis for the life of godliness has been laid in the cross of Christ. To this reference is made when the Apostle speaks of "the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." At the cross the rights of God were maintained by our Saviour giving Himself a propitiation for "the whole world" (1 John 2: 2). God has thus been so satisfied and

glorified, that now in perfect righteousness He can proclaim forgiveness of sins to all, and pronounce the one who believes "justified from all things." So we may say that at the cross the righteousness of God is **satisfied**; the love of God is **gratified**; God Himself is **glorified**; the believer in Christ is **justified**.

Secondly, we learn that not only are we as believers saved, but that God by "His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness." We have to face the power of the flesh within, the power of the world around, and the power of the devil against us; but the power of God, which is far above every adverse power, is for us, and in this power it is possible to live the life of godliness.

Thirdly, to encourage us to live the life of godliness, we are told that connected with it are "exceeding great and precious promises." In the course of the epistle we learn that these promises connect us with the "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" and the "new heavens and a new earth."

Fourthly. There are unrolled before us the beautiful moral qualities that mark the life of godliness. The Apostle speaks of faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, endurance, godliness, brotherly love, and love. We are exhorted to have these qualities together, each one effecting the other, so that in result there may be an even, balanced life of godliness.

Faith naturally comes first, for it

is by "the door of faith" (Acts 14: 27), that we enter into blessing; and in our practical lives as believers, "without faith it is impossible to please" God (Heb. 11: 6).

Virtue sets forth moral excellence, and is to be resident in our faith. In 1 Peter 2: 9, we learn that we are chosen to "shew forth the praises [excellences, New Trans.] of Him," who has called us. This is the same word in the original as here translated, "virtue." The reality of the faith is proved by a change of life that exhibits some of the moral excellences, seen in perfection in Christ.

Knowledge is needed to set forth these excellences, therefore it must be present in virtue. However true and sincere the heart may be, if there be ignorance as to the commands of the Lord, there will be failure in obedience. As one has said, "A true heart is of vital importance; but an **instructed mind** as to what the will of God is, is needed to regulate and guide the warmest heart." Martha's service for the Lord exhibited many excellent qualities, but it was not tempered by the knowledge of His mind — the knowledge that Mary obtained by sitting at the feet of Jesus and hearing His word. We may well pray with the Apostle Paul to be "filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col. 1: 9); and again, that our "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment," in order that we may "approve things that are excellent" (Phil. 1: 9, 10).

Temperance is needed in our knowledge. In Galatians 5: 23,

this word is rendered "self-control" in the New Translation. The possession of knowledge apart from self-control may lead, as with the Corinthian saints, to our being puffed up with a sense of self-importance. We are warned in 1 Corinthians 8: 2, that if a man uses knowledge to exalt himself, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. How important then to judge ourselves, so that with our knowledge there may be temperate thoughts of self; not thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought to think, "but to think soberly" (Rom. 12: 3).

Endurance is the word used in the New Translation for "patience," and this we need together with sober thoughts of self. If by grace we have a sober estimate of ourselves, we may be in danger of being impatient with a self-assertive person, who may "think himself to be something when he is nothing" (Gal. 6: 3). All such pretensions we have to endure, considering ourselves lest we be tempted.

Godliness, or the fear of God, is to be found in our endurance. Otherwise there is the danger of making endurance with the weaknesses and failures of one another an excuse for passing over actual evil in ourselves or others.

Brotherly love must be there, so that, while ever seeking to give God His place, we may not forget what is due to our brother. With godliness we are to remember to show brotherly love.

Love comes last, for we are to beware lest our love to a brother may

degenerate into mere partiality or natural friendship. It is to be **love after the Divine pattern**. Commencing with faith, we come at last to Divine love, and thus partake of the "divine nature," of which the Apostle speaks in verse 4. These then are the beautiful qualities that make up the life of godliness.

Fifthly. Having brought before us the life of godliness, the Apostle, in the verses that follow, encourages us to live the life by setting before us its blessedness and warning us of its neglect. We are told that if "these things" be in us and abound, our lives will not be unfruitful. Where these beautiful, Christ-like qualities are found there will be fruit for God. The Father will be glorified, and we shall be manifested as the disciples of Christ, as John 15: 8 tells us. Then we are warned that the lack of "these things" will result in spiritual blindness, that cannot look afar off to the glory to which godliness leads, nor look back to the cross, where all ungodliness was judged.

Sixthly. We are encouraged to "do these things," and thus be preserved in the present from falls, and in the future have an "abundant entrance" into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour. Every believer will be in the kingdom, but only those who live the life of godliness will have **an abundant entrance**. The Apostle is not speaking of preaching or teaching or the exercise of gifts, which are not given to all, and which may give prominence before others. He is speaking of the secret life of godliness, which is open to all. We all have to beware lest we estimate

ourselves falsely through any little service we render. Those specially, who are gifted, and much before the public eye, have to beware lest amidst constant engagements, constant preaching, and public work **before men**, they neglect the secret life of godliness **before God**. Does not Scripture warn us that it is possible to preach with all the eloquence of men and angels, and yet be nothing? That which bears fruit for God, and will have its bright reward in the day to come is the life of godliness, from which all true service must flow, and without which no amount of religious activity will carry blessing for the soul, even if, in the over-ruling ways of God, it may be used for the blessing of others, as indicated in Philip-
pians 1: 15-18.

Seventhly. To encourage us to live the life of godliness the Apostle sets before us the glory of the kingdom to which it leads. He with two other disciples had been eye-witnesses of this glory on the "holy mount." There they saw the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, which will introduce the kingdom. There too they saw the "majesty" of Christ, that will be displayed in the kingdom, when the One, who had received dishonour and shame at the hands of men, "received from God the Father honour and glory." Further, they realized that believers will be "with Him" in the day of His glory. In the closing chapter, the Apostle, still having in view the manner of persons we ought to be, marked by holy conversation and godliness, carries us in spirit beyond the kingdom, where righteousness **reigns**, into the "new heavens and a new earth," where

righteousness dwells.

To sum up the truth as to godliness, so blessedly brought before us in this portion of the word of God; we learn,

1. The **basis** the life of godliness in the Cross (I: I).

2. The **Divine power**, that enables us to live this life (I: 3).

3. The **precious promises** attached to this life (I: 4).

4. The **moral qualities** that form the life (I: 5-7).

5. The **present fruit** for God that flows from this life (I: 8).

6. The **abundant entrance** into the kingdom that the life secures (I: II).

7. The **glory of the kingdom and the eternal state**, to which it leads (I: II-2I; 3: II-14).

As these things pass before our souls, we are made to realize the truth of the words of the Apostle Paul:— "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4: 8).

CHRIST: SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN

J. HOUSTON

IN the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, we have Christ presented to us; first, as Son of God, and then as Son of Man. The former we find in chapter 1; the latter in chapter 2. Upon these two the whole doctrine of the epistle is founded. Christianity itself, as taught in the New Testament, has its foundation there. And all the problems and questions that arise in relation to God and man, find their solution there too. So we can say with the words of a hymn,

"All things that God or man could wish,
In Jesus rightly meet."

As Son of God, He is very God. As Son of Man, He is very Man. The former presents to us His Deity: the latter, His Humanity. He is divine, and He is human. We

often find in Him both of these together, perfectly expressed, in the course of His ministry on earth.

For instance, He sleeps in a boat. Here we see His humanity. But He rebukes the wind and there is a great calm. Here we see His Deity. He is tired with His journey, and sitting on Sychar's well, He asks a woman of Samaria for water to drink. Here we see His humanity. But He told her all that ever she did, showing that He knew all about her sinful life. Here we see His Deity. He weeps with the mourners at the grave of Lazarus. Here we see His humanity. But then He speaks the word of resurrection power, for He is the resurrection and the life, and He raises Lazarus from the grave, and presents him alive to his sisters. Here we see His Deity. Many more instances could

be adduced, but these suffice for our purpose.

Let us carefully note what is made known to us in Hebrews 1. God had spoken to the fathers by the prophets in former times. In these last days He has spoken to us in His Son. The word He sent to the fathers by the prophets was fragmentary; communications suited to their condition, as a people in the flesh, under law. When He spoke in the Son, He gave the full revelation of Himself. The Son was not a mere instrument, by which the word was given, as was the case with the prophets. He was what He spoke; therefore God, manifest in flesh; God seen and heard; the incarnate Word, as indicated in John 1: 18. Thus we see the Godhead fully revealed in Christ. What a revelation!

This being so, it might be asked, What place has the Son in creation? Our scripture answers, He is Heir of all and Creator of all. Could there be any higher place? Impossible! A further question might be advanced: How does the Son reveal God? The answer of our scripture is: He is the effulgence of God's glory; the full expression of His Person. As other scriptures tell us, He is "the Image of the invisible God" (Col. 1: 15). He who saw the Son saw the Father. The Father spoke the words and did the works in the Son. The Lord Himself said, "I and My Father are one" (John 10: 30).

Creation is dependent on its Creator: it has no existence apart from Him: nor has any being apart from Him. "In Him we live, and

move, and have our being" (Acts 17: 28). Christ the Son is Upholder of all things by the word of His power, even as by it He created all things; and by it He will dissolve all things, as indicated in 2 Peter 3: 11-13. How great is Christ, God's glorious Son!

Another glory the Son has is that of redemption. He Himself has "purged our sins," and has seated Himself at the right hand of the Majesty on high. The fact that He is seated shows that the great work of redemption is finished, and God is glorified in it. Hence the Lord's words, addressed to the Father, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do" (John 17: 4).

From verse 4 to the end of the chapter, we have Christ contrasted with the angels. The Son has a more excellent name than they, for to none of them did God say at any time, "Thou art My Son." What God did say was, "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And further, He addressed Him thus, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;" when the tottering thrones of men fall and come to nought. Marvellous glory for the Son — His is the eternal throne of God! At present He is on His Father's throne. Soon He will be on Israel's throne with universal dominion. He has no successor: He reigns supreme for ever and ever. The One, who is Creator of all, Heir of all, and Ruler over all, is worthy to reign. The Spirit of God would have us take full account of His creatorial glory and unchanging Being. Hence the tribute recorded in

verses 10-12. How fitting this tribute to God's glorious Son!

In chapter 2 He is brought before us as Son of Man. Angels cannot die, so He was made a little lower than the angels, that He might suffer death, and now He is crowned with glory and honour. God has set Him over the works of His hands, and put all things in subjection under His feet. This was God's eternal counsel. It was ever God's purpose that Christ, as Man, should be in supremacy, all things wholly subject to Him. Hence God has "left nothing that is not put under Him." His supremacy is absolute. His title, as Heir of all and Creator of all, demands nothing less.

At the present moment we do not see all things under Him, but we do see Jesus — the One once humbled — crowned with glory and honour. He is in the glory in His risen Manhood; and thus holds in security all that He has in His universal domin-

ion, according to the eternal counsel of God.

God is bringing many sons to glory, and it became Him to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings, which carried Him to the death of the cross, where He tasted death for everything. On that ground He takes up everything. He redeems what He had created; consequently nothing is lost. Oh, what security is ours in the risen glorified Son of Man!

And when occupied thus with His glory, we cannot forget His sufferings, even unto the death of the cross. He came so near to us, partaking of flesh and blood, that thus we might be delivered, and thus brought into such nearness that we are "all of one" with Him in His risen life; and so He is not ashamed to call us His "brethren." He is well fitted to take to glory those who in themselves are but His weak and suffering people.

"HAVE TO GIVE"

(EPHESIANS 4: 28)

"**T**HAT they may have to give." "Giving" is the language of the new life — as taking, stealing, is that of the old life. "Christ" instead of "self." "Self" says "I want." Christ says "Others need." "Let others work for me," says "the old man." "I will work for others," says the new man.

Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." When did He say these words? We know not. The four gospels give not the sentence. Very possibly they were recalled by those that companied with Him. But did not His whole life speak them? Are they not written on every footprint in all His journey here? Did not His every action show that this was His object in coming "to minister and to give"? And at what a cost He fulfilled them! "To give His life." What does our life say? What is written on our pathway?

BIBLE STUDY—DANIEL

F. B. HOLE

(CHAPTERS 6: 10 — 8: 27)

WE have noticed that Daniel's prayerful intercourse with God was supported by a knowledge of what had been recorded of Solomon's prayer. This it was that helped him to such courage.

His courage has become almost proverbial. "Dare to be a Daniel!" has become a well-known phrase. Good advice it is. But what gave him the courage to dare? The answer surely is — His reliance on God and His word. We may safely affirm that, down to our own time, all the saints who have acquired courage to stand for the truth, and suffer for it, have been fortified in the same way. In the tolerant, easy-going lands where English is spoken, compromise is the fashionable thing. But this was not Daniel's way, and should not be ours.

Hence, though "an excellent spirit" was in Daniel, the jealous "princes," who were under him, had no difficulty in denouncing him to the king, who foolishly and blasphemously had signed the decree, which could not be altered or revoked. Realizing his folly, the king made desperate attempts until night-fall to release Daniel, and incidentally himself, from the entanglement, which he himself had created. But all in vain.

So, just as in chapter 3, we saw the three faithful Hebrews going to their doom, now we see Daniel going to his. And with the same result. God intervened; altering the

order of nature, and delivering His servant. Here we have a miracle equally remarkable with that recorded in chapter 3. God has established a certain order in creation, whether in the action of fire or that of living animals. Fire will uniformly burn clothes and even human bodies that wear them. Hungry wild beasts, such as lions, will uniformly spring upon and devour their prey. God, who has established this order can reverse it, should it please Him so to do. It did please Him to do so in both cases. And His control of the lions in this case is equally remarkable with His suspension of the action of fire.

Some may wish to enquire why God has not acted in this way on behalf of His servants far more frequently? The answer surely is, that God acts in this **miraculous** way at the beginning of some change in His dealings with men, though He may often act on behalf of His saints in a **providential** way. It was so, for instance, at the beginning of the Christian dispensation. Peter was miraculously delivered from prison and death, as recorded in Acts 12. Since then, many a saint has died in prison for the sake of the Gospel, though some have been providentially delivered.

As we ponder over this, one reason for it at least becomes clear. In the two cases before us the times of the Gentiles had just begun by the complete overthrow of Israel and

the destruction of Jerusalem. The natural conclusion to be deduced was that the gods of the Babylonian world were more powerful than Jehovah, whose temple was at Jerusalem. They were not, and God demonstrated it by these miraculous **deliverances** of His servants in the teeth of the powers of darkness. At the end of the age He will demonstrate it by the **damnation** of His foes, and theirs. Who wants to be a "Hitler" before the great white throne, condemned to "the second death"?

The same thing may be said of this present Gospel age. Acts 12, which begins with the deliverance of Peter, ends with the judgment of Herod. In both cases an angel "smote." He smote Peter up for deliverance, and then smote Herod down to a miserable and disgusting death. God has not repeated these actions, just because we live in this Gospel age, which is characterized by **grace**. When this age of grace ends, we shall see God's saints completely delivered, and their oppressors completely judged.

In Daniel 6 we see not only Daniel delivered but also the evil men, who conspired against him, judged. They and their families suffered the exact fate that they had designed for Daniel, and that by the order of the king they had deceived into the evil law.

The end of the chapter reveals the salutary effect of the whole episode on the mind of Darius. His confession and decree, which was sent so widely abroad, was similar to the edict sent forth previously by Nebuchadnezzar. Thus in the

second of the four great world-empires this tribute to the One, confessed not only as "the God of Daniel," but also as "the living God, and stedfast for ever," was sent out to all men. The time had not come for the **love** of God to be manifested, but His **power** was declared in striking fashion, and everywhere men, under the sway of Darius, were commanded to "tremble and fear" before Him.

Let us notice the "decree" of verse 8, and by way of contrast, the "decree" of verse 26. Both were issued in an empire that permitted no alteration or cancellation of its decrees, yet they do stand in contrast. The first was nullified as to its **penalty**; the second was soon nullified as to its **performance**. The subsequent history of that empire shows that men did NOT tremble and fear before the living God, as they were commanded to do. No empire can legislate in the things of God; and so this "law of the Medes and Persians" was soon flatly and universally broken! We see this, for instance, in the book of Esther.

In chapter 5, we had the record of the last year, indeed of the last hours, of the kingship of Belshazzar. As we open chapter 7, we are carried back to the first year of his reign. At this time Daniel had sunk into complete obscurity, as chapter 5 bears witness. He had lost touch with worldly fame, but by a dream he was still in touch with heaven. Previously his fame had largely rested upon his God-given interpretations of dreams, though in chapter 2 the interpretation was revealed to him in "a night vision." Now, in his retire-

ment from worldly affairs, by a dream a prophetic revelation is given to him, and "he wrote the dream," for our benefit, since it has been included in the inspired Scriptures.

Verse 2 is very instructive. What he saw was produced by the striving of "the four winds of the heaven . . . upon the great sea." Now the sea is used figuratively as indicating the masses of mankind, as are the "many waters" of Revelation 17: 1 and 15, which represent "peoples, and multitudes, and nations." So also, "wind" often represents the power of Satan, for he is "the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2: 2). What Daniel saw was, in figure, the forces of darkness working on the masses of mankind, and as a result producing, as we shall see, the four world-empires that fill up the times of the Gentiles. Israel is the only nation that has been raised up by God to a place of supremacy; but, while it is set aside, four world-powers arise as a result of the striving of Satanic forces, and not of the working of God's power.

The powers that emerge are represented by "beasts." It is worthy of note that this figure reappears in the book of Revelation, where the revival of the Roman Empire in the last days is presented as "a beast" rising up "out of the sea" (13: 1). That the four empires should be portrayed as beasts is no compliment to them. But God does not pay compliments, but prefigures things exactly as they are, according to their inward nature. History, as far as it has been enacted up to the present, quite sup-

ports the accuracy of the figure used.

The four beasts appear in rotation, and are described in verses 4-7. The first was the Babylonian, with the strength of a lion and the swiftness of an eagle, and the latter part of verse 4 seems to refer to God's disciplinary dealings with Nebuchadnezzar. This had been nearly fulfilled when Daniel had the dream.

The second, described in verse 5, was the Medo-Persian, that overthrew the Babylonian soon after Daniel had the dream. It is represented as a bear, which is worthy of note. The Babylonian was like a lion and an eagle, as we see also in Jeremiah 4: 7, and 49: 19-22. Now the bear in nature has not the strength of the lion, but it is marked by rapacity, as indicated in our verse. History records that "one side" of it, namely the Median, came up first, for Darius was a Mede; but soon Cyrus the Persian became dominant. He became favourable to the Jews, as the opening verses of Ezra show, but apart from this its power was not tolerant, and the words, "Arise, devour much flesh," were fulfilled in its history.

In verse 6, the third empire is prefigured, which we know as the Grecian, founded by Alexander the Great. Now a leopard is a cruel beast, marked by great agility. The idea of swift agility is increased by this beast having "four wings of a fowl" on its back. This aptly sets forth the swiftness of Alexander's conquests, and his overthrow of the Persian empire. It also had

“four heads,” and in this we see an allusion to what followed the early death of Alexander — the division of the empire into four separate states, under four of his leading generals.

But a fourth empire was to arise, as stated in verse 7; namely the Roman, which would be so remarkable that no well-known beast, such as lion, bear or leopard, could represent it. It would be, “diverse from all the beasts that were before it,” — “dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.” Its teeth would be “iron,” and it would not only subdue, but also devour and break in pieces all that it subdued. How exactly this described the Roman empire, history bears witness.

Here then we have the four world-empires, that were indicated in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, recorded in chapter 2. But they are presented in a very different aspect. There the deterioration in the quality of their governments, descending from gold to an unreliable combination of iron and clay, was indicated. Here we have their true inner character and spirit set before us; and all four are beasts, endowed with great strength, which is used with destructive force. What a terrible unveiling is here before us as to the true character, as God sees it, of the mighty empires of men, which are to fill up the times of the Gentiles. Let us ponder these things deeply, and learn to view world affairs in the light of what is here made known to us.

The fourth beast had ten horns, answering to the ten toes at the base of the image, in chapter 2. Verses

8 and 9 of our chapter show that these “horns” prefigure powerful men and kings, that will arise in the last days of the fourth beast. Of these, three will be overthrown before “another little horn,” to be marked by penetrating intelligence and great powers of boastful speech. Here, for the first time, we meet with that evil man in whom Satan’s power will be personified, as we shall see lower down in our chapter.

As Daniel gazed at this remarkable sight, “thrones were set, and the Ancient of days did sit” (New. Trans.); that is, he saw the hour of God’s judgment arrived. How majestic is the language of these verses! One cannot read them without being reminded of the way the Lord Jesus appeared to John, as he records in Revelation 1. We remember also that “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son” (John 5: 22). To Pharisees and others John the Baptist declared, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire . . . He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Matt. 3: 11, 12); and “fire,” you notice, marks the scene we have before us here.

The “Ancient of days” then presents God to us in the eternity of His Being, for we must remember that the Persons of the Godhead were not clearly distinguished, as they have been since the coming of Christ. In the presence of Almighty God the Roman empire in its last and worst phase, under the domination of the “little horn,” whom we identify with the first beast of Revelation 13, will be destroyed in judgment; while up to that time the three

earlier beasts will have been permitted to exist, though dominion had been taken from them, as stated in verse 12.

This dream clearly divides into three parts. The first, the vision of the four beasts. The second, the vision of judgment established and the fourth beast with its little horn destroyed in the presence of Almighty God. The third, the vision of the advent and glory and eternal dominion of "the Son of Man." The allusion to the Lord Jesus here is not as distinct as it is in Psalm 8:4, where the first "man" represents the Hebrew word meaning "mortal man," and the second is the word "Adam." He was not mortal man, but He was indeed "Son of Adam," as Luke's Gospel shows. In verse 13 however it is really, "a son of man" (New Trans.), and the word in the Chaldee is the one used for mortal man. Daniel saw the One in the vision as being like a son of man, and this He was, for He was "made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:7). In the light of the New Testament we are privileged to know who He really is.

From verse 15 to the end of the chapter we have the explanation that was given to Daniel, of the vision he had seen. Much of it we have already mentioned, but there are in it details not represented in the dream. In verses 18 and 25, for instance, we find mentioned "the saints of the most High," or "of the high places." When the fourth beast is destroyed, together with the "horn," which is its imperial head, these saints will take the kingdom and possess it for ever. Yet some of them will be worn out, or destroy-

ed. As verse 21 says, the "horn" made war with the saints, "and prevailed against them."

We have here a brief allusion to things more clearly revealed in Revelation 13:7 and 14:9-13. We ask our readers to read these verses, noting particularly the 13th verse, and then turning to verse 4 of chapter 20. It seems plain then that the "horn" who is the first "beast" of Revelation 13, will persecute and slay many of the godly, who refuse him and his "mark." But such will be blessed in a particular degree, as resting from their labours, and they will be raised before the start of Christ's reign, to share in a heavenly portion and have dominion given to them, in common with all others, who are "of the high places;" that is, enjoying a heavenly portion, as distinct from a place in millennial blessedness on earth.

Not all the saints, mentioned in verse 21 of our chapter, are slain, though war is made against them. These of course will pass into the earthly blessedness of the Kingdom. So, in our chapter we have "the saints," who will escape and be blessed on earth: "the saints of the high places," whose portion is in heaven: and further, in verse 27, "the people of the saints of the high places," to whom the greatness of the kingdom "under the whole heaven," is to be given. That people will be the true Israel, cleansed and born again, as predicted in Ezekiel 36, and thus made spiritually to live, according to Ezekiel 37.

This vision was given to Daniel shortly before the first of the four great empires fell, and since he was

without the further light shed in the New Testament, we can understand what a disturbing effect it had on his mind. What **disturbed** him may well **encourage** us. The beast-like empires of men will vanish in judgment, and all dominion will be vested in the Son of Man, while delegated authority will be exercised by saints both heavenly and earthly.

We now leave that portion of the prophecy that deals specially with the Gentile powers; and so, as we begin chapter 8, the language of the original reverts to Hebrew from the Chaldee. The vision recorded in this chapter, is dated about two years after the one we have just considered. Though Gentile powers are still in view, the main point seems to be their action in regard to Jerusalem with its sanctuary and sacrifices. It came to Daniel not when he was in Babylon but rather in Shushan; that is, in a palace of the Medo-Persian empire, which overthrew the Babylonian, and it must have been just before that overthrow took place.

Thus before the Medo-Persian empire triumphed, its own overthrow was pictured in the mind of Daniel, since the ram with two horns clearly represented that power. The Persian horn became the dominant one, but it came up last. For a time the ram was irresistible, doing its own will and pushing in all directions.

The he goat of verse 5 is clearly the Grecian power, and the "notable horn" was a prediction of Alexander the Great, who, moving with great swiftness, crushed the Persian power. Then verse 8 predicted the sudden end of Alexander, and the division of his newly ac-

quired dominion into four lesser ones.

Thus far, we have been given an enlarged view of what was compressed into verse 6 of the previous chapter; but in verse 9 of chapter 8 we pass into predictions that are new, and that deal with happenings that would spring out of the dissolution of the Grecian empire rather than the affairs of the last days, until we come to the interpretation of the vision, which is given to us in verses 19-26. As is frequently the case, the interpretation travels beyond the details given in the vision.

The predictions, as to "the little horn" and his doings, are distinct from those of the "little horn," of chapter 7. That was to spring out of the fourth empire in its last days: this, out of one of the four parts of the divided third empire. This striking individual was to glorify himself and reach toward the south and east and "the pleasant land," which doubtless is Palestine. The "stars" he would cast down, we understand to be shining servants of God. He would take away the daily sacrifice and tread the sanctuary down, dishonouring the "prince of the host." This was all fulfilled in the career of that evil man, known to history as Antiochus Epiphanes. He defiled the temple and tried to force heathen worship on the Jews, which led to the revolt under the Maccabees, and a time of much tribulation, until at last after the 2,300 evenings and mornings the sanctuary was cleansed. We believe that many details given in Hebrews 11: 35-38, may refer to saints of those days.

When Daniel was made to under-

stand the vision, his thoughts were soon carried on to "what shall be in the last end of the indignation," as verse 19 says. Verses 20-22, summarize the history we have considered, and then verse 23 carries us on to the latter days, when two things will happen. First, transgressors will have "come to the full." Second, a king, marked by bold power and clever understanding, will rise up from the same quarter. This is indicated by the fact that he arises in the latter time of "their kingdom;" that is, from the north region of Syria, whence came Antiochus of evil memory, who sprang from Seleucus, one of Alexander's generals, who became king of the north, while Ptolemy and his successors became kings of the south, or Egypt.

This coming king of the north, like Antiochus, will attempt to "destroy the mighty and the holy people;" that is, the Israel of the last days. His doings are described in verses 24 and 25, but at the last he will "stand up against the Prince of princes," and as a result be broken "without hand;" that is, we understand, without human instrumentality. Here then, we have that "king of the north," or "the Assyrian," that figures so

largely in other Old Testament prophecies, who will be destroyed by the Lord Jesus Himself when He appears in His glory, and His feet stand on the Mount of Olives, as Zechariah has predicted in the opening of his 14th chapter.

It is important, we believe, to keep clear in our minds the distinction between this "little horn," proceeding from the third beast, and the one on the fourth beast in chapter 7, who is supported by the false Messiah in Jerusalem, according to Revelation 13; and that means of course that he is in league with the Jew and Jerusalem, whereas this northern king is violently against them. Both, though probably not at the same moment, will be destroyed by the glorious appearing of Christ.

Daniel was assured that this vision was true and certain, though what it portrayed was distant from his days. Though the terror of it caused him to faint, he understood it not. It was to be as a sealed book in his day. It is an open vision to us, since we have the light of the New Testament and are indwelt by the Spirit of God. We may well exclaim, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!"

THE ENDUEMENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

IN THE Scriptures this is presented to us in different ways. He is the **Seal**, the **Earnest**, and the **Uction**, or the **Anointing**. As the Seal He is God's mark upon us, bringing assurance to us. As the Earnest, He is the Pledge and Foretaste of the glory that lies before us. As the Uction He capacitates us to understand, and endows us with knowledge. And then, beyond this, there is the **filling** with the Spirit, which means all these things in more abundant measure. The gift of the Spirit is indeed an "unspeakable gift."

“BE NOT DECEIVED”

F. B. HOLE

THE warnings against deception that are found in the New Testament Epistles are indeed remarkable. We might have imagined that Christians of the first century, many of whom were converted under apostolic preaching, would have been proof against it; but such evidently was not the case. We of the twentieth century are doubtless more liable to it than they were, so we shall be wise to take notice of the apostolic warnings against it.

Deception may often assail us **from without**, for Satan is the great deceiver, and he has plenty of agents in this world of fallen men. Yet the most seductive sort are those that are generated within ourselves. We find such words, for instance, as, “Let no man deceive you,” occurring both in Ephesians 5: 6, and, 2 Thessalonians 2: 3; though the former were believers of a maturer and more instructed sort, while the latter were comparatively babes in Christ. On the other hand, we find such warnings as, “Let no man deceive himself,” and on several occasions, “Be not deceived,” where the inference is, we judge, that the trouble was generated **from within**. In this paper we confine ourselves to the various forms of self-deception.

If we turn to 1 Corinthians 3: 18, we get the words we have just quoted. When, pursuing his evangelistic labours, Paul reached Corinth, he was well aware that as a Greek city many of the inhabitants were well saturated with Athenian philosophy and learning. Hence he

approached them after the fashion he described in verses 1-5, of the second chapter; and hence, taught of God, he discerned in the infatuation for leading men of gift, that had come over them all — described in 1: 12 — a reversion to their old ideas, exalting human intellect and wisdom. They were deceiving themselves as to its real nature and true value.

Paul’s words are drastic indeed! “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world [age], let him become a fool, that he may be wise.” None too drastic however in the light of what follows; for he had to say, “the wisdom of this world [**kosmos**] is foolishness with God.” Now “**kosmos**” signifies the world as an ordered system, and in the ordering of the system all human wisdom has been engaged. Well, what a mess the world is in! Out of it there will be no emergence until Divine power, exercised in Divine wisdom, steps in.

We have to remember that knowledge and wisdom are different things. The area covered by the former has vastly increased in our day as compared with the first century, yet the Apostle could write, “We all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity [love] edifieth [buildeth up]” (1 Cor. 8: 1). With knowledge of a genuine sort there is nothing wrong, but the men, who acquire the knowledge, being fallen sinners, are puffed up by it to their own undoing; since wisdom is the ability to apply and rightly use the knowledge one has acquired. That ability fallen man

has not.

An able Christian writer coined an apt phrase when he wrote of "Mr. Worldly Wiseman." The man of the world, who is accounted wise, is one who possesses the practical sense that enables him to use his knowledge for his own profit, advancement or exaltation; and sometimes for the advancement of the whole human race, according to worldly standards. And besides this wisdom of a practical sort there is that of a theoretical and philosophic kind, for which Athens was famous; so that they, "spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing" (Acts 17: 21). As to God and His things they had no real knowledge, hence their wisdom was completely astray.

In the eyes of these ancient philosophers, whether Athenian or Corinthian, the Gospel that Paul preached was foolishness. In the eyes of God their learned thinkings and talkings were folly and ignorance. The stranger standing by as a listener on Mars Hill, might have said, "Just fancy this man talking to these learned men about, the unknown God, whom they ignorantly worshipped, and about these times of their ignorance!" But such was the case, and because of it Paul had to remind us that the man, who would be accounted wise by worldly standards, must become what the same standards would consider a fool, if he would be really wise according to God. And ultimately only the Divine wisdom is going to prevail and stand.

In its essential features the modern world is no different from the

ancient world, and therefore the Apostle's warning applies equally to us. On the surface things have developed in such a surprising fashion that we may easily be deceived into thinking that the "things of God," which display His wisdom, and which have been revealed and communicated to us, as stated in 1 Corinthians 2, must be modified somewhat to bring them into line with the wisdom of the world.

Against such deception we are warned, and it may help us if we remember two statements previously made by Paul. (1) God has said, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to **nothing**, the understanding of the prudent." (2) "The princes of this world . . . come to **naught**." The wise leaders of this world and their wisdom are both coming to NOTHING. So let us not be deceived.

The believers living in the intellectual city of Corinth were evidently specially liable to deception, for in later chapters we twice find the Apostle writing, "Be not deceived." (6: 9, and 15: 33), and each time matters of morality are in question. It is sadly possible for men of high philosophic thought and utterance to be quite dissolute in their lives. Men of evil and immoral life abounded in their city but such had no part in the kingdom of God; and in such lives many of the saints in Corinth had been involved, though now they were washed, sanctified and justified. No amount of specious talk was to blind their minds as to the purity of God's kingdom.

And further, they were not to deceive themselves as to the source

from which such evils flowed — "Evil communications corrupt good manners." We are told that Paul quoted this striking sentence of five words from a Greek author, who would be well known at Corinth, Menander by name. It may well have been so, for heathen authors sometimes state what is true enough, and it is easy to forget that evil teachings produce evil lives in those who imbibe the teachings. If professing Christians at Corinth, or elsewhere, embrace philosophic notions, which affirm there is no resurrection, or at least none that affects the body, there will soon be mischievous results.

It is quite common today to hear people state that it does not really matter what we believe: all that matters is the living of a good and decent life. This assertion simply means that doctrine is really of no consequence; whereas it is of all importance. The man of the world in his business affairs knows this right enough. If in his business he gets wrong advice, and so believes the state of the market to be what it is not, his affairs will soon go awry. If a saint accepts false teaching, his life will soon manifest its evil effects.

So this warning is very important today, since false doctrine is abroad and knocking at our doors, so to speak, more than ever. To be sound in the faith of Christ is of first importance. Let us not deceive ourselves as to this.

We pass now to Galatians 6: 7, where again we get the admonition, "Be not deceived." And as the point here is the order that God has

instituted in His holy government, both in natural things surrounding us, and in the moral affairs of our lives, we are told that even if we do deceive ourselves we shall not be able to mock God by altering the results. In nature every seed produces, "after his kind," as is repeated ten times in Genesis 1. The Galatian saints were warned that the same law would operate as to their daily conduct, just as also it does with us today.

Though, as born of God, we have a new nature, the old nature — the flesh — is still in us. We pass through our lives like a man walking through a field with two baskets of seed. The basket on his left has in it the things of the flesh. That on his right has in it the things of the Spirit. Everything practically depends upon his action. Into which basket does he dip his hand to scatter seed? Whatever he may think, he will reap according to what he sows, for he cannot mock God by altering or evading His law.

Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can indulge the flesh and yet reap spiritual good and blessing. That will only be reached as we cultivate the things of the Spirit of God. It would be a profitable and healthy thing for each of us, when confronted with some trying and unlooked for event, to ask ourselves, Has there been on my part some sowing to the flesh, which has produced this distressing harvest? At any rate, if we do not deceive ourselves on this point, we shall live our lives with care and sobriety and in the spirit of self-judgment, and reap life everlasting as the result.

Very closely connected with this is the warning given to us by the Apostle James in verse 22 of his first chapter, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." It is very evident that the individual, who likes merely to listen to nice sermons and unfoldings of truth, without any concern as to his life being governed by what he hears, is not likely to deceive anyone else. Even the unbelievers with whom he comes into contact, will soon detect how unreal he is. But he may sadly deceive himself.

Is this warning needed today? Let us hang our heads in shame and confess with sorrow that it is. Needed specially, we judge, by many of us, who have been privileged to hear and to read many valuable and enlightening unfoldings of the truth of God. How far has the truth that we know worked itself out into expression in our lives? Have we ever heard the ironic remark made, that some Christians are marked by "high talk and low walk"? Could such a thing be justly said of ourselves? God forbid that it should be!

We must not deceive ourselves on this point. Truth is made known to us that it may exert its governing effect on our lives. The Pauline epistles, for instance, not only expound truth but in their later chapters apply the truth stated, so that it may govern our lives. In Romans, for instance, the first eight chapters expound the Gospel, but in chapters 12-15, we are instructed in the kind of life that the Gospel demands. The same is true of the Epistle to the Ephesians, where the truth

as to the Church, its nature and privileges is unfolded. From verse 17 of chapter 4, the truth revealed is applied to the behaviour of those who compose the church.

It is an ever-present danger confronting the intellectual and well-instructed believer, that he should be content to become a kind of philosophic theologian, well versed in the higher details of the faith, and its heavenly privileges, without concerning himself as to the manner of life which such heavenly truth demands. We all need to utter as a prayer what some of us have before now sung as a hymn:—

O make us each more holy,
In spirit, pure and meek;
More like to heavenly citizens,
As more of heaven we speak.

Lastly we may glance at 1 John 1: 8, where we read, "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." The Apostle wrote these words about 60 years after the coming of the Spirit of God, at a time when many false notions were found amongst professing Christians, and as a consequence false claims were being made. Notice how we get three times in chapter 1, the words, "If we say . . .", and again three times in the early part of chapter 2, the words, "He that saith" These claims had to be tested.

The true saint is born of God, and if we read carefully the verses 2: 28—3: 9, it is evident that thereby we possess a new nature which is sinless. Yet, while we are still in our present mortal bodies, we have the flesh, with all its sinful

tendencies, still in us. In very easy, yet subtle ways, the flesh works, and hence, "In many things we offend all" (Jas. 3: 2), and this confession is followed by an allusion to what we say, for an idle word can so swiftly escape our lips; indeed the wise man of the Old Testament has told us that, "the thought of foolishness is sin" (Prov. 24: 9).

The entertaining of a foolish thought, to say nothing of the utterance of an idle word, proves that sinful flesh is still in us. To persuade ourselves into thinking otherwise would prove that we are deceiving ourselves as to the true nature of sin, regarding it only as

the committing of outward acts of reprehensible or immoral nature. The holiness to which we are called goes far deeper than merely the avoiding of wrongful outward acts.

He who is not deceived as to this, will confess his sins into the ear of the Father, who is faithful and just, in the light of the work of the Son, to forgive and to cleanse; as the next verse says. Tenderness of conscience and integrity of heart will preserve us from self-deception in this matter.

And the same things, coupled with with humble observance of, and subjection to, the Word of God, will deliver us from all the deceptions we have had before us.

SAMSON AND DELILAH

J. S. BLACKBURN

THE story of Samson is among the most dramatic in literature. The bright early promise, the carefree slipping into temptation, the deepening tragedy, the gigantic climax are scenes which deeply stir the imagination. A most critical portion of the story is a conversation which Samson never heard, and of which he only became aware in the disastrous result. The five lords of the Philistines came stealthily to Delilah and said, "Entice him and see wherein his great strength lieth . . . that we may bind him" (Judges 16: 5).

It is as though we had another glimpse of Satan plotting the downfall of the Lord's servant as in the case of Job. Samson did not see it like this. He saw what was greatly desirable and attractive to him. How could he remember his purpose,

separation unto the Lord, when he looked on Delilah? But the true facts behind the situation lay in the plan, "Entice him — entice him." Let us recall Paul's concern for the Corinthians, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for . . . I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from . . . Christ" (2 Cor. 11: 2, 3). And above all we remember the Lord's prayer for Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but I have prayed for thee" (Luke 22: 31, 32).

There are many things fair and attractive to us, perhaps even the friendship or love of a Philistine, but perhaps also something much more innocent looking but very at-

tractive. Why should we be always vigilant, why not enjoy life like everyone else? But all the time the infernal intention really is, "Entice him—entice her, that we may bind."

This is not a merely human tragedy. Human it certainly is, but not merely human. For Samson had (1) a Divinely ordained purpose in life and (2) he was supernaturally endowed with strength to achieve it. It is in the Christian's likeness to him in these two respects, as well as in the wiles of a crafty enemy, that our real interest in the story lies.

His purpose in life. The purpose for his life was not chosen by himself. Before his birth that purpose was clearly marked out, when the Angel of the Lord said to his mother "He shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Judges 13: 5).

Many Scriptures provide clear guidance as to life's purpose for a Christian. There is a sense in which there is a general purpose for all Christians; and there is a particular purpose for individuals. The general purpose was shown to the Thessalonian believers in the words "to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven." It was given to the Ephesians in that they were "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." The Lord's instruction to His servants collectively in the parable of the nobleman was "Occupy till I come."

But there is also a particular purpose which the Lord has for each of His servants. He said to Peter,

"Feed my Lambs" and to Paul, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee . . . a witness . . . delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light" (Acts 26: 16-18).

It is true that God has a work to do **in you**. Ephesians 3: 20 speaks of "the power that worketh **in us**." His work **in you** is to purge away envy and falsehood and pride and all the works of the flesh; and to produce in you the image and likeness of Christ, to bring the beauty of the Lord upon you. But God has also a work to do **through you**. He has a job for you to do. If any man wills to "do His will, he shall know" (John 7: 17).

To know God's purpose in our lives is particularly important for younger Christians, for it is so easy to think that sometime in the future we shall begin seriously to consider ourselves as the Lord's servants.

His strength for the purpose. The second point which makes the story of Samson applicable to us is that God gave him strength equal to his great task. Wherein lay his great strength can be quite clear to us, however much it was a riddle to the Philistines. It consisted in two things:—

- (i) His separation unto the Lord as a Nazarite.
- (ii) The Spirit of God came upon him.

The essential feature of the Nazarites' vow was separation unto the Lord. The details are given in

Numbers 6. Now there is no such thing as a special class called Nazarites among Christians. But it must be clear to all that this first element is descriptive of something to which all Christians are called, to be separated unto the Lord. Let us dwell on one out of several New Testament passages which speak of this: "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge . . . that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but **unto Him** which died for them, and rose again" (2 Cor. 5: 14, 15). It is a truth like this which transforms the matter, so that it is no mere question of barren theology, but of the effect and influence of the love of Christ.

In many cases the mind and heart are at war with each other; but here is the case in which the heart constrained by the love of Christ controls the mind with the result that "we thus judge." A Christian's strength is in proportion to his separation unto the Lord.

The words "unto the Lord" represent the positive side of Nazariteship. The word "separated" represents the negative side. If he was to be separated **to**, the reverse side of the same coin required that he should be separated **from**. There were three things in which his separation was to be shown:—

- Not to touch the Vine
- Not to poll his hair
- Not to touch a dead body.

These things do not, needless to say, literally apply to Christians, but they plainly represent that side of the Christian life which consists in self-denial. "If any man will

come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16: 24).

The immediate occasion of all Samson's strength was that the **Spirit of the Lord** came upon him. In his childhood it is recorded "the child grew and the Lord blessed him and the Spirit of the Lord began to move him at times." When he was a young man he went down to Timnath and a young lion roared against him and "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand." When he found that his riddle was uncovered, the Spirit of the Lord came on him (was not his purpose to destroy the Philistines?), and he slew thirty Philistines and gave their garments to those who had expounded the riddle. Later, when his countrymen bound him with new cords and delivered him to the Philistines, when they shouted against him, the Spirit of the Lord came suddenly upon him and the cords that were upon his arms "became as flax that was burned with fire and his bands loosed from off his hands," and then with the jawbone of an ass he slew a thousand.

No plainer proof could be given that Samson's Nazariteship was his strength, because through it the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, than the story of his downfall. Delilah bound him in vain until he told her all his heart, when she shaved the seven locks of his head and his Nazariteship was gone. Here is one of the most pitiful verses in all Scripture, "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him."

We also have been given a supernatural power for the purpose of our lives. In every word of the story of Samson there is instruction for us, because the Person who came on Samson as his great strength is the same Person, given to the Christian to be his power. To every Christian comes the Ephesian message, which in an explanatory paraphrase could read "In whom also, on believing, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise." What was the promise? It was, "that He may abide with you for ever." The promise was also "ye shall be clothed with power from on high." When the time of fulfilment came to these first disciples, "they were all with one accord in one place . . . and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 1-4). From that time God the Holy Spirit has come to dwell in every one who has believed in Jesus, the moment he believed. He dwells in you if you are a Christian. Unless we grieve Him and so hinder His work, He will show His mighty work in us. We aim to help one another to the increase of faith in this great fact, and to the removal of the hindrances, so that we also may be filled with the Holy Spirit and power, and show in our lives His fruit of love, joy and peace.

At the same time there is an important difference. Never shall the true believer have to lament that God's Spirit has been taken from him. The Promise excludes it. But the story of Samson brings us face to face with the humbling fact that if our behaviour grieves Him, His Power is unknown by us. We are urged not to grieve the Spirit. The effect of grieving Him is exemplified by the effect of unbelief on the

Lord Jesus. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief."

We have seen the secret of Samson's strength. What was the secret of his weakness? It could be summed up by saying that he was a trifler. There was with him an absence of the realisation of serious purpose. He was a dilettante — one who trifles with a matter with no serious purpose or persistence. It is against such a view of life that the apostles exhorted the new converts at Antioch that "with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord" (Acts 11: 23).

The purpose of God in Samson's life was clear. It was to deliver Israel from the Philistines. But Samson sports along in his strength. If he happens to meet a few Philistines, he knocks them on the head, unless some other thing takes his fancy. If he sees a Philistine who pleases him he forgets his purpose altogether and abandons himself to the gratification of his desires and passions and love of ease. Did he obtain the happiness he sought so carelessly? See Samson with his strength and his sight gone, grinding in the Philistine prison: and see what comes of seeking gratification of the desires of the moment and forgetting his Nazariteship. Samson's true happiness lay, like ours, in the fulfilment of the will of God.

In spite of the disappointment of the scene, there is a strong gleam of encouragement in the story of Samson's closing exploit. Perhaps he is the person of whom it says in Hebrews eleven that "out of weakness he was made strong." Certain-

ly he cried to God and God heard his prayer and gave him a great victory. When the blind slave leaned on the pillars of the vast hall, the glee of the assembled thousands of Philistines is turned to consternation and terror, as his muscles tighten and he feels within himself that the Lord is once more his strength: and the pillars begin to crack and sway: and then "the house fell upon the lords and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life."

Let us therefore watch and pray and the Lord will keep us true to Himself. Our unseen foes are ever ready to entice, taking occasion of our "unguarded hours." Charlotte Elliott's hymn containing that phrase may well close our meditation on Samson, whose "unguarded hours" were so tragically fruitful of failure.

"Principalities and powers
Must'ring their unseen array
Wait for thine unguarded hours
Watch and pray!

Hear, above all, hear thy Lord
Him thou lovest to obey;
Hide within thy heart His word:
Watch and pray!

Watch, as if on this alone
Hung the issue of the day;
Pray that help may be sent down:
Watch and pray!

Charlotte Elliott knew very well that the issue of the day does not depend on this alone. "Now unto **Him that is able to keep you from falling**, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy . . . be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever, Amen."

FRUITS OF THE GOSPEL

J. B. MARSHALL

(Seen in Romans 5: 1-11)

PEACE

PEACE is the result of the work of Christ, as we see in verse 1. He was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification, therefore we have peace with God. In His death our sins are gone, but in His resurrection we have the confirmation that He died for us. Both Peter and Paul (Acts 2 and 13), use the argument that, in contrast to David, who saw corruption, Christ was raised from the dead, thereby proving He knew no

sin, neither was guile found in His mouth. A sure witness that He died for us. It is on this basis we have peace with God. What a boon! What a blessing! The Lord grant we may all bring our praises unto Him who loved us and washed us from our **sins in His own blood**.

HOPE (verse 2)

We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. This is our standing in Christ. We can

now in peace survey all the extent of the grace of God, looking on to the end of the age, when the Lord will call us home to share with Him that eternal home of love. In Colossians 1, we are filled, walk, are strengthened, give thanks unto the Father, are translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, that He may present us to God — holy, unblameable, unproveable in His sight. What a prospect! What a hope! If we have peace at the beginning nothing can satisfy our hearts but to be with Christ in God's eternal rest. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." This is His promise. We wait in hope, until we are conformed to His likeness, to enjoy eternal peace with Him who died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, that our hope might be in God.

LOVE (verse 5)

And what is to sustain us whilst we wait in hope? The love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. In the midst of the trials of the wilderness, when our patience, experience and hope are put to the test, we are assured of His love. Whatever the grief, sorrow, pain or tears, this will always be our succour and will never fail; God's panacea for our every trouble. How and when is this love expressed? When weak and ungodly — Christ died for us. When wilful sinners — Christ died for us. When enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son. Here He would

have us know that nothing now hinders our nearness to God. This reconciliation brings us out of our antagonistic state, into the full enjoyment of the Father's love, through the death of His Son, made known by the Holy Ghost given unto us. In trial gloriously sustained through His love.

JOY (verse 11)

Peace, hope and love from God, most surely bring us to joy, but that joy is in God, the Giver. It is not now the things alone that please us; the heart is overcome with thankfulness for what is done, and finds expression in joyful praise to the Giver.

Peter says, "Whom having not seen ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1: 8).

Paul — "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4: 4).

John — "These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1: 4).

Abraham had more than the promises, in the Person, when the Lord said unto him — "I am thy exceeding great reward," and Moses would refuse the promised land if His presence would not go with them.

May the expression of our lips from thankful hearts be "We also joy in God," and may the God of hope fill us with all joy in believing.

BIBLE STUDY—DANIEL

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 9: 1 — 10: 21)

WHAT is recorded in chapter 9 took place shortly after Darius had overthrown Babylon and taken the kingdom — that is, soon after the experience Daniel had, as narrated in chapter 5. By this time he was of course an old man, and near the end of his life of service, for he had been amongst the first batch of captives, deported by Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah, an older man, had been left in Jerusalem, prophesying there until its destruction years later.

The fall of Babylon was a tremendous upheaval. What effect had it upon Daniel? It moved him to study that portion of the Word of God that was available under his hand. A first-rate example for us today, since the upheavals among the nations during the past fifty years have been more far-reaching than the fall of Babylon. The prophecies of Jeremiah had been committed to writing and were available to him as, "books." We have the completed Bible, which really means **THE BOOK**.

To Daniel these "books" came as "the word of the Lord;" that is, he received Jeremiah's writings as being inspired of God, and hence authoritative, and to be accepted without question. Happy are we if, following his example, we treat our Bible in the same way. The particular passage that affected Daniel so deeply was Jeremiah 25: 8-14, where "desolations" lasting 70 years were predicted. Daniel must at once have realized that the 70

years had nearly run their course, and that deliverance of some kind was near at hand. The effect that this discovery had upon him is most instructive and also searching for us.

Had we been in his place we might have felt greatly exhilarated by the discovery, and inclined to have a time of jubilation. But it was not thus with Daniel; but rather the exact opposite. He was moved to fasting, humiliation, confession and prayer, realizing the great sin of his people which had brought all this judgment upon them. This we see, if verses 4-19 of our chapter be read. He utterly condemned himself as identified with his people, and he vindicated God in His judgments, proclaiming His righteousness in all He had done.

These words of Daniel should be deeply pondered by each of us. Nowhere in the Bible do we find a finer example of thorough-going confession and prayer, though Ezra's prayer recorded in chapter 9 of his book closely resembles it. He made no allusion to the covenant of promise made with Abraham, but placed himself before God on the basis of the covenant of the law of Moses, and the subsequent ministry through the prophets. As to this he confessed complete breakdown and disaster, though personally he was less implicated in it than any in his day.

But thus it always is. Those

deeply implicated in failure and sin are by that very fact rendered insensible to the depths into which they have sunk, while those less involved are painfully alive to the state of things. What is the state of things in the professing church today? A prophetic sketch of church history is given us in Revelation 2 and 3. The last stage is that of Laodicea. Are those deeply involved in its grievous evils likely to bow down in confession and prayer? NO. Only those who are lightly involved will do so. May we all take heed to this.

The things that mark true confession come clearly to light here. The evil is acknowledged without any attempt at excuse or extenuation. The rightness of God's judgments and discipline are fully acknowledged, and the plea that God would grant deliverance, according to His word, is urged, "not . . . for our righteousnesses, but for Thy great mercies." Let us cultivate these excellent features in our day. We too can ask for nothing on the ground of **merit**, but only on the ground of **mercy**. As we contemplate the state of Christendom today, and of our own state too, let us cultivate the spirit of humble confession that marked Daniel.

Such confession and prayer meets with an immediate answer, as we see in verses 20 and 21. Gabriel, the angelic messenger of God, was sent, "to fly swiftly," with an answer that would give Daniel "skill and understanding" as to events that lay ahead, with the assurance that he was in God's estimation a man "greatly beloved." What other saint was

permitted to hear himself so described? Our Lord's words were, "he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt. 23: 12). Here we have an illustration of this. Daniel had humbled himself in exceptional measure, and so he is permitted to know that he is greatly beloved in Heaven. What an exaltation! Had he not been truly humbled such an assurance might have puffed him up to his undoing.

Gabriel was commissioned to reveal to Daniel the prophecy of the "seventy weeks;" the word week here indicating a period of seven, it may be of days, or, as here it clearly is, of years. We have just seen Daniel stirred to confession and prayer by the discovery of the fact that the seventy years of the desolations had nearly run their course; he is now to learn that seventy years, multiplied by seven, were to pass when according to the Divine reckoning, full release and blessing would be reached, as indicated in verse 24.

The contents of this verse must be carefully noted. In the first place, the time indicated is determined upon "thy people and upon thy holy city," and not upon the world in general; though doubtless what transpires upon Israel and Jerusalem will have great effect upon the world in general. Then, in the second place, the end that is to be reached is the establishment of full millennial blessedness. Then it is that the sad story of transgression and sin will be closed; then "the righteousness of the ages" (New Trans.), will be brought in; then the vision and the prophecy will be sealed up, since all is accom-

plished: then "the most holy" or, "the holy of holies" will be anointed, and set apart for God, as is also predicted in such a passage as Ezekiel 43: 12. The end of the seventy years of desolations would only be a very faint and imperfect forecast of this.

The seventy weeks, or 490 years, were however to be divided into three parts, and they were to start when the commandment was issued to restore and to build Jerusalem as a city. The opening verses of Ezra give us the edict of Cyrus to rebuild the **temple**: the edict to rebuild the **city** was that of Artaxerxes, as recorded in Nehemiah 2. This latter was the start of the seventy weeks, predicted here. The first part — seven weeks, or 49 years, — were to be occupied with the rebuilding, and the re-establishment of Israel in the city and land: that is, about up to the time of Malachi. Then were to come the 62 weeks, or 434 years, completing the period "unto the Messiah the Prince."

Here then we have a very clear and definite prophecy, which has been fulfilled. In checking its fulfilment the main difficulty lies in the fact that the Jews calculated their years in a way different from ourselves, which gives rise to complications. We are content to accept the result of an investigation made years ago by the late Sir Robert Anderson, a competent and reliable person. He showed that not only were the 483 years to Christ correct, but that they expired exactly to the day on which He made His formal presentation of Himself to His people, riding on the foal of an ass, as Zechariah had foretold.

And what was the result of this presentation? Just what we have in verse 26. Messiah was "cut off, but not for Himself," or better, as the margin has it, "and shall have nothing." Thus His rejection was foretold, and though He had the title to **everything** on the earth, He had **nothing**: a borrowed stable for His birth; nowhere to lay His head, while He served; a borrowed tomb at the finish. Here then we find the Jews committing themselves to a sin far worse than their breaking of the law and their persistent idolatry. The consequences flowing from this greatest of all sins, are stated at the end of verse 26.

Years ago we heard of a Christian talking to a Jewish Rabbi, and asking him what in their history justified God in condemning them to the disasters and miseries they suffered in Babylon. He admitted at once that it was their law-breaking and idolatry. Then, said the Christian, tell me, what have you done that justifies God in condemning you to far worse disasters and miseries, lasting from A. D. 70, to the present time, with even worse things still in prospect? It was a devastating question, and what could he say? We know what we should at once say; pointing to the Messiah crucified between two thieves.

In this prophecy the result of the cutting off of the Messiah is briefly summed up at the end of verse 26. The more immediate result was to be the destruction of the city and the sanctuary by "the **people** of the prince that shall come." Now this prince is the "little horn," of whom we read in chapter 7, the

head of the Roman Empire in its revived and last stage, whom we identified with the first "beast" of Revelation 13. This Roman despot is still to come, but the Roman **people** were the dominant power in the time of our Lord, and they did destroy Jerusalem in very thorough fashion.

That destruction was but the beginning of God's disciplinary judgments upon them. So the prophecy moves on to "the end thereof," which is to be "with a flood," or "an overflow," indicating, we judge, that the sorrows and persecutions that have followed the Jews through all these centuries will rise to flood-tide height just before the end. The closing words of this verse may be read, "unto the end, war, — the desolations determined." Here is a statement, conveying volumes in a few words.

In the past nineteen centuries war has been the prominent feature. If all reference to it were cut out of our history books, there would be not much history left, and there are wars predicted, that yet have to come. But the Jew and his city are particularly in view in this prophecy, and hence we again meet with the word, "desolations." Our chapter began with a reference to the 70 years' desolations predicted by Jeremiah; now as we reach its end we find another prediction of desolations, which in length and final severity will surpass the former. So Messiah's death was to be followed almost immediately by the destruction of Jerusalem, and ultimately, for a long period, but its length not revealed, by war and desolations.

Having mentioned the end in verse 26, we are carried on to the events of the end in verse 27. Who is the "he," with whom the verse begins? Clearly the "prince that shall come," dominating the revived Roman Empire of the last days. He is going to confirm, not "the covenant" but, "a covenant with the many for one week" (New Trans.). And this is evidently the one week which completes the 70 weeks of this prophecy. This covenant, we judge, will permit the Jews of that day to resume "the sacrifice and the oblation" in Jerusalem, for in the midst of the week he will break the covenant, and the desolations will reach their climax.

In the New Translation the close of the verse reads, "because of the protection of abominations (there shall be) a desolator, even until that the consumption and what is determined shall be poured out upon the desolate." This will be the time of the great tribulation, and the "desolator" we should identify as being the "king of fierce countenance," spoken of in the closing verses of chapter 8. At the end of this seventieth week Messiah will appear in power and great glory, as other scriptures show, and the "everlasting righteousness," or "the righteousness of the ages," will be established. His appearing will completely overthrow the desolator and completely deliver the desolate.

Thus, the day of grace, in which we are living, comes in between weeks 69 and 70. The latter part of verse 26 shows that there is to be an undefined period at that point, marked by war and desolations as

to world affairs and the Jews, but marked also by the going forth of the Gospel, as the New Testament shows. The rejection and the death of the Messiah was thus plainly predicted, with the sorrows of the world in general and of the Jew in particular, as the result of it.

As we commence reading chapter 10, we again find mention of "weeks." They are however to be distinguished from the "weeks" we have just been considering, since a note in the margin of our Bibles indicates that in the Hebrew they are "weeks of days." For those weeks Daniel was mourning and fasting, though the reason for this is not stated.

At the end of chapter 1, we were told that Daniel continued to the first year of Cyrus: what we are about to consider occurred in the third year of Cyrus, so Daniel was now an old man and very near the end of his remarkable career. Our chapter furnishes us with details preparatory to the prophetic revelations made in chapters 11 and 12. They are very instructive, as showing us the way in which angelic beings may act as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1: 14).

Verses 5-9, describe the angelic visitation and the effect it had upon Daniel. We may remark that uniformly when angelic beings assume a form visible to human eyes, they appear as men. Nevertheless that which is supernatural marks them, reminding the one who sees them of the presence of God. It was so on this occasion, and the

description given in verse 6 reminds us of John's description of his Lord, as recorded in Revelation 1: 14, 15. Yet the angel here was not the Lord, as verse 13, we think, makes plain. Still it put Daniel on his face and prostrate.

There is also a resemblance between this scene and what took place at the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Then his companions saw the light but did not hear the words that were spoken though they heard the sound. Here the men with him saw nothing but they were filled with trembling, and fled to hide themselves. Fallen man cannot stand in the presence of God, and even a saint — whether Daniel in the Old Testament or John in the New — falls down "in a deep sleep," or "as one dead." We know God as our Father, but we must never forget His supreme majesty as God.

In the first year of Darius, Daniel was addressed as a man "greatly beloved," as we saw in the last chapter. We have now come to the third year of Cyrus, and again he is thus addressed twice, showing he had not forfeited the earlier description. And why was this, seeing that so often saints backslide, and do not maintain the life of godliness? The answer, we think, is found in verse 12. In his devoted life Daniel had maintained two things.

In the first place he had set his heart to understand. How often is this lacking amongst us today! Is it our fervent desire to understand what God has revealed, not with the head only, but with the heart? Daniel loved his God, and loved his

people, so that what God made known deeply affected him. If love were more fervent with us, we should be setting our **hearts** to understand the truth made known to us.

In the second place he "chastened," or "humbled" himself before God, while he sought the understanding. Here again we have to challenge ourselves. It is fatally easy to desire a large understanding of Divine truth because it confers a certain prominence and importance upon the person who possesses it. In reality all truth, if apprehended in the heart, **humbles** us. This is exemplified in the Apostle Paul. Writing of God's great thoughts as to the church in Ephesians 3, he is "**less than the least** of all saints." In 2 Corinthians 12, after telling how he had been caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable things, he says, "though I be **nothing**." Did we chasten ourselves more truly before God, we should soon have a larger understanding of His truth.

Verses 12 and 13 show that answers to our prayerful desires may be delayed by adverse powers in the unseen world. Satan has his angels, and it appears that some may be deputed by him to hinder God's work in certain kingdoms. The prince of the kingdom of Persia, who withstood the holy angel speaking to Daniel, was doubtless a fallen angelic being. Michael, elsewhere called the archangel, came to help him. The first verse of

chapter 12 shows us that Michael is specially commissioned to act on behalf of the children of Israel, and hence he intervened on this occasion. In the last verse of our chapter he is called, "your prince."

In the angelic world there was also "the prince of Grecia," as verse 20 shows; but in spite of these adverse powers the messenger of God had come to Daniel, and lifting him up had strengthened him to receive the communication that God was now sending him. Conflict in the angelic realm had still to take place with the princes of Persia and Grecia — the empire that was presently to overthrow the Persian empire—but the instruction of this humble and devoted servant of God took precedence, as to time, over even that.

He had come to show Daniel, "that which is noted in the Scripture of Truth." He spoke as if it had already been so noted, but we may indeed thank God that it has been noted in the Bible — the Scripture of Truth — which we hold in our hand and can read today. What was thus conveyed to Daniel is noted in the chapters that follow, and as we read them we shall see that some things revealed have already taken place, and some remain to be fulfilled, as we have just seen in the prophecy of the seventy weeks. What has been so accurately fulfilled assures us that the important things, that remain to be fulfilled, will all take place with equal accuracy in their season.

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

J. S. BLACKBURN

(Notes of an Address)

THE expression, "The Inspiration of Scripture," comes from 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17, which reads, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The word "inspiration" thus comes directly from Scripture and it means simply, "God-breathed." The syllable "in" could mislead us. Just as the origin and power for speech is the breath coming **out** through the organs of speech, so the origin and power of the Holy Scripture is entirely from God who is the Actor in giving us this Word. It means "God-breathed" in the sense that the Scriptures are the very words of God and there are many other passages which present to us the kind of claim for the Holy Scriptures that this passage makes.

To begin with, let us think especially of the word "Scripture." An outstanding passage is John 10: 34, 35, when the Lord Jesus Christ (we may reverently say) is in disputation with the Jews. In answering their charge that He blasphemed in calling Himself God he said "Is it not written . . . "Ye are gods? unto whom the word of God came," but he puts in a little parenthesis, "and the Scripture cannot be broken." Thus the words of our Lord Jesus Christ are "Scripture cannot be broken." Again, remembering the word Scripture means writing, we have the expression very often in

the Gospels, "It is written," calling attention to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecies. "Thus it is written," He said, commanding and commissioning his disciples, "and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead" (Luke 24: 46). There can be no possible appeal against this for those who accept the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. In His own life, in His own conflict, in His speaking to us and to His disciples, the last word is said when He says, "It is written."

There are minor expressions in the New Testament, relevant to our theme. Romans 9: 17 reads, "The Scripture saith unto Pharaoh," and then gives the very words of God. Thus the Holy Scriptures themselves describe their words as the words of God. No more full and absolute statement of the authority of the Scripture, or the esteem in which we hold the Scriptures, and no claim which it makes for itself could be greater than this, that the words of Scripture are the words of God.

Someone will say, all this relates to the Old Testament, because every time the Holy Scripture is quoted in the New Testament the reference is to the Old Testament. It is not strictly true however that every New Testament reference to Scripture refers to the Old Testament. Turn to 2 Peter, 3: 15, 16, where Peter says of the very Paul who had withstood him to his face, "Even as our beloved brother Paul . . . hath writ-

ten unto you . . . in all his epistles . . . which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures." In other words, all the letters of Paul are Scripture. The New Testament affords several instances in which we see how this statement that the words of Scripture are the words of God applies also to the New Testament. Consider the dogmatism of the opening chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians. "Though . . . an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel . . . than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." Think also of 1 Corinthians 14: 37, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

We have been looking at the way our Lord Jesus Christ regarded the Scriptures and at the claim Scripture makes for itself. It is no exaggeration to state that claim in this form: the words of Scripture are the words of God; and this, of course, is another way of stating that Scripture claims for itself **verbal** inspiration.

A young man said to me the other day, "In all the secret doubts through which a Christian passes, it seems to me more and more true, that the point at which he comes to an end, the only point at which he can get a settlement, is in how he regards the Holy Scriptures." To regard the words of Scripture as the Words of God is no academic exercise, but it is a foundation on which we can build in life and in death.

Take for example the assurance of salvation. Perhaps someone has recently heard the Gospel, and has

deliberately taken the step of coming to Christ saying "Just as I am, without one plea . . . O Lamb of God, I come." It could have taken place in a large meeting where there was a great deal of emotion. Soon afterwards, probably in quietness, a voice from within will say "You don't think that matters of such magnitude can be settled like that. You don't really think that anything happened, there and then, under these circumstances, that can make the kind of difference you have been led to believe." How can that person find peace? A settlement can only be found where every Christian finds assurance of salvation, in the simple word, "It is written." God said it, and God cannot lie. Our **salvation** depends upon the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross. Our **assurance** of it however depends upon the fact that, "It is written," and since it is written in the Scripture, God has said it.

I remember hearing a man I know very well tell how in a Christian conference the word came to him, "Is it time for you to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste? . . . Go up to the mountain and bring wood and build the house" (Haggai 1: 4-8). Since that time he has been away for many years in a foreign land serving the Lord. How could it be, that upon words written in a book, a man's life could be laid down for the Lord, when it might have been devoted to his own pleasure? It happened because for this man the words of Scripture are the words of God.

We all know that the truth of the Verbal Inspiration of Scripture has

been attacked, and these attacks have been of two main kinds. First, they have sometimes rested on literary and historical grounds. Attacks of this kind were at first connected with Germany in general and in particular with a man named Wellhausen. These are mainly infidel views although they pretend to be Christian and I think it is fair to say they are largely discredited by Christian men in these days, whatever their profession may be. They have been replaced in theological circles by a more insidious form of weakness rather than flat error on this question which makes everything of the Word of God and the Revelation of God but is quite indefinite upon the ultimate truth that the words of Scripture are the Words of God. It might be admitted that God has revealed Himself in His redemptive acts such as His guidance and redemption of His people Israel, or in the great redemptive acts in which He burst into history in the Person and the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. But in such circles verbal inspiration is still not accepted. We can be assured, however, that whatever difficulties arguments of a literary and historical kind may appear to present, they cannot stand against verbal inspiration in the presence of the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second kind of attack has been based upon Science. We may say, however, a very large number of Christian people believe that they can see quite plainly how these two kinds of teaching (one of which, that is Scripture, is absolutely authoritative to us), can both be faced with confidence.

Other difficulties often arise in the minds of those who accept the supreme importance of verbal inspiration. Attentive reading of the Bible shows that the human individualities of the writers are displayed and each has his characteristic choice of words. Does this impair the Divine Authority of those words? It has been said that if the truth of Scripture is like gold, then the human writers are like the mould into which the gold is poured. What is then in the mould is gold, but there is no mould in the gold, and this illustrates how the truth of Scripture is not impaired by being cast in a form imparted by a human mould.

There is a difficulty presented in the fact that we have the Bible in **texts** which have been transmitted over thousands of years, differing slightly, yet preserved by the providence of God, and we have the Bible in **translations**. How are we going to get over the difficulty of possible difference between the Texts and Translations, since it is the original Scriptures which have the divine authority we are speaking of. In answer to the question, we are in dependence upon sound Christian scholarship.

No one would take any harm in staking his life upon the Authorised Version. In the first place, the differences between texts and translations are extremely small. The greatest of all scholars who have studied the text of the New Testament wrote the words, "It is difficult to escape an exaggerated impression as to the proportion which the words subject to variation bear to the whole text . . . and also as to their intrinsic importance . . . the

great bulk of the words of the New Testament . . . are free from variation . . . The words . . . subject to doubt can hardly amount to more than one thousandth part of the whole New Testament."

In the second place, if we believe that the Scriptures are the Word of God and God has superintended their composition in a perfect way, that would be a very poor faith indeed in God, which did not recognize that He providentially preserved them to us through the copying and translation processes.

If frequency of occurrence is a guide, then the question of the Apocrypha is one of great interest. In Luke 24 it is settled for us when the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to the two on the way to Emmaus. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself" (verse 27). "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 (1) the Law of Moses and (2) in the Prophets and (3) in the Psalms, concerning me (verse 44). The Hebrew Old Testament is now, and always has been, divided into three parts, The **Law** (that is the five books of Moses) the **Prophets** (including the historical books, as we would call them, and the major and minor prophets) and in the third place the **Other Writings** (loosely and generally called Psalms, because of the fact that the Psalms are the central portion). The Hebrew Old Testament did not include the Apocrypha. No book of the Apocrypha was ever written in the Hebrew at all. Now the Lord Jesus Christ

specifically says, "All Scripture," and He details these three parts of the Hebrew Bible, but does not give His authority to the Apocrypha. The principal ground on which we accept the authority of the canon of the Old Testament excludes the Apocrypha. There is no reason why it should not be read from the historical point of view. Particularly the books of the Maccabees are both historically reliable and interesting, but the great point to be seen is that they are not part of the Scriptures in which we recognise verbal inspiration. Since the Apocrypha is not Scripture therefore the reading of it is no better or worse than reading any other writings, being liable to all kinds of human error.

It has been said that the Word of God only becomes really the Word of God when it becomes operative in the heart, but this is plainly in error, though doubtless said with a good intention, for we all want the Word to be more operative in our hearts. A sword does not become a sword by cutting me, and the Bible is authoritative as God's Word whether it affects me or not.

Our aim is not to **prove** anything but rather to explain. Our grounds for believing that the words of Scripture are the Word of God are not that we have investigated every possible difficulty that could have arisen, and have satisfied ourselves that they can be solved. It is not for these reasons that we believe in the Inspiration of Scripture. If God has formed my mind and if God has also written the Holy Scripture it is perfectly natural to believe that the Word of God will have authority which my mind in its truest moments must admit, the

authority of the voice of God. The fact that this does not occur until my mind is enlightened by the Holy Ghost is no objection. The best way to prove that a key is designed to open a door is to show it fits the lock. The real reason why we accept the authority of the Holy Scripture is that as a key fits the lock so in conscience, heart and will, the Holy Scripture fits us men because we were created by the Author of Holy Scripture. You do not need to defend a lion, just let it out and whenever we are truly confronted with Holy Scripture, it proves its own power.

The Holy Spirit's work in connection with inspiration is described in 1 Corinthians 2: 9-13. It might help to ask first of all, exactly what does the passage describe? It does not describe the process of the entrance of a sinner into the knowledge of God. The process described is the action of God who having prepared in eternity, in the counsels of His own heart, the most wonderful things in Christ for those who love Him, has provided a revelation of them in words. It describes how we have a revelation, which is the very Word of God. It is important to be clear about how we come to have a book, concerning which we have built our lives upon the fact that it

contains the very words of God. We can here only note that there are three main parts to the process which is detailed. In verse 10 concerning the deep things of God we read that they have been **revealed** by His Spirit. In verse 12, we learn that they are **known** only by God's Spirit that has been given to us. The third part is in verse 13. They are taught in the words of the Apostle, and therefore in the Holy Scripture, in **words** which were given by the Spirit of God to match the truths themselves.

There are several references in these verses to "us" and "we." Verse 10 "unto us by His Spirit;" Verse 12 "now we have received . . . that we might know;" Verse 12 "we speak." A perusal of the passage itself will indicate that while in a general sense the truths that are here stated apply to every Christian, the "us" and the "we," of these passages apply precisely to the Apostles and Prophets, through whom this process went on. They were the persons to whom these truths were **revealed**, who would **know** them by the Holy Ghost given, and to whom were given the very **words** of Scripture, to be **received** and **known** by those who have received the Spirit and so are "spiritual" and not "natural."

THE WORD OF GOD

IN these days, when the Word of God is called in question, it is blessed to think how a single verse of Scripture was sufficient for Christ for authority, and sufficient for the devil, who had not a word to say in reply.

Beware of novel interpretations of Scripture: cream lies on the surface. Study the Bible . . . with prayer. Seek the Lord there, and not knowledge — that will come too; but the heart is well directed in seeking the Lord.

There is no craft of Satan that the Word of God is not sufficient to meet.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

J. HOUSTON

IF we read verses 5-8, of Revelation 1, we find Christ presented to us under various titles. He is "Jesus Christ;" "the Faithful Witness;" "the First begotten of the dead;" "the Prince of the kings of the earth;" "Alpha and Omega;" "the Beginning and the Ending."

This title, "Alpha and Omega" is repeated in Revelation 22: 13, as applying to our Lord, as the One who is coming, and it is all-embracing — everything from beginning to end being comprehended. All things have their being in Him, for they were created by Him and for Him, as we are told in Colossians 1: 16. The next verse tells us that "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." All that is for God's glory and man's good is in Him; and when all things have run their appointed course, and fulfilled their appointed purpose, He will bring in finality. Thus He is the end of all, just as He is the beginning of all.

Alpha is the first letter of the Greek alphabet: Omega is the last. Hence to John in Patmos He said, "I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore . . . and have the keys of hell and of death." He was in death; now He is out of it, alive for evermore, and the complete Master of the situation in every sphere. The greatness of His Person is clearly revealed in these scriptures. When we consider Him as "the First," we see Him as the Creator, for, "without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1: 3). As "the Last"

He is the One to bring to an end all God's ways with man. All things are given into His hand, as John 3: 35 tells us; hence He is the Judge of all, and will ultimately bring everything into subjection to God for His glory.

So again, when the eternal state is reached, as recorded in Revelation 21: 1-8, we find Him saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." In this scripture the end is reached. All is done. God is glorified in the Son: the Son glorified by God: the redeemed glorified for ever. Wonderful termination to all God's ways in grace!

It is edifying to see how all things that are of the first man, Adam, have been brought to an end. Christ not only died for sin but "He died unto sin once," and in His death "our old man" has been crucified. Hence we have died to sin in His death, and are so to reckon. Thus we are in the happy position of being set free from sin, and no longer live in it. This precious truth we learn in Romans 6. His death has also set us free from the law, as Romans 7 makes plain. We are delivered from it that we may be "married to Another," and come under His control. Thus it is that for us, and in Him, the old order of things has passed, and indwelt by His Spirit, we find ourselves in glorious liberty, according to Romans 8.

He will bring to a complete end all the sad results of sin. He is the end of death, for, "there shall be no more death." He is the end of suffering, for there shall be no more

sorrow nor crying nor pain. These former things are to pass away, when He makes all things new. He who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end will bring it to pass, when He shall say, "It is done." And to assure our hearts of it all, He condescends to our weak faith and says, "These words

are true and faithful."

Thus, finality is reached. God is glorified in His glorious Son, and man is glorified in Him. God then will rest in His love, and His rest shall be ours; just as the knowledge of these things brings rest to our hearts today.

"HIS DECEASE"

J. T. MAWSON

"**T**HERE talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias; who appeared in glory, and spake of His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9: 30, 31).

If Moses and Elias had been alone, when they appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration, they might have talked of the way God had honoured them, when He withdrew them from the sphere of their labours, but in the presence of their Lord, they must only think and talk of **His decease**.

How would He depart when His work was done? Both of them had been servants, and now He who was "in the form of God," had taken upon Himself "the form of a Servant," (Phil. 2: 7). They had broken down. Moses had failed in simple obedience to God, and in patience with His people. Elijah had become discouraged, as though God had less power than the pagan Jezebel, but of Jesus it was prophesied, "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth . . . He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (Isa. 42: 1-4). And in Matthew 12: 17-21, these words are quoted of Him.

In contrast with Him, Moses had

failed, and Elijah had been **discouraged**, yet they had been honoured in their exodus. How will His exodus take place? — that of the Servant-Son, who filled the heart of God with continual and infinite delight? They talked of His exodus — of "His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem." Mark the word **accomplish**. It means to fulfil — to bring to completion — to be so perfected that nothing is lacking. There is no flaw, no failure in it. He had come to do the work that God had given Him to do, and in John's record of the crucifixion we learn that it was done. His own words were, "It is finished."

The Servant of Jehovah as the Lamb of God had now offered Himself up as the great sacrifice for the taking away of the sin of the world. He had then drained the cup His Father had given Him: He had glorified God on the earth, maintaining that glory on the cross; so with the suffering behind Him, just before He yielded up His spirit, He

uttered the triumphant word, **It is finished.**

We but feebly enter into the meaning of this great word, but as we meditate upon it we are brought into communion with our God, for

in that finished work His attributes have been vindicated, His nature revealed, and our redemption secured. In His finished work, "Mercy and truth are met together: righteousness and peace have kissed each other" (Psa. 85: 10).

DOTHAN

G. R. BELL

DOTHAN is mentioned twice in the Holy Scriptures, the first occasion is in Genesis 37, the second in 2 Kings 6.

Genesis 37 brings before us the well known story of Joseph and his brethren. In verse 13 we have him sent by his father Jacob to see how his brethren fared. He found them at Dothan, it was there they conspired against him, it was there they cast him into the pit, there they sold him to the Ishmeelites who brought him to Egypt. In short, Joseph was rejected at Dothan. That Joseph is a type pointing to our blessed Lord there is no doubt, rejected by His own and cast out by the way of the cross.

Firstly then, Dothan is a figure of the world as the place where our Lord Jesus Christ has been rejected and cast out, and this is where we are today. If we only take one step in faithfulness to Him we will find it to be true that "Our Lord is **now** rejected." Have we really learnt to regard the world in this way? Surely the better we learn the lesson the more faithful will be our footsteps; the more separate will be our walk.

Turning now to our Scripture in

2 Kings 6, we find Elisha at Dothan. Elisha had on more than one occasion frustrated the purpose of the King of Syria, thus saving the King of Israel from disaster. The enemy having been informed that the prophet was the cause of his repeated failures, now surrounds Dothan with his armies to capture Elisha.

The servant of Elisha was greatly distressed when he saw the enemy host round about them. Not being marked by his master's faith, but rather by sight, he turned to the prophet with a cry of despair, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?" (verse 15). Do we not all at times feel like that young man?

We have been pointing out that we find ourselves in the world where our "True Joseph" has been rejected, and where enemies surround us. The world, the flesh and the devil are arrayed against us. As we bear witness to our absent Lord we meet with the unbelief and scorn of men. Are we like the young man in our chapter? Is our cry one of despair? Do we look at things merely by sight? Perhaps we had better move on and listen to the words of the prophet to his despairing servant. "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (verse 16).

Fear not! how simple, yet how sweet. How many a saint has been encouraged by these words. Many were the occasions when they fell from the lips of our Lord while here below, comforting many a heart. These are the words which were encouragement to John when imprisoned on the Isle called Patmos, as we see in Revelation 1: 17. We proceed further with our verse — "For they that be with us are more than they that be with them." As we read these words our minds turn readily to the words of the Apostle Paul, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8: 31). The writer in this epistle having told of the Gospel of God, bringing Justification, Deliverance and Sonship and much more beside, turns to face every foe; throws out this challenge to the universe.

Perhaps as we read these words of the prophet we are also reminded of the stirring words of the Apostle John, as he warns of the false prophets, and the spirit of anti-christ which even in his day was already in the world. In writing to the saints he says, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4: 4).

The Apostle here refers to the Holy Spirit which indwells every Christian, the power which will enable us to overcome all false teaching and instruct us in all that is true. So also is He the only power for Christian walk, witness and service, indeed in every sphere of our lives we are dependent on the Spirit.

Oh! that we realised more, in this our day the gain of having the Holy Spirit dwelling "with us and in us."

Another wonderful resource is the present work of our Lord Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest who succours us and intercedes for us every moment of our journey here below. So are not the words of the prophet true of us today "They that be with us are more than they that be with them."

To return to our passage in 2 Kings, how blessed it is to listen to the brief prayer of Elisha for his servant "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes that he may see" (verse 17). What is more, the prophet's prayer was answered, for "the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw, and behold the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (verse 17).

It was a happy day for each of us when we first put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour and were able to say like the man in John 9, "One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." However, it is equally blessed as Christians to have our eyes opened to see the vastness of God's resources, and to lay hold upon them in faith for our profit day by day.

I do not think the young man would despair any longer, and neither should we. If it be true we are in "Dothan," the world where Christ has been rejected, let us count upon God's help; let us be

more subject to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and draw more largely from the supplies of grace in our

Lord Jesus Christ. Thus may we go forward, "More than conquerors through Him that loved us."

BIBLE STUDY—DANIEL

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 11: 1 — 12: 13)

WE now come to the last of the prophetic revelations, received and recorded by Daniel. The opening verses of chapter 11, indeed the larger part of the chapter, give us predictions that very evidently have long since been fulfilled. If our readers will glance at the close of verse 35, they will see the words, "to the time of the end, because it is yet for a time appointed." Then turning back to chapter 9: 26, they will see the words, "unto the end;" and at that point came the undisclosed gap in the prophecy of the seventy weeks — as we now know, lasting over nineteen centuries — before the seventieth week arrives. So it is, we believe, here, and only when we reach verse 36 of our chapter does the prophecy suddenly move on to the time of the end, and to the last days.

The three Persian kings who were to "stand up," according to verse 2, are evidently the three mentioned in Ezra 4: 5-7, known in history as Cambyses, Smerdis, and Darius Hystaspes. The fourth, "richer than they all," would be Xerxes, who was so intoxicated by his own greatness that he attacked Greece, and stirred up the "mighty king" of verse 3 — Alexander the Great — to humble his pride and shatter his kingdom; gaining for himself

"great dominion," according to his own will.

History records how brief was Alexander's dominion, for he died when still young, and his kingdom was divided between four of his generals, as is clearly foretold in verse 4. Their powers however were far more limited and "not according to his dominion." From verse 5 onward, our attention is directed to the doings of two out of these four; the king of the south and the king of the north respectively. If we enquire why the prophecy concentrates on these two only, the answer surely is that only these two meddled with and oppressed the Jews back in the land. Their kingdoms were north and south of Palestine; what we should now call Syria and Egypt, and the first kings were Seleucus and Ptolemy.

The New Translation renders verse 5 as, "The king of the south, who is one of his princes, shall be strong; but [another] shall be stronger than he." Both of these princes of Alexander would be strong, but the northern one the stronger of the two. This exactly came to pass.

Verse 6 begins, "And in the end of years," and we at once travel on

some distance into history, for the prophecy does not concern itself here with individual kings. It is just "the king of the north," or "of the south," though different individuals may be indicated. What is plainly foretold is the state of friction and warfare that continued for many years between these two opposing powers, to the trouble and discomfort of the Palestinian Jews, who were located between them. We may say therefore that verses 6-20 forecast their evil schemings and fightings up to a point when the power of Rome became manifest, before which the then king of the north should "stumble and fall, and not be found." His successor had to be a mere "raiser of taxes," to meet the demands of Rome. Infidels have insisted this chapter must have been written after the events, so accurately does it foretell what actually took place.

Reaching verse 21, we read that after this "raiser of taxes" there would "stand up a vile person," marked equally by cunning flattery and by warlike violence, and his doings and the things that sprang out of his doings occupy us until we come to the end of verse 36. We have here again, we believe, the man presented to us in chapter 8: 9, as the "little horn" rising out of one of the four kingdoms into which the Grecian dominion was divided — the man known to history as Antiochus Epiphanes. His evil doings are dwelt upon at some length, we believe, because he acted with such violence against the Jews as to make him a type or forecast of the king of the north, who in the last days will be their great adversary.

This is seen especially in verses 28-32. In the first of these verses, "his heart shall be against the holy covenant." Then for a time his plans are spoiled by "the ships of Chittim;" that is, an expedition from Rome. This was the occasion that some of us may remember hearing about in our school days, when tired with his falsity the Roman leader drew a circle about him where he stood, and demanded an answer before he stepped out of it. This it was that angered him, and as he dared not attack the Romans, he vented his spleen on the Jews, and had "indignation against the holy covenant."

Amongst the Jews of his days were found some "that forsake the holy covenant," as verse 30 indicates, and establishing contact with these, he proceeded to pollute the sanctuary in a violent way, as verse 31 predicts. He overturned the whole order of things in the temple at Jerusalem, stopping the sacrifices to Jehovah in the endeavour to make all venerate a false image, which is described here as "the abomination that maketh desolate." Then he corrupted and gained to his side by flatteries "such as do wickedly against the covenant."

Let us notice that no less than four times the "covenant" is mentioned in these verses, and on three of these occasions the word "holy" is connected with it. What God has covenanted and decreed is always the object of the devil's attack, and this man was without a doubt an agent of Satan in his efforts to subvert what remained of the worship of the one true God at Jerusalem.

But in those days there were to be found not only those who were wicked and whom he could corrupt but also "people that do know their God," and, "that understand among the people." This is ever God's way. He does not leave Himself without a witness of some kind, and here we have a prediction of what actually happened in those dark days. The Maccabees were raised up, zealous and God-fearing men, and under their leadership there was ultimately a deliverance, though not without much loss and suffering, as is indicated in verse 33.

In the closing verses of Hebrews 11, particularly in verses 36-38, we find allusions to the sufferings of saints of a bygone age which we can hardly identify from Old Testament history, and it may be that the reference is to saints who suffered in this period of trial, after the days of Malachi. Their testings were intensified by the failure and apostasy of some who were men of understanding, as verse 35 of our chapter predicted; but this would have a purging effect upon those who did really stand firmly for God.

This mixed state of things is to persist, "to the time of the end." Thus it is stated, and thus it has been — particularly as regards the Jew, who is before us in the prophecy here. There is to be in this matter "a time appointed," but no indication is given of how long the time is to be. We turn to such New Testament passages as Ephesians 3: 4, 5, and Colossians 1: 25, 26, to find that in our epoch of Gospel grace going out to the Gentiles, God is working out designs that He had from eternity, but which were not

revealed in Old Testament times. In the wisdom of God however the prophecies were so worded as to leave room for the things subsequently to be made known without any collision of fact. An illustration of this, often referred to, is in Isaiah 61: 2, where both Advents are alluded to in one verse. The same thing may be said of chapter 9: 26, of our book, and of the verse before us here.

In verse 36, "the king" is suddenly introduced to us, and glancing at verse 40 we discover that his dominion will be "at the time of the end," and also that his kingdom will be found in a land lying between the kings of the south and the north. We conclude therefore that he is a king who will dominate Palestine in the last days, and of whom we read further in the New Testament. He is to be identified, we believe, with the second beast of Revelation 13, and with that false Messiah, coming "in his own name," whom the Lord Jesus predicted in John 5: 43.

The doings of this "king" are predicted in verses 36-39, and the leading feature is this:- he "shall do according to his will." Now sin is lawlessness — the creature breaking loose from the control of the Creator, in order to assert and accomplish its own will. In 2 Thessalonians 2: 3, we read of "that man of sin," who is to be revealed when He who restrains is removed, and if that passage be compared with this, we at once see some striking resemblances, for in both the leading features of this coming great one are self-will and self-exaltation.

Let us each remember for our own

soul's good that there is nothing more destructive of true Christian life than self-will. We are called to do, not our own wills but the will of God. We are called to a life of obedience, for we are to have in us the mind that was in Christ, which led Him even to death. His was the life of self-humiliation, the exact opposite to the self-exalting mind which was in Adam, and which characterizes the flesh in each one of us.

Two expressions in verse 37 indicate that this king will be a Jew, for he disregards "the God of his fathers," and also "the desire of women," for every typical Jewish woman desired to be the mother of the Messiah. He will speak "marvellous things" against the true God, assuming a God-like position for himself. Yet he will honour "the god of forces," or "of fortresses;" an allusion we think, to what is plainly seen in Revelation 13, where the second beast is the leader in religious apostasy but is dependent upon the first beast for worldly power and military might.

Support he will need, for the kings of both south and north will be antagonistic, more particularly the king of the north, as we see in the closing verses of the chapter. In Isaiah he is spoken of as the Assyrian, and "the overflowing scourge" (28: 15), and Zechariah 14: 1-3 appears to refer to the end of this northern adversary, as predicted in the two verses that close our chapter. At the outset he will have great success, overflowing many lands, save Edom, Moab and Ammon, who are reserved to be dealt with more directly by a restored Israel. He will even overpower

Egypt, and then tidings from the north-east will lead him to Palestine, and he will "plant the tents of his palace between the sea and the mountain of holy beauty," (New Trans.). And then, when his achievements seem to reach their climax, "he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." In this terse yet graphic way was revealed to Daniel what is stated in Zechariah 14: 3. Jehovah goes forth to the conflict, in the person of the Lord Jesus. The adverse northern king is crushed, and comes to his end.

There will be however other antagonistic powers beside the kings of north and south and the false Messiah-king in Jerusalem. All will be dealt with for "at that time" as the opening verse of chapter 12 declares God is going to resume His dealings with Israel in His grace. Michael the archangel is specially commissioned to act on their behalf, and he stands up to deal with things, and two great events come to pass. First, there will be a complete deliverance to Daniel's people.

This time of great trouble is evidently the time our Lord referred to in His prophetic discourse as the "great tribulation," (Matt. 24: 21), after He had spoken of "the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet." In this He referred to verse 11 of this twelfth chapter, and not to verse 31 of chapter 11, which though something of the same kind clearly refers to what took place under Antiochus Epiphanes. This verse in Daniel 12 is the first definite prophecy of this fearful time of tribulation which lies ahead.

And it is worthy of note that this

first prediction clearly relates it to the Jew, as also does the Lord's prophecy, recorded in Matthew 24 and Mark 13. It will be the climax of God's governmental dealings with that people, who rejected and crucified their Messiah, though as Revelation 3: 10 indicates, all the world will be affected by it, since the Gentiles as a secondary power had a hand in the death of Christ. In that tribulation there will be not only terrible evils, proceeding from both man and Satan, but the outpouring of the wrath of God, as revealed in Revelation 16. As Christians we have the assurance that, "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5: 9).

Our scripture tells us that an elect Israel will be delivered out of the tribulation — "every one that shall be found written in the book;" the book of life, as the New Testament speaks of it. The awakening that is predicted in verse 2, is evidently similar to that of which Ezekiel 37 speaks. Many a Jew will be asleep as regards their God, and buried in the dust of the nations. They will awake, some marked by faith to enter into the life everlasting of the **millennial** age; others still unbelieving to enter into judgment. It will be with them as it will be with Gentile peoples, as the Lord made known in Matthew 25: 31-46.

It will also be, as verse 3 shows, a time of reward for the wise and diligent in the service of their God. Let us all take good note of this, for the principles on which God deals with His servants do not vary. There is reward for the "wise,"

those who have a God-given understanding of His truth and ways, so as to instruct others also; and a reward also for those who are active in the winning of souls, so as to turn them into the way of righteousness. Thus what we may call the contemplative side of Christian life and the active side of service are to be equally balanced.

Verse 4 closes the prophetic communication that began with chapter 11, and it corroborates the statement that from verse 36 onwards we have revealed things that will come to pass at "the time of the end." Though made known to Daniel and recorded by him, it was to be as a shut book till the end time was reached. During the last century or so these things have been much studied and the light of them has shone forth. This should confirm us in the thought that the end of the age is near.

And the closing words of this verse should confirm us even further: "many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Our age is strikingly marked by both these things. Our powers of locomotion have increased beyond the dreams of our forbears — on land and sea, and in the air. But it is all to and from. We fly thither, and then back we come to our starting point, and end where we began. The increase of knowledge also is prodigious, even alarming in the field of nuclear energy, as everybody knows. Knowledge — YES: but, wisdom — NO. Man is just the same sinful creature as of old — deceived by the adversary.

When we consider the dealings of God, particularly in judgment, the

question that always arises in our minds is — How long? That was the enquiry between these angelic beings — appearing as men — that had conveyed the prophecy to Daniel. The answer is given in verse 7, and it plainly shows that the question was how long to the end of the time of trouble once it had begun? The answer was, “a time, times, and an half;” which we understand to signify, $3\frac{1}{2}$ years; doubtless the second half of the seventieth week, indicated in chapter 9. When that last week is finished all power will have departed from “the holy people;” that is, the God-fearing remnant in Israel. They will be marked by an extremity of weakness, and the adversaries will have reached apparently the peak of their power and splendour. Then the sudden appearing of the Lord in glory and might; His poor saints delivered; the adversaries irretrievably crushed.

Thus it has ever been, and thus it will yet be. Israel in Egypt, for instance. When Jacob went into Egypt in the days of Joseph he and his children were an honoured people. The years passed and they fell lower and lower, until they were a crowd of slaves under the taskmaster's lash. Then God acted in judgment. His powerless people delivered: the powerful enemy completely overthrown. Thus it will be for Israel at the opening of the millennial age; and we do not anticipate it will be otherwise when the saints are raptured to glory, as predicted in 1 Thessalonians 4. They will not have reached such a state of spiritual opulence that the angels might be tempted to think that they deserved it; but the very reverse. It will be the crowning act, not of

merit, but of mercy, as we see in Jude 21.

Daniel's question, in verse 8, finds an echo in all our hearts. It now concerns not the time of the end, but what is to be the final outcome of all this human wickedness and of the dealings of God? Daniel was a godly Jew of a representative sort, and to such at that time the real significance was “closed up and sealed.” We are told in 1 Peter 1: 12, how Old Testament prophets spoke of things, which they themselves did not understand, as in their day redemption had not been accomplished, nor had the Holy Spirit been given. What Daniel was to know was that God would still maintain a people for Himself, who would be purified and made white and “tried,” or, “refined,” by all His dealings, while the wicked would still pursue their evil way in darkness. Only the wise would have the capacity to understand. This solemn fact is stated very clearly in 1 Corinthians 2: 14.

So Daniel had to go his way without any clear answer to his question. He was given however supplementary information as to the closing periods, for in verses 11 and 12 we have mentioned the two periods of 1290 and 1335 days. According to Jewish reckoning a year consisted of 360 days, and therefore the “time, times, and an half,” of verse 7, would consist of 1260 days, and the 1290 days would mean one month beyond that, just as the 1335 days would be a month and a half further beyond. What Daniel could know was that he who waited in patience to the expiration of the longest period, was to enter into **blissing**.

So here in one word there is an answer to the question of verse 8. Daniel might not know any details but he could be assured that **blessing** lay at the end for the people of God. We have the same assurance only we have it in larger measure and fuller detail. However searching are God's judgments upon man's evil, for the humble and patient there is always blessing at the end. Another fact lies embedded in these words. God acts, whether in judgment or in blessing in stages. He did so with Israel in Egypt. He did so again when the church was inaugurated. There was the forty days of His repeated manifestations in resurrection, followed by the ten days of waiting; and then the formation of the church by the shedding forth of the Holy Spirit.

So it will be in the last days, when

the Kingdom of God arrives in manifested power, and the last word to Daniel is one of full assurance. Until it comes, rest is to be his portion, after a life of exceptional unrest and strain; and when it does come he has an appointed "lot," in which he will stand — and we venture to think that his "lot" will not be a small one.

And we too, each have our "lot" at the end. As sharing in the place and portion of the church, we know how wonderful that will be. But, what about our "lot" in the coming kingdom of our Lord? That will depend upon our faithfulness in service here. If in any measure our "lot" in the kingdom is to be comparable with Daniel's, we must like him go through the present world in holy **separation** and **devotedness** to God.

REJOICE ALWAYS

REJOICE in the Lord always." Certainly it could not be in circumstances, for he was a prisoner. Christians are often a great deal happier in the trial than they are in thinking of it; for there the stability, the certainty, the nearness, and the power of Christ are much more learnt, and they are happier. Paul could not so well have said, "Rejoice in the Lord always," if he had not known what it was to be a prisoner. It must have been an exceeding trial for one of Paul's active disposition for service to be kept a prisoner; and this is the time when he can say to the persons who were in the commonplace circumstances which were dragging down their hearts day by day, "Rejoice in the Lord always!" Grace is sufficient for favourable circumstances, but they are by far the most trying (spiritually) to the believer. There is an easy way of going on in worldliness, and there is nothing more sad than the quiet comfortable Christian going on day by day, apart from dependence on the Lord. It must be as with Israel and the manna; there must be the daily gathering and daily dependence upon God. If circumstances come between our hearts and God we are powerless. If Christ is nearer, circumstances will not hinder our joy in God.

THE RESULT OF THE MINISTRY

F. B. HOLE

THE question is sometimes asked; Why should so small a result be seen in true godliness and growth in grace, from the ministry of the Word, addressed to believers? Let us consider it briefly, and begin by admitting with sorrow that the result of all our ministry, whether by voice or pen, is very small. To face facts is always right, as also it is to enquire concerning the cause, and seek to apply the remedy.

It will hardly satisfy any exercised conscience to be reminded that we are living in days when the utmost that could be said as to saints generally is that they have but "a little strength" (Rev. 3: 8); and to infer that consequently we cannot expect anything beyond that which one sees at present. We should reply at once that such statements, made with prophetic insight as to the mass, are never rightly used, if quoted to hinder the exercises of the individual, or his desires after that which is better. A "man of God," in the Scripture use of the term, is one who proves himself to be an exception to the rule by standing for God, and caring for His interests, when the mass is marked by declension and indifference.

So let us together face the question, Why so small a result in godliness and growth in grace from all the ministry? Is it the fault of the ministers, the ministry, or those to whom the ministry is addressed? In attempting an answer, we can only speak according to our knowledge and experience; bounded by our circle of acquaintance, which is of necessity very small compared

with the great circle of the church of God.

First then, the **ministers**, and by this term we mean, as undoubtedly Scripture means, all who do the work of the Lord, no matter in what sphere their service may lie. We judge that neither ministers, ministry nor those ministered to can be absolved from blame; but if we attempt to differentiate, we should lay the greatest stress upon the minister—including of course the writer of this article — inasmuch as no ministry, whether spoken or written, is likely to be of a better character than the channel through whom it comes.

If any desire proof of this statement, let them read 2 Corinthians 5: 18 — 7: 3, and realise the force of the Apostle's words. The ambassador for Christ could approach the worldly-minded Corinthians, and urge upon them a thorough-going separation from the world, with his own heart enlarged and his mouth opened, because his own life of out-and-out devotion and separation was such as to give immense weight and power to his words.

Many of us may only minister the Word in small and obscure ways, but even so, let us see to it that first of all the truth has its proper effect upon ourselves, so that our lives exemplify the truth we minister. Too much stress cannot be laid upon this. Have we not learned by experience that only the man of solid Christian character is capable of speaking words of real weight, and that such words have impressed us

far more deeply than words marked merely by eloquence, or originality, or intellectual power?

In the second place we do well to examine **our ministry**. We would all freely admit that it has imperfections. But in what do they consist? While admitting that they are many, we confine ourselves in this article to one which, working in a twofold way, is a source of much weakness. We refer to the strong tendency to ignore the link between the **doctrinal** and the **practical** sides of truth. We can perhaps best illustrate what we mean by referring to Romans 6, and pointing out therein the three words we often refer to:— “know” (verses 3, 6, 9), “reckon” (verse 11), and “yield” (verses 13, 19).

“KNOW” stands first, and plainly indicates the prime importance of doctrine. Nothing can be right if we are not rightly instructed in the great truths of Christianity. The believers at Rome either knew, or should have known, the meaning and spiritual bearing of baptism (verse 3), the cross (verse 6), and the resurrection of Christ (verse 9). They set forth the sentence of death on our old life, and the introduction of a new, so that we are “alive unto God.”

Then “RECKON,” which indicates the continuous action of faith, which accepts the knowledge, and appropriates it as bearing upon oneself, thus laying the basis for new and properly Christian experiences in the power of the Spirit of God. The Spirit endorses the faith, which accepts the Divinely-given position, by giving the experience suited to it.

Lastly, “YIELD,” indicating that practical surrender of oneself to God, which involves the complete subjection of one’s own will, and of all that one possesses, to the will of God. Without the yielding this will not be maintained, even though the position be accepted in faith.

Now there are Christians who lay great stress upon this last point in their ministry, calling continually for surrender or consecration, and yet fresh consecration, until sometimes, it is to be feared, the doctrines which lie at the foundation of all are obscured, or even very imperfectly held. When this is so, a good deal of result may be produced, but result hardly of a kind to satisfy one who judges of things in the light of what was accomplished in the death and resurrection of Christ.

On the other hand, to dwell very largely upon doctrine, while omitting, or largely obscuring the definite call to surrender, is equally a distinct defect. The doctrine may be most clearly and scripturally expounded, and much helpful instruction may be added as to faith and the experimental teaching of the Spirit of God, but without this yielding, the hearers will after all be left with many a link with the flesh and the world uncut, and what is worse, perhaps, without any exercise as to it. They will see things more clearly in their minds; that is all. This, we venture to think, has been a great defect in our ministry.

That a considerable measure of grace and power is needed to exercise such a practical ministry is very certain. Still such words are needed, for most of us but slowly perceive the force of truth, when

presented only in an abstract way, whereas if presented in concrete form we cannot miss its practical bearing. When Nathan set before David the evil principles that had marked his conduct, presenting them abstractly in parabolic form, David listened and approved, and yet failed to see the practical application to himself. The quiet words that followed, "Thou art the man," gave the thing concrete shape and force in David's mind, broke through his self-complacency, and humbled him in true repentance.

It is worthy of note that Old Testament prophets exercised their ministry in the most personal manner. They not only set forth God's mind for Israel, but dealt with the people as to their practical condition in a most searching and faithful way. Nor did the New Testament apostles and prophets do otherwise. The Epistles bear witness to this. In each case the unfolding of truth is followed by instructions and exhortations, which apply the truth in the hearts, and to the lives, of the saints. Should not our ministry be formed after this model? We think so. Has it always been? We fear that all too frequently, it has not.

Lastly, **the hearers.** They must bear some share of the blame, for the parable of the sower applies as much to the saint as to the sinner. Were the ministers beyond reproach, and their ministry all that it should be, we fear there would still be but little result with many. Some there are who seem to be possessed of shallow minds and affections, incapable of much exercise: others there are, so immersed in the cares or riches of this life, or the lusts of

other things, that the word does not become fruitful in them.

There have always been these unfruitful hearers of the word, even when presented not only in doctrine but also in practice, and it is not surprising that in the present day they are more common than ever. In this twentieth century life has become amazingly complex and exacting, and "the things that are in the world," have multiplied greatly, both in number and in attractiveness. "The things that are seen," are so many and so enticing, that "the things that are not seen," easily fade in our minds and fall into a back place, though we are Christians.

With some of us too there is this added danger, that we have been brought up from our spiritual infancy under much sound doctrinal instruction, and find ourselves linked up with others, whose position is scriptural. As a result of this we may easily fall into the misake made by the Jews of old, and assume that nothing more than a correct outward position is needed.

If we fall into this snare, we may be inwardly counting on our ancestry and position, just as the Jews in our Lord's time boasted of being children of Abraham. Nothing more effectually deadens the conscience, and exercise, and that practical answer to the truth, which produces fruitfulness, than this.

May God look upon us all in His mercy, and revive His work; first in us and then through us. And to Him shall be the glory.

MAJESTIC WORDS

I. FLEMING

SOME of the most majestic words which ever fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus, are found in Revelation I.

The apostle John was in the little Island of Patmos, as a prisoner because of the witness he had given to Christ. Now our God is above all the workings of evil men. He makes the wrath of man to praise Him. The remainder of wrath He restrains for Himself in the day of wrath. (See Psa. 76: 10).

As one has said, "The persecuting emperor little thought what he was giving to us, when he banished the Apostle; no more than Augustus in his political plans as to the census of the empire, knew he was sending a poor carpenter to Bethlehem, with his espoused wife, that Christ might be born there; or the Jews and Pilate's soldiers, that they were sending the thief to heaven, when they broke his legs in heartless respect for their own superstitions or ordinances. God's ways are behind the scenes; but He moves all the scenes which He is behind. We have to learn this, and let Him work, and not think much of man's busy movements; they will accomplish God's. The rest of them perish and disappear. We have only peacefully to do His will."

It was thus in the will of God that John was found in the solitude and quietness of Patmos, and "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." Circumstances had been controlled of God, that he might receive the communication for the welfare of His people, until the return of the Lord Jesus in His glory.

All being ordered thus, the servant being prepared for the service, and the service being prepared for the servant, the Lord makes His presence known to the Apostle, who hears behind him a great voice, as of a trumpet, calling him to attention. The Lord of glory then speaks, for He is the Alpha and Omega; the First and the Last.

His Godhead glory is thus declared. He is Jehovah, Almighty, the Lord: Who is and Who was and Who is to come; "the First and the Last."

Turning to see the speaker of these awesome words, the Son of Man is beheld. No longer is He seen in His lowly grace as Saviour — though He remains such. Here He is the Ancient of Days and His supremacy in judgment is indicated. Every detail of the symbolic language used speaks of His supreme greatness and surpassing glory.

Such a presentation of Himself, by the Lord, leads the Apostle to fall at His feet as dead. He had known what it was in holy confidence and affection to lie in the bosom of Christ at the supper table. Now he lies low as if stricken to death in the presence of his Lord. And let us pause a moment, as we think that the reverence expressed by the Apostle becomes us in our spirit today. "He is thy Lord and worship thou Him," should be remembered constantly by each of His saints and servants.

Then it was that His words of comfort, "Fear not," fell from the

lips of the Glorious One, as He adds,

**"I am the first and the last:
I am He that liveth, and was dead:
And, behold, I am alive for evermore.
Amen; and have the keys of hell and of
death."**

Nothing can exceed the sublime majesty of the utterance of the Lord of Glory, the Son of God, in His announcement on this occasion. Let us dwell for a little, on His words.

"I am the first and the last." It has been pointed out that the "I" is emphatic. HE HIMSELF is before us. He is the FIRST, He is before all. HE is THE LAST. He sums up everything. The beginning and the ending of all are in the power of His Almighty hand.

"I am He that liveth." He is "The LIVING ONE," who ever was, and is, and will be. HE is "The Same": The Same **"yesterday,"** in the past of eternity and of time; and **"today"** in the present in the midst of all that changes here; and **"forever"** in the future, whatever that may be. HE LIVES eternally "the Same." Faith has ever delighted in His changelessness. Down the ages "The living God" has been the refuge and rejoicing of His saints in their every difficulty and danger.

"And was dead." HE became that which He had not been. Of His own will, He went into death. No man could take His life from Him. He laid it down of Himself and took it again. For His Father's glory He became flesh — taking

upon Himself holy, spotless humanity in the body prepared for Him. For His Father's glory He gave His immaculate life in sacrifice, at the cross of Calvary.

"And, behold, I am alive for evermore." THE FATHER'S GLORY was before all else at the silent sepulchre in Joseph's garden. The Son was raised from the dead by the Glory of that Father. It could not be that the Holy One could see corruption. Christ lives in triumph over every foe. The Spirit of God delights to call our attention to Him as alive from out of death. So we read, "It is Christ that died, yea, RATHER that is risen again." Note well that adverb of divine preference. The Victim of the cross is now the Victor of the throne.

"Amen, and have the keys of Hell [Hades] and of Death." The "Amen" of solemn affirmation and confirmation is to be observed. His solemn words are to be pondered over and kept in mind. As we have seen, He lives for evermore, and as such He has "the keys of death and of hades." "Neither death nor life" separates the believer from His love. All power is His, in heaven and in earth, whether over the grave, or in the region of departed spirits. He opens or shuts at His will, and soon He will exercise His authority in resurrection for all His own.

Thus He comforts those about to suffer martyrdom in Smyrna, as He says to them, I am "the First and the Last which was dead and is alive" out of death. Fear not, "be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2: 8-10).

In view of that which he had seen of the personal, the official and the moral glories of the Son of Man, the Apostle was to write the book of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." And so it should be with all His servants. With reverence and godly fear they should present the things which they have spiritually discerned, concerning the Son of Man and Son of God. He is the Centre of the Gospel story, the Centre of

the thoughts and purposes of God.

Soon He will come forth "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," subjecting all to Himself. Meanwhile we are called to His "kingdom and patience" and await His kingdom and glory at His return to claim His inheritance. May we be loyal and true to Him in the interim, with life and lip witnessing of His majesty and mercy, and proclaiming His salvation far and wide.

THE PRECIOUSNESS OF CHRIST

J. HOUSTON

THE Apostle Peter uses the word "precious" frequently in his epistles. He speaks of the trial of faith being "precious;" and of the blood of Christ being "precious;" and of Christ Himself as the "Living Stone," "chosen of God and precious;" and further, that this preciousness of Christ is for us who believe. Also we find in his second epistle "precious faith," and "precious promises." This shows how much he appreciated the holy things of God.

It is true, that unto us who believe He is very precious, and that **in Himself** — what **He is to us**, and not only what **He has done for us**. The Spirit of God emphasizes that **HE** is precious, and that God, who knows His preciousness absolutely and perfectly, shares it with us. A more literal rendering of the verse is, "unto you which believe is the preciousness." That which God has **fully**, we share with Him **in part**. Our limited capacity will allow us no more, until we have glorified bodies. Then we shall know even as we are

known. The Spirit of truth will then lead us into all truth.

Peter tells us we are constituted an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God has formed the spiritual house, the holy priesthood; it is not therefore a building made with hands, but one that pulsates with **life**, derived from Christ, the Living Stone: we being **living** stones, built up in Him by the indwelling Spirit of God. The saints today are thus the house of God, in which He dwells by the Holy Spirit.

It follows therefore that the sacrifices must be spiritual, since the Holy Spirit is the power for praise and worship. We now worship God in the light of the revelation He has given of Himself in Christ, and in the energy of the Holy Spirit, hence our worship must be in **spirit** and in **truth**. The Lord made this plain to the woman of Samaria, as we see in John 4: 23, 24. It is not a question of place — neither Jerusalem nor

Samaria. It is a question of spirit and truth. The former gives the character of the worship; the latter the ground of it.

Worship in spirit definitely sets aside worship through ordinances, and through an organized priesthood, as was the case under the law, when God was hidden behind the veil. The veil has been rent from top to bottom; and God is revealed in Christ, who died to put away sin, which was the barrier between God and man. God has now come out to men in perfect grace in Christ; and again, in Christ Man has gone into God's presence in perfect righteousness. Thus we may now draw nigh to God in worship through the blood of Jesus, "by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh" (Heb. 10: 20).

Under the law the ministering priests ate of the sacrifices, for certain parts of the peace offerings were allotted to them. In Leviticus 7:34, we read that "the wave breast," and then, "the heave shoulder," were to be their portion. God had His part, but the priests also had theirs. The breast and shoulder, given to Aaron and his sons, was literally and actually eaten by them. For us this has a spiritual significance: the breast signifying affection, and the shoulder, strength. We appropriate and appreciate Christ, in the value of His perfect offering. We rejoice in the love that has been expressed in His sacrifice and in the strength displayed; securing everything for God, and also for us, who appropriate it by faith, and thus participate in its benefits.

We cannot be too clear on the

subject of worship, which is connected with our approach into the very presence of God, through the death and resurrection of Christ. It is expounded in the early part of Hebrews 10, which we should read very carefully. We see there the way into the holiest clearly revealed, which was "not yet made manifest," under the law system, as Hebrews 9: 8, plainly tells us. God is no longer hidden from us, but fully revealed through the death of Christ. How precious is Christ's death to God! How precious is His death to us!

His preciousness is, of course, God's portion in divine fulness; whereas we appreciate it only in part. Still we little realize the great pleasure it gives to God, when He sees His redeemed people in the enjoyment of all that the death of Christ has secured for them, and appreciating the preciousness of Him who died. The fact that now God should find His portion in His redeemed people, with fulness of joy, is surely eloquent testimony to the way He appreciates the surpassing excellencies of Christ.

We speak rightly of service to God, and we do well as we engage in it, whether in evangelism or in other activities, which are happy and profitable; but how much do we know of worship to God, which flows out from a heart that is fully occupied with the preciousness of Christ Himself? As having died, and now risen and glorified, He is now the way to the Father, as also He is the truth and the life. The Father, as we have seen, seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth. Happy are we, when the

preciousness of Christ so fills our hearts, that we respond to His desire.

If Christ in the fulness of His love is truly dwelling in our hearts by faith; if He is rightly appreciated in

the power of communion, by the indwelling grace of the Holy Spirit; then our spirits will rise to God in holy worship, in the deep appreciation of the preciousness of Christ. Thus it will be in heaven. Why not now?

KEEPING THE FIRE BURNING

J. T. MAWSON

IT was the 6th of November; a group of lads stood on a spot where the night before they had had a glorious fire; they were measuring the circumference of it, telling each other how high it blazed and talking excitedly about their contribution to it. Its ashes were still smouldering, and after awhile they set to work to scrape them together, evidently hoping to renew the joys of yesterday. They soon gave it up and stood silently, and I thought, sadly, viewing the results of their labour, it was wasted effort. They had no fresh fuel.

Those lads and their fire and its ashes became a parable to me, and as I pondered, it spoke to me with no uncertain voice. I remembered times when I had tried hard to revive old enthusiasms and past devotion to Christ and His service, by dwelling on them—really raking together the smouldering ashes of the past, and I found it to be all in vain, and as I considered it I said to myself again and again, it cannot be done; if the fire is to continue to burn, if the present and future are to be as joyous and vigorous as the past, it will not be by dwelling on the past, but by finding fresh fuel; the fire must have fresh fuel every

day if it is to burn with a steady glow.

Then I remembered that it was written of old in the law of the Lord, "The fire shall ever be burning upon the altar; it shall never go out," and I pictured to myself the Levites who served that ancient tabernacle, seeking the fuel from afar and watching the altar-fire night and day and feeding it continually, and I asked, How can the spiritual fire — devotion to and fervent love for Christ — be kept ever burning in the soul, and whence the fuel?

The answer to my question came with refreshing speed and power. It was, The Spirit of God has come and it is He who supplies the fuel and delights to keep the fire always burning in the heart. I turned first to what the Lord Himself had said of His coming. "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14: 26). Those words secure for us in divine and infallible perfectness the Four Gospels, for they were spoken to the apostles, who wrote what they remembered

not according to their faulty natural memories, but by the unerring power of the Holy Ghost, that we — yes, you and I — might have the very words and know the very ways of our Lord Jesus as He spoke and acted when He was here on earth. As we hear His words and consider Him, we say to one another, “ Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked with us by the way? ” and to Him we say with adoration, “ Thou hast the words of eternal life. ” There is inexhaustible fuel for the fire in the Gospels.

But the Lord had more to say of the Spirit than that. He said, “ When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me ” (John 15: 26). This testimony of the Holy Spirit is to our Lord’s exaltation and glory. We have it in the Acts of the Apostle, an infallible testimony. If His humiliation and grace and gentleness, His sorrows and sufferings and death as recorded for us in the Gospels move us to fervent love to Him, the witness of the Spirit in the Acts fills us with triumph. He is the Conqueror, “ God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ. ” He hath “ exalted Him to be a Prince and a Saviour. ” As we muse on His exaltation and glory, and on His Name that is above every name, and realize that He lives in His glory for us, for “ He ever liveth to make intercession for us, ” the fire burns within us, for here is fuel indeed. When His disciples saw Him carried up into heaven they worshipped Him and were filled with great joy, and were continually praising and blessing

God, and so it will be with us as the Spirit testifies to us of His glory in heaven. And how brightly the fire burned in the lives of the apostles, as with power and the Holy Ghost and with much assurance they bore witness to the glory of their Lord.

But further, the Lord said, “ When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you ” (John 16: 13-15). These words carry us on to the Epistles for there are the heavenly things that the Spirit hears and reveals to us.

I Corinthians 2 assures us of this, “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. ” And all these things are Christ’s things, and ours because they are His, for we are joint-heirs with Him, and He gives, not as the world, but shares all He possesses with His loved co-heirs. What fuel for the fire there is in these Holy Spirit-inspired Epistles! “ And He shall show you things to come, ” carries us into the Revelation, and there is enough of the glory of our Lord unveiled for us there to make our hearts glow; but they will only glow as we have ears to “ hear what the Spirit saith to the churches. ”

The secret lies in keeping rightly

in subjection to the Holy Spirit. If we grieve Him the fire will die down to smouldering ashes; and we grieve Him if we are indifferent to Christ. And indifference to Christ sorely grieves His own heart; we learn this from His words to the Laodicean church: "Thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth" (Rev. 3: 15, 16). May we be preserved from

such a condition as that; but if it is to be so, the fire must be fed with fresh fuel daily.

But the Spirit delights to feed the fire in our souls; it is His great work, and it is not in vain, for at the end of the Book we read that the Spirit and the Bride are saying, "Come," to Jesus. The cry arises from hearts that are on fire with love to Him and will not be satisfied until they are with Him.

TRUE HUMILITY

IT IS better to be thinking of what God is, than of what we are. This looking at ourselves, at the bottom, is really pride — a want of the thorough consciousness that we are **good for nothing**. Till we see this, we never look quite away from self to God.

Sometimes, perhaps, the looking at our evil may be a partial instrument in teaching us it; but still, even then, that is not all that is needed. In looking to Christ, it is our privilege to forget ourselves.

True humility does not so much consist in thinking badly of ourselves, as in not thinking of ourselves at all.

I am too bad to be worth thinking about: what I want is to forget myself, and to look to God, who is indeed worthy of all my thoughts. Is there need of being humbled about ourselves? We may be quite sure that will do it.

If we can say that, "in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7: 18), we have thought quite long enough about ourselves; let us think about Him, who thought about us with "thoughts of good and not of evil" long before we thought about ourselves at all. Let us see what His thoughts of grace about us are, and take up the words of faith, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

GOD reveals not His things "to the wise and prudent," but unto "babes." It is not the strength of man's mind, judging about "the things of God," that gets the blessing from Him; it is the spirit of the babe, desiring "the sincere milk of the Word." The strongest mind must come to the Word of God as the new-born babe.

BIBLE STUDY—EZRA

F. B. HOLE

(CHAPTERS I: 1 — 4: 24)

THE closing vision, granted to the prophet Daniel, was given to him in the third year of Cyrus king of Persia. If now we open our Bibles at the book of Ezra, we are carried back to the first year of that great monarch, whom the prophet Isaiah mentioned by name some two centuries before he ascended the throne. If we turn to Isaiah 44: 28, we read the prediction of what he would do. Ezra 1: 2 records his doing what Isaiah foretold.

The opening verse of the chapter refers to the prophecy of Jeremiah, which so stirred the spirit of Daniel, as he recorded in his ninth chapter. The prediction is found in Jeremiah 25: 11-14. Daniel saw that its fulfilment must be near, and it moved him to the remarkable prayer that is recorded. Ezra has placed on record the exact way in which it was fulfilled.

The word LORD in verse 2 is of course Jehovah, and Cyrus recognized Him as the "God of heaven," and not merely of the kingdoms of the earth. Nebuchadnezzar had been brought to a similar confession, as we saw in Daniel 4: 37. As one reads the summary of the proclamation that Cyrus issued, recorded in verses 2 and 3, one cannot but think that he must have been informed of the prophecy, recorded in the opening verses of Isaiah 45, as well as the closing verse of the preceding chapter. It was no small thing that Cyrus should acknowledge the supreme glory and power of God in this striking way, and act in obedience to what God had commanded. It is not surprising that God should have

spoken of him as, "His anointed."

The proclamation did not name any person or persons who were to go to Jerusalem and build the house, but rather threw the door open for any Jew to go, whose heart stirred him up to do so, giving him the assurance that he was to be liberally helped in the project before him. Being thus worded it meant that those who responded would be in the main men of piety, whose hearts were alive to the glory of God and to the place of His Name, while the more worldly minded and selfish would be inclined to remain in their comfortable homes, established during the seventy years of captivity, and leave the task to others who were prepared to face the difficulties and privations.

It is to be noted that what Cyrus had in view was the building of "the house of the Lord," and he was not concerned with the desolate state of the city. It was Nehemiah who, at a later date, became so concerned about the waste and desolate condition of Jerusalem that he obtained the permission of Artaxerxes to restore and to build the city. The decree granted to Nehemiah is the starting point of the prophecy of the "seventy weeks," as noted in Daniel 9: 25. It was a case of God's house, first; the city where men dwelt, second. This is a principle of abiding significance.

Yet the tendency to forget it is very strong. Those who answered to the proclamation of Cyrus soon forget it, as we discover when we read Haggai's prophecy. Very soon they were building their "ceiled

houses," while the house of God was lying "waste." The same tendency is strongly at work amongst the people of God today.

So let us carefully observe the analogy that exists between what happened in the history of Judaism and what has happened in the history of Christendom.

In Judaism the law given through Moses was largely ignored, and the kingly authority, established in David, so corrupted that the Babylonian captivity fell upon them. In Christendom the purity of the Gospel was soon lost, and the rule of the Spirit, through the Word, was perverted and corrupted into the carnal rule of men, called "popes" in Rome, many of whom were leaders in iniquity. This corruption reached a climax in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Now, just as a revival of an outward and geographical sort began under Cyrus — though a number of men of true piety were engaged in it — so in the sixteenth century God granted the beginning of a revival of a more inward and spiritual sort in the history of Christendom; and out of the spiritual "Babylon," an emergence began, which has continued to our day. In the light of this, let us see what lessons we may learn from the opening chapters of the book of Ezra.

Verse 5 of the first chapter shows that there was a real work of God in the souls of many, including leaders both civil and religious, which led them to embrace at once the opportunity that was given for a return to the land of their fathers, to re-establish the worship of God

by rebuilding His house. In the providence of God this was actively promoted by Cyrus. In addition to vessels of value, given by Jews who did not participate in the expedition to Jerusalem, he restored all the holy vessels of the house of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had placed in the house of his gods. The **spiritual** work of God in the souls of His people was matched by a **providential** work of God in the surrounding world. Thus it has been again in more recent times.

Chapter 2, with the exception of the last three verses, is taken up with details as to the number of those who answered to the proclamation, named under the heads of their families. The heads are named and the families counted. God took note of them and put their names into His record, while those, whose hearts did not stir them up to go, are passed over in silence. Let us take note of this.

The first name mentioned is Zerubbabel, who became the "Tirshatha," or civil Governor: the second, that of Jeshua, the priest called Joshua in the books of Haggai and Zechariah. These were the leaders in the migration of 42,360 people, besides some servants and other possessions. There was no re-establishment of the kingdom, as though the times of the Gentiles had ceased. They were still under Gentile suzerainty.

Still there was a definite revival; and the first mark of it was this: they got **back to God's original centre**. Compared with the total number of dispersed Jews they were but few, and many of the worldly

sort may have nick-named them "Zerubbabelites," still they were not that, but simply a few who cared for their God, and sought His original centre.

In the second place, there was **no claim to powers they did not possess**, since they had been forfeited by previous failure, as we see in verses 59-63. Awkward questions arose, as to whether some were truly children of Israel, and whether others were really children of priests, their genealogies being lost. In earlier days these points might have been settled by an appeal to God through the "Urim and with Thummim," This had been lost and they were humble enough to acknowledge it. When God grants a revival after grievous failure, He may not be pleased to restore everything — especially as to outward manifestations of power — just as things were at the first. Let us take note of this — we again would say. Certain manifestations of power, that were seen in apostolic days, are not in evidence today.

A third mark of true revival is seen in **the spirit of devotion**, that marked some of the "chief fathers" of the people, when back in the land, as recorded in the closing verses of chapter 2. This spirit may not have continued for long, but it was evidently there at the start. When God begins to work there is always a devoted response on the part of some of His people.

As we begin to read the third chapter, a fourth feature of true revival is plainly manifested: **obedience to the Word of God**. In verse 2, and again in verse 4, we find the

words, "as it is written." Their first recorded action, when back in their land, was to approach their God in the manner He had laid down at the first. There was a very great contrast between their present humble circumstances and the great days when the law was given and the tabernacle constructed under Moses, or the palmy days of Solomon, when the first temple was built, yet they recognized that what God may lay down at the start of His dispensations stands unchanged to the finish.

So they did not attempt innovations, according to their own ideas of what might be suitable, but just reverted to God's original Word. They began with the burnt offering, which lay at the basis of all God's dealings with them; and the seventh month being come, they observed the feast of tabernacles, which fell at that time. This they did though the foundation of the temple had not been laid. The burnt offerings very rightly preceded the "house." That, however was not forgotten, as verse 7 shows. The necessary preparations for it were started, for it was the prime object of their return to the land.

Reaching verse 8, we pass on to the second year of their return and find them setting forward this work, so that the foundations of the house were actually laid. This provoked a very moving scene, in which both joy and sorrow were mingled. There was joyful praise and thanksgiving to God, according to the "ordinance of David king of Israel," as was indeed fitting. In Psalm 136 it is stated of God twenty-six times that "His mercy endureth for ever,"

and this they now acknowledged in regard to themselves, as representing Israel. It was the confession that no merit on their side had led to the revival in which they had part. It was all on the ground of God's mercy. Every revival, granted by God, in the sad history of Christendom, has been based upon the mercy of God, without merit on our side. Let us never forget this.

There was another side to this great occasion, for there were present "ancient men," who had seen the first house in all its magnificence, and the sound of their weeping matched the shouting of those who rejoiced, so that the two sounds were indistinguishable. The number of men, so ancient that they saw the first temple still standing, must have been small compared with the total number present, so their weeping must have been unrestrained and loud. Do we feel inclined to regard them as unthankful and melancholy, marring the brightness of a great occasion?

No, we do not. We regard them as expressing another side of things, which should ever be present, when we are able to rejoice in some time of revival, granted in the mercy of God. However blessed the revival granted, our rejoicing is tempered by the remembrance of the grace and power that characterized the beginning of things under apostolic energy, as shown in the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. We become conscious how small and imperfect is anything we may experience compared with that; and this, though it may not bring tears to our eyes, will have a very sobering effect upon us for our good.

In the opening verses of chapter 4, another striking feature comes into view. As is always the case when a work of God takes place, there were adversaries, and their first move had in it a strong element of flattery, and was therefore a very seductive one. They came with the profession of seeking and serving the true God, and so they offered to assist in the building of the house, as being partners in the work. This brought to light a fifth feature marking this revival — a feature of great importance: Zerubbabel and Jeshua and other chief men refused the alliance they proposed, and maintained a **position of separation from the surrounding world**. Had they acquiesced, the work would have been ruined from the outset.

If we read the last chapter of the book of Nehemiah, we discover there was failure on this very point, to the marring of the work, and similarly revivals in the history of Christendom have too often been spoiled in the same way. Take the Reformation for instance: it fell very short of what it might have been as the result of many of its leaders getting into alliance with secular and worldly persons and powers, so that even religious wars were fought. That having come to pass, the power and spirituality of the revival rapidly evaporated.

Under Zerubbabel and Jeshua however the line of demarcation between the returned remnant of Israel and the mixed multitude that dwelt around them, was faithfully maintained, and the result of this is at once manifested. Points of dispute, which might easily lead to strife and warfare, are frequently solved, at

least for a time, by a spirit of compromise. Each side yields a few points and peace is patched up; but it was not so here.

Instead of the watchword being **compromise** it was **separation**, and the result was strenuous opposition; not only weakening their hands in various ways, but also hiring counsellors against them at headquarters in a most persistent way. Here is a sixth feature that we must note. If true saints maintain separation from the world, they will have to face **opposition from the world**. This is as true today as at any other time in history. If we compromise we may avoid it in large measure, and lose our power. If we maintain separation, we must face it in some way, for as the Scripture itself says, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3: 12). It may not take the form of outward violence, as it did in the case of the Apostle Paul, but be exerted in more indirect and subtle ways. The absence of it would not commend us but the reverse. It would mean that the great adversary knows that as regards his designs we are innocuous, and so he wastes no energy over us.

Here it was far otherwise, and the adversary pitted his strength against those who without compromise were bent on rebuilding the house of God, as had been prophesied. The opposition was most persistent, for no less than four kings are mentioned in verses 5-7. It began at once in the days of Cyrus, and continued until the time of Darius, as stated in verse 5, who is identified as the one surnamed Hystaspes in secular history.

In between these kings came Ahasuerus, not the one mentioned in the book of Esther, but the one known as Cambyses. During his reign the opponents were very active, writing up an accusation against the Jews in Jerusalem, but apparently without any definite effect.

Then came the Artaxerxes of verse 7, who is identified with the usurper, known as Smerdis in profane history, who only held dominion for a very short time. Being an usurper, he was of course disposed to upset and annul decrees of his predecessors, in order to establish, if possible, his own position. The opponents saw that this man furnished them with an excellent chance of succeeding in their petition, so once more they sent up a letter.

The opposition had not diminished by the lapse of time or by the earlier lack of success. It had rather increased, as is clear if we read verses 7-9. The letter went up in the names of certain men who were eminent amongst the inhabitants of the land, backed by no less than nine of the tribes or citizens or peoples, who then had their dwelling in the surrounding country of Palestine. It was evidently a very imposing document.

A copy of this letter is given to us in verses 11-16, that we may see how skilfully the adversary can mix lies with facts, and thus garble and misrepresent the case in question.

The first thing that strikes us is that there is no mention of the thing the Jews had come to do under the decree of Cyrus — the rebuilding

of the house of God. They have much to say about the building of the city and its walls. It is possible of course that some little work of this sort had been done, which furnished them with a pretext, but we know that nothing serious of this sort was accomplished until Nehemiah's day. Their assertion of this to the king was **simply a lie**.

Then, assuming that the city was being rebuilt, they denounced it as a bad and rebellious place. It was true that the last few kings, and especially Zedekiah, had been bad men and unreliable, breaking their word in a rebellious spirit, and this gave some support to their accusation. The city however had originally been chosen of God and for a brief time held dominion from Him. They gained their opportunity to besmirch the whole history of Jerusalem by the bad behaviour of the last kings that reigned there: a striking example of how the whole of God's work may be dishonoured by unfaithful servants, and give the opportunity the adversary desires.

A third thing that strikes us is the way they presented the matter; as if their whole concern was for the king's advantage and reputation, and they had themselves but little interest in it. This Artaxerxes being, we understand, an usurper, he would specially fear anything that might challenge his authority. The great spiritual adversary, who lay behind these human adversaries, is not lacking in skill!

The closing verses of our chapter show that their letter had the desired effect. In those early days careful

records were kept, and search being made, the unfaithful doings of Zedekiah and others were revealed, as well as records of the great dominion once exerted by such as David and Solomon. Armed with the official edict that was issued, the adversaries, "by force and power," made the work on the house of God to cease. It seemed as if what God had purposed in this matter was effectually frustrated.

Thus it has been again and again in the sad history of the world. It appeared at the outset that God's purpose in creating Adam was defeated by the introduction of sin. It appeared as if God's call of Abram to go forth to the land of promise was defeated by his descendants going down into Egypt. It now appeared as if the establishment of God's house on earth through David and Solomon had been defeated. And so it has been in the history of Christendom, when God has intervened in reviving mercy. Always the adversary has been at work and has found human instruments available to his hand. This has been the case in our own day. We have only to consider the history of the past one hundred years — and more particularly perhaps the history of the English-speaking world — to see it all too plainly.

But does the adversary finally prevail? In the history before us the answer is found in chapters 5 and 6. When God intervenes everything is reversed. And ultimately God always does intervene. Let us take comfort and encouragement from that.

THE WALL OF THE CITY

T. D. BELL.

THE word of the angel to John, in Revelation 21: 9, "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife," introduces the holy city, descending out of heaven from God, and coming into relationship with the millennial earth. As the features of that city are described in this chapter we are apt to be engrossed with the glories unfolded, and overlook the fact that it is indeed the bride, and that consequently what is described is the shining out in the world to come of that which God is forming in our lives and characters today.

Looking at the city in this way, the features described instantly come into practical bearing upon our souls. The city is heavenly: we are, as the hymn puts it, "born from above and heavenly men by birth." It has, "the glory of God; and her light was like unto a stone most precious." That glory and light will shine out perfectly in that coming day; but even today, "now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light" (Eph. 5: 8). Measured by the golden reed, owned of God in complete suitability to His thoughts in Christ, God and the Lamb the temple of it, all evil for ever separated from it; all these glowing descriptions of the bride, which is the church, in glory, are being worked out now in their measure by Christ through the Spirit in each generation of the church here; in our day and generation as well.

In reading these coming glories, each of us must be struck by the importance given to the wall of the

city. Six times, from verses 12 to 19, it is spoken of, and each time with a different emphasis on some feature of it. Seeing then that these descriptions of the glories of our Lord in display are given that they may affect our hearts in anticipation, we may surely ask, why is the wall so prominent, and what is its meaning for us today?

The answer surely is, that in thus describing the holiness and separation of the city in the coming day, the Lord is showing us His thought for us today. As we are hastening to that coming day of glory, how this should search each of our hearts, as to how far the wall exists, separating each of us morally, not only from the things of the flesh, but also, since we belong to the Church of Christ, from association with the outside world, which utterly rejected Him.

The wall great and high had twelve gates. How complete is the enclosure within the city of all that is centred in God and the Lamb. Yet means were provided for the glory that was within to move out in grace to Israel and the nations. Is not this being experienced now? The twelve gates each of one pearl are future, but today saints may gather with the Lord in the midst, in holy separation to Himself, as a present experience. And thus hearts are set in movement, giving Him the praise due to His name, and then moving out, in affections formed there, to those who are outside. Thus spiritually the gates are in the wall today.

The wall had twelve foundations, ensuring perfect stability for the city and its administration in the world to come. What however of today? Each of us, marked by godly exercise, realizes that all this should come out in its practical effect in our lives. The foundation of God stands sure, as we are told in 2 Timothy 2: 19. The seal is still there, "The Lord knoweth them that are His," and also, "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The two things are united, for God is there and the truth, known from the beginning in Christ.

How perfectly that foundation was laid, for "other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3: 11). The names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb on the foundations will testify in the coming day that God abides by it; and today the mark of one with this in power in his soul will be unwavering adherence to Christ and the truth that has reached us through His apostles, come what may.

Are not the names of the apostles inscribed upon the foundations of our faith today? Peter's epistles, telling us of the glories of the coming kingdom, and the total destruction of the present age. John's writings, unfolding eternal life, its origin, nature and expression, derived from the heavenly Son of God. Paul, as "one born out of due time," teaching us the liberty and grace and coming glory of that life in Christ which is ours now, with the privileges and order of the church, to which we belong, and also exposing the wretched travesties of the truth, ready today to de-

ceive us, as much as the sanits of Galatia, Colosse or the Hebrews, by the epistles of his day. Who of us can read all these, as in the Lord's presence, without finding our souls bowed down with a sense of the stability of the foundation, and the greatness of the wall that rests upon it?

What of the jewels, garnishing the foundations of the wall? No sign of failure and breakdown here, but rather that which is the work of Christ in His saints — "the bride, the Lamb's wife." All that will shine out in His own radiance. Oh, the patience, the wisdom, the grace and power, of His work through the long sojourn of His saints here! Has that work of His, by the Spirit's power, ever moved away from the foundation and the wall that encloses all His delights? The coming day will manifest His work, when the jewels shine forth for all to see.

Now this is going on today. Where Christ is loved and obeyed, where in spiritual power the foundations abide and the wall is intact, the precious stones are being prepared in all the varieties of His blessed character. All fulness is alone resident in Him; all glories meet in Him; but each of His saints is to reflect some ray of that glory and fulness. With one today it may be wisdom; with another patience; with another grace; and these and other features, merging together where the Lord is loved and honoured, show forth His work in grace among His people. All this today leads on to the future, shining out in full variety of the glory that abides only in Himself.

The wall and the city: God and the Lamb are there! Here is the one source of any movement away from all that would entangle us here. Not a mere separation **from**, with the eye upon the world's things; that can only be partial, allowing some things whilst avoiding others. The heart moved by the attraction of Christ is swayed by different motives than the things of the world. The eyes are turned in another direction altogether.

Swayed by a love more precious than all besides, moved by the sense of a patience and grace well

known — some of us can say, long known — in all the secret ways of the Lord's dealings, what can we do today but find our joy and occupation in our own things — made eternally ours in Christ. If this is what controls us, and moves us to Himself, those foundations become ever more stable in our experience, and the great and high wall shuts us in more effectually with all that we love, while the gates open that grace may flow out to others.

This is true heart separation from this present evil world.

“MOVED WITH COMPASSION”

L. A. ANDERSON

(Matthew 14: 13-21)

THE disciples had just told Jesus about the death of John the Baptist and He had departed by ship into a desert place apart, for the circumstances of John's death were distressing in the extreme. Let us not vainly imagine that the Lord was not deeply moved by the things that happened around Him; and if He was touched surely we should be deeply affected by all that we see happening around us in the world today. But are we? And if so, to what extent?

There are four things mentioned in v. 14:-

1. **Jesus went forth** No words written in the Scriptures are without importance or can be considered unnecessary. And these surely have their significance, reminding us of how He came forth from the Father.

He might have remained there, but He went forth to do His Father's will. He came “from God and went to God” (John 13: 3).

2. **He saw a great multitude** The people had seen Him go away into a quiet place and they had followed on foot as He sailed the lake. He was cognisant of it all. Do we ever think of the vast multitude around us moving along toward eternity? There they are and travelling rapidly in many cases without Christ. May God help us to look on the multitude and get such a vision of them as He did.

3. **He was moved with compassion** What effect has the busy throng on us? He saw, and was moved with compassion toward them. Are we selfishly inclined to just look on the crowds with a kind of superficial pity as they pass by or are we

moved with compassion? It is feared that we know little about this.

It was a fine evening one Bank Holiday some years ago that I felt for some reason I must take a walk down the road to a busy thoroughfare; and, on arriving at a certain corner, I saw literally thousands of folks all returning from the forest, some on foot some on bicycles and some in coaches. They were shouting and waving their flags and streamers at the end of a long and pleasant day. I stood there for a short time and then wended my way back home. I think I must have caught a little of the spirit of the Master, for I knelt down and prayed for the masses, as perhaps never before, that some at least would turn to Him. Oh, that we might be more deeply moved with compassion as He was.

4. **He healed their sick** Yes, His compassion moved Him to action in a far greater degree than we can ever hope for. Nevertheless we can bring the multitude to Him and pray that their sin-sick souls may be healed. We must not be indolent or inactive but rather seek to do what we can for them, and so show practical sympathy.

Evening draws on and the disciples realise something must be done for the people are tired and hungry. They bring their difficulty to the Lord and say "Send the multitude away." No doubt they said this with the very best of intentions, but it seems almost as though the words had a coldness about them which was not exactly born of compassion. Well, what else could they do after all? Was

it possible that they were out of touch with Him? Are we not sometimes **only** too well aware of the coldness of our own hearts when bringing others in prayer before Him?

Now notice what the Lord had in mind and how **He** met the situation. See what He has to say:-

1. **They need not depart** We can almost fancy we hear these four little words from His blessed lips. Whatever does He mean by saying this?—would be the thought running through the minds of the disciples — they **need not** depart — but Jesus has a plan of which they are entirely unaware. Before, however, they have got over their astonishment **He** says something seemingly stranger still. How slow we are often to understand His ways and our faith goes no further than the material side of things.

2. **Give ye them to eat** How could they do this? His previous words had taken them by surprise, but this latter statement was even more difficult than ever to comprehend. What were five loaves and two fishes amongst so many?, and from John's Gospel we know that the fishes were **small** ones. Such a paltry quantity amongst possibly twelve thousand hungry mouths — it would **never** suffice! Observe the Lord's reply, as the disciples question His instructions.

3. **Bring them hither to Me** Ah, here lay the solution of every seeming difficulty. The disciples little realised His omnipotence. What **they** could never do He was able to accomplish.

Is our faith so small because we view the situation only from one limited standpoint and so we go our way saying — Impossible! The entire solution is in **His** hands.

We may have very little ability or gift and yet if we surrender whatever we have to Him, He can and will surely use our lives in a way and manner quite incomprehensible

to our finite minds.

We all know the rest of the story and how not only was the great multitude fed but there was amply more.

May God so help us to **view the multitude** and have the **like compassion** that He had and then bring whatever we have **to Him**.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

(EXTRACTED)

IF it were asked, What is the great need of the present hour? several answers might be given, but foremost among them would be "**a need of more prayer**" — that the people of God should, in the words of scripture, continue "with one accord in prayer and supplication." The necessity for this is so obvious that it might seem unnecessary to say much about it, were it not equally clear how much it is neglected; and in a day like the present there is special need that the importance of prayer should be insisted upon.

Prayer touches every department of life. It affects the individual, the church at large, and every kind of service for the Lord. The subject might be treated in its relation to all of these; but it is of the deepest moment that each individual Christian should be impressed with the need of much prayer; and then, through the individual, every other circle will be affected.

How often it has been noticed in the history of the church that prayer and the manifestation of divine

blessing accompany each other. There is repeated and striking testimony to this in the Acts of the Apostles. Before the descent of the Holy Ghost we read that the disciples continued in **prayer**. Again, in chapter 4, we read, "When they had **prayed**, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness." In chapter 10 we find at the very time God was going to bring the Gentile publicly into blessing, and while men were on their way to fetch Peter, who was the chosen instrument for its accomplishment, that "Peter went up upon the housetop to **pray**." In chapter 12 it is recorded that "many were gathered together **praying**" the night Peter was liberated from prison. And in chapter 16 it is seen that the conversion of both Lydia and the jailor was preceded by **prayer**. Other scriptures afford instances of the same thing, all testifying to the supreme importance of waiting upon God. It may be asked, Does God act in the same way today? We believe He does. Of one thing

we may always be assured, He will never fail to answer faith. We cannot have faith about a thing that God will not do. Alas! often we have not faith about a thing He would do. He loves to be counted on.

Having made these few remarks, we would first consider

How we are to Pray.

1. In Jude 20 we are exhorted to **pray in the Holy Ghost**. How often in scripture prayer and the Holy Spirit are connected. (See Rom. 8: 26, 27; Eph. 6: 18; Jude 20.) We need to realise our entire dependence upon Him if we are to pray aright. A man of prayer will generally be a man filled with the Spirit, and certainly one filled with the Spirit will be a man of prayer. Praying in the Holy Ghost guards us against vain repetitions. Our prayers would often be shorter if they were more "in the Holy Ghost." How frequently we begin in the Spirit and pray ourselves out of it. We must be very dependent and self-emptied to pray in the Holy Ghost. And He would lead us to think not merely of our personal needs, but of Christ's interests and what concerns the glory of God. He would also keep us in the conscious sense of being in the presence of God and of addressing Him, and not the mere out-pouring of words.

There is liberty to tell God everything according to Philippians 4, and so have the peace of God which passeth all understanding; but this should precede assembly prayer, and is not so strikingly connected

with the Holy Ghost. Should we not think more of the prayer meeting if we went there to pray "in the Holy Ghost"? He would lead us into the whole range of Christ's interests, and all connected with God's glory. Nothing can surpass the sweetness of Philippians 4, telling everything out to God, and exchanging our care for His peace. Still, our personal needs are not the highest subjects of prayer; but, as we have said they precede the other.

2. If our prayers are to be of much avail we must

Pray Earnestly.

Earnestness is almost the life of prayer. We are commonly in earnest when we have a great matter in hand, and is not prayer the greatest of all? We can be earnest about everything else — earnest in our business, in our studies, in our various pursuits — then let us be downright in earnest when we pray. What is there that earnest prayer cannot accomplish? It can bring about a settlement of every difficulty, obtain relief in every trial, and cause the heaviest burden to become light, not because prayer is anything in itself, but because it moves the Arm that moves the world.

Turn to James 5: 17 and see what it says on this point: "Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed **earnestly** that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months." It does not say only that he prayed, but that he prayed **earnestly**; or, as the margin gives it, he prayed "in his prayer," as though the very

idea of prayer without earnestness was an anomaly. And now read the last clause of the preceding verse, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." It was effectual because it was fervent. May such fervour ever characterise our prayer!

3. This leads us to a third consideration, namely, that we should

Pray Always

This does not mean we are always to be on our knees, or even always speaking audibly to God. We can breathe without ourselves or any one else being conscious of it. May our praying become almost as natural and continuous (Eph. 6: 18).

Elsewhere the Apostle Paul insists that we are to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5: 17). The apostles said, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6). How essential that these two things should go together! Much speaking and little supplication leave both preacher and hearer in a barren condition. The servant of Christ especially needs to remember this. The story is related of one very much used in the salvation of souls, that it was discovered to him that the large number of conversions was due, not so much to his preaching as to the prayers of an illiterate brother who always sat near to him and prayed during the meeting. Would that this man might have many imitators! If the children of God only realised that perhaps more depends upon their prayers than upon the preacher's

efforts, results would be greater and more manifest than they are.

Let us remember then this double exhortation, "Praying always" and "without ceasing." And while it is most important this should characterise us, might we not with advantage increase our **regular** times for secret prayer? Depend upon it our days would be happier and more useful did we pray more, and we should be less affected by the influence of things around us were we oftener upon our knees.

Habitual prayerfulness infallibly tells its tale. Daniel prayed at least three times a day, and the Apostle Paul seems as though he was doing hardly anything else. Let us seek to imitate them. It may not be an easy matter to closet ourselves alone with God in the middle of the day, but where there is a sense of its importance, the occasion can often be made, if only it be for five minutes. And it will well repay the effort. Satan will suggest all kinds of difficulties, and put obstacles in the way; and what is far more of a hindrance, there may be disinclination on our own part. But all this can be overcome by the grace of God. Let us pray that we may pray.

And not only should we be always in the spirit of prayer, and have our regular times for secret devotion, but **special seasons** of waiting upon God will yield to us the greatest blessing. In reading the gospels it would appear that even our blessed Lord sought such occasions. One instance is recorded in Luke 6: 12, "It came to pass in those days, that he went out into

a mountain to pray, and continued **all night** in prayer to God;" and in Mark 1: 35 we read, "And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed." If He chose to do this, how much more necessary for us! What a savour there would be about everything we said and did, if we knew such occasions more frequently.

Let us then pray **in the Holy Ghost**, let us pray **earnestly**, let us pray **always**, and in addition let us pray **everywhere** (1 Tim. 2: 8). Do not let us suppose the bedside to be the only place. We have seen that our Lord used a **mountain**, and in another place we are told He withdrew Himself into the **wilderness**; and in Acts we learn that the place where prayer was wont to be made was the **housetop**, the **river-side**, and even the **prison**. Indeed, where is **prayer out of place**? If anywhere, then there the Christian ought not to be. It is not only then that men everywhere are to pray, but men may also pray everywhere, and with how much blessing to themselves and others who can tell?

Having considered how, when and where we are to pray, it may not be out of place to mention a few leading topics for prayer. Scripture will easily furnish us with some.

1. We are told in Ephesians 6: 18 to make prayer and supplication **for all saints**. It is most desirable that every child of God should bear this in mind. Again and again reference is made to it in the word (See 2 Thess. 1: 11; Col. 4: 12; Eph. 1: 16; 3: 14). And we find

the great apostle not only ministering to the saints, but continually praying for them; nay, even the Lord Himself did so. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word" (John 17: 20).

Alas! how frequently we neglect this holy and priceless privilege, if we do not forget it altogether. So important is this that we may well ask the reader not to allow even a day to pass without praying for all saints in general, and for some in particular. Are you obeying this plain direction given in God's word? If not, we entreat you for your own sake, for the sake of others, and, above all, for the Lord's sake, to begin at once. Do not let us forget to embrace "all saints" in our supplication. There is a tendency sometimes to limit our prayers to those with whom we are intimate or with whom we may be specially associated. Let not our interests be narrower than the whole church of God.

2. It is needful, too, that we should pray regularly for the **Lord's servants**. While they occupy a post of honour, it is also one of danger and difficulty. Exposed more than ordinary Christians to the attacks of Satan, and to be led astray by their own hearts, they sorely need the prayers of others. What a blessing they may be made if used of God. We need to pray for them then in a twofold way, that they may be preserved, and that utterance may be given unto them (see Heb. 13: 18; 2 Thess. 3: 1; Col. 4: 3; Eph. 6: 19). A careful comparison of these scriptures will show us how varied are the needs of the Lord's servants, and

that praying for the workmen is one of the most effectual means of aiding in the work.

3. We are exhorted in I Timothy 2: 1-8 to **pray for all men**, for kings, and for all that are in authority (or eminent place). And the reason is given — “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.” Thus prayer of this sort will bring down the greatest blessing on ourselves as well as on others, and it is “good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.” While we pray for saints and for servants let us pray for all men, even for kings. Better to pray for a king than to be one; if we were kings we should do many things that were not so acceptable. Abraham was privileged to pray for Sodom, and to know God’s mind about it. This was infinitely preferable to “a seat in the gate.” The Christian is in a similar position with regard to this world. He is apart from it and in relationship with the Ruler of the universe, and, if a praying Christian, he wields a mightier weapon than earth’s greatest potentate. Depend upon it, the more we are morally outside of everything **with God** the more effective will our prayers be. The prayers of Abraham outside Sodom did more to save it than Lot’s influence within.

Having treated the subject of prayer in these various ways, we close with a few practical reflections.

If prayer is of such importance as we have tried to shew from actual experience and from scripture, the neglect of it must be of serious consequence. **How many a wrong**

step would never have been taken if there had been more prayer about it in secret, and with others. And, on the other hand, how many a good intention has never ripened into action, and many a first effort in the right direction has in the end borne no fruit, for want of prayer. Many a downward course would have been prevented if there had been more frequent access to a throne of grace. This at least may be said — and said especially to those who are entering upon life — that **no step** should be taken, of whatever kind, without first asking in the light of God’s word, “Can He bless me in this?” and if not, let the enterprise be abandoned at any cost. And if we find ourselves settling down into a cold, formal state, is not the grand remedy **prayer**? We believe it is. It was very likely the neglect of it that led to such a sad condition. May not prayer indeed be said to be the thermometer which tests our spiritual temperatures?

All this has more or less to do with the individual in secret. But would there not also be immense benefit derived from praying more with one another? Might we not invite others to pray with us in our houses more frequently than we do? How much better it would doubtless be for all of us, for teachers and taught, for high and low, indeed for every one, if it were only more of a **habit to meet together** in twos and threes for prayer. “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18: 19). Never, as Christians — except at the Lord’s table — are

we drawn closer to one another than in this meeting together before a throne of grace. Such a practice would not only foster the truest communion, but there would be far less likelihood of any "falling out by the way."

It is of the utmost importance to remember that the true preparation for prayer is **sincerity**. The Psalmist says, "If I regard **iniquity** in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." How can any one consistently ask God for blessing, or conscientiously expect an answer, if not walking in His ways? James says in his epistle (chap. 4: 2, 3), "Ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." Do we not here see the reasons our petitions are so often unanswered? We either regard "iniquity," or else we do not ask simply and solely for God's glory. It is the effectual fervent prayer of a **righteous** man that **availeth much** (James 5: 16). That is, one who renders what is due to God and to his neighbour.

Some perhaps think that to pray often or for long is very difficult. Perhaps, dear friend, it is because you pray so little. Prayer is like running. The more a person practises the longer he can keep up. But one who seldom runs is soon out of breath. The more you pray, the more you will desire to pray, and the easier you will find it. There have been men of God who have given three or four hours each day to prayer, and said they could not do with less. Once, perhaps, they found it as difficult to pray for ten minutes as you do.

Finally, when we pray let us ever remember that we are speaking to God. And though He is our Father, and we speak to Him as children, may it ever be with a profound sense of our own nothingness. To address **the King eternal**, immortal, invisible, as though we were on terms of equality with Him, or had a right to demand from Him, is altogether out of place. Such prayers will certainly not be heard. Confessing fully what we are, we should at the same time bless God for what He is. Some one has said that true prayer is composed of **confession, petition, intercession, thanksgiving and adoration**.

Let us never forget to plead the name of Christ. Alas! do we not often bring it in at the end as a matter of form sometimes without realising what it is to ask in His name? The Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in **my name**, he will give it you" (John 16: 23). It implies communion and the sense that we have been left here to represent the Lord Jesus. If we abide in Him and His words in us we shall have a will in conformity with His will, and so **ask** what we will and it shall be **done** unto us.

Oh for a deeper, more abiding sense that we receive every answer, not on the ground of what we are, but through the merits of Christ. In John 14 to 16 seven times over the Lord tells His disciples to "**ask**." Was it not because He was leading them into the knowledge of the blessed relationship that was theirs through redemption and the gift of eternal life? And while this is our blessed experience

in a world of need and sorrow, we can also look forward to the fulfilment of the sublime prediction of

the psalmist, "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come" (Psalm 65: 2).

Editor's Note. The above article is extracted from a small pamphlet, published without Author's name, in 1904. It is much to the point in 1960.

BIBLE STUDY—EZRA

F. B. HOLE.

(CHAPTERS 5: 1 — 8: 36)

IN considering the first four chapters we noted six things that marked the revival granted to the Jews, as recorded by Ezra. Let us briefly recapitulate them. There was:—

(1) A return to God's original centre.

(2) No claim to powers they had forfeited by previous failure.

(3) A spirit of devotedness and self-sacrifice.

(4) Obedience to the word of God.

(5) A position of separation from the surrounding world, and consequently,

(6) Opposition from the world.

We now begin to read chapter 5, and at once there meets us a seventh feature, which completes the picture immediately before us. The work on the house of God having ceased, because of the contrary edict from the Persian usurper, **God's Word was found in power amongst them**, through the two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. The result of this prophetic ministry was that once more the Jews began to build the house, in spite of the contrary edict.

We have the words of these two prophets preserved for us in the

books that bear their names; and if we now glance for a moment at these two prophecies, we may readily perceive their general drift or scope.

Haggai's message was a very plain word of rebuke, of instruction, of encouragement. They had stopped building the house and were engaged in building nice houses for themselves all too willingly. He told them to recommence work on the house of God, and encouraged them by predictions of future glory, though warning them that they must not imagine that anything they did was perfect. The searching eye of God could perceive uncleanness in all the works of their hands.

Zechariah's message also encouraged, but had in it more of visions and symbolic instruction. He foretold the advent of the Messiah, though He would be sold for thirty pieces of silver and rejected, and the sword of Jehovah would awake against Him, so that His hand might turn in blessing upon the "little ones," who would be marked by deep repentance. Nevertheless the Messiah would return in glory as being Jehovah Himself, and Jerusalem would ultimately be-

come Holiness unto Jehovah.

Immediately the building of the house recommenced the adversaries were up in arms. Behind these human adversaries lay the great adversary, who does not mind God's people "feathering their own nests," but opposes all that is for God. We may wonder perhaps that the prophets incited the people to disobey the edict against the building of the house, but God knew that the usurper being dispossessed and a king of the ancient dynasty being on the throne, the way would be clear. The Darius of verse 6, who was mentioned in verse 5 of the previous chapter, was now on the throne; and just as Artaxerxes, or Smerdis, being an usurper, was inclined to reverse the edicts of his predecessors, the new king, of the ancient line, was inclined to confirm them, and reverse the decrees of the usurper.

Hence, when fresh complaint was sent up to Darius against the Jews, now again working on the temple, he caused search to be made in the records to discover the truth of the matter. This we see in the opening verse of chapter 6, but we shall do well to take note of the ground taken by the leaders of the Jews, when confronted again by their adversaries, as recorded in the latter part of chapter 5.

Their opponents put on record that when challenged their answer was twofold; both religious and political; and they put the religious reason in the first place, saying, "We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth," and are building under His command. In

the second place they quoted the original authorization they had received from Cyrus.

Their position was indeed a strong one. Centuries later Peter and the other apostles were challenged by the Jewish council in the effort to stop them preaching the risen Christ, and thus working in the spiritual building, that started on the day when the Spirit was poured forth, as narrated in Acts 2. Their answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5: 29); and so they continued to preach the Gospel in spite of the prohibition issued by the religious authorities. Here however the verdict of Darius was entirely favourable. He cancelled the adverse command and confirmed the original edict of Cyrus. Thus God caused the wrath of men to praise Him, and fulfil His word.

And not only so, but the original decree of Cyrus having been discovered, it was found to be more full in its details and more favourable to the Jews than their adversaries had imagined. It demanded not only that they be left unhindered, but rather actively helped in their work, and be supplied with things needed; and that all who set themselves to hinder or destroy should themselves be destroyed and their houses made a dunghill.

So it came to pass that the house was built in the course of a good many years, for it was not finished until the sixth year of Darius, as verse 15 tells us. When completed there was a season of much joy, sacrifices were offered and the Passover was observed, as recorded in

the closing verses of chapter 6. Two things marked the people, which we shall do well to note. First, the Passover was eaten not only by the children of Israel, who had come out of captivity, but also by "all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the Lord God of Israel." We learn from Jeremiah 52: 16, that when the great captivity took place, "certain of the poor of the land" were left unremoved, that they might be husbandmen and carry on cultivation. Some of these, or their descendants, cleansed themselves from evils in which they had become involved, and joined in this time of revival and blessing, and so could take part in the feast of unleavened bread.

A second thing, which points in the same direction, we see in an earlier verse. They rightly discerned that, in view of the sad and sinful history of the nation a sin offering was necessary, if they were solemnly to place themselves thus before the God of their fathers; but this they offered in twelve he goats, "according to the number of the tribes of Israel," though the mass of those who had come out of captivity were of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin.

By this time five or six centuries had elapsed since the rending of the nation, and the secession of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, but the returned remnant recognized that God had called the whole nation out of Egypt, that the division that had ensued was their failure and not God's purpose, and that God never swerves from His original thought

and call. Hence they still had all twelve tribes on their hearts. Though they were but a remnant, they held to God's thought and purpose for the whole nation.

This has a very distinct voice to us today. The divisions of Christendom are multiplied, but if saints are found, bearing a remnant character, in keeping with what we are seeing in the book of Ezra, they must ever keep in view the whole Church of God, and not become wrapped up in themselves, as though others did not count before God. Every available Israelite, who was clean, by having separated himself from the filthiness of the surrounding heathen, was to benefit by the sacrifices offered, and participate in the feasts of the Passover and of Unleavened Bread.

It was after these things, as the first verse of chapter 7 tells us, that Ezra the priest with Levitical companions left Babylon and went up to Jerusalem. It was in the seventh year of that Artaxerxes, under whom thirteen years later Nehemiah went up. Ezra's genealogy was clearly known, and it is given in the first 5 verses, showing him to be truly descended from Aaron, the first high priest. This fact qualified him for the place he was about to take. He had the further qualification of being, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses," which indicates that he was fully acquainted with the original word of God, which still had authority over the lives of the people.

But he had a third qualification of even greater importance, and this is stated in verse 10. He was a

man who "**prepared his heart,**" which indicates that he was a man of spiritual exercise, something like Timothy of New Testament days, who was to meditate upon the things of God and give himself wholly to them. As a scribe he must have had a good knowledge of the words he had often written, and this must have prepared his **head**. The preparing of his **heart** went much deeper than this, for it led him to "**seek** the law of the Lord." He really wanted to be instructed of God.

The next statement of verse 10 still further deepens his qualifications. He was a seeker after the law in order that he might "**do it.**" This was the crowning feature that marked him. Let us pause and consider this.

Ezra lived under the law of Moses, in regard to which our Lord said, "This do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10: 28), and he knew well that to do it was the great thing. We are not under the law but under grace, yet we have the apostolic injunction, "Be ye **doers** of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jas. 1: 22). In this Paul does indeed agree with James, for in all his epistles he first expounds doctrine and then enforces the practical living and behaviour that the doctrine demands. Under the law men were to **do** in order to live. Under the Gospel we are brought into life in order that we may **do** the will of God. It is easy to forget this, and treat Christianity as though it were simply an exalted philosophy to entertain our minds.

Having prepared his heart to seek the law, so that he might do it, and thus exemplify its demands to some degree, he was now in the right state to "**teach** in Israel statutes and judgments." We all can see the point of this, and we trust we may realize its implications in regard to ourselves. We only effectually teach if our own lives are in accordance with what we say. How well the Apostle Paul illustrated this, for twice he alluded to it, when speaking to the elders of Ephesus: I "have **shewed** you, and have taught you;" and again, "I have **shewed** you all things" (Acts 20: 20, 35). He illustrated in his life what he taught with his mouth. This is the effective way of teaching, whether it be in Ezra's day, or Paul's, or our own.

Following this statement of the piety and zeal that marked Ezra, we have given us a full account of the letter given by Artaxerxes to Ezra, amounting to a decree, under the authority of which he journeyed to Jerusalem and acted when he got there. It occupies verses 11-26. As one reads through these verses, one cannot but be struck with the wonderful work of God in the mind of a heathen king, which led him to grant such powers, order such assistance to be given, and express such a recognition of the claims and greatness of "the God of heaven." We also see the overruling wisdom of God, controlling the mind of the king, so that His servant was given liberty, and even commanded to do, what God proposed.

Ezra, we see, was given remarkable authority, it being assumed that he would act, as the king said,

“after the wisdom of thy God;” and he and his helpers were exempted from every form of tax or exaction, and also given power to punish all evildoers, whether they transgressed the law of God or “the law of the king.” Ezra was to teach the laws of God to those who were ignorant of them. So Ezra was commissioned to go up to the land armed with remarkable powers in the providence of God.

The two verses that close this chapter record Ezra’s thanksgiving as he recognized how God had put His good hand upon him and moved the king’s heart to grant all this. All was “to beautify the house of the Lord.” The silver and gold and other gifts out of the treasuries would doubtless be used to increase the natural beauty of the house that was being constructed, but we venture to think that the teaching of the law, which Ezra purposed to do, would produce in the people, if they received it, a piety, which is a greater adornment to any house than can be conferred by any amount of silver and gold. The piety that marked Ezra himself can be plainly seen in these two verses.

It is further seen as we read chapter 8, though the first fourteen verses are occupied with the names of those who accompanied him according to their genealogies, and with the number of the males in each family. God has seen to it that the names of those who bestirred themselves to answer to His call to return to the land, should be placed on record in a very permanent way, while the names of those who did not bestir themselves are almost entirely lost.

With verse fifteen we resume the history of the migration; how again, as is confessed, “by the good hand of our God upon us,” there was brought to them the “man of understanding” that they needed, so that all together they were gathered at the river of Ahava, ready to set forth. Ezra recognized however that the fact that they had very definitely received help of God in the past did not exempt them from the need of dependence on Him for the present, hence His face must again be sought before they started; so according to the customs of the law a fast was proclaimed that they might afflict their souls before God, and seek of Him the right way for their journey.

Journeying in those days was not particularly safe or easy, so worldly prudence would have dictated the request of an armed escort. This Ezra did not do, and in verse 22 we have his touching confession in the matter. He had spoken in very definite fashion to the king as to the care of his God on behalf of His people and His wrath against those who forsake Him, so he was ashamed to depart in practice from what he had professed. This frank confession on Ezra’s part sets before us a very good example. He was on God’s business, and so did not need to rely on worldly support.

Let us consider how easy it is for us in our day to profess much confidence in God as to how we carry on His work, and yet to fail when the test comes, and we are faced with some very practical questions. We may well be ashamed when some adversary can reproach us by calling upon us to practise what we

preach. If we take the Apostle Paul as an example, as well as Ezra, it is quite plain that in carrying on the work of God we do not need the support nor the patronage of the world.

Being assured that God had heard their entreaty, Ezra gave into the hands of trusted helpers the gold and silver treasures they had with them, and they started on their journey from Ahava, and safely arrived at Jerusalem with everything intact. Those to whom the treasure had been entrusted had proved faithful, and they returned thanks to God by their burnt offerings. Thus far all was well.

But the next chapter is going to

record for us the shock that awaited Ezra when Jerusalem was entered. We reserve its details for another occasion, only remarking that the history of all the revivals, that God grants in His mercy, seems to be the same: a bright beginning, followed by declension more or less rapid. There is this constant tendency to forsake the fountain of living waters, and hew ourselves out broken cisterns that can hold no water (see Jer. 2: 13). Thus it has been from ancient times to our own day. Many of us may have inherited good things from more recent revivals, granted in the mercy of God; but how are we holding and profiting by these things? Or, are we neglecting them and letting them slip away?

FACTS TO STIMULATE PRAYER

BUDDHISTS have established special missionary training centres in Rangoon and Colombo. Buddhist leaders are calling their people to support a world mission to save men from Christianity. On May 13th, 1957, some 2,500 young men entered the Buddhist priesthood in Bangkok, one for every year since the death of Buddha.

Al Azhar university in Cairo is said to be turning out thousands of Moslem missionaries, whose influence is sweeping Africa. In Washington is the great and costly Moslem mosque with a noted scholar, Dr. Mohammed Biscar, who with his assistants plans to capture America for Mohammed. They have formed the Koran Society, modelled on the Bible Society

In Japan the old shrines are again drawing millions of worshippers, and there is a growing desire for a revival of emperor worship. Six hundred new religious cults have arisen since the war. All over the east Jehovah's Witnesses and other western cults are vigorously propagating their doctrines and peddling their literature.

The increase in population is immense. When Hudson Taylor went to China, the population was about 300 millions. Today it is 630 millions, and increasing by 15 millions every year. Japan now has 93 millions with an increase of over a million each year.

In the past 25 years quite 200 millions of people have learned to read.

HOLY AND TRUE

J. HOUSTON.

OF Christ alone could it be said, "He that is holy, He that is true" (Rev. 3: 7). It was absolutely so in Him, for He was holy in nature; holy in birth; holy in life; holy in death — see Luke 1: 35; Acts 3: 14; Psalm 16: 10. He was true in all that He said. When challenged, "Who art Thou?" He replied, "Altogether that which I also say to you" (John 8: 25, New Trans.). He was altogether **what He said**. His speech was the perfect expression of what He was; He Himself being the truth.

When He was in this world He was separate from sinners, though ministering grace to them. He had no contact with evil; His presence precluded it. It could be said of Him, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1: 13). He could say, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me" (John 14: 30) — no possible contact with evil. When He was reviled, He reviled not again, for there was no response to evil in Him, in the form of either retaliation or resistance. He committed His cause to God, who judges righteously. Even when led to the cross, He did not vindicate His cause, nor did He defend His person. He was as a lamb, led to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before her shearers. His trust was in God. In all things He was the Holy and the True.

What was in Him for man was perfect goodness, that flowed out in Divine love. In Him love found its own satisfaction and pleasure in

doing good, for He never expected man in return to respond in heartfelt gratitude. Man indeed was disposed to receive all the good from Him without a word of thanks; like the nine lepers, whom He healed, and from whom He received no gratitude. This however did not deter Him from acting in love for His own satisfaction and pleasure. God gives His sunshine and rain to just and unjust alike; and so He acted; finding His own joy in giving. How worthy of Him who said, "It is more blessed to **give** than to **receive**"!

"Never man spake like this Man," was the answer of the officers, who were sent by priests and Pharisees to apprehend Him; but who could not do so for they felt the power of His presence — see, John 7: 45, 46. He was God, yet He was Man. But a Man, whose presence and words were entirely different from those of sinful men. There was in His presence and in His words that peculiar power that they felt. Yet no man was ever so near and so kind to the poor as He. The proud were always afar off, debarred from His presence by His holiness and truth, since God resists the proud, while He gives grace to the lowly. So we read of the Lord Jesus, "Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him" (Luke 15: 1). It was the love of His heart and the kindness of His words that drew them.

Holiness and truth go rightly together. In Christ they were fully expressed. In nature He was holy; in testimony He was true. Thus we have His unchanging nature,

holy; and His abiding witness, true. In the history of the world holiness in this absolute form was wholly unknown. No such Person had ever been seen or heard. Well might it be said, "Never man spake like this Man."

It is interesting, and indeed edifying, to see Him present Himself in this double character to the church at Philadelphia. This church had nothing brought against it; nothing that needed to be corrected. On the contrary, it is commended for its faithfulness to Him in holding fast His word, and not denying His name, even though its strength was small. It had also kept the word of His patience. It therefore partook of much of His character as far as faithfulness in man could go. Man, though renewed, has limitations beyond which he cannot go.

The Lord is absolutely perfect, and in Him there are no limitations; but this church was closely identified with Him in His rejection by the world and waiting in patience. It is not surprising therefore that it is to be identified with Him in the day of His glory, in the heavenly city, as an answer to its faithfulness. The overcomer is to be, as the Lord Himself says, "a pillar in the temple of My God," and upon him was to be written, "the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God;" and finally, "My new name." Four times is the word, "My" mentioned, in reference to the identification of the overcomer with his Lord, in the holy city, the New Jerusalem. This is very precious, and it gives us a powerful incentive to faithfulness to Him now, while in the midst of

temptations to unfaithfulness, in view of participation in the coming glory. They that suffer with Him now shall reign with Him then.

What marks the church at Philadelphia is its poverty. It has but a "little strength," and so nothing in which flesh can glory. These words, "little strength," remind us of what we have in Isaiah 1: 9, "Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah." A very small remnant is what God reserves to bear witness to Him, when all else is corrupt and ready for judgment. It was so in the days of Jezebel. It is so now in our day. Who can deny it?

But "little strength" does not mean "little heart," or no heart at all, as we see in Laodicea, which church was "neither cold nor hot," — nothing but unbearable lukewarmness. This spirit of self-satisfaction prevailing, in which no need is felt, there is no wonder that the Lord should spue it out of His mouth. How abhorrent it must be to Him, who is the Holy and the True!

In the days of Malachi the priesthood was corrupt, and the table of the Lord polluted, but in the midst of the corruption there were those that feared the Lord and that thought upon the name of the Holy and the True. It is left for us today to hold fast His word and not deny His name.

We have nothing in which to glory; neither in ecclesiastical position nor in spectacular power. No

turning the world upside-down as with the apostles, when at the beginning of the dispensation the Spirit of God wrought powerfully in the calling out of the church. What began in power ends in weak-

ness. It was so with Israel; it is so with the Church. Divine faithfulness maintains the testimony, for the One who maintains it is "**He that is holy, He that is true.**"

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD

J. S. BLACKBURN.

IF we study how Isaiah presents Him to us, we find in the first place, **His Work and His Character** (Isa. 42: 1-4)

The Servant's work or purpose is three times stated in three verses:

- v. 1. "He shall bring forth **judgment** to the Gentiles."
- v. 3. "He shall bring forth **judgment** unto truth."
- v. 4. "He shall . . . set **judgment** in the earth."

It is plain that within the prophet's horizon the final result towards which the Servant's toil is directed, and which He will certainly accomplish, is described in the repeated word **judgment**. This is a widely used word in the Old Testament, and its fundamental meaning seems to be control of action in conformity with God's Law. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He has established in all the earth the control of human action in conformity with God's Law.

The very existence of these words is a miracle. They exist in the literature of a petty people whose Kingdom was at that moment tottering to final collapse; who were soon to be a helpless band of cap-

tives and yet they set forth the most sublime conception of the whole earth peacefully regulated in accordance with the Law of God. It is worth while to quote a well known author, "Although the terms of this service were published nearly two thousand five hundred years ago, in a petty dialect that is now dead, to a helpless tribe of captives in a world whose civilisation has long sunk to ruin, yet these terms are so free from all that is provincial or antique, they are so adapted to the lasting needs of humanity, they are so universal in their scope, they are so instinct with the love that never faileth, though prophecies fail and tongues cease, that they come home to heart and conscience today with as much tenderness and authority as ever."

It is necessary to remember that the horizon of the Old Testament prophets is the earth. They reach to the Heavens only in such conceptions as that of Hosea (a contemporary of Isaiah), or Daniel's "clouds of Heaven," that the heavens and the earth should be in harmony. The prospect opening to the Christian's view embraces a grander arena: the Pauline revelation of the heavens and the earth

gathered together under one Head in Christ: of a great host called out of every tribe and nation, whose rightful sphere of blessing is in heaven, and who form a body united to Christ, and of which He is the Head. Nevertheless, while we exult in the unsearchable riches of Christ, which include more exalted themes than those here considered, it is good to know that God adheres to His scheme of blessing for the earth, and above all that as the prophet passes from the statement of service to delineate the features of the Servant, we find that the Person portrayed is no other than **our** Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

His character is set forth in a series of negatives:

- v. 2. "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street."
- v. 3. "A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench."
- v. 4. "He shall not fail nor be discouraged."

The meaning of the words in v. 2 is illuminated by their quotation in Matthew 12: 19 "He shall not strive, nor cry," and further we may be sure, by the words of Paul in 2 Timothy 2: 24 "the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men." The words which best fulfil this prophecy are in 2 Corinthians 10: 1: "the meekness and gentleness of Christ." The screaming, hysterical tone is a method of working which did not characterise this Servant and is not to characterise His servants. We may not think that by our forceful-

ness or cleverness in speaking the work of God is forwarded. In the spirit of gentleness and aptness in teaching the servant of Christ is to conduct himself after the pattern of the Master in His Service, with prayerful expectation that God will intervene and grant repentance to an opponent of the faith.

"A bruised reed shall He not break and the smoking flax shall He not quench." Here we come to a lovely feature of the Servant. His is a task which demands the utmost tenacity of purpose, and opponents in millions are to be overcome before the goal can be reached: but He does not, and will not, ride roughshod over the feeble in order to bring it about. True it is that the lofty looks of man shall be brought low in that day, but it is also true that He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax.

"A bruised reed" — how true to our lives (for we have to do with this gracious Servant of the Lord, and we may praise God that it is so) are these word-pictures. The root meaning of this word 'reed' is 'upright,' and it draws attention to a reed's slender uprightness. But it is crushed. The heartless tread of man or beast has crushed it, and what God made upright has been crushed by another. But Christ is come so that we might have life, and have it more abundantly.

"The smoking flax"—there is a point at which one touch may extinguish a smouldering wick, or gentle care may re-ignite the flame. There is one point at which the temper of a touch means all. The

Servant of the Lord does not quench the smoking flax. How often do we feel like the smoking flax — a lamp with the flame expiring, due to our own folly or the cruelty of others? Surely Simon Peter was a smoking flax when, having denied His Lord with curses, he went out and wept bitterly. The Master did not quench the smoking flax. Deep and fervent prayer He had already made in intercession for Peter that his faith might not fail, the flame dimly burning might not expire: a look at the most critical moment and finally strong tender words restored the failing Peter to his purpose to serve the Lord. It is true that the believer possesses eternal life: we shall never perish: the flame cannot utterly expire: and one of the great foundations of its truth is just this, that our salvation is so great a salvation because our Saviour will not break the bruised reed or quench the smoking flax.

“He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth.” At this point the Authorised Version obscures one of the gems of the passage. The words are “He shall not burn dimly or be crushed, till He have set judgment in the earth.” The two words translated in v. 3 “**smoking flax**” and “**bruised reed**” are the words used of Himself in v. 4. He shall never burn low or dim. He shall never be crushed in the sense of being on the point of breaking down. There is here the most charming contrast between the true Servant and the character of men. The man who is himself really dependable is often unsympathetic to the weak. On the stage of world history, the man of iron will and deter-

mination, of ruthless directness in attaining his goal, has usually done so at the expense of riding down the feeble who stood in his way. And often the only persons sympathetic to the feeble are those who are themselves feeble. Our Saviour is perfect: perfect in His love and wisdom in restoring our souls, in speaking a word in season to him that is weary, in giving power to the faint, in increasing the strength of him that hath no might: but perfect also in that He is the everlasting God, Creator of the ends of the earth, who faileth not, neither is weary. He shall never burn dim, nor be bruised till He have set judgment in the earth.

The next portion of our study is in chapter fifty, and a few words may be necessary regarding the connection through the intervening chapters. Although we have studied chapter forty-two from the point of view of its fulfilment in our Lord Jesus Christ, its position in the prophecy probably indicates that the prime intention was to present a picture of the Lord's Servant in Ideal, an outline awaiting someone who could fulfil it. First appointed by the Lord to fulfil this Ideal was the nation of Israel. Accordingly, several times in the intervening chapters Israel and Jacob are named as the Lord's servant. The story is, alas, one of actual failure and blindness and yet of Divine encouragement. When we reach chapter forty-nine, we are still met by the words, “Thou art My servant, O Israel (verse 3): but in verse 5 Israel and Jacob are the **subjects** of the Servant's work. Between the two, the Lord Jesus has evidently in some way taken the

place of Israel as the Lord's Servant, and this is confirmed by the New Testament quotations of subsequent statements about the Servant applying them to the Lord Jesus. In the later parts of chapter forty-nine, we read a prophecy of God's recalling and regathering His people Israel to their own land and on this account we may view the period of the true fulfilment of Isaiah 50 to 54 at that time when, regathered to their own land, Israel will "Look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him" (Zech. 12: 10).

His Tongue and His Ear (Isa. 50: 4-7).

"The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." These words describe the speech of the Lord Jesus when He was here on earth. Zion's children will return to their stricken, dethroned and desolate mother, and when they come, the Lord will speak to them about His first coming. "Wherefore, when I came, was there no man? when I called, was there none to answer? . . . At My rebuke I dry up the sea, I make the rivers a wilderness." At His first coming He did not come speaking words which dry up the sea and clothe the heavens with blackness. The Lord God gave Him the tongue of the instructed — gave him a word in season for the weary. Here we see how the Lord Jesus Christ filled out during the days of His flesh, that ideal picture of the Lord's Servant. "The smoking flax shall He not quench." He was able to bind up the broken-hearted.

There are benighted souls who speak of our faith as being unpractical escapism. Christians have no need for a single blush of shame on **this** score. The class "weary" is very large indeed on the stage of life and on the page of history: physical weariness: nerve weariness: heart weariness: the weariness of the slave at his toil: the weariness of the heart over which the floods of the adversities of life have poured. Where else in the world is there any strength for the weary but in the Saviour? Who else could say, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"? This is the character of the Saviour's speech, and all who know Him have had experience of His power to sustain the weary with words.

"He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord hath opened mine ear, I was not rebellious, neither turned away back." These verses give the reason for His power to speak a word in season to him that is weary. There is deep mystery in words like these which speak of the true Manhood of the Master. He could speak such words, because His ear was opened to God. Morning by morning, day by day, His ear received communications from God and therefore He was able to speak words for the weary. His ear was open to the Word of God and in this He stands in contrast to all others. Whether the Words from the Lord God led him to comfort the weary, or to take the road which led by shame and spitting, giving His back to the smiters and His cheek to them that plucked off

the hair. He was ever **perfectly** responsive to the Word of God. This is the way in which He fulfilled the ideal "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." The object is not yet explained, but the road He took was a road of suffering, and the ear opened to His Father's voice gave Him equally looks of love and words for the weary, and on the other hand the face set like a flint. How perfect is this union of tenderness for the weariness of others with unvaried steadfastness in pursuing the Will of God Himself.

The two verses with which this chapter ends are very interesting. They contrast him that "feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant," with those who "Kindle a fire . . . and walk in the light of your fire." The latter is an exact parallel to those who live in the light of human reason alone. Such a road ends in eternal shame. There is nothing **contrary** to reason in the light that shines in Christ, but there is the revelation of those things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him;" — things that exist far beyond all human reason.

His Suffering and His Glory

(Isa. 52: 13—53: 12).

"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His Glory?" (Luke 24: 26), said the Saviour to the disciples mourning His death: and their hearts burned within them, as He talked with them by the way. And the heart of every disciple burns within him as he reads here the reason why the path of obedience was, for the

Servant, a path of suffering. His work as the Lord's Servant was to establish judgment on the earth. There are three facts about that earth, the conjunction of which are overlooked in so many schemes for its rescue from catastrophe. They are **sin**, **sorrow** and **death**. Ignoring them, and their essential connection with each other, is the ultimate refusal to face the facts.

Christianity is supremely exempt from the charge of blinking at reality. "In the centre of the situation plant the cross," someone has said, and here in this chapter is the cross planted in the centre of the situation of sorrow, sin and death, which are the obstacles to God's salvation for the ends of the earth. In our meditations on this chapter we might think of the first three of its four sections as showing how, on the part of God, His Servant grappled with these. In verses 1-3 we see the Man of **Sorrows**: in verses 4-6 our **sins**, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him: and with His stripes we are healed." In verses 7-9 we see Him with the rich in His **death**: and pray God that as we reach this holy place we may be no longer world-planners, but with Mary Magdalene, sinners delivered, at a Saviour's feet.

It is in the fourth section that He reaches the victory in glory through the suffering, that is predicted. The work undertaken in chapter forty-two is superabundantly achieved. Even as the pleasure of the Lord has prospered in His Servant's Hand, the Servant who has so suffered shall be satisfied with the fruit of His sorrow.

THE LINEN CLOTH

R. THOMSON

IT is good for our hearts to behold the glories of Christ in all the Scriptures, and sometimes an obscure passage of the Word of God may be directed by the Holy Spirit to yield much of the preciousness of Christ to the ready and willing mind. An illustration of this is found in the way the Gospels relate the entombment of the body of Jesus.

Each of the writers record the action of Joseph of Arimathaea, begging the body of Jesus, and wrapping it in a linen cloth. However, as we consider each account, we see details that remind us of the glories displayed in His perfect pathway of service.

In Matthew 27: 59, we read, "When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a **CLEAN** linen cloth." The emphasis here is on the spotless character of the cloth, in keeping with ceremonial Jewish cleansing, since Matthew wrote with Israel in view. But it speaks to us of the undefiled character of our Lord in His holy Manhood. His **purity** and **perfection** were declared in the clean linen used for His burial.

In Mark 15: 46, we read that Joseph "bought **FINE** linen, and took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen." Notice first of all that he **purchased** it; a fitting tribute to the perfect Servant, who was worthy of the cost. Then again, being fine linen, which was the clothing of the **rich**, we may see even in this a fulfilment of the prophecy, recorded in Isaiah 53: 9, "with the rich in His

death." So we see dignity and honour given to Christ, the Servant-Son, who had stooped so low, in the details of His entombment.

Turning now to the record in Luke 23: 53, the statement is simply that he "wrapped it in **LINEN**," which is a material of texture — of warp and weft. The vertical threads, crossed by the horizontal, produce the finished article. If we apply this to the perfect pathway of the Lord Jesus, what a Divine weaving we behold! The vertical threads remind us of His dependence and obedience Godward; while the horizontal threads make known His meekness and love displayed before men. At the cross all this reached its perfection in expression — God glorified and redemption accomplished.

In John 19: 39, 40, we get the account from the pen of John. Here Nicodemus is introduced as having part in the matter, and they "brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight," and taking the body of Jesus they "wound it in linen clothes with the **SPICES**." The spices themselves spoke of bitterness and suffering, but when crushed they send forth a delightful odour. And there was no scarceness in the odour for what they brought was very ample, in weight about a hundred pounds. Here was the Holy One of God, bruised unto death in the sinner's stead — but His death filled with **fragrance**.

The two disciples, Joseph and Nicodemus, came forth with bold-

ness to take charge of the body of Jesus. What a wonderful breaking away from the secrecy of discipleship! Not only do we see the **courage** of faith, but also the **sweetness** of fellowship, for they acted together in this thing.

Thus may we see the Holy Spirit of God taking up a seemingly small incident to bring before our hearts

some of the wonderful glories of Christ. The Lord Jesus had said of Him, "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16: 14).

"Each thought of Thee doth constant yield
Unchanging, fresh delight."

"HE FOLLOWETH NOT US"

I. FLEMING.

THE danger is ever recurring of self-importance among Christians in every age and association. It was so with the disciples of the Lord during His ministry on earth, and it has manifested itself down all the centuries since, and is evidenced in our own time.

The disciples at the foot of the Mount of Transfiguration had been unable to cast a demon out of a boy. Their spiritual condition had not been equal to the emergency. Prayer and fasting had been called for, and in this they had been found wanting. It was but a little while after that, voiced by John, they are found saying, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him because he followeth not us" (Mark 9: 38). The repeated statement,

"he followeth not us,"

showed that self was prominent in their thoughts. It was not, "he followeth not **Thee**," nor, "he loveth not **Thee**." No! it was not Christ filling their vision, nor that

they were jealous of His glory. It was that pride ruled their thoughts. The pride of office and privilege led them to arrogate to themselves the right of casting out demons. It was pride that led to Satan's fall, and this self-conceit, which is "the condemnation of the devil," led them to oppose the work of God through others. One can seem to hear the serpent's hiss in that repeated occurrence of "US."

And was it not this same pride of life that led the disciples to say of the woman of Canaan, "she crieth after US" (Matt. 15: 23). They were feeling apparently that it was a reproach that they should be subjected to the importunate calls of such a Gentile sinner. For this reason it was, no doubt, that they requested the Lord to "send her away."

But reverting to the incident in Mark's Gospel, how gracious was the Lord to His erring disciples when He said, "Forbid him not, for there is no man which shall do a miracle in MY name, that can lightly speak evil of ME." It was

Himself and not **themselves**. "**Me**" and not "**Us**."

But then, having wounded to heal, He added, "He that is not against us is on **our** part." Associating them with Himself in the service of blessing others. Then saying, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward." Blessed encouragement to them and to us, to serve others who "belong to Christ," and for that reason alone.

Then a warning follows, which must have been a salt word for their consciences, as to what they would deserve, if they caused to stumble one of these little ones "that believe in Me." Notice the occurrence of these expressions: "In My name" (verse 39). "In My name" (verse 41). "Ye belong to Christ" (verse 41). "Which believe in Me" (verse 42).

Precious words these for the consideration of everyone who desires to serve Christ's interests here. **His glory** is to command their thoughts. His own are dear to Him beyond expression. **He** must be the centre in all our service. Others may differ from us in this or that matter, but if they glorify Him, they are not to be slighted or offended in any wise. They belong to Him, and the least thing done for the least of His own is counted as done for Himself. The least thing done against the least of His own is counted as done against Himself.

"Ye belong to Christ" — these words should ring in our ears and

hearts, so that we should treat every one of His own, as if it were Himself present personally. Alas! selfish interests may fill our thoughts and lives, and so our judgments in spiritual things as well as in natural things, may lead us to slight or despise our fellow-believers, and thus slight and despise the Lord Himself in His own.

A well known preacher told how, in the American city in which he lived, there was a Hall, over which in large letters stood the words:

"JESUS ONLY."

A storm of exceptional violence arose, in the course of which the first three letters were blown away, leaving in result:

". . . US ONLY."

And knowing those who met in the building beneath the words, he thought that the remaining words described more correctly those who met there.

Alas! if our attitude and conduct towards any of the Lord's people should ever lead to such a conviction in any mind. Our doctrine and manner of life should bring Christ and not ourselves before those who hear and see us day by day.

The work of the Holy Spirit with us ever has this in view, that more and more Christ Himself may fill the vision of our minds, and through us may be presented to others, with whom we come into contact.

BIBLE STUDY — EZRA AND NEHEMIAH

F. B. HOLE

(Ezra 9: 1 — Nehemiah 2: 4)

EZRA had been so prospered of God in the enterprise he had undertaken that he may well have arrived in Jerusalem with high hopes. If so, the information he at once received must have come to him with very painful force. Among the people then in the land, there were certain princes who realized the sad declension that had taken place. That which had started so brightly under Zerubbabel and Jeshua had been gravely marred. Not only the common people, but also priests, Levites, and even princes and rulers, had been involved in the trespass. They had failed to maintain the necessary separation from the varied heathen nations that surrounded them. Intermarrying with them, they had learned their customs and had practised their abominable sacrifices and ways.

If we read the first six verses of Deuteronomy 7, we find that seven nations, who were greater and mightier than Israel, were in the land that God had given to them; they were to destroy them and contract no marriages with them, so that they might not be perverted to their ways. Even under the faithful Joshua this was only partially done, and now many centuries later we see the effects of their failure. In the first verse of our chapter the nations mentioned are almost the same as those we find in Deuteronomy 7, and to them the Egyptians are added, making eight in all.

The people had been warned through Moses of the disastrous

effects that would flow from alliance with these peoples, and those effects had come to pass in the history of both the ten tribes and the two, and had led to the scattering and the captivity. Now once again the same snare had entangled the returned remnant, in spite of a bright start, and hearing of it, Ezra was overwhelmed.

And we have painfully to reflect that the same snare, though it is mainly exercised in a rather different way, underlies much of the almost apostate conditions that prevail in Christendom today. The evil set in when there was the merging of the Church and the world under the Roman Emperor Constantine, which in the course of a few centuries led to the rise of the Papacy as a great world-power. And later again, after the Reformation, state churches came into existence, in which those truly converted and the unconverted are mixed together, and so on. The damaging effect of this is all too evident on every hand.

Have our eyes been opened to see the terrible failure that has marked the church in this thing? And if we have seen it, have our reactions been at all similar to that displayed by Ezra? We fear it has not been so. We shall do well to take very careful notice of the effect which the sad discovery had upon him.

Here was a man singularly free from the evil that was uncovered

before him, yet he smote himself, instead of starting to smite the guilty parties. According to the customs of those days, he rent his clothes, but not content with this he smote himself, by plucking out hair from his head and beard — a painful process. Having done so, he sat down “astonied,” or “overwhelmed.” He began with himself in humiliation before God.

Starting thus, the effect was immediate. Amongst the returned remnant there were those who were conscious of the widespread transgression of the law in this matter, but who had not the energy, and perhaps not the position among the people, to do anything about it. These were at once stirred up by Ezra's drastic action, and identified themselves with him, as verse 4 records. They were those who “trembled at the words of the God of Israel,” and these, being like Ezra, are just the people to whom God will look in His mercy, as stated in Isaiah 66: 2.

At the time of the evening sacrifice, when there was a small typical representation of the sacrifice of Christ, Ezra arose with his rent garments and fell on his knees to approach God in the remarkable prayer, which is recorded in verses 6-15; a prayer in which no actual request was made; consisting as it did from first to last in humble and heart-broken confession of sins, in which he personally had not shared.

One remarkable feature, characterizing the whole confession, is that he identified himself with the people, and confessed the evils as though they were his own. From beginning

to end he uses “we” and “us,” where we might have expected “they” and “them” to appear. Moreover he acknowledged that the evils that had confronted him were a reviving of the sins that had defiled his people from the outset, or as he put it, “since the days of our fathers,” but aggravated by the fact that they were being repeated after God had shown such mercy in relieving them of the governmental consequences of their former sins.

This prayer of Ezra contains admonition for ourselves of a solemnizing kind, so we do well to consider it. In the history of Christendom great mercy has been shown, and from the time of the Reformation revivings have taken place, but only to be marked by this same tendency to revert to former evils. It would indeed be well if every true saint today was on his or her knees before God with words like Ezra's, springing from convictions and a heart like his. And all too often we should have to make our confession as having been involved in the sin and defilement, and not, like Ezra, as identifying ourselves with those who have done so.

In verse 1 of chapter 10, we see Ezra on his knees, and as he confessed moved by deep emotion, that revealed itself in weeping. Some of us are so constituted that we dislike anything emotional, but we must recognize that truly deep conviction, whether as to things good or things evil, is bound to produce emotion — an example of emotion in both directions is found in 2 Timothy 1: 4. Paul was not a mere theologian, propounding Christian doctrine in a philosophical way, but an

ardent servant of Christ, moved in his spirit by what he preached and by the needs of both saints and sinners. Timothy too he commended as one who would "care with genuine feeling how ye get on" (Phil. 2: 20. New Trans.). Let us cultivate today a similar tenderness of feeling.

We should then be more likely to see our attitude and words having real effect upon others, as is recorded in the case of Ezra. The fact was quickly revealed that in Israel there were a large number who were aware of the sin and departure but had not the faith and spiritual energy to act as he did. Awakened to the sin and need by him, they also assembled and wept as he did. And further than this, a leader amongst them declared that the only hope lay in putting away the evils in which they had been involved and obeying the instructions they had been given from the outset. He reminded them in effect of what the Lord had said through Jeremiah, recorded in verse 16 of his sixth chapter. The principle there stated stands good today. At the beginning of each dispensation God makes known the "paths" that suit what He has introduced and established. These remain unchanged throughout the dispensation, and to revert to them after a season of departure is always right. Let us see that we do so today.

A special responsibility rested upon Ezra in this matter, since as we saw in the early part of chapter 7, he had prepared his heart to **seek**, and **do**, and **teach** the law of the Lord. This was recognized by Shechaniah, so that he said to him,

"Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee;" and he assured him he would have the support of those who feared God in the action that he had to take.

Thus God wrought in that day, and it does seem to be His normal way of working. Not every Christian is qualified and called to initiate some work of God, not even in the early days. Hence that word, "Remember your leaders who have spoken to you the word of God" (Heb. 13: 7). The word to be emphasized here is "Leaders," for they not only expounded the way, and enforced it by word of mouth, but **walked in it themselves**.

In the case before us Ezra's action and words had a remarkable and immediate effect, for God was with him. On a large scale the people were moved and trembled as they realized how they had disobeyed the law, and a great rain from heaven heightened their distress. The resolution was made to confess their trespass and to put away their connections with the heathen women, in which they had been entangled.

These two things appear in verse 11. It is sadly possible to make confession of wrong-doing, and yet continue in it in more subtle and unseen ways. It is also possible to realize that wrong-doing of a certain sort is not profitable and to forsake it, but without any confession of wrong in the matter. But when the conviction of sin is genuine, there is first confession of the sin, and then a forsaking of it, as is plainly intimated in Proverbs 28: 13.

The rest of this chapter, and indeed of the book, is taken up with

two things. First, we are told of the careful and orderly way in which was effected the difficult and distressing work of putting away the strange wives, and thus delivering themselves from this worldly and sinful entanglement. Had it been done in an impulsive and reckless way, it might have brought further dishonour on the name of the Lord. This too may have a voice for us. As we grow in grace and our understanding of the will of God is enlarged, we may become aware that some thing, that we thought little of, is really a spiritual entanglement and hindrance. Let us get out of it in a way that is worthy of the Lord whom we serve and obey. If, for instance, it means loss being incurred somewhere, let us accept the loss ourselves, instead of imposing it upon others.

The second thing, with which the book closes, is a lengthy list of those who had been involved in the trespass. It may surprise us to see that the first names mentioned in verse 18, were sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, the man whose name follows that of Zerubbabel in chapter 2: 2; the priest who is mentioned in the prophecy of Haggai, and again in Zechariah 3. Some, if not all his sons, had taken part in this sin. But really, this should not surprise us, for similar tragedies have been all too frequent. We have only to cite the cases of Aaron and his two sons, of Samuel and his sons, of Eli and his sons, of David and his sons, of Hezekiah and his son Manasseh. And so we might continue even to recent times. It is a sad and humbling fact that many true and devoted servants of our Lord have had sons who have not

followed in their father's footsteps. The recognition of this fact should lead us to be much in prayer for the families of those who serve the Lord Jesus.

Lastly, notice that the names given are of those who **put away** the strange wives, and offered a **trespass offering**. It was surely to their discredit that they had taken these wives, but the putting away of them was to their credit, and so their names appear in the record. They were, as we might now put it, backsliders restored, as the result of the faithful ministry and action of Ezra. He had indeed been, "a ready scribe in the law of Moses."

We now commence to read the first chapter of Nehemiah, and find ourselves carried to the 20th year of Artaxerxes, whereas Ezra went to Jerusalem in the 7th year of that king. Nehemiah was not a priest, but he was at Shushan the palace in an official capacity. His story begins when certain Jews arrived, who had knowledge of the condition of things prevailing then at Jerusalem, and he enquired of them as to the state of the remnant that had returned there years before, and as to the conditions prevailing in the city. The answer of these men is given to us in verse 3.

Their report was a distressful one. Jerusalem as a city was still in a ruinous state, and the people there in great affliction and reproach. The effect this news had upon Nehemiah is related in the rest of the chapter. We venture to think it should also have a very definite effect upon us.

We have just seen in the book of Ezra how under God-fearing men,

Zerubbabel and Jeshua, a remnant had returned and rebuilt the temple, and though defection supervened in the course of years, the coming of Ezra led to a distinct reformation; yet now, thirteen years after, they are marked by affliction and reproach. We might have expected that instead of this God would have rewarded them by visible tokens of His approval and favour.

The next book, that of Esther, relates for us things that happened to the much larger number of Jews, that did not concern themselves with God's interests in His temple, but preferred to remain in the land of their captivity, where in the course of the seventy years many of them had settled down in comparative prosperity. The name of God is not mentioned in Esther, and we might have expected that these easy-going folk would have come under His displeasure. What do we find? Read Esther 9: 17-19, and see. The people who, in spite of their defects, had cared for God's interests and rebuilt His temple, marked by affliction and reproach; while those who did not concern themselves, remaining in their comforts, have "feasting," "gladness," and "a good day."

What instruction shall we gather from this extraordinary and, we venture to think, this unexpected contrast? Well, in the first place, worldly prosperity and jollification, even if the fruit of God's care and dealings behind the scenes, is not necessarily an indication of His approval, nor is affliction a sign of His disapproval, as is seen in far more striking degree in the case of Job. Secondly, we may refer to

what is stated in Hebrews 12: 6, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." If we read Psalm 73, we find the same problem exercising the mind of the writer. He saw those who definitely were wicked prospering, while the godly were chastened. It was when he went into the sanctuary of God that he found the solution.

Nehemiah of course had not the light that the New Testament sheds upon this problem, so the sad tidings concerning, "the remnant that are left," affected him deeply, for in spirit he was **of** them, though not actually **with** them. He was moved to **tears, mourning, fasting and prayer**. The report he had heard was mainly concerned with the outward circumstances of the remnant, rather than with their inward spiritual state, but it moved him to these four things.

And what about present day conditions among the true saints of God? Many are in outward affliction under the iron hand of Communism or Romanism, while in the English-speaking world the increased inflow of money into our pockets seems to have produced a decreased outflow of love and devotion from our souls. Have these four things ever marked us? Have we ever mourned to tears over the thousands of our fellow-saints persecuted and even martyred in this twentieth century? Have we ever abstained from lawful things and given ourselves to prayer on their behalf? The writer leaves each reader to answer these questions for themselves. He knows quite well what he would have to reply.

The prayer of Nehemiah, though

shorter than Ezra's, is very similar. He too identified himself with the sin of the people, saying, "we have sinned." But in one direction he went further, pleading the word of the Lord, that had been written in Leviticus 26. Israel had been warned that disobedience to the law would bring upon themselves a scattering; but that even then if they turned to God in obedience to His word, He would gather them from distant lands and restore them to the place of His name. On this, which had been written, he based his plea. For those in Jerusalem and for himself he made the claim that they were those, "who desire to fear Thy name."

While making request in a more general way for the returned remnant in Jerusalem, he had a more definite request to make for himself. He was in a post of special responsibility before the king, and having access to his presence, he intended to make a request of the monarch that he might very naturally entirely refuse. He sought therefore that God would prosper him in that which he had in mind.

The king's cup-bearer of those days had to be a man of integrity, who would see that nothing undesirable or poisonous was inserted into the King's wine. The tidings he had just received had so affected him that his sorrow was seen in his face. Noticing it, the king was of course

suspicious and enquired what moved him to sorrow; as we see in the opening verses of chapter 2. A position was thus created that had definite danger in it, and Nehemiah was "very sore afraid." However he told the king of the tidings that he had received, which accounted for his sad countenance that had revealed the sadness of his heart.

The king did show him mercy as he had desired, and invited a request from him. This was a challenge, and Nehemiah's response to it is very instructive. The record is, first, "So I prayed to the God of heaven," and then, "I said to the king . . ." God first, and the king second. This silent prayer must have shot up to heaven in a matter of two or three seconds, quite unknown to the king or anybody else, and it was evidently as speedily answered from heaven, so that the request he made was the right one, and to meet with a favourable answer.

Would to God that we and all other true saints of God were so truly and simply living in touch with our Lord on high that in any and every emergency, needing a quick decision, we could at once with a minimum of words, remit the case to Him for His decision, and guidance for ourselves. We should more often see His hand moving on our behalf, even as for Nehemiah; as the rest of the story unfolds.

SAID the Apostle: "Through a window in a basket was I let down . . . a man in Christ . . . such an one caught up to the third heaven" (2 Cor. II: 23 — 12: 2). A striking contrast surely! Our lettings-down on earth will end in a catching-up to heaven.

ETERNAL LIFE

J. S. BLACKBURN.

THERE is no satisfactory definition of life. All living things have certain fundamental features in common, and in the description of these features science comes as near as it can to a definition of life. Life is not an object which exists by itself. We cannot take a lump of life and analyse and weigh it. Life can only be examined in examining the characters and movements of living things. It is by their difference with regard to these features that the various forms of life are differentiated and understood. We may regard eternal life as a kind of life and it is our present purpose reverently to enquire into the meaning of the Scripture phrase "eternal life" by this method.

Our first impression is naturally to think of eternal life as a life of endless duration. This is unquestionably true. "Eternal" or "everlasting" are both satisfactory translations of the original phrase. "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish." "He that liveth and believeth in Me shall never die." At the same time, there is little question that the phrase does not **primarily** refer to a life of an endless duration, but describes a **kind of life**. It is not primarily a question of quantity, but of **quality**. A little reflection will show that we use time expressions with a significance describing a quality rather than merely specifying a time. A friend preaching in France described himself as a man "du moyen age." He meant to say that he was a middle aged man, but what he actually said

meant that he was a man of the Middle Ages! Why did they smile? Only a trifling difference, and a statement about the duration of his life becomes a statement regarding its quality. In a very striking way this view is confirmed in Mark 10:30. The Authorised Version reads "He shall receive an hundredfold now in this time . . . and in the world to come eternal life." Literally, the passage says "and in the age to come, the age life." Here the phrase plainly means "the kind of life adapted to the world to come."

All lists of the features shared by living things include:—

1. Adaptation to **environment**.
2. **Behaviour** or Response to stimuli.
3. Reproduction or **Impartation** of life.
4. **Feeding** and growth.

1. **Environment.**

Fishes are adapted to live in water; men and beasts on land; and birds in the air. Each kind of life is adapted to a limited environmental range. Man cannot live long in water and fishes cannot live long on land. To what environment is eternal life adapted? The answer is clearly given in the New Testament, "That eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested

unto us." In John 3, eternal life as a "heavenly thing" is contrasted with the new birth as an "earthly thing." The Son who belongs to heaven, when He speaks about eternal life, witnesses what He has seen and heard. Up to the moment when the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, eternal life could not be seen on earth. It was in the home to which it belongs, the Father's house. Eternal life is the name given to the life belonging to a community of Divine relationships and affections unrevealed to man until the moment in time of which John speaks — "For the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested unto us." That eternal life, "with the Father" before it was "manifested unto us," takes us to John 1: 1: "the Word was with God," and to Prov. 8: 30: "then I was by Him . . . I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him." Thus we see that consideration of environment leads to the recognition that eternal life is the home-life of God, of the Father's house. How much greater is this sublime and exalted conception than the idea, sufficiently great in itself, of eternal life as being of endless duration!

2. Behaviour.

Just as no kind of life can be seen, but can only be studied in the behaviour of living things, so in 1 John 1: 1-2 the apostle lingers lovingly over the intimate way in which the disciples perceived the expression of eternal life in the behaviour of the Lord Jesus. The things they heard and saw and contemplated and

handled from the beginning of the earthly life of Jesus were the manifestation of "that eternal life which was with the Father." The purpose of his writing is to declare the things which were the data through which the knowledge of eternal life was given, that is, the things they saw and heard in Jesus. It can easily be overlooked that the epistle contains throughout references in detail to the things they saw and heard in Him. In other words, facts which are recorded in the Gospel with the object of promoting belief in Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God, are repeated in the Epistle with a further object. They are reported and explained as the manifestation of eternal life so that those who possessed eternal life may know it and understand its nature.

They had heard the message that "God is Light" (1: 5). They heard Christ's commandment given at "the beginning" (2: 7). They saw how "He walked" (2: 6). A perusal of the epistle in this manner shows to how large an extent it is occupied with reporting the things they heard and saw and with setting these facts in a new light as the manifestation of eternal life. In sharing the apostles' delight in Him, we have fellowship with them and this fellowship is "with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." Such fellowship is fulness of joy.

These considerations are a stimulus to renewed joy in the contemplation of and listening to Jesus "as He walked." This is the way in which we shall receive anew the witness of "the Spirit and the water and the blood," which is, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."

3. Impartation.

One of the features of living things is the power to reproduce themselves or to impart their life to new individuals. One of the distinguishing features of different kinds of life is the method of imparting life to new individuals. The lowliest creatures bring new individuals into being by division of themselves. Fishes and birds and mammals each have the manner of reproduction characteristic each of its kind. The manner in which new individuals become alive with eternal life is another characteristic by which we can study the nature of eternal life.

The New Testament has a great deal to say regarding the impartation of eternal life. A large volume of witness is to the fact that it is received through faith. This however regards the matter rather from the point of view of the experience of the person receiving life. Regarding the impartation of life the basic truth is given in 1 John 5: 11 already quoted. The believer receives and possesses eternal life by virtue of being in God's Son. "God hath given to us eternal life and this life is in His Son." What this means has sometimes been illustrated by the members of a body. My life is in my finger, but my finger is not the seat and fount of my life. Perhaps a better illustration is provided by keeping to John's writings and considering the Vine and the branches. In John 15: 5 the Lord teaches the disciples that severed from Him they "can do nothing." Branches severed from a vine are good for nothing (15: 6). Thus the branches have life, not in themselves independently, but by immediate derivation from the vine. The immediacy of

the possession of eternal life in the Son by each individual, is a basic truth.

That eternal life is imparted as a gift is stated in several passages. "I give unto them [my sheep] eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand" (John 10: 28). "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him" (John 17: 2). In addition to the passage in 1 John 5: 11, Paul also states that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6: 23).

A peculiarly vivid picture of the manner in which faith appropriates the gift of eternal life is seen in the Lord's words in John 6: 53 "Except ye eat [an act, not a habit] the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." To believe in Jesus is to appropriate for ourselves the virtue of His sacrifice, and only thus to possess eternal life.

From the truth that each disciple possesses eternal life immediately from its Source, flows the repeated desire of the Lord, "Abide in Me." In the figure of the vine and the branches there is no place for conscious dependence. But in the application of the figure to the disciples there arises the need for each believer daily and humbly to realise his dependence on the Lord and consciously to draw on the plenitude of His life. "I am come," He says, "that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10: 10).

4. Food.

Each form of life in nature is adapted to metabolize a certain range of food on which the maintenance of the life depends. The differences between fishes and mammals and man in this respect are among the means of distinguishing each kind of life. So it is with eternal life. The food of eternal life is the flesh of the Son of Man and His blood. In continuance of the passage quoted above from John 6, the Lord's teaching is clear on this point. "Whoso eateth [present tense] My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, dwelleth [or abideth] in Me and I in him. As the Living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me" (John 6: 54-57).

What does it mean to eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of Man? Small wonder that many of His disciples found this a hard saying, and "went back and walked no more with Him." We may well echo the saying of the Jews "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" Perhaps the simplest answer would be to say that we eat His flesh and drink His blood by meditation on the Cross. From the earliest Christian times a connection has been seen between this passage and the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. We do not believe that the physical act of participating in the Lord's Supper is to be equated with eating His flesh and drinking His blood, nor that the latter can occur only at the Lord's Supper.

But that there is a connection surely none would deny. The validity of the Lord's Supper derives from holding Him, in His death of sacrifice, in the mind — from enthroning Him in our love. "This do" He said "for a calling-to-mind of Me." To eat and drink unworthily is to fail to discern in the bread and wine the Lord's body. The **inward** occupation of mind and heart which accompanies the **outward** act of partaking is eating His flesh and drinking His blood.

"Thy flesh is meat; Thy blood blest Saviour, shed

Is drink indeed.

On Thee, the true, the heavenly living bread,

Our souls would feed.

And live with Thee in life's eternal home,

Where sin nor want, nor woe nor death can come."

In seeking reverently to pursue this enquiry into the nature of eternal life, using the similitude of the means employed in studying the various kinds of life in nature, we must never forget that "as the heavens are higher than the earth," so is the nature of the divine lifted above all that is of earthly nature. The transcendent greatness of the idea of eternal life is set forth above all in the prayer recorded in John 17. "This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (John 17: 3). No one less than God the Son, the Only-begotten Son who dwells in the bosom of the Father, could declare God. These words in prayer teach us that as He had glorified God on

the earth in completing the work the Father gave Him to do, so now in resurrection and in a new way He continues to glorify God. This new way is by the impartation of the power to know the Father, the only true God, and Jesus Christ His

Sent-One. "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life" (1 John 5: 20).

"ELECT... UNTO OBEDIENCE"

F. B. HOLE

IT is a fact in which we may ever rejoice that we "are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6: 14). Yet that fact does not absolve us from a life of obedience, as the succeeding verses, in Romans 6, plainly show. Our unconverted lives were marked by the yielding of our members as servants, that in their varied lusts we might obey sin. Now, as converted, we yield our members as servants of righteousness, that so we may obey God.

Moreover, the whole character of the service that we may render under grace is transformed. Were we under the law, such obedience as we managed to offer, would be rendered under compulsion, in order, if possible, to live and establish our position. But now, being delivered from the law and brought under the loving authority of Christ, we serve and obey "in newness of spirit" (Rom. 7: 6). The Gospel has brought us under the mighty influence of the love of Christ, and this produces a glad and spontaneous obedience, not to secure something for ourselves, but rather to please our Saviour.

we open Peter's first epistle. We are "elect," for God has chosen us in His foreknowledge, and we have been reached "through sanctification of the Spirit," and that has committed us to "obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." In this sentence the words, "of Jesus Christ," evidently apply to the obedience as well as to the blood. The sprinkling of His blood was needed to clear us from all the sins that accumulated in our former life of disobedience; and now we are committed to a life of obedience, the pattern of which is the perfect obedience that He rendered in His pathway here. We are to obey as He obeyed.

This imparts a very high and holy character to the life of a Christian, and our first impression may be to regard it as an impracticable ideal. But it is not so, as we may see if we carefully read the first epistle of John. We are there regarded as "born of God," and therefore we have a nature which, viewed abstractly, in its essential nature, "cannot sin," and "doeth righteousness," and therefore we have the capacity to walk as He walked, and do as He did. This will be seen,

Of this obedience we read when

if in that epistle we read, chapters 2: 5, 6, 29; 3: 6, 7, 10, 16; 4: 11-13; 5: 1-4, 18. We have the flesh still in us and all too often it displays its ugly features: but this is our essential character, as born of God; and so it is possible for us to obey even as Christ obeyed.

In the Scriptures there are ample warnings against disobedience. We will mention but three. A very instructive Old Testament one is found in 1 Samuel 15, when Saul was sent to destroy the Amalekites. He was told why this severe sentence was to be carried out, though why it was to extend even to their flocks and herds, is not mentioned: but so it was. Now the flocks and herds were desirable possessions, and so under cover of zeal for sacrifices in the service of the Lord, Saul did not do what he was told, but spared them. This brought forth the word of the Lord through Samuel, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (verse 22).

This incident unmasks for us a very subtle temptation to disobedience in the service of the Lord. Saul was now to accomplish what God has decreed, as we see if we read Deuteronomy 25: 17-19, and so serve the will of God. All true service for us is the carrying out of the will of God, but in grace, since grace characterizes the epoch in which we live. How easily, even in the service of grace, we may be tempted to spare what God has condemned, and do so under cover of honouring God. Our deviation from obedience may seem to us to be an advancement of the work of God, but thus it never is. We cannot serve God and sacrifice to Him

after our own thoughts. It is for us to **obey**.

Another temptation is to assume that the lapse of time induces some alteration in the divine instructions. There was evidently a tendency in this direction under the law of Moses, as century after century passed. In the days of Malachi over a thousand years had passed since the law was given, and hence that word in his fourth chapter, "Remember ye the law of Moses My servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." This is the closing injunction of the Old Testament.

Two sad things had happened when Malachi prophesied. First, the majority of the people had been for several centuries scattered among the nations. Second, among the minority, gathered back into the land, grave defection and disobedience had supervened. There must have been strong temptation, specially among the scattered ones, to think — I am indeed a child of Israel, but in my present **abnormal** conditions I need hardly concern myself with the law, given to my nation in their **normal** state. The word through Malachi was — The law was given for "**all Israel**," and therefore, if of Israel, it applies to you, whatever your state may be.

Again, the temptation may have been even stronger for them to say, — But surely, if we try to remember the main demands of the law, we need not concern ourselves with all those minor details, that come under "the statutes and judgments." But this subtle error is met with equal directness. The law, the whole

law in all its details, was as binding on the children of Israel as their dispensation drew on to its close, as it was at the outset. To obey it was the responsibility set before them by the prophet.

A third temptation for us is to assume that small details of our behaviour, or of church order and procedure, as laid down in New Testament writings, may lapse, or possibly need alteration, as the days in which we live are marked by such extraordinary progress in human affairs. In this connection let us read 1 Corinthians 14: 36, 37. Many disorders, some of them of a very grave kind, had crept into the large Christian assembly at Corinth. The word of God did not come out from them. It came unto them only, and in a very special way by this epistle, which the Apostle wrote to them.

Now, in this chapter 14, quite definite instructions are given as to how things should be ordered when they came together in assembly, whether concerning giving thanks, or singing, or prayer, or even ministry of a prophetic character. Having given these instructions, Paul called upon the saints at Corinth to recognize that these, together with all the earlier instructions he gave,

were not just his own ideas of what would be seemly, but were, "the commandments of the Lord." That being so, our duty is perfectly plain. It is not for us to attempt to explain them away, or to treat them as merely Paul's view of things, or as instructions quite appropriate in the first century, but really outdated in this twentieth century of the Christian era; but rather, as far as we may understand them, to obey them.

In a time of dispensational change we may find instructions given, which later are countermanded: Matthew 28: 19, for instance, alters what Jesus said, as recorded in chapter 10: 5. Again, Luke 22: 36, countermands earlier instructions. But when a dispensation is established, the instructions given at the outset abide until the dispensation's end. Romans 1: 5, states that the Gospel comes to all nations that it may be obeyed. The same epistle ends with the fact that the mystery, that springs out of the Gospel, is made known among all nations "for the obedience of faith."

May all of us, who confess Jesus as our Lord, be more concerned as to walking in obedience — that character of glad and devoted obedience that characterized Him.

THE EXHORTATIONS OF SCRIPTURE

THE exhortations of Scripture contained in the New Testament are not in any sense legal commands, to be carried out under pains and penalties. But they de-

fine in detail that which is the proper outcome of the divine life that we have received as the children of God; and, if we read Christ into them, the blessing and joy in carry-

ing them out is greatly enhanced.

Take, for instance, the Lord's answer to Peter's question, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matt. 18: 21, 22). If that were taken up as a legal command, how irksome it would be; absolutely impossible to nature, we would say. But if we read Christ into it and

say, **that is the way He has treated and does treat me**, what a feast of love it yields to the soul! What tender compassion, what unlimited grace! And thus with heart softened and made glad by a sense of His grace to me, with the full glory of this grace as shown in Him before my soul, it becomes a joy and a privilege to forgive others, and to be, as it were, a mirror, kept bright by the hand of divine grace, for the reflecting of Christ here.

DYING EMBERS

A Servant of Christ has written "I remember coming into my room one day, and seeing the fire very low, indeed nearly out. On examining it more closely, I observed about half a dozen dying embers scattered all over the bottom of the grate; quite too far apart to help one another, each fast fading away for want of a little help. What was to be done? To throw in a lot of fresh material would simply be to put the whole thing hopelessly out. The embers could not help the coals, and the coals could only squash the embers.

"At once I hit upon a very simple plan. I gently gathered the scattered embers close together, and the little bit of life in each soon made a good bit of life in all, and the little company of dying embers became quite a nice little collective fire, capable of acting on some fresh material.

"Here, thought I, is a fine lesson for me. If I come to a place and find the Lord's beloved people

in a very low, feeble, dying state, I must just seek to get them together for mutual help and blessing, in order that they may be in a condition to act on others outside.

"This mutual help is of all importance. People are so prone to lean upon gifted men. And if they cannot have such, they get discouraged and scattered, instead of getting lovingly together, and helping one another by their mutual faith."

Are any of our readers afflicted in this way; feeling themselves to be like the dying embers of a fire? If so, let them accept the guidance indicated by the simple incident related above, **and act upon it**. In so doing they will have the support of the Scripture itself; for it plainly says, "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10: 24, 25).

THE EPHESIAN DOXOLOGIES

A. H. STORRIE

Ephesians 1: 3; 3: 20-21

IT might seem to be almost a work of supererogation to attempt to write on these great doxologies; they remind us of the lines of the hymn:

“Heights unsearched and depths unfathomed,
In Thy wondrous love we see.”

Yet it is not difficult to imagine what it was that led the apostle, in his Roman prison, to rise in the first doxology to such heights of worship as have never been surpassed. As he envisages the accomplishment of the eternal purpose of God, his soul is filled with a sense of the immensity and the infinitude of the grace and love of God. Certain doxologies were called forth by some particular circumstances such as in 2 Corinthians 1: 3 and 2: 14. At Corinth there had been a large measure of recovery from a carnal state to a spiritual one. In Ephesians the sublime height of adoration to which the apostle rises, does not flow from any special mercy or consolation, but from an appreciation of what God is in Himself.

Here we are on high ground indeed. And clearly the spiritual state of those to whom Paul wrote was to some degree in harmony with the elevated nature of his communications.

The highest blessings that God confers are those which He bestows on His saints in the heavenly places in Christ. And God blesses us in a

two-fold way: as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Well may we bless Him who has so richly blessed us! Nor is there a single blessing wherewith God our Father has not blessed us. We are aware that the Lord Jesus here on earth, stood in a two-fold relation to God. As to His eternal Deity He was ever the Son of God; but He was also the Son of God in Manhood. Do we not see His highest personal glory set forth in the Gospel of John, whilst it is in Luke's Gospel that we perceive Deity in Humanity, the Man Christ Jesus. In resurrection He is still Man.

Our blessings “in the heavenlies” stand in contrast to those of Israel, which will have their sphere in earthly places, that is, in the Holy Land. But there is a certain analogy between them. In Deuteronomy 32, in language befitting his noble theme, the departing Law-giver dilates on the lot of the favoured people. By placing some extracts from that great discourse in connection with the no less eloquent language of Ephesians, we may better appreciate the similarity between the two:

Deuteronomy 32: 8-14.

“He found him in a desert land, and in a waste howling wilderness . . . He made him ride on the high places of the earth . . . That he might eat the increase of the fields; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock; . . . butter of

kine, and milk of sheep, with the fat of lambs . . . with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.”

Ephesians 1 & 2.

“ dead in trespasses and sins . . .
 . . . but God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love where-with He loved us . . . hath quickened us together with Christ . . . and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” And also, “ Blessed us with all spiritual blessings . . . that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.”

Well may we today exclaim, “ blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places in Christ . . . ”

The doxology of chapter 3 completes a parenthetical chapter replete with rich truth of a most blessed nature. And we may well note the deep humility that marks the great and gifted apostle in communicating this wealth of teaching: “ To me, less than the least of all saints, has this grace been given, to announce among the nations the glad tidings of the unsearchable riches of the Christ . . . ” (New Trans.)

And what a prayer follows from the apostle on his knees! It may be said that the prayer in chapter 1, addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ has more to do with our standing before God in the divine favour; that of chapter 3 relates chiefly to communion, being addressed to the **Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our being “ in Christ ” is a key note in the first chapter, in the

third, the prayer is that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. In the words of another:

“ . . . the apostle desires that they should be strengthened with all might by the Spirit of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that Christ, who is the Centre of all these things in the counsels of God the Father, should dwell also in their hearts, and thus be the intelligent Centre of affection to all their knowledge — a Centre which found no circle to limit the view that lost itself in infinitude which God alone filled — length, breadth, height depth. But this Centre gave them at the same time a sure place, a support immovable and well known, in a love which was as infinite as the unknown extent of the glory of God in its display around Himself. “ That Christ,” says the apostle, “ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” Thus He Who fills all things with His glory, fills the heart Himself, with a love more powerful than all the glory of which He is the Centre . . . ”

“ But to Him that is able to do exceedingly above all that we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, to Him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen.”
 (New Trans.)

A worthy doxology, surely, terminating such a sublime unfolding of divine truth! Later, as is the Apostle’s uniform practice, he gives us the exhortations as to our walk and conduct. May our earthly manner of life ever be consistent with our heavenly calling and our spiritual blessings.

BIBLE STUDY — NEHEMIAH

F. B. HOLE

(Nehemiah 2: 5 — 4: 23)

INVITED by the king to make a request, Nehemiah asked, with due deference, that he might be permitted to go to Jerusalem with the king's authority to rebuild it; that authority to be expressed in letters, not only to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, but also to governors beyond the river. The "river" here is doubtless the Euphrates, and so the governors were those that ruled in the direction of Palestine. What considerations moved the king's mind are hidden from us, that we may more clearly realize that, whatever they were, it was the power of God that controlled him, in response to Nehemiah's brief and sudden prayer.

The king was so favourable to Nehemiah's request that he sent captains and horsemen to speed him on his way. We may remember that though Ezra had returned earlier under the same king, carrying much treasure under his authority, he had not requested such official protection, since he had openly avowed his faith in the protection of God during his journey. Evidently Nehemiah, an official in the king's court, had not the spiritual education and understanding that Ezra possessed as a priest, devoted to the law of his God, yet both equally could speak of "the good hand of my God upon me." If the heart be right, God will guide and support His servant, whatever be the measure of his intelligence and faith. This fact should encourage us today.

Our faith and understanding may indeed be small, but let us see that our hearts are marked by true devotion to Christ and His present interests. As the fruit of devotion, intelligence will surely increase.

But, immediately there is action, as the result of devotion and some understanding, opposition is sure to appear. It had been so when at the start of the revival Zerubbabel and his party went back; it was so again, as verse 10 reveals, though the men who led the opposition were different. Sanballat was an Horonite; that is, we understand, an inhabitant of Horonaim, a town of Moab; while Tobiah was an Ammonite. So here we have representatives of the two sons of Lot, begotten under shameful circumstances, as recorded in Genesis 19, setting themselves against what God was doing. A man had come "to seek the welfare of the children of Israel," which at that moment God had in view, and therefore the adversary was against it, and used these two men, who as to their origins were distant relations of Israel. It has often been the case, sad to say, that those nearly related to the saints of God have been foremost in their opposition against them.

It is worthy of note that this antagonism existed before Nehemiah revealed the exact purpose for which he had come. He abode in Jerusalem three days and then he arose

secretly in the night and made a tour of the city that he might see for himself the exact state of things. The rulers of the Jews, as we are told in verse 16, had no knowledge of what he did, nor of the plan before him. It was only when he had seen the state of things for himself, that he set before them what he proposed, and said, "let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach."

The building of the wall was then the great object before him. The house of the Lord had already been built, but it stood in a desolated place, the walls of which were broken down and its gates consumed by fire. The day had not come then, nor has it come yet, when "the Lord will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her" (Zech. 2: 5), so a wall was needed that the city might again be seen as the place where God had set His name, and His house might, in this typical way, be separated from the defilements of the surrounding world. From the time that God said to Abram, "Get thee out . . ." (Gen. 12: 1), separation to Himself has always been God's mind for His people. Since the rejection of Christ this has come to light with increased emphasis, so that we now read, "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (Jas. 4: 4).

Having proposed the rebuilding of the wall, Nehemiah was able to tell the rulers, "of the hand of my God, which was good upon me." This plainly conveyed to them that God was behind the project, and they responded, saying, "Let us rise up and build." They were prepared really to put their hands to the work.

Pious thoughts and understanding are not enough. They had to put their hands to the task, and work. It is even thus with us today. To understand God's mind and purpose is not enough; we must be prepared to give ourselves to the active service which is indicated. Here, we fear, is a very weak spot in many Christian lives.

As it became increasingly plain that work was really going to be undertaken, so the opposition increased, and in verse 19 we find Geshem the Arabian joining with the Moabite and the Ammonite. This is remarkable for the inhabitants of Arabia were largely the descendants of Ishmael and Esau, and to this day the bitterest foes of the Jews are the various Arab tribes. And further, in prophetic scriptures Edom, Moab and Ammon are linked together. In the coming day, according to Daniel 11: 41, the king of the north will overthrow many lands, but these three will escape him; only to be subdued by Israel, regathered and unified, according to Isaiah 11: 14.

In our chapter, however, the opposition for the moment only took the form of mockery — "they laughed us to scorn, and despised us." This type of opposition all too often has considerable effect, even upon the people of God; but only if they are living and acting as before men. Nehemiah and his friends were acting as before God in what they proposed to do, as we see in the last verse of our chapter. Their reply was, "The God of heaven, He will prosper us." They anticipated in their measure the triumphant word of Romans 8: 31. "If God be for us, who can be against

us?" In the light of that they were about to act; and they reminded the adversaries how complete was the breach that lay between them and themselves.

We may take the three things that Nehemiah mentioned as having an application at the present time. It is as true today as when the Psalmist wrote, that "men of the world," who so often oppose Christ and His saints, "have their portion in this life" (Psa. 17: 14), and no portion at all in the things of God. Hence in these things they have no "right," and their thoughts and opinions are valueless. Nor, when the things of God are finally established in glory, will they have any "memorial" therein. They will be outside it all for ever. Let us never be diverted from the work of God, nor even ashamed, by the ridicule of men, who oppose Christ and His service.

Chapter 3 is occupied with details concerning the actual building of the wall, but in it are placed on record some things that are of interest to us today. We note first of all, that God has seen fit to occupy a whole chapter in recording the names of the leaders of families or townships, who engaged in it. We might wonder that so much valuable space should be taken up with the names of men, who would otherwise be forgotten. We deduce from it however the fact that the humblest service for the will of God is not forgotten but put on record, especially when carried on in the face of ridicule and opposition.

The whole chapter appears to us as like a miniature forecast of the judgment-seat of Christ. This is specially so, when we read verses 5,

12, 20, 23 and 27. The Tekoites were very diligent, for they repaired "another piece," as well as the first they undertook; yet it is recorded that "their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." All too often worldly elevation proves a hindrance when the work of the Lord is in question. Their "nobles," no doubt liked to talk and direct, but did not like to soil their hands, nor bend their necks, to do the work.

On the other hand, there was Shallum, who was ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, putting his hand to the work, and not only he but his daughters also. This was indeed remarkable, for building operations do not fall within the sphere of women's work. They were however sufficiently in earnest to take part in it, though what they did may have been of a lighter sort and not so conspicuous. These "daughters" remind us of the two women who "laboured" with Paul "in the Gospel," according to Philippians 4: 2, 3. What counts with God is not the apparent importance or unimportance of the work we do, but the devotion and earnestness that moves us to do it. So the work of these daughters, whatever it was, has a place in the record, and similar devotion and work in the present interests of the Lord, will find mention and reward at the judgment-seat of Christ.

This thought is reinforced by the case of Baruch the son of Zabbai, for it is recorded that he "earnestly repaired the other piece." He was evidently marked by unusual zeal, and it is noted and placed on the record; just as it is recorded of some of the workers, including even some

of the priests, that they repaired "against their house," which of course meant that they concerned themselves with the section that was of most interest and convenience to **themselves**. To do this was not so praise-worthy as to work on some piece of no particular interest to the worker; or perhaps even repulsive, as for instance the repairing of the "dung gate," undertaken by a man who was a ruler of part of a township, as is recorded in verse 14.

So the reading of this chapter should remind us that today we are called to serve the Lord's interests, either by building or maintaining the wall of separation, that surrounds, God's present "house," which is the church of God, protecting it from the defilements of "this present evil world." It should remind us also of the truth stated by the godly woman, Hannah, in her prayer, placed on record in 1 Samuel 2, that, "The Lord is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." When our actions, as we seek to serve the Lord, are weighed, how will they appear — weighty, or of little worth?

When the work of building was really started, the anger and opposition of the adversaries was much increased, as chapter 4 records. All this was expressed in a threefold way. First there was **mockery**. The Jews were indeed feeble, and their work of reviving "the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned," did seem a fantastic enterprise, and the adversaries made the most of it by way of ridicule. But further there was **misrepresentation**, regarding the objects before them in

their work; and then the opposition took an active form in preparation to intervene by **force**, and fight against them.

We may trace similar opposition by the great adversary in this our Gospel age. We see it in the service of the Apostle Paul. Delivering his message in cultured Athens, he was derided as a "babbling," (Acts 17: 18). Again before Festus he was considered "mad" (Acts 26: 24). Here was ridicule. In Thessalonica there was misrepresentation; for he was imagined to be turning "the world upside down," and doing things, "contrary to the decrees of Caesar" (Acts 17: 6, 7). Neither assertion was true. The Gospel leaves the world-system untouched, but calls individuals out of the world, turning them right side up, according to God. Then the violent opposition of the adversary was seen in the sufferings he had to endure, a list of which he was inspired to place on record in 2 Corinthians 11: 24-27. If we in our day were more energetic and more faithful in our service for the Lord Jesus, we should doubtless know more of all three things.

In the latter part of the chapter we learn the measures that were taken in the presence of all this. First of all there was **prayer** made to God, as verse 9 records. A very right move! Nehemiah began with prayer, as we saw at the start of the story, and in a prayerful spirit they continued. Have we not often made the mistake in some emergency of taking certain steps that to us seemed reasonable and prudent, and then praying afterwards that God would bless what we have done. In His mercy He may so bless, but we

should have done better if we had prayed first.

Then they faced the difficulties of the work. There was much rubbish that hindered and caused the strength of workers to fail, and the adversaries prepared to attack them. We venture to draw an analogy here. Their work was one of revival — reviving the wall that separated the temple of God from the outside world. In the mercy of God various revivals have been granted in the history of the professing church, and every time there has been more or less “rubbish,” that needed to be removed. What a terrible accumulation of worldly and moral rubbish, for instance, had been heaped up by Papal Rome, during the thousand years or more, that preceded the revival, that we speak of as the Reformation. And not all by any means, was actually removed then; the strength of the workers failed before it was accomplished. We Christians have always to watch against the accumulation of this kind of rubbish.

Then the opponents threatened actual attack of a violent sort, and against this the Jews armed themselves. In their case of course such arms as the world then used — spears, swords, etc. — were taken both by the would-be attackers and the defenders. In our age the more dangerous form of attack is of a spiritual sort. Servants of God, even in our day, have been slain, but “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church,” which has been proved again and again. The sword to be used, in meeting the spiritual attack, is “the word of God,” as plainly declared in Ephesians 6: 17,

where the spiritual conflict is stressed.

In English-speaking lands, where religious liberty is freely granted, the conflict side of Christian life is apt to be overlooked, and the idea entertained that our pilgrimage to a joyous heaven is to be happy and serene. But such is not the prospect held out in Scripture. We are not only pilgrims but also disciples, who are called to take up our cross in following our rejected Lord; and as identified with Him, conflict is inevitable. As “a good soldier of Jesus Christ” we are to “endure hardness” (2 Tim. 2: 3), consequently the protective armour of Ephesians 6 is needed, as well as the “sword of the Spirit,” for offensive action.

The courage that marked Nehemiah and his helpers is seen very clearly in verse 14; a courage which sprang from the call to “remember the Lord, which is great and terrible,” who was on their side. The result was that the building of the wall did not cease, though perhaps it proceeded more slowly, since defence was necessary. The workers, whether bearers of burdens or builders, had to carry weapons, and so each had only one hand for the work, the other holding a sword. Thus it is stated in verse 17.

Thus too it has been during the church’s history, even to our own times. True servants of God have always had to spend a substantial portion of their time and energy in defence of the truth. From the beginning the apostles had not only to evangelize and teach the truth; they had to spend much time in defend-

ing it from the attacks of the adversary, as the epistles bear witness. There was, if we remember aright, not so long ago a magazine entitled, "Sword and Trowel," produced by the well known C. H. Spurgeon, who with all his preaching gift had to contend earnestly for the faith in his closing days. The title of the magazine was doubtless taken from the chapter we are considering. The truth is worth contending for. If we lose it we lose practically everything. So let us each see to it that in a spiritual sense we have a sword in one hand, while in the other we have a trowel, wherewith to do the work of the Lord.

At the end of our chapter we notice another thing. Beside the sword and the trowel there was the trumpet, which was to be blown when an alarm was necessary. The work was great and large, so that the workers were widely separated, one from the other, yet they were one in the work, and not a number of disconnected individuals. Hence what endangered one endangered all, and their unity in the work was to be preserved. Here again we see an important lesson, that we very much need to bear in mind, in order to act on it.

This oneness of action in the service of God is specially important for us, and that for two reasons. First, because the oneness of saints today, brought into the church of God, is much more fully stressed than it was with the twelve tribes of Israel. This is seen in the Ephesian epistle — read chapter 2: 14-18, where the word "one" occurs four times; and chapter 4: 3-6, where it

occurs seven times. Second, because the present service of God is so varied, as we see in 1 Corinthians 12. There is great diversity in the unity, so that the human body is used to illustrate it, and no one member can dispense with the service of another without damage and loss. The trumpet on the walls of Jerusalem reminds us that if the enemy set himself to attack one of the small groups of workers, he was really attacking all.

In the closing verse of our chapter we get a glimpse of the great zeal and devotion that characterized Nehemiah and his helpers. All of them were to lodge inside Jerusalem, thus obtaining such protection as the partly built walls could offer, and none of them put off their clothes, so as to sleep with comfort by night, though they removed them for personal cleanliness. They were therefore always ready to labour in the work and to meet the foe. A very impressive picture!

Vigilance and **purity** are two things very necessary for us. We see them impressed on Timothy by Paul. If we read 2 Timothy 2: 21, we find he was to be vigilant as to error of a fundamental sort, and "purge" himself out from it. Then, reading the next verse, we find he was to "flee also youthful lusts," so that his personal cleanliness might be maintained, in a spiritual way.

And the instructions given to Timothy in the first century are in this twentieth century equally important for us.

THE DAY OF MANIFESTATION

F. B. HOLE

THE attentive reader of the Apostle Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians can hardly fail to notice the persistent note of correction that runs right through it. The state of this large assembly, composed mainly of converts from among the Gentiles, was carnal rather than spiritual, and many evils had crept in amongst them. But have we all taken to heart the fact that of all these evils the one to which the Spirit of God gave the first place was that of magnifying certain gifted servants of God to the displacing of Christ; for in verse 12 of chapter 1, He is mentioned as though He were but the leader of a party in the church, and that party fourth on the list, and not the first. This dethroning of Christ was the first, and worst, and most fundamental of all the evils. When that takes place any other evil may easily develop.

Consequently in that first chapter Paul makes repeated mention of the great Head of the church, and dwells repeatedly on His Lordship. Upon the Name of the Lord we call. The fellowship to which we are called finds its Centre in Him as Lord. We wait for His coming, when will be established "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." When that day arrives the most gifted of His servants will have to stand in His presence, and have all their service reviewed and perfectly estimated by Him. His verdict will decide everything.

This fact comes plainly to light when chapter 3 is reached. The

work is God's and the varied human servants are only "workers together," or "co-workers" under Him. Their work may be varied, not only in its nature but also in its fidelity and spiritual value. Some may be building with, "gold, silver, precious stones;" others, alas, with "wood, hay, stubble;" materials which will not abide when tested by fire, which is the symbol of a searching judgment; and as verse 13 says, "the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire."

Now "the day" of verse 13 clearly refers to "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," that had been mentioned in chapter 1. So we, who have called upon His Name, and who have been called into His fellowship, and who await His coming, when the night of His absence will end and the day of His presence will dawn, must never forget that its searching light will bring everything into manifestation, whether good or bad — everything will be fully declared. We must live our lives in the remembrance of that.

If we do, we shall be delivered from being over-impressed with the judgments, that may be expressed by men of the world, or even by carnally-minded believers. This we see when chapter 4 is reached.

In verse 3 we find the Apostle saying, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment," or as it more literally is, "of man's day." Elsewhere the Apostle writes, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Rom. 13: 12). So evident-

ly man's "day" is really the "night," if we view it from God's standpoint, which is also ours, through grace.

Unconverted men of the world view things in the light of their own fallen understandings. When spiritual things are in question their "light" is only darkness, and consequently their judgments on such matters carried no weight in the Apostle's mind, nor need they carry weight in ours. But it is a sad and solemn thing that he had to express the same unconcern as to the judgment "of you;" that is, of the Corinthian saints. Thus he spoke, because at the beginning of chapter 3, he had to tell them bluntly that he could not speak to them as being "spiritual," but as being "carnal . . . babes in Christ."

Now a carnal Christian is one who though truly a believer and indwelt by the Spirit is not walking in the Spirit, as we are exhorted to do in Galatians 5: 16. He is open therefore to fulfil the lust of the flesh. The believer who walks in the Spirit does so as having come under "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which sets him "free from the law of sin and death," as is indicated in Romans 8: 2. Here are two forces: that of the Holy Spirit, and that of the flesh — the old nature, which we have derived from Adam — and under the "law," or "control" of one or the other we live. Though converted and possessing the Spirit of God, we still have the flesh in us, and our lives may still be largely controlled by it, and "the carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8: 7). This is a strong and terrible thing to say, but such is its intrinsic

nature, and hence, even in a believer, it leads his thoughts and judgments astray, according to the measure in which it controls him. No wonder the Apostle was not much impressed by any judgments passed on him by his converts at Corinth.

The saints are to judge manifested evil, as the closing verses of chapter 5 show. The spiritually-minded saint is to judge what he hears put forth as truth, as stated in chapter 14: 29. But when it is a matter of passing an opinion upon servants of the Lord, as though we could assess the value of their life and work, let us remember what is stated in verse 5 of chapter 4. Amidst all the weakness and failure which encompasses the best of God's servants here, there are "the hidden things of darkness" and further we do not know the motives that largely govern their thoughts and actions. There are "the counsels of the hearts" — the hidden motives that led to words and actions. Now both these factors, unknown to us, will be brought into the light. Of every one of them we have to say, "the day shall declare it."

This verse, with which we close our short paper, is one of the most searching contained in the Scripture. What contentions, and strifes, and divisions, and scandals, have marred the history of the professing church of God! Every one of them will be reviewed and straightened out. Everything will be seen in its true light. All that was false condemned. All that was true approved and rewarded. And then, instead of seeking praise from one another, each will have any praise he merits from God — which is the only

praise that really counts.

We may well praise God that such a moment of judgment, and rectifi-

cation and appraisalment is coming, when man's day ends, and "the day" arrives.

REJOICE ALWAYS

REJOICE in the Lord always." Certainly it could not be in circumstances, for he was a prisoner. Christians are often a great deal happier in the trial than they are in thinking of it; for there the stability, the certainty, the nearness, and the power of Christ are much more learnt, and they are happier. Paul could not so well have said, "Rejoice in the Lord always," if he had not known what it was to be a prisoner. Just as in Psalm 34, "I will bless Jehovah at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth." Why? "This poor man cried, and Jehovah heard him, and delivered him out of all his troubles." "I sought Jehovah, and He heard me." This was what enabled him to say, "I will bless Jehovah at all times." He had been in trouble, and had been heard when in trouble. It must have been an exceeding trial for one of Paul's

active disposition for service to be kept a prisoner; and this is the time when he can say to the persons who were in the commonplace circumstances which were dragging down their hearts day by day, "Rejoice in the Lord always!"

Grace is sufficient for favourable circumstances, but they are by far the most trying (spiritually) to the believer. There is an easy way of going on in worldliness, and there is nothing more sad than the quiet comfortable Christian going on day by day, apart from dependence on the Lord. It must be as with Israel and the manna; there must be the daily gathering and daily dependence upon God. If circumstances come between our hearts and God we are powerless. If Christ is nearer, circumstances will not hinder our joy in God.

J.N.D.

SERVICE

NOTHING so deceives and leads astray as the conscience working at a distance from Christ; for instance, if I feel in my conscience that I ought to be Christ's servant (true enough, I am His bondsman), but if I am not in His confidence I may begin to do something to satisfy my conscience, and if so, I do it legally, and not as what simply suits Him. I do it to make my conscience easy and satisfied. When this is the case I do not consult what He would like me to do, but I do what I think best to be done. It may be quite a necessary service as Martha's was, but Martha was evidently thinking of the services which were incumbent on her to render, and was not governed by the pleasure of Christ. . . . If you begin with serving (as many do now-a-days), you will never sit at His feet, whereas, if you begin with sitting at His feet, you will soon serve well, wisely, and acceptably.

FAITHFULNESS AND ITS REWARD

R. THOMSON.

IT is a great encouragement of heart to know that our God will reward any activity that brings glory to Him. We are assured of this when we read Proverbs 28: 30, "A faithful man shall abound with blessings." Evidently this means faithfulness toward God; putting His interests first, and standing true to Him at all times. If we think of ourselves as to this, we have to hang our heads and say that we have been unprofitable servants, thinking too much of ourselves. However He knows our weakness, and also is wholly conscious of every desire of heart toward Himself. We are cheered by such knowledge, and seek to serve Him more faithfully, with reverence and godly fear.

When we have Christ before us as the Servant of God, we behold His faithfulness in all its holy and blessed perfection. His great purpose was always to maintain things for God in a scene where every other of Adam's race had failed. For this purpose He took up Manhood at God's appointed time. Prophetically, His faithfulness has been stated in its past, present and future accomplishment.

The past. "I have declared Thy faithfulness and Thy salvation" (Psa. 40: 10).

The present. "His compassions fail not, they are new every morning: great is Thy faithfulness" (Lam. 3: 22, 23).

The future. "Righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins" (Isa. 11: 5).

We are exhorted to "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus, who is faithful to Him that has constituted Him" (Heb. 3: 1-2 New Trans.). Faithful in His coming out from God, and faithful in His going back to God, having the Divine glory and our blessing in view. Faithful too in accomplishing the work of the cross; showing Himself to be the sinless and perfect Victim, who alone could take away the sin of the world.

For the delight of our hearts, let us note how the Son of God manifested His faithfulness. He was faithful in the days of youth, declaring to Joseph and Mary, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business" (Luke 2: 49). Faithful also at His baptism in Jordan, identifying Himself with the believing remnant of Israel, saying, "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness" (Matt. 3: 15).

Then further, we see Him in the wilderness, in conflict with Satan, who tempted Him to be unfaithful to God. Each temptation was presented with diabolical skill, yet only served to bring out the perfect obedience and faithfulness of the "Second Man" to the written word of God. In perfect dependence He met each onslaught by the words, "It is written" (Matt. 4: 4, 7, 10).

Faithful too in righteousness, when He turned out those that sold merchandise in the temple, saying, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves"

(Matt. 21: 13). And equally faithful in **compassion**, as He looked upon the multitudes. It says that He "was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd" (Mark 6: 34). He therefore, as the faithful Shepherd, gathered them, and fed them from His bountiful hand.

Then we behold Him faithful in the hour of **deep sorrow**, agonizing in the Garden of Gethsemane. The hour was near when He who knew no sin would be made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The contemplation of the drinking of the cup of God's righteous wrath against sin, caused Him to sweat great drops of blood, as He prayed earnestly, "Father if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done" (Luke 22: 42).

What subjection! What obedience! What faithfulness!

He is faithful in **grace**, displayed in matchless giving for our sakes. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8: 9). Faithful too in **love**, fully displayed at the cross. "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5: 25). The **sacrifice** of love thus declared is now followed by His present **service** of love from the glory, and soon to end in the **satisfaction** of love at His coming for the church, to have it with Himself, glorified for ever. Finally, He was faithful in **obedience**, when

He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2: 8).

All the blessings of God are centred in Christ as Man. When here on earth, He blessed the children, who were brought to Him, and no need was too great for Him to meet it with blessing. His parting action, as He was received up into the glory, was to raise His hands in benediction upon His disciples, and thus bless them. Now we know Him as glorified, and God has set Him to be blessed for ever. We, who believe in Him, can rejoice, knowing that God our Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ.

Coming to the practical expression of faithfulness and blessing as seen in us, we have a wonderful picture of it in faithful Abraham. Being obedient to the voice of God, he believed what He had promised; and thus strengthened by his faith, he was able to glorify God. The first promise of blessing to him is recorded in Genesis 13: 2 — "I will bless thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing" and in his life upon earth how beautifully was this blessing manifested.

At the close of Numbers 6, we have the account of the blessing of the Lord upon the children of Israel. It is fitting that it should be recorded at the close of a chapter, declaring the Nazarite's willing separation unto the Lord:—

"The Lord bless and keep thee." His presence assured to the individual.

"The Lord make His face shine

upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." Salvation and favour enjoyed.

"The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Communion and peace maintained.

"And they shall put My name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Ownership and blessing from God.

In conclusion, the prophet Malachi urged the people to render that which was due to God, and wrote, "Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." May we not be negligent to obey the word of the Lord, and prove in the experience of our souls that the faithful man shall **abound** with many blessings.

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON PRAYER

THE Lord Jesus Christ **prayed** and **He prayed much**. When we consider the place prayer had in His life, it makes it impossible for any spiritually-minded person to overestimate its value. In this connection we may well say, "Behold the Man." **The Man**. The one Man who sets forth what man ought to be. At the very opening of His public life we behold Him praying. (Luke 3: 21.) At the height of His fame, too, we find "He withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed." (Luke 5: 15, 16.) Here is a lesson for us. It is not sufficient to commence with prayer, but in the height of success, if anything, we need it more. When opposition arose we find Jesus "went out into a mountain to pray, and **continued all night in prayer to God**." (Luke 6: 11, 12.) This, too, was in connection with the choice of His apostles. From Luke 9: 18 it would seem as if prayer was His constant

practice. At the moment when His power and coming was about to be before the eyes of His disciples, and He was to receive from God the Father honour and glory, one might have thought prayer unnecessary, but it is just then He prays; as He does also on a very different occasion in the garden when "being in an agony he prayed more earnestly." And who can forget the prayer for His own before leaving this world, recorded in John 17, the only one of any length of which we have any record? If prayer had such a place in the Lord's life, can we do better than mould our lives after this pattern?

It is well perhaps to be reminded that prayer is successful where every other means fails. The Lord once told His disciples that "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." And on one occasion when the disciples failed to cast out the

dumb spirit, they were told "this kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting."

It has been said that "we need to be taught to pray." It is because true prayer is in the Spirit. Jude tells us to pray in the Holy Ghost, and another apostle exhorts us to "pray always with all prayer and supplication **in the Spirit.**" Now this is just what we are in danger of not doing. We can no more do it than a sailor can fill his sails with wind when there is not a breath making a ripple upon the ocean. Any man of average ability can fall upon his knees and give utterance to thoughts that come into his mind, but this is not necessarily praying in the Holy Ghost. For this there must be great dependence and looking up to God.

In public prayer this is particularly necessary. And because we are not in the Spirit, and are not sufficiently dependent, our public meetings for prayer are often not what they should be. It is manifest that a distinction exists between public and private prayer. In the latter only oneself is immediately concerned, while in the former we are leading others. None but the Holy Ghost therefore can teach us how to pray under such circumstances, in order that there may be that "agreement" and "one accord" spoken of in Matthew 18 and Acts 4.

From Acts 12: 5, with reference to the imprisonment of Peter, we learn that "prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Here, then, we have a case of agreement as to a definite

matter to be prayed about. Is there anything today about which Christians ought to be agreed to pray? Can scripture help us here? We think it can. We believe it indicates four main lines along which our prayers may move, lines along which no one need fear to follow.

I. For all men generally. (1 Tim. 2: 1.)

II. For all saints. (Eph. 6: 18; Phil. 1: 4; Col. 4: 12.)

III. For the coming and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Luke 11: 2; Rev. 22: 16-20.)

IV. For individuals, whether in regard to service for the Lord or the various needs of the path. (Acts 12: 5; Eph. 6: 19; James 5: 16.)

If these matters are thought over in private, and we become deeply concerned about them as we ought to be, there surely would be abundance to pray about when we come together. God's house is pre-eminently a house of prayer. We learn this both from Mark 11: 17 and 1 Timothy 2. May we all value more the opportunities afforded of coming together for this purpose, and realise the dignity conferred upon us of being priests to God.

What a place prayer has! The only danger is of thinking we shall be heard for our much speaking. It is not the "much speaking" that is wrong (except out of communion with God and His people) but the thinking that we are heard because of it. When we have prayed at our best we have to remember that this in itself is no ground for receiving

an answer. We have to cast ourselves entirely upon the goodness and mercy of God for His Son's sake.

When we think of all that the return of the Lord Jesus Christ means of blessing to this world — though judgment must introduce it — as well as honour and glory to Himself, and rest to God, can we be silent? Have we not the solution of every difficulty before us when we are privileged to invite the Lord Jesus to return? A world full of unrest and disaffection, of war and tumult, in blindness groping its way it knows not where; a church unable to help it, because of its own falseness, polluted, and torn with faction, saturated with superstition and infidelity, and the promise of the coming of One who can and will set everything right, are surely enough to banish even sleep sometimes from our eyes and cause us to "arise, cry out in the night."

"The prayers of David the son of Jesse," we are told, "are ended;" but they are not yet answered. Surely, however, the answer must be near. But great as these prayers are, as recorded in Psalm 72, they do not go beyond the whole earth being filled with God's glory. In connection with the church and the Christian's prayers a wider glory is in view. "Now unto him that is able," says the apostle, "to do ex-

ceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

In David's case it was not beyond what he could ask or think, in our case it is. So that our prayers are like a continuation of David's, beginning where he left off, only on a higher plane, and we cannot see where that plane either begins or ends. How great then is prayer. We can neither pray too much nor ask too much, for all is connected with God's glory, and consequently beyond our asking or thinking.

There is one prayer that yet remains to be prayed by the Lord Himself. "Ask of me," says Jehovah to His Anointed, "and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession." The kingdoms of this world are to become His in answer to prayer. What a place this gives to prayer. And it can be said with equal truth, what a place prayer gives us. It puts us in company with David, and in company with One still greater, even David's Lord.

May none of us miss our opportunity, but stir up ourselves to take hold of God. (Isa. 64: 7.)

(EXTRACTED).

WHEN engaged in prayer, neither use many words, nor repetition, nor run from supplication to declaration, as though God wanted information.

“IN MY NAME”

F. B. HOLE

THE above words occur no less than seven times in the last discourse of our Lord, recorded in John 14-16. And of these seven no less than six refer to the place of privilege and responsibility in which His disciples would find themselves after His departure to the Father, as may be seen if verses 13 and 14 of chapter 14; verse 16 of chapter 15; verses 23, 24 and 26 of chapter 16, be read. Though He would be no longer visibly amongst them, so that to Him they could go with their enquiries and requests, they would be able to ask in His name, with the certainty that He Himself and the Father also, to whom He was going, would grant what they asked.

Our first enquiry is, what is the force and meaning of asking in His name? The answer surely is, that the Lord was leaving His disciples during His absence as His representatives. As far as His interests in this world are concerned, they were left to represent Him, and their requests as His representatives would be granted. A place of remarkable privilege indeed: and equally a place of great responsibility.

Take a simple illustration. The heads of a large business concern have to leave for the antipodes. They depart after giving powers to several of their subordinates to act for them during their absence. They can sign cheques, which the bank will certainly honour. A cheque is but a request — in proper legal form — that money be dispensed to somebody else, and the bank honours

the business in whose name the cheque is issued.

We may at once feel inclined to say, Yes, but what if those deputed to sign for the firm as representatives of the absent chiefs, misuse their authority, and use money for their own purposes? And we have to reply that such breaches of trust among men do happen all too often, and the bank, unaware of the fraud, may pay the cheques. So here, of course, our illustration fails. No bank has power to discern what lies behind the issuing of a cheque. If it is technically correct, it is honoured and paid.

But, HE who presides over the “bank” of heaven — if we may thus apply our figure — possesses omniscience, since, “all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4: 13). We may close our requests by saying that we make them, “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” but He will know whether we are really asking for things that are in His interests, or whether we are asking for things, that will suit our own desires merely. Only that which is really and genuinely “in His name,” as representing His interests, is sure to be granted, and this should produce in us much searching of heart as to what we ask, as left to represent our Lord. We have of course full liberty to make known all our requests unto God, with thanksgiving, as stated in Philippians 4: 6, but that is another matter. We are **not** told there that what we ask shall be granted, but we **are** told that our hearts and

minds shall be kept in the peace of God through Christ Jesus.

But now we must take note of the seventh occurrence of this wonderful phrase, which occurs in verse 26 of chapter 14, for here we see the impelling Power, that lies behind the other six occurrences of the words. The main announcement of this farewell discourse is the coming of the Comforter, the Spirit of God, and here the Lord states that the Father will send Him "in My name;" that is, as My great Representative, to maintain My interests. This is a remarkable statement, and the force of it may be more clearly seen, if we place it alongside another statement of our Lord, "I am come in My Father's name" (John 5: 43). He came as representing His Father, concerned with His interests; and now that He is departing, the Holy Spirit comes to represent Him and concern Himself with His interests.

What we read in John 16: 13, is in keeping with this. The Spirit did not come to speak "of," or, more literally, "from Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." Clearly then, He came not to **originate**, but rather to **give effect** to the word of God, and to represent the absent Lord, who had gone on high; caring for His interests.

Now let us put these two things together. The Spirit is come as the Divine Representative of the absent Lord, gone on high; the disciples are left as the human representatives, with authority to ask in His

name. Having done so, we shall at once realize that consequently it is of the utmost importance that we are dominated by the Spirit of God. He indwells us that He may dominate us. This we see brought to pass in the Apostle Paul, when he writes that, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8: 2). The word, "law," is here used evidently in the sense of, "effective control." Dominated now by the Spirit, Paul was set free from the domination of sin and death. He not only had "life in Christ Jesus," but also the Spirit, as the energy of that life. In verse 9 of that chapter He is called, "the Spirit of Christ," since He is here, as we have seen, to represent Him.

Hence the great importance of that injunction in Jude 20, "Praying in the Holy Ghost." If we are enabled to pray **thus**, the requests we make will be in complete harmony with the mind of the Spirit. We, though imperfect, are left here to act and make requests in the name of our absent Lord. The Spirit, who is Divinely perfect, is sent in His name. Now if our prayers are "in the Holy Ghost," they will be marked by the suitability, that He alone can impart. The requests, that we make then in our prayers, will really be, as our Lord said, "in My name."

It is when we pray **after this fashion** that the answer is so sure — "that will I do;" "I will do it;" "He will give it you."

DIVERSITY in unity, and unity in diversity is God's way; as seen in nature, in history, and in the church, as unfolded in 1 Corinthians 12.

BIBLE STUDY — NEHEMIAH

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 5: 1 — 9: 3)

WE have noticed certain good features that marked the people, as recorded in chapter 4, but as we commence to read chapter 5, we discover that beneath the surface sad mischief had been at work. Under Nehemiah's leadership there had been a courageous attitude towards opposition from **without**, while all the time there was selfish oppression proceeding **within**. The richer Jews had taken advantage of the plight into which many poorer ones had drifted, owing to the shortage of the necessaries of life, borrowing money or raising mortgages, in order to obtain food for themselves and their families. We might summarize the situation by saying that while externally they presented a picture of commendable zeal, in doing what was God's service at that moment, internally they were guilty of much self-seeking and corruption.

The Apostle Paul reminded Timothy that the "Holy Scriptures," which he had known "from a child," — the Old Testament, therefore — were able to make him "wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3: 15); not only from future doom, but also from the dangers that infest our pilgrim path. Here, we think, is an illustration of this, for again and again even in our day, the work of God in revival amongst His saints has been damaged in similar fashion. Whilst outwardly the work of God has been carried on with diligence and success, even in building a wall of spiritual separation from

the outside world; there has grown up the spirit of self-seeking within, and consequently of damage and impoverishment to many humbler saints. Is not this the reason why gracious revivals, that have visited the English-speaking regions during the past four centuries, have lost their power and gradually faded away?

So, in the light of what is here recorded, let us all accept the warning, and try our ways before our Lord. In the case before us the situation was met for a time by the faithful energy of Nehemiah. He was angry, with the kind of anger that is to be permitted, as Ephesians 4: 26 indicates, and he called upon them to act "in the fear of God," even if they did not fear the retribution of men. Faced by Nehemiah's searching words, they had nothing to say. They admitted the charge, and under an oath they undertook to restore what they had taken away, and this they did according to the 13th verse.

What added force to Nehemiah's indignant charge was that he himself had been so careful in this matter, as we see in the verses that follow. Former governors had exacted their food and support from the people. He on the contrary had taken nothing from them, and had supported 150 Jews and rulers, besides occasional visitors. Just how he did this we are not told, but presumably he drew his supplies from the Persian monarch. When rebuke

is called for, the power of it is greatly increased when the one administering it is wholly free of the error he has to rebuke. The same principle stands when the happy work of restoration has to be undertaken, as we see in Galatians 6: 1 — “considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.” Either way, the call to consider ourselves and our own ways is very insistent, when dealing with others. This integrity also gave Nehemiah confidence in calling upon God for good, as the last verse of the chapter shows.

Chapter 6 discloses to us that, as the building of the wall neared completion the opposition from without was intensified, and took on more subtle forms. The first we might characterize as **compromise**, with a desire to inflict hurt, in this case evidently mischief of a personal sort. The request that there should be a conference in some village on the plain of Ono seemed reasonable enough then. In our day such a conference would have a special appeal, for all over the world nations and even tribes are full of disputes, and conferences continually take place, in order that, by some measure of compromise on both sides, open conflict may be avoided. Present-day statesmen would be very sympathetic to the suggestion of Sanballat and his friends.

But, when the truth of God or the work of God is in question, compromise is not to be entertained. The servant of God today may not fear physical mischief, but he knows that what is of **God** is not subject to human arrangement, however plausible such a compromise may appear to be.

The adversaries were persistent for they sent four times, and even a fifth, when they altered their tactics and resorted to **lying misrepresentation**. They accused him of desiring to throw off the Persian yoke and make himself a king. Similar tactics were employed by adversaries in the early days of the Gospel. Paul, for instance, was accused of being, “a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world” (Acts 24: 5); and even in our day quite untrue charges have been levelled against preachers of the Gospel. These untrue charges against Nehemiah occasioned fear, though they knew them to be untrue, but in verse 9 we see that they only cast him afresh upon God. If opposition today casts us upon God, we shall ultimately profit thereby.

Verses 10-13, show us that the adversaries tried a third device, perhaps more crafty and subtle than the earlier ones. They hired a Jew, one of Nehemiah's own people, to alarm him as to his own danger of assassination, urging him to protect himself by doing something which would have been reprehensible according to his own religion. Not being one of the priests, to enter the temple and hide there was not permissible for him. If compromise and false accusation had not succeeded in moving him, they hoped to accomplish it by entrapping him in A SIN AGAINST THE LAW OF HIS GOD. But perceiving their wickedness, and calling again upon his God, this snare too was avoided by this God-fearing man.

How often have many of us, who seek to serve the Lord in this our

day, been entrapped in somewhat similar fashion when opposed, committing ourselves in spirit, in word, in action to what is really sin against Him. If we would be delivered from entanglement in any of these three ways, let us keep in touch with God, as we see Nehemiah doing in this chapter. There is every reason for us to do so, since on the basis of His death and resurrection we are brought into such near and loving relationship with Him.

We must note verse 14, for it records the distressing fact that certain men who were prophets among the people, and even a prophetess, were in league with the adversaries and acting with them. Enemies of God's work, of a more secret sort, and even amongst the professed people of God, are really more dangerous to the work of God than opponents of an open sort. God however was behind the work on the wall, and so it was duly finished, as verses 15 and 16 record, in spite of all the antagonism and craft employed against the work, so that the enemies were cast down, seeing that God was in it.

The closing verses of the chapter again emphasize what appears to have been the main difficulty. Betrayal on the part of leaders within was worse than opposition from without. And, what led to this state of affairs? Marriage alliances with the enemy had taken place on the part of some, and the wish to smooth matters over was consequently very natural on the part of the transgressors. Ever since God said to Abram, "Get thee out," (Gen. 12: 1), these forbidden mar-

riages had been a great snare. We have sadly to confess that it has not been otherwise in the history of the church.

As we read Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, we might marvel at the number and variety of the disorders he had to refer to, and utter rebuke. What was the underlying cause? We believe this is reached in his second epistle, 6: 11-18. At this point the Apostle's heart was enlarged and his mouth opened to indicate with plainness the weak spot. It was the way in which they had accepted the "unequal," or "diverse," yoke with unbelievers. The believer, born of God, has a nature which the unbeliever does not possess. At the same time he has within him the flesh, the old nature, which the unbeliever possesses. Hence if the diverse yoke be accepted, the believer is almost certain to be pulled in the direction of the world, and adopt some, if not many, of its ways. So let us today watch our ways, in the light of this plain New Testament scripture, lest we are guilty of a sin, which is similar to that which troubled Nehemiah in his day.

We have a sense of relief as we commence chapter 7, since we at once discover that there were those, who far from hindering the work of God at that moment, were real helpers in the work. The wall was finished, in spite of the difficulties, the doors set up and officials appointed, that the gates might be opened and shut as would be suitable. In this connection Hanani, whom Nehemiah calls "my brother," is again mentioned. He it was who brought the first tidings

of the sad state of the city and the Jews, as narrated in chapter 1: 2. He is linked here with Hananiah, a ruler in the city, who is characterized as "a faithful man," who "feared God above many." Since "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1: 7), we may be sure that this man since he had progressed above many in it, had developed wise knowledge in a substantial measure. To have had such men, identifying themselves with him in his service, must have been an encouragement, granted to him by God. Such encouragement he needed for, as verse 4 records, the city was large, the people few, and though the wall was complete the houses were not as yet built.

Israel being God's earthly people, their genealogies were of importance and had to be carefully preserved. God having stirred the heart of Nehemiah on this matter, he found that a careful register had been made years before, when the first migration took place, as recorded at the beginning of the book of Ezra, and in view of its importance we have the register again recorded. Ezra 2: 1-67, is repeated almost word for word in our chapter, verses 6-69. Then the four verses that close our chapter concerning the gifts of the chief of the fathers and of the people more generally, do differ from the record of the closing verses of Ezra 2. The much larger gifts recorded here are accounted for, we presume, by later gifts that had accrued up to Nehemiah's time. The title "Tirshatha" applied to Nehemiah as well as to Zerubbabel. The gifts were large, and the priests and people were in their cities.

Then, as the last verse of the

chapter tells us, came the seventh month; and chapter 8 opens with the record of how the people were gathered together in the street before the water gate. Ezra the priest had been in Jerusalem for a number of years, but he now was called upon to bring the book of the law of the Lord and read it publicly before both men and women, and indeed before all who could understand it, which must have meant even children of maturer years. The word of God concerns everybody who has a mind capable of understanding it.

This public reading was a great occasion, and it furnishes us with some valuable instruction, particularly for those who minister the word in a public way. Ezra stood upon a pulpit, so that both he and the book out of which he read, were in full view of the people, and others helped to make the meaning plain to all who listened. If any of our readers engage in the public preaching of the Gospel or the ministry of the word to believers, we would ask them to read verse 8, and carefully note three words in it.

In the first place the book was read **distinctly**. What was written in the one precious book was clearly to reach the ears of the people, for they had no copies of it in their hands, which would enable them to check any mumbled or indistinct utterance. Secondly, they gave the **sense**, for during a thousand years the language may have altered somewhat, and many may have spoken the Aramaic and been unlearned in the ancient Hebrew. Thirdly, they made certain that the hearers really did **understand** the

reading. How remarkably this verse anticipates the instructions given in 1 Corinthians 14, in regard to what is uttered in the Christian assembly. He who gives thanks, or prays, or ministers the word, is to make sure, not only that he himself really knows what he is saying, but that also he says it in such a way that it is understood, and therefore can be assimilated, and endorsed by the saying of "Amen," by those who hear him. The speaker may say, "I understood quite well what I wanted to convey." We however, have to reply, "Yes, but did you speak with sufficient distinctness and simplicity, that your hearers got the sense and with clear understanding grasped your message?" A reference to our **understanding** occurs eight times in 1 Corinthians 14: 9-20.

The first effect upon the people of this reading is revealed in verse 9 — the people were moved to tears; and well they might be, for no one can face the demands of God's holy law without a sense of condemnation entering the conscience. Both Nehemiah and Ezra however stilled the people and bade them rejoice, for in the book there were of course the promises of God, showing mercy and predicting the Messiah, and further the Feast of Tabernacles was at hand, which was intended to be a season of happiness. They were entitled, of course, to rejoice in all that God had wrought on their behalf in spite of all the efforts of their adversaries. But we have wondered whether this switching of the emotions of the people from conviction and sorrow to eating and drinking and making "great mirth," because they had understood, was

really of God. Conviction of conscience is not easily reached, and consequently repentance is shallow all too often, though it is true of course that "the joy of the Lord" imparts strength. There is however a great difference between that joy and making great mirth as one eats and drinks. The day will declare whether this successful direction of the leaders was really of God or not.

There was however on the part of the leaders a real desire to read and understand the directions of the law, as verse 13 records, and the original directions as to the feast of Tabernacles came clearly before them. This resulted in taking action to observe the feast as it had been written. The statement of verse 17, that this feast had not been so observed since the days of Joshua, might fill us with astonishment did we not know how easily and swiftly a decline from the instructions of the word of God can take place. When King Josiah moved the people in his day to keep the Passover, the record is that, "there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet" (2 Chron. 35: 18). This was an earlier exhibition of the same tendency, though not quite so extreme a case.

And what has taken place in the sad history of the professing church? We cannot, in this connection, throw stones at the people of Israel. In 1 Corinthians, chapters 12-14, we have revealed the great facts that govern the life and activities of the church as the body of Christ, followed by the commandments of the Lord, to be obeyed in the exercise of spiritual gifts, so that all may

profit. For how long were they remembered and obeyed? Not for long. Soon other arrangements were made, which led in the course of a few centuries to the fearful evils of the Papacy, and what are called the "Dark Ages." There was possibly some remembrance of the word of God amongst the humble, unknown, persecuted saints, whom the Popes branded as "heretics," but that was all, as many centuries passed. So we are not surprised at what is recorded in verse 17 of our chapter.

In the last verse of our chapter and the opening verses of chapter 9, we see that this reading of the book of the law, which started when Ezra mounted the pulpit, did not end there. It continued through the seven days of the feast, and even beyond. It lay at the root of such measure of revival as occurred at that time, and thus, we believe, it has always been. The revival that came to a head in the sixteenth century, sprang largely from the fact that the Scriptures had begun to be translated out of dead languages into languages that were alive, coupled with the invention of printing, that enabled countless thousands to read them. And so it has been again and again since that time.

In verses 2 and 3, we see the effect which the reading of the law had upon the hearers. Firstly, they **separated** themselves from all the entanglements with "strangers," or

"foreigners," that they had been permitting. Secondly, they **confessed** their own sins, as well as the iniquities in which their fathers had been involved. Then thirdly, they honoured their God, by **worshipping** Him. They recognized that the word of the Lord, which they read, demanded obedience.

And this indeed is what we have to recognize. It is worthy of note that the epistle to the Romans, which, in its opening verses calls for **obedience** to the Gospel when it is preached, ends with the assertion that the "mystery," which concerns Christ and the church, equally calls for "the **obedience** of faith." All the truth of God is revealed, not to provide us with philosophical ideas for the entertainment of our minds, but rather while entering mind and conscience, to lead us into happy obedience, as those brought into subjection to the will of God. This will certainly lead us into a life of separation from all that entangles and defiles, and also confession of failure and sin.

These two things must accompany each other. To separate without confession is not acceptable to God: neither is it acceptable if we confess without separating. When both are combined we are humbled before God, and brought into that state of mind and soul which befits us to take up our happy place as **worshippers** in the presence of God.

A little thing is indeed but a little thing, but faithfulness to God in a little thing is a great thing.

“AS AT THE FIRST”

F. B. HOLE

THE sayings of the early “Fathers” of the church are by no means to be relied on, but one of them spoke truly when he said that, whatever was **first** was pure; whatever was **later** was adulterated.

The Scriptures support this. To backsliding Israel God said, “I will . . . purely purge away thy dross . . . and I will restore thy judges **as at the first**, and they counsellors **as at the beginning**” (Isa. 1: 25, 26).

Again, we read as a matter of history that, “the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in **the first ways** of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim” (2 Chron. 17: 3). David was the first king really chosen by God, who in spite of serious defects, adhered to the worship of God, and was not turned aside after the other gods, which later crept in amongst both the kings and the people. What was first in the history of God’s dealings with Israel’s kings was the purer thing.

We turn to the New Testament, and descend to individuals of a very humble sort in 1 Timothy 5: 12. Here are certain “younger widows,” amongst the professed believers, “having damnation,” or better, “being guilty,” because “they have cast off their **first faith**.” They left a life of service for a life of ease, because the “faith,” that made Christ a living, bright Reality to them, had sadly declined. Their “first faith” expressed itself in works of a devoted sort; later it was badly adulterated.

The same feature meets us in Revelation 2: 4. Here love and not faith is in question; and a church, and not individuals, is being scrutinized by the Lord. As the first century drew to its close the church at Ephesus had left its “**first love**,” and this, as the next verse shows, had affected its works. They are therefore called upon to recognize how they had fallen and, repenting of it, to do “**the first works**.”

If now we turn back to Jeremiah 2: 1-3, we find that a similar decline took place in Israel’s history, though the word “first” does not actually occur there. The word of God to Israel was, “I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals.” When God redeemed Israel from Egypt, He espoused them to Himself; and the love of their espousals we find expressed in their triumphant song, recorded in Exodus 15. Then Israel was “holiness unto the Lord,” giving, “the first fruits of his increase.” What fearful declension had taken place by the time Jeremiah prophesied.

Turn where we will in the Scriptures, we find testimony to the fact that what is first is marked by purity, and what is introduced later brings in adulteration.

The same thing is obviously true if, turning from Israel, we look back over the history of Christendom. Just as God granted revival in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, so He did in the great spiritual movement which we call the Reformation. The spiritual impetus that

marked its beginnings soon faded out, as it lapsed into political and even warlike actions. The same thing has to be said, though often differing much in details, about revivals that followed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In each case that which was at the first was a work of God, though committed into the hands of men; and that which was introduced later was not an advance or an improvement, but an adulteration.

What then is the **call** from our Lord, that reaches us as an admonition in these days, as we draw near to the **coming** of our Lord? We think that we might sum it up by saying, "First love;" "First works." These are the things set before us, as desired by our Lord, and as recorded and illustrated in the Scriptures. And the Scriptures themselves, we must remember, are the Divinely given record, that has reached us "**from the beginning;**"

an expression that is found so frequently in John's first epistle.

Before the first century closed there arose the Gnostics — i.e. "The knowing Ones" — who claimed to give a more intellectual version of the faith than had been given by the "unlearned and ignorant men" (Acts 4: 13), as the Apostles were from a worldly standpoint. Thus they turned some aside. It was an adulteration, and hence John's repeated reference to what was "from the beginning." Nothing other or different from that is set before us in the Scriptures.

There are others today, sad to say, who imagine that what they have produced altering, or adding to, that which is from the beginning is an advance to **higher** things. In the light of God's word such things will prove to have only been an **adulteration.**

UNANSWERED PRAYER

HERE is a matter which to many is very perplexing. Not a few could say, if they were asked, "I have prayed for years about a certain thing, and the answer has not come yet." And they want to know why. That question we will endeavour to answer.

In the first place, **some requests never will be granted.** There is the well-known case of Paul. He besought the Lord thrice that the thorn in the flesh might depart from him, and yet the request was not allowed. It was better for him

that it should not be granted; and so it may be in your case. David's history affords another instance. He greatly desired to build a house for the Lord. It was a right thought, and he would only have been too glad to obtain permission; but it could not be. And yet both Paul and David did receive answers — Paul received grace so that he could glory in his infirmities, and David had the satisfaction of knowing that Solomon would build the Lord a house — only the answers came in unexpected ways. John Newton describes an experience

akin to this. He says:

"I asked the Lord that I might grow
In faith and love and every grace,
Might more of His salvation know,
And seek more earnestly His face.

" 'Twas He who taught me thus to pray,
And He, I know, has answered pray-
er;

But it has been in such a way
As almost drove me to despair."

Your prayers, too, may have been answered, though differently from what you anticipated. But there are cases where no distinct answer in any shape has come. We may have asked for a thing that would not be good for us, or that is unreasonable, or altogether beyond us. Of this class is the prayer of the mother of Zebedee's children. She made request that her two sons might sit on the right and left hand of Christ in His kingdom. The Lord has to say to her, "Ye know not what ye ask." Doubtless she thought how fine it would be for her two sons to occupy such an exalted position, where they would be ministered to. The Lord shows her that a greater thing than being ministered unto is to minister.

But perhaps we have prayed for right things, such as the conversion of our children or relatives, and many other matters, and still no answer seems vouchsafed. This leads us to mention another reason why our prayers are unanswered. **There may be some fault in ourselves.** There was a Christian lady whose husband very much tried her in one particular. This went on for a long time, and had been the subject of many prayers. At length a servant of the Lord had occasion to

stay in the house. The wife complained to him, told him how often she had made it a subject of prayer, and said she could not understand why God did not answer her prayers and put her husband right. To her intense surprise she was told that it was she who needed putting right, for doubtless God would have answered her prayers long ago but for something in herself. Accepting the rebuke, she earnestly set about to discover what needed correction, and as the result she soon had the joy of seeing the desire of her heart fulfilled. Often it is something in ourselves hinders our petitions being granted. And if answers are withheld, it is a loud call to us to first of all "search and try our ways," and then "turn again to the Lord." Unanswered prayers are often but a reflection of our own state.

The Apostle James gives us another reason why we do not get what we ask for; he says, "**Ye ask amiss.**" "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts [pleasures]." How searching this is! With all our asking and all our seeming devotedness, we are after all seeking only our own pleasure! If God were to answer our prayers we should only use the answer to please ourselves. Is it any wonder we know so much about unanswered prayer? It may be the answers will not be long delayed if we are willing for God to have **all the glory.**

Another reason is that we may be **withholding from others what is their due.** This undoubtedly is a very frequent cause of our prayers meeting with no response. For example, in Mark II: 24-26 we find

the Lord, in speaking about answers to prayer, connects the thought of forgiveness with it. "What things soever ye desire, when we pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, **forgive.**" Are any of us cherishing an unforgiving spirit? It will prove a great hindrance to our prayers being answered.

And the same thing will probably happen if we keep for ourselves what should be given to God. Is it not well to remember the words of the wise king, "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty?" And while it is always true that God, in His grace, deals with us far above what we deserve, yet in government He deals with us very much as we deal with Him and with one another. "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright; with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward." (Psa. 18: 25, 26.) And God says to us as to His people of old, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." (Mal. 3: 10.)

Our prayers sometimes remain unanswered **because we ask unintelligently.** This is particularly the case in regard to spiritual matters. In the spiritual world, as well as in the natural, there are certain laws and processes, and if we run counter to these we cannot reach the

end we desire. For want of knowing this, or remembering it, many have been seeking for years what they seem as far away from as ever. They have prayed for a certain blessing many times, and yet their request has not been granted. If the truth were known it is probable this matter which is now so great a mystery could easily be explained. They have put their prayers in the wrong form, or they are looking entirely in the wrong direction. The case of the Syrophenician woman illustrates this very thing. She comes to the Lord in her deep need about her daughter, and says, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word." Now this was not coldness on the part of the Lord towards her, any more than it is towards you because He has not answered your prayer. This woman had preferred her request on entirely wrong grounds. The Lord did not send her away, as He does not send you away; but He has something to teach you, perhaps, before He can grant your request, as He had her. She addressed Him as Son of David, a title which gave a Gentile no claim whatever. The Lord could not consistently respond when thus addressed; to have done so would have ignored the distinction God Himself had made. But when she addressed Him simply as Lord, He could listen to her. He is Lord of all. And when, further, she casts herself entirely upon His goodness and mercy, asserting no claim, He cannot refuse her "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

Perhaps we have prayed for **more**

faith. This is a common delusion. As if some day we should become suddenly conscious of a great increase of it. It cannot be too clearly stated that God does not work in this way. He does not deal out faith to us in bulk. It would be harmful, rather than helpful, if He did. Faith, like money, is increased by circulation; or, like seed, it grows; or, as our physical frame does, it gathers strength by exercise. When the disciples on one occasion said, "Lord, increase our faith," the Lord Jesus in His reply laid down a fundamental principle which holds good for all time, and which we do well to ponder. He shows it is not the quantity of faith, but just exercising what we have; and He mentions one of the smallest things, and tells them what they could accomplish with just so much faith. "If ye had faith," He says, "as a grain of mustard seed." And for two reasons. A grain of mustard seed is very small in itself, but under certain conditions of soil and atmosphere and sun there is within it possibilities of development. So with faith. And then the least faith brings in all the resources of God. It is not then by asking for more faith that it increases, but, given certain conditions, it will grow as surely as a grain of mustard seed. In Paul's Second Epistle to the Thessalonians he says, "Your faith groweth exceedingly." How is this accounted for? By what he is able to say about them in his first epistle. He speaks of their "**work** of faith." Faith was in exercise, and consequently it grew exceedingly. (Comp. 1 Thess. i. 3 and 2 Thess. i, 3.) Had they been blindly asking for more faith instead of seeing the divine principle that governs the whole

matter, their faith would rather have diminished than increased.

In the same way, how often have we prayed to God for **more patience**. But God does not deal out patience, any more than faith, in lumps. And the sooner we learn that patience can only become ours by a certain process, the better. It is an immense gain when we see that faith and patience and such-like qualities are not given at random or arbitrarily, but stand in the relation of cause and effect. They do not become ours by asking, but by a principle as unerring as the law of gravitation. How, then, do we become patient? There is one simple answer. By the knowledge of God. In support of this assertion we can only just refer the reader to Colossians i. 10, 11. By increasing in the knowledge of God we are "strengthened with all might, according to the power of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

Do we underrate prayer in this way? No; but we learn to pray for the right thing, and also seek it in the right way. We learn that the real thing we need is the knowledge of God. We are impatient because we know Him so little; and if we only seek to deal with the impatience we are not going to the root of the disease, but dealing only with a symptom. No medical man would act in this way with regard to the diseases of the body, nor must we with that which is infinitely higher and more complicated, the diseases of the soul. Let us pray that God would help us to know Him by studying His word, and patience will come.

It is not otherwise with regard to

rest. How often we are weary and heavy laden! Perhaps we have often sought rest by simply praying for it. There is One who offers it to us, and tells us how we may find it. We can only have it on the same principle on which He had it, that is, entire submission to the will of God. And so when He offers rest to us He says, "Take **my yoke** upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Meek and lowly in heart" — here is the secret of all rest.

If the reader will carefully weigh what has been said, he may discover the reason of many an unanswered prayer. While we are privileged at all times to make our requests known to God, yet the one condition of our prayers being answered is

asking "according to his will." (1 John 5: 14, 15.) Of course we may have asked according to His will, and the time may not have come for the answer. God often delays the answer. Prayer was made continually by the church for Peter, but it was only a few hours before the execution was to take place that he was liberated.

But while this is true, yet our prayers are often unanswered, for the reasons already given. We have been asking for something that would not be good for us, or we have asked amiss, or at random, and overlooked the real thing to be asked for — not patience, but the knowledge of God; not rest, but to be meek and lowly in heart. If we grasp these principles, many of our prayers may yet be answered.

WHERE ARE THEY?

L. A. ANDERSON

"**H**ELP Lord; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psa. 12: 1).

If the Psalmist allowed this cry to escape from his lips, how much more urgent and necessary is the cry in our day.

Where indeed are the gifted men of God, that were serving the Lord a century or so ago? How well we could do with them today; and how we suffer for the lack of such in our midst.

The Psalmist, however, is not concerned with gifts — much as they are to be valued and appreci-

ated — but with **godly** and **faithful** men. Now we may have but little or possibly no gift, but what about godliness and faithfulness? These things are within the reach of the poorest and humblest of Christian men and women.

"**The godly man ceaseth.**" His generation seems almost to have disappeared in this our day. Where are those godly brethren and sisters, whom some of us, who are older, remember, or at least heard about in our youth? They have gone and their replacement is hard to find — they seem almost to have ceased. Help Lord! — raise up more of Thy children, who shall carry on this

godly line, and who shall live more closely like to Thy beloved Son, the Lord Jesus.

“The faithful fail.” Where are the faithful ones? — the men and women, who are prepared to do what is right in the sight of God, cost what it may? Search among the children of men today — even among instructed saints — and see how comparatively few are to be found, prepared to suffer for their faithfulness, in this our easy-going age. They seem hardly to exist. Help Lord!

Where are those who will be so faithful to Thee and Thy word, that their whole energies may be brought into exercise in Thy service? To the faithful ones of olden time, “the meat that perisheth” was a very secondary matter.

Now Lord, if such are the conditions that prevail, at least in our easy-going, English-speaking world, help us to bestir ourselves the more, because of the lack of such qualities amongst Thy people today. Help Lord!

But shall we despair because of the state of things around us, and even among ourselves? No, for

“God is faithful,” so rather let us be the more fervent, the more real, the more earnest, the more prayerful. Why should we not follow, by God’s help, along the lines of the godly and faithful, who lived in days that are past? God is the Same. He is unchanging. Is there a valid reason for us to sit down with folded hands, and give up? Cannot we be amongst the godly and faithful ones, even if others fall out by the way? In the very earliest days the Apostle Paul had to write to some, “Ye did run well: who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?” (Gal. 5: 7). Oh! the tragedy of it, when those who start well are hindered, and so stop short, and become unfaithful — and so they fail.

Alas, for the many today who do not continue in the path of faithfulness. They start right, but they fail to finish the course. Let us never forget that God is faithful, and therefore He can help each of us to be in that company who are “godly” and “faithful.” We may well pray:—

“Help Lord, for the godly man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.”

“Only a little longer,” in separation true,
To prove His glorious fulness, and all His beauty view;
To follow Him as Leader, and share with Him the love
And favour of His Father before God’s Face above.

How precious is this honour, while waiting for Him here,
To know the joy of ent’ring in faith the heavenly sphere;
And then with His own radiance experienced and enjoyed,
To yield Him heavenly service with fervour unalloyed.

CHRIST EVERYTHING

J. T. Mawson

THERE has come into my hands this simple confession of faith and experience, written years ago by a brother in Christ, whom I loved and esteemed — the Founder and former Editor of Scripture Truth. It has not, I believe, hitherto appeared in print.

It has a voice to all of us, and particularly to those recently converted, and who are therefore at the beginning of their Christian experience. The writer passed to the presence of his Lord in July 1943, but by this little paper it may yet be true that, "he being dead yet speaketh."

May his message prove of profit to all who may read it.

(EDITOR).

IN thinking over the Scripture, as ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him; rooted and built up in Him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. 2: 6, 7), I was carried back in thought to my own real start with the Lord. I had from my earliest knowledge of anything known the Gospel, but the time came when I definitely received Him — "You'll trust Him?" was the question put to me and I said "Yes." I remember the following day that the name Jesus was continually before me. I printed it in large letters and set it where I could see it continually. It was just Himself — not the blessing that I had received but Himself.

I could not have explained it all then, but now I see that the Spirit of God had led me to Him, it was not belief in a text of Scripture, but the reception of a Person about whom the Scriptures speak, and He was very real to me. I realised a personal link between myself and the Lord and longed to remember Him in His death, but I was afraid to make my desire known. After much

faltering, I awoke to the fact that I was losing time and slipping back for I was not keeping His word. I had not advanced in this desire beyond what was individual, it was simply the Lord's love to me and my response to His love, but so far it was very real — and it was Himself and my desire to keep His commandments.

Then followed the desire to serve Him. I felt that to serve Him who had done so much for me would be a great honour and I have no doubt that He then gave me a definite call to preach the Gospel. The opportunity came for me to preach, and I spent some days in careful preparation of a sermon on the wisdom of building on the rock and the folly of building on the sand. As I walked to the preaching room, 3 miles away, there rang insistently in my ears "Behold the Lamb of God" and all my sermon slipped out of my memory. I passed through an agony of exercise and the more so because on arriving at the meeting I could not find the passage of Scripture that I had studied so carefully. And still the voice continued within me, "Behold the Lamb of God."

It was time to begin and I was reminded of this by a brother sitting near to me. I picked up my hymn book and the first hymn that my eyes alighted upon was "Behold the Lamb, 'tis He who bore my burden on the tree." I was greatly comforted and felt that I could trust the Lord to give me words to speak upon the text "Behold the Lamb of God." While I spoke an old man of 74 who had been long anxious, believed the Word, and passed from darkness to light. I was greatly cheered and began to see the way of the Lord. It was as though He said by the exercise I had passed through, "If you are to serve Me you must speak about Me, you must begin with Me. **I must be your theme.** It was **Himself** again.

Zeal for the Gospel laid hold of me, and day and night my thoughts were filled with the Gospel and my service in it. On reading C. H. Spurgeon's very helpful and delightful "Lectures to my Students" I longed to get the help I felt he could give, that I might be more efficient in the preaching. But just then the Lord came in and led me one step further. A servant of God visited our town and in the first address that he gave he spoke on Matthew 18: 20, pressing the reality of the Lord's presence in the midst of His assembly. It was a revelation to me. It was not the brethren, whether nice or otherwise who made the meeting what it was, it was **Himself**, He gave character to the place. If I went it was to meet **Him** in His own circle, where He gathered His own about Him according to His own divine right.

I shall never forget the light that

this was to my soul. I had to get away from everybody to dwell upon it with the Lord. From that time I have been unable to understand brethren saying "I will not go to the meeting, if such and such a Christian is permitted there; or threatening to withdraw, if what they think right is not done. To me everything lies in the Lord being there, and if He is there I must be.

This was a great joy, but it soon involved me in further exercise, for, I had to face the fact of failure, I discovered that confusion and division had wrought much havoc in that which appeared to me so blessed and which I had considered to be above the failure of men. Moreover I discovered that even those who I believed held on to the truth, had sadly failed in the way they had done it, and the spirit that had been displayed. That party spirit could have entered that sacred enclosure with such disastrous results was to me a heart-breaking surprise. I was greatly shaken and I wondered whether it would not be better to devote myself exclusively to the Gospel, and let all else go as being impossible to carry out.

But I could not do this. I had tasted the joy of Christ and His assembly; to that I felt I must cling, and I went a step further and learned that everything was established and secured **in Him**. I learnt this from 2 Timothy, and I found from that Epistle that I could hold fast that which I had learnt and that it would be as a light and guide to me in the perilous times; I had got the clue to the maze. It meant that I must turn my eyes from the confusion and be strong in the grace

that is in Christ Jesus, remembering Him, raised from the dead according to Paul's Gospel, and test things henceforth by His word and authority. It was **Himself** again as meeting the exercise arising from our great failure in the truth.

I can see how falteringly I have followed these things so clearly shewn to me. Known only to the Lord and myself has been the continual failure in walk according to that which I see and know to be the way of truth. But to these things in His great grace He has held me, and how patient He has been. I realize that, in every recovery of soul that I have known, He has brought me back to the joy of these things. They abide and will so long as the Spirit of Truth abides on earth.

It is plain to me that everything depends upon **Christ personally** having His place. We are to receive **Him**, walk in **Him**, be rooted and

built up in **Him**, every advance is in **Him**. We may have doctrine and fight for "principles" and maintain a legal separation from what is wrong, but if that is all we shall become withered ourselves and a menace to the peace of our brethren. We shall abound in thanksgiving as together we continue in **Him**.

There have been many crises in my life, too intimate, too sacred, to commit to writing, but I have found that if He has drawn near to me in them I have gained in spiritual substance, no matter what else I have lost, and I have feebly learnt that for my own blessing as for His glory He must be all and in all, He is the Alpha and Omega, the First and Last, the Beginning and the End. He is this for God, and He must be this for every creature that is to be finally and eternally blest. This is the lesson that the Spirit of God is teaching us today. Happy will all those be who learn it.

A NEW MAN

TENNYSON, the well-known poet of the Victorian age, is said to have written, "O for a man to rise in me, that the man I am might cease to be!" In so writing he was evidently desiring one of the great blessings that the Gospel brings to those who believe it.

The "man," that he was, is the "man," that each of us is, and that Saul of Tarsus was in his day. It is the "man" that fallen Adam was. After his conversion, Saul of Tarsus, now the Apostle Paul, wrote, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2: 20). A new "MAN" had indeed risen in him. Such was his happy experience, based upon the act of God at the cross of Christ, when as Paul himself could write, "Our old man is crucified with **Him**" (Rom. 6: 6).

If then, using Tennyson's phrase, the new man has risen in us, our concern has to be put **on** the new man, in outward life and behaviour, having **put off** the old.

BIBLE STUDY — NEHEMIAH

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 9: 4 — 13: 31)

THE worship that was offered to God through certain of the Levites is recounted in verses 4-6, of chapter 9. They confessed Jehovah as their God, and owned that He is the great Creator of heaven and earth, and exalted above all earthly and heavenly praise. It was suited to the revelation of God, in the light of which they lived. If we read Ephesians 1: 3-7, we find the Apostle uttering worship in the light of the revelation that has reached us in Christ. And if we read Romans 11: 33-36, we find the same Apostle in the spirit of worship as he contemplated the end to which His dealings with Israel will bring them, as well as ourselves. The Levites of Nehemiah's day could not anticipate the things made known to us, "upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. 10: 11, New Trans.).

Having owned the Lord, as they knew Him at that time, they proceeded to recite before Him the wonder of His dealings with their nation, from Abram onwards through the centuries. The chapter is a lengthy one, and if it be carefully read, their chequered history comes before us, and we cannot fail to be struck by three things. First, **they vindicate God** in all His disciplinary dealings with them, as well as acknowledge His mighty power, that had wrought on their behalf in their deliverance from Egypt, their sustainment in the wilderness and their possession of the promised land. In all His deal-

ings, God had acted towards them according to both mercy and righteousness.

And, in the second place, owning that the law with its "right judgments," and "good statutes," was perfect in its place, they made no attempt to justify their ancestors or themselves in their repeated sins and failures. **They condemned themselves** for their disobedience, which went even to the length of slaying the prophets, by whom God had testified against them and maintained His truth; and they owned the rightness of all that had come upon them, so that, though back in the land, they were still in a position of servitude to kings who were over them. This humble confession of sin was indeed good, equally with the acknowledgement of the rightness of all God's dealings with them.

But there was a third thing, which comes to light in the last verse of the chapter. Owning the "great distress," that was still their portion, indeed because of it, they proposed to renew the old covenant of law, established originally with their ancestors, by making what they called "**a sure covenant**," which they would write, and to which they would put their "seal."

So evidently they had not yet learned what the Apostle Paul so forcibly set before the Galatians — "As many as are of the works of the law are **under the curse**" (3: 10). The full period of Man's pro-

bation had not yet expired. Israel was the nation chosen of God in whom that probation, or testing, was to take place, and it did not end until they had crucified their Messiah. So we are not blaming these God-fearing Israelites for again making a covenant on the original lines of the law, and putting their seal to it, in the hope that they would succeed better than their fathers in keeping it.

We shall do well to note however what transpired in their later history. We shall not conclude our reading of this book without finding grievous failure recorded: and if we pass on to the book of the prophet Malachi, written perhaps half a century after this time, we find that a most deplorable state of things had developed amongst their children and descendants. There was still a certain amount of outward religious profession, while the law itself was broken, the whole spirit of it perverted, and the transgressors themselves completely self-satisfied and intolerant of criticism: so much so, that they repudiate with indignation any accusation that the prophet had to bring against them in the name of the Lord.

There was however a spirit of revival, clearly at work among the people, and since their place and standing before God was on the basis of the law of Moses, some fresh resolution to reverence and obey it was the appropriate thing they had to offer. There have been moments of revival in the history of the church, graciously granted by God, but what has marked them has been some fresh recovery, not of what we ought to do for God, but

of what **He has done for us** — some fresh understanding and realization of the fulness of the grace into which we have been brought by the Gospel, and to the place of favour and heavenly relationship which is the church's portion, according to the eternal counsels and purposes of God.

In this long prayer of confession, as they reviewed the history of their nation, we find that twice they acknowledged one of the great root causes of their sin: their forefathers had, "dealt proudly" (verses 16 and 29). Out of this spirit of pride, helped on doubtless by the very privilege and favour in which they stood as a nation, sprang the self-assertion and disobedience that had characterized their whole history; and that in their early days came to a head in the fact that they "appointed a **captain** to return to their bondage" (verse 17), and when they "made them a molten **calf** and said, This is thy God" (verse 18).

As a matter of history, the calf preceded the captain, for it was made at Sinai, when Moses was for so long on the mountain, as recorded in Exodus 32; whereas the proposal to appoint a captain and return to Egypt was made when they were condemned to 40 years wandering in the wilderness after the bad report of the spies, as recorded in Numbers 14. In reversing the historic order, it would seem that they first mentioned the **effect**, and then went back to the underlying **cause**.

The inspired comment on all this is, "So we see that they could not enter in because of **unbelief**" (Heb. 3: 19). Unbelief wants a God

plainly visible to the natural eye: hence the making of the calf. It also is not prepared to face a 40 year sojourn in a wilderness without visible resources: hence the desire for a captain after their own heart, to lead them back to a land of plenty, even if it be a land of slavery. It is easy for us to see their error, but let us not forget that the flesh in ourselves has exactly the same desires and tendencies. It longs for something visible, and for what panders to our natural desires, even if we are spiritually enslaved in obtaining it. Here is indeed a case in which the Old Testament Scriptures, which Timothy had known from a child, are able to make us "**wise unto salvation**" (2 Tim. 3: 15).

We cannot indeed avoid the impression that similar evil principles were at work in the early centuries of the professing church. As faith vanished or declined, they wanted some visible representation of the Saviour, and then of His Virgin mother. They wanted too a visible leader, who would relieve them of the troubles connected with the life of a stranger and a pilgrim in this present evil world, to which the Christian is called. As the centuries passed they got what they wanted in the crucifixes and images, and in the Papal chair, and its occupants, in Rome, that led them back into the spiritual bondage and darkness, of which Egypt was a type.

So the covenant was signed, which evidently reaffirmed their adherence to the old covenant, given at Sinai, which was indeed "sure," in an absolute sense. They spoke of the covenant that they wrote and

signed, as being **sure**, and so it was on God's side; but not so sure on their side, as we have already remarked. The first 27 verses of chapter 10, record the names of the leaders, who signed the covenant on behalf of the people; and then the rest of that chapter records how the people generally bound themselves to observe the law as to questions of marriage, and of ordinances concerning the upkeep of the temple service, and of the priests and Levites. They had separated themselves to obey the law, and as it says, they "entered into a curse." Everyone who stands before God on the basis of law, enters into a curse. Significantly enough, the last word in the Old Testament is the word "curse."

The two verses that open chapter 11 may perhaps surprise us. We might have thought that, Jerusalem now being a walled city, there would have been strong competition among the people for the privilege of dwelling in it, but evidently it was not so. On the contrary, the country towns of Judah were more attractive, and therefore lots were cast, and one in ten of the people, on whom the lot fell, had to dwell in the city and if any offered themselves willingly to dwell there, the people blessed them, as though they made a sacrifice in so doing. The rest of the chapter puts on record the names of those who did dwell there, and also gives some details of their positions and the services they rendered. Their names may mean little to us, but may be important in the coming day of Israel's restoration and blessing.

What we may learn from it is

surely this, that any sacrifice made, or service rendered, for God's work and interests is not forgotten but rather recorded before Him. The names of those who did not dwell in Jerusalem, but had more pleasure in the other places, are forgotten. Malachi tells us that in his day, "a book of remembrance was written" before the Lord, "for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." That book was not peculiar to Malachi's day. It existed in Nehemiah's day, and exists in our day too. Let us not forget that!

Turning to chapter 12, we note that the first 26 verses are occupied with further genealogical records, going back to the days of Zerubbabel and Jeshua the high priest. In verse 10, we learn that a grandson of Jeshua was Eliashib, who presently became high priest, and who had a son named, Joiada. These two are again mentioned in verse 22, and more concerning them appears in chapter 13.

In the remaining verses of the chapter, though many names are mentioned, it is not a matter of genealogy but rather of the part they had in the celebration of God's mercy at the solemn dedication of the wall that had now been completed. On this joyous occasion those who dwelt outside Jerusalem were assembled, as well as those living within it. One thing however was necessary: a purification had to take place, not only of priests and Levites, but also of the people and the gates and the wall itself. This we learn in verse 30.

The lesson this has for us is obvi-

ous. We may state it in few words — No **dedication** without **purification**. We are not told how this cleansing was effected, but it was of course done in some outward and visible fashion, which after all is but the figure and shadow of that inward work of which David had some understanding, as we see in Psalm 51: 2, and again in Psalm 119: 9. To dedicate is to devote to God and to His service: the force of the word is very similar to the apostolic injunction, "present your bodies a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12: 1). We, as redeemed, are not our own, and God claims our very bodies to be devoted to Him and His service.

If now we turn to the verse just quoted, we find the very next words to "sacrifice" are, "**holy**, acceptable unto God." So here we are confronted by the same fact, what is dedicated to God must be cleansed and holy; that is, separated from defilement unto Him. The first eight chapters of Romans unfold the Gospel, in all its wonderful details, and by that Gospel we are justified and cleansed, and set apart for God.

The purification effected, the dedication was marked by three things. First, there was thanksgiving, and songs of praise to God. Second, there was great joy amongst the people, as they sacrificed, so that "the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off." Third, there was the bringing in of "the offerings, for the first fruits, and for the tithes." Here again, we can see an analogy: if true dedication marks us, God will receive His portion in praise and thanksgiving; we shall have joy of heart; there will be no lack of gifts for the support of the work of God

and of His servants. How do we stand in relation to these things?

In spite of these good features, marking the dedication of the wall things were not perfect, as we discover at the opening of chapter 13. On that day they again read in the "book of Moses," and found what had been written concerning their separation from the Ammonite and Moabite, in Deuteronomy 23. This led to a fresh concern as to the way they had failed in obedience, and a fresh separation from "the mixed multitude," and further discovery of how, amongst leaders in their very midst, this instruction had been ignored.

Eliashib, mentioned in verse 4, was, as we have seen, a grandson of Jeshua the high priest, and was himself the high priest, as stated in verse 28 of this last chapter. So here, in what we may call the headquarters of their religion, was a flagrant violation of their law, for he had entered into alliance with Tobiah, one of the chief opponents of the work of God, and had prepared him a chamber in the precincts of the temple, just where the offerings and other treasures were stored. His dwelling there is even described as "a great chamber." If the visible head of their religious system thus transgressed, what could be expected of the common people?

How this came to pass is explained to us in verse 6. Twelve years had now passed since Nehemiah came to Jerusalem with authority to rebuild the city, and he had gone back to Artaxerxes, who had made him the civil governor; hence he

was absent from Jerusalem for some time. Having however obtained leave of the king to go back, this was the situation that confronted him. It grieved him much and he acted at once, casting out Tobiah's stuff, cleansing the chamber, and restoring it to its proper use. But what a tragedy was this! Here was a man, who was no priest, having to rebuke and reverse the action of the man, who was "the high priest"! This tragedy has, sad to say, often been repeated in the history of the church. There is no guarantee of purity and of obedience to the will of God in **officialism**. Again and again God has raised up men in low office, or even outside office altogether, to bring about some revival of obedience to His revealed will.

Nehemiah having returned, this incident as to Eliashib evidently stirred him to investigate other matters, and the rest of the chapter gives in detail the painful discoveries that he made. These wrongs and departures from the law are grouped under three main heads. There was first, slackness in providing for the upkeep of the Levites and the singers, and the upkeep of the house of God generally. The people did not want the expense and bother of bringing in their tithes in regular fashion. Second, there were grave and open infractions of the law regarding the sabbath. The people were breaking it themselves and permitting "men of Tyre" and others to trade with them, even in Jerusalem itself: very convenient, no doubt; but flagrantly breaking the law. Then third, there was this repeated tendency to marry heathen wives asserting itself, so soon after

a reformation on this point. And this time even more flagrant, for "wives of Ashdod," a Philistine city, were in question as well as of Ammon and Moab.

In this last sin the priestly family was again prominent, as we see in verse 28. The unnamed son of Joiada, grandson of Eliashib, was a great-great-grandson of that Jeshua the high priest, concerning whom Zechariah the prophet had the remarkable vision, which he recorded in chapter 3 of his prophecy. If that chapter be read, we see that a promise was made to him, "if thou wilt walk in My ways, and if thou wilt keep My charge." Whatever the said Joshua (or, Jeshua) did, it is very certain that his descendants and successors neither walked in the ways of God, nor kept His charge. Nehemiah saw this and as to this son of Joiada, he "chased him from me."

We may learn the further lesson that departure from the will and way of God is what we may call, **an infectious matter**. The chapter begins with Eliashib striking up an alliance with Tobiah the Ammonite and it ends with his grandson making an even more intimate alliance, by marriage, to a daughter of Sanballat the Horonite, who was an even more prominent adversary; since Tobiah is introduced as "the servant," in chapter 2: 10. If departure from God and His word starts as only a trickle, it may soon become a **torrent**. May this also have the effect of making us "wise unto salvation."

Finally let us observe that just as

Nehemiah has to record the three grave departures that brought him into violent conflict with many, as he rectified what was wrong, so three times does he call upon God to remember him for good, according to the greatness of His mercy. He did indeed speak of his "good deeds," yet acknowledged that he relied upon "mercy," rather than reward. See, verses, 14, 22, 31.

Our first impression might be that he was somewhat self-centred, or self-satisfied: but our second thought would rather be, that he was acutely conscious that his strong action to maintain the law of God had brought him into unpopularity and under censure from many. The martyr Stephen said, "Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" (Acts 7: 52). They had persecuted them all, and Nehemiah, though not a prophet, uttering words of censure, had committed many acts of censure, which would have brought on his head more obloquy than words would ever have done.

Nehemiah's whole commission from God involved controversy, not only from without, but also, and perhaps more bitterly, from within. He was conscious that, if remembered for good of his God, all earthly disparagement would count for little.

Does faithfulness to God involve us today in condemnation from the world, or even worldly believers? Let us then, only aim at being remembered for "good," when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

J. STODDART

Substance of an address given to young Christians at Ripon, July 1960.

IN this first meeting for ministry it might be profitable for each to ask ourselves the question, What are my objectives for this week? There are certainly great possibilities of physical invigoration, which I am sure we all need, but of considerably greater importance is our spiritual advancement. Now in using that term just what do we mean? Do we mean simply acquiring a greater knowledge of Scripture? That would be good, but even more important would be the producing of an increase in our spiritual stature. I am sure that with each of us there is the desire to grow spiritually, to increase in our experience of rich Christian life. With that in view, we hope to consider, as the Spirit of God may lead, the subject of Christian character.

The Epistle to the Philippians, the first chapter of which we have just read, is a very unique letter of the Apostle Paul, for it is the most joyful, the most friendly, of his epistles, and containing the minimum of correction. From these facts we can gather something of the character of those to whom he wrote. He was writing as a friend to his friends, but also as a "slave" of Jesus Christ to those who had shown him no small kindness. The epistle does not start with a formal salutation from himself as an Apostle, nor does he address the church at Philippi as such, but rather to "all the saints" in Philippi. That is significant, as taking away from what may be regarded as official and bringing

us to a level in which we can place ourselves. At this level the word of God addresses us, and we can take our place today among the all saints, if not at Philippi, then at Ripon, though all the saints in Ripon are not here amongst us.

This epistle is marked by several outstanding characteristics, one being the constant reference to joy and rejoicing, and another the reference in each chapter to the mind. We are living in days when a great deal of importance is rightly attached to the mind, since much of what we are flows out from what we think. This fact is borne out by the Scripture, for it says, "as he thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23: 7).

Now in speaking on this subject what we are aiming at is precisely that, since what we **are** is very much more important than what we **do**. During previous meetings in the last two years we have studied the vital elements of the Christian faith — what the Christian **believes** — and then the subject of Christian service — what the Christian **does** — but now we are to give our attention to what is even more important — what the Christian **is**. For such indeed is Christian character.

Some young person might wish to ask, What is Christian character? The very simple answer to that is, I think, that Christian character is the character of Christ. Now that sounds very high and very lofty, but I want us all to see that the practical

truth is that we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have received His life, and from that life there flows character. Character is life expressed in some distinguishing way, and Christian character distinguishes us as having the life of Christ. Some very charming features of that life and character are seen throughout the Philippian epistle, and as we study it we shall see that we might summarize it something like this:— In chapter 1, the purpose and power of Christian character: in chapter 2, the pattern of it; the perfect Pattern in Christ, and the partial pattern in Timothy and Epaphroditus: in chapter 3, the progress and prize of it: in chapter 4, the prayerful practicalness that marks it.

I have endeavoured to use this alliteration so that we may easily remember the outline of our subject. Now, as to the general picture presented to us, we are carried back to the beginning of things at Philippi. Writing to his friends there, the Apostle recalls with much joy their affection and fellowship in the Gospel from the first day, when he had set foot on European soil. Acts 16 gives us the details, and we remember the meeting of women by the riverside, and among them Lydia, who came from Thyatira in Asia, very probably a Jewish proselyte, whose heart was opened by the Lord. Then came the casting out of the demon from the young woman resulting in the beating and imprisonment of Paul and Silas. Then their songs of praise, followed by the earthquake, which resulted in the conversion of the jailor. It is a chapter of extreme contrasts, for nothing could be more diverse than the way in which Lydia was con-

verted and the way the jailor was brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, yet a feature comes into display that marked them both.

Do you remember that when the Lord had opened Lydia's heart, she opened her home to the Apostle and his companions? So at once we see one of the features of Christian character; the nature of God, imparted by the Holy Spirit, expressing itself in kindness. As partakers of the Divine nature it must express itself thus with us, just as God Himself expressed it when His kindness toward man appeared. And further, it was not something that only happened with Lydia, for the very jailor, who hours before had lashed the backs of God's servants and made their feet fast in the stocks, when converted, received them into his home and did what he could to heal the wounds that had been made, and thus express the kindness of his heart.

Now if we read 2 Corinthians 8, we find that this feature of Christian character became one of the things by which they were known. Paul refers to the generosity of the Macedonian churches, one of which was at Philippi. It is lovely to read the language he uses, speaking of their giving, "beyond their power," and how, "in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." Very wonderful language, for it means that though they were poor they had the desire to enrich others; a desire fundamental to Christian character.

Let us consequently measure ourselves as to how far Christian char-

acter has developed along these lines with us. Has the kindness and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ moved our hearts in this way?

And then we see also in this first chapter how the Christian character is exhibited in the Apostle himself, for here is a man who though imprisoned speaks of that very fact turning out for the furtherance of the Gospel. He uses here, I believe, an interesting word for "furtherance," since it is one which might have a military sense, as used for what we might now call the work of a sapper. What does a sapper do? He occupies an advance place, cutting the way for the army to advance. So here is a man in prison speaking of himself as preparing the way for the advance of the Gospel, and how did that work out? Well, the Praetorian guard, in whose charge he was left, heard the Gospel from his lips. These picked men of the Roman army had to take their turn of duty, in being chained to a prisoner, and can we imagine the great Apostle, having a heart bursting with grace, being chained to changing guards without his telling them the Gospel of God's grace? Doubtlessly as he spoke the word went home, and so at the end of the epistle we read of saints who were "of Caesar's household." That is very remarkable.

Paul speaks of himself also in this chapter as being set, "for the defence of the Gospel;" another military word. Philippi was a Roman "colony;" that is a position of military strategy, for it lay at a point that commanded the road from Europe to Asia, so we can understand the use of such words,

which would be well understood at Philippi, and have special significance in the minds of the saints there.

Another remarkable thing is seen in chapter 3, where he speaks of their "conversation," that is, their politics, their citizenship, as being in heaven. This doubtless is a reference to the fact that in a place like Philippi a person was proud, not that he was a Greek, but rather that he was a Roman citizen. That being the case the Apostle says to the Christian company there, Now just as perhaps at one time you were proud of being a Roman citizen, you must now be proud of the fact that you are a citizen of heaven. That has much to do with Christian character.

Christian character is largely produced and developed by a right sense of our bearings in this world; that is to say, we recognize that God has put a separation between us and the world that surrounds us, and that we have a different character from those among whom we live. It is not at all a question of our adopting a superior attitude, but a question of our being essentially different inasmuch as we no longer belong to the world, and our manner of life is to bear a new character.

Now the same word is used in our chapter, in verse 27, where he says, "Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ;" that is to say, our manner of life is to bear the character of the Gospel of Christ. It is a very wonderful thing that the standard of our character is to be in line with and worthy of the Gospel, we might have expect-

ed the Apostle to say, worthy of being a member of the body of Christ, or worthy of our heavenly calling, and we might find these expressions elsewhere, but let us see that the Gospel of Christ is to promote in us a character which is consistent with what the Gospel teaches. The grace of God brings salvation, and that is proclaimed, and is to mark our lives, not simply in a Gospel meeting. Christian character extends far beyond what we are in meetings; for it is something by which we are known in the world.

I want to press that, because we must remember that our Christian character is to be exhibited not only in scenes that are conducive to it. Largely in Scripture we find it developed in the very circumstances that would seem to be most harmful and injurious to it. For instance, the Philippian saints, whose manner of life seems to have been on the whole so exemplary, were under fierce persecution, as also was the Apostle himself, who was such a shining example of Christian character. So in our chapter the Apostle says to them, "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake." It may be that our characters are feeble to-day, because we have so little to suffer for Christ. I feel that we must all suffer to some extent in the world on account of our faith, but it is encouraging to know that such suffering is one of the means that God takes for the development of Christ's character in our lives.

Now turning to verses 9-11, of our chapter, which give us the prayer

of Paul for the saints at Philippi, I want us to see that here we have the power and the purpose of Christian character. He prays that their, "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment." Now, if at conversion God's nature was implanted in our hearts, and then His love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, given to us, there is something to grow and to develop, and Paul prays for just that; for this love, this nature, to express itself in character.

What then is this character? It is not a matter of sentimentality, for it is to be in knowledge and in all judgment. That does not mean the ability to criticise one another, to pass harsh judgments, and that kind of thing, but rather that love gives the power to acquire true knowledge and spiritual discernment; and was there ever a day in which such things were needed more? The knowledge here is not that which may be acquired from the study of many books, but rather that produced by the development of the divine nature in us, producing character, so that we approve things that are excellent, or distinguish between things that differ.

We may remember that the Lord told Jonah how many thousands there were in Nineveh who knew not their right hand from their left. Too many Christians are like that today. They push everything into one category, when God in His word has carefully made distinctions. We are to "approve things that are excellent," and that with a view to our being "sincere and

without offence till the day of Christ."

The word that we have here, "sincere," is derived from a word the Greeks used in their architectural work. When a Corinthian pillar, with all its beauty, was found to have a flaw, the place was filled up with wax. When without flaw it was said to be "without wax," using a word for this which we have adopted in English, slightly altered, as "sincere," so that there is no need of some packing — no need of pretence and no ulterior motives as we seek to serve our Lord Jesus Christ.

This sincerity, this being without offence, will mean that we are without a cause of stumbling to others; nothing whereby another, even a very young believer, might be caused to fall. These things do not belong to human nature, but to the new nature we have as born of God, and they are to be developed and displayed until we reach their very home in the day of Christ. So even now we are to be, "filled with the fruits of righteousness."

Now this expression might cause some anxiety to us if we are very young believers. Christian character demands the fruit of righteousness. What does it mean? May I try to simplify it in this way, that righteousness is God's will. It is the antithesis of sin, which is my will. So that if God's will is first and foremost in our lives that is righteousness. It is the maintaining of God's rights in this world as against the maintaining of my rights and my will. Is it not delightful to think that righteousness is not

something that we have to whip up, but something that is produced as a fruit of the divine nature.

I should like to connect this with what we have in John 15, where the Lord said that, if we abide in Him and He abides in us, we shall bring forth fruit. This is not just service and getting souls saved, but rather in line with what we have before us. It is the fruit of righteousness; in other words, it is the character of Christ shining out in our lives, and there is to be much of it, as the Lord Jesus said.

Now finally I come to the two expressions which I gave as my headings for this chapter. How is all this to be produced? — you may ask; saying, I am constantly being tripped up and reminded that I am a weak creature. Yes indeed, so are we all. How then is this to be achieved? By what power is Christian character to be produced in our lives? It says here, "by Jesus Christ," not by any self-effort. It means the power of His life in us, and I do feel we need to be reminded of this. A Christian is not merely somebody who believes a certain number of things, but one in whom is Christ's life. This is exemplified in the Apostle Paul who said, "For me to live is Christ."

His life was an expression of Christ. As to his desires he was, "in a strait betwixt two," (as though he was in a rocky defile, where he could not turn to the right or to the left but could only go straight on) whether to live, or "to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." The word used here, translated "depart," is one **that**

might be used in a military sense for pulling up the tent ropes and marching on, or used for pulling up the anchors and setting sail. So here is a man whose whole desire is to express Christ while in this world, but has a great desire to depart and be with Christ, and so gain more of His company.

Christ to him was everything. Who preached the Gospel, who got the credit for it, who was antagonistic to himself, who criticised his methods, was of no matter to him. What did matter was that Christ was being preached, and Christ was his object in life. This is a very high standard but in a subsequent chapter the man who sets it before us says, "Be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." And in this epistle, in which there is so much joy and rejoicing, he tells us that he weeps; and why? Because there were some who walked so that they were "enemies of the cross of Christ," and this not because of some false theology, but because they set their mind on the things of earth. Of these he says severely, "whose God is their belly, who mind earthly things," for their ambition was to get on in this world.

Their great desire was self-expression, not Christ-expression. Now this is very relevant to our day, since on all hands this idea of self-expression is encouraged. We would say here and now that it is the exact antithesis of everything Christianity stands for. We are called to Christ-expression in our lives, which is Christian character, where the world is exalting all the

passions and desires and mental and intellectual fancies of the day. We are to have the mind that goes down in lowly sacrificing obedience to the will of God.

Then at the end of our chapter we see that the Apostle aims at encouraging the saints at Philippi in unity. The one great fear underlying all he writes in these four chapters is that the enemy would produce disunity amongst them. It was there potentially in the difference of thought between the two sisters who are named in chapter 4, so let us not forget that even a difference between two earnest sisters is a matter relative to Christian character — a matter which may affect the glory of Christ, and may result in further disunity amongst their fellow-Christians.

Hence his desires for them all that they might stand fast "in one spirit, with one mind striving together," not against each other but, "for the faith of the Gospel." So with this in mind we come back to verses 9-11, where we saw that "by Jesus Christ" is the power, and to "the glory and praise of God" is the purpose of Christian character. The power is not inherent in us by nature. It is something that God has wrought by His Spirit in us, implanting the life of Christ. All that men are by nature has in view attracting glory to themselves, but we live in the power of the life of Christ, walking in the will of God, and thus bringing glory and praise to Him, who is our Father.

This is Christian character — its purpose and its power.

THE SIN OF SCHISM

(Extracted)

EVERY successive manifestation by God of Himself to man has served to call forth the sin which is in man . . . The introduction of the marvellous grace of the Gospel has but afforded scope for the coming forth of man's evil; and indeed, in numerous ways in which it had not previously appeared. Among other exhibitions of the fearful evil in man, which have been occasioned by the perverted grace of the Gospel, is one of an exceedingly hateful character in the sight of God — a sin marring even the very aim and end of that grace. This is the sin of Schism.

This was undoubtedly in man's heart, along with every other sin; but it needed, in order to its formal exhibition, something to be set up of God. For, properly speaking Schism cannot appear until God's object in the Gospel of His grace appears — Schism being the directly opposite thing to that object. Hence this sin is not found affecting the natural conscience of man, nor indeed as pressing upon a conscience awakened to a sense of sin and seeking the way of salvation; although it comes under the general class of sins, viz:- works of the flesh.

Accordingly, so long as individual salvation is the only object of thought, the sin of Schism is hardly apprehended in the conscience at all. And perhaps, nothing more manifests the general disregard or ignorance of God's aim in the Gospel of His grace, viz:- **Church unity** or **Fellowship**, than the light treat-

ment which the warnings against **Schism** have ever met with. This sin is the constant subject of reproof, exhortation, or warning throughout the epistles; yet how few have troubled themselves to consider where it is chargeable. It has been so much the habit of men's minds to view communities according to their judgement or taste, or even to stand altogether aloof and alone; that it is very possible for a whole community to lie guilty of the sin of Schism, from its never having questioned the soundness of the principle on which it has been acting.

If it were true, that God, having called an individual into the fellowship of His Son, had left him without any direction for his guidance, then indeed that individual might be suffered to follow his judgment; whether to stand alone, or to associate with others on whatever principles might be deemed most conducive to their common welfare. But God has not left man; for almost all the preceptive part of the New Testament bears on the individual as sustaining certain relations as **a member of a body**; and teaches him how to behave himself in the **house of God** — which is the Church of the living God. And so far from its permitting Christians to associate together as they will, it lays down, for their association, principles subsisting in the most essential particulars of their faith . . .

Now whatever hinders the manifestation on earth of that oneness which Christians have in Christ in

heaven — is this sin of Schism. This manifestation is hindered **positively**, either when an individual follows his own will, and separates himself from the communion of saints; or when an association of Christians, by prescribing rules not of the Spirit, preclude an individual from fellowship with them: for such Christians, so far from gathering with the Lord, are, in fact, scattering abroad. And it is hindered **negatively** when an individual believer either stands aloof from the visible communion of saints, or holds fellowship with unbelievers, who assume the privileges of the children of the kingdom, and are accredited as such by those who are unequally yoked with them.

We are furnished with a most instructive illustration of the principle and of the working of this sin, corporately, in the policy of Jeroboam (1 Kings 12: 26-33) . . . We have here all the features of that policy which man has ever used, viz:—making the things of God to subserve his own interest . . . But Jeroboam “had devised this of his own heart.” Here we get the hateful principle as seen of God — the device of man’s heart substituted for God’s own prescribed plan; and its great end to hinder God’s end — the oneness of His people. And this once established, rendered reformation impossible. It was constituted in falsehood; and therefore, whatever might be the individual’s character, the one sentence runs, “Howbeit from the sin of Jeroboam, who made Israel to sin, he departed not.” . . .

Now the unity of the Church is based upon the death of Christ; and

its manifestation as to place is in heaven . . . There were two (Jew and Gentile) separated, the one from the other by insuperable barriers — by nation, by education, and by habits; and, besides all these, their separation was sanctioned by God Himself. Yet for these two God Himself found a meeting-place. But it was one that broke down the middle partition-wall, and declared at the same time their common failure, and their common acceptance — it was the **Cross**. In this it is that Christ crucified is so pre-eminently the power of God and the wisdom of God, in its bringing the most discordant subjects into fellowship with Himself, and into fellowship with each other. And God in His applying His own principle of unity, first of all, in the most difficult case, brilliantly manifests the virtue and the vigour of it. For surely that principle which can bring Jew and Gentile together, can bring any together. And hence it comes to pass that real communion of saints is the guarantee for the preservation of the true doctrine of the Cross; for in that it is that they meet one another. The Cross therefore would answer to Jerusalem as the centre of unity.

But there is another thing, viz:—the band which keeps together: that in Israel was, Ye are “brethren,” “Ye are the children of Abraham.” . . . It is thus still, inasmuch as we too are “brethren,” yet, not as descended from Abraham, but as begotten of God into life in Christ Jesus. That which now bindeth is the New Life received from Jesus risen; and this lifts us above such distinctions, and above all distinctions ending in

death. Faith sees them already ended, and enters on the new life; and where this new life is realized, how strong the bond of union! "All ye are brethren." If the Cross declares unto us the end of all fleshly distinctions, we must not stop here; we must press on so as to get a present entrance into those things which the Spirit reveals. In these things all believers have a common interest. In these there is nothing which ministers to division. These are spiritual blessings, and are to be apprehended only in the Spirit. Hence, unity is **in the Spirit**; and that which maintains it is **the Spirit**, shed abundantly on the Church by Jesus Christ, giving to each individual saint union with Himself the Head, and communion with all the members.

It necessarily comes to pass, that the moment anything is introduced as a point of unity which the Lord has not commanded, there is room for the sin of Schism. That thing is made to occupy the place of the Cross; and it is not that which links to the Head. Instances of this very early showed themselves in the Church. Questions arose as to the observance of days, and as to the cleanness of meats; but they were met and ruled by the wisdom of the Apostles. They presumed not to prescribe in such matters, because such prescription, though it would have been an attempt to produce uniformity, would, in effect, have divided those who were one in the Spirit, and have thus produced Schism. In fact, the real ground of unity was not involved in such differences; but it would have been, had thy been made the subject of positive enactment: and the mo-

ment this is the case, Schism is produced. A man might have observed a day, or might not have observed it, without the least interfering with the blessed constituents of real unity — one body, one Spirit, one faith, one hope, one baptism, one Lord, one Father. Not one of these would have been affected by an individual's conduct in regard to a day, or to a particular meat. Such matters therefore, were to be left free to the private conscience; only providing that this freedom be used for the display of grace in resisting one's own will, and in yielding all proper compliance and conformity.

But directly that the kingdom of God was made to consist in meat and drink, and this became a term of communion, Schism was the necessary result — the Cross of Christ and the Spirit of Christ were both forgotten; and the meat or the drink became the one object of concern and contention. It is this which so fearfully characterizes almost all the establishments of Christendom . . . Much of what is flagrantly evil may be removed by a Reformer; but the original sin, working all evil, is in the very constitution of the system — even the setting up, as the basis of union, of something which is not of the Spirit . . . in order to unite them upon principles and in an order of man's own devising. Every basis not broad enough for the whole Church to meet on proclaims this sin . . .

It is true that there are, in bodies which are schismatic in their constitution, many individuals who have really union in spirit with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ, and who

do not say, "We forbid him because he followeth not with us." Such individuals are, for the most part, impatient of ascertaining the fact of the wide departure of the Church from God; and they usually rest contented with what others sanction; though it be to the grief of their own spirit. . .

But while we look at this sin in its aggregate character, we ought also to look at its guilt as estimated by the Lord Himself. It was first exposed in His rebuke to John (Luke 9: 49, 50). Here the "with us" was the proximate object, not the glory of Jesus; and it is so now; we may be labouring most zealously for the interest of any little gathered body of Christians, but the moment that becomes our object, we are acting in the spirit of John. And here unconsciously many are systematically guilty of the sin of Schism; more earnestly contending for the preservation of the unity of a particular body, than for the unity of the body of Christ . . . What is the sad truth but that there is so little of the Spirit of God realized in the midst of us, that we must have recourse to some traditional and fleshly prescription; and thus declare that unity is not to be had in the Spirit simply, and that we can meet together only as Schismatics.

One thing needs to be clearly seen here — that separation from

things is not separation from **persons** . . . It may be that one who has separated, and certain believers who have not, depart together from their native country in the same ship; are thrown together in some foreign land; meet together . . . and in all this enjoy the real communion of the saints. This is no uncommon case: many testify unto the sweet fellowship which they have had as Christians in the midst of heathens, which they could not attain in England: they return . . . to their respective denominations, and there is no common ground on which they can meet as Christians at all . . .

There are two ways in which, **individually**, we can be guilty of this sin. The one is refusing to assemble ourselves together as Christians; and the other in separating ourselves from such, after union with them . . . In a day when the "spirit of the day" is so markedly that of self-will, no one can too solemnly weigh such a momentous step . . . And where the charge of this sin will fall, it must not be for taste or prejudice to decide; but for the truth of God. And if God has set up **unity in the Spirit**, and man has substituted **uniformity** instead of it, then leaving uniformity is the first step, in order to obedience to God's plan of unity.

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IN Romans 2: 4, we read of, "the riches of His goodness," available for sinful man. In Romans 11: 33 of, "the riches" of His "wisdom and knowledge," available for His saints.

BIBLE STUDY — HAGGAI

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 1: 1 — 2: 23)

WHEN considering the 4th and 5th chapters of the book of Ezra, we saw how the adversaries of God and of the remnant, who had returned to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and started to rebuild the temple, succeeded in stopping the work; and that God raised up two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, under whose ministry the work was restarted. Turning now to the book of Haggai, we may find instruction in what God said through him.

His prophecy is carefully dated, and noting this we see it divides into four sections, though all were uttered in the second year of Darius. The first utterance was on the first day of the sixth month: the second on the twenty-first day of the seventh month: the third on the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month: the fourth, though distinct from the third, was given on the very same day. Our first remark must be that God always recognizes the validity of His own governmental actions. He had set Israel aside as a nation, and the times of the Gentiles had begun; hence the dating is that of the ruling Gentile power and not that of the Jews.

Has this point any significance for us? We believe it has. We live, as we believe, near the end of the sad history of the Church as a professing body on the earth, subject to God's holy government. Some idea of that government may be ours if we consider with care Revelation

2 and 3, where the Lord as a Judge surveys the seven churches, and speaks of such things as the removal of the "candlestick" of light and testimony, and acting so as to "fight against" the evil-doers; and even when there is a measure of approval, it is only "a little strength" and the minimum of faithfulness.

We shall do well if we remember this with much humility of mind. The overcomers in the seven churches are not exempted from the painful results of God's government, but must overcome in the conditions that prevail. The Apostle Peter had to say, "the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God;" and nineteen centuries have passed since that was written. Here is a fact that bears upon much painful weakness that confronts us today.

Because of the weakness marking the returned remnant, God raised up Haggai. Because of the contrary edict of the new Persian king they had stopped the work on the house of God, and evidently without much concern they had started to build nice and comfortable houses for themselves. This being the case the prophet's first utterance was a **word of rebuke.**

The people adopted a fatalistic attitude, saying, "the time is not come . . . that the **Lord's** house should be built;" and started to build up their own affairs. Some sixty years ago we heard Christians

saying, in spite of the Lord's words in Acts 1: 8, that the time for the evangelization of the distant heathen was not come, and they settled down to build up their own spiritual affairs, as they considered them to be. It was not wrong for these Jews to build themselves some houses, but it was wrong for them to settle down to this and let the house of God lie waste, hence the drought, and God did "blow upon" all their efforts.

It is not wrong for us today to care for our own spiritual state; indeed we are admonished, "building up yourselves on your most holy faith" (Jude 20), but as the succeeding verses show, this is to be done as the fruit of the love of God, which expresses itself in "compassion" upon some, and as to others saving them with fear. We are not to concentrate upon ourselves to the exclusion of God's work and God's interests today. The word of our Lord still stands, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Do we modern Christians require a word of rebuke, because we neglect God's interests in favour of our own interests? We fear that all too often we do. Let us accept the rebuke with the humility of mind that becomes us.

This is what the people did, led by Zerubbabel and Joshua, and they set to work in obedience to the word of the Lord. Haggai was to them the Lord's messenger, bringing them the Lord's message, and he gave them the assurance that God Himself was with them in the prosecu-

tion of the work. It was so pleasing to God, that the very day they recommenced the work is placed on record in the last verse of the chapter; exactly twenty-three days after the word of rebuke had reached them.

The assuring word from the Lord, "I am with you," really settled everything. The Apostle could write, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" and this, though stated in New Testament days, was just as true in earlier days. The people soon discovered that difficulties vanished when God was with them, as the book of Ezra has shown us. Their adversaries sprang to life directly the work recommenced, and reported their activity to headquarters, but another king was now on the throne in Persia, who rescinded the decree of Artaxerxes, and restored the original decree of Cyrus, under which the remnant had returned. So once more the voice of the Lord was being obeyed; and obedience is ever the way to blessing.

Hence about four weeks later there came another message from the Lord through the prophet Haggai, and this time it was a **word of encouragement**. It was specially addressed to the very old people, who might have some recollection of the magnificance of Solomon's temple, and consequently realize how inferior was any temple that they could hope to raise. The encouragement ministered was twofold. It had first a present aspect and then a future one.

But first let us note how this record bears upon ourselves today.

There has been, in the history of the professing church some recovery of truth and some reversion to the simplicity of things, as ordered of God by His Spirit at the beginning, analogous to this return of a remnant to the place where God had placed His name, and had His house long before. The devoted saints of God, who had some part in this recovery, must surely have been conscious that anything of an outward nature into which they came, was far below the greatness of that which was established visibly on the Day of Pentecost, when three thousand were converted, and "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2: 42). It would indeed be good if we today were fully conscious of the smallness and feebleness of all that is in our hands, if compared with the greatness of that which originally was instituted of God.

And if we are duly impressed with this fact, and therefore liable to be somewhat depressed by the contrast we observe, we may be cheered as we discover how the word of encouragement ministered through Haggai, has a remarkable application to ourselves.

The encouragement in its present aspect we find in verses 4 and 5. Not only did God pledge His presence with them, but He added, "The word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, and My Spirit, remain among you: fear ye not" (New Trans.). He cast them back upon the integrity of the word to direct their ways, which He gave at the beginning of His

dealings with them, and the guidance and power of His Spirit, who was still among them. If we were asked what are the resources still available for saints today, we should have to answer that we still have the authentic word of God, dating, "from the beginning," as the Apostle John so frequently reminds us in his epistles; and then that the Holy Spirit, who was shed forth on the Day of Pentecost, still indwells the saints, and therefore, if ungrieved, His power is still available for us. So we too need not fear, though opponents are many and difficulties persist.

As to the future there was also a word of encouragement though a time of judgment was to come. The very earth on which man lives, together with the heavens that envelop it, are to be shaken, as well as all the nations that inhabit it. The instability of themselves, and of all that surrounded them, had to be feared by the Jews of that day. And we have to face it also for as we reach the end of Hebrews 12, we find these words of Haggai quoted as applying to the end of the age. His words, "Yet once," are quoted as, "Yet once more," and therefore as applying to such a final removing of every shakable thing, that it never needs to be repeated.

And when that great shaking takes place, "the desire of all nations" will come and the house of God be filled with glory. Now Christ personally can hardly be spoken of as the "desire" of all nations, since when He shall appear in glory, so that every eye sees Him, "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him" (Rev.

1: 7). But though this is so, the nations have ever desired such peace and fruitfulness, such prosperity, and quietness and assurance for ever, as is predicted in Isaiah 32: 15-18. These very desirable things will only come to pass and be enjoyed when the Lord Jesus comes again; and hence, we judge, this prophetic word does look on to the advent of Christ. When He comes, He will bring these blessings to men, and glory to the house of God.

The better translation of verse 9 appears to be, "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former." The house of God in Jerusalem is considered as one, though broken down and rebuilt on several occasions, and the glory of its final form will outshine even its first glory as built by Solomon, when visible glory filled the building; so much so that the priests could not enter. That final glory was seen in vision by Ezekiel, as he records at the beginning of his 43rd chapter. We can thank God that the same thing will be true in regard to the church. Its latter end, when invested with the glory of Christ, will exceed all that marked it at the beginning.

One further item of encouragement was presented through Haggai — "in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts." Now we think it would be true to say that no city has had a more tempestuous history, and endured more sieges, than Jerusalem; indeed even today we hear Palestine spoken of as "the cockpit of the nations;" and so indeed it is going to be, as Zechariah 14: 2 declares; yet the

place of peace it will ultimately prove to be.

Now let us carefully note that all this blessing, glory and peace, to be reached after the predicted mighty shaking, is not going to be reached as the result of human effort or the fruit of human faithfulness, for it is God declaring what He will bring to pass as the fruit of His sovereign mercy. The returned remnant had now responded to the word of rebuke and set their faces in the right direction, and what greater encouragement than for God to tell them, while still in felt weakness, what He proposed ultimately to bring to pass.

It is even so with us today. We are in weakness — and happy are we if it is **felt** weakness — but if our hearts are set in the right direction, seeking the furtherance of God's present work in grace, we may find great encouragement and joy as we consider the New Testament predictions as to the future glory of the church in association with Christ, reached according to God's sovereign purpose. We look, as Jude tells us in his epistle, for "mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." We shall reach glory, not as the fruit of **our merit**, but of **His mercy**.

A little more than two months passed and then the Lord saw that the people, now busy in His work, needed another message and this time a **word of warning**. It was addressed more particularly to the priests though it concerned the work of all the people. Two questions were raised with them concerning their work: one record-

ed in verse 12, and the reverse question in verse 13. The priests had to admit that what is unclean and unholy is infectious and therefore defiling, what is holy and clean is not transmitted in the same way. Here is a matter of much importance from a spiritual standpoint.

The principle is illustrated even in natural things. Everyone knows that if a rotten apple is placed in a box of good ones, the rottenness will soon spread; whereas no one imagines that rotten apples will be made good by placing a few sound ones among them. In the temple service this matter had to be observed, and like all these outward observances under the law, the point has an inward and spiritual instruction for us. Let us heed it, since we have the defiling "flesh" within as well as the defiling "world" without.

The application that Haggai had to make of these questions was calculated to have a searching and sobering effect upon the people. Stirred up, as they had been, to put their hands to the work of building the house, there would have been a tendency towards self-complacency as though all was as it should be. They were plainly told it was not so, but that what was imperfect and unclean marked their best work. A humbling lesson for them — and for us also. If some little reviving is granted to us today in the mercy of God, how easily the defilements of the flesh creep in: how quickly we may become like the early Christians in Galatia, who though beginning "in the Spirit," proceeded as though they might be

"made perfect by the flesh" (Gal. 3: 3).

But having warned them as to the imperfection that marked their work, the prophet proceeded to assure them that in spite of it the blessing of God rested upon them. In contrast to the times of scarcity and blasting and mildew, that they had experienced while they neglected the house of God and set themselves to embellish their own houses, they now saw the hand of God working in their favour, giving them plenty of earth's good things. Thus it is today. There are elements of failure and uncleanness in all our service, but in spite of that, if the heart be right, we may expect spiritual blessing from God.

The frequent occurrence of the word, "**Consider**," in this short prophecy is worthy of note. Twice in the first section did the prophet have to say to the people, "**Consider your ways.**" And now in this later section the word occurs thrice — verses 15 and 18 — and we find the prophet saying in effect, "**Consider God's ways.**" He delights to own any measure of energy and faithfulness in His service, even though there is a measure of uncleanness and failure connected with it, and to respond to it in blessing. In our present feebleness, conscious of failure, proceeding both from the flesh within and the world without, we may take much comfort from this.

The last section begins with verse 20. We have had, what we have ventured to call, the word of rebuke, followed by the word of encouragement, and then the word of warn-

ing. We now have what we may call the **word of exaltation**, addressed personally to Zerubbabel, who was a prince of David's line, as stated in Matthew 1: 12. The last verse of the chapter doubtless had some application to the man himself. Kingdoms would be overthrown, as predicted in Daniel 11, but he would be as a signet-ring, by which God would establish His decrees. How this worked out for Zerubbabel we know not, but we believe the Spirit of God had in view, not so much some temporary exaltation of this man, but the permanent exaltation of One whom he typified; even our Lord Jesus Christ.

Viewing it thus, we seem to have here an Old Testament forecast of what is more definitely stated when we read of our Lord that, "All the promises of God in Him are Yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us" (2 Cor. 1: 20).

Only here of course the thought is greatly amplified. Christ is He who will not only set forth and establish, as under the stamp of a signet-ring, all God's purposes, expressed in His promises, but also carry them to their fulness and completion, so that at last the great "Amen" can be said. The Apostle Paul added the words "by us," because he was dealing there with what God had promised for the saints today, such as ourselves.

So Haggai finishes with a prediction that points to the coming exaltation of the One whom we worship as our Saviour and our Lord. He does so in a typical and symbolic way, some centuries before His first advent in lowly humiliation. We wait for their fulfilment in a far more glorious way than Haggai can have known, when at His second advent He appears in great glory.

THE GREATEST ENEMY

IT is Gibbon, the historian, who tells what the effect upon Clovis, the invincible King of the Franks, was, when first he heard the story of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus. He was deeply moved, and, fierce soldier though he was, he could not restrain his tears. Suddenly he grasped his sword hilt and exclaimed, "Ah, had I but been there with my Franks." They were generous and ingenuous words, the words of a soldier and a man of violent deeds, and he had not yet learned the spirit of the Lord, whose name he afterwards confessed, yet they were beautiful words, in spite of their ignorance. They remind us of the way that Simon Peter acted in the garden. But both Clovis and Simon were wrong; the true and intelligent followers of the rejected Saviour do not smite His foes with the sword; they pray for them and pity them as He did, yet they may use the sword, but it must be upon an often unsuspected and more subtle enemy, and that enemy is self. It is self that often stands between us and the glory of our God; it is self that often obtrudes when none but Christ should be seen. Self is the enemy, the great rival to Christ, and we may rightly use the sword upon self.

J.T.M.

THE PATTERN OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

J. S. BLACKBURN

Substance of an address given to young Christians at Ripon, July, 1960.

WE have had before us, under the general heading of, "Christian character," the subject of Christ, as the power for this, dwelling particularly upon Philip-
pians 1. We shall do well to recall what was said as to our having within us the life of Christ, and so it is only natural that the life of Christ should be manifested in our lives.

Our present subject, looking at Philippians 2, which we have read, is Christian character, with particular reference to the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the **Pattern**.

In order to grasp the significance of the opening verses of chapter 2, I want you to look back to verse 27 of chapter 1. The Apostle desired that their manner of life should be, "as it becometh the gospel of Christ," so that they should "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of," or, "on the side of," or, "in the same conflict with the gospel." We have a good deal in this first chapter about the Gospel. They had fellowship with it, and Paul was set for the furtherance and confirmation and defence of it, but here he comes to the fact that there is a manner of life that is becoming to it. In order to lead to that, he brings forward a concept from which we now start; that is, the **Gospel is at war**.

I hope to give you four brief headings in considering this portion.

They are connected together naturally, by the way the subject develops. The first is this:—

The Gospel is at war.

It is perfectly plain that there is a manner of life which goes with that fact. God forbid that it should be so; but if this country were at war tomorrow, all our lives would be changed. That one fact would tower over everything else, and all we did would be dominated by it. In particular we shall come to the point that unity is absolutely vital to a people at war. Now the Gospel, by which God in Christ has reached down to reconcile the world unto Himself, is opposed by entrenched sin; manifesting itself in our days in the forces of materialism and nationalism and communism. Yes, the Gospel is at war, and we have to see how that affects our lives.

There are many ways in which our lives should be in harmony with the Gospel. In it the kindness and love of God our Saviour has been manifest, and we therefore are expected to manifest the kindness of God in our ways with other people. God is not unmoved by the sorrows that have come into the world on account of sin, but is active by His Gospel. If we are really in harmony with this, we shall be active in zeal for God's present working, in order that out of the pit of sin there might be gathered those who in the coming day may be for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The thought of the Gospel being at war is wonderfully illustrated by the Old Testament story of Uriah the Hittite. David had forgotten that Israel was at war, and was at ease in his palace and fell into sin. When Uriah was recalled from the front, he entertained him, and then told him to go to his house and live at ease as though there were no war on. But Uriah went no further than the steps of the palace, and slept in hardship there. When challenged, he said in effect, "My lord Joab and the people are at war and in discomfort, and it is no time for me to be at ease in my house."

That is the idea; is it not? Today our brethren in the Congo are struggling for the very life of the Gospel against sin, manifested in the form of nationalism. Is this a time that we should forget our unity with them in the Gospel, and should be planning our lives, with only the consideration of material advantage and pleasure? No; war-time is no time for ease. It demands that we stand with those who are in the forefront of the battle; and though we sit here in delightful surroundings and at ease, we must never allow refreshment or recreation to be "in the saddle," for it is our privilege to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Is all that we plan, our homes, our studies, our recreation, dominated by the fact that the Gospel is at war? If so, we shall be labouring at the Gospel. We shall be labouring at the church, and for a deeper understanding of the Holy Scriptures, that God may give us the power to use them as the sword of the Spirit in the strife that is going on. But do not let it

stop there, but pray that the Holy Spirit by His new covenant ministry might write it in your heart and character, so that the character of the Lord Jesus may be seen there. But the fact that the Gospel is at war leads to this:

War demands unity.

There is nothing concerning the Christian faith that more tests our self-judging sincerity than the subject of Christian unity. On the wide scene of the profession of Christianity one has to see that disunity and breakdown and division, are sad facts; and in so late a day there is very little that we can do about it. But when we think of this epistle, we find the searchlight is turned, not upon a point as to which we can do practically nothing, to one where it is up to us, by the grace of Christ, to live in love and peace with the brethren in our own local assemblies.

If we are to stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel, then we must be, "of the same mind in the Lord." That mind is displayed in nothing less than the incarnation, the unthinkable down-stooping of the blessed Son of God; humbling Himself to become obedient even to the death of the cross. But when it comes to the kind of disunity here mentioned, it appears to be centred in two sisters, who had fallen out with each other. It seems a small thing, and yet it is the point upon which the searchlight of Scripture has been concentrated.

If for a moment we glance at the verses in chapter 4, we find that they tell us next to nothing about

these two sisters who laboured in the Gospel, but the difference between them has been recorded for our warning all down the centuries that have intervened. We can be quite sure that in the church at Philippi there were those differences of character and temperament and training which make for those personal breaches, that so often sadly afflict companies of the people of God. The first convert at Philippi was an Asiatic lady, engaged in a lucrative trade, as a seller of purple. Then there was a Greek girl, devoted to a very degraded shrine; and then the Roman jailor, converted through the earthquake; but all were appealed to very definitely.

In chapter 4 two actions are mentioned. In the first place in verse 2, there was to be the willingness by the grace of God of both Euodias and Syntyche to be reconciled with each other. And in verse 3 we have another action. Paul's true yokefellow, by whom this epistle was to be sent, was to help them in their reconciliation. He says in effect, "If you help them you will do me a service, for I cannot forget their great service with me in the gospel." Both were worthy persons of Christian virtue and service.

General circumstances, and general advice and guidance are appropriate to an occasion like this today. The difficulty is great, but we can take it that we must never be satisfied with the existence of personal breaches in the Christian community. They are always a canker and a grief, though occasionally about real issues. But each one of us can challenge our-

selves about this matter of unity in the local assembly, and ask, Which of these two things is my part? What I might do to **prevent disunity** is to be willing by the grace of Christ to be of one mind in love and peace with my brethren. On the other hand, am I the one who might **help definitely** towards an act of reconciliation?

The road to unity is through humility.

In the first part of Philippians 2, the Apostle brings before us the means whereby this unity can be brought about. In humility lies one of the central elements of Christian character; and let it be noted that the word, "lowliness," in verse 3 and the word for humility in verse 8, have the same meaning here. He is saying to them here, "I want you to abandon strife and vainglory as motives for action, and substitute in their place lowliness of mind, as the attitude and disposition of heart and mind out of which your actions spring.

Strife here evidently means party strife, the exalting of my party; and vainglory means the exaltation of myself. In the exercise of daily piety, bringing ourselves, as we read His Word, into the searching light of the cross of Christ, we will discover the motives of strife and vainglory in ourselves. There is only one power by which the Spirit of God can put these things away, and that is the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, as is so wonderfully presented to us in this chapter.

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Lord of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And **pour contempt on all my pride.**

It is in the presence of that cross, and by the power of the Spirit, and as the result of that life which by the Spirit has been given to us, that we may abandon strife and vainglory as motives for action, and substitute lowliness of mind and humility.

Humility is indeed one of the central elements in the lovely character of Christ. Let none of us think that lowliness, any more than love, is a feeble virtue. Before the writing of the New Testament this word was a term of reproach. It betokened servility; a lack of that spirit by which a man could hope to make progress in the world. The very idea of humility contained within it something repugnant to nature. But once we see it displayed in the character of the Lord Jesus, we know it to be a triumphant virtue. The One who came riding into Jerusalem, lowly, and upon the foal of an ass, proved Himself to be a mighty Victor, striving against sin. So in lowliness of mind let us each esteem others better than ourselves.

This does not mean that we are enslaved, to carry out the instructions of others, but rather that we esteem all our brethren and sisters as those who are to be served in the power and vitality of Christian love; even as the Son of Man, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister and give His life a ransom for many. Let us remember that in our service we obey the Lord, and that is what it means to be in His kingdom; and one of the maxims of true humility is — Let us each esteem others as persons who for Christ's sake are worthy to be ministered to.

A second maxim is, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." To consider only our own interests and advantage is natural to us. We can discover ourselves doing it to the disadvantage of others almost every day; but the more we drink into the spirit of our Master, the more we learn to consider the interests of others and not only of ourselves. It is illustrated for us in our chapter by both Timothy and Epaphroditus, who both in different ways were serving the saints rather than themselves.

Now I come to the greatest part of our chapter, and present it to you under the fourth heading:—

Humility is the mind of Christ

We have to stop and think rather carefully about this word, "mind." In the realm of English poetry there is something about an obscure village schoolmaster, and folk wondered that one little mind was able to contain all that he knew. But that kind of mind is not the one spoken of here — not a mind of majestic proportions and tremendous attainments — but rather the lowly mind — the lowly way of thinking — which characterized Him.

In this tremendous passage there is given to us a most wonderful glimpse of the essential, unchanging Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and of the true nature of the incarnation, for our reverence and worship. We see that there are two steps, in the downstoopings of the One who as to His original form was God. First, He "made Himself of no reputation," or, "He emptied Himself," not of Deity, but of the glory and

majesty and heavenly splendour that go with essential Deity, and took the form of a Servant. The second step was that when found in fashion as a Man, He humbled Himself, and that even to the death of the cross.

When we consider His first great downstooping, when He took the form of a Servant, it is quite plain that we cannot imitate such a downstooping. Why then is this truth given to us? Does it not present to us the absolute contrast between the mind that was in the blessed Son of God and the mind that was in Adam? It is in our nature to do what Adam did. Being created as man, it was proposed to Adam that they should become as gods. He grasped at it, and so became disobedient unto death. But here was One who as to His original form was God, and yet took the form of a Servant, and so became obedient unto death.

Now in this second downstooping there is clearly a direct example for us. It should be our daily delight to dwell upon that word — "He humbled Himself" — for in the Gospels all its details come to light for us. This indeed was His character. In such a way as this; even to the death of the cross; He considered those for whom He would pay the price, those who would become His brethren. He looked to their everlasting advantage as well as doing the will of God. If once we see the humility of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be moved to have His mind, and thus do in our measure what He did.

In Matthew II, we read those well-known verses, where the Saviour bids us come to Him. But the

One who bids us come also says, "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me." Here He is as the Example of this wonderful element in the Christian character; "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart." So too, in Zechariah 9, the prophet speaks about the King coming to Jerusalem. Of all the conquerors who had come to those gates here was One, whom they should not fail to recognize. He bore an insignia that should never be mistaken, for He came lowly and riding upon the foal of an ass. Sir Edward Denny describes that city in his poem:—

Thou art stricken, dethroned and lowly,

Bereft of a home on earth,
Yet still to our hearts thou art holy,

Thou land of Messiah's birth!
He sprang from thy chosen of daughters,

His star o'er thy hills arose,
He bathed in thy soft-flowing waters,

And wept o'er thy coming woes.

He came there as the lowly Saviour,
on His way to the death of the cross.

Some of us may remember that solemn passage in Mark 9, where the disciples, almost in the very presence of the cross, were disputing among themselves who should be the greatest. And we are told that when they came to the house in Capernaum the Lord asked them, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" And they were silent in His presence. Years ago, when a speaker read this passage, he said to us, "When we get into the house; when we reach home with Him,

and He asks us what we disputed about on the way, we shall indeed be silent."

So much of the strife that ruins the work of the gospel and mars Christian testimony arises from this self-seeking, this vain glory, against which the Apostle so solemnly

warns us here.

Let us finish on the note of seeking to drink into that wonderful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that obeying Him and manifesting His life of lowliness and love here upon earth, we may stand fast in one mind and one spirit, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

"THE SUFFERINGS OF THIS PRESENT TIME"

F. B. HOLE

THE words that form our title are taken from Romans 8: 18, and from that point till we reach verse 27 we find ourselves in an atmosphere charged with groaning. That word occurs three times in these verses, which is not surprising, since the contrast is drawn between the "bondage of corruption," which marks the present age, and the "liberty of the glory," which will mark the age to come.

First of all, "the whole creation" groans and travails in pain together. This was the case when the Apostle Paul wrote these words, and it certainly is so now. In these words the first reference is to the lower creation, which has been dragged down by the fall of man. Dominion was given to Adam over all, and by his sin he ruined all. He was, so to speak, the top link, intelligently connected with the Creator, with all other links in the chain dependent on him. When he fell, all creation fell with him; animals became wild and destructive. We may not have ears to hear the groan of the lamb or kid as the leopard pounces upon it, or of the fly as, entangled in the

web, it feels the spider's bite; but the groaning is there.

And what about the human race? Well, as we write the newspapers give us a daily record of revolutions, whether accomplished or only attempted, of strifes, disorders and contentions. In the English-speaking world, many would tell us we "never had it so good," yet the daily story is of accidents, robberies, strikes, with an all-too-frequent murder thrown in. Added to this the marvellous discoveries of the scientists, which make the almost total destruction of the human race a possibility, cast a dark shadow upon us. They who know most of what is being developed, are most conscious how dark that shadow is. Yes, creation groans from the lowest intelligence to the highest.

And what about the saints of God? Verse 23 answers that question. We are indwelt by the Spirit of God, and He is Firstfruits of the coming day of glory, yet, while we wait for that day, we groan as well. You notice, it says that we groan "within ourselves:" that is, our

groaning is of a quieter, less demonstrative kind. The sincere and earnest and instructed believer feels things deeply; he groans in his spirit and in his prayers, but he is not found amongst the noisy, demonstrating, shouting throng, that expresses in this way its grievances and discontents. But just because this is so, our groans are deeper and more sincere.

The Christian is called upon to suffer in this world, as is so frequently stated in Peter's first epistle. We fear that in our present easy-going circumstances this fact has rather eluded us, and we are apt — especially with the young — to present the Gospel, as an introduction to a life of pleasant goodness, and almost of jollification, in the company of other converted and like-minded young people.

As presented in Scripture the case is far otherwise. There is abundance of joy in God, coupled with suffering for Christ, and with Christ, as we share in a measure His feelings as He passed through this world of death and doom.

A third groaning is mentioned in the passage we have before us. It is that of the Spirit of God. He has come to earth, indwelling the saints, and therefore is found in the midst of the groaning creation. He is not insensible to this, nor is He to the needs and sorrows of the saints in whom He dwells. Hence He intercedes for us in our infirmities. Though Christ is our Intercessor on high, He takes the place of Intercessor below, and He carries out this ministry, "with groanings which cannot be uttered."

This strikes us as a remarkable

expression. When Paul was caught up to the third heaven, he "heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12: 4). No words were found in any human language which could convey these things; and equally no words can be found to convey the depth of the Spirit's groanings for and in the saints. He, to whom they are uttered, knows what is the mind of the Spirit in these groanings, for the mind of the Spirit is the mind of God the Father, and equally, we may say it is the mind of Christ.

This is illustrated for us in the record of John 11. Twice in that chapter do we read of His groaning. As Mary and others with her wept, "He groaned in the spirit;" and further we read, "Jesus therefore again groaning in Himself," went to the graveside of Lazarus. Here we have the Son of God marked by a groaning in Himself — in His spirit — too deep for words; an exact counterpart, we judge, to the groaning of the Spirit of God, which cannot be uttered.

Let us each ask ourselves, Do I groan, as I pass through this world so sadly blighted by sin? Possessing the indwelling Spirit of God, the answer must surely be, Yes. Only let us honestly confess how slight our groanings are — how little we live in the light of the glory to come and the liberty it will bring, so that we but feebly realize the darkness and the bondage of corruption that fills the earth at present. The more brightly we anticipate the coming "liberty" the more keenly we shall be sensible of the present "bondage" that fills a corrupt earth.

And the more desirous we shall be to stand apart from the bondage, helping our fellow-Christians to do

the same; and also to win souls for the coming day of "the liberty of the glory of the sons of God."

SEPARATION FROM APOSTASY NOT SCHISM

. . . IT has been rightly said, "When truth becomes important, it begins to be questioned;" and the accuracy of the remark is forcibly seen at the present period, when the necessity so extensively beginning to be felt, of recurring to the Scripture alone for everything relating to the ordering of the Church of God, is met sometimes by denying that we are in possession of the **whole** word of God; at others by the assertion that we can have nothing to do with regulations dependent upon the presence of the Spirit, and by every possible attempt to sustain their present position, by maintaining the authority of things appointed since the apostolic age. . .

This is a simple matter of history, for none but the apostles were ever authorized to make enactments for the Church of Christ; and all that was ever entrusted to the Church itself, was to carry into effect those already made — the actual ministry of present order, according to the principles, and by the enactments laid down by them. Every step beyond this is necessarily evil; for either it is the virtual assertion that the provision made by the Lord and His apostles is insufficient — that is, that the word and Spirit of God are not enough; or it is the proof that the Church is no longer in circumstances to be governed by Christ. . .

For what is apostasy? Not merely the maintenance of false doctrine

or superstitious and heathen observances: these may all be wanting, and yet a Church be apostate. Apostasy is in the Church, what it is in an individual, a turning back from Christ, and losing the special characteristics of His holy calling, by being again mixed up with the world out of which it was taken to be a peculiar people, a witness for His name. It is in short as to its result, identity with the world. Corruption in doctrine may more or less abound in such a state of things, or there may be a perfect form of orthodoxy; but where this one character is found there is the irretrievable mark of apostasy. . .

For a Christian mind therefore, not taking for granted that things are as they should be, but judging by the plain truth of God, there is but one course, and that is to separate from the evil. And such separation is not schism; on the contrary, it is nothing more than is due to God's glory, to Christ's honour, to purity of conscience, and to the fairness of the Christian name. It has sometimes been said by unshrinking apologists, that whatever be the corruption of a Church, yet if it **be** a Church, it is a sin to leave it. But this argument, if good for anything, would prove that we ought to have remained until this day in the bosom of the Romish Church. . .

What then is schism? This is a

question which must needs bring a crowd of painful thoughts into the mind of anyone who has learnt from Scripture what the Church once was when "All were of one heart and of one soul." So fearfully different are our present circumstances that the possibility of such an union is now, so to speak, scarcely credible. Time was when it could be said of the **visible** Church, standing as it did, as God's witness in the world — the first fruits to His name — "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in **one** hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all:" — a sevenfold unity, which appertains indeed to all the children of God scattered throughout the world, in virtue of the union in the heavenly places in Christ; a unity which was not hidden as it now is, but visible and open union, manifested as meeting as members of that body, into which they were all baptized by **one Spirit**; a fellowship of which no forms of outward union can make us partakers. But this was speedily lost as soon as the interests of Christians were separated from the one object wherein their desires met, whilst they forgot that their "citizenship was in heaven;" worldliness produced division, until all, with the exception of the remnant, sunk back into the world again, to be built together by Satan into a fitly framed union of his own.

The external unity of Romanism was perfect as far as outward conformity would go — so perfect as to shame believers, for "the children of this world" are much more single eyed in their common desire, and therefore more strongly knit together

than the "children of the kingdom;" but such conformity and fellowship was but the "friendship of the world," and therefore "enmity against God."

This, at the reformation, was shivered into a number of smaller masses; but the separate fragments of the Church owned by God were never reunited. And now the very idea of unity seems altogether lost. If ever it is enquired for, the answer sometimes is, that all believers are one in heart; at others, that it means conformity to whatever the ruling powers are pleased to make the Church, which is no other than the principle of Romanism. And on all sides the perverted use of the right of private judgment has split the union of believers, and severed them from each other, in a hundred different ways, each asserting its own claim to pre-eminence, and denying its own share in the charge of schism.

The only way then of deciding the question, what is schism? is to refer at once to that which is given in the Scriptures of the principles and character of the Churches. And these, by the evidence of the apostolic Scriptures, were each, as before said, simply a union of believers upon the ground of the common salvation; "congregations of faithful men," ordered by the Spirit of God. Nor does it appear that anything, beyond the mere ascertaining, as far as it was possible, that they were believers, was necessary to make them partakers of this fellowship. The whole tenor of the accounts given for our instruction prove this, and that the terms required were none other than those which make a man a member of the body of Christ. The question is not

now as to whether evil may or may not exist among them, but as to the **principle** on which, as the preliminary to obedience, Christians are bound to be united, and that is as Christians, and Christians only. Any union which has not this principle as its basis, which is brought together upon a point of secondary importance, (and all else is secondary) or which enjoins anything which might prove a stumbling-block to the conscience of the weak, is contrary to the mind of Christ, and is inevitably schism, because the unity of the Spirit, the only one which Scripture contemplates, can exist when those who confess Christ are brought together upon this simple ground. . .

The principles upon which the different Churches have been respectively gathered, have never been such as would comprehend all the children of God upon the great essentials of Christian belief; but some special point has been made the ensign of each party, and they who have gathered round it, have proved only their preference of the object in question, to the general unity of God's people. In truth they are now united, not simply as children of God, but upon the particular sections of Christian doctrine, which give the names to their several divisions.

Is Christ then divided? . . . Surely there is little conformity in these things to the mind of Him, who has given one simple mark by which His followers were to be recognized — "By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another."

They have greatly sinned also in

requiring from their members assent to terms of communion which the Lord never enjoined — thus shutting out many of the weaker brethren; and by raising things of secondary importance into the same virtual importance with faith in the atoning blood of the Lamb, each of which has been a stumbling-block. The case is not altered in the circumstance of individual congregations professing to admit others besides themselves to their communion, since the real question is, whether they themselves are united solely upon the ground of being Christians — for nothing short of this is a full recognition of the principle of Christian unity; and the point to be pressed again and again is, whether believers are joined simply as members of the body of Christ? . . .

To act on any other principle, is but to add another to the hundred sects which are around; and better, far better, would it be with the prophet "to sit alone" (Jer. 15: 17), than to exhibit that, which, keeping the word of promise to the ear, is but a mockery of the desires of those who seek Christian communion. A gathering of believers should be nothing less than an available point for all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity; and when it ceases to be this, it ceases to have any value as a witness for Christian unity.

In the meantime those who desire simply to act as disciples have a path before them in which they cannot err. There can be no pleasure in speaking of iniquity; the present broken and disordered state of the Church of God is the common shame of all His people. Nothing but sorrow and abasement of heart

becomes them; and the more they have of His Spirit the more will it be their feeling . . . But for the sake of others, faithfulness in testimony is required. To look for a restoration of that symmetry which has been so entirely destroyed — for a return of that spirit which alone

sustained it in power — would be a vain hope. But believers may still walk in obedience to such measure of the Spirit as they have, always indeed seeking increased grace, and endeavouring to exemplify every principle of Christian doctrine.

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BIBLE STUDY — ZECHARIAH

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 1: 1 — 6: 15)

AS we commence to read Zechariah we note that, just as with Haggai, definite dates are given for the messages that God gave through him; and the first verse reveals that his first message — verses 2-6 — was uttered between Haggai's **word of encouragement**, in the early part of his second chapter, and the **word of warning**, recorded later in that chapter. We think we may term Zechariah's first message, a **word of exhortation**.

We may wonder perhaps, why such a word at that juncture was needed? Had the people not responded to the word of rebuke, and so diligently resumed work on the temple that they were encouraged by a prophetic view of its future glory? Yet before Haggai's word of warning, uttered on the ninth month there came this call to them to remember the directness and certainty of God's governmental dealings with their fathers, and the certainty of similar dealings if like their fathers, they turned away from Him. The exhortation therefore is, "Turn ye unto Me, saith the Lord of hosts." Had they not done this? Yes, indeed, **outwardly** and **in**

action. But had there been that **inward** and **vital** turning of heart, which is what counts in the sight of God? Their subsequent history, as revealed by the prophet Malachi, shows how little they were marked by this inward turning of heart to God.

So, as we open this fresh prophecy, we meet with something calculated to make us "wise unto salvation," from a similar danger today. How easy for us to be satisfied with correctness of outward behaviour, without that inward heart-turning, of great value in the sight of God. Very possibly the "uncleanness," which in his third message Haggai pointed out as marring the work of their hands, was connected with this matter.

In verse 7 we travel on to the eleventh month of the second year of Darius, so important in the history of the Jews, and we commence a whole series of visions which were granted to the prophet — visions which had a bearing upon their position at that time, but which carried in them allusions to the far future, and the ultimate deliverance to come through Christ.

Before starting on them we may pause to notice the great difference of style that marked the two prophets. Of all the Minor prophets, none is more plain and direct, and free from figurative language and visions, than Haggai; and none more full of figurative language and the record of visions than Zechariah; yet both were equally used, and at the same time. We see foreshadowed that which comes plainly to light in God's administration for the Church, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 12-14. What God establishes is marked by **diversity in unity**. Each servant of God is marked by difference and variety as to detail — like the many differing members of the human body — but all bound together in a God-created unity. Let us never forget this fact in our dealings with, or our judgments of, God's many servants today.

From verse 7 of our first chapter, till the later part of chapter 6, we get a series of visions that were granted to the prophet, and recorded by him. The words, "Then lifted I up mine eyes," (1: 18), occur a number of times, as he puts on record what he saw. As we ponder these visions we may discern a certain sequence in them.

The first is that of the rider on a red horse among the myrtle trees, and behind him other horses, red, speckled and white. They represented those whom the Lord had sent forth to walk to and fro through the earth. As a symbol, a horse is generally used to indicate strength and power, but in this first vision nothing is said to show just what form of strength is meant, though we gather not earthly kingdoms, such as Persia or Greece, since the

horses walk on tours of inspection through the earth. When however, we read chapter 6, we again find horses mentioned, and they are described as, "the four spirits of the heavens;" that is, they are angelic in character. This, we believe, they are here; and their report is that though God's city and people were still in distress at the end of the seventy years, the nations under the Persian empire were having a very quiet and restful time.

This being so, the angel of the Lord gave Zechariah a clear message to the effect that He was sore displeased with the apparently prosperous nations, and was going indeed to return to Jerusalem in blessing. Reading verses 16 and 17, we cannot but feel that though the help and blessing that visited the people during the next few years was a fulfilment of these words, the complete fulfilment awaits the time when the glorious appearing of Jehovah, predicted in Zechariah's last chapter, takes place.

Then a fresh vision met the eyes of the prophet: the four horns representing the four earthly powers that were permitted to scatter so completely the people and their city. Then there came into his view the four carpenters, who would come, as sent of God, to disturb and destroy the four powers that had done it. The prophecy views the whole matter in a comprehensive way, as from God's side. In Zechariah's days, the first of these "horns," the Babylonian empire, had been "cast out," and the second was in power, the third and fourth yet to come; but God was making known the fact that their rule was only temporary, and that each would be

“ cast out ” in turn.

There can be no doubt, we think, as to the identity of the four horns, though we may not be able to identify in the same way the four carpenters. We believe, however, again that the prophecy is not yet completely fulfilled, for the “ horns of the Gentiles,” which lift up their power for the scattering of Israel, are not completely disposed of while “ the times of the Gentiles ” (Luke 21: 24), still run their course. But the remnant, now back in Jerusalem, were given the encouragement of knowing that the day of their oppressors would come to an end in God’s own time. It is an encouragement to us to know it also.

The adversaries being disposed of, the vision of chapter 2 carries the predictions a further step forward. That God should send a man with a line in his hand, wherewith to measure Jerusalem, indicated that the city was still an object of His attention and interest. The Jews that surrounded Zechariah might be pleased with the progress of their rebuilding operations, and inclined to be complacent about it, but they were to know that God had far more wonderful things in view, as the angel proceeds to explain.

A day is to come when Jerusalem would need no wall, such as the people would soon be building, for Jehovah Himself would be as a wall of fire round about and, even more wonderful, be Himself “ the glory in the midst of her.” Multitudes will be within her in that day, for there will be a great exodus from the lands of their scattering and particularly from “ the land of the

north,” as is revealed in verses 6-9. This migration will take place, as verse 8 indicates, “ after the glory ” has been revealed and established. So that again we have to say that the prophecy goes far beyond anything that has yet transpired and looks on to the time of the end.

This is made yet more plain as we read the four verses that close this chapter. Never yet has Jehovah been dwelling in Zion, and inheriting Judah as His portion, with many nations “ joined to the Lord.” But that day will yet come to pass. At the present time God is not joining nations unto Himself, but rather He is visiting them, “ to take out of them a people for His name ” (Acts 15: 14).

A fourth vision is recorded in chapter 3, concerning Joshua the high priest, and the removal from him of all that was defiling. In verse 8, we read of him and his fellows that they were “ men wondered at,” or, as Darby’s New Translation puts it, “ men of portent,” with the note, “ men to be observed as signs, or types.” Regarding Joshua therefore as a type, we see a plain prediction that it will only be as cleansed from their filth that the people will enjoy the blessing connected with the dwelling of Jehovah in Zion, as just foretold. There can be no nearness to God without deliverance from the filth of sin. No change of dispensation alters this fact.

It is worthy of note that Zechariah saw, not some erring and disreputable man clothed in filthy garments, but a man who had been used of God and in a place of special

privilege. We are reminded that David exclaimed, "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity" (Psa. 39: 5). If Joshua needed cleansing from filth, then they all did. Now Satan was there to resist this cleansing, but he was rebuked since Joshua was "a brand plucked out of the fire." This vision supplements what Haggai had to say to the people, in his second chapter about their uncleanness. But Joshua in this vision was not only delivered from his filthy garments, but was clothed in what was clean with a fair mitre upon his head. He was thus established in his priestly position. God does not only remove evil; He also crowns with good.

But all this will really be established when God brings forth His Servant "the Branch" who had been predicted under this figure nearly a century before, as we see in Jeremiah 23: 5, 6, where the Branch is revealed to be "Jehovah-tsidkenu" — the Lord our righteousness. We have to travel back to old Jacob for the first reference to "the stone of Israel" (Gen. 49: 24). He is not only the One who will introduce and establish righteousness, but also the foundation stone, upon which will be built everything that is going to stand unshaken, for He who is the stone has complete power of perception, represented in the "seven eyes," so that nothing unclean can ever creep in. So, in that day, as the last verse indicates, there will be quietness and assurance for ever.

A fifth vision follows in chapter 4, which indicated, as we understand it, a further thing needful if the full

blessing, revealed to the prophet, is to be securely established; namely, the energy of the Spirit of God. The prophet was shown a golden candlestick supplied with oil, after the fashion of the candlestick that had been in the tabernacle and the temple. On confessing his ignorance as to the meaning of this vision, he was instructed as to its present application. This time the vision concerned not Joshua the religious leader, but Zerubbabel the civil leader of the people, who might be tempted to fall back on purely human things to accomplish what he felt would be right. He is instructed that his resource lay not in "might," or armed force; nor in "power," or authority, derived from men, but in the Spirit of the Lord of hosts. Obstacles, like a great mountain, might rise before him, but all would be levelled and the "headstone" be brought forth with rejoicings, and the cry of, "Grace, Grace."

Verses 8-10, show the application of all this to the immediate task before Zerubbabel. Relying not upon human force or power but upon God, he would be enabled to finish the work of rebuilding the house. It was, as compared with the days of Solomon, a day of small things, but not to be despised on account of that. In verse 10 the marginal reading is the better. The seven eyes of the Lord, seen in the previous chapter, "upon one stone," shall rejoice, since they run to and fro through the whole earth, and everything is observed by them.

It is plain then that God gave encouragement through the prophet, and in connection with the two lead-

ers of the people. The two things needed were cleansing as seen with Joshua, and spiritual power as shown to Zerubbabel. And in all this there lay an indication of how God will bring in the ultimate blessing at the end of the age.

The prophet now raises a question as to the meaning of the two olive trees that supplied the oil to the golden candlestick; the very oil itself being spoken of as "the gold." The answer was that they represented the two "anointed ones," or "sons of oil," that stand before "the Lord of the whole earth." In Israel the high priest was anointed, and also the king — David for instance, in I Samuel 16. At that moment Joshua represented the priestly line, and Zerubbabel, the kingly line, though not himself a king. The grace and power of God was to flow through them at that time, in its measure. In full measure it will flow through Christ, when He will sit a Priest upon His kingly throne, as the sixth chapter will tell us. It will then be perfectly clear that all is reached on the basis of grace, and not of law-keeping. Compared with the New Testament, the Old has but little to tell us of the grace of God; but here we have it emphasized. "Grace, Grace," will indeed be the cry when all is established in the Messiah, anointed both as Priest and King.

The other side of the picture meets us as we read chapter 5. In a sixth vision the prophet saw a flying "roll;" symbolically representing the law, extending its authority over all the earth, and bringing with it a curse. The two sins specified — stealing and swearing — both ex-

ceedingly common, represent sin against man and against God. The fact that God acts in grace does not mean that there is any condonation of sin, on which the curse lies. And as Galatians 3: 10 tells us, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." A proper sense of this only enhances our wonder, and appreciation of the grace of God.

The second part of this vision reveals what had to take place in view of this curse. An ephah was the common measure of trade and commerce, and a woman is several times used in Scripture as a symbol of a system; and systemized idolatry, linked with profitable business had lain at the root of the evils that had led to the captivity out of which the remnant had come; and the land of Shinar, where Babylon was situated, had been the original home and hotbed of all idolatry. It was this that had brought the curse upon the forefathers of the people. The whole system of this idolatrous evil had to be deported to its own base.

Now this is what in figure seems to be depicted here. It was not so much a personal matter, as presented in the cleansing of Joshua in chapter 3, but a national cleansing from the sin of idolatry. This did come to pass historically, as we know, and from about that time the Jews have not turned aside to the idols of the nations. If Matthew 12: 43-45, be read, we see how our Lord made reference to this act, and yet predicted how ultimately they will be dominated by this sin in an intensified form. But for the time being they were delivered.

The last of this series of visions meets us as we read the early part of chapter 6. Again, as in the first vision, four horses are seen, but this time in chariots and no riders are mentioned. Again there seems to be some connection with the four great world-empires, that successively follow during the time that Israel is set aside; yet they are stated to be, "the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." In the closing chapters of Daniel we are permitted to know that angelic beings hold commissions in connection with certain nations; Michael, for instance in connection with Israel. It is an obscure theme, but it seems to be alluded to here, and Zechariah is given to know that there was at that time quietness in the "north country," which would indicate that for some little time the Jews would be permitted to pursue their way in peace. We may be thankful that in our day, as in that day, the controlling hand of God is on and over the nations.

The series of visions being finished, Zechariah is directed to perform a striking symbolic act in the presence of certain men of the captivity, who were then present. Crowns, which are a symbol of royalty, were to be made, primarily for the head of Joshua the high priest, though also to be given as a memorial to the four men mentioned. In chapter 3 Joshua was **cleansed**, as representing the people, and then came the prediction as to the **BRANCH**, who would truly be Jehovah's Servant. Here, Joshua is **crowned**, inasmuch as for the moment he is made into a type of the **BRANCH**, who was to come.

When Zechariah had thus done as he was told, there was the high priest, crowned as a king. Thus was set forth the Coming One, who was to build the temple of the Lord. But were they **not** engaged in the building of a temple? They were: but they were thus notified that all they were building was provisional and not the final thing, when its latter glory would exceed its first glory, as they had been told through Haggai. The Branch, or, Sprout, of David's line would accomplish the permanent work, and He would be a King, as well as Priest, when He did it.

By the oath of Jehovah, according to Psalm 110, Christ is "Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." When at last in Zion the kingly crown rests upon His head, He will not relinquish His priestly service, but "be a Priest upon His throne." The two things, which so often among men have been in opposition, will be united harmoniously in Him. How often have kingly authority and priestly grace clashed amongst sinful men? They will not do so when this prophecy is fulfilled; for, "the counsel of peace shall be between them both."

In result, this further great prediction will be fulfilled — "He shall bear the glory." Glory in a small measure has before now descended upon human shoulders, that were unable to bear it, so speedily it vanished. At last it will descend upon One able and worthy to sustain it for ever. What a day that will be! Well may we anticipate it with joy.

“ENRICHED IN HIM”

F. B. HOLE

THE disorders that marked the church at Corinth indicated that they were not in a healthy state from a spiritual point of view. They had the sort of knowledge that tends to “puff up,” as the opening of chapter 8, of the first epistle, shows; but their state was “carnal,” and not “spiritual,” as Paul plainly tells them, at the opening of chapter 3. Notwithstanding this, the Apostle could say to them, “in everything ye have been enriched in Him” (1 Cor. 1: 5 New Trans.). The poor conception they had of the riches did not alter the fact that the riches had been bestowed.

It is indeed remarkable how these “riches” were indicated by our Lord to His disciples during His farewell discourse to them, and in His final prayer to the Father, recorded in John 14-17. They were stated in an elementary way, as bound up with the revelation He had made, the work He was about to accomplish, and the consequent gift of the Holy Spirit. Let us briefly notice some of these “riches,” that we have in Him.

As we commence reading chapter 14, the first is revealed. It is,

“My Father” (verse 7).

This great enrichment indeed fills the first eleven verses. The Father so revealed that we may know Him, and the Father’s house to be our eternal dwelling-place in association with the Son Himself. The Lord Jesus was so really in the Father, and the Father so effectively in

Him, while He was as a Man on this earth, that His words were the Father’s words, and the Father, dwelling in Him, was the Doer of the works. It was not, however, until His death and resurrection were accomplished facts, that He could say to His disciples, “My Father and your Father” (John 20: 17).

In John 14, He does proceed to speak to them of

“My name,” (verse 13).

And they and we, being left to represent Him, during the time of His absence, may know its virtue and power, as we make our requests in prayer. Indeed any and every request, which is really in His name, as genuinely representing His interests, is sure to meet with a favourable response. A very real enrichment indeed!

But these enrichments in the way of privileges carry with them enrichments in the way of responsibilities. Hence we now read of,

“My commandments (14: 15),

“My words,” (14: 23),

“My sayings,” (14: 24),

“My words,” (15: 7).

Now His commandments consist of definite injunctions which demand our obedience. They are given, not that by keeping them the flesh in us may be restrained, and a position before God may be attained; but because we are put into a posi-

tion of favour before God, and they are given with the object of directing the new nature that we possess, to the setting aside of the flesh. We are indeed enriched by having these clear-cut, definite expressions of the will of our Lord for us.

In verses 23 and 24, the Greek words are similar, save that in the earlier verse the word is in the singular, in the latter it is in the plural. In the New Translation they appear as "word," and "words." Here then we have the expression of His mind in a more general way, apart from definite commands, and then the very words in which His mind is expressed. In chapter 15 the word is different, but having much the same force. All His sayings express His mind and will for us, and if they abide in us, our minds are brought into conformity with His mind, and happy obedience follows, with prayer that is acceptable and answered of God. And what an enrichment is this!

In the light of what we have already seen, it is not surprising to find that towards the end of chapter 14 the Lord speaks of,

"My peace" (verse 27).

The peace He leaves with them is doubtless that mentioned in Romans 5: 1, the result of justification by faith in Himself, as having been delivered for our offences and raised again. But beyond this there was the peace that He ever enjoyed in His path of obedience, ever subject to His Father's will. Now if we, under the direction of the Comforter, who was to come and abide, are subject to His word and will, peace

of that kind and order will possess our hearts. He has made provision that so it may be, as His gift. Another great enrichment bestowed upon us!

As in some measure at least His peace fills our hearts, we are prepared more largely to enter upon the realization and joy of,

"My love" (15: 9).

His love has been fully expressed. We know it, thank God, but we are to "continue," or "abide" in it. It is therefore to permeate all our thoughts and be the governing factor in our lives, and this will only be possible as we keep His commandments, and thus we are in obedience to His mind. And, as the succeeding verses show, our love will flow out to all others in the family of God. Love is the Divine nature, and as we abide in it, there is of necessity an outflow to all others in whom that nature dwells. On our side love and obedience are inseparable. The saint who dwells in love is of necessity obedient Godward, and filled with love for the brethren. Where is an enrichment greater than this?

But if not greater, there is certainly more; for the Lord proceeds to speak of,

"My joy" (15: 11),

that His disciples might have their cup of joy filled to the brim, by the fact that His joy may be in us; and His utterances up to this point had this in view. His joy had been to do His Father's commandments and thus abide in His love. Now they, and we, are committed to a life of

obedience to the commandments of His love, and thus abiding in His love, we shall possess a joy of the same order as His, though realized of course in a much smaller degree. That we should be able to share in a joy that is His is an enrichment of a very wonderful kind.

It is not surprising therefore to find a few verses lower down the words,

" My friends " (15: 14).

We must notice however that here we find an enrichment that is conditional. He accounts us as His friends, if we are marked by obedience to what He commands. Now we have seen that obedience springs from, and is the expression of, love. So our Lord is virtually saying that if we abide in His love, and so are marked by responsive love and the obedience that flows from it, He will bring us into the intimacy that friendship involves. We are not merely servants, but friends, as the next verse shows; but it is love and obedience that will introduce us into the understanding and intimacy that friendship really involves. One has sometimes wondered if the Apostle

John when he wrote about the " friends " in the last verse of his third epistle, had this saying of our Lord in his mind. If so, he was thinking of certain saints who were specially marked by love and obedience to their Lord. Such intimacy with Him is an enrichment beyond words.

We have to travel on into chapter 17, to find the last of these wonderful things. There we read of,

" My glory " (17: 24).

We are to behold His glory, and we are to be in a glorified condition ourselves when we behold it, for a few verses earlier we read, " the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them." He did not say, you notice, " I will give," but rather, " I have given." The donation is an accomplished fact. The glory conferred upon Him is given to us; but there is of course the essential and eternal glory which ever was His, and this we shall behold to our abiding joy.

This will be a crowning enrichment through eternal days!

THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST

R. THOMSON

AS we contemplate the excellent greatness of the Person of Christ, and meditate thereon, it is good for us to notice how all things in heaven and earth bear witness to it. " The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth His handiwork " (Psa. 19: 1). The Psalmist could also write, " Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable "

(Psa. 145: 3). Turning to the New Testament, we find it was the Son of God, " by whom also He made the worlds " (Heb. 1: 2). As we sometimes sing:—

Thy almighty power and wisdom
All creation's works proclaim,
Heaven and earth alike confess
Thee,
As the ever great I AM.

The Lord Himself could say, "That in this place is One greater than the temple." He said also, "Behold, a greater than Jonas is here." And yet again, "Behold, a greater than Solomon is here." These words were spoken at the time of His rejection by the nation of Israel, and are recorded in one chapter — Matthew 12: 6, 41, 42. Just then God caused the greatness of His Son to be sounded forth by Him.

However it is in the Gospel of John that we find recorded how the opportunity was given to others to question His greatness. The Samaritan woman by Sychar's well asked the question first, as she heard from the lips of the Lord the wonderful statement, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water" (John 4: 10). Astonished, she exclaimed, "Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well?"

Now Jacob was a recipient of grace, which brought him from being a supplanter into the favour of being a prince with God. Jesus was the Giver of grace, since "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17). We may measure the greatness of a person by the measure of the gift he bestows. Jacob gave a well of water, which satisfied for a brief time: Jesus giveth the living water for eternal satisfaction. If it entailed much toil and labour for Jacob to dig a well; how much greater the work of Christ by redemption to give the water of eternal

life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

John 4 is a chapter of grace, and we see this greatness of grace wonderfully presented to a guilty Samaritan woman. He, Himself, was in the place of the outcast, for He had come to His own, and His own received Him not. However His glory could not be hid, and was beheld by those who had received Him by faith. The law came by Moses, and condemned all those who transgressed; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, who was ready to meet the need of all. The poor woman by the well, received this grace from Him, and went away with a springing well in her heart, to become a sanctified witness to Him.

The second question as to His greatness came from the Jews, who asked, "Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, which is dead? . . . whom makest Thou Thyself?" (John 8: 53). Abraham was a great personality, the friend of God, and the father of all them that believe; but he was dead. Jesus, the Lord, had just said, "If a man keep My saying, he shall never taste of death." This was a tremendous statement to make; but was nevertheless true, coming from Him who claimed to be the resurrection and the life. The Jews could not understand His word, and began to speak of Abraham, the great exemplar of true faith, but who was dead.

How could this remarkable statement of Jesus be reconciled with the fact of Abraham's death? One of two things must be brought to light: either He was infinitely great, or

His word was false. So, taking up the challenge, the Lord declared that Abraham rejoiced to see by faith the day of His glory and majesty, and seeing it was sustained in gladness of heart. Hence, "He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11: 10).

The Jews could see nothing of His greatness as He stood before them. They judged Him to be a lowly and despised man, not yet fifty years old; so then how could He have seen Abraham? Was He the Eternal One, dwelling in the sphere where time and death do not exist? Let us listen to the majesty of His own words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am." He therefore declared Himself to be the "I am," the Self-existent One, the true Jehovah — yet manifest in the flesh.

This was more than the unbelieving Jews could receive, and they took up stones to cast at Him. But His hour was not yet come, and so He hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst

of them, and so passed by. By delivering Himself in this remarkable way from their violence, He proved that He was a Divine Person, the Omnipresent One. His greatness had truly been established by His word; but by the will of God He who was equal with God, must become a Man, to die on the cross, that we might be saved, and never taste of death.

Now the mighty work is accomplished, and Christ who was the Victim on the cross, is risen ascended and glorified at the right hand of God. His greatness is now fully declared, and the Holy Spirit brings His glory nigh to those who wait for Him. So we sing:—

Thou art greater, glorious Saviour,
Than the glory Thou has won;
This the greatness of Thy glory —
Ever blest — Thou art the Son!

May our hearts be so engaged with the greatness of His Person and work, that we will thankfully and continually ascribe to Him worship, praise and glory. He is indeed the Worthy One.

THE PROGRESS OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

P. HIRST

Substance of an address given to young Christians at Ripon. July 1960.

IN the first of these addresses on Christian character, based on Philippians I, we were told plainly and forcefully that the Christian life is in a very real sense the life of Christ, and that the **power** behind it is the power of Christ. Then in the

second address on Philippians 2, we were further told very forcefully that the **pattern** of Christian character is to be seen in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ here upon earth. Now therefore, coming to Philippians 3, we are going to think about

the **progress** of Christian character — the growth of the life of Christ within us.

In considering chapter 2, we had before us what I might almost call a spiritual biography of the Lord Jesus. Now in chapter 3, we come to consider the life of Christ as manifested in a man, and we have before us a piece of biography once more; a most powerful piece of autobiography from the Apostle Paul. As we consider it, we must get the setting clear so as to see what the circumstances were, before we see its application to ourselves. There is one fundamental principle that I want to emphasize from this piece of spiritual autobiography.

This begins to appear in verse 2, and then it is illustrated in the autobiographical section that follows. The Apostle was in prison when he wrote this, nevertheless his letter is characterized by joy and love. Yet he has to begin here with words of strong denunciation. He speaks of men as "dogs," as "evil workers," and of the "concision," or perhaps we might say, the "incision party," and later in the chapter he goes on to speak of those who are "enemies of the cross of Christ." Here he seems to bring out a crucial principle where Christian character is concerned. He had been speaking in chapter 2 of the cross, but in verse 2 he turns aside to say, Look out for men who are indeed dogs; not the pet variety that we have, but the vicious animals who roam the streets of the east, feeding on garbage and filth. Then there were men who were trying to seduce Christians from the truth, devoting themselves to this

task, for they were evil **workers**. Lastly there were those who, though boasting of being the concision, were really only the concision or incision party.

Now what was this teaching that was so denounced by the Apostle? It was that doubtless of the Judaisers, who dogged his footsteps wherever he went producing a theory of the Christian life which was not at all in accordance with the truth of God; insisting that it was developed in a mode of life that followed the traditional pattern of Jewish culture, and stuck to their ritual, which was the highest culture of the day. To make sure that there should be no doubt in the minds of the Philippians that these men are the enemies of the truth, he used these three phrases in verse 2, and then contrasts them with three other phrases in verse 3.

These corrupters of the truth might claim to be the concision, but he calls them the concision, and says, "We are the concision," when it is a question of the heart, and we "worship God in the Spirit." That is the first thing, showing that all the fleshly system and ritual of the Jews — all the outward circumstances in which it was encased, and the material things that were involved in it — these were not the things of true worship. True Christian life does not run in the groove of material things. It is indeed a matter of worship and service of God in the Spirit.

The second mark is, "rejoice in Christ Jesus;" for they found the Centre of everything, not in Jewish

law, or ritual, or culture, but in Christ Jesus, in whom they gloried. This then is the true basis of Christian life, and the work of the Lord Jesus that in which we glory. The power of the Lord Jesus Christ then becomes the secret of our lives.

And then comes the third thing — we have no confidence in the flesh. We are to put no trust whatever in the flesh, nor in the things of the flesh, whatever they may be.

And so in these two categories of three things the Apostle produced a clear cut between what was advocated for the progress of that Christian character, which, I trust, we all desire, and the true basis on which it can really come about. It depends upon the three things which are so clearly stated in verse 3.

This statement however was not enough; so to show the practical working out of that which was at issue, the Apostle put on record this piece of spiritual autobiography. He shows that if it is a question of having confidence in ~~the~~ flesh and following out the traditional culture and ritual and advantages of Judaism, he could altogether surpass those who were advocating that line of things as leading to the character that was to be desired. He lists seven things in the following verses.

First, "circumcised the eighth day." A lot was made of this, and Paul could say, that he had it; and what is more, taking place on the eighth day, showed that he was a true Jew and not a proselyte. He was indeed of the stock of Israel, and of the tribe of Benjamin; a small

tribe and select, for they were loyal to the original kingdom. Then "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," which is thought to mean that he was brought up in the true Hebrew culture, with no Greek culture filtering in. Further, as touching the law he was a Pharisee, the strictest sect with the most narrow, rigid upbringing. Then what about zeal and enthusiasm? It was magnificent, for he pushed it to the final extent of persecuting the church. Lastly he was blameless as regards the outward observances of the law. Nobody could point a finger against him.

Here then is summed up the magnificent story of one who had all the advantages that were made so much of by those who were opponents of the truth of the Gospel. And yet, having summed up these things, he dismissed them as — dead loss. The whole lot he counted, "loss for Christ;" and thus he brings out this crucial principle.

Now these things are recorded not merely that we may understand how the cross set aside these Jewish things, but that we may see how it bears upon similar things today, that we might be inclined to count as gains. It is not therefore a remote matter that only concerned the Apostle Paul. It comes home to each of us. It is extremely difficult not to consider background, culture, a fine home, first-class education, enthusiasm, high ideals, success, as great gains. Do you count them great gains? Do I? These are things that mark people out from others, and we may be tempted to think of them as the things that develop Christian character. They

are gains from a worldly point of view, but they may be possessed by those whom the Apostle would denounce as evil workers, and are things that Paul would have counted loss for Christ.

But we must understand exactly what he said about them. Nowhere in the Scripture does the Apostle say that he would rather have been a Gentile than a Jew; that he would have preferred to have had no enthusiasm; that it would have been better if he had been guilty of law-breaking. He is not saying that all these apparent gains must be reversed and turned upside down, and then you will have the right perspective. He is saying that however much you might value such things they are of the earth and of the flesh, and therefore loss, when Christ is before us.

They are not just neutral either, for they have within them the power to come between us and God, and then they become positively evil, as hindering the development of Christian character. Paul saw the glory of Christ on the road to Damascus, and if we have had any sight of that glory, we too shall see that these things are no gains at all but rather loss. Our true gain then, like Paul, may be summed up in one word — Christ. That was the one thing. Christ then became his whole life. The decision was reached on the road to Damascus, but it did not finish there. He goes on to tell us that now many years after he still counted all these things as loss, since they came between him and the Lord Jesus. Let us all realize that these things do not help forward Christian character. It is only

as we come to know the Lord Jesus Christ that true Christian character can be developed.

This chapter also makes it plain that the vision of Christ so affected him that deliberately he began to count these other things as loss, that he might gain Christ. He seems to be saying to us quite bluntly, "You cannot have both." You cannot gain Christ in this sense and think that at the same time you can have all these other things as gains. And in the following verses from 8 onwards, we get that which is of supreme magnificence — "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." This it was that turned these other things into loss, and enabled him to suffer them to go, counting them but dung, and having Christ for his gain.

This is, I think, a most amazing passage, where he says, first of all, I want to be on this foundation; not of my own righteousness, but rather of the true righteousness which is in Christ Jesus. This is the only basis on which a man can be righteous. But more than that I want to know Him; to have His resurrection power manifested in me. This became his all-absorbing desire so much so that in line with what we have had before us, he desired his own Christian character to develop, almost in a literal sense, according to the perfect character seen in the life of Christ Himself.

So he wanted, as it says in these verses, to become "conformable unto His death." He wanted, even in the most extreme things, to know the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ — even unto death and resur-

rection. In this way these outward sufferings of the Lord Jesus would be traced again in his own life, and Christ would indeed be his own life, and so his character be formed and developed in that way.

Here then is the one principle that I want to emphasize; this reckoning of all these worldly things that might entice us as loss, for the sake of winning Christ, being conformed to Him and having Him for our gain. It is only as we do so count them, and have our ideals and enthusiasms in the right direction, that we really grow in Christian character. Every one of us began, being Christians, with some sense of the love of the Lord Jesus, and the glory

of the work that He accomplished for us, but do we see the surpassing beauty manifested in Him, and what our lives would be like were they conformed to His.

Oh that every one of us might realize the importance of these things that have been before us, so that we might discover what it is to "win Christ," and know the power of His resurrection life. Then our values, our understanding, would be in keeping with what the Apostle here brings before us, and our characters be developed after the pattern of Christ's own character, while we pass on to the resurrection world, that we shall surely reach ultimately through His power.

LIFE AND THE SPIRIT

W. KELLY

IT is important to distinguish life and the Spirit; because when a soul receives the Gospel, though there be ordinarily the reception of life and of the Holy Spirit at the same moment, yet we must bear in mind that the two things are quite distinct. The new life which the Christian receives in Christ is not God, though of God; but the Holy Ghost is very God. The believer's life is a new creature or creation, while the Holy Ghost is the Creator. It is not because we have a new life that our bodies are made the temple of God, but because the Holy Ghost dwells therein. Hence, when Christians do not properly distinguish this, it is very possible to use that life as a thing to comfort oneself with and to set us at ease, leading us to say, I know that I shall be saved; and all spiritual exercises may close

there. How often souls settle down to rest in the satisfaction that they have got life, or exercise that life only in the desire to bring souls to Christ! But, blessed as this zeal is, it is a very inferior thing to loving Christ; as love to Christ is an inferior thing to the enjoyment of His love to us; and I believe this to be the true order in the souls of the saints of God. The great thing that God calls upon me for, is to admire and delight in and learn more and more of the love of Christ. What is the effect? Love to Christ is produced in the very same ratio that I know His love to me. What is it that judges self and keeps it down, and raises a person above all grovelling ways and ends? Entrance into the blessedness of His love.

Being filled with the sense of it,

we love souls in a different way, because we see them in His light, and we view them out of His affections, and not merely as having some link with ourselves. This is the true secret of all spiritual power, at least, in its highest forms.

Take, again, any little suffering we undergo for Christ's sake, any work undertaken for Him — whatever God calls us to: in all these things the true blessing of the Christian is not to abstract them from Christ, but to have Christ Himself as the spring and pattern and measure of all our service, so that all our service should flow from our enjoyment of Christ. In one way, worship is a nearer

thing to God, and ought to be a dearer thing to the child of God, than even service; whereas it is no uncommon thing to find zealous servants who know very little of true worship. I say this, not that we should serve Christ less, but that we should enjoy Him more, and serve Him in the spirit of enjoying what He is, apart from all circumstances. What is the basis of this measure of enjoyment? It is the absolute peace and rest of our heart in Him and His work. We see how completely every sin is met and every need of our soul supplied in Christ.

Extract from Lectures on Galatians.

BIBLE STUDY — ZECHARIAH

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 7: 1 — 11: 17)

IN the first verse of chapter 7, we find another date given; almost two years later than that of the visions just recorded, and the prophecies of Haggai. These fresh prophecies were occasioned by the arrival of certain men with questions as to the observance of fasts, and we notice that we pass from the record of visions to a series of plain declarations of God's message. We now find repeated not, "I lifted up mine eyes," but rather, "The word of the Lord came."

The question raised by these men concerned a fast in the fifth month, which had been observed for many years. From Jeremiah 52: 12, we learn that it was in that month the Babylonian army had burned Solomon's magnificent temple, and

wrecked Jerusalem. Now once more the house of the Lord was being built, if not entirely finished, so was it suitable that they should still observe the fast? A very natural question!

The answer of God through Zechariah linked with this fast another in the seventh month, which apparently was in memory of the murder of Gedaliah and others, and the flight of the remnant, left in the land, into Egypt, as recorded in 2 Kings 25: 25, 26. These tragedies were commemorated with fasting and tears, during the seventy years captivity. As far as we can discern, no direct answer was given to the question they raised: instead another question was raised with them. Did they have Jehovah before their

minds in their observances or only themselves? And when the fast was over, did they return to their eating and drinking just enjoying themselves? Did they really fast, enquired the Lord, "unto Me, even to Me?"

Here is deeply important instruction for ourselves. We may put it thus: **In our observances and service a right motive is everything.** We may diligently observe the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, diligently preach the Gospel, or minister to the saints; but are we doing it with God Himself, revealed in Christ, before us, or are we just pursuing an agreeable ritual and maintaining our own reputations in it all? A searching question, which the writer had better ask himself as well as the readers ask themselves.

If the people had kept the Lord before them and observed His words through the former prophets, things would have been far otherwise. And what was His word now through Zechariah, but just what it had been through them. Take Isaiah's first chapter as an example. He accused the people of moral corruption, whilst maintaining ceremonial exactitude. In verses 11-14, of our chapter the men who enquired are reminded of this, and are plainly challenged as to the present attitude of themselves and the people of their day, as we see in verses 8-10. The moral evils that had wrecked the nation were still working amongst the people that had returned to the land. A remnant may return but the inveterate tendency to develop the old evils remains. Let us never forget that.

But having exposed the sinful state of the people, another word from the Lord came in which the purposes of His mercy were revealed, as we see in chapter 8. In this remarkable chapter there are things specially addressed to the remnant then back in the land — verses 9-17, for instance — yet the main drift of it goes far beyond anything that was realized in their history, between the rebuilding as permitted by Cyrus, and the destruction under the Romans; so it looks on to the end of the age and the second coming of Christ.

In that age Jerusalem will indeed have Jehovah dwelling in her midst and be called "a city of truth." Once indeed He who was the "truth," as well as the "way," and the "life," was in her midst, only to be rejected and crucified, while Pilate, who sanctioned that act of rejection, asked satirically, "What is truth?" No, Jerusalem has never yet been worthy of that designation; but she will be in a coming age. And then human life will be greatly prolonged, and young life be abundant and free. Our modern streets with fast-moving motor traffic are hardly a playground for children.

Verses 6-8, also look on to the time of the end. What had come to pass in the return of the remnant was indeed wonderful in their eyes, but what is here predicted would be more wonderful still, when God would gather from the west as well as the east, to dwell as His people, so that He would be their God "in truth and in righteousness." In Christ truth and righteousness have

indeed been revealed and established, but never yet has God dwelt in Jerusalem on that basis. The day is coming when He will do so.

In verses 9-16, there is a special appeal to the remnant of the people then in the land. They are reminded of the words spoken to them earlier, when the foundation of the temple was laid, and how the adversity that had marked their doings had been turned into a time of prosperity. God was now bestowing much favour and prosperity upon them, but they are reminded that He called for suitable behaviour on their part. Truth, honesty and righteous judgment was what was expected of them. Again the stress is on the moral qualities that are according to God, and not on ceremonial observances.

A further word from the Lord is now given, and in verse 19 four fasts are mentioned. Besides the two mentioned in the previous chapter we now have the one in the fourth month, for in that month famine prevailed and Jerusalem was broken up, according to Jeremiah 52: 6, and it was in the tenth month that the city was surrounded by Nebuchadnezzar's army, as verse 4 of that same chapter records. It is now revealed that the day would come when these four fasts would be turned into feasts of rejoicing. Therefore they were to love truth and peace. These predictions of future blessing were to have a present effect upon the people.

And all that we know of future blessing should have a present effect or good upon ourselves. It is

worthy of note that truth precedes peace, as cause and effect. Error produces strife just as certainly as truth produces peace. In the remaining verses of our chapter we find predictions of the happy state of things that will prevail when truth at last prevails in Jerusalem, and peace fills the scene. In that coming day the house of the Lord will indeed be, "an house of prayer for all people" (Isa. 56: 7). There will be many who desire to seek the Lord in prayer, and they will recognize where God is to be found in that day. All through the centuries the name, "Jew," has had a measure of reproach attaching to it. It will not be so then, for they will recognize that at last God is with His ancient people. It is obvious that this prediction has never yet been fulfilled, and looks on to a future day.

The word of the Lord that opens chapter 9 is spoken of as a "burden," since it starts with solemn words of judgment on peoples that surrounded the land of Israel. Some of these judgments took place soon after the predictions were uttered; that upon Tyre, for instance, and upon the cities of the Philistines. Darby's New Translation tells us that an alternate rendering to "bastard," is one "of a foreign race." But even so there will apparently be a remainder, or a remnant, who will be for God and belong to Him. Moreover, however powerful oppressors may appear to be, God will encamp about His house in protecting mercy. And how will this be brought to pass?

Verses 9 and 10 answer this question, for in these two verses the

two advents of the Lord Jesus are brought before us. The coming of the King will settle everything, but we can imagine how the reader of Zechariah's day might pause at this ninth verse in amazement, feeling that in the presence of powerful outside foes, and the inward defection so plainly manifested amongst the Jews, some great and majestic and powerful Deliverer was needful, and the King is announced as lowly in His person and in His approach. True, He is to have salvation, but this was not the kind of King that was popularly expected.

The Spirit of God, who inspired this prophecy knew very well that there was a deeper question to be settled before there could be the intervention in power that was so ardently desired. First must come the bearing of the full penalty of human sin, and hence the Divinely reached settlement of that dreadful matter, and, that accomplished, there could be emancipation from sin's power. This had been set forth typically in Exodus 12 and 14. First the blood of the lambs in Egypt, and then deliverance by the overthrow of Egypt. The latter is more spectacular, but the former a far deeper thing.

In the Gospels we see how the more spectacular filled the minds of the disciples. Even when they acted and played their part in the fulfilment of verse 9, they did not realize they were doing it. This we are plainly told in John 12: 16. Only when Jesus was glorified and the Holy Spirit was given did they realize the true significance of what they had done. Again, in Acts 1: 6,

we see how the coming of the kingdom in power filled their thoughts before the Spirit was given. The coming of the King in lowly grace was but little understood or anticipated by the great majority.

But the Messiah will come in power and have dominion over all the earth, as verse 10 declares. The way His widespread kingship is stated here agrees exactly with the inspired statement through David centuries before, written in Psalm 72: 8. When David foresaw this by the Spirit, every desire of his heart was satisfied, and he had nothing left to pray for, as the last verse of the psalm tells us. What our prophet tells us is that the days of warfare will be over — chariot and battle bow cut off, and peace imposed upon the nations.

Verse 11 appears to be a word specially addressed to the sons of Israel, for Ephraim is addressed in verse 13, as well as Judah. They have all been like prisoners, entrapped in a waterless pit, waiting and hoping for deliverance. When Messiah comes in power deliverance will reach them, but only through "the blood of thy covenant." Here we see an allusion to that new covenant of grace, predicted in Jeremiah 31: 31, illuminated for us by the words of the Lord Jesus at the institution of His Supper, when He spoke of, "My blood of the new testament" (Matt. 26: 28). On that basis only will the deliverance and the blessing be brought in and firmly established.

When Zechariah wrote these things, Greece, mentioned in verse

13, was hardly a power to be reckoned with, though not long after, under Alexander the Great, it was destined to overthrow the Persian power. We may see therefore in the closing verses of this chapter predictions which had a partial fulfilment not long after the prophecy was given, though in their fulness they look on to the end of the age.

The same thing may be said of the predictions that fill chapter 10, though it opens with solemn words concerning the evils that still were practiced among the people. The "rain" of blessing would descend from God, and not proceed from the "idols," or "teraphim," little images by which men sought to probe into future events. All that came from this source was but vanity, and the "shepherds" of the people, who dealt with such things would have the anger of God against them, for God was going to take up the house of Judah and use them in the execution of judgment in some directions. The word, "oppressor," in verse 4 has apparently the meaning of, "ruler;" but, even so, the details of that verse do not refer exactly to the Messiah, but rather to what God will raise up among His people in the last days. It would agree with what we read in Jeremiah 51: 20, concerning Israel, "Thou art My battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations." At the end of the age the Lord Himself will execute judgment upon certain nations: upon others He will do so by means of a restored Israel.

Of this our chapter speaks, from verse 5 to the end. It will be an

Israel spiritually recreated, and also physically regathered, for God will "hiss" for them, or, "pipe" as shepherds used to do in the gathering of their sheep. He will gather them out of Egypt to the south and out of Assyria to the north, as once He smote the river in the days of Moses. Having regathered them, He will strengthen them, so that they "walk up and down," in His name, which means they will be rightly representing Him on the earth at last. All this clearly looks on to the end of the age.

The prophetic strain now ceases, and we have to come back in chapter 11 to the actual condition of things among the people to whom Zechariah spoke. The solemn words of governmental judgments here uttered might seem to us strange, had we not the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which show us the sad departure into flagrant law-breaking, which marked the masses of the people, whilst outwardly temple and city were being rebuilt. The prophet foresaw the times of trouble that would come upon the people, when they would still be under the heel of various Gentile powers, and the really godly are designated as the margin of verse 7 reads, "the flock of slaughter, verily the poor of the flock."

Commencing with this seventh verse we find the prophet himself beginning to act in a symbolic way as well as speak God's message. He took the two staves, called respectively, "Beauty" and "Bands." Though the poor of the flock were to be fed, the others were to be left, and the shepherds who might have fed them were cut off. We may not

be able to say to whom the "three shepherds" referred, yet the drift of this judgment is plain. While the poor of the flock should be fed, the ungodly majority lost the worldly leaders who might have fed them.

It would appear that in this remarkable incident of the two staves the prophet is led to impersonate the Messiah Himself. His first action was to break the staff called "Beauty," as a sign that God's covenant "with all the people," was broken. The word here is in the plural, "peoples," and we may turn back to Genesis 49: 10, where the word had previously occurred in the plural — "until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the peoples be." The staff "Beauty" was broken as a sign that there would be no fulfilment to the unbelieving generation, for when Messiah came in lowliness and not in outward splendour, they would see "no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53: 2).

This was followed by the remarkable actions recorded in verses 12 and 13, which prophetically set forth the terrible actions of Judas Iscariot. Matthew 27: 3-8, records how accurately this prediction was fulfilled. Messiah, who was the embodiment of all beauty was priced at thirty pieces of silver. Judas who fixed the price and got the silver, before committing suicide in his remorse, cast the money down in the temple, thus fulfilling the words, "in the house of the Lord;" while the chief priests took the silver and used it to buy the potter's field, thus fulfilling the words, "I . . . cast them to the potter."

The breaking of the second staff

followed. If beauty be broken by the rejection of the Messiah, the bands that linked together Judah and Israel were necessarily broken. Christ is the Centre of unity for God's earthly people, just as He is the Centre of unity for the church today. We may therefore see a word of warning and instruction for ourselves in what we have before us. Christendom is much occupied today in efforts to achieve unity, realizing what great power might be wielded by a unified church. Do they recognize that Christ in His beauty must be the Centre of all their thoughts and efforts? If His beauty be broken in their thoughts and efforts, everything in the way of bands will be broken as well.

Having first acted as impersonating the true Shepherd of Israel, the prophet is now bidden so to act as to impersonate the false one, who is to come, as a direct result of the government of God in retribution upon the people. What were the "instruments" of a foolish shepherd we are not told, but what will mark the false one we are plainly told in verse 16. First, there are four things that he will not do. We quote from Darby's New Translation, He "shall not visit those that are about to perish:" and again, "neither shall seek that which is strayed away:" and again, "nor heal that which is wounded:" and once more, "nor feed that which is sound."

Readers and writer alike will at once be saying, Why, these four things which the false shepherd does **not** do, are exactly those which the true shepherd **does**, in abundant and perfect measure. False shepherds

there were before the true One came, as He indicated in John 10: 10, 12, but Zechariah is predicting the coming of that antichrist, of whom the Lord spoke when He said, "if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5: 43). This "idol," or "worthless" shepherd will be raised up of God in judgment upon the people, "in the land," as verse 16 says: that is, he will not be some worldly king in the Gentile world, but the false messiah in Palestine—the second "beast" of

Revelation 13, rather than the first.

Here then is a striking exhibition of the governmental ways of God. The unconverted Jew would not have the true Shepherd, when He came in grace: then they shall have the false, who shall feed himself on their "fat," and tear them unmercifully, though ultimately he will be destroyed in judgment as verse 17 declares. For the ungodly in Israel the final raising up of the "idol shepherd," will mean the terrors of the great tribulation.

FLESH AND FAITH

J. T. MAWSON

THE Gospel condemns the old life of the flesh in which men do their own sinful wills and offers new life in the Spirit in which they do the will of God. Judgment must fall on the first, there can be no judgment but only approval for the second.

Adam failed at the first incitement to do his own will. The Lord was tested in every possible way, even to death — the giving up of His life — and nothing made Him do His own will. He died to continue the path of obedience.

We have to deny our own wills. When we yield and do what pleases ourselves, we do not suffer but are gratified, though we may suffer from a bad conscience afterwards.

Faith — that most precious, priceless, divinely-wrought principle, positively delights in being called to lean absolutely and abidingly upon the living God. But it must be the

real thing. It is of little use talking about faith if the heart be a stranger to its power. Mere profession is perfectly worthless. God deals in moral realities. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith?" He does not say, "What doth it profit though a man have faith?" Blessed be God, those who, through grace, have it, know that it profits much every way. **It glorifies God** as nothing else can do. **It lifts the soul** above the depressing influences of things seen and temporal. **It tranquillizes the spirit** in a most blessed manner. **It enlarges the heart**, by leading us out of our own narrow circle of personal interests, sympathies, cares and burdens, and connecting us livingly with the eternal, exhaustless spring of goodness. **It works by love**, and draws us out in gracious activity towards those who are of the household of faith. It is faith alone that can move along the path where Jesus leads.

THE SUFFERINGS AND GLORY OF CHRIST

J. HOUSTON

THE Apostle Peter has a good deal to say on the subject of Christ's sufferings, and the glory that was to follow. In his first epistle he refers to His sufferings; in the second to His glory. Both sufferings and glory are Christ's, viewing Him as the Messiah. This is in keeping with the character of Peter's writings, for he was the apostle to the circumcision, and wrote to dispersed Jewish believers.

It was difficult for the orthodox Jews to admit the thought of sufferings in reference to their expected Messiah. They had no difficulty as to the hope of His glory, especially when there was connected with it the exaltation of their own nation. But to think of their Messiah being lowly, despised and rejected among men, with no form nor comeliness, that He should be desired, was altogether foreign to their expectation. It was indeed the preaching of the crucified Christ that proved to be, "unto the Jews a stumblingblock" (1 Cor. 1: 23).

The Lord told His disciples plainly that He had to suffer many things of the elders, priests and scribes, and be killed; though after three days He would rise again. It was Peter, who began to rebuke Him; but the Lord turned and rebuked him, telling him he did not savour the things that are of God, but rather those that are of men. This we learn in Mark 8: 31-33. When he did learn to savour

the things that are of God, he could speak of himself as "a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed" (1 Peter 5: 1). To him it was granted to die a martyr's death and win a martyr's crown. To this he referred when he said, "shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me" (2 Peter 1: 14). His tabernacle was his body which he put off when martyred as a witness of Christ's sufferings. In a glorified body, like unto Christ's glorified body, he will be partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

The dispersion, to whom Peter wrote both his epistles, were sufferers. They were sorely persecuted by their enemies, and they were scattered abroad in the places he mentioned in the opening verses of his first epistle. He assures them that nothing strange happened to them, since they were called of God to suffer. "For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps" (1 Peter 2: 21).

Their sufferings came upon them from two directions: from the hands of their unbelieving nation; and under the iron heel of Gentile rule. The Lord Jesus Himself had suffered similarly. He was persecuted unto death by the unbelieving Jews, and put to death by the Gentiles

under Pontius Pilate. Strange as it might seem, the Jews who hated the Romans, should yet join with them, both in the crucifixion of the Lord and in the persecution of His humble disciples. They hated Christ without a cause; and His followers, because they bore faithful witness to Him. What depth of evil was in their hearts!

In his first epistle Peter points out three ways in which the dispersed believers suffered: "for conscience toward God:" "for righteousness' sake:" and "as a Christian" (2: 19; 3: 14; 4: 16). The first two would refer to their suffering under Gentile power; the last to what they suffered from their fellow-countrymen.

A good many dispersed Jews were servants to Gentile masters. In any case a very galling position for them, and all too often made worse by the masters being "froward," or, hard and exacting, having no regard for God themselves. If we speak of having "conscience toward God," we mean that God is before us, our conscience enlightened by His presence so that we seek only to please Him. These Jewish believers, who were servants, acted in this way, setting God first, though under Gentile masters. Thus they accepted the discipline of God, and if it brought suffering from their masters, they accepted it, glorifying God in their submission, instead of seeking to assert themselves.

Suffering "for righteousness' sake" means that we act righteously before our fellow-men, whether it please them or displease them.

Righteousness is to determine our relationship, in all our contacts with them. Christ "loved righteousness, and hated iniquity," (Heb. 1: 9) in all His pathway on earth, and they followed Him. Now the eyes of God are over the righteous, and the Apostle asks, "who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" In one sense the righteous are invulnerable.

But there is of course another sense in which the righteous are hated and persecuted by the wicked. This aspect of things is seen at the beginning of human history. Cain slew Abel, "because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (1 John 3: 12). He was faced with an exposure which he could not bear. It is so today. The unrighteous are exposed in the presence of the righteous. This was supremely so in the presence of our Lord, when He was on earth, for then the true Light had come, "and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3: 19). The believer who walks righteously as in the light will be approved of God, though disapproved of men.

Suffering as a Christian would be amongst the Jews particularly, since they hated Christ and all who confessed His name. The name Christian was first given to the disciples at Antioch, and became a term of reproach. The Lord Jesus warned His disciples against the fear of confessing Him, and in John 9: 22, we are told how the Jews had agreed, "that if any man did confess that He was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue." So we are told

further that among the rulers there were many that believed on Him, "but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John 12: 42). On this account it was a great test of faith for these dispersed Jewish believers to be designated a Christian, and suffer. But they could glorify God instead of being ashamed.

How important it is for us to maintain a good conscience by walking in the light, as God is in the light, even though we should have to suffer for it. How important to follow righteousness as the essential principle of our conduct, since knowing that He is righteous, we know, "that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2: 29). And finally, we must confess the Lord at all costs, and be true to the name of Christian. Thus, if persecuted, we shall show our loyalty to Him.

We have the glory of Christ presented to us in 2 Peter 1: 16-21. It is the glory of His Person, come in power and majesty to establish His kingdom. On the holy mount Peter and others were eyewitnesses of His Majesty, and they heard the voice of God the Father from the excellent glory say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." What Peter had seen in Galilee was a humbled Christ; what he saw on the holy mount was a glorified Christ, and from the excellent glory he heard the Father's appreciation of Him. Two things evidently filled Peter's mind: the power and coming of the Lord Jesus; and His receiving from the Father honour and glory. This latter, when He is owned as the

beloved Son, the Object of the Father's delight, is distinct from His glory, when He comes with all His saints to establish His kingdom in judgment.

Having given this witness of the Father to His beloved Son, Peter directs our attention to His coming. He speaks of "a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." The day star here is just the "morning star," which is to arise **in our hearts**. The reference here is not to something outside us, when He will come in power and glory with all His saints, but to what is to be held by faith in our affections, while we wait for Him. The Morning Star will indeed appear on the horizon, when He comes for His saints, before the break of day, when He will come with them. Peter puts this before us that we may hold it by faith in our hearts now.

The "dark place" is the world in which we find ourselves. The whole world lies in darkness, and not one ray of light is to be seen anywhere. All the light that exists is in the hearts of the saints, where the Morning Star has arisen.

Then it is important to know that prophecy does not come by the will of man, "but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." This gives us the assurance that we have God's word and authority as to the coming and glory of our Lord, and that we are not dependent upon vain speculations that may reach us by the will of man.

THE PHILIPPIAN DOXOLOGY

A. H. STORRIE

**"Now unto God and our Father be
Glory for Ever and Ever. Amen."**

Philippians 4: 20

ALTHOUGH the Philippian doxology occurring at the end of the epistle is only brief, the Apostle Paul clearly wrote under its influence from the beginning. He had not dictated many words before his thoughts were lifted to "the glory and praise of God," (chapter 1: 11). The epistle, delineating normal experience, falls naturally into four parts indicated by the chapters. By Christian experience is meant the experience that results from all doctrine when properly received. There is less of distinctive doctrine in Philippians than we find, for instance, in Ephesians and Colossians, not to mention Romans. As is well-known, this epistle has a beauty and a charm altogether its own. The joy of Acts 16, in the prison at Philippi has lost none of its triumphant gladness in the prison of distant Rome. Sin is not even mentioned in the epistle, nor the flesh except to state that we have no confidence in it; but the pronoun "my" of personal experience occurs over twenty times. The following brief thoughts may afford profitable meditation for us all.

Chapter 1. "**Christ my life.**"

Oh rare and blessed experience! The man of Tarsus, cultured, learned, gifted, for some years unjustly incarcerated, yet supremely content! And not only so, but able to say with triumphant ecstasy that his very life and his whole life could be summed up in one word,

"CHRIST"! Not the service of Christ, however glorious, but Christ. Do **we** all ardently desire that Christ may be magnified in our **bodies** whether by life or by death? We may be willing as to the former, but what about the latter? Paul hardly knows which to choose — to live is Christ, to die gain, for then he would be with Christ, which is **far** better than the best that earth can afford.

Chapter 2: "**Christ my model.**"

Deeply appreciative of the Christian graces shown in their gift to him, the apostle would have these virtues exercised amongst themselves. To this end follows the marvellous passage on the "mind that was in Christ Jesus:"

From the far-flung splendour of the
realms of light,

Came our Lord, Christ Jesus,
veiled His glory bright.

Though with God co-equal (let His
praise resound!)

Walked He here as Servant, my-
stery profound!

Stoop still even greater! humbled,
He became

Unto death obedient, His the
Cross of shame!

Now by God exalted, His th'eternal
throne,

All must Him acknowledge to be
Lord alone.

May this mind be in us as was seen
in Him,

Who now bears the glory nought
can ever dim.

And again Paul anticipates his doxology;" . . . to the **glory** of God the Father," (verse 11).

Chapter 3: "**Christ my goal.**" The prevailing note of joy throughout the epistle comes mainly from the causes mentioned. These may vary and the joy fluctuate with the variations. In chapter 3: 1, however, we have the Fount of joy independent of all circumstances, the Lord Himself. With a spring of joy in his step, the apostle presses on as a fleet runner in a race that he may, practically, "win Christ." Casting aside his very considerable human attainments, Christ is his only object. He gladly sacrifices all for "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord . . ." How ardent is his desire "to know Him . . . being conformed to His death, if in any way I may arrive at the resurrection **from among** the dead. Not that I have already obtained (the prize), or am already perfected; but I pursue, if also I may get possession of it . . . looking towards the goal, for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus . . ." And still the glory lights up the runner's brow, from whence he expects, as we now do, the returning Lord.

Chapter 4: "**Christ my strength.**" What rich and blessed comfort the closing chapter of this most precious letter holds for us all! Standing fast in the Lord! Rejoicing in Him always! Committing all to God in prayer with thanksgiving! Hearts and minds guarded by the undisturbable peace of God! Occupation only with good! The walk such as to have the God of Peace with us! Thus the note of true and normal Christian experience is carried on till the end. Be his circumstances pleasing or adverse, the ageing prisoner of Christ can say with the fullest confidence: "I have strength for all things in Him who gives me power." Having thanked them gratefully for their acceptable gift, he assures the kind senders: "But my God shall abundantly supply all your need according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus," then turns gently from the material to the sublime and spiritual:

**"But to our God and Father be
Glory to the Ages of Ages. Amen."**
(New Trans.)

"OUR FELLOWSHIP"

J. T. MAWSON

IT is usual for people of the world, who are ambitious, to make great efforts to enter into circles of society higher than those to which they have been used. To be familiar with notable people, or with some aristocratic family, or better still, to be presented at Court, or to come into contact with Royalty in any way, is something to be laboured for, and talked about when accomplished as long as life shall last.

That is the way of the world, and what heart-burnings, envyings and disappointments it carries with it, and how utterly poor and unsatisfying it is, especially when compared with that which God in infinite grace has opened to us. Take those Galilean fishermen — Simon and Andrew, and the sons of Zebedee, as examples. We have no reason to suppose that they were particularly ambitious, for they possessed neither

qualities nor attainments likely to grace society, and they probably never contemplated moving out of their own station in life; and yet one day they received a call, which changed their whole life and outlook for time and eternity. They heard the call of Jesus, and in response to it they abandoned their nets and followed Him, and they were placed immediately in associations, and given access to and intercourse in a circle, of which they could never even have dreamed.

They did not become the companions of scribes, or enter into the the fellowship of haughty Pharisees; they were not put into relationship with the chief priest, or looked upon favourably by the kingly court. No, they were carried beyond all these, beyond the most exalted and exclusive circles on earth, and beyond angels also, into a wholly divine circle, so that they could say, **"Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ"** (1 John 1: 3). They were not introduced as mere spectators, or to pass in and out of it, as those who were to be thus honoured for a moment yet who had no abiding place there, but they were brought into it as those who were to know it as their life and portion for ever.

Let us consider their call to this high place and privilege, and remember as we do so that they were representative men, and that what was true for them is true for us, and can be made real to us by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.

The first chapter of John's Gospel shows us their introduction into this entirely new circle of fellowship for

men. They heard the Baptist bear witness to Jesus as the Lamb of God. Wonderful title for the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, to assume! The fact that HE came in that character put at rest all doubts for ever as to the question of sin being settled for the glory of God, so that no barrier to the effectuation of God's purposes of love might remain. They not only believed the testimony that they heard, but He became at once the Object of their hearts, which had been awakened by the Father's touch, and they followed Him, for from henceforward nothing but Himself could satisfy them, and no place but the place where He dwelt could be home to them. It was this that made them ask with deepest earnestness from their very hearts, illuminated as they were by His glory, and wholly possessed by Himself from that moment, that memorable question, "Master, where dwellest Thou?" To their question they received an answer, which must have filled them with wonder, and which opened up to them, and for all who receive Him as they did, His own dwelling-place in the Father's everlasting love.

The desire for His company, which moved them so mightily, was only the response in their hearts to the love for them which was in His heart, and the grand purpose of His coming was to set them free from every hindrance and to cleanse them from all defilement, that they might be His companions for ever in the place where He dwelt. Thus has His love expressed itself.

It has been pointed out very beautifully that in John's Gospel the

Lord is not spoken of as the "Son of Man without a place to lay His head;" that belongs to other Gospels, in which we have Him portrayed to us in other ways. But in this Gospel He had His dwelling-place of ineffable rest, for He is the Only-begotten Son, **which is in the bosom of the Father.** This was His eternal dwelling-place, and it was His home as a Man here below. None shared it with Him before He came into Manhood, it was His own peculiar place, but now He had found associates to whom He could say, "The Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me" (John 16: 27). And of whom He could say, when speaking to His Father of them, "Thou hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (John 17: 23). Yes, He had found those who were now to share with Him the unspeakable rest and joy of the Father's love.

Thus they became the associates of the Only-begotten Son of God. He dwelt among them and they dwelt with Him, and they beheld His glory as the most worthy Object of the Father's love. They heard the Father's voice, telling out His delight in His beloved One, and their hearts thrilled in unison with the Father's thoughts of Him. And as they lived and walked and dwelt with Him, He gave them the Father's words — words that angels could not understand — and these words entered their hearts and made known to them the Father's name, and opened up the Father's bosom to them with all its wonderful secrets of love. They beheld Him, with ever-deepening wonder, a Man amongst them, yet the Only-begotten **with the Father.** They saw Him

despised and hated of men, yet moving onward through all opposition and undisturbed by it, doing that which His Father commanded Him. He manifested before their eyes a life that did not belong to this world, that was not dependent upon anything that this world possessed — even **that eternal life which was with the Father.** It was the life of His own dwelling-place, revealed here upon earth to His disciples, that they might enter into it, and share it with Him, that **His own joy might be fulfilled in them.**

And these Galilean fishermen entered into that which was revealed to them, and the things that they heard and saw and contemplated and handled they have declared unto us by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that we might also know the fulness of joy that belongs to this most blessed life and fellowship.

What are our thoughts and attitude towards this revelation of the Father by our Lord Jesus Christ, and the divine fellowship which is the result of it? Has it effected our sanctification from the world? or do we still in company with the unlightened crowds pursue the things of the world and run after its friendships, fellowships and society? If so we know nothing experimentally of the Father's love: it is not in us; and we are pursuing that which is nothing but lust and pride, and which is most surely perishing.

Can we do this? Not if we have believed the testimony of God to His Son as the Lamb of God, and

beheld Him upon the cross suffering for sin as the Sin-bearer, there coming under God's own condemnation of it that He might bear it away. No, we shall shrink from that which brought Him into the judgment of the cross for us, and attracted by the unmeasured love that led Him to become a sacrifice for sin for us, we shall follow Him as His disciples did, and He will lead us into His own dwelling-place.

It is thus that we shall find the rest and peace and joy that the world cannot give, and of which it knows nothing, for we shall be led outside of it, disturbed and dominated by sin as it is, into that region of eternal repose, the Father's bosom, His perfect love. Not our love to Him, but His to us; and not only as the One, whose love has been told out to the world, but as brought into this most blessed relationship; His love to us measured only by His love to His Son, who

has been through death that we might with Him enter the home of "love supreme and bright."

Let us consider these things, and bow in worship in the presence of Father, Son and Holy Ghost, for this great purpose did not originate with us; it is the fruit of divine and eternal love. The FATHER could not rest until it was accomplished; the SON OF THE FATHER became Man to declare the Father's love, and to make this fellowship attractive to those who were called to it; and the HOLY GHOST, who has proceeded from the Father, has come to dwell in the hearts of all who respond to the call of grace, that they might apprehend and enjoy the bliss of this new place and relationship with its life and fellowship. It is ours to respond to the labours of sovereign love, and refuse everything that would unfit us for fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

BIBLE STUDY — ZECHARIAH

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 12: 1 — 14: 21)

HAVING thus plainly predicted the rejection of the true Messiah and Shepherd, and the consequent raising up, in God's governmental wrath, of the antichrist — the worthless shepherd — the following series of predictions concerning the Jews and Jerusalem, are presented as a "burden" in the first verse of chapter 12. And indeed a burden

must rest upon the spirit of the reader as we begin that chapter. The way Jehovah presents Himself is very remarkable. The heavens, the earth, and man himself, have all been formed by Him: and in particular, "the **spirit** of man," for that is the highest part of man's composite being — the part where man's sinful rebellion against God is most

sadly manifested. In the end of the prophecy we shall find man's spirit subjugated and restored.

Here however Judah and Jerusalem are in question, and we learn how they will come into prominence and all the nations of the earth be involved in the controversy; for the word "people," occurring three times in verses 2 and 3, is really in the plural — the peoples or nations. As we write the earth is full of disputes, yet there is no darker spot of contention than the little land of Palestine. Many worldly observers fear it may yet become "the cockpit of the nations." That it will become just that, is plainly declared in these two verses.

When that hour arrives, God's dealings with Jerusalem will reach their climax, as the opening of chapter 14 declares; but here the point is that the nations will come under judgment. When they beseege it, they will find it a cup of "trembling," or "bewilderment," for nothing will proceed as they vainly imagine. It will also be a "burdensome" stone, far beyond their power to lift or to carry. At last God will be acting for and with His people, and so the whole situation will be transformed. Verse 3 begins, "And in that day . . ." Another "day" is going to dawn, and the phrase, "in that day," occurs again in verses 4, 6, 8, 9 and 11. It is the "day of the Lord," of which other prophets have spoken.

In that day God will act in judgment upon the nations, but will open His eyes upon Judah, just as Jesus turned and opened His eyes upon

Peter, after his sad denial, which started the work of repentance in his heart. Later in our chapter we shall find a very deep work of repentance produced in Israel. But for the moment what the prophet brings before us is the fact that in spite of all the failure and faithlessness that had been marking the people, God would at the end make good His word in their deliverance and blessing. This is ever His way, as we may realize with thankfulness. All the evils that have marked the professing church, and the failures that have marked us, who are true saints of the Lord, will not hinder Him, in making good His purpose.

So, as verses 5-8 declare, God will do a remarkable work in Judah, making them like a fire in the midst of the nations, and giving them precedence over the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The reason for this may be that the people of Jerusalem were always inclined to pride themselves on their priveleges, with the temple in their midst, as we see in such Scriptures as Jeremiah 7: 4, and Micah 3: 11. All false pride will have to be brought low in that solemn hour. Yet God will look upon them in power and blessing, as verse 8 declares. In that day truly, "the house of David" will be "as God;" for He who came "of the seed of David," by His incarnation, is none other than the Son of God, as Romans 1: 3 so plainly states, and He will be manifested in glory.

As a result of this the nations that come against Jerusalem in that day will be destroyed, and His glorious manifestation will produce the great work of profound repentance that is

foretold in the closing verses of the chapter. It will come to pass when, "they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced," and have their eyes opened to discover whom He is. This explains how it will come to pass that as Psalm 110 says, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy **power**." They were unwilling and rejected Him in the day of His **poverty**, of which the closing verses of Psalm 109 speak; nor have they been willing in the day of His **patience**, with which Psalm 110 opens. In the day of His power they will see in glory the One whom they pierced, with tremendous result in their consciences and hearts.

Repentance, as ever, is an intensely individual matter. "The spirit of grace" will move them, and all thought of deserving anything as under law will be abandoned. A century or so before they had mourned deeply in the "valley of Megiddon" over the untimely death of Josiah, but now there will be a mourning extending over the whole land, and of such depth that everyone has to be in solitude before their God. Of old Nathan had to come to David and convict him of grievous sin, saying, "Thou art the man!" but now the house of Nathan has to be apart in their own sorrowful self-judgment. Simeon and Levi once were brethren, acting together in an act of cruelty, as Genesis 49: 5, indicates, but now their families will be apart, bowed in self-judgment before their God.

Repentance always precedes blessing. It is so as the Gospel is preached today. This fact, we fear, has hardly had its due weight with many of us today. Our commission is that,

"repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations" (Luke 24: 47). Have we too lightly skipped over the "repentance" in our desire to arrive at the "remission of sins"? By all means say frequently, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But always remember that was the brief word that Paul gave to a **repentant** man, and not to a careless sinner.

So it is here, as we start chapter 13. When deep repentance thus takes place, a fountain is opened to cleanse from sin and uncleanness. We all know Cowper's hymn, based on this verse, notwithstanding we believe the reference here is not to the blood of Christ, shed long ago, which cleanses from sin judicially; that is, as before the throne of God in judgment, but to that "clean water," that God will "sprinkle" upon them, as predicted in Ezekiel 36: 25. It was to this verse that our Lord referred, as we believe, when He spoke to Nicodemus of that new birth, which is needful if any are to enter the kingdom of God. It was overlooked by the Jews, so Nicodemus was astonished, at the words of the Lord. As a teacher in Israel, he should have known it, as John 3: 10 indicates; for both "water" and "the Spirit" of which man needs to be "born," are mentioned in Ezekiel 36.

At last then there will be a born-again Israel, and as a result of that they will possess a new nature: the unclean spirit will be gone, and the idols and other evil things that once ensnared them will be put away. No more will false prophets appear to deceive. If any should attempt it,

their very parents would condemn them to death. Their unreality will be made perfectly manifest, as verse 4 indicates.

Verse 5 begins, "But he shall say . . ." Who is this "he"? Verses 5 and 6 present a difficult problem. Some take them as referring to one of the false prophets, just alluded to: others as reverting to the true Shepherd, referred to in the previous chapter, and again very clearly in verse 7; and with this we are inclined to agree. The true Shepherd took the place of the "Hebrew Servant," as indicated in the opening verses of Exodus 21, and was pierced amongst those to whom He came in the spirit of friendship. He took the humble place, and one of suffering, even among men. And there was far deeper suffering beyond this.

Verse 7 predicts that far greater matter. Israel nationally were God's sheep, and their sins and apostasy had a twofold effect. It stirred up God's governmental retribution in this world, of which the prophet had much to say; and it also raised the far more serious matter of God's eternal judgment in the life to come. The true Shepherd was to meet that in such fashion that Jehovah's sword was to awake against Him. The sword that had been awakened by the persistent sins of the faithless sheep, was to smite not them but the holy Shepherd.

"The Man that is My Fellow"—these words may have been an enigma to the prophet who wrote them, for 1 Peter 1: 10, 11, tells us that often the Old Testament pro-

phets had to discover they were saying things, the full meaning of which would only appear in an age to come: the privileged age in which we live. These words are no enigma to us, who can read Romans 1: 3, and learn that He who became "seed of David according to the flesh" was none other than "His Son Jesus Christ." When the Son of God assumed Manhood in holiness and perfection, there was indeed a Man that could be called Jehovah's Fellow. He could take the place of sinful men and allow the judgment sword to awake against Himself.

But the immediate effect of the smiting of the Shepherd would be the scattering of the sheep, on the one hand, but also the turning of God's hand upon the little ones. The children of Israel had been scattered "because there is no shepherd," as Ezekiel 34: 5 says; but since the smiting of the true Shepherd, a far more serious and prolonged scattering has taken place, and yet the "little ones" have not been forgotten but rather remembered for blessing.

If we turn to Isaiah 1: 25, we find the same expression, "I will turn My hand," and the context there indicates that the turning of His hand means blessing, when for His adversaries there is judgment. If we read the closing chapters of the Gospels and the opening chapters of the Acts, we see God turning His hand in blessing upon the "little ones," when the great ones among the Jews were pursuing their way in blindness to the hour of their great scattering. The great verse we have

been considering has indeed been wondrously fulfilled.

And the two verses that conclude the chapter will be fulfilled with equal exactness in their season; for they refer, we judge, to what God will bring to pass at the end of this age, when He will deal with a people to be found in the land at that time. In Ezekiel 20: 34-38, we learn how God will deal with the people scattered throughout the nations, purging them before He brings them into the land for blessing. Here we learn what He will do to such as may be left "in all the land," in the last days. Judgment will fall on two-thirds of them, and only a third will come through into blessing. And those blessed will have to pass through the fire of tribulation, which will refine them in a spiritual sense, and bring them at last into vital connection with God. They will truly own Him, and He will own them in blessing.

We must keep this in our minds as we begin to read chapter 14. When the day of the Lord arrives, there will come the moment of supreme crisis for Jerusalem. God will allow the most determined adversaries to have their way for a brief time. It has ever been thus. When God begins to work, the adversary is stirred to put forth his power to the utmost but only to find his efforts over-ruled for ultimate good. Thus it was on that occasion that stands out above all else, as is recorded in Acts 4: 26-28. The actions of the adversary only help to accomplish what God had determined from the outset. How great a comfort is this fact for us today.

The final siege of Jerusalem, that verse 2 indicates, we believe to be that which is predicted in the latter part of Daniel 11, as the act of "the king of the north." In that chapter, verses 36-39, we have at the time of the end, the king, who will do according to his own will, exalting himself, and magnifying himself above every god, and not regarding "the God of his fathers," whom we regard as being identical with the "idol shepherd," and with the second "beast" of Revelation 13. Against this king, as Daniel reveals, will be found both "the king of the south" and "the king of the north," and it is the latter who will "go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many;" and who will finally plant his palace, "in the glorious holy mountain." And Daniel's terse summary of the result is, "yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."

The two "beasts" of Revelation are not antagonistic, but acting in concert. The attack of Gog, of the land of Magog, predicted in Ezekiel 38 and 39, is against the land of Palestine generally, and not specially Jerusalem, when the land has been brought back from the sword; so these great actors of the last days cannot well be identified with what we have before us here. This leaves the king of the north, who is called the Assyrian in Isaiah's prophecy, as the one, whose attack will fulfil verse 2 of our chapter, though all nations will be involved in the tremendous happenings of those days. It will be, as chapter 12 has told us, "a burdensome stone for all nations."

No city, we are told, has been besieged so many times as Jerusa-

lem, and here we learn that this one, the last, will be up to a point a complete success; and then, just before all is complete, the attacker will come to his end and none shall help him. How this will come to pass verse 3 reveals. Jehovah will suddenly and unexpectedly intervene in power. When He fought against Egypt at the exodus, He swept the whole Egyptian army into death — “there remained not so much as one of them.” In Hezekiah’s day He intervened against Assyria, and 185,000 dead lay upon the earth. What He did of old, He will do again.

But verses 4 and 5 furnish us with further details of a very remarkable character. When He thus appears, He will have “feet,” which “shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives,” and He will have “all the saints” with Him. In the light of the New Testament we recognize with joy that the “LORD,” the “LORD my God” of our Scripture is none other than our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. His feet left the mount of Olives, when as the earth-rejected One, He ascended to the glory of heaven. On that same spot His feet shall stand, when He returns in power and great glory in judgment upon His foes.

When He does thus come, a great convulsion will break the surface of the earth. We have not heard of Palestine, as a land much subject to earthquakes, during recent centuries. There was one in the days of Uzziah, to which our passage refers, and there was another at the moment Jesus died, as recorded in Matthew 27: 51. From that time onward has

there been another in Jerusalem? — we wonder. At any rate, there is going to be another, as predicted here. An earthquake, when He died the death of the cross, in extremest humiliation! An earthquake, when He returns in splendour and majesty! How wonderfully suitable are the ways of our God!

It is quite clear, we think, that the overthrow of the two beasts of Revelation 13 at Armageddon is something distinct from that which we have before us, though we do not know of any Scripture which makes plain which of the two overthrows precedes the other.

As the result of the earthquake a way of escape is made for the remnant — the godly remnant, as we suppose — in the moment of their extremity. Saints will be delivered on earth, while the heavenly saints will appear in glory with the triumphant Christ. The translation of verses 6 and 7 is somewhat obscure, but they evidently emphasize the fact that again, just as it was on the day of the crucifixion, there will be atmospheric changes in the heavens as well as the earthquake in the surface of the earth. There will be light at eventide, just when naturally we expect darkness to be falling on the scene.

Verses 8 and 10 further show that the earthquake will produce other great changes in Palestine, both in the flowing forth of waters and in the formation of a plain with Jerusalem lifted up in the midst of it. This agrees with the predictions in the later chapters of Ezekiel. All will be preparatory for the Jerusalem and temple that is to arise in millennial splendour, when, as verse 9 says, the

Lord will be King over the whole earth. Subsidiary kings there may be, as Isaiah 52: 15 seems to indicate; but He is indeed the King of kings. At last the great era of peace will have arrived.

But it will not come to pass without judgment of a very severe kind falling upon the sinful nations, as verses 12-15 show. The terrible effects of judgment on the bodies of men are given in verse 12, and these have, in our day, been likened to the effects produced on the survivors after the fall and explosion of an atom bomb. But in addition to this there will be the internecine destruction of which verse 13 speaks. And further Judah will enter into the conflict, and much wealth will be laid up for the coming day.

We must remember that, though the king of the north may be specially concerned in this attack on Jerusalem, all the nations will be involved as stated in verse 2, and so these tremendous warlike judgments will be widely felt in all directions, and hence we get in verse 16 the expression, "every one that is left." We believe that this expression signifies that only a very small proportion of mankind will be left. At the present time many men of foresight are concerned about the very rapid rise in the population of the earth, particularly in nations like China, India and Japan. The over-population that they anticipate half a century ahead may never come to pass if the day of the Lord arrives before that, for there is not only to take place the warrior-judgment here indicated, but also the sessional-judgment of Matthew 25, when the "goats" are separated from the "sheep," and go down to destruction.

Those that are left will year by year come up to Jerusalem to worship and to keep the feast of tabernacles. When that feast was instituted under the law it was typical of the rest of the millennial age, which will then have been established. So it will be observed as a memorial of the fact that what had been typified had now been actually established, and not to observe it would result in punishment.

The two verses that close this prophecy emphasize the holiness that becomes everybody and everything that is brought into contact with God. Holiness, we have been told, becomes His house for ever. In the coming age it will be stamped upon the most ordinary and the most humble things, such as bells that jingle round the necks of horses and little bowls that have some part to play in the temple services. It is worthwhile noticing that horses are mentioned here, for we might be inclined to ask, But, will not these marvellous inventions in the matter of transport be further increased and expanded in that day? The answer must be that there is no mention of these inventions in Scripture, but the reverse. In that day, instead of men flying all over the earth in their unsatisfied desires, the picture is rather of a man sitting restfully in contentment under his own vine and figtree. The knowledge of God will then be filling the earth, and it is this that really satisfies the heart. God in His holiness will, so to speak, have come in; and consequently from the house of the Lord the Canaanite will have been permanently cast out.

These closing words of our prophet might strike us as rather unusual, did we not remember that

the continual trouble that menaced the returned remnant of Israel, amongst whom Zechariah prophesied was this very matter of marrying Canaanite wives, and even giving some of the Canaanites, related to them by these marriages, a place in the chambers of the rebuilt temple. This thing which had been so great a snare to them, would be gone for ever.

And as we close our meditations on this prophet, let us not forget that a similar tendency has ever been a great snare amongst Christians.

What was it that underlay all the disorders that marred the church at Corinth? It comes clearly to light in Paul's second letter to them, when in chapter 6 he felt his "mouth" was "open unto you," as he put it. He put his finger upon the real trouble; and it was their "unequal" yoking with unbelievers. All through the church's history this has been one main source of trouble and dishonour. It is so today, we have sadly to confess.

May God give us all grace and strength to flee from it!

ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT

Questions having been raised as to the reality of our Lord's Humanity, it would be appreciated if you would give a short word in "Scripture Truth" affirming and Scripturally supporting this great fact.

Could you also give your views on whether you would regard acceptance of the truth of the Lord's perfect Humanity as being fundamental to Christian fellowship?

IN the first chapter of John's Gospel we read, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory;" and hence from that wonderful epoch there have been persistent attempts by the great adversary to obscure or pervert the revelation then made. The earliest was to deny that He really came "in the flesh," as we see in the opening verses of 1 John 4, and this denial of His human body — so that He was only an apparition, as were angelic appearances in Old Testament days — was anti-Christian in character. Later there came denials of His full and proper Deity; and then again efforts were made to support His Deity by statements that denied His full and proper Human-

ity. And so it has continued down to the present day.

In order to be brief, let us concentrate our thoughts on the early chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the first chapter the reality and fulness of His Deity is made very plain. He is the Son — the Creator, Sustainer and Heir of all things — who is the "brightness" of the Divine glory, and the "express Image," in whom God is set before us. In verse 8 Psalm 45 is quoted, and we discover that the One therein addressed as "God," is none other than "the Son."

Then in chapter 2 the reality of His Manhood is made equally plain. In verse 6 Psalm 8 is quoted. If

Darby's New Translation be consulted, a note will be seen, to the effect that two different words are used for "man." The first is, "What is feeble mortal man?" The second introduces, "the Son of Adam" — Man of another order, yet truly Man, and in keeping with this it is to Adam His genealogy is carried in Luke's Gospel. Now man was created "a little lower than the angels," for though having spirit as well as soul, he is clothed in a body of flesh and blood. Hence death, which involves the separation of the spirit from the body is a penalty possible for men, though not for angels.

So, the mighty Son of God became "Son of Adam," that by death He might become the Redeemer of fallen men. This is emphasized in verse 14 of our chapter, and in connection with this we find in verse 17 a very remarkable statement to the effect that it "behoved," or "was incumbent upon" Him to be made like "in all things" to those whom He now acknowledges as "His brethren." This was so in all the details of His wonderful life and pathway, but this could not have been so had He been fundamentally unlike them as to the perfectness and reality of His Humanity.

One further thing has to be added, and we find it at the end of chapter 4. He qualified Himself to be our great High Priest, in sympathy. As God, He has the **knowledge** of our infirmities, but in His Manhood He experienced the **feeling** of them, for He was tempted "in all points" as we are, with this one great exception — "yet without sin," or, "sin apart."

Intrinsic holiness was in Him, and

He was tested that it might be made manifest. It has often been noted that the order of His temptations in the wilderness differs in Matthew and in Luke. The former gives us the historical order, the latter the moral order: the first temptation appealing to the body; the second to the soul; the third to the spirit in man. Being perfectly Man, He felt them all; being Man in perfect holiness He was unmoved and repudiated them all. Very evidently His Manhood was complete and in all things similar to ourselves, with this one great exception, "sin apart," — and not anything else apart.

The Scriptural answer to your second question is evident. If the early denials of Jesus Christ "come in flesh" were anti-Christian, as John has told us; and tampering with the truth of resurrection, so as to overthrow the faith of some, destroys fellowship, as Paul has told us in his second letter to Timothy, we have to regard in the same light those who in our day propound what is false as to the Person of our Lord. We speak of course as to the teachers of error.

There are thousands of dear simple believers who know nothing of these discussions, which often obsess the minds of these inclined towards the intellectual and philosophic. We do well to remember the words of our Lord in Matthew 11: 25-27, that no man knows the Son, but the Father; and the Father's way is to hide these things from "the wise and prudent," and to reveal them "unto babes."

We are not to be "babes" in the Corinthian sense, but to be "babes" in this sense would be good for all of us.

THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY

J. T. MAWSON

“Of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Tim. 1: 7).

(Reprint of an article that appeared just over 50 years ago)

THERE are three spheres of life in which the children of God are called to move, and in which is to be manifested the greatness of the spirit of Christianity. They are: the individual life; life in relation to the church of God; and the life of testimony before the world. “Power, love, and wise discretion” (New Trans.), are needed in all these spheres, but they have each a special bearing upon one or other of them. In the individual life wise discretion is of paramount importance; in the believer’s relations with other members of Christ, love is absolutely essential; and in testimony before the world nothing but the spirit of power will avail.

Power stands first in our scripture because the subject in hand is “the testimony of the Lord” in the world; but this will be greatly enfeebled if love and wise discretion are not in evidence; the three go together, they are the outstanding features of the spirit of Christianity.

The individual life—Wise Discretion.

It is remarkable how little the spirit of wise discretion, or the sound mind, is developed amongst Christians; the mass do not seem to have had their senses exercised to discern both good and evil; they are unskilful in the word of righteousness, and when they ought to have been teachers, they need that one teach them again the first principles of the

oracles of God (Heb. 5: 12-14). Instead of being rooted in the faith they are blown about by every wind of doctrine; teachings that are “new,” and that offer an easier path for nature have a great charm for them, and they are soon moved away from the hope of the Gospel. The consequence is that the soul does not prosper; how can it, when it is fed upon the fruit of poisonous vines, upon words that eat as a canker, upon profane and vain babblings? Thus, withered, dwarfed, and stunted, without inward joy or manifest fruit, they remain in the condition of spiritual babyhood. It is this condition in the church which has made the advance of corrupting heresies and new religions so easy during recent years.

A man of sound sense knows what is good for him; he will not throw himself into an illness by partaking of injurious dishes; and if this wise discernment is demanded by the physical constitution, of how much greater importance it must be in the spiritual, for as the body is more than the raiment that clothes it, so is the spirit more than the body.

But how shall we learn to discriminate between good and evil, and embrace the truth and reject the lie, so that we may rejoice in full and vigorous spiritual life? The answer is: **Only by the Holy Ghost.** Of Him the Lord Jesus said, “When

He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself . . . He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16: 13, 14). And there is evidently no excuse for the Christian who is ensnared by false teaching, for we read: "Ye have an Unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1 John 2: 20, 21).

We are also taught that, "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2: 14). It is evident, then, that the discerning faculty is developed by the Holy Ghost within us; but since this is so, and since it is also evident that all who have believed the Gospel have received, and are sealed by the Holy Ghost, why is it that spiritual discernment in the things that are vital to us is so feeble?

The Holy Spirit has wonderful things to unfold — the things of Christ; but the children of God are often dull, of hearing, their thoughts are engrossed with the earth and the world, and He, grieved because they will not listen, is compelled to retire from His blessed ministration to their souls, to let them prove the barrenness of everything else. **Behind all soul-poverty and absence of growth lies the sad fact that the Holy Spirit of God is a grieved Spirit.**

The life of fellowship in the Church of God — Love

We have to sorrow over the fact that the church of God has been rent and torn by faction and division, and that the endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is very feeble. It seems easier to build up a party than to edify the body of Christ; and more congenial to make proselytes to some special persuasion than work for the perfecting of the saints. This proves our lack of the spirit of love, and behind this lack there lies our failure in soul-growth. When children suffer from malnutrition or injudicious feeding, they become petulant and cross; and this was exactly the condition which the Apostle had to deplore at Corinth. The saints there were in the state of sour and quarrelsome childhood, evidenced by the envying, strife, and divisions among them (1 Cor. 3).

But love produces an opposite condition to this, and is one of the great features of Christianity; without the spirit of it fellowship is impossible. It is the first of the rich cluster of graces, called "the fruit of the Spirit" (Gal. 5: 22). It is the Divine nature, and most wonderfully broad and strong. It embraces in its breadth, "all the saints" (Eph. 1: 15); and it is invulnerable in its strength, for it "beareth all things" (1 Cor. 13: 7). It builds up and binds together, and the unity of the Spirit can only be maintained as Christians, with lowliness and meekness, **forbear one another in love.** But this love is not natural affection, which is self-centred and absorbing, but Divine love, which is self-sacrificing and radiating. This

love can only be developed and exercised in the power of the Holy Ghost, and the reason so little of it is seen in its breadth and strength is because **the Holy Spirit is a grieved Spirit.**

The Testimony of the Lord—Power

The testimony of the Lord was never popular in the world; certain kinds of preaching may be, for we often hear of popular preachers; but the testimony of the Lord, the preaching of Christ, who was rejected by the world, but is risen from the dead and accepted in heaven, always carries reproach with it — the reproach of Christ. Paul was a great preacher the greatest that ever bore the flaming gospel-torch through a benighted world, but he was not popular; he was despised, buffeted, and reviled; he was defamed, made as the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things (1 Cor. 4: 10-13). Yet he was not ashamed. He boldly proclaimed that He, whom the princes of the world crucified, was the Lord of glory. He made his boast in the cross, in which was concentrated all shame and dishonour. He maintained before the world that every thought and purpose of God and every blessing for men were centred in the despised and rejected Christ. He identified himself so completely with the Lord and His testimony that it was the only reason why he lived; he had no other thought, though it made him an object of hatred and scorn. In this he rejoiced, and wrapped the shame of Christ about him as a royal garment, it was his chiefest boast.

That the testimony of the Lord should provoke the hostility of the world is not surprising, for it humbles the pride of men; it is independent of their wealth, learning and influence; it leaves no room for their vaunting ambitions, and exposes their world in its true character a system false, foundationless, godless and condemned. Moreover, it crowns the sacred brow of Jesus with immortal glory; God's blessed answer to the contumely and derision heaped upon Him by the world.

Timothy was liable to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, and it needs a sterner courage than lies in nature to take it up. The disciples were not one whit less courageous than their fellow-countrymen, and they vowed to act valiantly for their Lord when the test came; but they all fled in that hour of darkness, when He was led as a lamb to the slaughter. They were sample men, and in them it was demonstrated that a new spirit was needed on the part of those who were to witness for Him, a spirit, not of cowardice but of power. Hence we can understand the Lord's command to them: "Tarry ye in Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high."

This power lies in the Holy Ghost given at Pentecost, in the Holy Ghost who dwells in and with the saints of God. Then why, since this is so, is there so little power in testimony? Why is there the spirit of fear instead of power, and compromise with the world and evil instead of unflinching devotion to the Lord? The reason is not far to seek: **the Spirit of God is a grieved Spirit.**

If we are conscious that the spirit of power and love and wise discretion is feeble within us, and that we have miserably failed in these three spheres of Christian activity, what and where is the remedy? Some would turn us back to Pentecost, and put us in the position of the disciples, waiting and praying for the power of the Holy Ghost. But this will not do. We must not, we cannot, ignore the solemn fact that He came from Christ, bringing "power, love, and a sound mind" to the church, so that it might stand as a devoted witness to Christ. We cannot ignore the fact that the Holy Ghost has been slighted, that His divine presence has been largely forgotten, that fleshly wisdom, worldly schemes and much human organization have usurped the place of the one untiring and all-wise Servant of Christ's glory on earth.

Nor can we be indifferent to the fact that the church has loved ease and popularity in the world rather than the reproach of Christ; it has forgotten that its portion is on the behalf of Christ to suffer for His sake; it has left its first love; it has been corrupted and defiled; and instead of bearing the shame of Christ upon its brow as the brightest crown the world could give, it bears the shame of a faithless and dishonoured lover.

The Spirit of God is grieved because of this slight cast upon Christ, and the way of blessing and power is

to put ourselves right with regard to that which has grieved Him.

To be right with the Lord above and the Holy Ghost within there must be confession and repentance. "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent" was the Lord's word to the church; it is the voice of the Spirit in the Scriptures still; and if the church will not hear, "**he that hath an ear**" may. This is the way of recovery, a way that every saint of God may tread, for it is open to all, and is the only way that becomes us.

But to lie on our faces deploring defeat, as did Joshua, is useless (Josh. 7: 10-13). There must be activity on our part, activity in the judgment of ourselves, as to how far we have had our part in that which has grieved the Spirit, there must also be holy separation from it. **Let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."**

Space fails us to speak of the path of devotion to Christ, a path that can only be trodden by those who have received the spirit of power and love and of a sound mind, that entails certain persecution on those who tread it (3: 12), but leads to glory at last (2: 12). It is helpful, however, to trace it through Paul's second letter to Timothy, and to mark therein the stability of the things of God, and the triumph of the good soldier of Jesus Christ. We earnestly commend it to the prayerful study of our readers.

CHRIST BELONGS TO THOSE, WHO ARE LOWLY IN HEART;
NOT TO THOSE, WHO EXALT THEMSELVES OVER HIS FLOCK.

DISCIPLESHIP

J. HOUSTON

(Luke 14: 25-35)

THE subject of discipleship is not very frequently brought before us, if we neglect it, we lose a great deal that is most helpful to us in our Christian life and service. Let us consider it now, with the hope of benefitting by a brief study of those things we ought to know, if we are to be the Lord's intelligent and devoted disciples.

When the Lord first called His disciples, He said to them all He had to say in two words, "Follow Me." The disciples then were His followers. In this way they learned their lessons. They saw Him, heard Him, and obeyed Him. The teaching they received had a practical character. They did what He told them to do in simplicity of heart and with a ready mind. In this service they were happy, for His commandments were not grievous, nor was His yoke heavy.

In the scripture we have cited above, we see that at that time, "there went great multitudes with Him." It could not be said that the Lord was a popular teacher, or that He ever aimed at attracting the populace, as such, to Himself. We read of Him sending the multitudes away, after He had ministered to their bodily needs, for in no sense were the multitudes His disciples. They sought Him, that He might heal them of their diseases, or give them food to satisfy their hunger, but beyond these creature necessities they do not seem to have had any

particular desire for Him. The Lord knew this and said to them, "Ye seek Me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled" (John 6: 26).

But on this occasion the multitudes went with Him, and this gave the Lord the opportunity to give them the conditions of discipleship saying, "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple." This hating of one's own family, of one's own life, and the bearing of one's cross were the essentials of discipleship. There must be a complete break with the old life.

If we allow natural feelings and reason to sway us, as we consider these words, we shall greatly err. The Spirit of God alone can teach us what they mean, and to His teaching we submit. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3: 6). The reasonings and feelings of the flesh are fleshly, and the teaching of the Spirit is spiritual.

Peter made a great mistake when he rebuked the Lord, since He told His disciples that He must suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and

be killed; though in three days He would rise again. But the Lord severely rebuked Peter, seeing Satan behind his words for he savoured not the things of God, but the things of men. This we read in Mark 8: 31-34. Having said this to Peter, He called the people to Him as well as His disciples, and said to them, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Peter was governed by the things that are of men — a fatal error! But how easily it is done. We only need to give rein to our flesh and we run into error immediately. On the other hand, we have the flesh ruled out altogether, when we bear our cross. The cross carries the sentence of death on the flesh. Only one thing ends it — death. The cross is the power to effect it. How important then that we should have the cross continually upon us.

Then we need to learn the lessons that the Lord taught in connection with the building of the tower, and also the king going to war, but confronted by another king with twice as many men. In both cases the call is to count the cost. Not to count the cost is folly, yet how many there are who start forth as Christians without giving a thought to the responsibilities to be faced. It behoves us to quietly and carefully reckon not simply how to begin, but also how to carry on, and ultimately reach an honourable conclusion. If we do count the cost, we shall quickly realize that no power for these things is found in our flesh. The cross must rest upon us there, that we may find all our sufficiency and

power in the Spirit of God. He it is who builds up what is of God, and gives grace and strength for the conflict that is involved.

Of all this the Apostle Paul is a good example. He counted the cost and suffered the loss of all things, as he tells us in Philippians 3. He did his work well, ending it in honour and glory, He could say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4: 7). What now remained for him was the crown. The cross, when borne faithfully, secures the crown. And this is what the Lord would have us emulate, an honourable ending to the path of faith; what Peter calls, an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom.

Then again if one king were to go to war with another, he would surely count the cost, and face the facts governing the conflict. True discipleship involves conflict, and we have no sufficiency for this, save in the power of the Spirit of God. But if further it were asked, What then has the disciple of the Lord Jesus to give up? The answer we have to give in one word is, ALL. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple."

When the Lord Jesus was on earth, many would have liked to follow Him as disciples. One was rich, but when told to sell all that he had, and follow Christ, taking up his cross, he wanted to retain his riches, and so sorrowfully he went away. Another said that he would follow the Lord wherever He went, but when the Lord told him that

He had not where to lay His head, and that in consequence he would have to suffer great privations, he turned aside and abandoned the thought of becoming a disciple.

The fact of the matter is, that if we are truly disciples of the Lord Jesus, we cannot allow anything to come between us and Him, anything which would displace the supreme place which He is to have in our hearts. Has the Lord called us to follow Him? Then let us answer to His call in a worthy way, by forsaking all else, that He may have the supreme place in our hearts, that we may follow, and be with Him. He must be enthroned in our hearts, and there must be no rival there. Whether it be father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, or

even our own life, all must be left to acknowledge His supremacy and follow Him.

Then we should not think that those whom we leave, as to earthly relationships, in order to follow the Lord, are for ever lost to us. No, we get them in a better way. Not simply now, as of old, in the flesh, but rather as **in the Lord**. This is to have them in an infinitely better way. To have them in the flesh is to have them for the brief span of our earthly lives. When we hold them in the Lord, we have them for ever; not only in this life, but also in that which is to come. Set free from earthly entanglements, we truly become disciples of the Lord Jesus.

A WOMAN'S DEVOTION

L. A. ANDERSON

LET us note Mary Magdalene's three sights in the sepulchre grounds as given in John 20, verses 1, 12 and 14.

I. The Stone Taken Away. It was the first day of the week; the third day since the crucifixion, but this latter fact seems to have been entirely overlooked by Mary in her great grief. It is still dark and a burying ground is a strange place in which to be found so early: but this matters not to her who has lost the One she loved. She must find Him and look on His beloved form just once again.

She approaches the sepulchre and to her amazement, finds that the stone is already removed from its

place. Alas, someone has been there before her and taken the body away, or at least so she thinks. It only adds to her grief for she knows not where He is.

We, who live in the full blaze of the light of the resurrection of Christ can see things as they really were for we have the four gospels in our very hands. But do we realize the full significance of the stone taken away? Are we gripped by the vital fact that Christ is risen and that God was so satisfied with His work on Calvary's cross that He raised Him from the dead? Perhaps, in spite of all the light that we have in our day, we too are slow to apprehend the real meaning of the stone rolled away. His death is a glorious fact

and the foundation of all our blessing, but let us never overlook the power of His resurrection.

2. **Two Angels in White.** Without going into the interesting details as given in verses 2 to 10, we find that the next sight Mary has is of the two angels in white. She had been standing at the sepulchre for some time weeping and not knowing what to do next: if only she could find Him! In her anxiety, she takes a good look inside the sepulchre and sees the strange sight of the angels; one at the head and the other at the feet where the body of Jesus had been, waiting to give a word of comfort to any who might come. God has His Angels ready to minister to His children and Mary immediately makes known her heart's desire, she must see Him if it is at all possible. I wonder if we are anxious to find Him and to enjoy His company whilst He is away. Nothing else would satisfy her, not even the vision of angels.

3. **Jesus.** Mary is conscious of

someone standing near to her: perhaps he might be able to help her, for with her tearful eyes she does not recognize the One who says, "Woman, why weepest thou?" So she turns to the Stranger, again seeking an answer as to where the body of Jesus had been taken. Then the supposed gardener utters one word: "Mary," and a change comes over her immediately. She recognizes His voice and answers "Master." She had found the One she loved at last and she is satisfied.

He called you, perhaps, some time ago and you came to Him in all your sin, and found in Him a Saviour. But, perhaps He is calling you again, He knows your name, and He wants you to own Him as your Master, the One who would control your life.

Will you yield to His loving call and let Him hear a response from your heart? If so He will surely give you a message to take to His own as He did Mary.

"THE OBEDIENCE OF FAITH"

F. B. HOLE

IT is worthy of note that this expression, which we have taken as our title, occurs twice in the Epistle to the Romans; first in the opening verses, in connection with the Gospel, that Paul was commissioned to preach, and then again in the closing verses of the epistle, in connection with the Mystery, that he also had to make known, among all the nations.

Now the Roman saints were dwelling in the city which at that time dominated the civilized world, and imposed obedience upon the many and various peoples it had subjugated. Very easily therefore they might have been somewhat infected by the masterful spirit that surrounded them, and so have not sufficiently realized that genuine faith commits the one who possesses it to a life of

obedience. The spirit of disobedience is rampant in the world of today, so we modern Christians very much need to come face to face with the importance of obedience in the things of God.

Most of us, we venture to think, would hardly begin by linking together in our minds faith and obedience: We would more probably think of faith as producing blessing—whether salvation, or intelligence, or consolation. It may be healthful for us therefore to consider for a moment how obedience does spring out of faith, whether in connection with the Gospel or the Mystery.

The epistle to the Romans is, as doubtless we know, the orderly unfolding of the Gospel for the instruction of believers. In it we discover first of all how a just God can yet justify ungodly sinners, clearing them from all their offences and reconciling them to Himself. We read on to the latter part of chapter 5, and another matter confronts us, equally serious, if not more so. We possess fallen natures, from which all our sins have sprung. We learn that God has introduced Another—spoken of in 1 Corinthians 15 as "the Last Adam"—and we believers are identified with Him in His death and resurrection. Our "old man"—all that we were as fallen children of Adam—has been "crucified with Him" and we are now brought into His risen life. Does this impose any obligation upon us?

It clearly does. Though believers, the old Adamic nature has not been eradicated from us, and therefore we may all too easily be governed

practically by it, obeying its lusts, which are simply sin. And all the time we have been brought into this new risen life in Christ, and indwelt by His Spirit. Hence this definite instruction now reaches us, "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" or, more correctly, "in Christ Jesus."

Now this demands obedience on our part, and it must be the obedience of faith. Faith apprehends that of which the previous verse speaks; namely, that Christ "died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God." He had no sin in Him, but it was on Him, in its bitter judgment when He died on the cross; but having exhausted its judgment, in His risen life He lives to God. Now in all this we have been identified with Him through grace. Have we in faith laid hold of this? Then how shall we in faith obey it?

Obviously, by the complete reversal of our former mode of life. In our unconverted days we shared the life of the men and women of the world. We were very much alive to sin in its multifarious forms and wholly dead to God. The **reckoning** of faith sets before us the exact opposite of this: and the **obedience** of faith makes the reckoning of faith a practical reality in our lives. Were this so with all of us, and all the time, what a tremendous contrast there would be visible between the lives lived by Christians and those lived by the world that surrounds them. The practical effects of the Gospel would be very clear to all. And this is as God intends it to be.

The Mystery, which is alluded to at the end of Romans, is not expounded there, but rather in the Epistle to the Ephesians, so there we may find how the obedience of faith may be rendered in connection with it. If the opening verses of chapter 2 be carefully read, we notice that in verses 1 and 2, it is "you," — Gentiles — who are considered, whereas in verse 3, it is "we," — Jews — that are scrutinized. The verdict on both comes to the same thing, "dead in trespasses and sins." Out of both these classes some are being reached, and are "quicken . . . together with Christ," by the rich mercy of God. Now to quicken is to bestow life, and this life which is ours together with Christ is a work of new creation, as we see when we reach verse 10 of our chapter — "For we are His workmanship **created** in Christ Jesus unto good works." The word for "create" occurs again in verse 15, though there translated, "make." The enmity between Jew and Gentile is for the saints today abolished since God's present work is "to **create** in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

In Old Testament days the law demanded a rigid separation between Jew and Gentile, that the Jew might not be infected by Gentile idolatries. That a day would come when God would introduce a new creation order of things, in which this separation would be completely abolished, could not then be made known; but had to remain a "mystery," or "secret." Now however among all nations, where

the Gospel penetrates, this mystery is revealed, and the faith that receives it leads to obedience, for it imposes a responsibility upon all those brought into it by the mercy of God. Obedience is therefore required.

Take, for instance, verse 3 of chapter 4. The clashes that damaged the early Christian assemblies sprang largely from the introduction of Jewish rigidity and ceremonialism on the one hand, or Gentile laxity and intellectualism on the other: Romans 14 is a chapter that emphasizes this, as also do verses 8 and 16 of Colossians 2. In our day, nineteen centuries later, the Jewish-Gentile clash may not be so evident; but if we found ourselves in an assembly, wherein were converts from Asia and Africa, as well as from America and Britain, we should soon discover how needed is the injunction to keep "the unity of the Spirit."

This unity being the creation of the Spirit of God, we could never have made it, nor can we break it; though as a matter of practical life we may "keep" it, or we may ignore it. In the measure in which we yield the obedience of faith to that which the mystery has established and revealed, we shall be keeping it.

How we need then to stir one another up to the yielding of the obedience of faith, both to the Gospel that we have received, and the Mystery, that has been revealed to us.

BIBLE STUDY — MALACHI

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters I: 1 — 3: 2)

UNLIKE the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, who furnish us with dates in regard to their utterances, Malachi gives us no such details. It seems certain however that he wrote about a century later; hence his words reveal how little effect the ministry of these two earlier prophets had produced amongst the masses of the people in the land. As we read through the short book we shall notice that every statement the prophet has to make — usually by way of correction — is repudiated. The people and their leaders were not prepared to admit anything. They were quite self-satisfied.

Satisfied with themselves, they were dissatisfied with God. Hence when the prophet made his first assertion — “I have loved you, saith the Lord” — they challenge it at once. Many troubles afflicted the Palestinian Jews in those years, which God permitted as a chastisement, because of their state: these afflictions they resented, regarding them as harshness and contrary to love. Hence they challenged the assertion, in an insolent way, asking, “Wherein hast Thou loved us?”

The answer of God to this was to recall them to what marked His attitude and action from the beginning. He had loved Jacob and hated Esau. Human opinion would have reversed this: Jacob stooped to crooked and crafty schemes; Esau a fine manly fellow. Yes, but the “birthright,” which carried with it, we believe, the advent of the Messiah, meant so little to Esau, that he sold it for a bowl of pottage,

whereas Jacob esteemed it of highest worth. Here we have perhaps the earliest forecast that, “What think ye of Christ” is the test.

Now God maintained His attitude of judgment against Esau, as verses 4 and 5 show, and thus magnified Himself “beyond the border of Israel” (New Trans.). But, on the contrary, Israel had been brought into relationship with God, who in regard to them had taken a father’s place, as verse 6 shows. Love had established this relationship. How had they acted as to it?

To them God was both Father and Master. Both honour and fear should have been His, and yet the very priests had despised His name. They should have been the very first to have revered His name, and have acted consistently with it. They had not done so, and this brought the hand of God in government against them. They treated this as a denial of His original love towards their nation.

But it was not so. Nor are the fatherly chastisements that come upon His saints today, any denial of His love, as Hebrews 12: 6 plainly declares. Let us remember this, and never ask, when trying circumstances arise — If God loves me, why does He send, or permit this?

In Malachi’s day the priests did not for one moment admit the charge laid against them. They repudiated it, saying, “Wherein have we despised Thy name?” This

brought forth a more specific accusation as to their offering "polluted bread" upon God's altar; and verse 8 gives further details as to this. The kind of offerings they were bringing meant that they treated "the table of the Lord" as "contemptible." It was not, we judge, that they were saying this in so many words, but that was what their actions declared; for, as we know, actions speak louder than words, and God knows perfectly how to interpret them.

The fact was that they were offering to God animals that they would never present to a secular governor; and further, as verse 10 shows, they expected to make some material gain for the simplest things they did in the temple service. They were putting their own things first and treating God's service as subservient to themselves. Has this no voice for us? We believe it has very definitely. The flesh in each of us would naturally and easily put our own earthly interests first, and treat "the kingdom of God and His righteousness" as something that may conveniently fill up any little gaps left as we pursue our own things. It is all too easy to forget the Lord's words in Matthew 6: 32.

Through the prophet God made it plain that though they profaned His name, He would yet make it "great" as we see in verse 11, and that even among the heathen, whom they so greatly despised. When the wise and mighty utterly fail, God takes up the weak and despised to achieve His ends, as is stated so clearly in 1 Corinthians 1: 26-29. And what about the fulfilment of this predic-

tion? It will be literally fulfilled in the coming millennial age, but we can make a spiritual application even today. We have humbly to admit that many of us, easy-going, English-speaking Christians, living amid luxuries, may have to take a back seat in the coming Kingdom of reward, compared with simple saints — often but babes in Christ — who live and die for their faith under Communist or Romish persecution.

The three verses that close this chapter again bring home the evils that were prevalent. Twice further the prophet charges home upon them what they were saying — "The table of the Lord is polluted," and also, as to the service rendered, "What a weariness is it!" They themselves had polluted it, and if the heart be not in God's service, what a weariness it can become! To have "a form of godliness" without the "power," leads to all the evils delineated in 2 Timothy 3: 1-5. We must never forget the closing words of the chapter. In Christ God is known to us as the God of all grace, but at the same time He is "a great King," and His name is "dreadful," or "to be revered," among the nations. His grace does not cancel out His majesty; indeed His majesty enhances His grace.

Chapter 2 continues the solemn warnings that have been occupying us. The priests, who were, so to speak, the finest specimens of the tribe of Levi, are further denounced for their sinful practices, and warned that already a curse lay upon them. They are reminded in verses 4-6, of God's original covenant with that tribe, when for a time they

answered to it and walked suitably before their God. Now all was sadly changed. As ever, God viewed their defection in the light of the original calling and behaviour. How do we stand? we may well ask, in the light of the original calling and behaviour of the church, as we see it in the opening chapters of the Acts. Another matter to search our hearts very deeply.

Another very serious thing about the priests of those days comes to light in verses 7 and 8. The priest was intended to be a "messenger," who should possess a knowledge of the law, and so be able to convey it to the masses of the people. Though the "law of truth" was in the mouth of Levi at the outset, it was not so in Malachi's day. It was departed from the hearts and lips of the priests. They were not only out of the way themselves, but they were a cause of stumbling, leading many others out of the way. Thus they had corrupted God's original covenant with their tribe.

Once again we have to note how God always reverts to that which He establishes at the beginning. Man's beginnings are imperfect. His inventions are crude at the outset, and improved as time goes on. God establishes that which is perfect in its time and place. If men think to improve, they actually only deface. In the things of God today, let us remember this. As soon as departure from the faith of Christ became manifest, the Spirit of God began to emphasize "that which was from the beginning," as John's epistles show. Amid the confusions of Christendom we are on safe and

right ground if we revert to the simplicity, both in faith and in practice, of that which was divinely established at the outset of the dispensation.

Verses 9-13 that follow, show how departure from God's purpose and plan had disorganized and corrupted all behaviour amongst the people themselves. The priests had become contemptible in the popular view, and false dealing abounded amongst the people. Idolatry crept in, and the holiness of the Lord outraged. When this brought down God's judgment upon them, there was much outcry and covering the altar with tears, but this was not real repentance, but only a protest against their troubles. Hence God paid no regard to it.

This disregard on God's part was an offence to them, and they in petulant fashion asked, "Wherefore?" This led to a more specific charge being laid against them. There was much marital infidelity: much putting away of their wives in treacherous fashion, in disregard of God's original purpose in making both man and his wife to be one. Here once more we see that God's original design stands unshaken, no matter how far it may be forsaken and forgotten. We also see that when God is ignored and His things forgotten, confusion soon ensues as to our own things.

We have to notice also that when evil of this sort is allowed, it not only spreads but persists. When some centuries later our Lord was on earth, the Pharisees came with the question, "Is it lawful for a man

to put away his wife for every cause?" (Matt. 19: 3), which infers that these loose practices were still common. We know how our Lord referred them at once to what God established at the beginning.

Having read thus far, the last verse of chapter 2 does not surprise us. They had indeed wearied the Lord with their words, refusing to admit any charge that had to be brought against them, but rather challenging the accusation in very insolent fashion. But even this remonstrance they met in the same self-satisfied way, asking, "Wherein have we wearied Him?" They were not prepared to admit anything. They would rather cast an aspersion on God Himself.

So the prophet is led to bring home the charge against them in two specific ways. First, there were those who sought to make God to be, so to speak, a partner in their evil, as though He approved of it, treating as good that which was evil. This is a religious trick, not uncommon, we fear, in our day. All too many would claim they are serving God and pleasing Him in practising things wholly astray from His truth. The priests and people, that Malachi addressed, were religious folk, and this is an evil specially seen in the religious sphere.

But then again, there were others, who did not attempt to make God a partner in their evil. They were less crafty, but more bold. They apparently challenged God's judgment, when He by the prophet challenged them. Their question, "Where is the God of judgment?"

may not have insinuated that He had no right to judge, but rather that He had not exercised His right of judgment in the matters that were in question. Whatever was their exact meaning, they evidently endeavoured to thrust God, and His word, out of the whole matter. The spirit, that lay behind this form of reasoning in self-defence, is not dead in our day.

The full answer to all this appears, as we commence to read chapter 3. God Himself was going to intervene in a very personal way. In the first verse we have in the first place, "My messenger," or "angel." "He is to prepare the way before Me;" the "Me" here evidently being Jehovah. Then, thirdly, there is the "Lord," or "Master," who is the "Messenger," or "Angel of the covenant;" clearly distinguished from the angel first mentioned. In this very close way the coming Messiah is identified with the Jehovah who sends Him. In this remarkable verse the two advents are predicted, though not clearly distinguished: a feature we also see in Isaiah 61: 2. At His first advent the messenger sent in advance was clearly John the Baptist, who prepared the way of the Lord, and came in the spirit and power of Elijah, though not the Elijah of which Malachi 4: 5 speaks, for he is to come before the great and dreadful day of the Lord in judgment. John came after the fashion of Elijah, but before the coming of the Messiah in grace, who is the Master, identified here with Jehovah.

Suddenly to His temple the "Lord," the "Master" came. And

He was the One in whom they delighted, as a matter of theory, in expectation, though, when He did appear, they saw no beauty in Him, that they should desire Him, as Isaiah had predicted. Hence He was rejected and crucified, as we know; though that is not predicted here. In contrast thereto our thoughts are turned at once to His second advent, when He will be like fire and soap in their testing and cleansing power, and who will then be able to stand before Him? He will then be in majesty on the throne, and not standing as the Prisoner in Pilate's judgment hall.

So, as we said, both advents are here predicted; and the exact fulfilment of the first part gives us the assurance that the second part will in its season be fulfilled with equal exactitude.

In Malachi's day this was not apparent, and the point to the people of his time was that things would be brought to an issue, and their state judged by an intervention of God, such as they had never before known. All their hypocritical self-satisfaction would collapse, and reality be brought to light when He appeared.

It may be profitable now to digress a little and point out two things. First, let us observe that behind all this state of things so clearly manifested, lay the work of the adversary, making it certain that when Christ came in grace, He would be rejected. A few centuries passed and the state of things exposed by Malachi, developed into, the Phariseeism and Sadduceeism,

exposed in the Gospels and in the Acts. The former ardently followed a religion of outward observances; the latter favoured something of a more intellectual type, and therefore were unbelieving as to certain things that did not appeal to their reason. Both therefore were absolutely self-confident as to their own position, and bitterly resented anything that undermined it. The spirit that we see among priests and people in Malachi's day was so intensified, that when the Messiah did arrive His coming was no joy to them. This we see in Matthew 2: 3. That an evil king like Herod should be troubled, when tidings of His birth came by the wise men from the east, need not surprise us. But look at the words, "and all Jerusalem with him." Let us each underline in our minds that word, "all." It evidently signifies — Pharisees and Sadducees included. True, these religious men had a knowledge of their Scriptures, for they could at once quote Micah 5: 2, in reply to Herod's demand. Yet the only practical use made of their knowledge was to furnish Herod with an opportunity to kill the infant Messiah. There is no record of their doing anything about it, or welcoming Him.

There was of course a work of God, going on amongst the people in Malachi's day, as we shall presently see, and this worked out also, and was maintained till the coming of Christ as we see in the lovely picture of devout souls, who gladly received Him, given us in the opening of Luke's gospel. Through the years however these were few in number and comparatively unknown.

There is a second thing we ask our readers to observe. This strain of self-satisfied complacency, that resents and repudiates all criticism, evident in Malachi's day, and more decisively manifested when Christ came, is predicted in Revelation 3, as characterizing the end of the church's history. We refer to the Laodicean church, that felt itself to be so "rich, and increased with goods," doubtless of a spiritual sort, as well as a material, that they had "need of nothing." To have need of nothing is for all practical purposes to lay claim to perfection, and therefore to be beyond all criticism; and bitterly to resent it, if offered, even as they had begun to do when Malachi prophesied.

And let us note another feature. The outward ruin of Israel fairly started when "that woman Jezebel" was married to Ahab, and nearly diverted the ten tribes to the worship of Baal. Then with the two tribes there was that time of deadness Godward in the days of Jeremiah, ended by the captivity. And then the mercy of God, permitting a remnant to return to the land and re-establish the temple worship, and amongst these were a number of really godly and devout souls. It was amongst that remnant that the evils, we have had before us, had developed.

Now notice a painful analogy. It may not be very pronounced and distinct, but it is there nevertheless. The addresses to the seven churches give us a prophetic outline of "things which must shortly come to pass," as Revelation 1:1 states; and when we reach the latter part of chapter 2, we find "that woman Jezebel," dominating things in the Thyatira

stage. And this is followed by the spiritual death that marked Sardis. And then some measure of recovery in Philadelphia, not anything great, for their strength was "little," and they had the rather negative virtues of keeping the word of the Lord, when others were forsaking it, and of not denying His name, when others were doing so.

But then comes Laodicea. If God has granted a measure of recovery during the last century or two, and some of us have entered into a heritage of spiritual blessing, let us beware of this Laodicean spirit of self-occupation and self-conceit, which so naturally would entangle us. Today we have not only the high-class intellectualist, who believes he has a modernistic version of Christianity, which is beyond all criticism, but also a mystical type, great on the experimental side of things, who feel they have entered into something which is also beyond all criticism. They feel "rich" because they increase in "goods," in the form of increased light and further revelations.

We see the Laodicean delusion, if we may so call it, beginning in the days of Malachi. It is sadly evident in our day, and hence we need to be warned against it, for it is a deep-seated tendency of the flesh, which is in every one of us. The more worldly minded believer may be tempted to glory in wisdom or nobility, and the more spiritually minded to glory in spiritual experiences, imagined or real, but the only safe ground of boasting is that stated by the Apostle Paul, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 1:31).

KEEPING THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT

F. B. HOLE

DURING the first twenty years of the Christian era, we find, as related in the Acts of the Apostles, circumstances arising which seriously imperilled the oneness of heart and soul which so happily marked believers at the beginning. The occasions were these:—

1. The murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews (chapter 6).
2. The gathering out of the church from amongst the Samaritans (chapter 8).
3. The conversion of the first Gentiles — Cornelius and his friends (chapters 10 and 11).
4. The controversy as to the law of Moses and the Gentiles (chapter 15).

In each case we see how the disruptive forces at work were checked and defeated, and a brief survey of them may not be without its usefulness for us today.

Two things stand out prominently, and must be carefully distinguished. First, the wisdom of God, that wrought providentially behind the scenes; second, the grace and wisdom of the apostles and early Christians, which was the human element in the case.

As to the former we can only observe it with wonder, and pray that at the present time, when disruption has been so sadly achieved, a like providence may yet be operative towards God's saints. As to the

latter, let us note and inwardly digest with exercised consciences, that at least we may learn how better to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4: 3). We shall thereby prove afresh how these God-breathed Scriptures are profitable "for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

I. The murmuring of the Grecians.

All the disputants in this case were Jews nationally. The only differences were matters of upbringing and tradition. The Grecians, or Greek-speaking Jews, whose ancestors had for long been outside the boundaries of Palestine, naturally had a different view of things from the Hebrew-speaking Jews, who had been carefully guarded in the land under the strictest regime. Suspicions therefore were easily excited and quickly expressed. The matter in question was wholly of a mundane order.

The workings of God's providence in this case are not clearly manifested. The human side, however, is distinct enough. We would specify three things.

First, the apostles dealt with the difficulty, as soon as it was apparent. They did not wait for it to spread and grow. "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!"

Second, they would not suffer themselves to be diverted from their great work of ministering the word by any such dissensions, but cast the responsibility of a godly settlement upon the whole body of saints.

Third, the believers at large recognized that it was an occasion to express and confirm their interest in these Grecians, who were more or less strangers in their midst, and hence chose as overseers men whose names indicate that they were mainly selected from the Greek-speaking saints. Unselfishness triumphed. Suspicions were allayed.

2. The work at Samaria.

No dissension was actually manifest here. It was a case of prevention rather than of cure. The antipathy between Jew and Samaritan was of long standing. Such Scriptures as 2 Kings 17: 24-41, and John 4, enlighten us as to it. With these before us, it is easy to see how Philip's very successful evangelistic labours opened up a dangerous question. On the one hand, the church in Jerusalem might wish to repudiate any real connection with believers from amongst their despised rivals. On the other hand, it would have been natural for the Samaritan church to have nursed its own feelings, and refused to be in any way guided by the authority of the apostles at Jerusalem. In this way the scandal of division might early have appeared in the form of a Samaritan "church" and a Jerusalem "church."

In contrast with the first occasion, the main thing mentioned in this chapter is the providential working of God. Philip preached, many believed and were baptised, but no Holy Spirit was given. The usual procedure was in this case suspended, and it was not until the two apostles came upon the scene, with prayer and laying on of their hands

— symbolic of the identification of the apostles and the Jerusalem saints with the believers in Samaria — that the Holy Spirit was given. By this simple variation on God's part it became out of the question for the Jewish saints to repudiate the Samaritan, or the Samaritan to declare their independence of the Jewish.

On the human side we have only to notice the fact that the apostles were subject to the leading of God. They did not attempt to give rein to natural prejudices by denouncing Philip as irregular in his proceedings, or seizing upon the absence of the gift of the Spirit, as a reason for discounting, if not entirely disowning, the whole work at Samaria. They bowed to the sovereign grace of God, and selected from their number, to go to Samaria, two who ranked amongst the very chief of the apostles — Peter and John.

3. The conversion of Cornelius.

This was perhaps an even more critical moment than the foregoing, inasmuch as the Jewish feelings in regard to Gentiles were far more pronounced than against the Samaritans.

The providential actions of God were many. The angelic messenger to Cornelius; the vision granted to Peter; the instantaneous giving of the Spirit upon reception of the Gospel, without baptism having taken place, as was the case with the Jew in Acts 2, which rendered it impossible for any Jew, however great his natural prejudices, to forbid the baptism and formal reception of these Gentile believers. All

these show us how God was at work, manipulating events so that every barrier, which might have withstood the thorough fusion of both Jew and Gentile in the one body of Christ, was swept away.

On the human side the outstanding feature was the action of Peter, in taking "certain brethren from Joppa" (10: 23), "these six brethren" (11: 12), with him.

By this wise act he not only made sure that there was ample witness of what really transpired, but he did away with any suspicion that he acted behind the backs of his brethren. There was nothing underhand, no attempt to settle a thorny question apart from fellowship with his brethren.

The effect of this is seen in chapter II. When in conference at Jerusalem certain brethren of extremely circumscribed views raised difficulties, the evidence was so conclusive that they ended by admitting God's work amongst the Gentiles, and glorifying God for it.

4. The controversy as to the Law.

This was perhaps the most dangerous crisis of all. Though Gentiles were admitted into the fellowship and privileges of the church, yet there were many Jewish believers who wished to maintain a Judaized or legalized form of Christianity, and therefore to Judaize the Gentile converts. This was stoutly resisted by Paul and those with him.

Galatians 2: 1-5, throws light upon this occasion, showing how

uncompromising Paul was because he saw that vital truth was at stake. It shows also the working of God's providence inasmuch as it was "by revelation," that Paul went up to Jerusalem about this matter. The church at Antioch "determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them should go up" (Acts 15: 2); but behind the scenes was that revelation to Paul, which was the governing factor.

On the human side we notice three things:—

First, the obedience of Paul and his companions to the revelation. They might naturally have felt that they were throwing away their case — which they knew to be right and of extreme importance — by consenting to go for a settlement into the city where the influence of their opponents was so great. They waived all natural feelings and calculations, and **obeyed**.

Second, free but sober **discussion** was allowed. The case was freely stated on both sides. No attempt to score points, by descending to a level sometimes displayed by barristers arguing in law courts, is recorded. There was much discussion, as verse 7 states. The truth is great, and therefore it fears no investigation.

Finally, Peter cited **facts** and James cited **Scripture**, and then stated his judgment, founded upon both, to which judgment all those present agreed. Facts, and Scripture which interpreted the facts, carried the day. There was no appeal from these things. They were conclusive, and to them all bowed.

Is it not evident that had similar wise procedure been followed, aided by similar desires for the unity of the saints of God as members of the body of Christ, the history of the church through the centuries would have been very different from what it has been?

And is it not equally evident, that even though the history of the church has been so full of failure and disruption, our responsibility to keep the unity of the Spirit still remains, and that these Scriptures may help to make us wise, unto salvation from further disruptive tendencies?

“OCCUPY TILL I COME”

J. T. MAWSON

Extracts from an article that appeared in “Scripture Truth” about fifty years ago.

AN educated Hindu visited a missionary in India, and said to him, “We have found you Christians out. You are not as good as your Book.” As I read the story, it arrested me, and I asked myself the question, “If the Hindu came to that conclusion after watching the life of a devoted missionary, what would he say, if he could see us in the home lands?”

The Book speaks of, “joy unspeakable and full of glory;” how much of that do Christians know? It assures us that we may be “more than conquerors through Him that loved us;” but is this the life that we are living? In it we find the Christian life described as one of devoted, joyful, self-sacrificing service. Are our lives this? Alas! we have to confess that there is a sad disparity between the Book and the lives we live. One reason for this, perhaps the chiefest, is that we have but feebly realized that we are the servants of an absent Lord. The privileges and the responsibilities of this position have not fully laid hold of our souls, and in consequence we live

too much to ourselves, which means a joyless and barren existence.

This responsibility is disclosed to us in the parable of the “pounds,” which we have in Luke 19: 11-27. It should be observed that it was while they heard “these things,” that the Lord propounded the parable. The previous verse gives us these things, “The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” It is as on this gracious mission that the Lord is revealed to us in the Gospel of Luke. There is,

No true service without salvation

But if He came to seek and save the lost, it was that He might send them out when found and saved to do business for Him during His absence, even as He did His Father’s business when here. This is the life’s business of every saved person.

Let us rightly consider this matter. He came to seek and save us; for this He gave Himself; yea, suffered the unspeakable anguish of Calvary, and passed into the darkness of

death, in order to accomplish this purpose of immortal love. The only right answer that we can give to Him for this, is to yield ourselves to Him as His bondservants for ever. He knew that when we rightly understood His love to us we should desire to do this; that it would be a positive luxury to us to serve Him: to do business for Him while He is away, and until He comes again; and knowing this, He has given to each of us a "pound."

"But His citizens hated Him."

Our service is in the world that hates Him. Let us not attempt to disguise or reason away this sad fact: the citizens of it said, "We will not have this Man to reign over us;" and that decision has never been reversed. We must face this in order to gauge our position with regard to the world. It hates the One who loves us, and we are called to do business for Him in it. If it hates Him, and we are true to Him, it will hate us too, and in it, trading as His representatives, we shall be confronted by opposition, and have to endure tribulation. The Lord's own words, recorded in John 15: 18-25, record this. It is useless to plead that the world has improved since then; it may have become more adept at veneration of the surface of things; but it is still the world that hated and rejected Christ; and if we have not experienced its hatred and contempt, it is because we have not been faithful to Him.

"He called His ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds."

It is important now to see that He has committed to us the wherewithal

for our service. He has given to each of His servants a pound wherewith to trade. It is not here a question of talents, as in Matthew 25, where one received more than another, but one pound to each servant. You may be very small as a servant, but to you has a pound been given, as well as to those who appear great and gifted, and you are responsible to be active with it as well as they are. God is presented to us in the Gospel of Luke as glorious in His grace, and this has shone into our hearts from the face of Jesus Christ, as we read in 2 Corinthians 4: 6, 7.

What a golden pound is this! What a precious treasure to bear about with us — the knowledge of God! Christian, consider it well. You can say, "I know God. He has been revealed to me in the glory of His grace by the Lord Jesus Christ. I go out, carrying this priceless treasure in my heart into the world that does not know Him, to put it into circulation for the glory of Christ — not to keep it hidden within my own consciousness, but to let it shine forth, to pass it on to others, that they may be enriched as I have been, and that this treasure may increase in the earth." Would not such a thought, if constantly present with us, add a dignity to our lives? Would it not make us feel that here was something to live for? Would it not make us diligent to hold forth the word of life, and to shine as lights in the world — Philipians 2: 15, 16?

This is our matchless privilege, but it is also our responsibility; our Lord has the right to command us, and it

is that we might attend to His business that He has saved us. Our responsibility abides, and the day is coming when our Lord will call us to account, as to how much we have gained by trading with this pound.

“ Occupy till I come.”

Evidently then this is the chief business of our lives. We are not here, in the first place, to be mechanics, shopkeepers or professional men, to guide the house or rear the children, much less to live lives of selfish ease; but to trade for our absent Lord. We may be able to put the pound out to the best rate of interest as we follow our business, and guide the home. But this will only be as in these things we serve the Lord Christ. It may be, on the other hand, that He would have some of us to carry the pound with us in diligent labour for Him, into the streets and lanes of the city, or into the highways and hedges, where the fallen and lost stray and sin and hide; or it may be His will that others should go far afield to heathen lands: in these things He must direct and command; it is ours to obey, to serve and to trade.

I have heard of some who claimed to have retired from the ministry; but here is a ministry from which none have the right to retire, for to each of His servants He has said, “ Occupy till I come.” These are solemn words for our consideration, and especially so when we remember how much of the past time has been wasted in selfish pursuits, how much of it is lost time; but they are also words that should act as a powerful tonic for our souls for the future, for they tell us that our Lord is coming

again, and of what He expects of us meanwhile. Yes, He is coming again; we shall see Him whom, having not seen, we love; and what will that mean to us?

The day of reckoning

When He comes His servants will be called unto Him, that He may know how much every man has gained by trading. As we think of this side of His coming serious and solemn thoughts possess us, for we must feel how poorly we have used our opportunities.

Yet there is here encouragement for us, for we find that one servant had gained ten pounds by his trading, and why should we not be like him? Ten seems to stand in the Scriptures for the measure of the Lord's demands from men — see, ten commandments — and we may conclude that there is grace with our Lord for us, to enable us to render a full return to Him in that which He has committed to us. If there is any failure it is on our side. But everything, be it much or little, will be rightly appraised by Him, and nothing done for Him shall lose its reward.

A Servant who knew not the Lord

But one servant hid his pound in a napkin; it was something, perhaps of which he was ashamed, for the Gospel of God is folly to the wise men of the earth. So he put it out of sight, and if he did any business at all he did it with his own base coin, and for his own enrichment. He was servant by profession, and in name only; he did not know the Master; his own confession proves

this, though he imagined that he did know Him when he said, "I feared Thee, because Thou art an austere man."

Is the Lord a hard Master, reaping where He has never sown, and demanding where He has never given? Who amongst all of us who know Him will give Him such a character? Nay, we have other things to say of Him: we have proved Him to be exactly the reverse of this. Knowing Him as we do, we must conclude that the man who spoke thus knew Him not. He

was a wicked servant, who neither appreciated the pound nor loved the Master who gave it.

We do well to test ourselves. Do we know the Lord, and appreciate the pound entrusted to us? If we do, we are trading with it. But the time is short. Let us confess the failure of the past, and seek grace and power to fill up the future for Himself alone. As we receive from Him, we can trade for Him, and the world will not be stumbled by the grave inconsistencies that often have lain between us and our Book.

"THE FATHER LOVETH THE SON" L. A. ANDERSON

THIS is a brief statement of fact and its meaning is perfectly clear to all who read it. What struck me recently however is that it is repeated, the words being found in John 3: 35 and then in John 5: 20. Apart altogether from quotations in the New Testament from the Old there are quite a large number of instances of sentences being repeated. This very fact would appear that such statements must be of very great importance. We use the same idea ourselves in our day and the Holy Spirit of God adopts the same principle when communicating to us in the Holy Scriptures.

In Old Testament times when God wanted to draw attention to the importance of redemption and substitution he called "**Abraham, Abraham**" (Gen. 22: 11). When, in spite of Jacob's crooked character, God wanted to convey the fact that He would bless his creatures quite apart from any merits on their part

He called "**Jacob, Jacob**" (Gen. 46: 2). Again when God wished to point to His holiness without which no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12: 14). He called out of the burning bush "**Moses, Moses**" (Exod. 3: 4). Finally before bringing down His judgment on Eli's household He called "**Samuel, Samuel**" (1 Sam. 3: 10). These four points are of vital importance if we are to understand God's character, namely:—

1. Without shedding of blood there can be no remission of sin.
2. That God is bent on blessing mankind.
3. Whilst God is love He is also absolutely Holy in character.
4. That judgment must surely fall though God waits in mercy before it falls.

Similarly there are four repetitions of names or titles used by the Lord Jesus as revealed by the writers of the Gospels with which we are not now immediately concerned.

God attaches immense importance to the statement at the head of this article "the Father loveth the Son" and surely God desires His children to ponder the truth of it, the matter is worthy of our consideration. So deep is the Father's love to His Son that it is stated that He "hath given all things into His hand" (John 3: 35). Whereas man utterly failed in all that was committed to his care Christ has fulfilled everything to God's satisfaction. A little further in the same gospel we read that "the Father loveth the Son and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth" (John 5: 20).

Moreover, we read that God "hath committed all judgment" unto the Son (John 5: 22). God has placed His entire confidence in His Son in every way.

The three evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke all record the voice from heaven saying "This is my

beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" on the occasion of the Lord's baptism. These same three evangelists also record the story of the transfiguration, when again the heavens were opened and a voice is heard saying "This is my beloved Son, hear Him."

I am convinced that if we pondered that sublime statement **the Father loveth the Son** more thoughtfully we should see John 3: 16 stand out in all its grandeur and magnificence, realizing at the same time more what it cost God to give up His Son in order that we might be saved. Then when we came together on the Lord's day, to remember Him in His death, we should come in a more reverential attitude and more full of praise and worship. May God help each one of us to think more often of God's thoughts as to His beloved Son.

"NOT I, BUT CHRIST"

"Not I, but Christ" be honoured, loved, exalted;
 "Not I, but Christ" be seen, be known, be heard;
 "Not I, but Christ" in every look and action,
 "Not I, but Christ" in every thought and word.

"Not I, but Christ" to gently soothe in sorrow,
 "Not I, but Christ" to wipe the falling tear:
 "Not I, but Christ" to lift the weary burden;
 "Not I, but Christ" to hush away all fear.

"Not I, but Christ" in lowly, silent labour;
 "Not I, but Christ" in humble, earnest toil:
 Christ, only Christ! no show, no ostentation;
 Christ, none but Christ, the Gatherer of the spoil.

Christ, only Christ, ere long will fill my vision;
 Glory excelling soon, full soon I'll see —
 Christ, only Christ, my every wish fulfilling,
 Christ, only Christ, my All in All to be.

BIBLE STUDY — MALACHI

F. B. HOLE

(Chapters 3: 3 — 4: 6).

THE first verse of our chapter, as we saw, has in it predictions that found a fulfilment at the first advent of Christ. The second and third verses however make it clear that the main emphasis is on His second coming. Then it is that the fire of the refiner will come into action with purifying effect, and this means judgment as verse 5 states. The bringing of the advents together is not unusual in Old Testament prophecy. Take the later chapters of Isaiah for instance, where the humbled "Servant" of Jehovah and the mighty "Arm" of Jehovah, achieving His purpose, come before us. Chapter 53, which predicts the sufferings of the Servant, begins by asking, "To whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed?" In other words, "Who identifies the glorious and irresistible Arm with the despised and humbled Servant?" This was not so plain in the days when the prophets spoke; but very plain in ours; so that we can all reply—Thank God, we do with joy identify them.

What His second advent will accomplish is stated in verses 4 and 5. There will be first a work of purification, and at last the offerings of a restored people will be pure and acceptable, as it had been at the beginning. The "fuller's soap" will have had its effect. So also the "refiner's fire" will have come into action judging and removing all the sins and evils, then so prevalent among the people. The fear of God

will be established in every heart, and express itself in life.

And the guarantee of all this is found in verse 6. It is the unchangeable character of Jehovah. We might have expected the next words to be, "Therefore ye sons of Jacob **must be consumed**;" but they are just the opposite. God exercises much forbearance, and He has power to reach His own purpose in the end. The Apostle Paul asks the question, "Hath God cast away His people?" and he at once answers, "God forbid" (Rom. 11: 1). At the time of the second advent judgment will fall on the Jew, yet a godly remnant of the "sons of Jacob," will be preserved and blessed. The same thing of course is true today.

In verse 7 the prophet returns to his earlier theme, and lays against them the general charge of having departed from God and His Word, with the promise, if they returned to Him, He would return to them. The charge was most apparently true, yet they did not admit it, but rather called it in question. Again they resented and repudiated these words. So, in verse 8, the prophet brings against them a specific charge. They robbed God, by withholding that which was His due, according to the law.

Did they admit this? No. Once more they challenged the accusation. They had to be told that "tithes

and offerings" had been withheld, and so what should have been given to God had been spent on themselves. This it was that brought a curse upon them in the government of God. At the opening of Haggai's prophecy we saw how their ancestors were doing the same kind of thing, though perhaps on a smaller scale, when they stopped the building of the house of the Lord, and started the building of nice houses for themselves. In both cases the practice was to give the first place to their own things, and then any surplus to be given to God.

And what is the practice in Christendom today; and even among true Christians? We fear that very similar charge could be maintained against all too many of us. Small wonder then, if we see but small result from the work in which we do engage.

Thus they had been robbing God, and the prophet had to confront them with this solemn fact. But he also was authorized to assure them that if they reversed their practice and gave to God His due, there would open "the windows of heaven" and pour out more than they could receive. The emphasis here is of course on material things for as the Apostle tells us, God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph. 3: 20). So there is no limit on His side, though such failure, and so often, on our side.

The delightful state of things promised in verses 11 and 12, will only be reached in the age to come, when Christ returns, for only then

will God be fully acknowledged and His claims fully met. Palestine will at last be a "delightful land," when Christ is on the throne. In Malachi's day things were different, and the people in their spirits far from God. This comes before us once more, and for the last time in verses 13 and 14.

Their words had indeed been "stout" against the Lord, as this short book bears abundant witness. Yet they did not admit even this. If we have counted rightly, the prophet cites what they were saying no less than twelve times, and of these twelve no less than eight were cases of priests and people indignantly repudiating the accusation that God had to bring against them. They were not prepared to admit anything, and resented the words of God. They would not even admit that they had resented and repudiated the truth.

If we glance at such scriptures as Jeremiah 2: 30; 6: 3; 7: 28; and Zephaniah 3: 2; we find that a similar spirit prevailed among the people in Jerusalem just before its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. They who refuse "correction," thereby claim to be all they should be. In Malachi's day, as we are seeing, all correction was being refused; and the same thing meets us in Revelation 3, since Laodicea is so rich as to have need of nothing, and therefore no need of correction. So again we have to remind ourselves of our danger in this direction, which is specially acute as we draw near to the end of the church's history.

The disastrous effects of this spirit

we see in verses 14 and 15. The people had been serving God in this official and ceremonial way, and they felt they got nothing out of it in the form of material gain, which was what they wanted. Hence their sense of real values was entirely perverted. In their view to be proud was to be "happy;" and evil amongst them became exalted. This is just what we see in the record of the Gospels; the proud Pharisee was accounted the happy man. Because of this, when on the mountain the Lord "opened His mouth and taught," the very first of His beatitudes was, "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5: 3). To be "poor in spirit" is the exact opposite to being proud in spirit, as the leaders were in Malachi's day, as well as in the day when Christ came; and we fear it is not absent in our day also.

In verse 16 we find something more in keeping with our Lord's beatitude. Amidst all this proud self-conceit and intolerance of correction, there was found a godly remnant, who are characterized as "they that feared the Lord." This "fear" produced a reverence for God and His will, that made Him the governing factor in their lives. This at once put them into complete contrast with the mass of priests and people, that surrounded them.

Certain features that marked these pious folk are given, and we find them very instructive. The fear of the Lord was the fundamental thing, but this led them to think "upon His name." They recognized that they were a people called into re-

lationship with Jehovah, according to the way He had revealed Himself to their fathers, and they were therefore responsible to live lives in keeping with the revelation made, so that His name might be honoured. Consequently, they could be acknowledged as "righteous," and as serving God, as verse 18 shows.

These features, we have just noticed, were Godward, but they led to a happy state of things manward; that is, among themselves. They did not remain as a number of isolated units, but recognized each other and sought one another's company for spiritual help and encouragement. This they did "often," and their intercourse was of so good a character that though it has not been recorded on earth, a heavenly record has been kept. No small honour this!

We turn to the opening chapters of Luke's Gospel, and we find that though several centuries have passed a godly remnant still persists. And here we are permitted to read a few of their utterances. Let us take as a sample what old Anna spoke about when she went visiting "all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" — they could not have been a very great number; could they? — her theme was this, "she spake of HIM." The advent of the long looked-for Messiah was her only theme.

Once again we may turn to Revelation 3, for in the address to the assembly at Philadelphia we find similar good features appearing. Though having only a little strength they too had kept the word of the

Lord and had not denied His name — and the name, in the light of which they walked, went in its claims beyond anything known in Malachi's day, or even in the day when Anna spake of Him.

It is an encouragement to know that however dark the day, God will maintain a witness to Himself. Let us seek grace and humility from God to be within that witness today; for, as this scripture shows, it is of value in His eyes. A day is coming when these obscure, unknown saints of Malachi's day are going to be owned as "Mine," by the Lord of hosts and that will take place when He will "make up My jewels;" the inference being that He will count even them, as being jewels in His sight. A person might point to a casket of jewels and tell us they are but small pieces of stone. Yes, we should reply, but they possess the property of reflecting light, and sparkling in various hues as it is turned upon them. The figure therefore is an apt one, for the saints of God are partakers of the divine nature, and so have the capacity to reflect the light into which they are brought. In Revelation 21, the foundations of the heavenly city are precious stones, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

But the day when the Lord of hosts makes up His jewels will be a day of discrimination, and therefore of judgment as well as blessing. This comes clearly to light as we commence to read the last chapter of this short prophecy. The earth is of course in view, and when judgment does arrive it will be final and complete. Neither root nor branch will

be left as far as the wicked are concerned. The Sun of righteousness will arise to exterminate the wicked, while He will bring healing and full blessing to those who fear His name.

In the Old Testament the Lord Jesus — the coming One — has been presented under a variety of beautiful figures; this closing figure comes home to us all, we trust, with singular force. He who has read through the 39 books, up to this point, has certainly surveyed a very dark scene with here and there little patches of light. We now close with the promise of God's resplendent day, introduced by the rising of the "Sun," in whom all true light is concentrated, and who is specially to be the display of, and the enforcer of, righteousness in perfection. In a world ruined by sin everything is **wrong**: hence if an order of things is to be established according to God, the first consideration must be what is **right**. This is seen even in the Gospel that we preach today, as expounded in the epistle of the Romans. Paul was not ashamed of the Gospel since it is the power of God unto salvation; and it is that because in it righteousness of God is proclaimed, and made available by faith for sinners such as we were. Behind the righteousness lies of course the love of God, but that is not actually mentioned in the epistle until we reach chapter 5.

If righteousness be fully established it must mean the elimination of all that is wrong. Hence the beams of that glorious "Sun" will burn like an oven destroying the ungodly, while bringing healing and fertility to those who fear God.

How different is the final presentation of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament, where He comes before us as the bright, Morning Star, which is the harbinger of the coming day. No thought of judgment enters here for, as the Lord Jesus Himself says, He sent His angel "to testify unto you these things in the churches." For only those who are in "the churches," have the knowledge of Him, who is the "Morning Star," and who are on the look-out for Him, while the world is still in darkness before the rising of the "Sun." When the Morning Star appears, there will be the first sign of the rising of the Sun of righteousness, and the coming of the day of the Lord; for there will be the "rapture," or snatching away of saints, both dead and living, to present them before the Father in their heavenly home.

We now have to call attention to verse 4 of our chapter. It might strike us at first as a rather extraordinary command to be interjected at this very late hour in Israel's history, about a thousand years after the law was given through Moses. But enshrined in it we see two important principles. First, the law was given for "all Israel" and it was given "with the statutes and judgments." The people in the land, to whom specially Malachi wrote, were comparatively few and in surroundings very different from the days of Moses, or even the days of David and Solomon, but if a man was an Israelite the whole law, in all its details was still binding upon him, and to be obeyed.

And in the second place, not only was it a case of **all the law** for **every**

Israelite, wherever he might be, but it was also a case of **all the time**. The fact that many centuries had passed made no difference. In Malachi's day some Israelite might have been saying to himself — But circumstances are so different today; surely a lot of these minor details of the law are not so binding as at the beginning. Here then was the necessary word for one, such as that.

Exactly the same tendency confronts us today. As an instance of what we mean, take Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, written at the outset of our dispensation, nineteen centuries ago. There was much disorder among the Corinthian Christians, so the Apostle was inspired to lay down the order that should prevail amongst them both in their individual lives, and in their functions as members of the body of Christ, which is the church. In chapter 14 he lays down the Divine administration for their assembly meetings, and concludes by calling upon them to recognize that the directions he gives are "the commandments of the Lord." Are any of us tempted to say, or even to think, — Yes, but the changes that have supervened during these many centuries are far greater than at any other period of the world's history; surely we are hardly bound to these small details of assembly life and practice. If we are so tempted let us consider this verse.

It is happily true that we, "are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6: 14), and yet we are furnished with many commandments. The commandments of the law were given, that by keeping them men

might establish their righteousness before God. This they never did. Grace brings salvation to us who believe, and then teaches us to live sober, righteous and godly lives, as is stated in Titus 2: 11, 12, and then issues commandments, to guide us in so doing. But **commandments** they are, and not to be brushed aside while the dispensation lasts.

What we have indicated is further supported by the closing chapter of the New Testament. We have already noticed how Revelation 22 ends with the "Morning Star," rather than the "Sun of righteousness," and now we notice that it closes also with a strong assertion of the sacred integrity of the Word of God. No man is to add to, or take away from, its words. This has doubtless special reference to the Revelation, but coming at the close of the New Testament, we believe it has reference to the whole New Testament revelation, in a secondary way, just as the verse we have been considering applies to the whole Old Testament revelation.

In these closing words the minds of the people were not only carried back to Moses, but also onward to Elijah, as we see in verse 5. Through Moses the law had been given. By Elijah the ten tribes had been recalled to God and His law, in days when they were almost swamped by the worship of Baal. Before the coming of the predicted day of the Lord an "Elijah" is to appear. We may remember that when John the Baptist was asked if he were Elijah, he answered, No. Yet he came in

the spirit and power of Elijah, so that in regard to the first coming our Lord could say, "If ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come" (Matt. 17: 14).

But the first coming of our Lord was the introduction of the day of grace. It is His second coming in power and glory that will introduce "the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Hence, we judge, this prediction in its fulness must still await its fulfilment. In Revelation 11: 3-6, we read of "two witnesses," marked by features in their testimony, reminiscent of Moses and Elijah, and these precede the second coming of the Lord. We may connect the Elijah of our verse with one of these. What we can say with assurance is that God ever raises up adequate witness, and gives adequate warning, before He acts in judgment.

What is stated in the last verse may seem rather obscure, but if we read Luke 1: 17, the bearing of it is plain. The "disobedient" will be turned to "the wisdom of the just," and thus a people prepared for the Lord. Thus a godly remnant will be found, otherwise the whole earth would be smitten with a curse.

The Old Testament is the history of man under the law: hence its last word is, "curse." The New Testament is the story of the appearing of God's grace: hence the last word is, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints" (New Trans.). How happy are we to live in a day when grace is on the throne, reigning through righteousness!

ANSWER TO A CORRESPONDENT

Many believers seem to be concerned about this "New English Bible," the New Testament portion of which has recently been published. They wonder if, as compared with the old "Authorised Version," it will prove to be more accurate, and generally more helpful than a number of other versions that have been produced in recent years. It might be helpful if you could give us a short word of instruction and counsel on this important matter.

THOSE who undertake the serious work of Bible-translation must possess two essential qualifications. The first is one that everybody would recognize: a thorough knowledge of both Hebrew and Greek; the languages in which the Bible was originally written. The second, which is equally important, is by no means widely acknowledged, though every true Christian should be thoroughly aware of it. It comes clearly to light in 1 Corinthians 2: 9-16.

In this passage the Apostle clearly tells us that things which had previously never entered the heart of man, had now come to light, and the process by which this had taken place is explained. First, they had been **revealed**, as verse 10 states, to apostles and prophets, as chosen by God. Second, the things revealed had been **communicated** in words given by the Spirit of God, as verse 13 states, where an alternative rendering of the closing words is "communicating spiritual things by spiritual." This is why we speak of these New Testament writings as the **inspired** word of God.

But then there is a third thing necessary, indicated in verse 14. That which is revealed to chosen servants, and by them conveyed to others in Spirit-given words, can only be **discerned** by those who possess, and are dominated by the Spirit of God, from whom the communications came. The natural man — man in his fallen condition — does not possess the faculty that is necessary. The Christian who is "carnal," only uses the faculty in small degree, as the opening verses of chapter 3 show.

The fact that unconverted man has not the faculty that would enable him to discern the things of God, lies embedded in the Lord's words to Nicodemus, recorded in John 3. We have all noted that a man cannot **enter** the kingdom of God unless he be born again; but have we all noted that he "cannot **see** the Kingdom of God," (verse 3), apart from the new birth. Many a Jew perused his Old Testament, and awaited the restoration of the kingdom **to Israel**, who was quite blind as to things concerning the kingdom **of God**. Only the

new birth would give such the eye that really sees. This is what the Apostle Paul also plainly tells us.

Now what about the learned Greek scholars who have given us this latest version of the New Testament? The very learned chairman of the board of translators has given us his view of the Bible in his book, "The Authority of the Bible." As quoted in a recent issue of "Bible League Quarterly," pointing out errors, it ran, we regret to say, as follows: "The traditional theory valued the Bible as giving authoritative information, in the form of dogma, on matters known only by special revelations . . . Its place as a whole is rather with the masterpieces of poetry, drama, and philosophy, that is, the literature which does not so much impart information but stirs the deepest levels of personality . . . We are the greater men potentially for reading such works."

So to him the Bible, though worthy to be read for its elevating tendencies, is really to be classed with such great works as were produced by Homer, or Dante, or Shakespeare, but authoritative truth

from God is not to be found there. To him it is **not** the inspired Word of God. This view of the Bible was shared, we fear, by most, if not all, of his colleagues; and if any did not share it, we have not heard of their making known their dissent in any public way.

The matter therefore, we are sorry to say, stands thus: we are offered a translation by eminent scholars, who do not **discern** in the Book they translate truth revealed by God, and communicated in words inspired by His Spirit. They do not **see** the kingdom of God, expressed in the words of God. Is it likely that under these circumstances they are going to give us what will be of spiritual help? Are they not likely to miss the point where spiritual values are concerned?

Any of our readers who wish for some details of their questionable renderings, we advise to apply to the Trinitarian Bible Society, of 7 Bury Place, London, W.C.1, for copies of a "Detailed and Critical Examination of the Text," written by the Secretary of that Society, enclosing 4d in stamps.

WHERE and as the Lord has called us, there we have to serve Him. Only let us do it heartily with all our might. Our time here is short, but it is unspeakably precious. Our little lives are the seed plot of eternity. He gave Himself for us that we might serve Him joyfully, with all our hearts, "You in your small corner; I in mine." And so it is written, "They shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads, and His servants shall serve Him." It will be our eternal joy to serve Him then. It is our blessed portion now.