

THE
GOLDEN LAMP;
OR,
TRUTH IN LOVE
FOR
THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

"I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD: HE THAT FOLLOWETH ME SHALL NOT
WALK IN DARKNESS, BUT SHALL HAVE THE LIGHT OF LIFE."

John viii. 12.

"Now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."

Ephesians v. 8.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works,
and glorify your Father which is in heaven."—*Matthew* v. 16.

VOL. VII.

LONDON:
JAMES E. HAWKINS, 70, WELBECK STREET, W.;
AND 12, PATERNOSTER SQUARE, E.C.

1876.

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THE GOLDEN LAMP.

GOD'S MIGHTY MOMENTS.

ONE of the "words of the wise" which we sometimes see on the walls of fellow-believers' houses is as follows:

"LOST,
SOMEWHERE BETWEEN SUNRISE AND SUNSET,
TWO GOLDEN HOURS,
EACH SET WITH SIXTY DIAMOND MINUTES.
NO REWARD IS OFFERED
AS THEY ARE
LOST FOR EVER!"

"Two golden hours" is more, we would trust, than any readers of the *Golden Lamp* ever do lose between any "sunrise and sunset" of their precious ransomed time (though we little know perhaps, any of us, how much we lose); yet the motto on a wall may help us to "watch and pray," and may stir us to be diligent in catching the moments as they come, and in using them for God's glory as they fly past.

Paul writes to us about "redeeming the time" (Eph. v. 16) in the same epistle in which he tells of the love that chose us in Christ "before the foundation of the world," and that also reaches on to the "ages to come;" and in his epistle to the Romans, though dwelling so largely on "the gospel of God" (Rom. i. 1), "the everlasting God" (Rom. xvi. 26), he yet also says, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; . . . the night is far spent, the day is at hand." (Rom. xiii. 11, 12.)

Peter also makes the same use of the flight of time :
 "But the end of all things is at hand : be ye *therefore*
 sober, and watch unto prayers." (1 Peter iv. 7.)

Even the heathen philosophers could teach that the only way of taking hold of time was as it approached, and drew the figure of one hastening on, with a lock of hair on his forehead by which you might grasp him ; but no such lock behind, if once you let him pass.

The first number therefore of the *Golden Lamp* for 1876 may well be used to wake us to that thrift of our time which becomes us as the saints of God.

"God's mighty moments" are a fit subject for our thoughts at the opening of another year, and may serve this purpose. We sing of such moments in our hymns, and we well may—

"O God, what cords of love are Thine!
 How gentle, yet how strong!
 Thy truth and grace their power combine
 To draw our souls along.

"The guilt of twice ten thousand sins
 ONE MOMENT takes away ;
 And when the fight of faith begins,
 Our strength is as our day."

And again—

"Each *moment* listening for the voice,
 'Rise up, and come away.'"

Cowper justly says of the creation wonders of the living God, as shown by the microscope, "To whom an *atom* is an ample world." And of the God of grace and salvation, we may as truly say, To Him a *moment* is an ample time.

A moment is, strictly speaking, time so short that it could not be made shorter, and is represented by the quickest possible action of the body—"the twinkling of an eye ;"* or a moment is but a *point* (στιγμή

* "Ἐν ἀτόμῳ," says Paul (1 Cor. xv. 52), "ἐν ῥιπή ὀφθαλμοῦ," an atom being a thing so cut and subdivided that it cannot be subdivided any more.

χρόνου. See Luke iv. 5.), a thing too small to have in it any size that can be measured. And yet in but a MOMENT what cannot the God of our salvation do!

We would name three of "God's mighty moments" of blessing to His saved ones: (1) The moment of conversion; (2) The moment of departing and being with Christ; and (3) The moment of the first resurrection.

Each of these wonders of His grace and power is the work of but a *moment*, showing in this respect the glory of God, and in this way meeting also our utmost need.

First, then, our actual passing "from death unto life"—our conversion—was a thing of but a moment. It was by a life-look we were saved, as by a life-look the bitten and dying Israelites were healed, and as by a beam of the glory of the risen Lord Jesus, Saul was brought to God on the Damascus road. And nothing short of this could fully manifest God's glory in the sinner's salvation, nor fully meet the dying sinner's need. In the first creation God had but to say, "Let there be light," and light entered amidst the darkness; and with equal instantaneousness does He shine "in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

The passing from death unto life may not always seem to be a thing of a moment; there seems in some cases, both to quickened ones themselves and to those who look on, a longer time and a slower process, but all this is either the struggle of unbelief previous to the moment of life-giving faith in Christ, or else the action and growth of the new-born life after its springing into being, and must be distinguished in our thoughts from "the time of love" (Ezek. xvi. 8), the moment of mercy, when the God of salvation "passed by," saw us in our blood, and said unto us, "Live." That was the first to us of "God's mighty moments" for our eternal blessing.

What joy it is to remember this in our gospel work with the still unsaved, that *even* the *moment* of some word to them by your lips, dear reader, is time enough for God to make them His own *for ever*; and nothing else could suit the case of dying hearers, "whose breath is (only) in their nostrils," and the moment of your voice to them may be the last moment they have. Such was the joy of Moses in bidding dying Israelites look up to the serpent of brass, and such, too, the glory of God in giving the healing virtue by but a moment's look.

No wonder we sing to the unsaved—

"There is life in a look at the crucified One,
 There is life *at this moment* for thee;
 Then look, sinner, look unto Him, and be saved—
 Unto HIM who was nailed to the tree."

But the departure of a saved one to be with Christ is another of "God's mighty moments." For the saint to depart is for him to be with Christ in a moment. The Scripture places no interval whatever between the two things. One moment we *live* to the Lord in dying pain and weakness perhaps, but still living, and living to Him; the next moment yield up the labouring breath, and die *to Him*. The dying is as truly *to Him* as the living was *to Him*, while still in the body.

And this is another of the triumphs of God's grace to us *through Christ*, and therefore is another of His mighty moments for our blessing. Old Testament saints had not this joy so clearly shown them, nor could they have; for Christ had not then actually gained the victory which He has now gained by His wondrous death and resurrection. From the hour, yes, the moment of that blessed victory, we date His Lordship over the dead as well as the living, of His saints and servants. "For to this end," says the apostle (Rom xiv. 9), "Christ both died, and revived, *that He might be* Lord both of the dead and living." Hence the dying of saints *now* is not a going to the dimness of Hades, but the entrance in a

moment to the joy of Paradise—the blessedness of being “with Christ.” (Compare Luke xxiii. 43 with Phil. i. 23.)

Such is the joy of each departing child of God in this age since the Son of God has come; but this, like the former one of soul-quickenings, is a moment of God's love and power to His saved ones *singly and individually*, and precious though they are, neither of these completes His blessing. The departed saints are waiting, as we the living also are, for “the resurrection of the just,” and this will be indeed a crowning one of “God's mighty moments;” for Paul tells us (1 Cor. xv. 52) that even this also will be “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.” And yet it shall be but “a moment!” But what a mighty moment! How glorious, how vast, and yet how accurate; how perfect and eternally enduring will be the work that God shall do in that moment!

And if this is true as to the changing of *all* the living saints at that blessed moment, who shall one and all be then clothed with bodies glorious, our wonder still increases as we think of the vast multitude of those who shall then be lying asleep in Christ. The earth we live upon and walk upon has the dust of the human dead mingled in with its original soil; and mingled in again with both it and them lies the ransomed dust of God's saints. It is *this* He calls for at that mighty moment, and ALL of it instantly answers to the call (see Job xiv. 15, xix. 25–27; and 1 Cor. xv. 38, 42–44); and that, too, not only from the dry land, but also from the far larger sea. Forth they come, all of them with their own dust changed from “corruption” into “incorruption,” and from “dishonour” into “glory;” and that, too, whether buried more lately or long before. No matter whether gently laid by loving hands, or beheaded like faithful,

honoured John the Baptist, or reduced to ashes like the martyred ones of Smithfield and Madrid, or of the Church's earlier days. They all, one generation after another, bore the image of "the first man"—"earthly;" but now, in one single moment, they are all "clothed upon," and, behold, they bear "the image of the heavenly!"

Oh! is it not a crowning one of "God's mighty moments" for our blessing? and that not individually only, but for the "Church glorious" collectively? How parallel it runs with that other mighty moment when Christ "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it!" With *one* mighty stoop He bore her sins and her guilt, when God gathered and laid the burden upon Him; and sinking in death, He put it all away for ever. At *one* deep draught He drained her cup of wrath, when He tasted death for each one (Heb. ii. 9); and now, at *one* mighty moment of triumph, as "the Captain of their salvation," He brings the "many sons unto glory."

Indeed, out of that truly *omnipotent* moment of Jesus' death flow all these other mighty moments of God's grace and power which we have been considering; and not these only, but all the countless multitude of His other moments of "goodness and mercy," which not only so follow us all the days of our life below, but shall flow on for ever in the new creation home of the unveiled presence of God and the Lamb.

"A moment of time is a monument of mercy" is a trite saying around us, but a true one, as respects the unsaved; but how unspeakably precious are the moments of God's children as they fly! We would not have them less swift, but we would be stirred by the subject now before us, and by the opening of another year, to value them, and enrich them, as they come and go.

This wondrous grace of God to us in Christ should

now make every moment precious to us between the past one of our conversion and the coming one of our either resting from our labours and being "with Christ," or, better still, our hearing the trump of God, and the shout of the Lord Jesus, and our meeting Him in the air. . But does it? We sing in our happy Lord's-day assemblies—

"Sweet the moments, rich in blessing,
Which before the cross we spend,"

but might we not have all our other moments of consciousness here below made also sweet to us, if we did but abide in Christ, and His words abode in us? (John xiv. 23.) Shall we excuse henceforth a single moment of our time that we spend away from Christ, and in sloth, or sin, or folly?

Does not the blessed Holy Ghost dwell in us every moment? and does HE not so estimate the mighty moment of Jesus' death for us, and the happy moment when at our believing He first took up His abode in us, that He would not leave us to have from that time forth *one* barren or idle moment during all our time below, even as He knows we shall never have an idle or sinning moment in the blest eternity of our heavenly home?

Oh, then, fellow-saints, let us not grieve the Holy Ghost, who so graciously ceases not to dwell in us, and never will!

But this will want an unceasing watchfulness on our part; for Satan can make great attacks on us even in passing moments. It was in but "*a moment of time*" that he made "all the kingdoms of the world," "and the glory of them," pass before our blessed Master (see Luke iv. 5, 6); but no moment of His life-service ever found Him unguarded, or out of the presence of His God, as His instant answer showed: "It is written," said He, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

Alas! alas! how often it is not so with us! A far

smaller bait than "all the kingdoms of the world" suffices to allure our eye, and even to draw our hearts away for a time from God our Father's love, and Christ our Redeemer's cross, just because we forget the presence with us of our gracious God, and fail to use, as Jesus did, "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Thus Peter forgot, on one painful occasion, both the divine power of his Master and the word of Scripture which his Master's lips had taught him (Matt. xxvi. 31, 32), and in one brief *moment* of a maidservant's challenge of him denied the Master whom he loved! Thus also David, yielding to ease and sloth at the very season "when kings go out to battle," sends Joab with the army, and he tarries at home, and the fatal moment of his glance at Bathsheba—fatal to his domestic peace ever after—was Satan's moment of darting an arrow into him of unholy lust! (See 2 Sam. xi.)

Yes, fellow-saints, Satan can indeed do us much hurt in but a moment of our sinful unwatchfulness, and can change the moments, that should have been as diamonds of heavenly value to us for ever, into wounds which may take long to heal. Oh, may the opening of the year 1876 find us with "the breastplate of faith and love" guarding our hearts, and "the helmet of the hope of salvation," ere long at Christ's coming, defending our heads, and may this be our abiding state until He comes!

H. D.

THE HASTING OF LOVE.

"*O'er* haste" surely cannot flow from love, but from a zeal not according to knowledge. Love *must* haste. "I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments." David's men of might were "as the roes upon the mountains to make haste." (1 Chron. xii. 8, margin.)

In Canticles ii. the effect of the experience of the

embrace of love (v. 6), and the consciousness of Christ's rest in *that which is His own* in us (v. 7), is—*first*, the apprehension of His hasting (vv. 8, 9), *then* the claim of His love upon us to haste likewise (v. 10.) The book opens with the rest of love; it closes with the haste of the young hart upon the mountains of spices.

The last testimony of the Spirit concerning our Beloved is His hasting to us—“Surely I come quickly.” The end of “all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter iii. 11, 12) is our hasting toward Him.

This “hasting” is not only the reaching forth in spirit, the not resting in anything here, but *also* the going right on in the ways of God, though the Philistine host lie between; and this not only as to precepts written, but as to fulfilling the least desires of His heart, revealed to us by the Spirit. Surely the Lord loves to see in these days of expediency and caution some who dare to go out of right lines, as laid down by saints, conscious of only one purpose—to please *Him*. Shall not such be among the richest trophies of His grace, the triumph of His yearning and His travail, in the day when He shall present us before the presence of His Father with exceeding joy?

That wondrous unending day is before us. What honour to be with Him “in the hold,” to hear His heart whispers, and in any little measure to haste as David's three mightiest hastened to Bethlehem's well, to fulfil His desires, whether appreciated or not by any other but Himself!

“Oh, draw me, Saviour, after Thee!
 So shall I run and never tire;
 With gracious words still comfort me,
 Be Thou my hope, my sole desire.
 Free me from every weight; nor fear
 Nor sin can come if Thou art near.”

A. E. W.

ON GUIDANCE.

ONE of the greatest evidences of how much Israel gained by leaving Egypt was that God Himself alone marked out their way for them, and always "guided" them. At His word—of which the pillar of cloud was the expression (Num. ix. 15-23)—they journeyed, and at His word they encamped.

The two grand characteristics of the journey were the guidance and the manna. Practically *we* are even *now* in the wilderness; and if we are enjoying the manna, we are entitled to enjoy guidance. Few saints would deny their title to this privilege; but many who would aver that they receive and feed on spiritual meat, would hesitate to say with equal confidence that they are guided as positively and distinctly as Israel was in the wilderness.

But should it not be so? The cloud accompanied them as surely as the manna fell. To Israel both were visible to the natural eye; both are spiritual now, but ought not to be difficult of realization to the spiritual man. If I can with thankfulness say I am divinely fed day by day, ought I not to be equally conscious of guidance? Both are connected with the wilderness, and blessed evidences of the care of God for His people thus cast on Him.

The first feeling of my soul, then, regarding guidance must be, that I am in a wide desert, that I have to depend on God, on Him *alone*, to direct me. But how? By circumstances? *Never*. He did not guide Israel by circumstances improvised for the occasion, but by a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. These were His own *appointed* means; anything less would not have been guidance in its proper sense.

In spite of ourselves and our lack of dependence on Him, our gracious God will not allow us to lose our way; and it is true that He often uses *circumstances* to

correct us and drive us back in the path of faith, and when *in* that path He may allow them as helps to our weakness; but they do not mark the path, they are not intended to guide us; and I believe that the watching of circumstances, as indications of our path, prevents many a true-hearted soul from enjoying its real and rightful privilege in the wilderness.

Psalm xxxii. gives us the filling up of the Lord's grace to us in this blessed privilege: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." *This* is His appointed means for us, as distinctly as was the pillar of fire and the cloud for Israel.

But how am I to discern the guidance of His eye? I must *watch for it*. If I do, I shall surely see it; if I do not, I cannot be guided by it. Where His eye looks, I ought to look. But unless I am spiritual, unless my soul is near Him, this will not be. If I am looking anywhere else for guidance, I shall *not* see His eye. But never is that eye hidden from him who watches for it.

The "bit" and the "bridle" are God's alternative for the soul that will not depend on Him and be led by His eye. But the eye is there, lighting up the wilderness track for any who will discern and make use of it. The Spirit has come down to "guide us into all truth." "The spiritual man discerneth all things."

The effect of the presence of the Lord on His disciples was always to constrain them into the mind of God, so that He could say, "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name." Wonderful is the effect of a presence that commands our veneration, while controlling us into fellowship with itself. If we have no liking or drawing to it, we soon retire; for we cannot endure a restraint entirely foreign to our tastes.

In John xi. we find that Martha, when the conference with the Lord becomes too *close*, escapes from

it. Not so Mary; the closer it becomes, the more she is swayed by His presence, and she walks according to God side by side with her Lord. Her grief at the death of her brother was not less than Martha's, nor her joy at seeing him raised up again; but all that time her soul was gathering up the ointment of spikenard which was to be poured forth at the proper time. She was lovely in the common walks of life, and there she learned the heart of her Lord. Thus walking with Him, she could say, when He came to her own house, "While the King sitteth at His table, my spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof." In every position she was comely and useful; she abode in the Lord, and His word abode in her, and she brought forth much fruit.

It is a very harassing and profitless occupation to be constantly asking, What shall I do now? If I were near the Lord I should see what He would not have me neglect, and the next thing to be done would be at the doorway; it might be a very little thing, but the smallest things often lead to the greatest results. It is in neglecting them that the greatest misadventures have occurred. *Nothing is neglected by God.*

If at any time I am at a loss to know my true path, I shall ascertain it better by drawing near to the Lord than by cogitating on the various bearings of circumstances. I may very laboriously fish all night, and take nothing; but if the Lord is with me all difficulties will surely vanish. While He was with the disciples they *lacked nothing*; He was both a "purse" and a "sword" to them; but when He was going away He said, "He that hath a purse, let him take it: and he that hath no sword, let him buy one." He was then going to leave them for the all-absorbing work of sin-bearing, and they were not to reckon on His care for the time being. No greater picture could have been given of their desolation.

Now, as risen from the dead, He is ever with us, as

the One who has all power. His presence gives us a true perception of things, and a power for doing them. Not only does He furnish us with power, but the possession of power provokes us to use it, like vigour in a man of strength. His presence is better than purse or sword, and He will always succour us if we are in the true path.

If I turn aside from my path, I turn aside from the faith proper to it. I must leave His presence if I do not seek to walk according to God's will. Abraham walked with God, and thus entered into His joys and blessings. Lot sought to make a path for himself, and was ever going from one sorrow to another, vexing his righteous soul with the filthy conversation of the wicked, instead of walking with God above it.

These are solemn, deep principles of truth. To carry them out we require a single eye, no object but Christ Himself, and true purpose of heart to follow Him at all cost. All our cares and anxieties must be left with Him whose loving heart knows all our need. His grace is sufficient for us.

THE SUMMONS HOME.

“Do you mean it? do you really mean it? Am I going home?” was the joyous utterance of a well-known servant of Christ, on being unexpectedly informed that he would very soon be with the Lord. And then, with uplifted hands and eyes, he added with ecstatic joy, “Going home! home to be with Jesus, with *Him* whom I love. Wonderful joy, wonderful glory, to be with *Him*, with *HIM*!”

Not a cloud, not one regret nor anxious thought, passed over his heart or mind, but with one upward bound his soul sprung forward to meet his Lord. His heart and hands were full of works of faith and labours of love; his affections were true and fervent for many

whom he must leave behind ; but unhesitatingly, unreservedly, and unmurmuringly he dropped it all at a moment's notice, and hailed the summons into his Master's presence. Christ was the object, the one centre of his heart's affections ; and the prospect of being soon with Him swallowed up all minor objects, and made him count them as dross.

Dear child of God, would it be thus with you ? Are *you* thus weaned from earth ? thus longing for the presence of your Lord ? Are your hopes, your desires, your affections, all fixed on things above ? Surely it should be so. Our soul, our life, our all, is there. Our home, our portion, is above. We are but strangers here below ; left here to testify and work for Christ ; sent forth to do His bidding for a little while, and *then* eternal rest, and fellowship, and joy *with Him* above.

Ah, could we pierce the skies, and scan the glory up above, how valueless these paltry earthly things which draw our hearts from Christ would seem ! "For me to live is Christ," said Paul, and this alone is worthy of our care ; all else is dross and vanity ; all also must pass away and come to nought ; but *this* endures eternally. We are a blood-bought people, redeemed and set apart for Christ, and should be wholly sanctified to Him ; a holy people, glorifying God in our bodies and our spirits, which are His.

Who can tell the joys of heaven ? To have done with sin and sorrow, pain and woe ; to be with and like our Lord ; to see His face, to hear His voice—

"And from the river of His love
Drink endless pleasures in."

No breaking heart is there ; no disappointed hopes ; no bitter grief ; no struggling in vain, and labouring for nought. All, all that is gone, for ever gone ! The conflict with sin over ; the struggle with self finished ; the victory gained ; the devil completely foiled ; and all is rest, and peace, and joy ! Who would not gladly spring forward to hail such a full and glorious portion ?

What is there below to tie or to fetter our souls, and make us cling to such a world as this? What is there worth living for, except to serve and work for our blessed Lord? What portion have we here?

“Sorrow and danger stand
Round us on every hand;
Heaven is our father-land,
Heaven is our home!”

Why toil and labour for that which will not profit? Why waste our strength and energies upon that which can only disappoint? Our time *may be* redeemed, our strength be spent in that which will endure; yes, we can live for Christ, and seek the praise which comes from Him alone—His approving smile, His words of commendation, His rich, His wonderful rewards.

He leaves us here that we may prove our love to Him. It will cost us *something* to follow Him. We must sacrifice the present for the future; and the Lord would have us fairly weigh the one against the other—present or future and eternal gain; present or future fame; present or future praise; present or future glory.

The sacrifice too must be real and unfeigned. “Cursed be the deceiver which voweth, and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing,” affecting a devotedness which is not real. “Better is it that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay.” He desires truth in the inward parts, and delights greatly in that love which thinks not of itself, but finds its joy in ministering to and serving Him.

Surely He is worthy—worthy of all our heart’s affections, worthy of all we have and are, worthy of all that His God and Father can heap upon Him; and yet in our folly we hold back our little tribute of devotedness and love, and waste this golden opportunity of gladdening Him.

Why, oh why, should we be so foolish? Why leave our high and holy place of walking before God, cleav-

ing to Christ, and ministering to Him, and come down to our own little contemptible circle of a few poor fellow-sinners, and walk before them, and strive for place and honour and praise among them? "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherd of the earth;" but "our citizenship is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body;" and *then* shall we fully know the blessedness and joy of *His* soul-gladdening words: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Let us listen now, before it be too late, to His entreating words: "My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall rejoice, even mine; yea, my reins shall rejoice, when thy lips speak right things." May these words tell upon our souls, and constrain us to yield ourselves afresh unreservedly to Him; and then, should the summons to His presence be speedy and unexpected, it will be hailed with delight, and responded to with joy.

May the words of this hymn be the true language of our heart—

"My soul amid this stormy world
Is like some fluttered dove,
And fain would be as swift of wing,
To flee to Him I love.

"The cords that bound my heart to earth
Are broken by His hand;
Before His cross I found myself,
A stranger in the land.

"My heart is with Him on the throne,
And ill can brook delay;
Each moment listening for the voice:
'Rise up, and come away.'

"Then leave me not in this dark world
A stranger long to roam!
Come, Lord, and take me to Thyself;
Come, Jesus, quickly come."

L. T. S.

“ALL HIS BENEFITS.”

Thoughts on Psalm ciii. 1-5.

It will be well, at the beginning of another year, to remember the God of infinite grace, and to recall “*all His benefits,*” as they dwelt on the mind of the Psalmist in the opening verses of Psalm ciii.—that psalm of blessing and praise which gives such sweet expression to the thoughts of the redeemed, as they call upon their souls and all that is within them to bless His holy name.

In these verses the Lord is called the *Forgiver*, the *Healer*, the *Redeemer*, the *Crowner*, and the *Satisfier*; and as such let us direct our thoughts to Him who, for the great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sin, hath quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Him. And may God graciously remove the veil from our hearts that we may see Him as He is; and as we ponder His “benefits,” may our conceptions of their breadth and length, and depth and height, grow upon our minds, so that we may in some measure truly realize them.

1st. THE FORGIVER — “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.” If we would know what forgiving grace means, we must count up the debts that have been forgiven. He that hath little forgiven loveth little, but he to whom much has been forgiven loveth much. Thus did our Lord draw the comparison between “Simon the Pharisee” and the “woman that was a sinner.” (Luke vii.) Sin has to be measured by faith, even as grace has to be apprehended by faith. Man has his estimate, and God has His. Faith accepts God’s estimate, and hence the depth of mercy can only be known by one to whom sin has become indeed an

unfathomable depth of evil. We are slow to arrive at this.

But what has God forgiven? The answer is given us: "*All* thine iniquities." Have we ever tried to count up what that "*all*" means? Let us go back to the days of unregeneracy; let us recall the forgotten sins and transgressions of childhood and of riper years; let us look down into the dark abyss; let us seek to reckon up the fearful account; let memory be active and conscience awake, and as we still ponder, the magnitude of sin will be such that we shall wonder no more at what God says about it. It will be so dark, so deep, so vile—and yet, what are all our remembrances to what the all-seeing God has seen and known?

But there is a deeper and a darker phase—the sin of our converted days, since the love of God has been known in the gift of Christ, since the grace of God was read in the blood of Calvary, since the blessed spirit of sonship enabled us to cry "Abba, Father." Yes, there are the sins of the child of God against light, and love, and pardon. Let these be dwelt on but a little, and the heart will melt, and the tears flow, at the remembrance of the ingratitude that adds double dye to every sin, giving it a weight and a measure it never had before.

These, and infinitely more, are included in God's "all;" and He comes at the dawn of another year and whispers in loving grace to our hearts, "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins" (Isa. xlv. 22); and again, "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isa. xliii. 25.) Oh, may all that is within us unite to bless our God for this the first of all His benefits! and as we bless His holy name, may our hearts overflow with loving gratitude and wonder that His love to us is so great, when ours to Him has been so little.

2nd. THE HEALER—“Who healeth all our diseases.” When Israel came out of Egypt God revealed Himself to them by that gracious word, “I am the Lord that healeth thee,” “I am Jehovah-rophecha”—Jehovah thy Physician. What a precious name for faith to lay hold on when entering on the wilderness and tasting its bitter waters! (Ex. xv. 22–25.) Broken hearts (Ps. cxlvii. 3), vexed bones (Ps. vi. 2), wounds of chastening discipline (Jer. xxx. 17; Hosea vi. 1), backslidings (Jer. iii. 22; Hosea xiv. 4), and what else He only knows, will need the healing touch of His loving hand! He is the Healer! We need to learn this; for we are ever prone to go to our God as our last resource instead of going to Him as our first and only remedy.

“The great Physician now is *near*,
 The sympathising Jesus;
 He speaks, the drooping heart to cheer:
 Oh, hear the voice of Jesus!”

It is interesting to notice that in the New Testament to *save* and to *make whole* are the same words in the original. Hence there is deep significance in the word “salvation;” it points to the restoring power of God’s grace as that which repairs the ruin sin has wrought, whether in ourselves—spirit, soul, or body—or in our circumstances. This is beautifully revealed in the comparison of Christ to “the Sun of righteousness,” when it is said that He shall come “with healing in His wings;” *i.e.* in His beams. Shining down on a world of unrighteousness and darkness, He heals all whereon He shines. Alas for the clouds that rise and shut out His healing beams from the sinner’s soul! Alas for the heart-unbelief of the children of God that shuts Him out also, and prevents His healing grace carrying on its mighty work of daily salvation! Faith in Christ, the Sun of righteousness, secures life and gives rest; but walking in the sunshine of His countenance produces the enjoyment of this life. It is that

which causes a *given* rest to become a *realised* rest, and makes salvation an overcoming power that enables the soul always to triumph in Christ.

Notice here again the blessed word "*all*." It is not *some* ills in life that God is the healer of, not *some* bitter waters, not *some* sorrows nor *some* circumstances that He can remedy—not some, but *all*. We are ever prone to think there is some peculiarity in our case, something special in our sorrow, that we are inclined to put outside God's "*all*." We seem to think God has some exceptions. But, blessed be God, His rules have no exceptional cases, His skill finds nothing beyond its reach; for He who said to Israel as they entered on their desert wanderings, "I am the Lord that healeth thee," said at the beginning of His own ministry in this world's desert waste, "Come unto me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Thus He who heals all diseases invites all persons to His own blessed self, the great "I AM" for all our varied and infinite need!

3rd. THE REDEEMER—the "*Goel*," the Kinsman. "Who redeemeth thy life from destruction." Redemption implies that something has been lost or forfeited, and the cost of redeeming may be great. To forgive and to heal do not necessarily imply more than the will and the power, but more is implied here; and therefore we are told that "no man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom (or an atonement) for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious;" *i.e.* costly. (Ps. xlix. 7, 8.)

What has redemption cost God? It is easy to answer. The gift of His only-begotten Son. But who can measure that gift, or estimate what it cost to give it? Who, as he reads throughout Scripture that blessed name "Redeemer," can unfold the mystery of that name, or tell what it involves?

We speak of redemption's price, and we know who

paid it; for Christ gave His life a ransom for many. But who can estimate the preciousness of that atoning blood, or tell what it cost the Son of God to pay the awful debt of our transgressions, and to meet the claims of infinite holiness at the bar of divine justice?

The Father and the Son alone know what the cost of our redemption from first to last has been, and this the Spirit of God unfolds by little and little, revealing to us the mysteries of God as we are able to bear them.

What is it that God redeems? “Thy life.” That which was forfeited the moment sin entered, and the divine sentence, “Thou shalt surely die,” took effect. And what is it from which we have been redeemed? “From destruction.” To know what redemption means we must know what destruction means, and the measure of the one is the measure of the other. If one is infinite, so is the other. God does not pay more than the object to be gained costs, and hence the cross is the measure alike of heaven and of hell, of eternal bliss and of eternal woe.

With these thoughts let us ponder once more this precious name, REDEEMER, and see in it the perfect security of our souls in our emancipation from hell and destruction. The GOEL is the kinsman who takes the poor and needy one under the shelter of His wings, as Boaz took Ruth; He is the redeemer who recovers the lost inheritance, and raises up the name of the dead upon it, so that the name of “*man*” is never lost in the person of the Man Christ Jesus; and He is the avenger of blood, who shall slay the enemy, and “bruise Satan under our feet shortly.” (Rom. xvi. 20.) And now, as the redeemed of the Lord, we can look back over life’s past, and onward to life’s future, and with dying Jacob call our God “The God that fed me *all* my life long, the Angel that redeemed me from *all* evil.”

Such is redemption; but its fulness, who can tell? If its truth be at all laid hold on by us, then, in the confident assurance of what our God is to us, we shall

see redemption as a wall of fire between us and "all evil," and learn to say, "All things work together for good to them that love God," and who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. But let us remember that every deliverance is a redemption; for no deliverance, whether great or small, has come to us but as the result of cost and sacrifice. Every help and alleviation has been purchased by the blood once shed on Calvary.

4th. THE CROWNER. — "He crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies." We read in Ps. viii. 5 that God crowns man with glory and honour; but this points to the future, when God shall be "for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto His people." (Isa. xxviii. 5.) The thought here is different. It represents God as placing the crown of His grace and mercy, as an ornament and as a protection, upon the head of those who fear Him. God's people are not uncrowned, though the glory has not yet come. "Grace reigns through righteousness," and puts its crown on the head of all in whom it reigns. The righteous judgment of God crowned with a crown of thorns the sinner's Substitute, and now He loves to crown with loving-kindness and tender mercy those who trust in Him. We are ever prone to forget the crown wherewith we are crowned, and which invests us with protection and blessing as children of God. We need to be reminded of our dignity as His children, and of the Fatherly care which ever surrounds us; for though we oft forget the relationship in which we stand to Him, He never forgets.

How small would the difficulties of life seem, and how light the sorrows of the way, did we remember, all our journey through, the loving-kindness and tender mercy of our God, which distinguish us from men of this world. We have the promise, may we lay hold of it; and while our hope looks forward to

the crown of glory ere long, may our faith bear in mind the crown of mercy and grace which our God put upon our head when redeeming love sealed us as His from that day forth, and even for evermore.

Lastly. THE SATISFIER, for He is the One “who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” What a word of omnipotent grace! May our souls apprehend it. This precious name seems to be the climax for all our need, and all our aspirations. Our need has first to be met, and this is fully done in the first two names, the Forgiver and Healer; and then our highest aspirations are realized in the Crowner and Satisfier. And these couplets are beautifully linked together in the Redeemer which comes between them.

God, as the Satisfier, will meet all our longings in the future, and we can say, “I shall be satisfied when I awake in thy likeness.” (Ps. xvii. 15.) It is precious to look to the “evermore” of the world to come, but we need not wait till then. We shall be absolutely *satisfied then; we know it, and we rejoice in the hope.* But what of the present? asks some tried, cast down, and weary child of God. Is there no such thing as being satisfied now? To this faith says, “Yes, not absolutely, but relatively;” for the word of promise runs “*from this time forth, and even for evermore;*” or, as we read in Ps. cxxi. 3, “*Let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever.*” Of this, “*from now*” (margin), we would say a word for the comfort of the Lord’s people; for here perhaps is our great danger of distrust.

There is so much around and within that necessarily leads to an unsatisfied sense of need, that we require a very firm laying hold on God as the One who satisfies in Himself. It is this revelation of God to the soul, in the daily renewings of His grace, which meets the wear and tear of daily life and conflict, so that

each day the youth is renewed as the eagle's. It is this that the presence of the Holy Ghost, ungrieved and unhindered, is designed to vouchsafe; for we have not only "the washing of regeneration," but also "the renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus iii. 5), so that "the inward man is renewed day by day."

We cannot press this too much. We have not a God that is far off, not a God for the future only, but a God for the present; and it is this which enables a believer to say, not only are "*things to come*" mine, which all readily admit, but "*things present*" are mine also, and mine because I am His. Surely this satisfies, and will satisfy more and more as it is realized.

Thus was Paul satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and enabled, when a prisoner, to say, "Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 12, 13.) So, too, may our souls be satisfied under all circumstances, and say, 'All things are mine; for I am Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

It becomes us, then, with these precious jewels from the casket of God's promises before us, to take up once more the opening verses of this Psalm, "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and *all that is within me*, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not *all His benefits.*" Yes, all that is within us, our joys and sorrows, our fulness and our emptiness, our strength and our weakness, all, all are called on with one song of praise and thanksgiving to bless Him, "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

The Lord enable us to make these truths our own, and in their joy may we walk now till that day come when He shall appear, and we shall walk in them through eternal ages, finding our God the Omega of all of them then, as He is the Alpha of them now.

H. G.

BLESS THOU THE LORD, MY SOUL.

Bless thou the Lord, my soul, and raise
 To Him thy grateful song of praise ;
 Bless Him for *all* His love to thee,
 For mercies countless, rich, and free.

He gladly pardons *all* thy sin,
 And breathes a heavenly calm within ;
 And soon from *all* defilement free,
 In soul and body thou shalt be.

While from destruction's power secure,
 Through His redemption strong and sure,
 His loving-kindness crowns thy head,
 And tender mercies round are shed.

Thy mouth with good things He doth fill,
 So that thy youth is vigorous still,
 E'en as the eagle's strength renewed,
 And with fresh grace from heaven endued.

Bless Him for *all* the hourly love,
 Gently distilling from above,
 Which fills thy soul with deepest rest,
 And will not let hell's powers molest.

Bless Him for hopes of coming peace ;
 When *all* thy griefs and pains shall cease ;
 Bless Him that soon His face thou'lt see,
 And like Him evermore shalt be.

Bless thou the Lord, my soul, and raise
 To Him thy grateful song of praise ;
 Oh, deeply in thy heart record
 The unnumber'd mercies of thy Lord !

BLESSINGS TO US BY OUR *IGNORANCE*.

1st. *Of our sins*. "Who can understand his errors?"
 This casts us on *God's grace*. "Cleanse thou me from
 secret faults ;" faults, that is, unknown even to myself.
 (Ps. xix. 12.)

2nd. *Of ourselves*. "The heart is deceitful above

all things: who can know it?" This makes so welcome the next word: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." (Jer. xvii. 9, 10.)

3rd. *Of our steps.* Abraham "went out, *not knowing* whither he went." This endeared to him the word: "A land that *I will shew thee.*" So also when Abraham's posterity, Israel, knew not their way in the desert, they learned to value the guidance of the pillar of cloud and fire.

4th. *Of the results of our work.* "Thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good." Hence labour in it all: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." (Eccles. xi. 6; see also Isa. xxxii. 20.)

5th. *Of what to pray for.* "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." Hence the blessedness of the Holy Ghost's help in this our infirmity, and His "intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." (Rom. viii. 26.)

6th. *Of the time of the Lord's coming.* "Ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." (Matthew xxiv. 42.) Hence the blessed work of watching. "Watch therefore;" and, "Therefore be ye also ready." (v. 44.)

7th. *Of what we shall be at Christ's coming.* "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Hence so good to know we shall be like HIM. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." (1 John iii. 2.)

8th. *Of the boundless fulness of God for us.* "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. xxix. 29); and, "It is the glory of God to *conceal* a thing." (Prov. xxv. 2.) Hence the never-ending joy of learning more of Him and of the Lamb. Therefore "the honour of kings is to *search out* a matter;" and "the Lamb shall lead them unto living *fountains* of waters." (Rev. vii. 17.)

NOTES AND REPLIES.

How are we to understand Isa. lxxv. 17 in connection with the post-millennial character of the *new heaven and earth* of the New Testament?

There can be no doubt from Rev. xxi. 1 that the new heavens and new earth belong to the age after the millennium, and are not to be confounded with it. Of this period also Peter speaks, when he says, "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." (2 Peter iii. 13.) The expression, "according to His promise," refers back to the latter chapters of Isaiah, where alone in the Old Testament we find the promise. The question arises, Does the millennial period described in Isa. lxxv. and lxxvi. refer to the "new earth" period, as would be gathered from the English construction of chap. lxxv. 17? We think not. We would read the verse as follows: "For, behold, I am the Creator of new heavens and of a new earth," and the thought is that He whose *purpose* is to create new heavens and earth *prepares* for that consummation by first making Jerusalem a rejoicing, &c. The millennial age is called the "regeneration," and is that age which is both the end of the present dispensation and the introduction to the future, along which runs the old by the side of the new; just as the old nature and the new nature occupy together the same person till the final change comes. This final change does not come to the creation till after the judgment of the great white throne, because not till then is the last enemy—death—destroyed; for Isa. lxxv. 20 speaks of sin, death, and the curse as still not wanting at that period, which shows plainly that the time of universal righteousness has not come. In the Hebrew of Isa. lxxvi. 22 the same participial form occurs—"For as the new heavens and the new earth, of which I am the Maker, shall remain, so shall your seed and your name remain." Thus the thousand years'

reign vindicates the claims of the Son of God against a world now in rebellion against Him, and that cast Him out and slew Him, and also prepares the way for the final unfolding of God's purposes in the glories of the new heaven and the new earth, and we cannot entirely separate this period from either what goes before, or from what follows after it. Regeneration carries within it the thought of a gradual evolution of the new and of a gradual separation from the old, during which time both flow on together till the destined time of absolute and final separation comes. This has been God's universal principle in dealing with fallen man, thereby teaching lessons that had otherwise never been learnt. Surely "all His works are truth, and His ways judgment."

1 Cor xi. 10. What is the force of "*because of the angels*"?

The Church is a "spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men." God teaches through His appointments in the Church. Man is in the place of rule; the woman in the place of subjection; all therefore that in a woman puts her out of the place of subjection mars God's order, and sets aside that example which God would have to be given to angels as well as to men of the Church's place of subjection to her Head. Family life unfolds the heavenly mystery, and each member of the family must be careful not to contravene God's order before angels. In connection with this relation in which we stand to the angelic world, let us remember another passage in the same epistle, "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" (Chap. vi. 3.) Surely our relation to the angels is far nearer and closer than we are apt to imagine. They joy when the sinner comes back to God; they minister to him after he has come back; they perhaps attend his dying bed (Luke xvi. 22), and are brought into direct fellowship with him in the world to come. (Rev. v. 8-12.)

SIN IN THE BELIEVER; ITS EXCEEDING SINFULNESS.

Few things need to be so prayerfully guarded in the believer as *sensitiveness of conscience* in the matter of sin. There is nothing the enemy of souls seeks to assail so much, for when that is undermined the soul becomes an easy prey.

Satan seeks to effect this object in various ways. Paul writes of his *wiles* or schemes. They are subtle, dark, and deep-laid; and the subtlest, the darkest, and the deepest are those wherein he comes as an angel of light, using often God's weapons and God's words, and thereby taking the unwary soul off its guard. But he who is abiding in Christ, and walking in the light, having a single eye and an undivided heart, is not led wrong, for "in vain is the snare laid in the sight of any bird."

It is while men sleep that tares are sown. It is when we are taking our rest, after real or supposed triumphs, that the heart is most easily entrapped. We are often never nearer a great fall than after a great victory. The very greatness of the goodness of God leads to pride, unless the soul lie low in the sense of its own sinfulness. It is to be noticed in the history of the blessed apostle Paul, that as he rose higher, he sunk lower; as God exalted him, he humbled himself. It was at the close of his life, with his race nearly run, and his fight almost fought, that he called himself "the chief of sinners." He says not, "I was," but with the emphatic present tense he says, "Of whom I am chief" (*εἰμι ἐγώ*). Yes, I, I who have suffered so much, consecrated myself, my time, my all so completely to Him, I who was caught up into the third heaven, and heard unutterable things, and saw unspeakable glory, "*I am the chief of sinners.*"

Contrast with this what we read of Hezekiah. He pleaded with God for his life, not on the ground of God's grace to sinners, but on the ground of the *perfectness* of his heart and the *goodness* of his ways; and after his recovery he tells God, in the same spirit, how he means to walk softly all his days. (See Isa. xxxviii. 3, 15.) But what was the actual result? We read in 2 Chron. xxxii. 25 that "Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem."

Nothing is more dangerous than the peace of God, when laid hold on by any except with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. The Spirit of God had unfolded free, unlimited grace by Paul—grace for sinners in the epistle to the Romans, and grace for saints in that to the Hebrews; but immediately after we see in the epistles of James, of Peter, and of Jude how the devil was turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and sowing tares among God's wheat; and this was brought about by false teachers privily bringing in damnable heresies. (2 Peter ii.)

Most of the corruptions of doctrine and practice in the Church of God have originated in good men with good intentions, who, forgetful of the balance of truth, have sowed mingled seed, and thus introduced those terrible delusions which, when developed and propagated by unscrupulous hands, have caused many to make shipwreck. This is exemplified in the latter part of the life of Hezekiah, the development taking place under the godless hands of Manasseh. Hezekiah begins what Manasseh consummates. It was the very goodness of Hezekiah that fitted him as Satan's instrument to bring in the wrath of God on his family and nation; and this is a lesson the Church of God is slow to learn. Hence it is we so often hear the goodness of a man set off as a reason to call in question the danger of his doctrine, or of his ways. Bad men have little influence

for evil in the Church of God, and if the tone of godliness, of holiness, or of morality is to be lowered, it must be done by those professing to make their boast in those very things.

Let us see the danger, and then we are forearmed. Let nothing pass current that is not in accord with the word and with the testimony, let the deviation be apparently ever so small; and let us never allow appeals from the written word to any fact, supposed or real, in the experiences of ourselves or of others, for God will be found true, even though every man be found a liar. It was this that David learned when, recovered from his terrible fall, he penned that precious 51st Psalm, a psalm that finds its echo in every true heart that has been proved by God in the light of His holiness, and in the darkness of its own corruption.

To direct our thoughts aright on this solemn subject, we will take for our guidance those sorrowful pages in the record of the life of David, given to us in the second book of Samuel, and as we consider them, may our hearts tremble, and our broken and contrite spirits cry with Paul, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" remembering that at any moment (but for the grace of God) we are capable of plunging into any depth of sin and iniquity.

The opening verses of chap. xi. tell their own tale. Self-indulgence had come in, and the battle-field was forsaken and "at the time when kings go forth to battle," "David tarried still in Jerusalem," and instead of going himself to the conflict, "he sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel." Alas for us when we send others to do our work, and seek by proxy to accomplish that which belongs to ourselves!

But before going into this history, we must take a passing look at chapter vii., and its glorious unfoldings of God's covenant with David—a covenant that carries our thoughts on to the ultimate fulfilment of

all prophecy in the kingdom and glory of the Son of David.

No promises could be higher, and no revelation of God's purposes more wonderful than those contained in God's message by the prophet Nathan. David's heart was full. He had received more than man could ever have thought of, and in his holy amazement at the goodness of God he goes and sits before the Lord, and gives expression to those humble and adoring thoughts that fill the latter portion of the chapter. He had as it were been taken up into the revelations of the third heaven, and could but say, "Who am I? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord God." His past experiences were very wonderful and very undeserved; but what were they in comparison with those things that lay before? David was perhaps never higher.

The next chapter tells us briefly of his many and great victories; but of these God seems to make very little, and a few verses serve to tell us of them as they were gained over the Philistines, the Syrians, and all the surrounding nations; but twice it is said that "the Lord preserved David whithersoever he went." In chapter ix. he who had received mercy himself shows mercy to Mephibosheth, causing him to sit at his table as one of the king's sons.

In all these things David is presented to us as on a pinnacle of spiritual grace, which had been crowned with great and many victories; for God had made him to triumph over all his enemies. God's grace had surrounded him, and His goodness had followed him; and, in the language of our days, it might be thought he had got "out of the seventh chapter of the Romans," and far beyond the cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" and that he was "resting amid the triumphs of the eighth." But though we have died

to sin, sin is not dead in us; and it is this which raises the cry of wretchedness in every renewed soul, only the more intensely as the body of death makes its presence felt within us, in view of the glory of God. David's history has now to teach us this; and the war with the children of Ammon becomes the occasion.

Having fought, it is hard to stand prepared for the conflict still; and of this we are reminded in the Spirit's word to us in Eph. vi. 11: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand the wiles of the devil;" and again in verse 13: "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand in the evil day, and having done all, to *stand*." We are only safe as we stand prepared for a fresh conflict. The enemy is never idle; the body of the flesh is never dead, though judicially slain; and he who would stand against Satan's schemes and devices, and quench his fiery darts, must needs stand like a soldier on the battle-field, ready for open attack or for covert stratagem.

In all this we find David wanting. When kings went forth to the war, he was tarrying at home, where ease and rest soon laid him bare to the fiery darts of fleshly lust. A little rest nerves for the fight; but when rest becomes the paramount thought, the sword is apt to fall out of its scabbard, and to be found lacking in "the evil day." Again, it is said: "And it came to pass in an eveningtide, that David arose from off his bed." The Spirit of God has not recorded this in vain. How different an employment of the eventide from what we read elsewhere: "Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice." (Ps. lv. 17.) Then "the voice of the enemy" and the "oppression of the wicked" cast him on God, and the evening hour found him with God in prayer. It was otherwise now; and as he rose from his bed, he "walked upon

the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he *saw . . .*"

The uncared-for garden of the sluggard is soon overgrown with weeds; and the heart of the child of God that is not guarded by constant watchfulness and prayerfulness is at once open to the enemy, and an arrow pierces ere he is aware, and either a deadly conflict ensues, or, as is too often the case, he becomes a willing captive. How minutely has God seen fit to describe the downward steps of this man after God's own heart. In verse 3 we read, "He sent and enquired." How sure is sin to triumph when we begin to parley, and every succeeding step becomes easier and easier, and yet more and more rapid. "Put thy knife to thy throat if thou be a man given to appetite," says the wise man; that is, die rather than transgress by allowing the appetite to rule thee. We next read, "He sent messengers and took," &c. We read in James, "When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin" (chap. i. 15), and hence some have erroneously inferred that a thing is not sin till it has been brought forth. This is man's conception of sin and man's measure of morality, but it is not God's. It is sin in the thought long ere it is sin brought forth, and he who knows and feels what sin is will kill it in the womb that it may be still-born. But that which is born dead tells that it had life once, and this is the bitter shame and sorrow of every child of God, who, while thanking God for deliverance from outward transgression, is humbled in the dust that sin in desire was ever conceived at all, for it is not conceived unless inwardly yielded to. The great burden of the seventh of Romans is indwelling sin, the body of death, rather than the outcome of it in thoughts, words, or ways. But sin is a depth which none but God can fathom.

Time rolls on. The sin and shame must come out. God will not help to hide it. David seeks to screen his guilt. We know the contrivances by which this

was sought, and step by step he sinks lower and lower, till, finding every way of escape from exposure taken away, he adds murder to adultery. It is hard to read David's letter to Joab without shuddering, and to conceive that such a man could fall so low as to pen it. But God speaks to us all, and has left on record a painfully detailed account of this great fall, the greatest on record in the Word of God, when the height from which David fell and the depth to which he sunk are considered. It has been written that we might ponder it well, and not readily forget it, but take heed to the words of the psalmist, "I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad."

In the message sent by Joab to David, announcing the death of Uriah, we notice the keenness of the eyes of the world to detect the sins and failings of God's people; and it is well for us that it is so. The chapter ends with: "But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord," or "was evil in His eyes." For months the record is silent, and probably not till a year after was Nathan sent to David to tell him God's thoughts of the whole transaction.

What these days and months of silent anguish were to David we are told in some of the penitential psalms, and we cannot close this part of the record without a reference to them. The sin was still unconfessed, and in Ps. xxxii. David's bitterness of soul is strikingly portrayed, when, in describing these awful days, he says, "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." Can anything more reveal the exercise of a saved soul under sin than these words? The world is prone to quote David's sin, either to condone their own sins, or to stamp with hypocrisy all those that profess to be converted and born of God. It would be well, however, when God

has so drawn aside the veil that separates heart from heart, that these inner experiences, and these dark, unutterable groanings, were pondered over; and there would be found in them a more convincing proof of the reality and genuineness of David's heart Godwards than had the sin never taken place, and the agony of unconfessed sin never been told us.

There must be silence before God till sin is confessed. Prayer cannot ascend—the heaven is brass above the head, and the earth iron below the feet of him who refuses to acknowledge his sin. Who can fathom that “horrible pit,” with its noise, its tumultuous upbraidings of sin, its voice of Uriah's blood crying from the walls of the beleaguered city of the Ammonites, and its re-echoing back on all sides of the sound of his “roaring all the day long”? Conscience was not asleep, but the heart was not broken, and when at last it broke under the self-conviction of the prophet's parable, we read the immediate response, “I said, I will confess; . . . and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

The horrible pit and the miry clay had accomplished their end; and God again brought him up, and set his feet upon a rock. But of this more hereafter.

H. G.

THE believer should not sin—that is, walk in the flesh. The flesh is in us, yet it need not hinder our communion with God; but *walking after the flesh* will. We lose our communion, not our union; for as joined to the Lord, we are one Spirit with Him. By confession of sin or failure, our souls are restored; for God is faithful to Christ's atonement. He is *justly* a forgiver of sins—“a *just* God and a Saviour.” We know this, and therefore we can go into the light. Indwelling sin is no bar to our communion; it was condemned in the cross. In Jesus we have died to sin, and we must not let it reign. Our liberty is *from* sin, not *to* sin.

THE POWER OF FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.

“When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.”

Ex. xxxiv. 30.

THE mighty transforming power of fellowship with God had told on Moses' face, and caused a brilliancy which alarmed those around. He wist it not; he thought not of himself; his heart, his eyes were full of heavenly sights, his ears had heard the very voice of God. He had learned some little of His grace, and, fired with holy zeal and love, he longed to share with others the treasures which he had found.

On two different occasions Moses spent forty days and forty nights in the mount alone with God; but no such effect, so far as we know, was produced upon him the *first* time. Then he received the law from the hands of God, written by the very finger of God upon two tables of stone prepared by God Himself; he was also shown the pattern of the tabernacle, and received full instructions as to making and rearing it, with many other ordinances connected with the holiness and worship of God, yet the skin of his face remained unchanged.

The law of the Lord convicts of sin, and shows us what we are; but there is no power in it when alone to correct what is wrong, nor to raise the sinner from his depraved and sunken condition. It may, and should, bring us down in the dust, and cause us to cry, “Unclean, unclean!” but there it leaves us, groaning and weak, with dull and heavy hearts, and sad and careworn faces.

The *second* period of forty days which Moses spent in the mount with God was *after* Israel's terrible sin, after they had broken the covenant which God had made with them, and forfeited every thing. So truly did Moses apprehend their real condition, that he had

cast the tables (those tables which were the work of God, Ex. xxxiv. 16) out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount. He then sought to execute judgment on the most hardened of the offenders, and returned to the Lord to entreat His mercy and forgiveness for the people.

Exodus xxxii. and xxxiii. unfold to us this wonderful scene, in which he prevailed with God, and not only obtained forgiveness for Israel, but also received the promise for himself, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee."

How eagerly he must have obeyed the command, "Be ready in the morning, and come up in the morning unto mount Sinai, and present thyself to Me there, in the top of the mount." What great expectations must have filled his soul! The Lord Himself had promised to hide him in a cleft of the rock, to cover him with His hand while He passed by, and to proclaim the name of the Lord. With what swift yet measured steps he must have climbed that lofty mount! How earnestly he must have longed to reach its summit, that he might there present himself to God, and wait for the unfoldings of His grace!

Would that our hearts were as eager and as swift to tread the new and living way into the holiest, there to abide, and with open face behold the glory of the Lord, and listen to the words of life and love which flow continually from Christ!

For forty days and forty nights Moses was there alone with the Lord, the whole time spent in close and holy converse with Him. What a solemn and blessed season it must have been! What glorious truths he must have learnt! Very little is recorded of it (five minutes will suffice to read the inspired details); but this we know: the Lord Himself descended and stood with Moses, and proclaimed His Name before him; and as the preciousness of that Name spread over Moses' soul, he "made haste, and

bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." Having grasped a little of the truth unfolded, he then uttered this wonderful petition: "O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; for it is a stiffnecked people; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance."

He laid firm hold of the grace of God, and pleaded the very rebellion of Israel as a ground for the Lord's presence. It was as if he had said: 'We are so corrupt and abominable, that nothing short of thine own presence will subdue our iniquities; our sin is so deeply rooted in us, that unless thou dost take us for thine own inheritance, and dig and plant and prune us accordingly, we shall always remain barren and unfruitful; yea, overrun with every noxious weed.' He grasped the covenant which God had made with Abraham, and laid hold of the strength and faithfulness of God as pledged to fulfil that covenant.

Now mark the immediate answer. "Behold, I make a covenant," says the Lord: "before all thy people I will do marvels: . . . and all the people among which thou art shall see the work of the Lord: for it is a terrible thing that I will do with thee. . . . Behold, I drive out before thee the Amorite, and the Canaanite, and the Hittite, and the Perizzite, and the Hivite, and the Jebusite."

How fully, how graciously the Lord met His servant's faith. He speaks no longer of their sin, but takes them up in their utter weakness, and pledges Himself to cast out all their enemies. Instead of withdrawing Himself from them, He gives renewed instructions about His service and worship. He also adds this *fresh* command: "Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leaven." Ah no! the blood of His sacrifice must stand *alone*, pure and unmingled with aught beside. "It is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul;" and upon this basis, this one immovable rock, He could renew His

covenant, and continue to bless His wilful, wayward people.

So now. The blood, the precious blood of Christ, is the ransom for our souls. No leaven can be mingled with that purchase-price; no mixture of polluted prayers, or tears, or failing efforts to obey. The price is paid; and thus we stand eternally redeemed, the gift of God to Christ. These hearts, so filthy and corrupt, belong to Him, and He will subdue every deeply-seated sin. Yes, He will do a terrible and yet a blessed thing within our souls. He will humble our pride and selfishness, bring down our high and lofty thoughts; yea, empty us of all that grieves His heart, and fill us with every precious fruit and every lovely grace.

He has taken us for His *own* inheritance, and He will make us *worthy* of Himself. Terrible indeed the work may be; for if we refuse and rebel, and cleave to the world or yield to the flesh, the strong hand of power will come down upon us, and we shall have to prove what an evil and a bitter thing it is to depart from the living God. But still He will perfect His own work. He will keep His covenant, and He will train and fit these hearts to love and serve Him perfectly, and be a joy and praise to Him throughout eternity.

Moses had learnt a little of these blessed truths. The Lord had made *all* His goodness pass before him; and as he gazed upon these brilliant rays of grace, some few bright gleams of glory rested on his soul, and made his face to shine.

So now with us. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." If we would show forth His likeness, or in any measure reflect the rays of glory which shine out in Him, we must "consider Him;" yea, gaze on Him, delight in Him; ponder

His words, His ways, His acts; keep looking off unto Him, and draw continually from His abundant fulness.

Commandments and precepts humble and bring us down. They show us how greatly we fail; but beholding His glory lifts us up, and fires us with zeal and courage to run in His steps.

“I beseech thee, shew me thy glory,” was Moses’ entreaty. “I will make all my goodness pass before thee,” was the Lord’s response. Yes, this is His glory, His greatest glory—the unfoldings of the riches of His grace, which meets all the requirements of His justice, and will not clear the guilty; and yet has devised and provided an effectual remedy, by which the sinner is not only saved from wrath, but made partaker of His holiness, and rendered fit for eternal companionship and fellowship with God. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!”

Let us gaze on His glory; let us ponder it well; and thus will our souls be changed from glory to glory through the mighty working of the Lord the Spirit.

Moses *abode* in the mount with God for forty days and forty nights. He did neither eat bread nor drink water, and we may certainly judge that no sense of weariness or unrest crept over him. Surely there is a secret here. The flesh is so strong within us that we quickly weary of His holy presence. Our hearts back out, and run after some other object; and the effort of abiding there is so great that it hinders the gentle inflow of His grace, and the transforming power of His presence. In His presence is fulness and joy; yea, strength and gladness; and it should be to us the most attractive place for which our souls should long and pant, and where we should love to linger long.*

* It is well to enquire what it is that makes the effort so great. That it too often is so few will deny; that it ought not to be so we all allow. Why should it need an effort

Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone; and if our eye is fixed upon Christ we shall forget ourselves, and while delighting in Him, and seeking to minister to Him, we shall unconsciously reflect His glory, and others will take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus. May these lines be our continual experience—

“I would commune with Thee, my God,
E'en to Thy seat I come;
I leave my joys, I leave my sins,
And seek in Thee my home.

“I stand upon the mount of God,
With sunlight in my soul;
I hear the storms in vales beneath;
I hear the thunders roll.

“But I am calm with Thee, my God,
Beneath these glorious skies;
And to the height on which I stand,
Nor storms nor clouds can rise.

“Oh, this is life! oh, this is joy!
My God, to find Thee so;
Thy face to see, Thy voice to hear,
And all Thy love to know.”

THE WAYS OF THE SON OF GOD IN RESURRECTION.

JOHN XX.

[Notes of an Address to Believers at Leominster Conference, October, 1875.]

THIS chapter unfolds to us the ways of the Son of God with His own elect, and especially with *individuals*.

to remain in the presence of eternal love? to continue in the conscious embrace of the everlasting arms? What but unbelief and distrust on the one hand, or disobedience and self-will on the other, could ever make that to need an effort to which our hearts should rise spontaneously, as they will hereafter? Need we further proof of the depth of the sinfulness and the enmity of sin in the human heart than these practical hindrances which we experience in our communion with God?
—ED.

Indeed this whole gospel has this characteristic. In John iii. we have the case of Nicodemus; in chap. iv. the woman of Samaria; in chap. ix. the blind man; and numerous other cases in this gospel show forth our Lord's care and humility in dealing with the *ones*.

In Matthew's gospel we see Christ dealing with crowds, because He there stands forth as the *King*. In Mark, we behold Him as the *Servant*; in Luke, as the *Man*; in John, as the *Son of God*; and here as the Son of God in resurrection.

In this chapter we see the way of the Son of God in resurrection (1) with His foes; (2) with His Father and individual saints; (3) with the assembly; and (4) with the absentee.

1. *The way of the Son of God in resurrection with His foes.*

We see how the enemy had apparently got the Lord Jesus under his power in death; but he could not keep Him, nor could the clothes with which He was bound. He bursts the grave, and comes forth! How? Not as a runaway, but as showing his enemies' entire subjection. The grave-clothes even were carefully folded by Him, so *leisurely* must He have come forth, in order to show that neither sin nor Satan could hold Him any longer. Among men, if any one succeed in bursting his prison bars he makes all haste to get away, or rather run away; but not so the Lord Jesus. The clothes were properly folded, as if to say, "Who is he that condemneth? I have died, yea rather, I am risen."

The *stripping off* of the clothes by the Lord Jesus is alluded to in Col. ii. 15, where the same word in the original is translated "spoiled." He has *stripped off* principalities and powers. He has *spoiled* them. And if *He* has, have not *we* in Him? Christ has answered, yea, vanquished every foe for Himself, and for us also.

The quiet folding of the grave-clothes was an act of perfect triumph, and in it we see His enemies, our enemies, stripped off and spoiled, yea, defied.

2. *The way of the Son of God in resurrection towards His Father, and to Mary, as an individual saint.*

What a blessed and encouraging truth this is for us, that the Lord deals with *units*; and here with *such* a one as Mary Magdalene. This is His highest glory. She was the *first* to whom He appeared after His resurrection; and thus He shows His perfect love to *all* His saints.

Mark, too, how He desires to share with us His joys. (v. 17.) "My God, your God; my Father, your Father." "As thou hast loved Me, so have I loved them." He would teach us how perfectly we are joined together—the Lord Jesus and His saints. Again, "My brethren." How beautiful! and yet while He thus blessedly identifies Himself with His own, notice the dignity that He preserves in the *measured* words, "*My* God, and *your* God"—not "our God;" and yet the sense is throughly conveyed that *His* God is *our* God, and *His* Father is *our* Father.

3. *The way of the Son of God in resurrection with the assembly.*

What is the first word He utters? "*Peace!*" How like Himself! He had made peace; He is the Prince of peace; and He proclaims peace. And where does He stand? "*In the midst,*" so that all may gather round Him. Not at the top, which *we* might have thought His befitting place, but "*in the midst;*" Jesus the *centre*. He the great ONE, and His saints like so many *noughts*—each one adding to Him, and yet nothing in themselves. All are gathered around Him, so that, turn which way you will, you see a perfect whole; Jesus the gathering-point, the centre of every heart and eye.

Again He utters the word "*peace*," but there is no repetition in it. The *first* peace is for ourselves, to set our hearts at rest: "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." The *second* peace is for others: "As my Father hath sent Me, so send I you." Oh the unselfishness of love, of the love of Christ! And how unselfish He wants His saints to be! He first meets our own need and speaks peace, and then sends us forth to minister this peace to others.

Note also that the words in verses 22, 23, which have been made such a vile handle by the Romish Church, were not uttered to the disciples as apostles, but as disciples; and Luke xxiv. 33 shows that the women and others were with them. They prove the right and power of disciples as disciples, when gathered around Christ, to exercise discipline by the power of the Holy Ghost.

4. *The way of the Son of God in resurrection with the absentee.*

What is not lost by our absence from the assembly of the Lord's people on the first day of the week? Would that all saints of God valued the blessed presence of the adorable Lord Jesus so highly, that nothing but the most weighty reasons should be able to keep them absent from such an assemblage.

We see in the case of Thomas how much he lost, and what unbelief it caused in him; and may it not be thus at any time with any absent one? May not such a one lose some wonderful manifestation of the Lord's presence and blessing, which can never be recalled?

But mark the Lord's amazing loving-kindness to the absentee. He, the blessed Lord, comes again to His gathered disciples *expressly* for this naughty Thomas, and especially addresses Himself to meet and remove his unbelief. Oh, what matchless grace!

See, too how perfect is the cure! Notice the excla-

mation of Thomas, "My Lord and my God." All unbelief gone now. Note also the patient love, the pains the Lord takes with this unbelieving servant, inviting him to handle Him, to put his finger into His hands, and thrust his hand into His side.

See also the rebuke in verse 29, "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed." May we always be *ready* to receive the highest blessing.

A word here about the want of punctuality in coming to meetings for worship, &c. If we really believed that we were going to meet the Lord, would we keep Him waiting? Besides, we are robbing the Lord Himself of the time we lose by being late. We would use the highest reason for pressing punctuality, and this will also include our own loss. Shall we deprive our blessed Lord from gathering His pleasant fruits from us, His redeemed saints, the whole of the short time we might be together? Oh that this highest reality of pure worship, *His joy*, were entered into by each of us! Surely there would be more waiting on His Spirit for guidance, more subjection one to another in the fear of the Lord; no haste, but perfect confidence in the *present One*, the Lord Himself. How little this seems to be understood, or rather, carried out.

Thomas well learnt the lesson, not to be absent again; for in the next chapter we find him mentioned *second* among the disciples. This is the only time he is so mentioned, and surely it is significant, and speaks to us of the close company he afterwards kept with the other disciples.

COMFORT.

THE Lord knows that our fellowship with Himself in death and resurrection has made us strangers on earth. He "knows the heart of a stranger;" for He could say—oh, with what intensity!—"I was a stranger."

But how blessedly all our need in this respect is met and provided for.

Our God is the "*God of all comfort*; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." (2 Cor. i. 3, 4.) And again, "God, who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us." (vii. 6.) Is not this enough to make one rejoice to be in any depth from which His own hand might lift us into closer, deeper fellowship?

Then the Holy Ghost is "*the Comforter*," ministering comfort to our souls in a double way as He leads us on, by *love* and *hope*—the one shedding its light around our path, the other filling and irradiating all our future.

"If there be therefore any comfort of *love*, if any fellowship of the Spirit," says the apostle (Phil. ii. 1); and again, "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in *love*." (Col. ii. 2.) The Holy Ghost seems continually to make this love the foundation, perhaps because it is essentially the divine nature: "that ye, being rooted and grounded (not in doctrine, but) in love," &c. (Eph. iii. 18.) This, I suppose, is that "comfort of the Holy Ghost," in which the churches walked. (Acts ix. 31.)

Then, as to the comfort of *the hope*, "So shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." (1 Thess. iv. 17, 18.) How precious that our Lord should thus count upon our longing to see Him, that He should know the one joy that only can fill our heart fully and for ever. Alas! how often we grow weary and discouraged, and the waiting-time seems so long; but, blessed be God, however the days go by, the coming hastens on, the wilderness journey grows shorter, and home joys and rest are nearer and nearer.

A. E. W.

THOUGHTS ON MINISTRY.

“He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ.”—Eph. iv. 11, 12.

THERE has been of late very much teaching on the all-sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ for the wisdom and sanctification, as well as for the justification, of the believer. This may, however, lead to the overlooking of the truth that the Lord has made His people “*workers together with Him*,” and that He not only acts by *direct* influence on the believer’s mind through the Word, but “perfects” and “edifies” His saints by the imperfect utterances and ministry of His servants.

The Word is a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path, cleansing, quickening, comforting; and under what circumstances does its guidance fail the believer? When the *Holy Spirit* applies the Word to the heart without other instrumentality, what can withstand its power? Yet “it pleased God by the foolishness of *preaching* to save them that believe;” by the feebleness of *teaching* to edify those who have believed; and it pleases Him to do so still.

We have no mention of miraculous gifts in the passage quoted above; and if we understand the place of the apostles and prophets, in the light of the twentieth verse of the second chapter of the same epistle, as the *foundation*, the first stones in the building, there remain, connected with the superstructure, *evangelists*, *pastors* and *teachers*, as the Lord’s provision, the tools or instruments He employs “for the perfecting of the saints *unto* the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

Are these gifted ones still provided by the Chief Shepherd for His flock? If so, (1) Whence do they derive their *authority*, and what are the *tokens* as

found in the Word? (2) In what *relation* do they stand to the flock, and what are the *responsibilities* of the flock to them? In the consideration of these questions may the Holy Spirit, who takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them unto us, lead us to a right judgment.

What then is an *evangelist*? One who preaches the gospel to the unconverted. What is a *pastor*? One who cares for the souls of those who have received Christ. And what are we to understand by a *teacher*? One who has not only a knowledge of the Word, but power to impart that knowledge. In the apostle Paul we see one who was mightily endowed in all three capacities. Whether we view him as the evangelist on Mars' hill, as the pastor in his farewell charge to the elders of Ephesus, or as the teacher at Rome when deprived of his accustomed liberty, he stands forth as a pattern to all who might succeed him.

I. It may be asked, Are these gifted ones still sent forth in our midst? and how are we to know them? From the sermon on the mount, at the commencement of our Lord's ministry, to the latest exhortations of the Holy Spirit by the beloved apostle John, we are distinctly told to judge those who speak to us in the name of the Lord by their *walk and doctrine*; and not only so, but that if an apostle or an angel from heaven taught otherwise than in conformity with the testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, he was to be avoided as one under an anathema.

When some would call in question Paul's apostleship, his reply is, "*The seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*" (1 Cor. ix. 2.) And the conversion of sinners through their word now is the Lord's seal to evangelists as His duly-appointed messengers.

No human authority, even were it of an apostle, gave a man the right to preach the gospel, or to teach believers; it was always the Spirit's gift to the individual. The responsibility lay with the world of

refusing or receiving the gospel; the responsibility lay with the church of accepting or rejecting the teacher. But the church no more constituted its teachers than the world does the ministers of the gospel.

While, however, *evangelists* and *teachers* were directly qualified and sent forth by the Spirit of God, there is Scripture to show that *pastors*, or those who exercised rule in the Church of God, were additionally appointed (under the name of elders and bishops) by the apostles, as the apostles themselves had been appointed by the Lord. Acts xiv. 23 may serve as an example: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed." In the case of Titus, we find Paul authorizing him to ordain elders as he had previously appointed. (Titus i. 5.)

Such was God's order in the beginning. The apostles were not only filled with the Holy Ghost, but had power to communicate the gift by laying on their hands (Acts viii. 17); and in giving the elders of Ephesus his farewell charge, Paul could tell them that *the HOLY GHOST had made them overseers* (elsewhere translated *bishops*). But in the present day can we recognize any one divinely-gifted by the Spirit, able to detect the false from the true, as Peter was in the case of Ananias, and to communicate the Holy Ghost as a qualifying power to others by the laying on of his hands? Nay. Then if hands are laid on one man by another in the way of appointment without the accompanying power or gift, does it in any way differ from the action of one who would command a leper to be clean in the name of the Lord Jesus, and leave him a leper still? It is not within the present subject to enquire why or when the gift of the Holy Ghost by laying on of hands ceased in the Church; but we may seek to ascertain what the *tokens* of the gift of the Spirit are where no hands have been laid.

We know that to be chief among the brethren was

sometimes a subject of dispute among the apostles while the Lord was with them. This desire for pre-eminence grieved Him, and He always replied that the chief among them was to be recognized in him who truly served the rest. Thus did the Lord give us the abiding distinction between rule in the Church and rule in the world. It is of the greatest importance to keep this grace in view while we are searching with the lamp of the Word for the Christ-appointed pastor or ruler. The "exercise of authority" by a wise king is as different in its nature from the rule in the Church of God that is upheld by the Word, as light is from darkness. To be the *servant of all* the saints in any place for the Master's sake, carefully avoiding dependence on them in any way, as Paul did, whether in Ephesus, Corinth, or Thessalonica (Acts xx. 34; 2 Cor. xi. 9; 2 Thess. iii. 8), reveals the seal of pastorate, the token of the Christ-appointed elder, even a yearning love for the souls that He has loved, simply *because He has loved them*.

The evidence of appointment by the hands of the apostle to this office in the church in the early days, has led some to the conclusion that they cannot yield obedience to *any* in these last days. But this is not the Master's will, as we find in the closing chapter of 1st Corinthians, that *submission* to those who had *addicted* themselves to the service of the saints (the same word as *ordained* in Romans xiii. 1) is enjoined upon the church. In 1 Thess. v. 12, we are told to know those who are *over us* in the Lord, and to esteem them very highly for *their work's sake*. The word "*know*" in this passage (*ειδεναι*) is worthy of attention; it has the force of "do not lose sight of." There is no danger of the ruler appointed by *man* being lost sight of, but spiritual discernment is called for to recognize and keep before our eyes the one whom the Lord has endowed for this office. In the last chapter of Hebrews, where the saints are also exhorted in this particular,

the distinguishing characteristics given are—first, that the end of their conversation is “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever;” and secondly, that they watch for our souls as they that must give an account.

But it naturally occurs in connection with this subject to enquire how two or three can *rule* in the same place without their authority conflicting. It is hard to divest ourselves of the world-type of government, or to see how authority may be maintained when the servant of God *must not strive* (2 Tim. ii. 24), and all are to be *subject one to the other*. (1 Pet. v. 5.)

Perhaps a consideration of the word *rule*, as we find it in Romans xii. 8—“He that *ruleth* with diligence,” and in 1 Tim. v. 17—“Let the elders that *rule* well be counted worthy of double honour”—may help us in this enquiry. The literal meaning of the word is, *to stand in the front*; the evident application being, that every occasion of difficulty, sorrow, or scandal finds these bearing the brunt of the trial; and where this is fully done as unto the Lord, He bows the hearts of the saints to yield to such as the trees are bowed before the wind. And if the good of saints, and behaviour in them such, as to please the Lord, be the one thing desired, the guides, instead of being divided, will be united by their blessed work. It is not implied that if there were five such men in any assembly they should be of equal influence in it, any more than the fingers of one’s hand are alike in length or strength. There will always be that which one does more efficiently than another—the chief, as our Lord tells us, being known as the one who most truly serves all the rest—as the thumb not only confirms and adds strength to the closed fingers, but can individually meet each face to face in a way the rest cannot do to each other.

II. As to the mutual relation between these gifted ones and the flock, the responsibility of accepting or

refusing them lies with the flock ; the making and sending forth solely belongs to the Spirit of God. Now the Scriptural holding of this principle leads to very important issues.

Supposing among a meeting of believers in any place there were one or two gifted in preaching the gospel, one or two more who were peculiarly fitted for edifying believers, having their hearts ever exercised about their welfare, and others again who (though neither qualified as evangelists nor possessing the heart of a pastor) were endowed with a knowledge of the word of God, and an ability to expound its teachings, is it the mind of the Spirit that the believers, recognizing their gifts, should enter into an engagement with them to become *their ministers*? In other words, that these gifted ones should, in return for temporal support guaranteed, exercise their gifts under the direction of and for the immediate benefit of their supporters.

Is it not rather the mind of the Spirit, that believers should recognize and care for those whom the Lord sends, in so far as their labours call for such care, without entering into a covenant with them, fully relying that God is able to make all grace abound towards them, that they, "always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work" ? (2 Cor. ix. 8.)

These texts, that have been already referred to, reveal perhaps the apostle Paul's judgment on the matter. Acts xx. 33, 34 : "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me." 2 Cor. xi. 9 : "And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man : for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied : and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." 2 Thess. iii. 8 : "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought ; but wrought with labour and travail night and day,

that we might not be chargeable to any of you." During the three years that he did the work of a pastor at Ephesus, not one of the flock escaped his watchful care. For eighteen months he was *settled* (*καθίζω*) at Corinth (Acts xviii. 11); but, as he tells the Thessalonians, among whom he also laboured, he expressly refrained from being *chargeable* to them, which he might have been, "to make ourselves an ensample unto you to follow us." Nor can it be understood for a moment that Paul's marvellous gifts at once established his position in any church, so that offerings of love flowed in upon him from those to whom he ministered. On the contrary, the wealthy Corinthians, who were his children in the faith, ignored his wants, and let the poor Macedonians supply them; and as he touchingly tells the Philippians, that among other lessons he had been instructed "to be hungry, and to suffer need." (Phil. iv. 12.)

The Lord Jesus said to His Father, "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world;" and Paul's heart responded, "I fill up that which is behind of the sufferings of Christ for His body's sake, which is the Church." Barnabas sold his property and distributed it to the saints (Acts iv. 36, 37), and shared the privilege of those who had neither silver nor gold, and who walked by faith and not by sight.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" If applied to all who are engaged in ministry, how would this principle thin their ranks as Gideon's army was thinned before being led to battle!

But how has the Spirit directed the Church in the matter of giving? 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2 is the clearest instruction, that on the first day of the week each believer is to lay by a sum, as God hath prospered. Should our engagements be such that the money is not thus weekly forthcoming, it may nevertheless be reckoned; and as stewards look to their master for in-

structions as to the expenditure of the money they have collected on his behalf, so is the believer to search for the will of his Lord in this respect from His written Word, and where this is done in the simplicity of a child-like faith, the path of obedience is plain. The text just quoted, as also 2 Cor. ix. 3-5, seems to point out that Paul disliked special appeals, inasmuch as the response might be from other motives than that of obedience to the Lord; nor is there the shadow of Scripture warrant for asking the world to help the work of Christ.

But supposing any body of believers neglect those whom the Spirit sends unto them, have these any course open to them other than of making this neglect known to the Lord? None apparently. He who has said, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," visits these thoughtless and self-absorbed ones oftentimes with a spiritual atrophy, so that they are unable to profit or grow by all the instruction they receive, and also withholds answers to their prayers for lack of their obedience in this respect; and further, the very gift and power of ministry not unfrequently fails as a result of this neglect. Many a hopeless groan over our coldness, and many an unexpectant prayer for more life and power in our midst, is but an evidence of failure in this respect.

But the exhortation to him that is taught in the Word, to communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things (Gal. vi. 6), is one that goes further than supplying him with the necessaries of this life, as is generally understood. The *very teachings themselves* should form continual subjects of conversation between the teacher and the taught. The additional search of the Word and labour in prayer which it leads to, are blessings to both. Although in one aspect some are instruments used by Christ in building up, yet in another aspect all are living stones—we are "*members one of another.*" (Rom. xii. 5.)

E. K. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

WHAT is the meaning of 2 Tim. ii. 6?

We think the reading of the margin cannot be sustained. Alford renders—"The husbandman who is engaged in labour must first partake of the fruits." The passage seems given as an encouragement to labourers, and corresponds with "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn." He eats as he treads; and so the worker for Christ has the first reward of his labour, receiving it here while he works, as well as entering into the joy of it hereafter, when his work is done. Paul attaches importance to the thought; for he adds, "Consider what I say." It has an important bearing on the warfare of the soldier who has to "endure hardness."

What is the bearing of 2 Tim. ii. 11-13?

A beloved brother writes: "I read verse 11 as the security of our standing; viz., that having *once* died (aorist tense) with Him, we shall surely live with Him. (Compare 1 Thess. v. 10.) Then verse 12 I look upon as containing the law of Christ under which we live as His saints and servants; viz., that *according to the suffering for Him will be the reigning with Him* (compare Luke xix. 17, &c.), and that His denying us is in respect of our work as His soldiers and His servants. The two uses of 'deny' are like the two uses of 'defile' or 'destroy' in 1 Cor. iii. 17; and verse 13 I read as if it said, 'If we believe not *this truth*' (*i.e.* as to His coming judgment-seat and its verdicts), 'He remains faithful;' '*for*' (so the best MSS.) 'He is not able to deny Himself;' *i.e.* the decisions of His tribunal are as it were a part of Himself, and necessarily partake of His character of holiness.

JESUS AS "THE TRUE VINE."

JOHN XV. 1-16.

THE subject of this precious teaching of our Lord is not salvation from the sinner's doom, nor the receiving of eternal life only, but fruit-bearing here on earth for God; and Jesus teaches us that He is as truly our only power for this as He alone could be the source to us of eternal life at the first. And thus is seen the truth of the word in John i. 14, 16: He "dwelt among us . . . *full* of grace and truth." "And of His *fulness* have all we received, and grace for grace." Every variety of "grace" is in Him, and every reality of "truth;" and an infinite fulness of each kind: a fulness not only of the "grace" of *life*, which saves from even seeing death or tasting it (see John viii. 51, 52); but of the grace of *sympathy* (John xi. 35), of the grace of *service* (John xiii. 13-15), of *communion* with Himself and with the Father (John xiv. 20-23), and here also of the precious grace of *fruit-bearing*.

Hence in this teaching Jesus speaks of none but those who are His own, as it was uttered with none but such present. Judas Iscariot was gone out. He could therefore say to them: "Now *ye* are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." (v. 3.) Whereas before Judas left, He had to say: "Ye are clean, but not all." (John xiii. 10.) The subject of fruit-bearing therefore, as taught here, raises no question whatever of the individual's salvation—that is a settled thing. The bearing of ever so much fruit cannot add to the blessed certainty of eternal life being his, nor can the absence of fruit take away from it.

"Once in Christ, in Christ for ever;
Nothing from His love can sever."

Under the law, the priest once washed, and robed, and brought near to God by sacrifice, remained a priest, however much he might fail in his service after he was made one; and in Titus iii. 5, Paul speaks of the "washing of regeneration" as something done for the believer once and for ever; and because of which he can be both taught and exhorted as to his subsequent walk. So in our chapter our Lord says: "Now ye *are* clean through the word which I have spoken unto you;" and makes this the very ground on which both to instruct and to exhort them as to fruit-bearing.

Christ, then, is a Vine for God, as well as a Saviour by whom God saves sinners from perishing, and gives them everlasting life. And acquaintance with Him as a Saviour does not at all of necessity carry with it equal acquaintance with Him as the sap-giving power for fruitfulness. But God desires this fruit-bearing here on earth for each child of His; and hence these teachings and exhortations of our Lord.

Moreover, Christ is now God's ONLY Vine, as truly as He is God's *only* salvation of sinners from hell. No sinner can be saved and have eternal life, except through Christ; so also no saved one can bear any fruit whatever, or have his life here below of any value whatever in God his Father's sight, except through abiding in Christ; and the fruitfulness will be according to the measure of this abiding, and no more.

Again, *fruit-bearing*, as here considered, is a thing more especially of the words, and ways, and activities of life, as *communion*—which is the distinctive subject of John xiv.—is of the Mary-like quiet, sitting at Jesus' feet, and hearing His words, and anointing His feet with the ointment of our grateful love to Him.

John xv. is a chapter of activity, as chapter xiv. is one of rest; "peace" is the subject of the one, as "joy" is of the other. (Compare chap. xiv. 27 with xv. 11.) Chapters xv. and xvi. seem to have been

spoken by our Lord as He, and the disciples with Him, walked from the "upper room" of the passover through the streets of Jerusalem, out toward the eastern wall and on to the valley of the brook Cedron; for, "Arise, let us go hence," closes chap. xiv., and His precious words continue throughout the next three chapters until with the eleven He crosses the brook.

What a sight to Him, as He walked those streets that night, were the passover-keeping houses of Jerusalem! Lit up with the outward observance of the Moses ritual, they kept the feast; but, alas! it was with the old leaven of formality, by the ignorant and careless; or, worse still, with the leaven of malice and wickedness, by the rabbis and the priests, for they were even then plotting how they might "take Jesus by subtilty and put Him to death." The lamp of the outward ordinance might shine from many a window, as Jesus and the little band walked along, but it was "a fire" of their own kindling, and "sparks" of their own with which they compassed themselves about (see Isa. 1. 11), the end of which could only be that they should lie down in sorrow.

No one more sorrowfully felt their state than He, who that night in loneliness and rejection walked along those streets. He was indeed the One who "feared the Lord," who "walked in darkness" as to outward prosperity, and had no light, yet trusted "in the name of Jehovah, and stayed upon His God" (Isa. 1. 10), and joy filled His soul even amidst His sorrows; nor could, nor would He keep His joy to Himself; it flowed from Him in this parable of the Vine, of which, when ended, He said, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my *joy* might remain in you, and your joy might be full."

And what was the joy? It was the consciousness that He drew from God the strength for every step He trod; and that every step, as He trod it, was fruit in

the earth for God, and was pleasing to Him. His own words express as much: "I am the *True Vine*, and My Father is the Husbandman."

The Israel nation around Him was too plainly to His eye what Hosea had described it: "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images." (Hosea x. 1.) Or, verifying Isaiah's still more solemn word (Isa. v. 2) that when God justly "looked that it should bring forth grapes, it brought forth wild grapes" (Hebrew, poisonous berries), for all through the land Jesus had found only pride and oppression; and the very temple itself, His Father's house, was made not only "a house of merchandize" (John ii. 16), but even "a den of thieves." (See Matt. xxi. 13.)

What joy to Him, in such a place and at such a time, to know that He, at any rate, bore fruit for God; that not only "the prince of this world had nothing in Him" (John xiv. 30), but that His Father had in Him a pleasant plant, and tasted in Him that fruit of the Vine, that wine "which cheers the heart of God and man."

Nor was it Himself only. His loving heart drew still closer to Him the little band His Father had given Him. In chapter xii. 24-26, He had joyed over them as corns of wheat, the "much fruit" springing from Himself as the one corn of wheat which must first die; and He now rejoices over them yet again as called to share with Him the grace of fruit-bearing in the earth for God, which was at that moment His own especial joy; and He speaks of branches springing from Him as the true Vine: "I am the Vine, ye are the branches."

Never before perhaps had He seemed more solitary or more feeble; never before more distinctly the rejected and cast out one. The knife of the Husbandman,

His heavenly Father, had indeed shorn Him of all that which, at the beginning both of His life and of His public ministry, had made Him attractive even to men. He was no longer the Youth of Nazareth who as He "increased in wisdom and stature" increased also in favour not only "with God," but also with "man." (Luke ii. 52.) Nor was He followed now, as He had been when on a single evening He healed all the sick that were brought Him, nor as when, at His Father's will, he fed the multitudes. He had now broken "His staff, even beauty," and had ceased having to do "with all the people," and fed only "the *poor* of the flock." (See Zech. xi. 10, 11.)

But shorn of branches, as He was by the knife of His Father's will and ordering, He yet knew in Himself that He was the Husbandman's "true Vine," and that He was only more and more precious in His Father's sight, and bore Him only increasing fruit. And He seeks to teach all this to the little band that had "continued with Him in His temptations" (Luke xxii. 28), that His "joy," the joy which was at that very time filling Him, might "*remain* also in them." (v. 11.) He knew the loving mind of His Father was, and would be, to deal with them, and with all who should thenceforth believe in Him, as He was Himself being dealt with at that time, because the Father's love to them was like His love to Himself.

But Jesus well knew how slow we should be to take in these ways and tokens of the Husbandman's value for the Vine and for all the branches, and therefore He used the precious opportunity for thus instructing them and us.

And what is the instruction? Surely it is that the Father's care of His vine here on earth is seen in two ways. First, in the removal from the vine altogether of such branches as do not bear fruit; and second, in the diligent and thorough removal from such as do bear fruit of all superfluous growth, of mere wood and

leaf which would hinder their bearing more. Removal, therefore, or "taking away," is the action in both cases; and in both cases it is because of the Husbandman's value for the vine, and His delight in it—in other words, God's delight in Christ, as His vine, and in all fruit borne then by Jesus Himself, and now by any who are Christ's, and abide in Him.

But the "taking away" is of a perfectly-different kind in the two cases. In the case of the unfruitful branch the culturing care ceases altogether, whilst on the fruitful branch it is only more and more bestowed.

And are not these two ways of God's acting with His saints visible both upon the page of Scripture, and in His Church around us? Blessed be God, no child of His can ever perish; but he may be removed from the opportunity of bearing fruit. It may be by sickness, and even by falling asleep, as Paul says was the case with "many" of his own children in the faith at Corinth.

Removal from fruit-bearing of this solemn and outward kind may not be so evident now; but God has inward culture of our souls by His Spirit by which to keep us abiding in Christ and bearing present fruit to Him, as well as by outward circumstances of health and faculties and property. And He as truly removes a child of His from bearing fruit when He no longer works in that one by the whispers and the leadings of His Spirit, as when He takes from another his property or faculties, or even life itself. "My Spirit shall not always strive with man," was God's word about our guilty race in Noah's time; and surely God's own children must take great heed that they do not so "grieve the holy Spirit of God" that God does not, in His Fatherly displeasure, withhold from them the Spirit's revealing and inworking *power*; for if any bring on themselves this rebuke, it is only another way in which the Husbandman removes such branches from bearing fruit. "Ephraim is joined to idols: let him

alone" (Hosea iv. 17), was a more terrible word than the *outward* stripping of His people by a Chaldean or Assyrian invasion.

The painful instance of Lot is given us in the Scripture as of one who failed to bring forth fruit to God; yet he seems to have prospered rather than otherwise in this life's things; but we read of *no culture of his soul* by God, no visits to him from God such as there were to Abraham in his tent, and no communion with God; and, like others in God's word, his sun, as it were, "went down at noon," and the rest of his day on earth was dark indeed.

And do we not see too many now in God's Church of whom those who knew them in their earlier days can only say, "Ye *did* run well; who did hinder you?" And the answer might be supplied perhaps from Paul's word about Demas: "Demas hath forsaken me, *having loved this present world.*" (2 Tim. iv. 10.)

Let us tremble then, as saints, and watch with godly fear, lest in this deeper and less outward way we be severed from the Vine, and thus be taken away by the Husbandman from His culture.

"Take heed, my soul, and watch and pray,
Lest thou the Spirit grieve,
Who makes thee know the Father's love,
And in the Son believe."

Blessed be God, His love to us as His children, and as His saints in Christ Jesus, can *never* cease; nor can the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, ever cease *abiding* in us (see John xiv. 16); but God may cease to take pleasure *in our ways*, and the Spirit in us may be grieved by our waywardness and stubbornness, "sealed" with His indwelling though we be, even "to the day of redemption." It is not the bare fact of the Holy Ghost's dwelling in the believer that causes him to bear fruit by Christ the Vine; but it is by yielding to the Spirit through the word that his heart and life become occupied with the commands of Jesus. Thus

does *abiding* in Christ commence, and it should be his delight to be ever increasing in it.

In John xiv. 23 the keeping of Jesus' words is the one only way to obtain the fulfilment of the promise that the Father and the Son should come to the believer, and make their "abode with him." It is the law of the saved one's communion with his God and Saviour. And here in chapter xv. the bearing of fruit (which the believer *begins* to do the moment he is Christ's) is the only way of his having a share of the Father's culture of him as a branch in Christ the Vine.

Hence the loving earnestness of our Lord to us to "abide" in Him, in order to our bearing yet more fruit; and also the forewarning He gently gives us that the Father's way of enabling us to bear more will be one of "taking away" from us in outward things, rather than of increasing them.

To dwell on this part of the subject, and to supply some illustrations of it, will be the object of another paper, if the Lord will. Meanwhile, and "till He come," may we abide in Christ, and His words abide in us.

H. D.

PRINCIPLES.—In seeking to use the word of God, we must not expect to find a text to guide us in every detail; but God expects us to learn His *principles* of truth, which apply when there may be no special precept. Thus when Peter asked the Lord how often he was to forgive his brother, He took up his word, and said, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." Here the Lord does not mean a certain number, but He lays down a principle. So also when He speaks of walking *two* miles with the man who compels us to go one, He does not mean that we are to go exactly that distance, but we learn a great principle. Yet in sitting down to read the word of God, let us never rise without learning something more, not only of principles or precepts, but of God.

F. C. B.

“THY LAW IS MY DELIGHT.”

PSALM CXIX.

Who has not meditated with amazement on this wonderful psalm? It is at once the longest and most methodically arranged; divided into twenty-two portions, the eight subdivisions of each portion commencing with the same letter of the alphabet, in regular sequence; each portion containing a repetition of the same fundamental ideas with the others, yet under varied aspects. The very frequent recurrence of “law,” “statutes,” “judgments,” &c., cannot but strike the attention.

To what end, it may be asked, is this repetition? Would not a few times have sufficed?

Who can be the speaker? Evidently his soul is in close and holy communion with God. It is to Him the language is addressed throughout, with the exception of the first three verses, which are an abstract statement, or declaration of principles apparently by another speaker. • The psalm exhibits a continued dependence upon God, and entire devotedness to Him; an ardour of affection for Him; a separation from earthly concerns and objects; an eagerness of desire to learn and to do the desire of God’s heart; all which we look in vain for in ourselves or in others around.

Can these utterances be those of David? Childlike as was his heart, do we find in his history, as recorded by God, any emotions of this exalted character? Whether in Saul’s household, as a warrior, a fugitive, or a king, earthliness and failure are intermingled with the high qualities he displayed. Long-continued lapses occur. He has to be reminded by the prophet of his wrong-doing. In Deut. xvii. 19 it was enacted that the king should have a copy of the law, that he should “read therein all the days of his life that he

may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them." No intimation exists of David having done this, or any of his successors. On the contrary; on the memorable occasion when his heart, and the heart of his people, was filled with the desire to glorify God by bringing up the ark of the covenant, neither he nor any of the priests or the people knew how to perform a ceremony so simple and customary as it should have been, until failure had occurred, and judgment fallen in consequence.

The language of this psalm is of such high attainment that no mere child of man could intelligently and honestly use it. Who of us could say, "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words;" "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law"?

The thoughts and words, herein indited by the Holy Ghost, must surely be those of Jesus, the Son of God, and, in their fulness, of Him alone. He could and did honestly use such expressions to His Father. As a "minister" or literally, servant "of the circumcision" (Rom. xv. 8), His part was to fulfil the whole law. As the anointed King, He not only possessed a copy of the law, but that law was His delight; ever meditating upon its statutes, its precepts, and seven times a day praising His God because of His righteous judgments.

But why this repetition and this detail? Is not the reply to be found in these words, "Thy law is my delight"? Any one whose pleasure it is to occupy himself with sculpture, painting, architecture, &c., finds fresh beauties as he contemplates a celebrated object of his favourite pursuit, noticing points which to a person unacquainted with the art would be altogether undiscernible. He who is described as having "His delight in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night," has discerned in that joyous

study beauties unknown to our dull and uninstructed faculties. He has not been contented with a general admiration of what is “perfect,” as well as “holy, just, and good.” His mind rejoices in the parts of this excellence, as well as in the whole. He whose heart and mind was thus engrossed could say, not only, “Oh, how I love thy law!” but also speak of the uprightness, faithfulness, purity of the judgments, testimonies, and word of His God; expressions which to us convey little or no definiteness of meaning.

The annexed notices may perhaps tend to elucidate this subject:

WORD.—Promise of God; to which the psalmist clings, and by which he is animated. (*vv.* 25, 38, 49, &c.)

COMMAND.—Given on any special occasion. (*vv.* 19, 60, 115, 131, &c.)

THE LAW.—The whole law. (*vv.* 18, 85, 109, &c.)

TESTIMONIES.—Instances in which God testifies the favours He has shown; the mercies He is prepared to bestow; or the penalties He will inflict on disobedience—testimonials. (*vv.* 24, 59, 78, 88, &c.)

STATUTES.—Ordinances of God: decrees of the Sovereign will. Statute as distinguished from common law. (*vv.* 5, 12, 23, &c.)

JUDGMENTS.—Cases which God has decided and adjudged. (*vv.* 7, 13, 20, &c.)

In the Old as well as in the New Testament many instances may be noticed falling under these several heads.

But without dwelling further on this part of the subject, I desire to draw the attention of my brethren and sisters in Christ to a deeply important lesson: a practical lesson demanding the earnest consideration of us all.

We have all noticed how, among the disciples of Christ, genuine Christian *feeling* has operated, and continues to operate. The ardent soul sees a path open

before it, deems that it is opened by God, and at once enters. An opinion is presented, pressed by some valued authority, and at once adopted. Scribes and Pharisees denounce some line of conduct, and it is forthwith shunned.

What is the result? Is there any uniform course of conduct followed by the family of God? On the contrary, what one esteems, another disregards; what one ardently pursues, another despises. The heavenly family is thus divided into knots and parties, each believing itself to be correct in opinion, as well as in practice, and every one else wrong in both respects.

Can it be that this discrepancy of judgment has arisen from the study of the one Book, the Book of our God? Has the trumpet given an uncertain sound—such as admits of an honest diversity of interpretation? Or has the divine code been set aside, and idealism, or antiquity, or self-will, been allowed to usurp an authority which our Lord alone should possess? Let us bear in mind, that before the tribunal of Christ, where His redeemed people, His servants, are to give account of themselves, obedience to His commands alone will have any value in His estimation.

In the beautiful consistency and simplicity of His course, as depicted in this psalm, we cannot trace any conjectures, surmises, or reasonings as to what opinions He should entertain, or what conduct He should pursue. All was marked out for Him ages before the God-man appeared on earth, framed in the counsels of divine wisdom; and when the time arrived, every jot and tittle was attended to with scrupulous exactitude. Every thought, every word and action, every desire, every emotion of our adorable Lord, was weighed and carried out precisely as His Father gave Him command; not with machine-like inertness, but with the happiest and most exalted, joyful concurrence.

If then our Master deemed it proper thus to ponder and lay to heart every word of His Father's enact-

ments, and to regulate Himself thereby, what is the becoming conduct in us as His servants? Ignorant and foolish as we are, can we adopt a wiser course, or one more safe? Can it be intended that we should frame our own ideas upon these subjects? Happy is it for us, that having died with Christ, and being in Him risen from the dead, our position is superior, more elevated than theirs who were under the law. But though through grace exempt from its shackles and penalties, we are by no means at liberty to follow our own imaginings. We are elect unto OBEDIENCE! And we have seen what obedience implies and involves.

Step by step must each child of God ascertain the path marked out for him, and for all his brothers and sisters. Confidence in those gone before us, however eminent, cannot be indulged. Fallible men are not safe guides for fallible men. Following them is only an excuse for not following Christ.

Were all obeying His commands, the grand highway, the royal road into the presence of our God, would be filled with His people. Divergence into by-paths would then be unknown. No place would then be found for party leaders. Their very functions would be at an end. Each one according to his ability helping on his neighbour, and submitting to be so helped, would testify that we comprehend the mutual relation in which our God has placed us, and are governed thereby.

At present, however, all is confusion. Like Israel of old, every man is doing that which is right in his own eyes, ignoring or unaware of the fact that this is forbidden: (Deut. xii. 8.) There was then no king in Israel. God was their King, but they revered Him not. We have in the heavens a glorious, holy, and loving Shepherd-King, yet how grievously have we abandoned our allegiance. True loyalty is displayed, not by the subject doing his own will, but by conformity to the orders of his Sovereign.

R. N.

ON OUR USE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

Notes of an Address given at a Conference held at Beresford Chapel, London,
by Mr. R. C. CHAPMAN.

THE precious promise of our Lord regarding the Comforter, "He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you," is fulfilled to us through another promise, "He shall guide you into *all truth*;" to which we must add, "Thy word is truth."

The solemn obligation of all God's children is to deal with *all* God's truth. In order to please God fully after that blessed pattern, "I do always the things that please Him," the believer must have respect to all the will of God as in His word revealed; and each one should seek to have this testimony.

We rightly pray, "Search me, O God;" but if the prayer is to be answered, it must be by our being searched *through the Word*.

God's word is a whole, its parts being in perfect harmony with one another. If we deal with the whole Scripture, we shall find all that is needed for the vigour and comeliness of the new man. And the same word which will strengthen and mould the new man, will certainly be killing the old man.

Let us examine ourselves, old and young, teachers and hearers. Do we deal with *all* the word of God, as before God, desiring, longing, thirsting that it may do its work upon the new man, and especially upon the old? We are always in great danger, when we read for *comfort*, of stopping short of being *searched* by the Word in our hearts and consciences. The Word is often compared to *light*, and this is one of the titles of our Lord. But what is needed besides the light when the sun is risen? The faculty of sight, and the *opened eye*. As it is said of the Lord, "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;" so has the word of

God all fulness for our need; all the light we require for perfectly pleasing God is to be found in the Scriptures. Supposing there were faith's full, unreserved, constant obedience in the hearts of God's children, then we should just as naturally see the light of God in the word, as our outward eye discerns the light of the sun. All sins and divisions (those most unnatural things in the children of God) would vanish away before the word of truth like mists before the sun.

Every child of God is accountable for using aright the time that God gives for the reading of the Word, and while we cannot be called to give the account which the unregenerate man will have to do, inasmuch as we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, we yet have to give account of the things done in the body, as God's children and Christ's members. Shall we not have to render an account for these two inestimable gifts—God's word, and the Comforter, the Teacher?

The iron chains of guilt and curse are for ever gone, and the golden chains of love are upon us; let us ever be found wearing them. While we make it our business to be serving God—not according to our imagination, but according to His mind—we shall find it more easy to please God than to satisfy the cravings of our natural hearts. Our perfection consists in *pressing on*; but there must be no league with the Canaanites, no reserves in our obedience. The test must always be the written Word.

If we walk in the Spirit, we cannot do the works of the flesh, as does the natural man (Gal. vi. 16); and this walking in the Spirit should be *all the day*, according to the written Word. We are to judge ourselves by the example of Christ, and by the commandments of Christ, in the closet, in the family, and in our callings. The performance of one duty will help another. But if I fail in seeking God in the closet, my prayer afterward may be only like the cry of distress.

It will receive an answer from a pitiful Father, but it will not be *communion*.

Let everything that God says in the Word be according to my heart, and then the outpourings of my heart will be music in the ear of God. Whatever be the outward calling, let our walk be in the Spirit, as those whose ear, hand, and foot bear the marks of atonement and the Spirit's unction. So soon as the heart of anyone is made up to this, he will discover his own imperfection, and be driven to the atoning blood; but he will have the comfort of the Spirit, and prove that nothing in the world, the church, or the family, can come in between his heart and fellowship with God in Christ.

THE PRESENCE OF GOD OUR SALVATION, REST, AND HOPE.

WE read in Judges vi. 12-16, that in the time of Israel's declension and judgment God gave to Gideon a threefold assurance of *salvation* and victory; each time dependent, not on anything in him, but simply on *the presence of the Lord* with him.

Gideon answers the salutation of the angel, "*The Lord is with thee*," with a doubt—"If the Lord be with us." "And the Lord *looked* upon him." What depth of meaning in these divine looks, searching the very thoughts and intents of the heart, and yet speaking peace and rest to the troubled one!

But grace continues to bless, independently of our doubts; and the Lord answers him, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel." Yet Gideon questions, "Wherewith shall I save Israel?" and again gets the assurance on which alone the hope of victory could rest—"I will be with thee." He is still the same fearful one, even after the thrice-reiterated promise. The power is outside himself, and he has yet to learn to count upon it and use it as his own.

Three times he seeks a sign from the Lord. The

first which the Lord gave him is full of meaning for us. The flesh and the unleavened cakes are accepted at his hand; but the very token of acceptance is the fire that consumes it all; not the offering itself, though it be fully accepted, but the smoke of the burning goes up before God as a sweet savour. This is just what the Lord desires from us—a *living* sacrifice; not brought to Him to fulfil the desires of our own hearts in service, but laid upon the altar for *Him* to use as He will. How often He thus answers us by consuming the best which we have offered, in token, not of rejection, but of fullest acceptance; and our hearts fail, like Gideon's, because we get not the sign we seek.

Twice again the Lord in grace gave him a sign, and twice again put his unbelief to shame. First, when he feared the men of his father's household (Judges vi. 36-40); and then when he feared the hosts of Midian (vii. 13-14). We wonder that he should need to hear from the lip of a stranger a confirmation of the word of the Lord. And yet such are our hearts; and such is the grace that meets our waywardness, and will not let us go unblest.

As to his personal relation to the hosts of Midian, Gideon's power was but as a cake of barley bread, fit only to be consumed; but because of his fellowship with God, it was as the sword of Jehovah.

Is it not ever thus with us, whether in conflict, or service, or communion? The measure of our feebleness is the measure of our power, if only faith be exercised in the God of Jacob and of Gideon.

But the God of the spirits of all flesh needs to keep this in our remembrance; and thus we find that of the thirty and two thousand that were gathered after Gideon, only three hundred men could be trusted to follow him, "lest Israel vaunt themselves, and say, Mine own hand hath saved me." (Judges vii. 2.) It is blessed when we are afraid of ourselves because of

the depths of evil in our own hearts, and when we trust Him who knows what is in man to keep us in the place of blessing and of fruitfulness at any cost to ourselves and to Him.

Not only must there be few men, but the few must hold no sword; only a lamp within, an empty pitcher, and a trumpet to sound the victory. The only use for the pitcher was to be broken, that the light might shine undimmed. There was yet one thing more—a voice to cry, “The sword of the Lord, *and of Gideon.*”

We get here a revelation of the grace of our God. He confounds the things that are mighty, not directly by His own power, but by the weakness of His children (1 Cor. i. 27); not only choosing them for fellowship with Him in His work, but putting them forth to be the doers of it; and hence arises our danger of forgetting that personally we can never be more than as a cake of barley bread to the hosts of Midian, or as a trumpet to sound the victory which ever must be His.

Not Gideon’s valour, but Gideon’s obedience, was rewarded by a mighty deliverance; and when Israel arose to battle, it was to pursue a discomfited and flying foe.

We get the same truth in the history of Jacob, when God wrestled with him at Peniel. (Gen. xxxii. 24–32.) If ever there was a time when Jacob had need of his natural energy, it was then; and yet victory must be given him by the setting aside of it all. It was only when he became consciously helpless under the hand of God that he could speak in the consciousness of power—“I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me;” and then God could own the constraining energy of the faith Himself had given in the words, “Let me go, for the day breaketh.”

In that night of wrestling, when he was overcome that he might prevail, Jacob was given power, not with God only, but with men. Jacob halted; but the

God who had given him faith to decree the blessing (Job xxii. 28) touched the heart of Esau, rebuking thus his unbelieving contrivances, and speaking in him to us. Too soon the power of the Presence is lost when its protection is no longer needed; and if the God of Jacob, in His unwearied grace, had not reminded him in a strange land of His deliverance and victory, his name of Israel had well-nigh been forgotten. Thus are we ever debtors, whether in times of failure or of success, to the God of Jacob—the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.

In connection with the presence of God we get also the thought of *rest*. Isaiah testified of Israel—"They thirsted not when He led them through the desert." The desert was the desert still; but He led them, therefore they thirsted not. He clave the rock for them, and the waters gushed out. We learn in 1 Cor. x. 4 that "that Rock was Christ;" and we get a glimpse of the love that passes knowledge, the love that clave the Rock that we might never thirst.

We look at Israel in the desert; we see the rock smitten for them, and we wonder at the power of God's hand. But can we look at God as a Father smiting the Son of His bosom for us—taking out of our hand the cup of trembling which our sin had filled, and giving it into the holy hand of His well-beloved? Can we look upon Him as He drank that cup, while the wrath that was due to us eternally passed without measure over His devoted head? Do we not tremble as we remember *whose* hand clave the Rock, *whose* voice bade the sword awake against Him that we might pass unscathed? That Rock was smitten, not to meet the need of our souls only; but to satisfy and fill them to the uttermost; to give us, not salvation alone, but rest; not only life, but gladness; not once to satisfy our thirst, but to follow us all through the wilderness way, ever giving forth its refreshing waters.

This, then, is the hand that leads us on. Shall we ask any questions concerning His wisdom? shall we need any promises concerning His care? shall we fear that the love that spared not His own Son shall one day grow weary of us because we cost Him so much? Surely all the provision made for our guidance and blessing is in accordance with the price given for us—the indwelling Spirit, the glorified High Priest, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be our God and Father.

There is one other blessedness which cannot be separated from the Presence; it is *hope*. God with us is the "God of hope." Christ having identified Himself with us in death and resurrection, having borne the curse as our Surety, and entered the heavenly places by the blood of our redemption as our Forerunner, God has bound up the future of His saints with *His* in a oneness which cannot be broken. Our hope entereth within the veil because it is the fellowship of His hope in which we share.

God has given His Church as her future a coming Jesus. Faith discerns two moments—the moment we live in, and the moment of His appearing. As we hold the hope, do we remember that it is *ours* because *He is with us* and we in Him? The desert is the desert still; but we tread it in company with Him who has already entered for us into the rest. We live and walk in Him whose future is the heirship of God. Earth's heirs need only life and title to enter into their inheritance. Is ours less real because it rests only upon the word of the promise? because our life is hid in Him?

Shall we not lift up the hands that hang down, and lay fast hold of the hope set before us as an anchor of the soul? Shall we not more honour His Word, more live upon the assurance He has given us? The Lord grant it for His name's sake.

A. E. W.

SIN IN THE BELIEVER; ITS EXCEEDING SINFULNESS.

(Concluded from page 36.)

“LET him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall,” is the condition of soul in which every child of God has to walk through the waste, howling wilderness of a God-dishonouring world, where the flesh and the devil are ever at work to accomplish the ruin and the break-down of God’s redeemed ones. In contemplating David’s fall, we left him “roaring all the day long” in the “horrible pit” and in “the miry clay.” The hand of God was pressing him down into the dust, his moisture was turned into the drought of summer, and the thirst of hell was there. But God had not forsaken the impenitent David. Sorrow is not necessarily penitence, any more than Judas’s regret at having sold his Lord was repentance toward God.

True penitence leads the soul back to God, and David had not yet got there. There can be no unconfessed sin in the conscious presence of God. But David has been brought into the lowest depths, and that God, whose loving care never forsakes us in our sin, sends His servant the prophet to the fallen king.

“And the Lord sent Nathan to David.” The Lord knows how long to wait. He is never too late; but He is never too early. We little remember the patient grace that keeps God waiting upon the condition of our souls before He commences the work of lifting up the fallen one. We are often in too great a hurry, and hence our work is often imperfectly done.

How simply beautiful is Nathan’s parable; and how solemn is David’s judicial sentence. “And David’s anger was kindled greatly against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die.” How little he

thought, when passing sentence on *that* man, that he was to hear the terrible words from the lips of God's servant, "Thou art *the* man;" and then follows the divine judgment, "Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house;" concluding with, "Thou didst it secretly: but I will do it before all Israel, and before the sun."

This draws the long-delayed confession from David, "I have sinned against the Lord." His eyes were opened to see himself again in the presence of God, and in His holy light he was casting back his thoughts upon the troubled, sorrowful past, and upon the many sins which were the result of the slothfulness arising from unwonted prosperity. He had kept God waiting to put away his sin by that hardened state of soul, which had kept him roaring all the day long, rather than humble himself before God; yet God does not keep him waiting for forgiveness, but then and there gives the word, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." What a gracious fulfilment of the promise, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.) And so we find David giving his experience at the close of this terrible time of unhumiliated darkness, "I will acknowledge* my sin unto thee, and my iniquity will I not hide. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Our God and Father is holy, and He must discipline our souls into the abhorrence of sin, not for its consequences merely, but for what it is in His sight. To this the words of the apostle direct us, when he says, relative to the chastenings and discipline of God, that they are "for our profit," to make us "partakers of His holiness." (Heb. xii. 10.) The object God has in the judgments that ever begin in His house is not

* It is better to read the word in the future as it is in the Hebrew.

punishment, but *correction*, so as to mortify that sin in us which will ever prevent our being conformed to His image. This truth Moses would teach Israel in the words, "Thou shalt also consider in thy heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." (Deut. viii. 5.)

This needs to be apprehended lest parental discipline be mistaken for judicial vengeance, and the sense of forgiveness lead the unexercised soul to think it will hear no more of the matter. But God has to deal with us for our profit, and to teach us to mortify the flesh in us, as He crucified the flesh for us in the person of our Substitute.

We must now for a little take a glance at that part of David's history wherein we see the bitter consequences of his sin. While suffering for righteousness under Saul, he could say, "Thou keepest all his bones: not one of them is broken;" but when suffering for sin, his sorrowful experience is, "Thou hast broken all my bones;" and yet when summing up all God's ways towards him in the light of resurrection, he is enabled to say, "All my bones shall say, Who is a God like unto thee?"

The first sorrow under the discipline of God is the death of the child, as had been foretold in the same breath that assured him of his pardon, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." Oh, it becomes the people of God to ponder well the fact that God holds us responsible for the dishonour done to Him and to His name by the evil of our ways, our words, our tempers! And when we are taught to say, "Hallowed be thy name," we are called to remember that it is desecrated by all that in us which causes the world to blaspheme or reproach the holy name of "Christian."

But if this child dies, God seals His forgiving grace to the restored soul of His servant, by sending and

calling the name of the second child Jedidiah; *i.e.* "Beloved of Jehovah." And David "called his name Solomon: and *the Lord loved him*. And he sent by the hand of Nathan the prophet; and he called his name Jedidiah, *because of the Lord*." (2 Sam. xii. 24, 25.) Who but God could be so gracious? and what a precious assurance was thus given to David during that long night of family sorrow and darkness into which he was about to enter, which is so vividly pictured in the eight following chapters.

As if to impress this painful part of David's history upon our hearts and consciences, God has seen fit to give the most painfully minute record of the sin-stained and blood-stained pages in the history of David's house; and as we read each dark scene of incest and murder, of adultery and rebellion, we are again and again reminded that as we sow, so shall we reap; and that he who sows to the flesh and its lusts, to the world and its vanities, will reap corruption. This is God's lesson for His people, and here also is to be seen God's retributive vengeance upon His enemies. The outward dealings are often similar in both cases, though often appearing to come with a tenfold present severity on the erring *child*, on the principle laid down in God's admonition to Israel: "You only have I known, therefore will I punish," and that with a chastening greater than that of the heathen who knew not God.

We cannot here go into the dark pages under contemplation, but it would be well that these terrible chapters should not be lightly read or hastily passed over. God has not left them on record to be neglected. They are written with the finger of God that they might make a deep and certain warning upon our hearts, telling us that though our sins are forgiven and blotted out, we shall assuredly be judged of the Lord here if we allow ourselves to be ensnared by sin, and judge not ourselves in reference to it in His most

holy presence. God is not mocked, and as Uriah's blood cried out of the dust, a holy God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who cannot look upon sin, must hear that cry, and make all David's broken bones cry out that He is righteous.

The last words of David, in 2 Samuel xxiii., give us his triumphant, yet sorrowing, experience relative to this portion of his history, and hence the marked contrast between these last words and the words of the glorious song contained in the previous chapter, which were spoken unto the Lord "in the day that the Lord delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Sãul." His thoughts are taken onward into the future to contemplate the righteous throne of the Just One who was to come, and who should usher in the "morning without clouds," when the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. And while contemplating the darkened history of his own house, he says, "Although my house be not *so* with God;" and again adds, "Although He make it not to grow," yet he realizes that there is the covenant of eternal grace; and on this alone did his dying soul rest. That was *all* his salvation, and to that was *all* his desire; for however much he and his house had failed, or might fail Godwards, His covenant was an everlasting one, ordered in all things and sure, and that could never fail. Thus does God secure in Himself His ultimate purposes towards us; while at the same time, by the terribleness of His holiness, does He make our flesh to tremble before Him, thereby securing the certainty of our salvation on the one hand, and the "fear and trembling" character of our walk on the other, and we can surely say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!"

Sin in the unsaved is a setting aside of God's claims

as Creator and King, and His right to the creaturely homage of those He has made, and for whose comfort and well-being He has so amply provided; this the right-minded natural man will readily acknowledge. But sin in the child of God is not only all that sin is in the unsaved, but is the setting aside of the claims of the *Father*, who has so manifested His love in the gift of Christ, in the regenerating grace and power of the Holy Ghost, and in the bestowal of that eternal glory of which we are made heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ."

We estimate very differently, and rightly so, a wrong done outside the home, of which the police may take cognizance, and a wrong committed within those precincts, of which the law of the land may be unable to take account; and just so is it in the family of God. This needs to be pressed upon the hearts and consciences of the people of God, otherwise lax thoughts of sin will flow into the Church of God, which will corrupt the springs of Christian life, and lower the tone of its morality.

In conclusion, we would say a word on self-examination. Some have so enforced this, that souls have been brought into the darkness of despair, and others have so deprecated it, that souls have been led, in ignorance of their real state before God, to presume that all was right, and fallen into pride and the snare of the devil. Self-examination is helpful or hurtful to the child of God, according to the place where it is carried on. Get into the presence of God, at the mercy-seat where the precious blood is sprinkled, and there can be no scrutiny too minute, and no searching too deep for the healthful development of the lowliness of the divine life in our souls. In the presence of the atoning blood, and of Him who in mercy and grace dwells between the cherubim, the prayer can ascend, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me,

and lead me in the way everlasting." (Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.) We are never afraid to see our sins when we see the blood of cleansing, and have our heart upright before God, and regard all sin as much our enemy as His, and hateful to us because hateful to Him.

"The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and above all, the heart of a child of God. God alone knows it. He alone can fathom it. He alone can discover it to us. For this He leads us through the wilderness, that He may prove us, to make us know what is in our heart. (Deut. viii. 2.) We need to know it, else pride takes the place of humility, and self-consciousness the place of self-emptiness. Circumstances are God's crucible, and by them we learn how much there is of dross that we little expected; and the examination of ourselves in the light of God's holiness and in the presence of His love enables us to separate between the precious and the vile, and not carry about the dross as if it were precious metal. Sin in the believer, not the overt act of sinning (let us not be misunderstood), is that which draws forth the bitter cry from the heart of him who, walking in the light, knows what sin is. May we all well ponder over the word, "*Our God is a consuming fire.*"

H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

HAS Lev. xii. 3-7 any typical reference to the children of Christian parents?

To allow that it had would be subversive of the first principles of the New Testament dispensation. It unfolds the deeply important truth of the infant's need of atonement, and therefore of the taint of sin that attaches to every child of Adam as being born in sin. To infer, as some would, the lawfulness of bringing an unconscious child into the Church, is to forget that though the child of a Jew is born a Jew, the child of

the Christian is not born a Christian; that is, is not born regenerate. (See John i. 12, 13.) All such applications subvert the foundation of the gospel, which stands in personal faith on the Son of God.

What is the force of *θεραπεια* in Rev. xxii., where the "healing of the nations" is spoken of?

The word is used by uninspired Greek writers in a wider sense than in New Testament; viz., of care and nourishing generally, probably from *θερω*. Hence it came to have the narrower meaning of healing of sickness, as in Luke ix. 11 (a meaning very natural to Luke, as a physician), and of ministering to the "household" of a person, as those for whom he *cared*, and whose healing he looked to if needed. It is interesting that this larger word should be used in Rev. xxii. (the only time John ever does use it), instead of the narrower words, *σωζω, ιαμα, ιασις*, as it implies the care and nourishing of the millennial nations from the stores and virtues of the heavenly city; somewhat as Joseph nourished all Egypt when in his wealth, and nourished also his brethren.

What is the meaning of *επιουσιος*, rendered "daily" in Matt. vi. 11, and Luke xi. 3?

The meaning of *επιουσιος* in these passages appears to be *needful*, necessary for sustaining *life*—from *επι*, *for the purpose of*; and *ουσια*, *being, existence*—and refers not to the *time* for which the bread is to last, but the *quantity* to be supplied; viz., what is actually necessary. The manna was not only a day by day supply, but its *quantity* also was limited—an *omer* for each person.

JESUS AS "THE TRUE VINE."

Continued from page 64.

ABIDING in Jesus as the Vine, in order to our bearing still increasing fruit for God, is the lifelong, heavenly business of every believer, and should be well attended to by us all. It is joy to the new man to do so, but most repugnant to the natural mind. Self-opinion, self-will, and self-pleasing are the way of the carnal mind even in God's children: these may increase us in man's esteem and in our own, and may bring us outward prosperity; but self-sufficiency is the root of all these things, and self-sufficiency is the very opposite of abiding in Christ.

Only the Spirit of God teaching us the fulness of Jesus, and the preciousness of His love, can make His command to us to abide in Him attractive to our eyes, or winning to our hearts. "Abide in ME" was uttered by One who was indeed the "root out of a dry ground," without "form or comeliness;" and it needed the revealings of God's Spirit for His own disciples at such a time to see in Him God's pleasant plant, and His one fruitful stem, from which all the branches should draw their sap.

It needed divine teaching for Nathanael to recognise in the despised Nazarene the Son of God, and the King of Israel. Who but God could teach the woman of Sychar that the feeble One sitting on the well, who asked for a drink from her pitcher, was the One by whom she might then and there have the all-satisfying and ever-springing water of life? Who but those taught of God would have thought that the friendless, lonely One who stood in the temple on the last day, that *great day* of the feast, and cried (while with solemn ceremony and Old Testament songs they flooded that marble pavement with pitchers of Siloam water), "If any man thirst, let him come unto ME, and drink"

—who would have thought that He could really cause better streams than these fetched from Siloam to flow from the one that believed in Him?

Thus was Jesus' outward appearance very often unlike His words. But God's Spirit is the "interpreter, the one among a thousand" (see Job xxxiii. 23), who enlightens our darkness "with the light of the living," and has ever been revealing Him, not only to the unregenerate as a Saviour, but also to believers as the fulness of all grace for them, and among other things as "the True Vine," in whom they have but to "abide," and, feeble though they be in themselves, His grace will cause them to bear much fruit.

"Blessed is he," said our Lord, "whosoever shall not be offended" (*i.e.* stumbled) "in ME." The Jews stumbled at Him as respects salvation, and they perished; and multitudes, alas! still thus stumble. But believers stumble also at the lowly truth of abiding in Him, and thus lose the rest they would "find" if they carried His "light burden," and wore His "easy yoke;" and in the day of Christ they will find themselves losers indeed, when the mere wood and leaf of self-will, and all its self-seeking ways, will pass for nothing, and worse than nothing, with Him, whose searching in our case will be the same as it was in Mark xi. in the case of the Jewish fig-tree.

But, blessed be God, there have been in every age some who have *not* thus stumbled. They have drunk of "the fountain of life," and "in God's light have seen light" on this precious subject.

Abram was a branch that bore fruit, the goodly fruit of leaving his country and his kindred simply at God's bidding; the fruit also of trusting God to give him a numerous seed. And he was helped to bear *more* fruit, by being obliged to trust the naked word of his gracious God; for when he reached the land which was to be his, the Canaanite still possessed it, and years after the promise to him and to his wife of a seed that

should be theirs they were suffered to remain as barren and childless as ever!

This pruning of Abram as a fruit-bearing branch comes from His God *through others*, as well as from God direct. No sooner do his and his nephew's flocks and herds increase than strife arises between their herdmen (Gen. xiii. 7); but Abram says, "We be brethren:" he values his "brother" Lot—a worldly-minded and weak partaker of the same grace as himself—more than any choice of pastures, and leaves the choice to Lot. The divine edge of this trial and pruning of Abram gets only sharpened by Lot's selfish choice of taking the well-watered plain as his; but when Abram accepted this trial God drew but the nearer to him, and it ends with Abram building there an altar to Jehovah.

But Abram became Abraham, and then the pruning was severe indeed! God had given to him and to Sarah the long-looked for, loved and valued son and heir. The wood or natural growth and leaf of Abraham's now budding family-tree was promising and tender. The boy had been duly circumcised, the bondwoman and her mocking son had been sent away at God's bidding. The tent of Abraham is indeed a fruitful place, and Abraham himself a richly-laden branch, and for that very reason he must be purged, that he may bear more fruit.

"And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham;" but by faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

Truly the branch that had borne fruit did bear still "more fruit;" and by the much fruit it bore God was glorified, for a lively figure was given of God's giving up of His own Son.

Joseph, too, was "a fruitful bough; a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall;" and

yet how "sorely grieved" he was; and how "the archers shot at him, and hated him." But the hands of Jacob's mighty One were strengthening him. From earliest days he pleased God, and bore fruit; and the greater part of his life was spent in sorrows and rejection, which were the pruning-knife of God's love for him, and delight in him; and at every sharp touch of the pruning, he only bore still "more fruit." The painful home-life with his brothers, his slave-life in Potiphar's house, and the years spent in the dungeon with criminals, were but love-tokens to him from God in order that he might bear "much fruit," and truly the object was gained.

Would Moses have borne all the fruit he did but for the sharp edge upon him of sorrow and trial, both from God direct and also through others? His precious pleadings for Israel were when the edge of God's dealings was on him through the people's murmurs and rebellions. (See Exod. xxxii. 30, &c.; Num. xiv. 13, &c.) And it was when he was told he should not himself ever lead the people into the land that he looks on from this cutting off of his own days, and turns all his soul toward God's glory in a suitable successor being raised up to follow him. (See Num. xxviii.)

Samuel, again, was one in whom early fruitfulness (see 1 Sam. iii.) only ripened into still richer fruit and more abundant, when the sharp edge of his nation's rejection of him was used as God's own way of bringing his dearly-loved servant nearer, and still nearer to Himself. (1 Sam. viii. 7-9.)

"Nearer, my God, to Thee—
Nearer to Thee!
E'en though it be a cross
That raiseth me;
Still all my song shall be,
Nearer, my God, to Thee—
Nearer to Thee!"

"But," to use Paul's expression, "what shall I more

say? for the time would fail me to tell" of the many who, even in Old Testament days, were enabled to bear God's sharp-edged ways with them in order to their still more delighting Him.

Job stands conspicuous in God's word in this same line of truth: "There is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil," is God's account of the fruit he bore from the first; yet how purged was he by God that he might bear more fruit! Outward afflictions, and discipline also of his spirit within him, were God's way in order to make him "blessed at the latter end more than at the beginning." And who is there that reads the book of Job in the light of teaching such as Jesus gives of Himself as "the True Vine" but must conclude as James does (James v. 11), that they see in Job's case "the *end* of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy," and deals with His servant only to increase his fruitfulness.

Ezra and Nehemiah in their trials, Daniel in the den of lions, and the prophets who have spoken in the name of the Lord in all their afflictions, do but utter as with one voice the same teaching of what God's ways are with His loved ones.

Briefer, but still clearer, are the pages of the New Testament.

John the Baptist is a burning and a shining light. Among those born of woman there had not up to his time arisen "a greater than he" (see Matt. xi. 11), and therefore the wickedness of Herod's court, and the executioner's axe, are used to increase the rich clusters of his fruit, and to conform his path as forerunner to that of his Master, who was so soon to succeed him.

The Acts of the Apostles and the epistles show what rich fruit from Christ, "the True Vine," the churches of God in Judæa bore, and the churches amongst the Gentiles also. And this fruitfulness was followed by the Husbandman's pruning-knife of persecution, and

many other trials, in order to their bearing still "more fruit."

The church at Jerusalem showed the grace of Christ when at Pentecost "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need." (Acts ii. 44, 45.) Yet this was quickly followed by the imprisonment of Peter and John (Acts iv. 3), and all Jerusalem becoming a fiery furnace of trial for them; which however only ended in their bough being still more fruitful; for in answer to their prayer still more grace was given, and "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: . . . and great grace was upon them all." (Acts iv. 32, 33.)

Amongst the "churches of Macedonia," the Thessalonians and the Philippians were rich in grace from the first; and when this brought on them "much affliction" from "their own countrymen" (see 1 Thess. i. 6; ii. 14), reducing them to poverty, "their deep poverty only abounded unto the riches of their liberality." (2 Cor. viii. 1, 2.)

The same results are seen in New Testament *individuals* as in churches.

Stephen "serves well as a deacon," and purchases to himself "a good degree and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus;" and the stones of his murderers tell how greatly the Husbandman loved this branch in Christ the Vine, and brought forth in him, ere he fell asleep, that richest cluster of all, his Christ-like prayer, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And who shall tell how this led on, not only to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, then present, but to his afterwards earnestly longing and expecting that in him also "Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death."

Paul followed Stephen. At the very outset of his divine life he bore rich fruit. "When it pleased God," he says (Gal. i. 15, 16), "to reveal His Son in me,

immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." But though late in the apostleship, he "laboured more abundantly than they all." The third heavens was given him; and he faithfully kept the things which he then heard, but was not to utter. All this fruit unto God by Paul in Christ was so precious that the "thorn in the flesh" was added; and, as in Job's case, "a messenger of Satan" was used by the hand of the heavenly Husbandman, and Paul yields that yet richer fruit of "*glorying in his infirmities*, that the power of Christ might rest upon him."

Peter was one in God's Church, and in its ministry, prone indeed, in luxuriant natural growth, to run to much wood and leaf. To gird himself and go whither he would, his gracious Lord had told him, was his nature (John xxi. 18); but "a reproof entereth more into a wise man," says Solomon (Prov. xvii. 10), "than an hundred stripes into a fool;" and the word was sharper to Peter than any two-edged sword. It was the Husbandman's knife upon him, that he might bear "more fruit;" and his meekness and subjection to Christ, as he used the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," in the Acts of the Apostles, and opened the door of faith to the Jew (Acts ii.) and to the Gentile (Acts x.), show us the richer fruit which God's pruning-knife caused him to bear. Once afterwards "the wise reprover" found in Peter "an obedient ear." (See Prov. xxv. 12.) In Christ's name, and for God's gospel's sake, Paul reproves him to the face at Antioch (Gal. ii. 11, &c.); and the man who was earlier in the apostleship than Paul, and whose very shadow had been valued as he walked in Jerusalem streets (see Acts v. 15), far from resenting the cutting edge of God's rebuke by Paul, addresses *Gentile* believers in his epistles (see 1 Peter ii. 10, iv. 3), and takes special pains, since Galatia and Asia were Paul's field of labour, not only to assure them that what Paul had led them into was "the true grace of God in

which they stood," but also names him as "our beloved brother Paul," and as one with whose epistles his own were in harmony and full agreement. (See 2 Peter iii.)

Surely all this was the "much fruit" in Peter of abiding in Christ, and of having been helped to do so by the Husbandman's care.

Nor is this the case in Peter and Paul only amongst the apostles. We see the same in James and John. Early in their days of service their mother asks for them first places in God's kingdom (see Matt. xx. 20), and the sons joined their mother in making the request. It was precious fruit of God's grace both in her heart and in theirs. Jesus did not rebuke nor undervalue it. He loved such longings; for He had Himself said, "Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness." But He gently warned them of the sharp edges of sorrow and suffering which were His Father's path both for Himself and also for all such seekers. This does not deter the sons, nor even their loving mother. As Hannah with her Samuel, so she with her two sons; she yields them up to God for all His dealings with them, and they yield up themselves. And how truly the edge of the pruning came, though in such different ways! One of the two is the first of the apostles to *die* for Christ (see James in Acts xii. 2); while John, in his Patmos island banishment, has the protracted sorrow of being the last perhaps to remain here below, and has to witness the declining state of the seven churches of Asia to which he wrote.

So God is able to give us our baptism of sufferings and our cup of woe, if, like Paul, we sincerely seek of Him, that at all costs we may know Christ and the power of His resurrection, even though it be by knowing somewhat of "the fellowship of His sufferings," and "being made conformable unto His death."

These illustrations of the Father's way with the branches in Christ for their growing fruitfulness might be multiplied from the holy Scriptures, and every

reader will supply them also from his own observation and experience. May the effect of considering them be to draw all our hearts into glad and adoring acquiescence with these holy ways of God our Father!

In Hebrews xi. Paul names some of those who had finished their course by simple *faith*, as testifiers to its sufficiency and power, whose voices should fill the *ear* of us who still have our race to run, while our *eye* looks off unto Jesus as the incomparable and perfect Truster. The apostle reminds us also that God's discipline for us in the race-course, or running fight of simple faith, is for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness; and he exhorts us to consider Him that so endured, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds.

In this subject of Jesus as the True Vine, and us as the branches, let us therefore not forget that no pruning of any branch in Christ can compare with His Father's sharp-edged discipline of Him; but let us on that very account only the more value His milder and less cutting ways with us, the branches. Let our lifelong aim be, not to escape the edge of our Father's loving pruning, but thereby to yield Him the glory of even *our* bearing much fruit, and of all men thus seeing that we are Christ's disciples, that we have "been with Jesus," and have learned of Him.

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations" (*i.e.* trials); "knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience; but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." (James i. 2-4.)

And if we "lack the wisdom" to see trials and sharp prunings in this heavenly light, let us ask it of Him that giveth to ALL liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given. The least and feeblest of us shall then have it, and shall walk with God in the furnace, and have on us no smell of fire.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant it for His own name's sake. Amen. H. D.

“HE SHALL HAVE DOMINION.”

(Read Psalm lxxii.)

THE government of this world by a *Man* has been in the mind of God from the beginning. True imperial and universal government must be vested in one person. It pleased the Lord at the first to give Adam a partner (Gen. ii. 18) to share with him the blessedness of the garden, and to govern the earth, with this benign charge, “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Gen. i. 28.)

Such was the grand model and outline of universal kingly power and blessing, foreshadowing the reign of Christ, as we have it in this psalm, and the joint reign of Christ with His glorified Church, as mentioned in the closing chapters of the book of Revelation.

This first manifestation of God’s purpose to “set man over the works of His hands” (Heb. ii. 7), as narrated in Gen. i. ii., ended in the sad failure of our first parents. Instead of the earth receiving blessing and nourishment, it brought forth a plentiful harvest of briars and thorns. Man’s disobedience brought in the curse, and henceforth “in the sweat of his face” he must eat bread. These shadows, however, serve as patterns of good things to come, as described in this psalm; whilst they afford a solemn lesson of human failure, and of the inability of man to accomplish God’s purpose, or to carry out His directions.

In Noah we have again man set up in the same way, and with very much the same injunctions (Gen. ix.); but he is scarcely enthroned ere he too becomes a moral wreck, requiring also *his* nakedness to be covered.

David and Solomon were both special types of Christ

in His reign over the earth. Their power was more limited, being intended more particularly to express the government of Christ over the house of Israel in the land of Canaan. These two kings represent Christ—the one as a man of war, the other as the builder of the temple of the Lord; but they likewise afford additional proofs of human weakness and failure. Adultery and murder stained the history of David, and idolatry that of Solomon.

Nebuchadnezzar was a striking instance of imperial power. God placed universal power and government in his hands. As “head of gold” in the image which he saw, he represented universal power more than either of the three succeeding empires did. But just as we see the earth ruined, Canaan left a wilderness, and the house of Israel made a by-word and proverb among all nations, so do we see the great empires of Daniel’s image come to an end. Three of these have passed away, and while the fourth remains, it is only in its fragmentary form of the ten toes; and though the man of sin will seek to resuscitate the image, and unite the ten kingdoms into one great confederacy, it will only be to be destroyed by the Lord at His coming, when amid the wreck and ruin of fallen empires Christ will set up His kingdom that shall never pass away. (See 2 Thess. 2–8; Zech. xiv.; and Rev. xix.)

How grandly did the true King stand before Pilate! (John xviii. 37.) “Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” Thus He made His kingly work a part of His testimony to the truth. (See also Matt. xxvi. 64.)

The second psalm speaks in unmistakable language of the reign of Christ. He is God’s King, sitting on the hill of Zion, and having the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession—a blessed harmony of His

government over the house of Israel, with universal dominion. He is the true head of gold and Son of David—Jewish and universal power combined. As the obedient One, He has been highly exalted (Phil. ii. 8-11), and to Him "every knee shall bow," and every tongue shall declare Him Lord. "Then the moon shall be confounded (or blush), and the sun ashamed, when the Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." (Isa. xxiv. 23.)

The beauty and fulness of this 72nd Psalm is far beyond human pen to describe; it contains a striking contrast to all other dominions and their results, whilst it gives a most glorious and glowing description of Christ's happy and prosperous reign and government, when He shall take the throne of His father David. He is the true Melchisedec; that is, "King of righteousness," and "King of peace" (Heb. vii. 2), born King of the Jews. (Mark xi. 10; Matt. ii. 2; xxii. 42.) "Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness. . . . And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever." (Isa. xxxii. 1, 17.) "Surely His salvation is nigh them that fear Him; that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth; and righteousness shall look down from heaven." (Ps. lxxxv. 9-11.)

Such will be the state of things when Christ shall reign over the earth with His glorified church, of which Eve was a type. (Eph. v. 25.) We long, wait, and cry for the fulfilment of this psalm. Until then the world shall be a moral wreck, with everything blighted, under the dominion of Satan. He who overcame him on the cross will come again, and dethrone him out of the heavens (Rev. xii.), and chain him for one thousand years in the pit. (Rev. xx. 1, 2.) Then shall it be said, "The kingdoms of this world are become the

kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xi. 15.)

David in this psalm asks for the judgments to be given to his son, "the king's son." Being entitled to the throne, He must have also the judgments. Moses directed that a copy of the law was to be written for the king when he sitteth on the throne of his kingdom. (Deut. xvii. 18; see also 2 Kings xi. 12.) "And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel." These conditions of kingly rule have never been fulfilled; they await fulfilment by Him who says, "Thy law is within my heart," and who will gird Himself to serve His waiting brethren. (Luke xii. 37.) Thus David well foresaw the importance of this request, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son." All the blessings in this psalm are the result of Christ's obedience to God. In His life on earth and in His death He could say, "I delight to do Thy will, O God;" and this will be true of Him upon the throne. Hence the perfectness of all His works, the lack of which has ever been the ruin of man, and the cause of desolation in the earth.

Is not this psalm all that can be desired to glorify God, and to fill with joy and blessing every thing that hath breath? How full of delights is this psalm! The poor and needy are delivered, and saved from deceit and violence. Christ's dominion shall be "from the river to the ends of the earth;" it stretches "from sea to sea;" all is permanent and abiding "as long as the sun and moon endure." All creation rejoices. Gentile peoples fall down and worship, as the wise men did

before the babe of Bethlehem; they also bring their presents to the King of glory. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth." Then shall the earth be full of the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. All shall be blessed in Him, and all shall praise Him. This seems to be the last of David's psalms, though not in order; the consummation of all his desires. What a glorious termination! Though he saw not his own house to grow (2 Sam. xxiii. 5), he saw it all growing and blooming in the true Son of David, our Immanuel. Even so, come, Lord Jesus; come quickly! T. M.

DIVINE TESTIMONIES IN REFERENCE TO ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH.

IN the temple of Solomon, as in the tabernacle in the wilderness, the glory filled the place which had been prepared for it according to divine direction. There was no voice uttered, but the God of the glory found there His rest.

We read in Exod. xl. 35, that "Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." And again, in 2 Chron. v. 14, "The priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God."

In the early chapters of Ezekiel's prophecy, we find that when the slowly-departing glory ascended, first to the threshold of the house, and then to the mountain on the east of the city, and finally from earth to heaven, a voice was heard of judgment to backsliding Israel, because they refused to hearken to the commandment. Yet, although the glory must be taken from a rebellious nation, its presence being conditional on their obedience, Jehovah's covenant with Abraham never could be for-

gotten, neither could the love that was from everlasting fail or change. The glory may depart, but God's faithfulness never.

Notwithstanding Israel's departure from Abraham's God, provision was made in the divine counsels for blessing to a remnant of the seed; and once again Ezekiel sees in vision the glory returning by the way of the east, and again filling the house. That they may be ashamed of all that they have done, the house is to be showed to them, and then the divinely-given pattern must be measured. (Ezek. xliii.) They must observe the form of the house, the goings out thereof, and the comings in thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the laws thereof, that they may keep and do them.

Israel as a nation was brought into blessing on the ground of covenant. Under the figure of the olive branch (Rom. xi.) it is for the time broken off, and the Church, formed of Jews and Gentiles, is brought in on the ground of grace. But when God's purposes of blessing concerning His Church shall be accomplished, "He will return to set up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and to build again the ruins thereof" (Acts xv.), because the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

In accordance with this we find in Rev. v. that when Christ, as Son of man, takes from the hand of Him who sits upon the throne the seven-sealed book of earth's judgment, He appears as *Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David*; and the sealed ones, sheltered from wrath in chap. vii., are of the twelve tribes of Israel. We get the same truth in Rev. xii., where we see (vv. 1-4) the Jewish nation under the figure of the woman, of whom our Lord was born after the flesh.*

* We think it would be safer to take the woman with child as an unfolding of the promise in Gen. iii., from which *the woman's seed* has been the great theme of prophecy, and hence also rightly, though not exclusively, connected with Israel.—
[Ed.]

Verse 5 glances at the interval between His birth and resurrection and the rapture, looking at the Head and members as the one perfect man (1 Cor. xii. 12; Eph. iv. 13), having the one heirship and rule, as given us in Ps. ii. 9, Rev. ii. 27, and Rev. xix. 15. But verse 6 again takes up the history of Israel as a nation, broken off from verse 4, and we see the woman in a place prepared of God, fed and nourished from the fall of the serpent.

Yet Israel's renewed blessing, although it be of God's rich, unrepenting grace, must not come by the compromise of the least tittle of the covenant; and thus we find in Ezekiel's closing chapters, as in Zech. iv. and Rev. xi., that Israel's testimony for God is in connection with a rebuilt temple. The table before the Lord is of wood, contrasting with the gold and shittim-wood and brass, given on the ground of the yet unbroken covenant (Exod. xxiv. 7); and the seven days' purging of the altar points back to the defilement of the holy things committed to their keeping; and the voice from the returning glory is of warning, not of rest; yet the glory fills the house.

Israel must be brought back to the first principles of the slighted covenant, ere grace can come in on the ground of righteousness; and thus we find in Rev. xi., as well as in Ezekiel's vision, that the measurement of the house precedes the return of the glory.

We find also in Daniel's prophecy (chap. xi.) reference to the "prince of the covenant," "the holy covenant." We are told that the heart of Antichrist shall be against it; and again, that he shall have intelligence with them that forsake it. This is all perfectly in harmony with the revelation in other Scriptures of glories and judgments to come.

Ezekiel's rebuilt temple, Zechariah's candlestick of gold, Daniel's prince of the covenant, and the witnesses of Rev. xi., all point to the rekindled light of Israel's testimony in days yet to come. Satan will

have come down in great wrath, knowing that he hath but a short time (Rev. xii. 12); but in the midst of the re-gathered nation (Ezek. xxxviii. 8, 11, 12) God's witnesses shall keep His commandments (Rev. xii. 17), loving not their lives unto the death. The witnesses prophesy clothed in sackcloth, and they are hated of men; but God shows in vision to Zechariah "a candlestick all of gold." Its light is sevenfold, for which there is sevenfold provision supplied through the two "sons of oil," one on either side of the candlestick. (Compare Zech. iv. 14 with Rev. xi. 14.)

The figure points to the deep darkness that shall have settled on a Christ-rejecting world. The flying roll of judgment is unrolling its thunders over the face of the earth. (Zech. v. 1.) Wickedness in twofold energy and power (v. 9) is hasting to establish itself on its own base; but the golden candlestick of divinely-given testimony sheds its light undimmed upon the darkness for the appointed time.

Not as in the first days, when Israel's weakness succumbed to enemies within and without, shall this temple be, because it is no longer by might or power of man, but "by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." The plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel, is used with the seven eyes of the Lord, and thus the headstone is brought forth with shoutings, "Grace, grace, unto it." Joshua indeed was cleansed and crowned for service (Zech. iii), and blessing and continuance were promised through him conditionally (see also chap. vi. 15); but provision is made for the failure of Israel's high priest in the bringing forth of God's unfailing Servant, through whom the blessing must come. Though it tarry because of the unfulfilled conditions, yet the love and grace of the divine bosom must have its way fully and for ever, when He shall come whose right it is, and God will give it to Him.

But we read that when the witnesses shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out

of the bottomless pit shall make war against them and shall overcome them, and power shall be given unto him to continue forty and two months. (Compare Rev. xi. 7, xiii. 5, Dan. vii. 25.) This is the time of trouble of which the Holy Ghost tells us by Daniel there was never such since there was a nation, even to that same time.

No man must buy or sell save he that has the mark or the name of the beast, and all who worship him not must be slain. Yet God sustains His faithful ones safe in the midst of evil. The third part is brought through the fire (Zech. xiii. 9), tried as gold is tried, and found to His praise. The everlasting gospel of God's unwearied grace, unquenched by the floods of evil, is taken up by an angel, as though the love that no longer speaks from earth must speak from heaven. Next we see the heavenly Reaper seated on a white cloud, gathering His own faithful ones ere divine vengeance reaps the clusters of the vine of the earth to cast them into the winepress of God's fulfilled wrath. (Compare Rev. xiv. 14-20 with chap. xi. 11-13.)

In Rev. xv. we see the risen multitude, having gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. Then the temple of God's testimony is opened in the face of a guilty world. God deals with man on the ground of His righteous outraged law; and the seven vials, in which are filled up His wrath, are poured out. Yet now, even now, in the midst of the almost universal triumph of evil, there are those who watch and keep their garments. God's unquenchable grace must find room in the darkest hour of earth's night to display itself; and He can still keep His hidden ones by His mighty power in the very face of Satan.

What manifold lessons we learn here of God's faith-

fulness, grace, and power, unfolding into fuller glory in the time of man's deepest need and sin.

We come now to the fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham, in the bringing of the seed of Israel into millennial blessing and fruitfulness. Against the un-walled villages of the re-gathered nation the armies of the earth shall be assembled under Antichrist. (Compare Ezek. xxxviii. ; Zec. xiv. ; Dan. xi., latter part ; and Rev. xix.) But the God of the covenant with Abraham will pour upon the house of David the Spirit of grace and supplication ; and they shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him, that He may hear and deliver them. (See Luke xiii. 35.) Israel's once rejected Messiah shall then return to judge and reign ; to smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips to slay the wicked ; to bring the dawning of the day of rest when a King shall reign in righteousness, and the whole earth be filled with His glory. (Ps. lxxii. ; Isa. xi. ; Rev. xx.)

But amid all the glories that shall cluster around our divine Lord, one shall be pre-eminent. Israel shall be brought into the fulness of millennial blessing. "In that day there shall be upon the bridles of the horses holiness to the Lord." The nations shall share her riches and her peace ; for "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." But His Church shall be over all ; His joy and crown, sharing His rule and glory, and reflecting Himself. In Rev. iv. 3, we read : "*He* that sat was to look upon like a jasper stone." In Rev. xxi. 11, it is said of the bride : "*Her light* was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." The preciousness is His, the reflection hers ; but it is a perfect, undimmed reflection. "Clear as crystal." No tint of her own in that day to mar the full shining through of His glory ; no spot or wrinkle, or any such thing to hinder His exceeding joy in His

saints. But as in that day none shall share His affections or His glory as His Church, none shall so testify to His manifold wisdom, and the exceeding riches of His grace; so in proportion is the deeper responsibility that rests upon us now as God's witnesses, and His only ones, in the almost closing day.

The glory has indeed departed from Israel; but the God of the glory has found Himself a habitation and a rest. (Eph. ii. 22.) That which was made glorious had no glory in this respect by reason of the surpassing glory—the glory of God shining in our hearts from the face of a risen Jesus. A voice was heard from it of invitation to blessing richer than Israel ever knew: "This is my beloved Son: hear Him." God, who in time past spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. Not as when Moses put a veil upon his face, and the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished, we are called with unveiled face to gaze upon *Him*, not that we may behold only; but also be transformed into the same image, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. What wondrous provision God has made for our testimony before angels and men! Should it not be according to our standing before Him in His glorified Son? Do we remember how short is the moment given us for witness-bearing in a world on which the night of death and judgment is already gathering? how precious the name committed to our keeping? how momentous the issues that hang upon life's little hour?

God will ever have His witnesses, one after another, on the scene; but none can ever have the same high responsibility, as none can have the same imparted grace and power, as the Church of the living God. A little moment and He will be here. God help us, ere it be past, to live and suffer for Him, as those who shall rest and reign with Him in His coming kingdom.

A. E. W.

THE BELIEVER'S HELMET;

OR, THE APPROACHING SALVATION.

(1 Thess. iv. 8; Rom. xiii. 11.)

WITH what simplicity and definiteness does the Holy Ghost in the Word present the great and glorious subject of SALVATION, and also the certain result of believing God's testimony; namely, *everlasting life*.

"He that believeth on Me *hath* everlasting life."

"He that believeth and is baptized *shall* be saved."

"He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life."

Salvation is God's means to the highest possible end—His own glory. Our salvation and sonship are according to the "good pleasure of His will." God *delights* in saving sinners, and thus salvation is rendered both certain and glorious.

As believers, then, we *are* saved—"Who *hath* saved us, and called us." "Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate; . . . whom He predestinated, He also called; whom He called, He justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified." (Rom. viii. 28-31.) This is the fulness, the full scope, of God's purpose in Christ; and it is true of *every* believer, and *faith* grasps it all. "Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter i. 9.)

We *have* salvation, and praise God for it; and yet it is true that our salvation nears us each year, each day.

To explain this, we need only consider for a moment the meaning of the word, and its varied connections in Scripture.

The meaning of salvation, as gathered from the original, both of the Old and New Testaments, is deliverance and preservation. The word is used either in a general and comprehensive sense, or in a particular and limited one.

When used in the general, it comprehends the entire

work of God's grace in Christ, and Christ's perfect work, from the forgiveness of sins to the ultimate results in eternal blessing, whether to the Church of God, *i.e.* the body of Christ, or to Israel and the nations. When employed in its limited sense, it refers to some special act of God in the economy of redemption, and the particular act may be determined by the context.

Israel's history illustrates salvation, supplying us with a faint *type* of ours, and a blessed *pledge* of theirs in the future.

The Scriptures of the Old Testament which present salvation in its entirety are abundant, such as Psalm lxviii. 20; cxlix. 4; Isaiah xlix. 6; lix. 16. In the New Testament it is presented in such passages as Acts iv. 12; xviii. 28; Rom. x. 10; xi. 11; Titus ii. 11; Jude 3; Rev. vii. 10. These may suffice for the general application, and I pass on to notice its *limited* application.

In Exodus xiv. 30 we read, "Thus Jehovah *saved* Israel," and they sang, "He is become my *salvation*." (xv. 2.) Here it is connected with one special act of Jehovah, by which He delivered them from Egypt, and from Pharaoh, its king; the beginning, if I may so say, of His purposed work for them.

In 1 Sam. xiv. 45 it is said, "Jonathan wrought a great *salvation* in Israel;" *i.e.* deliverance from their enemies, the Philistines. (See also xix. 5.)

The blessed result of Jehovah's discipline of His self-willed servant Jonah was his being able to say, as a resurrection man, "Salvation is of Jehovah;" *i.e.* *salvation* from the deep.

I need not multiply examples from the Old Testament, but select a few from the New, to which class the verses heading this paper properly belong.

The first of these will be found in Luke i. 68-80. (Please read the passage.) Here we have the inspired utterance of the hope of Israel based on the promises,

which declared Jehovah's eternal purpose to bless them. This is a remarkable Scripture; for while it contains a description of salvation entire to *them*, no mention is made of the Church, the body, the mystery, the heavenly calling and glory, all of which are nevertheless included in God's salvation in Christ. The application of this passage is therefore *particular*, and connected with Israel.

In harmony with this were the thoughts of the apostles, and their hope before the cross, and even after the resurrection of Christ. In Luke xxiv. 21 we have their confession of this, and their great disappointment; and in Acts i. 6 their enquiry concerning the kingdom, the earthly kingdom, to Israel. The Church's standing, calling, and hope had not yet been revealed; neither had the formation of the body of Christ on the earth commenced.

Such Scriptures as the above abound in the word of God; and it would be a happy and profitable occupation to search them out, and mark their distinctive character.

I next cite that well-known, yet oft misunderstood, and therefore misinterpreted, passage, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure." (Phil. ii. 12.)

What a diversity of opinion has existed, and still exists, as to the meaning of this Scripture! and how much contention has a wrong and partial interpretation of it given rise to! Calvinists and Arminians, so-called, have severally contended for its meaning, whereas it bows to neither as such; for the simple truth of God is too majestic to yield to any mere system of human thought. What then is its teaching?

Before answering this question, I wish to remind my reader that the stand-point on which the Holy Ghost places us in the particular epistles is that of absolute possession of life—indestructible, eternal

life; and that no instruction, exhortation, admonition, or warning contained in such epistles can contradict, set aside, or even weaken this fact.

Remembering this, let us examine the passage in question, and we shall find that it stands in a practical connection, and is an exhortation addressed to persons already *saved*, already in Christ, and in possession of life—"To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi." (i. 2.)

The Philippian believers were living in the midst of doctrinal and moral evils—among those who were slaves of the lusts, the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and who sought to entangle them in the same. From such persons, opinions, and practices they were to work out their salvation from day to day; their preservation, if free; and their deliverance, if entangled. Either and both these they were to effect with "fear and trembling;" distrusting their own wisdom to detect the evil, and their own strength to escape, or save themselves from it; casting themselves upon Him who is the author both of the desire and the act, whose wisdom is deeper than Satan's subtlety, and His power almighty.

Paul enumerates some of the evils by which the Philippians were surrounded, and among them that subtle but fearful sin of *selfishness*. Whether indulged in relation to things natural or spiritual, it is the bane of the "fellowship" mentioned in chapter i. 5, which is the key to the understanding of the entire epistle. In opposition to this evil the apostle gives the perfect example of the Son of God in His self-emptying and humiliation, even to the death of the cross, and the honour put upon Him by God in consequence. (ii.)

In beautiful harmony with this, Paul uses the word in his first epistle to Timothy (iv. 16), teaching him that by the faithful use of his gift, by habitual meditation, giving himself wholly to (existing, being in)

the things written to him, by taking heed to himself and to the doctrine, he should both *save* himself and them that heard him.

In Phil. i. 19 he uses the expression again in connection with his deliverance from prison—"This shall turn to my *salvation*;" and in 2 Tim. iv. 18, alluding to his past deliverance, and expressing his confidence in the Lord for the future, he says, "He shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve (*save*) me unto His heavenly kingdom."

Lastly, let us look at the word as it occurs in one of the verses heading this paper, in which it relates to the *future*—"Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

It is needless for me to bring forth proof that the writer was a saved man, or that he regarded those to whom he wrote as saved; and yet he speaks of salvation as nearing them, and that continually, even as the morning nears by so much as the night passes away.

Here, as in almost all the passages in which the Church's hope is presented, the aspect is *practical*. The words, together with those of the first part of the next verse, are inserted in parenthesis (see Greek Testament) to enforce the exhortations preceding and following.

Paul took the place of a watchman looking out for the dawn of day; and hailing its approach, he sought to arouse those to whom he wrote to expect it, and to order their conduct suitably to the day, awaking out of sleep, casting off the works of darkness, and putting on the armour of light.

But it may be asked, In what sense can one who is saved be said to look for salvation?

The answer to this question will be found by considering what we are saved *to*.

We are saved *from* the judgment of God against sin. In the person of our Head and Representative we entered the judicial court, met every charge; in Him

satisfied divine justice, and passed out. That court is for ever closed to us and to Him as on our account. In resurrection He was proclaimed free, and we also in Him.

We are saved from Satan's dominion, and that of the world and the flesh. We are experiencing daily preservation and deliverance, or *salvation*; yet that very deliverance presupposes the existence of evil, sorrow, and pain around us, and also our own imperfection. But we have been apprehended of Christ Jesus for *glory*, for resurrection perfectness—"He hath called us to glory and virtue." We are "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son." "When we see Him we shall be like Him." We wait therefore for final deliverance—*salvation* from this scene of conflict and sorrow, from the last taste and trace of our state of humiliation and imperfection.

In virtue of our heavenly citizenship "we look for the Saviour, who shall change our body of humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of His glory." We have sonship in Christ the Son of God, are dwelt in by the spirit of sonship, and cry Abba, Father; yet we wait for the *adoption*; *i.e.* "the redemption of our *body*." (Rom. viii. 23.) In like manner we who are saved wait for salvation to the perfecting of our person, condition, and place.

Then shall the Church realize her hope. Salvation shall also be brought to Israel at the revelation of Jesus Christ; the kingdom also shall be restored to them (Acts i. 6; iii. 21), and the nations be blessed through them.

This, our hope, will be the accomplishment of God's eternal purpose in Christ, and the fulfilment of promises and predictions.

Let us then, dear reader, take this hope and use it as our "*helmet*" (1 Thess. v. 8), and we shall be able to lift up our head with boldness amid the din and strife, the dust and smoke, the sorrow and trial of

these evil days, holding on our way in the patience of hope. Let us rejoice in it, and regard the passing away of time like the footfalls of Rebekah's camel, bearing her across the desert towards her unseen but beloved Isaac. (Gen. xxiv. 61-67.) Let our hearts be in advance of our steps, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour," "pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus." The Lord Himself direct our hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ. Amen. H. H.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

WHAT is the meaning of "*castaway*" in 1 Cor. ix. 27?

The word is properly "disapproved," and in this passage Paul is not referring to his standing in Christ, as if he contemplated his rejection from Christ; but he is contemplating his *service*, and guarding against its being disapproved in the day of the Lord. Compare with this chap. iii. 15: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Our persons, as believers, are ever secure in Christ: our work will have to come before His judgment-seat. But this is entirely distinct both in principle and character from the great white throne. There man meets God as judge. This the believer in Christ never can do; for we are told "he shall not come into the judgment." See John v. 24, where for "condemnation" read "judgment."

Heb. iii. 6, 14. Do the "*ifs*" give the thought of uncertainty as to salvation?

They do not imply uncertainty as to the salvation of one who is born of God, for he has *already* been made partaker of eternal life; but they do imply that many will be found among the disciples, like Judas, who go

to their "own place;" and hence the deep importance of the "ifs" as they stand amidst the certainties and verities of God's truth. God's foundation is sure; for it has a seal with a double clause engraved on it. (2 Tim. ii. 19.) The one clause points to God, the other to the creature; but if either clause be unverified, the seal is imperfect; it is not God's. Thus we find linked together the belief of the heart and the confession of the lips; *i.e.* the inward and the outward, and if either is wanting, we have no evidence of regeneration. The clean beast had two signs—it chewed the cud, and it divided the hoof; and therefore the cony and the swine were equally unclean; the one not having the outward mark of the cloven foot, the other being wanting in the inward mark of chewing the cud. These "ifs" are like the wires of God's sieve, that separate the precious from the vile.

The Word as a Sword.—"The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The reference here is probably to other swords mentioned in the Scriptures. In Exod. xxxii. the Levites were bidden to gird every man his sword by his side, and slay every man his brother, his companion, and his neighbour. Moses was faithful to God as a servant, and thus he commanded them, and the true Levite did not know his brother. Christ as the Son over His own house would have us use in our own case and in others His word, which is sharper than any two-edged sword. Another sword mentioned is that of Solomon. After God had filled him with wisdom, he directs the sword to be used in the case of the child claimed by the two women, and thereby he searched the heart and tried the affections of the women, and thus he was enabled to give a true judgment. (1 Kings iii.) F. C. B.

THE DIVINE HUSBANDMAN;

OR, THOUGHTS FROM ISAIAH XXVIII. 23-29.

THE Lord, when speaking of Himself as the True Vine, speaks of His Father as the Husbandman; and Paul, in writing to the Corinthians, says, "Ye are God's husbandry." (1 Cor. iii. 9.)

This character of God as the Husbandman is beautifully described in Isaiah xxviii. 23-29; and to it we would prayerfully direct the attention of our readers; and may we with worshipping hearts contemplate the ways of our God in His sovereign grace.

The prophet here divides man's husbandry into three parts, *plowing*, *sowing*, and *threshing*; and of them it is said that they proceed *also* from God, who in His dealings with us is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." The passage commences with God's call to us:

- 23 Give ye ear, and hear my voice;
Hearken, and hear my speech.

Then follows the plowing:

- 24 Is it every day that the plowman plows to sow?
That he opens and breaks the clods of his ground?

Next the sowing:

- 25 Is it not when he hath made plain (even) the face thereof,
That he casts abroad the *fitches*, and scatters the *cummin*,
That he places the *wheat* in the principal place,
The *barley* in the place designed (for it),
And the *rye* in the border (of the field)?

Then the threshing:

- 26 And he bindeth it (in sheaves) according to the judgment
of his God, who teaches him.
27 So that the *fitches* are not beaten out with a threshing
instrument,
Nor is the cart wheel turned about upon the *cummin*;
But the *fitches* are beaten out with the staff, and the
cummin with the rod.
28 *Bread-corn* is beaten, because he will not go on treading
it out for ever;

And though he cause to pass over it the wheel of his
cart and (the hoofs of) his horses,
He will not beat it to pieces.

Lastly the application :

29 This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts,
Who showeth Himself wonderful in counsel, and great
in working out (His result).

In the above we have made a few corrections in translation to give greater clearness to the text, which we will now consider, tracing under the different headings the steps of the Great Husbandman.

Recalling the words, "give ear," "hear," and "hearken," in verse 23, we cannot but infer, that what God is going to unfold demands our attentive consideration. May the Spirit of truth so unfold to us all that God would teach, that we may be able to comprehend the wonders of His counsel, and the excellence of His working, in His divine husbandry of us.

First. **THE PLOWING.** This is the preliminary process which prepares the ground for the seed. The furrows are carried long and deep, as we read in Ps. cxxix. 3, "The plowers plowed upon my back; they made long their furrows." Thus will Israel cry, when the seed of repentance shall have taken root in their hearts, and they have learned the object of the Lord's dealing with them in the days of their rebellion and unregeneracy. In harmony with this thought God cries to Israel, "Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns." (Jer. iv. 3.) The plowing also applies to God's preliminary work in a soul's salvation, with a view to the sowing of the good seed. It is however only preparatory, and hence the question, "Does he plow every day? Is he always breaking the clods of the ground?" And the implied answer is, "No."

There is a depth of meaning in the expressions, *plowing, opening, breaking the clods*, as descriptive of God's ways with unregenerate hearts. What patient

toil on His part! what stubborn unyieldingness often on ours! We little think of the service of the wise Husbandman, as in its suited season, when the ground is wet with showers, He brings His plow over the fruitless soil, and then, having opened it up to light and heat, He sends His harrow to break down the clods. What is all the Egypt-experience of the child of God, the experience of his days of nature's darkness and deadness, but that of the hand of God plowing deep down into the unrenewed heart, and that not once nor twice? As soils differ, so do hearts; and the infinite wisdom of God is seen in suiting His dealings to the need of each particular case. His plowing and harrowing show the wonderful character of His counsels, and contemplating His work we may well exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out."

It is but little we know now, or can know, of the peculiar adaptation of God's plowings to our individual characters and needs; but let our believing, trusting hearts recognise the fact, and while we may not understand now the needs-be of all the circumstances in our past unregenerate life, let us look at the result of it all in our present participation of eternal life, and rest assured that every step in the process that prepared our heart for the seed was necessary. Thus even now we shall be able to thank God, even though we know not much of His ways that we shall know hereafter.

These three acts, then, mark God's first dealings with our souls. He first *plows up* by means of afflictions and trials. He then *opens out*, bringing the law of God to bear on the plowed-up and awakened conscience, revealing the desperate evil and wickedness of the heart, and then is fulfilled Paul's experience, "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." The hidden depths are brought to the surface, and God opens out.

to man *himself*; and the convicted sinner, like the proved leper of old, cries out, "Unclean! unclean!" "Lord, save, or I perish!" This prepares for the *breaking down*, when, like the clods under the harrow, the ground is made even, and the heart prepared for the sowing. But there can be no sowing till the heart is broken down—till the high thoughts disappear—till the proud will is laid in the dust. These form the several parts or stages of the first process whereby the sinner is prepared for the reception of the good word of God, which makes wise unto salvation, and then makes fruitful unto God.

Secondly. THE SOWING. Here also there are divine appointments and sovereign arrangements which we are called deeply to ponder. There is the sovereign will that appoints the *kind of seed*, and the infinite wisdom that appoints to each its *fitting place*.

The field does not belong to itself; it belongs to the Husbandman, and He has a right to do what He wills with His own. God ever claims this right. The Lord Jesus ever accorded it, and in regard to all His acts would say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in thy sight." All was right, whether in bringing into fruitfulness the field of the lowly, that refused not to be opened out and broken down, or in consigning to barrenness and the curse the field of the proud which, though plowed up, opened not to the light, and refused God's breaking down. Faith ever bows to God, not as of necessity, but of free and loving choice, knowing that His sovereign will is right, and that the highest glory of the creature is to subserve the glory of the Creator in His own appointed way.

There are five different kinds of seed mentioned in verse 25: *fitches*, a small, black aromatic seed used as a condiment; *cummin*, a small seed containing an essential oil of a grateful flavour, also used as a condiment, and sometimes as a medicine; and then three kinds of grain—*wheat*, *barley*, and *rye*, which in verse 28 are

collectively called "bread corn." All these seeds are different in character and in use, and also differ greatly in intrinsic value; but God has given to each its value and its use. The first two are chiefly used as condiments, the last three are the staff of life, and among these there is all the difference between the wheaten bread of the wealthy, the barley bread of the poor, and the rye of the lower animals. The latter are essential to life, and the former are given to make food savoury, as were the fishes which our Lord gave with the bread when He fed the multitudes.

What if God sows one man's part of the field with barley, while He sows his neighbour's with wheat? Shall the former complain? Far from it; the Master has need of barley. Shall the ground sown with wheat boast over that sown with rye? It may not be. As well might the ass say, "Oh that I were a horse!" But when the Master wants to ride into Jerusalem, it is of the ass He says, "The Lord hath need of him."

There are those who seem to be in the Master's field as *fragrant fitches*, or *aromatic cummin*. They would never feed the hungry, nor supply the need of the famishing, but they impart a relish to what God gives through others. This is their appointed use, and although among the smaller things of "the mint, the anise, and the cummin," they have their own blessed place in the perfect economy of God. It is of unspeakable importance that we really get down into a deep child-like realization of the sovereignty of God; but in order to this we must get into the very presence of God Himself. There proud thoughts disappear; for in His high and holy presence we can but occupy our fitting place. God and His will rule there, and we are subject. He is the God of resurrection, and we learn about Him that to every seed He "giveth a body *as it hath pleased Him*." And that word, "as it pleased Him," decides all questions, and settles all hard thoughts. In bowing to God alone, is it that we can walk humbly with

Him ; and it is only as walking humbly that we can walk with God at all.

But when the sovereignty of God has given the seed according to His pleasure, the wisdom of God appoints also the *place* in which it has to grow, and the circumstances in the midst of which it has to ripen its fruit. The fitches and the cummin are scattered, it does not say where. Is it that they are too insignificant to need a special place? Perhaps so, but the Master needs them. The wheat, the most important of all, is put in "the principal place;" the barley in the place that is good enough for it; for it is hardier, and needs less carefully-prepared ground; and then the rye is put in the borders of the field as of less intrinsic value still, and as needing less care.

Is there no voice in all this for us? Is there nothing in it that touches the self-will and pride that murmurs oftentimes at the place assigned to us, and the circumstances by which we are surrounded? Each has his position assigned by infinite wisdom, and our wisdom is to bow in joyful acquiescence with His will, who will assign the highest place hereafter, not to the wheat, because it has occupied the highest place in the field, but to that, whether it be wheat, barley, or rye, fitches or cummin, which has most fulfilled the end for which the great Husbandman sowed it where He thought best in His field. As believers, and as children accepted in the Beloved, we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ to receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad; and He who judges the secrets of all hearts will with an impartial hand reward each according as his work shall be.

Let us remember our Lord's word to His disciples in contemplating the sovereign dealings of God: "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John ix. 3.) How satisfying this answer to loving faith, and to obedient love! If one is born blind, while others

can see; if one is in poverty, and another in wealth; if one is in lifelong suffering and weakness, another in possession of health and strength; if one comes into life in the darkest of our city slums, surrounded by vice and misery and sin, another in a holy, happy home, where all is peace and heaven and God—what then? In all and in each He has done as seemeth Him good, since the highest glory of the creature and the sweetest consolation of the blessed is, and will be, that they have subserved the glory of their infinitely glorious and loving Creator, their God and Father, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thirdly. **THE THRESHING.** This is the last process here indicated, and describes the various means in the husbandry of God, whereby the chaff is separated from the wheat, which is needed ere the garner is filled with the grain. The garner will bear witness to the result of the plowing, the sowing, and the threshing. That garner is the heavenly city—the new Jerusalem, which had “no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb was the light thereof.” (Rev. xxi. 23.) The glory of God is especially connected with this city, where the golden grain is garnered, and the precious jewels treasured up; as we also read in Rev. xxi. 11—“Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.”

The connection of Isaiah xxviii. 26 with that which follows is not so plain, unless we adopt the marginal reading, and render it, “And he bindeth it according to the judgment of his God, who teaches him.”* This allusion at once points to the disciplinary character of

* In Hebrew the words “to bind” and “to discipline” (or instruct, which is a secondary meaning) are very nearly allied; and in Hosea x. 10 we find an interchange of these words. The sheaves are bound in such a manner as is needed, according to the discretion of the husbandman.

the threshing. It must be remembered, however, that discipline is training. This we all need, and it only becomes correction or punishment when training has been resisted, and disobedience has marred the purposes of grace. The human husbandman deals with the produce of his land "according to the judgment of his God" given to him for his operations, and the same wisdom is exemplified by God in His husbandry.

Various means are employed in these threshing processes, and God, who addresses His people as "O my threshing, and corn of my floor" (Isa. xxi. 10), would teach us something of the sovereign wisdom that deals with each of us according to a discriminating love, as He sees each needs, in order to separate the precious from the vile, and thus to prepare His harvest for Himself. The means used in this work are the *threshing instrument** and the *cart-wheel*, the *staff* and the *rod*. Wisdom is needed to know which to employ. The threshing instrument, sharp and armed with many teeth, would well-nigh annihilate the fitches, and the heavy cart-wheel would crush and destroy the delicate, fragrant cummin. The fitches and the cummin separate easily from their shells; the rod and the staff are sufficient for all that is needed, and God's wisdom never uses more than that, and His love cannot use less. But the bread-corn, the wheat, the barley, and the rye are not so easily deprived of their chaff, and therefore they are beaten out with the sharp threshing instrument, "because He will not be always threshing it;" and though to expedite the work He may drive the heavy cart-wheel over them, His purpose is not to beat to pieces and destroy.

How beautifully true is this in all God's discipline of every-day life! yet how apt are those under the threshing instrument and its sharp blades to complain

* This is called *charootz*, and is used in Isa xli. 15, where we read of "a sharp threshing instrument having teeth," or having many blades.

that in their case, as in that of others, the lighter rod and staff are not employed; or those under the daily heavy pressure of the wheel of providence to think that some more expeditious way might have been found to accomplish the desired end. Heavenly discipline and divine training, a Father's chastisement or His heavy rebuke, are very sacred things, calling loudly for an exercised heart. To such alone will the discipline yield its peaceable fruit; and if not yielded, a repetition of the same discipline will be necessitated, perhaps in a severer form, or the long-continued cart-wheel may have to take the place of the sharper and speedier threshing instrument.

But let us not complain, except of our dullness and hardness of heart. "God does not afflict from His heart, nor grieve the children of men." He chastens for our profit, to make us partake of His holiness. Infinite skill marks every step of the way by which we are being led. The way is "a right way," every step of it appointed, and the end an infinitely blessed one, even to bring us to "a city of habitation;" and we may well quote the oft-repeated words of the Psalm—"Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" for truly He is "wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working."

There is special emphasis in the "*this also*" in verse 29. It tells us that all this wisdom and skill is seen not only in man's ways as a cultivator of the soil, but also in the higher and holier sphere of God's dealings; and the prophet bids us mark the infinitely higher wisdom and diviner skill whereby the heavenly Husbandman is carrying out His own purposes with us His children, till at the consummation of all He shall say, "It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." (Rev. xxi. 6.)

The original "counsel," in its wonderful conceptions, is *from* eternity, and the ultimate "out-working," in

its glorious "excellency," will be to eternity. Let us learn therefore to bow cheerfully to all the intervening steps, knowing that eternal love gave birth to the "counsel" in the past, and that the blessed results will be in the eternity to come, to which by rapid strides we are all hastening, amid the silence of the growing field and the noise and din of the corn-floor.

So, be the present what it may, we will join in the thanksgiving, and say, "To Him that loves us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and made us a kingdom and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

H. G.

GOD'S WISDOM AND MAN'S.

IN Psalm xxxvii. 5 we read, "Roll thy way upon the Lord." The child of God who commits his way to the Lord, and allows Him to arrange and provide for him, fares far better than he who takes the management of his affairs in his own hands. God deviseth more liberal and richer things for us than we could possibly think of for ourselves. In Christ Jesus "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." As *the* liberal one He continuously "deviseth liberal things" for us (Isa. xxxii. 8); "He giveth to all *liberally*, and upbraideth not." (Jas. i. 5.)

Let us take a few simple Scripture instances for the sake of illustration.

Adam and Eve desired to be wise, and in the hope of becoming so eat of the tree of knowledge. Satan had told them that in the day they eat thereof their eyes should be opened, and they should be "as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Did

they gain their purpose? Alas, no! Their effort after wisdom and knowledge only resulted in sorrow, and "brought death into the world, and all our woe." Naked and alienated from God, how manifest was their folly!

But this gave occasion for bringing forth of the "eternal purpose" which was in the heart of God, that by the church should be known His " manifold wisdom " (Eph. iii. 10, 11), and that believers should have true wisdom in Him who is " the wisdom of God," and " the power of God." Wisdom's voice is now to " the sons of man " (Prov. viii. 4) to those who, seeking and professing to be wise, have only become fools (Rom. i. 22), and God makes them that hear wise unto salvation. Christ Jesus " of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." " We speak wisdom," says the apostle, " among them that are perfect."

" God's own purpose gave us being,
When in Christ, in that vast plan,
Abba chose the church in Jesus
Long before the world began."

Oh how immeasurably great are the blessings that God in His eternal purpose has planned for us, and secured to us, in Christ! far beyond what Adam fell from, or dreamed of attaining.

Here then we see a striking contrast between what God spontaneously does for man and the very best we could think of for ourselves. No wonder that Israel by-and-by will confidently say, " Jehovah shall choose our inheritance for us." (Ps. xlvii. 4.) But look again. Adam and Eve having sinned, must have their nakedness hid, and forthwith set about procuring a covering for themselves, and sewed fig leaves together. How worthless it proved when God's voice sought them out! And so will it be with every covering that man dévises. But God effectually provides. " Unto Adam also and to his wife *did the Lord God* make coats of skin, and

clothed them." "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." (Isaiah lxi. 10.) The weary sinner toiling for righteousness finds salvation in accepting the King's wedding garment made ready to his hand.

Again, when after the flood the family of Noah had multiplied, they were anxious for a great *name* in the earth, and dreaded being scattered. To secure their object they set about raising the city and tower of Babel. Such was their plan, such their thought of obtaining what appeared to them their best good. But the result was "*confusion*." The very thing they dreaded overtook them; they were scattered abroad, their language confounded, and their city left unfinished. But in the next chapter (Gen. xii. 2) we see that God selects a dweller in Ur of the Chaldees, who never was expecting anything of the kind, and says to him, "Abram, Get thee out of thy country . . . and I will make thee a great nation, and will make *thy name great*." Thus God gives to Abram a far better and higher name than ever men hoped for at Babel.

In Genesis xiii. we have another instance. Lot and Abram came to an arrangement to separate one from the other. Abram, conscious of what God had made Himself to him, could roll his way upon God, and therefore could trust Him to care for his interests. So he gives Lot the choice of the whole country. Poor Lot thinks not of having God to order for him, and makes his own plans, bringing in common sense and worldly wisdom. He lifts his eyes toward the *east*, and is attracted by the apparent richness of the plain of Jordan, and selects it, congratulating himself, no doubt, upon the good choice he had made. "Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan, and Lot journeyed east" toward Sodom, and finally settled down therein, to his sad, sad loss. Instead of having his wealth increased by the well-watered plain, he lost all

in the destruction of Sodom, and escaped only with his own and his two daughters' lives.

Mark the contrast in the case of Abraham: "And the Lord said unto Abram, *after that* Lot was separated from him, Lift up now thine eyes" (Lot had lifted up his own eyes), "and look from the place where thou art *northward*, and *southward*, and *eastward*, and *westward*: for *all the land* which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever." Oh, what an infinitely better portion than Lot chose for himself! Such was the portion of one who committed his way unto the Lord. Lot looked only eastward; but God tells Abram to look to all four points of the compass. So it is always; when we choose for ourselves, our hearts are so miserably small that our utmost ambition dwindles into nothing in comparison with the largeness of what God would prepare for us. In view of all this, no wonder it is said we "are straitened in our own bowels," and exhorted to be enlarged. (2 Cor. vi. 12.)

Well would it be for us as Christians if we could more unreservedly roll our individual ways upon God, and trust our all to Him. Unbelief likes to act and make sure for itself, lest God should neglect or overlook its interests; but faith rests in His love, and acknowledges itself incompetent to know what to choose, and therefore trusts in God.

In Joseph we see one who always committed his ways unto the Lord, and habitually trusted in Him, thus typifying to the full Him that was "anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows," of whom it was said, "He committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously." (1 Peter ii. 23.) Jesus never took things into His own hands, sought not His own honour or profit, tried not to reach the end by a short cut, but with patience let God bring everything about in His own time and way.

Israel's choice as to a land for themselves was no better. We read, "In their hearts they turned back

again into Egypt." (Acts vii. 39.) "They said one to another, Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt." (Num. xiv. 4.) They said also unto Moses, "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us to die in the wilderness?" . . . Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians?" (Exod. xiv. 12.) Thus Israel's preference was for Egypt rather than for the good and fat land that God had "espied for them" (Ezek. xx. vi.), and had arranged to bring them into. And shall we not make similar mistakes and ill-choosings, unless we "leave it all with Jesus day by day" to arrange, plan, and perfect that which concerns us?

The description of the tabernacle in Exodus xxv.-xxxii. was given to Moses in the mount by God, so that the children of Israel had not heard or known of it when what is related in chapter xxxii. took place. Here then we have the same lesson, and learn what man chooses in the matter of worship. Of His own accord, and according to His foreknowledge, God was giving His servant Moses minute and particular directions as to the true sanctuary and tabernacle where Israel could worship, and in which God would condescend to dwell among them. But the children of Israel wait not for God; they themselves take in hand the arrangement of their worship; and when Moses comes down from the mount to tell them about God's worship, he finds them dancing around the golden calf. God nevertheless in grace gives them His tabernacle, with the altar, mercy-seat, and all the means pertaining to their drawing nigh to Himself.

Do we realize how miserable any devices of our own would have been in this direction? In this connection it may be remarked that the Lord's Supper, like the Passover, was of the Lord's gracious and unasked forethought given us. It was not left to be arranged by us; He gave "the command." Men's commemorations

of their great ones are of their own devising—their anniversaries, and centenaries, and such like—and what foolish things they often are!

If man's attempt at worship was calamitous, his aiming at the priesthood was equally disastrous. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram sought the priesthood, and gathered themselves against Moses and Aaron (Num. xvi.); and what was the sequel? Instead of obtaining what their proud hearts sought after, the earth swallowed them up.

In the very next chapter God makes the rod of Aaron to bud. Thus Korah and his company, who sought honour for themselves, came to ruin, while Aaron and his house, without seeking it, are established in the priesthood as their "service of gift."

Scripture abounds in such contrasts; one other may suffice. David came down to the sheepcotes (1 Sam. xxiv. 3) by the way, where there was a cave, into which king Saul went when David and his men were in the sides of the cave. David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe, but would not slay him. His enemy was in his power, and the kingdom within his grasp; but he would not take the matter into his own hands, but "rolled his way upon the Lord, and trusted also in Him." "The Lord," said he (v. 12), "judge between me and thee, and the Lord avenge me of thee: but mine hand shall not be upon thee." The faith thus shown was tested afterwards. Saul again pursues David (xxvi. 2); and David may have been tempted to say, "What a fool I was to let Saul escape; had I slain him in the cave, I should be in security now, instead of being thus hunted and troubled. If ever I get another chance I will make better use of it." But no; faith utters no such language. He had another chance, but uses it as he did the former. Saul is again in David's power, as he is sleeping at his feet (1 Sam. xxvi. 5-12), and Abishai, his general, begs permission to strike him down with one blow; but David will not

hear of it. He takes the spear from Saul's head to show what he really could have done, but still commits his way to the Lord. How like to one of the temptations of our Lord by Satan. Satan offered Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them; but Jesus would only have "the kingdoms and the glory" in the Father's time and way, even though such choice, He well knew, would postpone their enjoyment for many a long day, and also necessitate his going down into the agony and bitterness of the death of the cross.

The lesson from all this is obvious. Man cannot devise anything, still less accomplish anything, really good for himself, and that what he does devise, is poor and scanty in conception. On the other hand, we have seen God ever arranging and bestowing good things and large upon those that are content to leave the ordering of their matters in His gracious and heavenly hands. Be ours, therefore, the better part of confiding in Him. Let us habitually "commit our ways unto the Lord; trust also in Him;" "rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him," "and He shall bring forth our righteousness as the light, and our judgment as the noonday."

R. E. S.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

LUKE xvi.

WHEN our blessed Lord was surrounded with the publicans and sinners who came to listen to His wisdom, and by the murmuring and mocking scribes and Pharisees, He was pleased to open out to them the thoughts and designs of His Father. The touching parables in Luke xv. conveyed to them the feelings of heaven, which He who came from the bosom of the Father was alone capable to unfold. He taught them how very dear was the one sheep who had strayed away, with the joy on his being recovered; the anxiety, diligence, and perseverance exercised in searching after

the wanderer; the overflowing eagerness with which the prodigal is welcomed back; with the surpassing joy pervading the heavens, re-echoing the gladness of the Father's heart. He made them understand how the self-righteousness of the elder son could in nowise comprehend this gladness, and, far from entering into the general happiness, was totally opposed to it.

Having thus far shown the discordance of man's heart towards his fellow-sinner with the sentiments entertained above, our Lord proceeds to unfold the future in two different aspects—in the narrative of the unjust steward, and that of the rich man and Lazarus.

The unjust steward, or, as the words are more correctly rendered, the steward of injustice, is about to be deprived of his employment. He has wasted his master's property, and has received notice to quit; his stewardship draws to a close.

Anticipating the loss of his situation, he takes measures to secure friends who may afterwards welcome him to their homes when he has no longer anything at command. And his master commends his prudent foresight, though, we may conclude, not approving of the dishonesty; but this point is not alluded to in the narrative.

Then follows our Lord's own comment in these words, the purport of which is missed in our present translation, "For the sons of this period are more wise than the sons of light are towards their own generation." In chapter vi. 30-38 of the same gospel the Lord describes the kindness of men towards each other with the motive that influences them, the expectation of receiving kindness in return; also, that if the act is done without such expectation, the recompense will nevertheless come from men; and in Matt. vi. 4 from God also, that is, when done in faith and obedience. The thoughts of men, however, reach only to the things of this life; they look only to this side the

grave, not beyond. The good measure pressed down and running over which they bestow extends not further. It is only the children of light, the redeemed of the Lord Jesus, who possess a title to an inheritance hereafter; their hopes are not limited to this present passing scene. Their prospects are however out of sight, not yet beheld. And such is the weakness of our faith, that we are habitually swayed by the same motives that govern our fellow-men.

We are to inhabit those glorious mansions which Jesus our Lord is gone before to prepare for us. We are to dwell together in our Father's house. Our loving Master is coming again to change our humble bodies into the likeness of His glorious body; to take all of us who trust in Him to be with Him for ever. But our eyes are scarcely open, our attention scarcely awake to the reality of what awaits us. Were it otherwise, could we behave ourselves towards one another as we do? Much is it to be lamented that the children of light are not so wise towards each other as the children of darkness are!

And the wisdom here inculcated is prospective—a deliberate anticipation of the future—so as to govern our present intercourse. Hear our Lord's words: "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of injustice (*αδικια*), that when it fails they may receive you into the everlasting habitations."*

Several questions arise here. Where are the everlasting habitations? Who are the persons to receive you? When will they do this? How are they to be made friends of?

And first, of the habitations. It is plain these cannot be on the earth, since here there is nothing permanent. The earth itself passes away. We and our friends pass away from it. The Father's house,

* It is to be noticed that the most reliable MSS. read as above, instead of "ye fail," and that the emphatic **THE** is an essential part of the divine record.

the New Jerusalem, the abode of the saints, is alone entitled to the designation everlasting. It is there all who love Jesus are to reside, not in our present mortal bodies, nor in the "unclothed" condition, but in the spiritual, the resurrection body, like unto the glorious body of the Son of God. None enter that abode of happiness either before or after the rest, since all are raised from the dead, and are changed simultaneously, in the twinkling of an eye, at the shout of Jesus. All ascend to meet Him in one vast concourse, and are conducted by Himself to His Father's presence.

When thus located in their own habitations, around the throne of God and of the Lamb, of which the many chambers for the priests in Ezekiel xli. and xlii. give a faint but significant idea, the Lord God loving to be surrounded by His people, their intercourse will know none of the restrictions with which sin and Satan have narrowed up our hearts during this time-state. Millions of years may roll on, and the fellowship, far from being diminished, will only be heightened in its joys. It is then the redeemed will have and exercise the privilege of receiving one another "into the everlasting habitations." None others enter there. None but themselves inhabit those abodes, or have access to them.

It is therefore amongst the children of light that the disciples of Jesus are taught to make to themselves friends, and this with a view to their future intercourse above.

But how are such friends to be made? By means of the mammon of injustice! Does this lie within reach of every one? Yes, of every one! High and low, rich and poor, have some of this mammon entrusted to them.

What Christian has it not in his power to show kindness to some other Christian? Not all perhaps have it in their power to give money, which is often perhaps of small value compared with other service

which may be rendered. Many do not want our money, but all stand in need of friendship. A kindly smile costs little, but often cheers the heart of the sorrowful. A word spoken in season to the weary one may impart fresh strength for the journey of life. The doubting one may be confirmed in the faith by mentioning some of the promises of our God. The bed of sickness may be watched over, the aching brow bathed, the desponding roused. The numberless offices which the willing heart renders spontaneously in domestic life, if rendered to the child of God, because he belongs to Christ, are raised above the level of benevolent actions, and become acts of faith. All such will be certain to receive future reward, because of the loving recognition and remembrance of Him to whose servant such kindness has been shown. Even so small a gift as a glass of water lives in His memory, though forgotten both by the giver and the receiver. Much that is purely benevolent towards men and towards animals, though greatly cultivated by men, will not come up to this high standard which Jesus gives for His disciples.

In this parable we are informed that the friends whom we make by such actions will not forget the benefits they have received. Memory will awaken on seeing him or her through whom the favour was bestowed. Each will call to mind the especial blessing he has obtained through the other, and accord a joyful welcome to his benefactor, even to those of the family of faith, whom we have never yet seen, but to whom in any way we have been indebted.

Beyond all, with what rapturous joy shall we for ever and ever behold Him who has redeemed us by His own life's blood, to whom we owe pardon, peace, and life—every thing; who has sought us out while we were strangers and enemies; who, having reconciled us, has now made us kings and priests unto His God and Father; and who is about to present us before the throne of His glory with exceeding joy. By Him

shall we be introduced to our God and Father as the children whom God has given Him.

In the succeeding verses the Lord now opens out some of the truths on which His high purposes are based: "He who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he who is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the mammon of injustice, who will commit to your trust the true? . . . And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" The terms faithful and unjust are here used in contrast, and in relation to stewardship; "moreover it is required in the stewards that each should be found faithful." Solomon said, "A faithful man who can find?" Our Lord well knew that such an one was not to be found on earth, save in His own blessed person. All of us are unjust, inasmuch as we have not employed that which has been entrusted to us according to the desire of the owner. Time, faculties, opportunities, parts of our stewardship, who has employed them as the property of another? Have we not all used them as if they were our own, and we were not accountable to any one? Before we knew God we were at enmity with Him—living without God in the world, disowning Him, and asserting our own independence. Little did we think that the life, health, strength, in which we boasted, were His property, and could be withdrawn in a moment.

And since we have known Christ, has nothing of the same blindness remained? It is true we do not now say, "Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?" but practically do we realize that it is by God we live, move, and exist, and that these faculties, powers, positions, and every thing that contributes to our existence and well-being, are parts of the stewardship for which we are accountable?

The higher class of stewards are those entrusted with the gospel. The apostle Paul, referring to the

account, says of himself, "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." And in another place, indicating his own personal subjection to the gospel he taught, he says, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disapproved."

Not to extend this paper by further examination of this solemn branch of our subject, I will merely add four passages, among others, where the fact is revealed to us—Ps. lxii. 12; Prov. xxiv. 12; Rom. ii. 6; 1 Peter i. 17.

In resuming the consideration of verses 10 to 13, it is to be noticed that the expression, "the least," relates to the present, the temporal, as contrasted with the "much," the eternal. The same applies to the mammon of injustice, and to the true mammon; also to that which is "another's," and to that which is "your own." And here the terms faithful and unjust do not contemplate gradations of one or the other quality, but the absolute acceptance or denial of subjection. If the heart is subject to God, it stands altogether in a different relation to Him than if subjection is refused. In the former case only is stewardship acknowledged, and its duties attempted. In the other case, though the property is entrusted to the care of the man, he commits the injustice of disowning Him to whom it belongs, treating it as his own.

While we remain here on earth, it is with the mammon of injustice alone that we have to do; the true exists only in the heavens. It will be meted out to each of the redeemed, the servants of Christ Jesus, in exact accordance with the divine appreciation of each steward's conduct. All are children of God by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ—all are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ—all are loved with the same Fatherly love; yet, though all are stars in the firmament, all stars do not shine with the same brightness. Such is the state in resurrection. The master's approval

of the steward, on inspecting his accounts, does not depend upon the quantity of work done, but upon its being done in exact conformity with the instructions he has received. This alone will remain on the record, and through grace meet with reward; the rest of the page must needs be blank. (1 Cor. iii. 14-15.)

The meaning of "that which is your own" seems to be explained by the apostle in 2 John 8—"Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward;" and in Rev. iii. 11—"Hold that fast which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." The reward and the crown are both in readiness for the individual; but may be lost, diminished, or given to another! A warning was given to the Israelite—"The children of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness." (Matt. viii. 12.)

In the resurrection it is not to be supposed there will be such discordance between position, character, endowment, attainment, as we see around us in this world. The inequality which is everywhere apparent, and which gives occasion to the exercise of stewardship, will then have ceased; the "injustice" be no more. The most perfect harmony in all these respects will alone accord with the idea of "the true mammon."

"No household servant (or slave) can serve two masters," &c. Where the dwellings are apart, and the interests opposed, how impossible is it that faithful service should so be rendered. God leads the heart to disregard the present for the sake of the future. Mammon relates only to the present, and has no eye to the future. The god of this world or age blinds all eyes under his control, dazzling them with earthly things, which yet are all to perish in the using. Impossible, therefore, to be faithful to both these masters. The child of God must decide to follow his new Master, listen to His orders, and govern himself by them; and though this course may involve the loss of all that he naturally clings to, the gain throughout

eternity will be such as has not entered into the heart of man to conceive.

If, then, we would be wise with the wisdom from above, let us make to ourselves, by any means in our power, such friends as may receive us into the everlasting habitations, after their necessities and our power of supply are both brought to a close.

The ridicule of the Pharisees who heard this teaching is explained by their covetousness. They who had all along been exalting themselves, misleading others for their own ends, occupied with hypocritical practices, grasping at the property of others to enrich themselves, what could they do but cast contempt on teaching so wholly at variance with their own? As a tenet they held the resurrection to be a fact, but in conduct denied it utterly, and were Sadducees altogether in practice.

But since their hearts were too hard and their minds too much occupied with the desire for gain to admit of their looking beyond this life into eternity, with the desire to make friends who might welcome them in the abode of the blessed, the Lord now appeals to another motive, the opposite of the former. And to this end He relates the searching history of the rich man and Lazarus. The one was destitute and in misery, the other having all that heart could desire. In vain is his compassion sought. Day by day as he passes in and out of his house he sees the misery of the sufferer, yet cares nothing for his distress. There the poor one lingers till he dies. No morsel of food is bestowed, no drop of water to slake his thirst.

One special command of the law said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This command had been broken, broken habitually, persistently. Whatever other good deeds he might have done, this vitiated his claim to life. How could such a flagrant breaking of the law terminate except in everlasting burnings? (Isa. xxxiii. 14.)

No friend is found *there* to alleviate his dire necessity. He made no friend while on earth by using the opportunities he then possessed; and now there is none to help him. Besides which there is a great gulf intervening which cannot be passed from either side. He can from afar behold the happiness he formerly disregarded; but for him there is no relief, no hope, not even a drop of water to cool his tongue.

Conscience, long dead, is at length aroused. Though for himself there is no escape, he feels for the added horror of seeing his five brethren involved in the same torture as himself. They were passing their lives as he did. If Lazarus, whom they had seen die at their gate, were sent, such a messenger could not fail to convince of what was awaiting them. That the poor man had been allowed to perish under their eyes was self-sufficient evidence that the whole household had violated the second great commandment of the law.

To this appeal the reply of Abraham, in whose paternity they boasted (see John viii.), is, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." The holy One of Israel had for centuries been giving them ocular demonstration of His mercy and kindness, notwithstanding their long-continued guilt and rebellion. This description of proof had failed of producing the desired effect. Miracles in abundance had now been wrought before their eyes by Him who now addressed them. They would neither receive Him, nor Moses who spake of Him. Had they believed Moses they would have welcomed Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write. It is to their testimony that Abraham refers them.

One last appeal is made—"If one went unto them from the dead, they will repent." This too had already been tried, and had failed of effect. Several persons had been raised from the dead in the days of the prophets; several more had been so raised by Jesus Himself. Where was the result? The raising

of Lazarus of Bethany was about to take place, if indeed it had not already occurred. Were they convinced by this stupendous instance of authority and goodness? Did it not, on the contrary, bring out more fully the intensity of their hatred to Him who had raised Him? And when afterwards their own hands had nailed the Son of God to the cross, beholding Him expire there in agony, and when He had risen from the dead, and proved His power in resurrection, were they then constrained to receive and welcome Him? Every evidence that God gave them was cast aside. They sought only to destroy those through whom that evidence was being given. Even Saul of Tarsus was not persuaded till, struck to the earth blind and helpless, he was informed who it was that had conquered him, and at whose disposal his life lay.

If then the Pharisee refuses to be led on into God's ways by hope, he must be taught to fear. He cannot remain where he is. Earth trembles under his feet; heaven and hell are open before him. Should he refuse to anticipate future happiness with the redeemed in glory, there is but one other condition, that of endless misery, without alleviation; no sympathy, no hope, nothing save the blackness of despair! R. N.

BUILDING ON ANOTHER MAN'S FOUNDATION.

"Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation."—Rom. xv. 20.

"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon."—1 Cor. iii. 10.

THE first of the texts above quoted is liable to be misunderstood on a *casual* reading, and to be interpreted as if it were intended to express that it is wrong for a servant of Christ to follow in the footsteps of another, preaching the same gospel to the same people to whom it has been already proclaimed.

That the apostle did not intend thus to restrict the action of any servant of Christ, may be proved from two considerations.

1st. What Paul is supposed by some to condemn, he in this same epistle expresses the intention of himself doing.

If we look into the passage, we find that he is explaining to the Roman Christians (among whom were many labourers, as appears from the list given in chapter xv.) why he has not yet been able to visit them *for the purpose of preaching the gospel*.

It was ever his desire or "ambition" (so Alford) to preach the gospel where Christ had not been named; and in carrying this out, he had been hindered for many years in fulfilling his long-cherished purpose of coming to Rome. But now, having fully preached the gospel in Asia Minor and south-eastern Europe, he had it on his heart to go into Spain, and by the way to tarry awhile in the metropolis of the world in order to build up believers, and to preach the gospel of Christ, *although it had been already preached there*. (Read Romans x. 5, 22-29; also i. 10-15.)

2nd. In his epistle to the Corinthians, the same apostle speaks, *with evident commendation*, of other men building upon the foundation he himself had laid while at Corinth. He does this in 1 Cor. iii. 6, in words which have since become a proverb: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Further on, in chapter xvi. 12, speaking of the purpose evidently entertained by Apollos of re-visiting Corinth, he states: "I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time." Again, in chap. iii. 10, he re-states the principle in these words: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon." From these three passages it must

assuredly be gathered that Paul would gladly welcome the advent to any field of labour of any true builder to carry on a work already begun.

This principle of one man building upon the foundation laid by another pervades all God's dealings in the present dispensation, whether with the Church or with the world. Scripture teems with instances of it, and in our life as Christians we daily see the same principle working all around us. We hear the truth first perhaps from our mothers; it is again brought before us in the Sunday-school; and as we go on in life our path is probably crossed by one labourer after another, each of whom delivers his message with more or less fidelity, and with more or less effect. We are brought under the influence of other labourers, it may be through their writings, or in private intercourse, until at last God uses one of the many instrumentalities He has at work to produce conversion. Then, as believers, the same principle again almost immediately appears. We learn in our Christian life much from those united with us to the same living Head, whether they be pastors, teachers, evangelists, or simple Christians fulfilling other ministries according to the gifts given to them.

While contending for this principle, as to the liberty of Christ's servants to work wherever He calls, whether in laying foundations or building thereon, let us remember the divine injunction, "Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory." (Phil. ii. 3.)

But though it is desirable that none should be brought into bondage in their service through a misapprehension of the apostle's mind on this point, there is still greater need that *many* should be filled with his ambition to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, where Christ is unknown. May the number of labourers ready to leave home and friends for Christ's sake and the gospel's be greatly multiplied, and that quickly.

M. S. K.

"THE PANOPLY OF GOD."

EPH. vi. 11, 13.

ARMOUR is as truly one part of God's loving provision for His saints in Christ Jesus as is redemption out of an Egypt world, or as is manna for their wilderness food. All saints, even the feeblest, are as truly soldiers for the fight as they are feeders on the Passover Lamb, or pilgrims through the desert; and it is for this "good fight of faith" that God arms us. To get acquainted with the armour provided, and to perceive its fitness for our weakness, and for the unyielding fight to which we are called, is a necessary step toward putting it on, and overcoming by means of it.

The world, the flesh, and the devil, are a threefold battle array against us—the world with its allurements, the flesh with its lusts, and the devil with his deceivings; but there is armour for us against each of the three.

"*The armour of light*" (Rom. xiii. 12; 1 Thess. v.), which is nothing more nor less than a God-taught love, first to God our Father, and then to each other, and to men, is provided for us against this dark world, with all its boast and its allurements.

"*The armour of righteousness* on the right hand and on the left" (2 Cor. vi. 7) is given to us to use against those lusts of the flesh to which the saints at Corinth had so sadly yielded, that we may learn, like Paul, to keep the body under, and bring it into subjection.

And "*the whole armour of God*" (lit. "the panoply of God") is ours against those arts of the devil for which Ephesus was so known, that the sorcery books burned by the early converts in that city (see Acts xix. 19) were valued at "fifty thousand pieces of silver!" "So mightily," it adds, "grew the word of God and prevailed!" Truly that "sword of the Spirit," which is the word of God, was mighty then "against the wiles of the devil."

But, oh, the need of keeping each of these three kinds of armour in *present* use! For the world is the world still; the flesh (*i.e.* our sinful nature) is still the flesh; and the devil has lost none of his art and his boldness in deceiving, and has lost, alas! too little also of his success.

Our object now is to endear to the hearts of God's children the last of these three kinds of armour—the whole armour (or panoply) of God—by reminding us *at what a cost* it has been provided; for if thus endeared to us, we shall both the more readily "put it on," and in our use of it shall the more be found "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," that we may by means of it glorify Him who has indeed sent us to the warfare not at our "own charges."

The expression "whole armour," or panoply, is used in only one other place in the New Testament (Luke xi. 21, 22); and there it is used by our Lord of the whole armour or panoply of the devil.

Jesus saw the mastery which Satan had of His own nation, and indeed of us all as sinners. The scorning of the scribes and Pharisees showed Him this: they had called His casting out of demons a Beelzebub power. He sees by this their own deluded state, the grasp that Satan had of them. Well did he know that the battle to be fought for the salvation of such blinded ones was "not against flesh and blood" merely, nor only against "principalities and powers;" but was against "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," the prince of darkness himself; and He shows this by the parable He gives. In it He tells them of Satan's power over them, as the "strong man armed," who "kept his goods in peace;" but He keeps in view His own work of delivering such, and speaks of the stronger than Satan, who should take from him "all his armour" (Greek, his whole armour or panoply) wherein he trusted, and should also take his spoils.

Joining this passage, then, with that in Ephesians vi., we see at once the victory of our Lord Jesus. The panoply was once, all of it, on the side of the devil, and we were the helpless, because "lawful, captives." Satan "had the power of death" (see Heb. ii. 14), for our sin had given it to him; and he had the power of delusion, for our unbelief gave it to him; and as "the god of this world" or age, he "blinded our minds lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine" into us (2 Cor. iv. 4), and thus he held us as his slaves in undisturbed possession. "The strong man armed kept his goods in peace."

But a stronger than he came. Jesus met this armed power as One who "gave *Himself*" for us, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." Christ has encountered for us our foe, and has not only defeated him, but has turned his own weapons against him; and He has done this, not aided by any armour, but simply as the One who was in Himself "*stronger* than he."

Thus Samson, amidst all his ill ways, was made a type of Christ, when, in order to reach the unworthy one he loved, he rent the lion that roared against him as he would have rent a kid; and, it expressly adds, "he had *nothing* in his hand;" and afterward he turned the very lion into profit, by obtaining honey from its carcase. (Judges xiv.)

Thus Jonah also did not spare himself; but in order to quell the storm that "wrought and was tempestuous" against the helpless mariners, he said, "Take *me* up, and cast me forth into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you." (Jonah i. 12.)

David, too, had none but God to cover his head for him "in the day of battle." (Ps. cxl. 7.) The armour was all on the giant's side: a whole suit, a "panoply" of hostile power and pride; and in front of Goliath a shield was borne by another. David had neither armour on him nor shield before him. How feeble he

looked, and how exposed he really was! Even king Saul pitied him, and fain would have helped him with some of his own armour; but David refused it all, and relied on the living God alone to make him "stronger" than all this giant power against him. And we know the issue. One stone slung by David with skilful eye and strengthened arm laid the Gittite low, and gave him the giant's own armour with which to celebrate the victory he had won—a victory which all Israel shared. What a type of the glorious Captain of our salvation!

*"Alone He bore the cross,
Alone its grief sustained;
His was the shame and loss,
And He the victory gained.
The mighty work was all His own,
But we shall share the joy and crown."*

Let us recall the words of our "strong Deliverer" when engaged in that mighty work, facing for us our ruthless foe, and see how unaided and unarmed He was, as to any creature defence or creature help. (Ps. xxii. 14, 15, 19, 20.)

*"I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.
My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue
cleaveth to my jaws;
And Thou hast brought me into the dust of death.
But be not Thou far from me, O Jehovah: O my strength,
haste Thee to help me.
Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling ('my only one')
from the power of the dog.
Save me from the lion's mouth."*

And again (Ps. lxi. 1, 4, 19-21):

*"Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.
They that would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully,
are mighty:
Then I restored that which I took not away.
Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dis-
honour:
Mine adversaries are all before Thee.
Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness:
And I looked for some to take pity, but there was none:*

And for comforters, but I found none.

They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

Yet it was thus that He, David-like, gained the victory, and now He makes us share it. Thus it was that Jesus took from Satan "all his armour," his "panoply" of darkness, and brought us forth, who were Satan's captives, from the dungeon of our condemnation, and delivered us from his service, when we were his willing slaves. How infinite the cost to Himself; but how perfect the triumph! "making peace by the blood of His cross," and by it, "having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Col. ii. 15.)

Nor is the triumph to be seen in Christ only; we also are "more than conquerors through Him that loved us;" and in order that we may prove this from day to day, He would have all His saints well armed for the fight. The panoply is now no longer Satan's; it is ours. "God's whole armour" is made ours in Christ; but, as with all the other gifts that are ours by Christ, diligence is needed on our part. Hence the apostle's words, "*Put on*" and "*take unto you*" the whole armour of God, and "*receive* (Greek) the helmet of salvation," &c. And surely we are without excuse if we do not "receive" it, "take" it to us, and "put it on."

David had an armoury for Israel when the kingdom became his. It was one of the contrasts between his reign and that of proud, unhappy king Saul. In Saul's reign, we are told, "there was no smith found throughout all the land of Israel: for the Philistines said, Lest the Hebrews make them swords or spears. . . . So it came to pass in the day of battle, that there was neither sword nor spear found in the hand of any of the people." (1 Sam. xiii. 19, 22.) Sad condition of the people under a dark and selfish tyrant, who took care to possess defensive armour for himself (see

1 Sam. xvii. 38), but provided none for them. Not so David. No sooner has he the victory, and by that victory at length also the throne, than the richness of his armoury for Israel was according to his triumphs over his enemies. The same David who had calmly put slain Goliath's armour in his own tent in the day of the fight was surrounded afterwards with warriors, even from among Saul's brethren of the Benjamin tribe, "*armed with bows,*" and who could use both the right hand and the left in fighting. When his followers still increased, and "there came to David to help him, until it was a great host, like the host of God," we are told they were "*ready armed for the war;*" and they "came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the Lord," and among them are mentioned "the children of Judah that bare *shield and spear*, six thousand and eight hundred, *ready armed to the war.*" Again, "Of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them *with shield and spear* thirty and seven thousand." "All these men of war, that *could keep rank*, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over *all* Israel." (1 Chron. xii. 2, 22-24, 34, 38.) What a vigour was there in David's cause, and what a contrast to the enslaved and cowardly days of Saul! No wonder that Solomon sings of "the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men."

But how much more true is all this of Christ Jesus our Lord, and of God's rich grace to us in Him! We joy in the *number* that by grace have believed in Him, and are His—a number greater in our time than in any time before perhaps in the history of the human race. There do come to the Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly David, "a great host, like the host of God;" but however many, God's riches in Christ are such that there is "the whole armour of God" with Him for each. As there is no believing one for whom there

is not in the risen Jesus “forgiveness of sins” (Eph. i. 7), and not one who was not sealed with the Holy Spirit immediately he believed (Eph. i. 13), so also there is not one for whom “the tower” of the heavenly “David” has not breast-plate, girdle, shoes, helmet, and sword; and outside all the rest a shield, with which, whether old or young, babe in Christ or father, he is armed at once for the fight.

An unarmed host would be no honour to that “King eternal, immortal, invisible,” under whose banner of love we fight as well as sweetly rest. Even an earthly king would be ashamed of having no army at all, or of an army only partly furnished with weapons. What would David have felt if his Hebron host had been as ill supplied with weapons as Israel was in the days of king Saul and the Philistines’ power? But they had their weapons, and knew how to use them, and that so well that they could even “keep rank” as they fought.

And shall it be that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has given us in Him such a Captain, and by Him has provided us such an armoury, shall see us as unarmed as if “all spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” were not ours? Did not God give Him once to be “crucified through weakness” (2 Cor. xiii. 4), and then to “live by the power of God,” on purpose that we also might “live with Him by the power of God” at every step we tread in this dark world of death? Were not His *loins* loosened in all the weakness of death that our loins, *all of us* as His saints, might be “girt about with truth”?

“The tempest’s awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Thine *open bosom* was my ward;
It braved the storm for me.”

Was not His “*open bosom*” pierced with the sword of God’s justice, that every one of us might always wear on us “the breast-plate of righteousness”? Were

not His *feet* pierced and fastened to the tree that ours might be "shod with the preparation (*i.e.* the readiness) of the gospel of peace"? And, perfect Truster though He was, "the author and finisher of faith," yet did all the arrows of the Almighty enter Him (Ps. xxxviii. 2) that the feeble faith, even of the feeblest of us, might always know Him now as our "shield" against all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And His uncovered, thorn-crowned head, sunk so deep in death, when all God's waves and billows went over Him, was it not that we might thankfully "receive" and constantly have on our heads "the helmet" of a coming salvation, nearer to us each day than when we first believed? And, lastly, the "word of God," which at that solemn hour was a "sword" that awoke *against* Him as God's Shepherd (see Zech. xiii. 7), is now given to us for our fight of every day and hour against flesh and blood, led on by the powers of darkness, even "wicked spirits in heavenly places."

There is not a portion of our armour then but ought to be most dear to us for His sake who clothes us with it, and in remembrance of God's "rich mercy and great love" (Eph. ii. 4) in giving Him for us, because before the world was He gave us to Him. *Now* is our little time to "keep rank" here for our heavenly David, and to fight with right hand and left (2 Cor. vi. 7), and with sword and spear, and to exalt Christ alone, and God in Him, against the world, the flesh, and the devil. And the crowning proof that we are really doing it will be that our *attitude* will be one of "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;" for what is a warrior's "panoply" worth to him, complete though it be, if his attitude is not one of fighting? And how shall we fight except it be with praying also?

"Restraining prayer we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian's armour bright;

And Satan trembles when he sees
The weakest saint upon his knees.”

This is as necessary to the “keeping of rank” in “the good fight” as it is that we should know and use the parts of our heavenly armour.

One word more. This charge to us to put on “the whole armour” of God closes that part of the epistle in which our *walk* as saints has been so taught us. Five times are we told of our “walk” — “Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. iv. 1); “Walk not as other Gentiles walk” (chap. iv. 17); “Walk in love” (chap. v. 2); “Walk as children of light” (chap. v. 8); and “Walk circumspectly (*i.e.* carefully), not as fools, but as wise.” (Chap. v. 15.) And because these are paths of the righteous (Prov. iv. 18), and highways of God’s redeemed (Isa. xxxv. 8), which are full of blessing for us, and of glory to God by us, they are the paths in which we shall need “the whole armour of God;” for Satan will either dispute them with us at every step, or will seek to seduce us from them by his wiles as an angel of light.

Those who minister the Word, and such as are in any way prominent in the Church of God, do of course specially need all this armour; but all saints need it; for there is not a path of godly every-day occupation in which we shall not find Satan working through “flesh and blood” of those around us to hinder our “walking in Christ,” now that we have “received” Him (see Col. ii. 6); and the family and household relationships of life need to find us thus armed, for in these also we shall be tested and tried at every point and every moment of our lifelong warfare.

Will not “wives,” for instance (chap. v. 22, 24, 33), need this whole armour of God that they may “submit” and “be subject to” their own husbands “as unto the Lord,” and “reverence” them, whether well treated by them or not? Will not “husbands” need it that they may “love” their wives, and “nourish” and

"cherish" them, not from inclination merely, but after the lofty pattern of Christ's love to the Church? Will not "children" want it (chap. vi. 2) in order that they may be always subject to their parents because it is "right," even though, as in the case of our Lord at Nazareth, it may be to parents who misunderstand them? And "fathers" too will need all this armour that they may be "strong in the Lord" instead of in their own will, and may bring up their children in the firm yet gentle "nurture and admonition of the Lord." And "servants" will indeed need it, "whether bond or free," that no provocation may turn them aside from "doing their service with good will as to the Lord" (chap. vi. 7), and that no length of endurance may weary them from still withstanding "in the evil day," even though, like Joseph in Potiphar's house and in the prison, they should be both ill-treated by their earthly masters, and forgotten.

What an armed host of the living God would the saints now on earth be if in all these paths of life and all these relationships they did but strengthen themselves in Christ to wear this armour, and to use it!

It would then be true of us once again, as of old, that men would see our boldness, and would "take knowledge of us that we had been with Jesus." (Acts iv. 13.) The world and the worldly-minded would stand aloof. "Of the rest durst no man join himself to them." (Acts v. 13.) And a greater than David and a wiser than Solomon would say of His faithful Church, "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?"

But in order to this we must first "awake" (Eph. v. 14), then "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (vi. 10), and then also "put on the whole armour of God."

Oh may this "grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruption!"

H. D.

“AS THE MORNING.”

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning?”—CANTICLES vi. 10.

WE might look at this word in two aspects. As to our growth in the divine likeness, the present is but as the first dawning of the noonday in His presence by-and-by. Beholding as in a glass the glory, we are changed into the same image; but when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. It will no longer be the feeble fitful glimmer, but the unclouded reflection of Himself; and yet it is the one life, reaching on from its first new-born breathings unto the full vigour of the perfect man, each moment having its bearing on the future; for “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

But also as to our Father’s dealings with us, it is the morning of our unending day. How precious the Word links our life here and our life eternal as one whole with God! Do we not often grow impatient under the discipline of daily life because we forget that the morning has already dawned upon us, though it be through the clouds and mists of time? God has put the treasure into the earthen vessel that we may learn blessed lessons of obedience in suffering, to be unfolded throughout eternity to His praise. It is the same life in the wilderness as in the glory; for “now are we the sons of God.” Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself, God can never cease to deal with us on the ground of heirship. If we could only see the relation of every trial and disappointment to the glory we shall bear, and the blissful unhindered service we shall render through the ages to come, how richly content we should be; but He sees it. 2 Cor. ix. 17 would be enough for us if we had faith. But, blessed be God, He works right on with the unchanging purpose to bless; though,

alas! we often give Him not the joy of fellowship or trust. Thus it is, that "whom He loveth He chasteneth." There is no hindrance to the very fullest inflow of His grace into our souls save in us. How often it must be removed, even by the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. It is not easy work, but it is blessed work for eternity; and the hand that deals with us is a very tender one. Let us not seek to stay it. What an incentive it will be by-and-by to our love to trace back all the unwearied training that marked our journey homeward, while we reap its blessed fruit! Meanwhile, let us remember the moments of our morning reach on into eternity, bearing undying issues. God help us to receive not His grace in vain.

A. E. W.

SPIRITUAL SIFTING.

LUKE xxii. 32.

EVERY careful reader of God's word must have been struck with the beautiful way in which the simplest matters of every-day life, both on the land and on the sea, in the house and in the field, are used to illustrate the weightiest principles and explain the most important truths.

It was thus the blessed Master taught; and the hearers wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth, and acknowledged that His word was with power.

Of this mode of instruction we have a striking example before us.

He who spake as never man spake, whose wisdom was perfect, His discernment unerring, His predictions accurate, and every word the truth, addressed Himself to Peter thus: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired you, that he may *sift* you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Solemn yet encouraging words; solemn because predicting Peter's unfaithfulness, encouraging because foretelling his restoration. But who will presume to express, or even adequately to conceive, the feelings of the blessed Master as He uttered them?

Nearing that hour of hours which was always before Him, having been disowned by the world and rejected by His own people as the Son of God, their Prophet and their King, He had retired from the world, leaving it under sentence of judgment, and from the Jews, leaving their house desolate. Judas had struck the bargain for His betrayal, and was contriving its accomplishment; Gethsemane and the unutterable weight of the cross was pressing on His soul. Such was the time when Jesus predicted the fickleness and cowardice of His own true followers.

What He felt we shall better know hereafter. Resurrection will fit us, in a measure unknown to us now, to search the depths of His woe as well as the heights of glory.

The figure of sifting employed by Jesus on this occasion occurs also in the Old Testament (Isa. xxx. 28; Amos ix. 9); but there is at least one point of difference between them, viz., that whereas in the Old Testament passages JEHOVAH is the sifter, in the New Satan seeks to be such.

Let us consider these passages, commencing with that in Luke. It contains, first, Satan's request; second, Christ's prayer for Peter; and third, Christ's instruction to him, connected with his conversion.

Satan remembered his success with the first Adam; also the part he had taken in Job's trial, when at his repeated suggestion Jehovah gave into his hand all that Job had, and then himself, with the sovereign limitation, "*Touch not his life.*" And although he could not have forgotten the entire failure of his attempts against the Master, still he desired to have the servants to sift them as wheat, whilst he was preparing for another

and desperate attempt against the Master, even to bruise His heel, not apprehending the mighty pressure of that bruised heel on his own head.

But what is this sifting which Satan desired for the disciples? Sifting, as I have seen the process, and also as the word in Greek implies (not differing materially, I judge, from the ancient mode, certainly not in its object), is a tossing of the wheat, and shaking it to and fro from side to side with sufficient force to effect the desired end; viz., to rid the precious grain of chaff and dust, without bruising the wheat. Such is the natural process and the result; but what is its spiritual import?

Respecting those to whom the words were immediately addressed, the Lord doubtless referred to the trial of their faith which His apprehension and crucifixion would involve them in, when the conduct of Jews and Romans against their Master and themselves, used by Satan, would test their stedfastness, and especially that of Peter, who had spoken so strongly of his purpose to go even to prison and to death; when one thing after another would toss them to and fro, till at length they would all forsake Him and flee, and Peter deny Him with oaths and curses.

Thus was their weakness manifested; but in answer to Christ's prayer for Peter, and by His eye turned on him, (who shall describe that look?) he was brought to himself, and wept bitterly. He discovered himself to be the poor, weak, unstedfast, unfaithful servant of such a Master; his well-meant professions had proved an utter failure, and doubtless he had sunk much in his own esteem. Thus was a little of the chaff and dust of self-confidence sifted out. His faith had not failed, and he is now a restored man, turned, at least for a time, from his boastfulness to lowliness. He had previously been made a partaker of life, but now he is restored, and who shall say how often afterwards? for this was not the last time Peter was to be sifted. In haste he went a fishing, and led his companions to

do the same. At Antioch he dissembled through the fear of man, and met with Paul's faithful reproof.

His Lord, his faithful Lord, had prayed for him; and although Peter had failed in faith, His faith had not failed; *i.e.* died out, utterly failed from his heart.

He was a disciple and an apostle before, a blessed man, the subject of a divine revelation of the Son of God by the Father; but he is now a *restored* man, and his preaching, as recorded in the Acts, together with the tone and matter of his two epistles, prove it; also, that he obeyed his Lord's injunction by strengthening his brethren. Nor can we omit the notice of that beautiful manifestation of grace appearing in chap. iii. 15 of his first epistle, where he calls his former *reprover* "our *beloved brother Paul.*"

Interesting as Peter's case is, because of the abundant profit reaped by him from his sifting, I must now pass on to consider the other two passages, leaving my reader to meditate on and amplify the subject of spiritual sifting, and to enquire if he has not been, and perhaps is at this moment, the subject of a similar process, and with like blessed results.

Of the two remaining passages in which the process of sifting is mentioned, I shall first notice that in Amos ix. 9, because it directly refers to the nation of Israel, to which the apostles by nature belonged: "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not one grain thereof fall to the earth."

The time at which these words were spoken, and the condition of the people to whom they refer, as also the connection in which the words are found, determine their meaning. They contain a figurative prediction of the scattering of Israel among the nations, and yet the assurance of the perfect preservation of the true seed. "For all are not Israel who are of Israel, but in Isaac shall thy seed be called." They have indeed been *moved to and fro, agitated*, as the Hebrew word

implies. They continue to be moved about as corn is in the sieve; yet as the corn is preserved even while it is being sifted, so Israel, although scattered by the mighty hand of Jehovah because of their sin, are still within the circle of almighty recovering power and grace. Not one grain shall fall to the earth; for "all Israel shall be saved."

They are indeed scattered and parted; but Jehovah will gather them, and rejoice over Judah and Israel as one. Yes, the joyful scene described in Luke xv. will have its answer in them; for to them, I believe, the primary application and interpretation of the parable belongs. Israel, in self-righteous boastfulness, and quarreling with the exercise of grace, are represented, as to their present condition, by the elder son; Israel returning, taking with them words and returning to Jehovah, received and blessed on the ground of grace, are seen in the prodigal and his reception. The complaining Pharisees and the befriended publicans and sinners were all of the same nation, and illustrate its two conditions—the present and future. Of this twofold condition Hosea fully treats.

Jehovah will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance; but judgment shall return unto righteousness, and when He shall have accomplished His purpose on them, He will fulfil the prediction contained in the third Scripture noticed here. (Isa. xxx. 28.)

In this passage, as in that quoted from Amos, Jehovah is the sifter and the nations are the sifted, and that with reference to Israel, Jehovah's nation. He will sift them in the sieve of vanity, He will make them know themselves to be but men; and every man at his best estate is *vanity*. He will judge the nations according to their treatment of His nation Israel, even as He did when they came out of Egypt. The blessing or the judgment of the nations, as shown in the parable of the sheep and goats in Matt. xxv.,

will be according to the treatment received by the King's brethren after the flesh. Jehovah will stretch out, or breathe forth, as the original word here used implies, His wrathful indignation against any and every nation opposing Him and afflicting the remnant. He will reduce the enemy to vanity, and deliver and exalt His people.

Such has been Jehovah's way with Israel from the beginning, and in this the manner of their deliverance from trial differs from that of the Church. They are delivered by judgment on their enemies, but the Church will be taken out of the scene of judgment in order that it may fall on her enemies.

These remarks will, I hope, lead the Christian reader to search the Scriptures in order to acquaint himself with this subject of sifting or discipline—the Father's discipline of each child, and therefore of His entire family; the Lord Jesus Christ's discipline of each servant, and of His entire house, over which He is Son; also Jehovah's dealings with His nation Israel, and with the Gentile nations for their sake. H. H.

A WORD AT A PRAYER MEETING.—Satan's power is seen in the case of Peter; he desired to have Peter to try if there was anything in him that would not go through his sieve, and the only thing that would not was Peter's *faith*—"precious faith" he might well call it in his epistle. The value of *prayer* is also strikingly shown forth in our Lord's words. He did not put forth His almighty power on Peter's behalf and drive Satan back; He did not pray that Peter might not be tempted; He knew that Peter needed the trial; but, as the *best thing* He could do for him, He *prayed* that his faith might not fail; He confided him to God in prayer, thus showing Christ's own confidence in prayer, and His assurance that prayer would be answered.

A.

“THE THINGS OF THE SPIRIT OF GOD.”*

“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.”
1 COR. ii. 14.

“Now concerning spiritual [gifts], brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” Man’s additions to God’s word take away from God’s truth. This is seen even in the addition of the little word “gifts” here. “Spirituals,” as the word is, or spiritual things, include the graces as well as the gifts, and “charity,” or love, the most important of all; but the insertion of the word *gifts* leads to the overlooking of this.

“I would not have you *ignorant*.” There is not a branch of truth on which there is greater ignorance in these days. This is not the will of God. We need this instruction on account of the tendencies of the age, which is essentially a material and secular one; we need *spiritual* truth. It is an age in which man is growing so large that he would shut out God from His own universe; and human intellect has arrived at such gigantic proportions as to leave no room for the Spirit of God in the Church. There is a tendency to deny everything supernatural, to explain away miracles or anything that is above man’s reason, or not manifest to his senses.

The character of this age is just the very opposite of that in which the apostle wrote. Then spiritual agency, though of an evil kind, was fully owned. These Corinthians, when converted to God, had been brought out of idolatry, and as idolaters they were familiar with supernatural powers. Idolatry, like Popery, does not merely keep men in the dark, but in the darkness the god of this world is working. There are “the world-rulers of this darkness,” as we read in Eph. v. 12.

But now the devil’s house, so to speak, is empty,

* Notes of an address by T. Newberry. Yeovil, April 26th, 1876.

swept and garnished, and people are ready to deny his very existence. He was at home in those days, and the Corinthians had had experience of it. “Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away,” &c. You know what spiritual power is, the supernatural power of the spirit that now “*worketh* in the children of disobedience.” You know it, the apostle says, for you were carried away with it, even as ye were led, though it was only to dumb idols.

But now he is about to speak of spiritual matters of a totally different character. “No man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed.” The Spirit of God *honours* Christ; guards the honour, authority, and glory of the Lord Jesus; guards the truth that He is the only-begotten Son in the bosom of the Father, but who was manifest in these last days for us. Thus we may know the Spirit of truth, and contrariwise the spirit of error.

“No man can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.” It is not the language of the lip, the mere saying of “Lord, Lord”—there is abundance of that—but the honest, real, practical confession of the heart. There is no true subjection to Christ but by the Spirit of God. Subjection in the Church is just in proportion as the Spirit of God is working there. Where He is not recognised, there human authority, human system, human arrangement, human influence, and human means are substituted. The carnal mind is not subject to the spiritual authority of the Lord Jesus any more than to the law of God. (Rom. viii.) The office of the Spirit of God is not only to maintain the truth respecting the person of Christ, but also His supreme authority in the Church. No man can be truly in subjection to Him there but by the Holy Ghost.

The Corinthians were *carnal*, saying, “I am of Paul,” &c.; so that the apostle had to say in indignation, “Was I crucified for you?” What they needed

was the owning of the power of the Spirit of God. That is the great need now, and anything brought in as a substitute should be regarded as high treason against the Lordship of Christ.

Not only was there supernatural power in demon-worship, but there is also a power above nature of a divine and holy character in the worship of the saints of God, IF the Father is worshipped in spirit and in truth; otherwise we must be dependent on the power of man, and the culture of intellect; for there must be influence of some kind. A square whitewashed room is without influence; hence the Gothic arches and long-drawn aisles in imitation of the heathen groves, the solemn peal of the organ, the well-trained choir, the academic style of address, all this is made to supply a felt need. Human skill and ingenuity is taxed to the utmost to elevate the mind and bring in an influence; for men cannot worship without. The worldling must have something to work on the feelings. But what we want, as children of God, is the living, ungrieved, unquenched power of the Spirit of God, not only in the manifestation of gift, but of *grace*; and not only in the individual soul, but in the assembly.

There was in the apostles' days the speaking with tongues, and great must have been the effect; but there is something higher still, the sunshine of divine love, "shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." (Rom. v. 5.) There is then a warmth, a comfort of love, a fellowship of spirit; not merely agreement of mind, but fellowship of soul and heart. This is what we want, and then there would be a corresponding manifestation that would constrain the unbeliever to own, "God is in you of a truth."

"How marvellous the grace that makes us know the *deep things of God!* Truly, God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit, else we had been to this day sitting in darkness, and calling it light."

THE FIRST PSALM.

“His delight is in the law of the Lord.”

To tell unsaved people to obey God's law, keep His ordinances, pray to Him, and worship Him, is simply to deny gospel truth, and man's utter ruin. Before Israel could leave the land of Egypt, they first must sprinkle with the blood of the lamb the lintels and side-posts of their houses. This, and this only, gave them redemption. “*When I see the blood,*” God said, “I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.” (Exod. xii. 13.) Then, as the ransomed of the Lord, they left the land of their sorrow and captivity.

The next stage in their history is to receive the law at mount Sinai, by which they were directed how to use the redemption they had obtained; how, as God's saved ones, they should walk so as to please Him. This distinction is of great importance. The law was not in any way mixed up with Israel's redemption. All the virtue and redeeming power lay in the blood of the lamb. The eye of God sought none other, and would have nought beside.

But after Sinai the law became everything to the nation. Portions were appended to their garments, and were written on the door-posts of their houses and gate. By it the priests had to judge every stroke and controversy. A copy was handed to the king on the day of his enthronement, and one was placed by Moses in the ark. I speak not now of Israel's failure in relation to it, but simply of the divine side of it as God's appointment, and to show that the giving of the law was subsequent to their redemption by blood.

In a national sense all this was external; but it served to show the important place that the law occupied in the mind of God. Of Christ only could it be said that the law was *in His heart*. Israel's garments and door-posts might tabulate it; the priests and the divine

ritual might represent it; the newly-enthroned king might receive it, and all the nation bow assent; but only one Man could say, "Thy law is within my heart."* It was there inherently, and not as a thing *placed* there; it was indigenous to His very being; it found there its true and native dwelling-place. His delight and employ were in meditating upon the law of the Lord; not the commandments or Jewish law only, but upon all the holy will and mind of God.

The eye of the believer instinctively turns to Jesus as the perfect fulfiller of this psalm—perfect in all His works and ways. The soul becomes absorbed with Him; He gains our entire confidence; we rely with implicit assurance on every word of His, and satisfaction and restfulness fill our souls.

This first psalm shows us the personal righteousness and consequent prosperity of the blessed Man; the second, the glorified King; the third, the Man of sorrows. The book of Psalms unfolds these three great subjects. They appear, either one or more of them, throughout the Psalms. Whilst other persons and histories are treated of, these are the three great central subjects always before the mind of the Spirit.

We do not here attempt to enter fully into this psalm, but only make a few remarks on the chief points as they refer to Christ.

"*Blessed is the man,*" &c. The word used here for man (*Eesh*) may be interpreted, a man of virtue or valour. Out of some thirty or forty words used in Scripture to express man in different connections, the Holy Ghost has selected this one for Christ here. Truly He was the man of virtue; *He only* stood apart from all that sin had tainted, whilst blooming in all the fragrance of divine perfection; and such is the foundation of all His mighty work in redemption, and with this view it is here presented in the foreground.

* Some have supposed, from Rom. ii. 15, that the law is in every man's heart; but this passage merely refers to the *work* of the law in the sinner's heart—that is, in its *condemning* character.

He loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore hath God highly exalted Him. (Ps. xlv. 6, 7.)

At twelve years of age He astonished the Jewish rabbis with His questions. In Joseph's house at Nazareth He was subject to His parents according to the law. In the synagogue there He opens the book of the prophet Isaiah, and shows them His blessed mission. He foils the great tempter by the Word. His life was one of obedience to that Word. Even on the cross He says, "I thirst," "that the Scripture might be fulfilled." (John xix. 28.) In resurrection He made His disciples' hearts burn while He opened to them the Scriptures.

So when He comes again He will fulfil every jot and tittle of His appointed work. The law of God never leaves His heart. Whether as a boy, a man, in His death, resurrection, and future glory, it is there, and still yielding its abundant fruit.

"A tree planted by the rivers (or streams) of water." As streams refreshed and nourished the choice trees planted by them, so did tides of refreshment ever flow from God towards His beloved Son, whilst passing through this desert. Now He is Himself the fountain that refreshes His people. (Sol. Song iv. 15.) Jeremiah's description may well apply to Him: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (xvii. 7, 8.)

"The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment." Christ has stood in the judgment. He was fully tried on every hand. None was ever so tested. The end of all was, that God in His exceeding pleasure set Him at His own right hand, far above all principalities and powers, with a name above every name. The end of all others apart from Him is to be driven away like chaff.

"The Lord knoweth the way of the righteous," or acknowledgeth it with regard. All the moral grandeur of Christ, all His perfect, sinless obedience, His finding meat and drink in doing His Father's will, were viewed by God with infinite delight. No honour is too great wherewith to bless this heavenly Man, in whom God's soul delights.

All have failed save this One. He alone stood amidst the moral wreck of a groaning creation. His righteousness, His willing obedience, even unto the death of the cross, His delight in the will of God, are like rays of light that radiate our hearts, and fill us with joy and hope. Ere long the light of His glory will shine over and brighten a world of sin and darkness.

T. M.

THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD.—“Whatever these so-called men of science may find out, and very admirable things do they discover, very marvellous—put all their discoveries together, set them by the side of the mystery of God's love, His mind, His counsels, His holy name as in Christ revealed—all is but nothing, and these wise men are but grubs in the old creation. It is God's new-born babes, nourished up with the unmingled milk of the Word, that have the enlarged understanding; these men of science, the narrow and the strait. Of them it is true, ‘In much study is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow’ (Ecl. i. 18); but he that increaseth knowledge of Christ increaseth joy and peace, and every precious fruit of the Spirit of God. Moreover, when the conscience is purged by the blood of Christ, the eyes of the heart are enlightened to see God in every work of His hand, from the greatest to the least. The firmament above, and earth and sea, to the pure in heart are ever telling forth the glory of God the Creator, and the grace of God the Redeemer. (Ps. xix. 1, 14.)”

R. C. C.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

IN what sense is Satan the "*prince of this world*"? (See John xiv. 30.)

We regard Satan as the prince of this world, by virtue of a divine appointment, when the Creator heard "the morning stars sing together," and when "all the sons of God" (*i.e.* the angels, see Ps. viii. 5; xcvii. 7; cxxxviii. 1; Job i. 6; ii. 1, &c.) "shouted for joy." (Job xxxviii. 7.) Of these principalities or principedoms (*ἀρχαί*) we read, in Eph. i. 21; iii. 10; Col. i. 16; ii. 10, as those over which Christ is exalted; and we also read of antagonistic principalities (among whom Satan, as holding the principality of the earth under his sway, stands prominent) in Eph. vi. 12; Col. ii. 15; and also in 1 Cor. xv. 24, where "all *rule*" (*ἀρχήν*, better rendered for uniformity "every *principality*") is said to be put down by Christ. *These* principalities, through the redemption of the cross, have been judicially brought back to God, in consequence of which Satan, as the prince of this world, is judged (John xvi. 11), and will be so in fact when God shall take to Himself His great power and reign. Satan is, however, not only the prince of this world, as under an original appointment from God, but he is the "god of this age" (2 Cor. iv. 4, *αιωνος*, not "of this world," as in English version), to whom fallen man has willingly subjected himself and his inheritance, and is therefore Satan's lawful captive by reason of sin, and subject to death through him; for it is he "that hath the power of death." (Heb. ii. 14.) Satan's power is therefore delegated power, and over him and his ways God exercises His almighty control; so that it is no less true of Satan than it was of Pilate: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." (John xix. 11.) This is acknowledged by Satan when speaking to God about Job. (See chap.

i. 10-12; ii. 4-6.) Thus, while the earth is the Lord's, for He made it (see Ps. xxiv.), the kingdom of the world is still subject to Satan (Matt. iv. 8, 9), and will be till the shout of victory is heard, and the seventh angel says: "The kingdom" (in singular, so read all critics) "of this world is become the kingdom of our God, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xi. 15.)

Why is the vision of the four great empires in Dan. ii. like an *image*, and in Dan. vii. like four *wild beasts*?

The one seems to point to the government of earth as, in the purpose of God, human; but when pride came in, as is seen in chapter iv., the sentence is, "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him." (v. 16.) Nebuchadnezzar was shown the kingdoms as they appeared, human in form; but God showed the same kingdoms to His servant, "Daniel, greatly beloved," as they were in heart, and therefore as they were before God—wild beasts. The lesson is of deep importance. Man looks at human government as it was appointed to be by God, and as it now appears to man, who judges of things by their outward appearance. Faith judges of the government of this world as it is in fact and as it is in heart, as seen by God, wherein the majestic human form of man, who was created in the image of God, and made to have rule over all the earth, has degenerated into the wild-beast form and the wild-beast heart, indicated in Daniel's vision. Observe also how different the sources whence they emanate. "The four winds of the heavens strove upon the great sea," in the one case, "and four great wild beasts came up." (vv. 2, 3.) Contrast this origin of the beasts with the divine origin of the image: "The God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." (Chap. ii. 37.) The answer to this question, if under-

stood in all its bearings, will solve many of the difficult problems arising in the heart of the Christian in reference to his relation to the powers that be, to which, on the one hand, he is called to submit as to the appointment of God, but from which, on the other, he keeps aloof until the day come, when at last man will learn that "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the most abased (or lowliest) of men" (compare with *v.* 37); then shall the saints possess the kingdom, but not till then. Compare this also with the principle of the kingdom of heaven as given in Matt. xviii. 1-6, and Luke xiv. 7-11.

John xvii. 19. In what respect did Christ *sanctify* Himself, and how does this affect us?

Sanctification means separation unto God, and the Lord sanctified Himself on our behalf when He took up His Nazarite vow, and separated Himself from the world, in its hopes and expectations, going outside the camp, dying on the cross because He would not defile the head of His consecration by making Himself subservient to Israel's carnal anticipations of an earthly kingdom. With this thought probably in view, the Lord says (*v.* 16), "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." His purpose was to secure a heavenly people, and for their sakes He waived for the present His claim to be King of Israel and King of nations. Then follows the prayer (*v.* 17), "Sanctify them in (*ev*) Thy truth: Thy word is truth." That is, let the word of truth be to them from God as a separating power, that as heavenly priests and holy Nazarites they might also be truly consecrated to God. And after telling the Father that *as* He had been sent, *so* He sends them into the world, He adds the words referred to, "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified in truth" (*ev*, without the article), and therein carry out the precept

in 2 Cor. vi. 14–vii. 1, “perfecting holiness in the fear of God,” and fulfilling the word, “Become ye holy, for I am holy.”

How is the *sifting* of Israel in Amos ix. 9 to be understood?

Israel stands for the nation at large, in which wheat and chaff are found together, and while the fan of God’s judgment will drive away the chaff, and the fire of God’s wrath burn it up, yet not one grain of the precious wheat, not one of those who are Abraham’s seed according to promise, the believing remnant of the latter day, shall be allowed to fall to the earth and be lost. With Amos ix. 9 compare Isaiah vi. 13, where the holy seed are represented as being the real substance or stock of the nation, though the unfruitful branches be all cut off. We would read the passage thus: “As the teil-tree, and as an oak, whose stock is in them, though they be cut down” (Fuerst renders, “in the felling”), “so the holy seed shall be the stock thereof.” (Compare also Matt. iii. 11, 12.) Since this reply was written, a paper on the subject has been sent to us. See page 152.

Is there any connection between our Lord’s *baptism* as administered to Him by John and that of believers now?

There is a connection, but they are not identical. Christ submitted to John’s baptism as unto a confession of man’s lost condition, and of Himself as the appointed sin-bearer, the Lamb of God. John’s baptism witnesses to ruin and death, but that appointed by Christ witnessed to life obtained out of death; and hence it becomes the symbol of the baptism of the Holy Ghost into the one body. (1 Cor. xii. 12.)

CHRIST'S JOY.

EVERY thing relating to the Lord Jesus Christ should be considered in connection with the dignity of His person.

The atonement itself thus derives its value. We have redemption in Him who is "the image of the invisible God," and that "through the blood of His cross." (Col. i. 14, 20.) Nothing short of this could satisfy God, or give rest to the soul that believes.

The subject of this paper has reference to no less a person than the Word of God made flesh; God's own Son and servant, His Son in service, who entered with undivided heart into every act of obedience.

Never before nor since did man, angel, or devil, no, nor even God the Father, witness such a course as His, seeing at every step one who never had among creatures His equal. He was alone in life here, and but for His death would have continued to "abide alone;" and although through His death He has and will have many a companion, yet is He anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows; for though the Church is one with Him, she is not His equal.

It is of His joy, the joy which He had, and now has, and ever will have, that I purpose writing; and who is sufficient for this? May the Holy Ghost, who takes of His, and shows to us, help in writing and in reading to profit.

In presenting this subject, let me begin where I believe Christ ever began, with the Father Himself—

HIS JOY IN GOD.

This order is observed by Him, whether as the only-begotten Son, as Emmanuel, as the Church's Head, or as King of Israel and of the nations: God Himself in each connection is His chief joy; and this is reciprocated by the Father—His Son is His chief delight.

This mutual joy of the Father and Son had, and ever must have, a peculiar character; no one, not even the redeemed, will ever enter into it; it is special, like one of His three names noticed in Rev. xix.: "His name is called The Word of God," and "He has on His vesture and on His thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords;" but He has also "a name written which *no man knows* but He Himself." This incommunicable, inexplicable Name, written but not understood, associates with itself secrets of fellowship and joy which in their absoluteness must ever remain secrets.

We, the Church of God, know Him as the Word of God; Israel and the nations will recognize Him chiefly as King of kings; but as the Son, no one knows Him but the Father, "No man knoweth the Son but the Father;" no man comprehends Him.

This joy in God Himself, His Father, was His before the world was, from everlasting, as was the Father's in Him. (Prov. viii. 22, 30.) He had it when here below, He has it now, and ever will possess it. This was the first, the chief source of His rejoicing. We rejoice that He has it, and in our place and measure know what it is to joy in God Himself, and that before and above all else. This is the common privilege of believers.

Believers have joy in common, and yet even with them it is true that each child of God has something special in his fellowship with and joy in the Father and in Christ. In this he resembles his Lord, even as the overcomer shall also receive at the hands of his Lord, among other rewards, a white stone in which will be written a name that no one knows save he that receiveth it. I now pass to notice, secondly,

HIS JOY IN THE WILL OF GOD.

This is the simple and natural result of the first, His joy in God; for what is the will of God but the unfolding of His nature, the expression and manifestation

of His perfections? If we have confidence in, and love a person, we take pleasure in pleasing him, and the Son of God had joy in doing His Father's will.

We might have inferred this from our knowledge of Him; but we are not left to inference, we have His own words, His positive declaration; first in prophecy, and then in person on the earth. In prophecy we hear Him saying, "Lo, I come; I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. xl. 7, 8), words quoted by the Holy Ghost, and applied to Him in reference to His offering up of Himself a sacrifice for sin (Heb. x. 5-10); and He Himself declared, "My *meat* is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." This was also the ground of His rejoicing in spirit, when He said, "Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: *even so*, Father; for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." And when His soul was pressed with sorrow, His heart wrung with grief in Gethsemane, He could say, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Therefore, although tried, tempted, and pressed with unutterable grief, He was never unhappy.

Joy in the will of God our Father, whatever be the circumstances used in accomplishing it, is the blessed secret of habitual rest and joy; not the *circumstances*, even the happiest, but the *will* accomplished by them.

The blessed Lord Jesus knew that the will of God involved the cross, yet it was His *meat* to do it; His Father hid the things of the kingdom, and the things concerning Himself, from the wise in Israel, revealing them to ignorant fishermen, to babes, and gave Him such for His disciples, yet He rejoiced and said, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth;" "Even so, Father."

He found His joy in the entire will of His Father; He knew the difference between the pleasant and the painful, and felt it; He had a choice between pain

and ease, but no opposition of will to the will of God; therefore He knew subjection, and "learned obedience by the things which He *suffered*." But in the midst of all circumstances, the deep, full consciousness of perfect delight in and obedience to His Father's will was to Him an unfailing source of rest and joy of soul. In this, in the general, we are called to have fellowship with Him; yet in all particulars we cannot.

Every proper father and son might have understood the intercourse, the joys and sorrows known to Abraham and Isaac up to a certain point; but the three days' journey to, and the scene on mount Moriah, involved thoughts and feelings which no other parent and child could have entered into, indeed such as the twain themselves had never before known. Thus also Calvary involved that between the Lord Jesus and God, of which we can have scarce any conception, and into which we cannot enter. He was alone there. His heart (with reverence let it be said) knew its own bitterness. (Prov. xiv. 10.)

The will of God embraces the Church, Israel, and the nations; and in connection with each Christ has and will have a joy common to Himself and them, and a joy special to Himself alone. A common joy, because all will be on redemption ground; but a special joy as Head, as Bridegroom, and as King; a joy proper to each relationship.

HIS JOY IN THE CHURCH.

He has present joy in the reception of souls drawn to Him by the Father, the Father's choice and gift. (John vi. 37-41.) He rejoices in the increase of the body, in its proximity to perfection, anticipating the fulness of joy; He delights Himself in the affections of the renewed soul, the workmanship of the Holy Ghost, and has the joy of hope and expectation of the fast approaching day when He shall receive His perfected body and Church to Himself for ever; when "He shall present it to Himself a glorious Church, not

having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing;" but "faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." (Eph. v. 27; Jude 24.)

Yes, dear reader, we can now give Christ joy by treasuring up and obeying His words (John xv. 11); yet too often, alas! we grieve Him; but *then* we shall give Him *only* joy.

HIS JOY IN ISRAEL.

Again there is joy in reserve for Christ as the Messiah of Israel in their future reception of Him, joy above even the sorrow He had when rejected by them; and a recompense for that sorrow when the shout, "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him," and again, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of Jehovah," shall reward Him for His grief and shame. What grief to Him when their forefathers cried out, "Away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him;" but to His joy His people shall be willing, even in the day of His power, and be like the countless dew-drops sparkling in the light of millennial sunrise, yet not to pass away, for their beauty will be *holiness*. (Ps. xc.)

Yes, Israel shall be saved and blessed, and through them the Gentiles, and Christ the King shall have

HIS JOY IN THE SAVED NATIONS.

They shall walk in the light of that city which shall descend from God out of heaven. He will rule for God, accomplishing the purposes of God concerning the millennial earth, doing His will. When He rules in righteousness, and righteousness reigns, great will be the blessing, and the King Himself shall rejoice.

Then cometh the end,

HIS CROWNING JOY,

when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power, even death itself, that last enemy to be destroyed; and when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, and God shall be all in all, and perfection shall mark everything. H. H.

FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE:

THEIR RELATIONS AND DIFFERENCES.

“Add to your faith knowledge.”—2 PETER I. 5.

It is a matter of no small importance to realize the distinction between faith and knowledge, and at the same time to maintain the divine connection marked out between them in the word of God. *Faith* in Scripture has chiefly to do with the objective side of truth. It believes the statements made; it rests on the object presented to it. *Knowledge*, on the other hand, is rather occupied with the subjective side of truth, and is therefore the *result* of faith. It is what is termed by many *realization*. Some have said, where there is faith there must be realization. We do not think the word of God so presents it, and would remind our readers of Peter's words: “Add to your *faith* virtue (or courage); and to courage *knowledge*.”

In the present day, when faith is so much spoken of, and knowledge so much boasted in, and both perhaps are so little understood, it is of the greatest importance we should clearly understand the relation in which they stand to one another, and to our own souls. We are met often by an earnestly-expressed longing for a realization of what is verily believed, and a painfully-felt sense with many that but little is known of those things which as truths are held without a question.

The object of faith is Christ; the power of knowledge is the Holy Ghost. Our conceptions of Christ and of His fulness may be great, while our realizations in the power of the Holy Ghost may be lamentably small. If this is not remembered, pride will take the place that humility ought to occupy, and the soul, exalted above measure in the fulness of God's grace in Christ, will fall into the snare of the devil, and will be left by the grieved Spirit of our God, like a stranded

vessel high and dry, far away from the overflowings of the love of God.

The question before us is deep and practical; and may the God of all grace give a word of help and counsel to many of His tried ones, who desire to make their own in enjoyment and knowledge that which has been freely given to them of God.

To illustrate our meaning let us use a simile. We meet a needy person, and give him a draft on our bankers for an amount more than enough to meet all his need. We meet him again a few days after, and he is no better off than he was before. We express surprise, and he takes the draft out of his pocket, and we see he has not lost it, but still he has not realized it; he has not exchanged the paper for gold, and may be almost dying from want with the means of meeting it within his reach. Alas! how true a picture of many of the children of God. They do not doubt the Word; they accept its promises; but they bring in some condition of their own—some “if” or “but” that puts off the fulfilment of the promise to a future day—and hence they remain practically poor, though enriched “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” They have it all *in* Christ, but they have it not *by* the Holy Ghost. Christ gives us our *standing*, but the Holy Spirit works out our *condition*. Our salvation is sealed and secured to us in Christ, but it is wrought out in us by the Holy Ghost. Hence it is that we have, and have not, at the same time. We have, in the right of our inheritance, for the birth-right is ours in Christ; but we have it not in the power of realization and enjoyment.

What is needed to make what we have in Christ ours by the Spirit? Is there a link between the faith and the possession that may be missed, so as to make faith dead on the one side (James ii. 17, 26) and works dead on the other? (Heb. ix. 14.) The word of God points out that there is. In the world we see works dead

because not linked with faith, and faith dead because not joined with works. But what is true in the unregenerate, leading to irremediable woe, is in its measure true in the experience of the regenerate, leading to loss and detriment in the world to come; for all that has been dead, whether in faith or in works, will be among "the wood, hay, stubble" that the day that tries our service by fire will burn away.

What is it, then, that makes so much of the faith of the believer dead, and so many of his works dead also? The answer must be, *lack of obedience*. Courage is wanting to obey, and hence that high and holy "virtue" which would link faith to knowledge is set aside. We have forgotten that the divine and necessary order is, as already quoted—"Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;" and the result is that, the connecting link being absent, faith withers on the one side by our disobedience, and knowledge is puffed up on the other. Faith can only grow very exceedingly (2 Thess. i. 3) when, as among the Thessalonians, there has been already "the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father." (1 Thess. i. 3.) They became in themselves what the gospel was as it came to them; and it came "not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." There was realized by them the *presence* of God, the *person* of Christ, and the *power* of the Holy Ghost; and where these three are, there must be the deepest, sweetest, fullest knowledge or realization. Eternal things thus become real to the soul, and the glory of the presence of God will keep the enriched and empowered spirit of the child of God humble and lowly. There can be no pride in the presence of God; and whenever pride comes in there is the clearest evidence that the proud one has got out of the presence of the God of glory.

We would here notice the remarkable connection in

which knowledge is placed in Isaiah, when mentioned as one of the communications of the Spirit of God (chap. xi. 2), where we find it joined with "the fear of the Lord." The Spirit of Jehovah is there spoken of in a triplet, each having two distinct features. Thus the spirit of *wisdom* is linked with *understanding*, and the spirit of *counsel* with *might*, and "the spirit of *knowledge*" with "the *fear of the Lord*." These can never be separated when received direct from God. But how slow are we to learn this divine association, this holy relationship, which if only laid hold on, we should find that knowledge would lead to holy fear, and fear to deeper knowledge. One has well said, that when the seraphims with their six wings were in the presence of God, they covered their face with twain of their wings, and with twain their feet, and with twain only did they fly; but, alas! with vain and foolish man, reverence, homage, and fear are forgotten, and he would fain use all six wings to fly with.

Now, the very essence of Godly fear is obedience. It is the only proof given to us of real love. "If ye love Me, keep my commandments." But for all obedience in a hostile world courage is needed. A faint heart cannot obey, because man is feared, and in that soul the presence of the creature has taken the place of the presence of God, and the power of the flesh the place of the power of the Spirit. Hence the significance of the place assigned to courage; and, as if to make the importance of this truth the more apparent, and our deep need of it the more evident, the Spirit speaks of the necessity for our using "all diligence" in this matter of adding it to (or in) our faith.

There is, however, a connection between our giving diligence (2 Peter i. 5) and God's giving, as mentioned in the previous verses (*vv.* 3, 4), which we wish to point out, in order that we may see how dependent the creature is on God, and yet how essential this giving all diligence in us is to the development of

God's purposes in us, and the fulfilment of God's promises to us.

In verse 3 we read that "divine power has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness;" and in the following verse, that there are "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these we might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped," through regeneration, "the corruption that is in the world." This describes our *position* as having received a divine nature that raises us above corruption, and which has attached to it a divine power and precious promises that secure all to us for ever in Christ Jesus. This is the grace into which Paul tells us we have access (Rom. v. 2), and in which we are called to stand, and to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

But we must not stop, as if there was no race to run, no fight to fight, and no faith to keep, and as if there was no narrow way beyond the strait gate. In verse 5 Peter continues: "And for this reason, giving on your part" (*παρεισευέγκαντες*; i.e. bringing in on your behalf by the side of what God has given and done) "all diligence, provide in (the exercise of) your faith virtue; and in your virtue knowledge; and in your knowledge self-restraint; and in your self-restraint patience; and in your patience godliness; and in your godliness brotherly kindness; and in your brotherly kindness love. For these things being in you, and multiplying, render you not idle, nor yet unfruitful, towards the perfect knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." (See Alford's translation.) This describes the *condition* towards which the diligence of the believer is to be put in exercise; so that, being neither idle nor unfruitful, he may ever press "towards the perfect knowledge" of his Lord.

But while all this diligence is spoken of as ours, it is none the less the inworking of the Spirit of God, who alone works "to will and to do;" and these in-workings of the Spirit are regarded by God as ours,

but are none the less regarded by faith as God's. Thus Paul writes: "*I can do all things in Christ, who strengthens me.*"

It is the Spirit of God unhindered and ungrieved that conforms our condition to our position, and makes our knowledge correspond with our faith in Christ. But this agreement between God's purposes and promises in Christ for us, and our attainments in the divine life, can only be maintained by the obedience of faith. It is thus that what we believe becomes to us that which we know, and to which we can ourselves put our seals as witnesses that it is true. It is thus that heavenly things become living realities. The Spirit, who reveals and unfolds the things of God to the soul, quickens into life that which He reveals; so that all our otherwise abstract conceptions become living personal realizations. This appears to be one great end in "the communion of the Holy Ghost," who by his divine communications brings the waiting soul into fellowship with God, and transforms the dead words into the living voice, and the ideal truth into the living person of the Son of God, who is the Truth. It is thus that what is too often purely ideal, and too often unreal, becomes to us a mighty reality; and we can say, as Naaman when rising out of the Jordan after he had dipped therein seven times, "Now I know." (2 Kings v. 15.)

Let us ask ourselves, as we ponder one by one the truths we believe, as we gather them from the precious treasure-house of the sacred record, of how much of it all can we say, "*I know it.*" To Naaman's renewed condition of body, the healing virtue of the obedient dipping in the Jordan was a *theory* of healing no more. Every vein and sinew, every nerve and muscle, bore direct witness to his own heart that there was a God in Israel. He *thinks* no more, though he had thought and argued before; for now he *knows*. He believed the prophet's word; he obeyed it; and his faith and

obedience brought with it a knowledge and a realization which made everything within and around him new. So enhanced was the balm of Israel's waters and Israel's soil, because they belonged to Israel's God, that he asked for two mules' burden of earth to carry back to his own land in token of his loving allegiance to Israel's God! How changed did this *knowledge* make him!

So it is with the poor sinner when once the saving grace of God is realized in his soul, and he cries out in rapture and in praise, "I was blind, but now I see." It is so none the less as revelation after revelation of the truths of the word of God is really made to the waiting, longing child of God. The Word then becomes power, and the abstract truth an inwrought experience. It is thus when the Comforter takes of the things of Christ, and reveals them to the obedient saint.

We cannot make too much of this, for it is the want of it that stamps with hypocrisy in the eyes of the world the Christian profession of so many of those who love the Lord, but who live so far below the realizations of faith and the personal knowledge of things believed, that the unregenerate do not think them to be Christians. The world taunts us rightly, and says, "If you believed what you profess, you could not live and act as you do." The difference between one Christian and another is the measure of this Holy-Ghost power that finds room in each. Christ in His fulness is given to each, and hence each believer has a whole and perfect Christ. The Spirit fills each vessel, and the measure depends on the capacity of the vessel to receive. "He filleth the empty with good things;" and so it will ever be. God seeks empty vessels into which to pour out of His infinite fulness, and our concern need not so much be about the filling as about the emptying. We have but to take the shutters down from our windows and the glorious sunshine will stream in, and our difficulty

will be to keep it out. Thus is the love of God poured forth into hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us, and an open heart and an open mouth is sure to be filled, for God delights to satisfy.

We ask our readers, "Are you satisfied?" If not, why not? There is a Laodicean self-satisfied condition, which is the devil's counterfeit of real satisfaction in God. From this may the Lord preserve us, for it makes the deluded soul to say, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." The soul that is really "satisfied as with marrow and fatness," that has been seeking, thirsting, and longing (as in the experience of Ps. lxiii.), will still say, "My soul followeth hard after Thee." (Compare *vv.* 1, 5, 8). Thirsting still, yet ever supplied, its consummation is future. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness." (Ps. xvii. 15.)

The knowledge of God satisfies, for that is a realization in the soul of what God is in Himself to it; an experience which the enemy can never gainsay. It lies deep down in the soul, whereon the Holy Ghost engraves the words of the new covenant—"I am to them a God, and they are to me a people." Alas for the veils, many and thick, that cover the hearts of the children of God, shutting out the unveiled glory of the eternal Son of God, as borne witness to by the Holy Ghost. "The words that *I* speak are Spirit, and they are life," said the blessed Lord; but He must speak them through the Holy Ghost to our open ear, and we must hear them in the Holy Ghost with an obedient will, or they will be to us but as the letter that killeth, and not as the Spirit that giveth life.

Deep is the mystery of that process in nature which turns our meat and drink into life and tissue; and far deeper and more profound is that mystery of the new life, which by the Spirit of God is continually being nourished and fed, where and in which we are led on "from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord."

To this unhindered operation of the Spirit would we particularly direct our thoughts at this time, living as we do in a day where on all hands semblances and counterfeits are put forward by man and Satan in the place of those divine realities which are given to us of God. Perhaps of all things nothing is more dangerous than truth robbed of its life, or the letter deprived of its spirit; and against this only one remedy is to be found — a deep inwrought conviction of the needs-be for our aiming at truth in the inward parts. Truth in the head is very ensnaring and very delusive: it is cheaply obtained and easily boasted in. Truth in the inward parts costs us many a tear, is but slowly learnt, and can only be taught by the Spirit of the truth Himself: it never comes second-hand, but like the ray of the sun has in it life, light, and power. But light without life is the devil's counterfeit; it is cold and cheerless.

What the Church of God at large and the individual Christian stand in need of is this "demonstration of the Spirit." (1 Cor. ii. 4.) It is this which alone will make visible the unseen things of God, and make audible the unheard voice of the living Lord. This will unfold to the eye what "eye hath not seen," to the ear what "ear hath not heard," and to the heart "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God," and reveals them unto us; for "we have received the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

May our faith ever ripen in obedience, and obedience lead us into knowledge of God, that so the things of God may become to us increasingly near, increasingly real, and increasingly heard, seen, and handled to His glory, and to the fulfilling of His purpose in us, in Christ Jesus our Lord.

H. G.

THE PERSON AND WORK OF THE HOLY GHOST.*

Now that Christ has been rejected here and departed to the Father, the cardinal feature of God's ways with the world throughout this dispensation, is the personal presence of the Holy Ghost. (John xiv. 16, 17.) He did not come down personally unto the world, until the Son of man had been received up into glory. As in Genesis i. we read of light ere we hear of the sun, so it was of the Spirit of God that a people was led to fear God, even in those times after the fall, but previous to the Word becoming flesh. But as the light now shines forth from the sun, so the Holy Ghost is poured out from the ascended Christ. (Acts ii. 17, 33.)

Now, inasmuch as the presence of the Holy Ghost in person here is only consequent on Christ's rejection by man, and on the reversal of man's sentence by God in His Son's resurrection and ascension, it follows that this very presence here convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. But this reproof of the world is not His object in coming; this only comes to pass incidentally. He is never called a Reprover. He has come down to display in Christ's acceptance the infinite grace and long-suffering of God. He has come down whence Christ has gone up. Therefore, here we have proof of Christ's exaltation by the right hand of God. The bells are sounding whilst the High Priest is in the holiest of all. (Exodus xxviii. 35.)

In the gospel of John the Spirit's work now is set forth in a sevenfold form.

1. In chap. iii., through Him we are born again, and are made partakers of eternal life.

2. In chap. iv. the Spirit is as a well of water in the new-born soul. Then as this water springs up, worship necessarily follows.

* Extracted from *Lincoln's Leaflets*. Second series.

3. In chap. vii. the Source of this living water, and of all the rivers thereof flowing out from believers, is traced to be a glorified Christ.

4. In chap. xiv. 17 we hear of Him as a person present with believers, and dwelling in them. Contrast the prepositions *in* and *with* in Isa. lvii. 15.

5. In chap. xiv. 26 we have this abiding Spirit's testimony of Christ, as to His words and work up to the cross. And hence it follows that the believer has still need to study attentively the lessons of the cross.

6. In chaps. xv. 26 and xvi. 13-15, we have the Spirit's testimony as to Christ's *present* glory with the Father. He causes us to perceive how every ray of that glory is further evidence as to how completely all that was against us has been disposed of, and of our own complete acceptance in Him. Yea, He guides us "into all THE truth," *i.e.* as to Christ and as to God in Him.

7. The Spirit announces the things to come. (Chap. xvi. 13.) Beginning with Christ and His glory, the child will understand more of the future than the wisest in this world who acts otherwise.

Again, the Spirit's name in these three chapters is Comforter. Thus is His work connected with Christ's own. For Scripture speaks of two Paracletes, or Advocates, or Comforters. (1 John ii.) And the Lord's word about the Holy Ghost is "ANOTHER Comforter." Also He is the Spirit of truth, even as Christ is the Truth.

Again, the Holy Ghost is at once Himself both the Seal of the living God and the Earnest of our Inheritance. These two terms are usually in the Word combined; for we are God's inheritance, and God is Christ's and ours. As the Seal, the Spirit places His mark upon us as God's own exclusive possession. Thus the divine likeness is being indelibly stamped upon our souls. As the Earnest, this same Spirit pours out into our hearts (Rom. v. 5, Greek) draughts of divine love, for us to enjoy even here. Of old, the spies brought

of the fruits of Canaan into the wilderness; now we must not separate the Bringer from the blessing in power brought. The two prayers in Ephesians refer to this twofold operation of the Holy Ghost. In chap. i. the prayer is to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ; in chap. iii. it is to the Father. In the former the Spirit is to conform us to the image of the First-begotten from the dead; but in chap. iii. He is gladdening our hearts with the knowledge of divine love, and thus strengthening them with the ultimate object, when those hearts have been filled to the brim and are overflowing, of directing them into the love of God. (2 Thess. iii. 5.) For a vessel must first be filled ere it can be surrounded above on every side.

Further, whilst in the gospel we behold the Lord as the inexhaustible Fountain, in the epistles the rivers of living water, of which He speaks in John vii., are traced in their several streams. There are they beheld as flowing out from a glorified Christ unto us, into us, and out from us. Thus in Romans we read of being filled with all joy and peace in believing, and even abounding in the hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Chap. xv. 13.) In 1 Corinthians the Spirit fills the entire assembly. In Ephesians the word is of God giving (that is, filling us with) the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. In Colossians we have the expression, "Filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;" and again, "Ye are complete" (or rather filled full) "in Him." In Philippians we have that God supplies or fills all our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. So remote, therefore, from the will of God is the thought of His Spirit being only here for the quickening of dead sinners. No, indeed; He dwells also in the living saints.

But this is not all. He unites us to Christ. It is written that by faith we become the sons of God; but it is never said that by faith we are united to Christ.

This last result is only by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Moreover, the union effected is to Christ in glory and in God, insomuch that we are in God too. (1 John iv. 16.)

But if we are united to Christ as the Head, then thus are we united to each other. (Eph. ii. 15.) "By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body." The Spirit therefore is not only with each one member, but dwells in the entire assembly. By Him all of us are being builded together for God's everlasting habitation. Then 1 Corinthians (see leaflet on this epistle) traces the diversity of His operations where He is not quenched, but where He has free scope. At the same time it is most inaccurate to speak of the presidency of the Holy Ghost. Such language betrays great ignorance of the ways of the Lord. As His presence in person with the individual believer is attended not by bondage and fear, but with the cry of Abba, and followed by the fruit of love, joy, and peace, so in the assembly the accompaniment of His presence is not rule, but liberty. (2 Cor. iii. 17.) The rule is in the hands of Christ Himself as the Head of the body. (See Heb. iii. 6, and x. 21.) And the Spirit maintains the lordship of Jesus. (1 Cor. xii. 3.) Now as the presence of the Spirit marks the liberty of all, so the presence of Christ ("there am I") involves the subjection of all, and especially of the younger to those who are elder, and of the sheep to whatever guides and undershepherds He in His sovereignty may raise up. (1 Peter v. and Heb. xiii.) For whilst the gifts of 1 Cor. xiv. are not pledged unto the end, those of Eph. iv. are. Nevertheless, however weak the assembly may be as to gift, compared with the scene in 1 Cor. xiv., no one but God Himself can set aside or modify God's own order there. On the contrary, the more truly spiritual any one is, the more readily will he acknowledge that therein are given for the assembly "the commandments of the Lord." Specially a time of

weakness is the time when implicit obedience and trust are tested. And these commandments are declared to be for all who "in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. i. 2.)

In like manner the epistle of Jude is closed; for after a solemn descriptive look out at the entire apostasy in the middle verses, the writer, in reference to the *common* salvation (the setting aside of which by clerisy had led him on to speak as he had done, in those tones of denunciation thereof), turning to the little flock, adds, "But ye, beloved, build up" (or edify) "YOURSELVES in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Now this latter injunction assumes that however the gifts of 1 Corinthians are withdrawn, the Spirit Himself is with us to the end, according as the Lord promised us should be the case. (John xiv. 16.) And how can the thought of His holy presence be other than delightful, when His work is what it is stated to be in John xvi. 13, 14; or when from 1 Cor. ii. we are informed that His presence in the temple which He is rearing is to make known to us: (1) The things which God hath prepared for us who love Him; (2) the deep things of God; (3) the things freely given to us by God? Therefore the introduction of worldly wisdom, and the words which such wisdom teaches, can only defile this temple.

Consequently it is evident that as the great feature in this dispensation of the ways of God towards the world is the presence in person here of God the Holy Ghost, and of all involved thereby, as stated in John xvi., so the main and ultimate object of the Spirit of God is to form and maintain the church, which is the body of Christ, and to build us together for God's own eternal habitation. And this is His delightful occupation when, in the assembly of the saints, He works unhindered. Generally speaking, He is hindered in meetings of God's people, when not gathered to the Name of the Lord, by some one called "*the minister,*"

who acts as if all the gifts were comprised in himself alone. On the other hand, in assemblies which *are* gathered to the Name, He is hindered either (1) by the flesh in some seizing an opportunity to show off itself; or (2) by others mistaking animal impulse for His holy leading; or more rarely (3) by some continuing silent when the Spirit would have opened their mouths. But "the flesh profiteth nothing" any more in the least than in the greatest. All assembled, therefore, should perceive and demean themselves as in the immediate presence of God.

Thus and then till the moment the Lord returns, the cry of the Bride will be in the Spirit. For "the Spirit and the Bride say, Come." The fuller we are of the Spirit, the more intense will be our desire for the coming of the Lord. We can only abound in the hope of His return speedily through the power of the Holy Ghost. Then, as Isaac went out into the fields to meditate about the time he expected Eliezer's return with his bride, so when Christ at last descends, the Spirit will lift us bodily into His presence (Rom. viii. 11), who will present us to Himself, and through Him and in Him, unto God and His Father. (2 Cor. iv. 14.)

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE.

JOHN XV.

OH, beloved brethren, what a heart we have to do with in Jesus! How vast the love of our God in bestowing upon us that heart overflowing with love! In the immediate prospect of the agony He was about to suffer—the fearful death of the cross with all its horrors—He could think only of the poor ones he was leaving behind, and the dangers and sorrows to which they would be exposed. In the five chapters of John's gospel—xiii. to xvii.—containing His last intercourse with them, how solemn, how precious is His solicitude

in their behalf! That loving heart was pouring out words and prayers of comfort and of guidance, assuring them of His return, of the care He would bestow upon them in the meantime, of the estimation in which they were held by His Father, and of the happiness awaiting them in resurrection.

Having thus consoled them, He tells them what He wishes them to do, and how they may please Him. His wisdom marks out the path; all His commandments are pure, enlightening the eyes; in keeping of them there is great reward. His paths are paths of pleasantness; all His paths are peace.

After having assured them of their being accounted clean by His Father (which to an Israelite would have an import coming home to their bosoms, as contrasted with the endless washings and purifications demanded by the law), He then gives them the beautiful instruction about feet-washing, so drawing their attention to the care of one another—an idea not consonant with man's selfishness, which, even in spiritual matters, is too commonly engrossed with its own well-being.

Then follows His "new commandment," and what the observance of it will indicate to the world. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Brethren, have we kept this commandment?

In chap. xv. our Lord unfolds this desire of His heart more fully. Naming Himself as the True Vine, their minds would naturally recur to another vine with which they had long been familiar. Speaking to the house of Israel, God, by His prophet Jeremiah, says—"Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto Me?" In Psalm lxxx. and Ezekiel xv. more is said of this vine.

But in Isaiah v. the special point is brought out in

relation to the house of Israel in the character of the vine, wherein they failed to meet the requirement of God's loving heart, disappointing His desire. The language is very remarkable. "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: and he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes (thorns). And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes (thorns). And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: and I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but he hold oppression: for righteousness, but behold a cry."

Here was a family, brought out from the rest of mankind, the object of special favour and protection, placed alone in the world. They had been enjoined, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." The owner of the vine came looking for fruit, according to his command and desire. No response of that kind was found. On the contrary, what met his ear was the groan of the sufferer under the oppression of his neighbour, his brother. Chapter i. 21-23 gives the melancholy detail. That vine failed to give any satisfaction to God. Not producing the required fruit, it was fit for nothing; destruction was to be its end. (Ezek. xv.)

Jesus, the True Vine, alone is capable of yielding this excellent fruit to delight the heart of His Father. It is to be noticed, that whilst many delicious fruits exist on the earth, the God of Israel allowed none of them to be presented on his altar, save that which the vine produces, and which also bears so remarkable a character in the parable of Jotham, in Judges ix. 13. Other trees produce that which is estimable. This is the fruit of His choice.

And what was this quality to produce which He laboured in his vineyard so long and so earnestly? Was it not love? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God; thou shalt love thy neighbour. But the vine of the earth, with all the culture bestowed, did not and could not yield it; it must be sought elsewhere. The Lord from heaven is the fountain from whence it flows. He who is Love can nowhere meet with the response of His love, except in His own beloved Son, the True Vine.

In this capacity He is the special object of the Father's care and culture, as the stock in which all the branches obtain their position, and whence they derive nourishment and the power to bear fruit.

And here I would notice, before passing on, the distinction between the unfruitful branch in the second verse and the branch in the sixth. As to the last, there is no question of fruitfulness; it abides not in Jesus, and therefore is exposed to the penalty impending over the Israelite community. "I will set my face against them; they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them." (Ezek. xv. 7.) The class here adverted to seems to be that spoken of in John ii. 23—those who believed in His name upon the sight of the miracles which Jesus did, but to whom the Lord did not confide Himself; possibly they are the same as those who afterwards "went back, and walked no more with Him." (John vi. 66.)

But those mentioned in verse 2 are branches which

have already yielded fruit, done their work. Any vine-dresser would explain to us that the branch which produces this year does not bear any more. It is pruned away. By the side of it grows the shoot which is to bear next year, and which in like manner is cut away at the end of the season to make room for its successor. Such branches having borne fruit, each in its turn, are not cast into the fire, but remembered before God, gathered home to Him, having served their generation in the appointed way.

We are now enabled to perceive more distinctly what this precious fruit is on which the Father has so set His heart, and which the Son is so solicitous the branches should bear abundantly; for we presently read, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." "These things I command you, that ye love one another." This then is the fruit of the True Vine.

Other fruits there are, each excellent—the pomegranate, the melon, the fig—all highly appreciated; but none equal to this. And why? "A meek and quiet spirit is" surely "in the sight of God of great value." "If when ye do well and suffer, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God." All the fruits of the Spirit are very pleasing to Him when produced in His children; but LOVE is first and foremost of them all. Many reasons might be adduced; but that mentioned by our Lord is sufficient to establish its pre-eminence. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me." "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing;" *i.e.* cannot yield this fruit. The incompetence of the branch is here distinctly stated. Of itself it cannot produce it. Two things are essential. It must abide in Jesus, and Jesus must abide in it.

What conclusion therefore are we to draw if this love be absent? Are we not inevitably compelled to

admit that the soul does not abide in Him, nor He in it? Grievous indeed must this delinquency be to Him.

I apprehend there is a distinction to be drawn between the abiding in Him for salvation and for fruitfulness. The first may be without the last, but the last cannot be without the first. Only those united to Him are capacitated to bear fruit; but scarcely all who are united to Him do really bear this fruit. For were all of us, who trust in Him for salvation from wrath, abiding in Him, and His words abiding in us, could the present state of things exist? Gloss it over as we may, is not the universal failure as to brotherly love but too apparent? Each finds something to impede its outflow; some impassable obstruction, an icy barrier shutting him off from fellowship with the children of God, save those belonging to his own party. Our Lord's word teaches us to love the brethren; to walk in love, and so fulfil the law of Christ; to esteem others better than ourselves. Any influence that counteracts this teaching cannot therefore be from above. It must be from beneath.

But, brethren, will our excuses avail when we come to give up our account before the tribunal of Christ? Will they do more for us than the trees and fig leaves did for Adam?

What must the heart of Jesus feel when thus wounded in the house of His friends? R. N.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER.—“We love to be wet with the dew of His love; we delight to realize the showers of His grace. Were it not for the sun there would be neither dew nor rain; and were it not for Jesus, the Sun of righteousness, no refreshing dew, no invigorating showers of grace, no unction, no power of the Spirit. Take away Jesus, and all would be darkness and confusion. He is the *light* of His Church, the *love* of His people, and the *life* of His members. When He shines in His love, they shine in Him.” R.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

WHAT is the force of 1 Cor. xi. 5?

(1) The key to the understanding of this section (*vv.* 2-16) is in *v.* 3. God's appointment in the relation of the sexes to each other depends on certain principles which, if clearly understood, will of themselves settle all questions that may arise as to the relative sphere of the ministry and service of each. One of these principles is contained in verse 3: "The head of every man* is Christ, but ($\delta\epsilon$) the head of the woman is the man." The place of rule and prominence is thus given to the man, and to fulfil that in subservience to Christ is God's will for him: the place of dependence and unobtrusiveness is given to the woman, and her glory is in fulfilling the place assigned to her. The woman *ought* to have "authority ($\epsilon\xi\sigmaουριαν$) over her head because of the angels," to whom we are all a spectacle; and who in us should see realized God's great principle of subjection to Him by subjection to His arrangements. The meaning of verse 5 then becomes plain. Whether praying or prophesying, the woman is to remember she is in the presence of God and of the angels, and of men, it may be (but if not the principle remains the same); and she is to be covered *before God*, in token of subjection to Him. The sphere where the praying or prophesying is to be exercised is not here stated, and has to be gathered from other Scriptures. In chapter *xiv.* 34, 35, we read: "Let your women keep silence in the churches;" "for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." Read also 1 Tim. *ii.* 11, 12, where the double reason is given why a woman should not "teach," or "usurp authority," but "be in silence." First, "For Adam was first formed, and not Eve;" and

* The word here used is *ανηρ*; *i.e.* man as distinguished from woman, not *ανθρωπος*, which distinguishes the human species.

secondly, because the woman was deceived, and not Adam, and therefore in the transgression. It may be asked, Why does God allow a woman to prophesy and not allow her to teach? We answer, first, that God, who is Master, may set aside His own injunction of silence, but a woman may not break it herself; and secondly, teaching assumes authority in the teacher—prophesying only assumes an authority in God, who inspires. To all troubled on woman's sphere of service we would ask to read over all that is said of the many holy women mentioned in the New Testament, and carefully to note their varied spheres of service, from Mary the mother of the Lord to "Mary who bestowed much labour on us" (Rom. xvi. 6), and the sphere will be uniformly found to be quiet and unobtrusive. (Read 1 Peter iii. 4.) Ed.

(2) Chapter xi. 3 supplies the *groundwork* on which Paul rests his commands to the Church of God as to the outward demeanour of the sexes when they pray or prophesy; viz., that in God's Church on earth the difference of the sexes is not to be forgotten. Chapter xi. 5 teaches how that difference is to be shown forth in the case of women; viz., they are to *show* they remember they are women by their apparel; and this doubtless includes feminine behaviour in all other respects. Chapter xi. 2-16 must be carefully distinguished from the rest of the chapter. It speaks of the Church of God at any hour of any day; the other part of the saints when "*come together*" (see v. 17), *i.e.* the assembly; just as chapter xii. speaks of the church generally, and chapter xiv. of the church assembled. In the latter women are to be silent. (See chap. xiv. 34; 1 Tim. ii. 8-15.) D.

What is the difference between the invitation to the believer in Heb. iv. 14-16 and that in Heb. x. 19?

They both invite into the holiest of all, and to all God's fulness there through Christ. In the former

passage it is the heavenly *pilgrim*, with all his sorrows and his temptations invited to "the throne of grace;" in the latter it is the once-purged *worshipper*, urged to make constant use of the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat. Power on our behalf is the thought in the "*throne*," as perfect "acceptance" is in the *mercy-seat*; but neither one to the exclusion of the other. D.

How does the statement (Rom. xiii. 4) "He is God's minister to thee for good" harmonize with the wild-beast character of Gentile power as explained at page 166?

Paul commands submission to the powers that be, on the ground of God's will. His design in earthly government is "for good;" and as a rule such is all government; for even bad government is better than none. But the particular feature of the wild-beast character is its godlessness, rather than its injustice to the subject. It became such by setting aside the allegiance of the kingly power to God, by whom kings rule and princes decree justice, as we see in Daniel iii. iv. v. and vi. in all which chapters the special sin is the setting aside the claims of God. The question will arise in many minds, If such be the character of Babylon's power, how could the "beloved" Daniel exercise authority under it as he did under Nebuchadnezzar, and under the godless Belshazzar? (Dan. viii. 27.) The answer would be that the Jew was commanded to seek the good and the peace of the country where he was taken captive, and to own the transfer of earthly power from Israel to the Gentiles. Daniel therefore and others were bound to obey any summons of their royal masters in all that lay within their divinely-appointed jurisdiction. But Daniel in Babylon and Nehemiah in Jerusalem give no warrant to one in this dispensation doing now as they did then; for the Christian has in these matters no standing in common with the Jew.

PENTECOST; OR, THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT, POWER, AND MINISTRY.

THE Passover and the Pentecost were linked together in the types of the Old Testament, and in their fulfilment they are linked together in the antitypes of the New Testament.

When the last passover had come, the Lord kept the feast, saying; "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Luke xxii. 15, 16.) Christ as our passover was sacrificed for us (1 Cor. v. 7), and then, as the risen Lord, having ascended into heaven, His disciples tarried in Jerusalem, according to His commandment, until "the day of pentecost was fully come," when "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house in which they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven [or distributed] tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts ii. 1-4.)

Thus the passover testifies of redemption by blood, and the pentecost testifies of life and power by the Spirit—the promise of the Father sent down from heaven.

Before, however, we seek to enter upon the precious revelation of the New Testament as to the pentecost, it will be well to take a view of the Old Testament festival type, and of some of the prophetic unfoldings respecting it, that so we may be prepared for the teachings of the Acts and the Epistles on the subject.

This feast is called *pentecost* from its being on the *fiftieth* day after the first day of the week which followed the passover (Lev. xxiii. 15, 17);* and it is

* Pentecost was a *fiftieth day*; *i.e.* the day after seven weeks, as the jubilee was a *fiftieth year*, after seven weeks of years.

called "*the feast of weeks*" for the same reason. (See Deut. xvi. 9, 10.) It is named likewise the feast of "*first-fruits*" (Exod. xxxiv. 22), because on it the first-fruits of wheat harvest were presented to God, a witness of the year's harvest. These names call for a few remarks.

It is important to notice that pentecost, or the feast of weeks, is connected with the first day of the week, the day after the Sabbath, the day of the resurrection, *not* with the day of the crucifixion, or the offering of the paschal lamb. From this we learn that *resurrection* is the truth specially foreshadowed in this feast. The Corn of wheat had fallen into the ground, and died, and out of the grave of death sprung the abundant harvest that was to repay the travail of the soul of the Son of God.

Thus we are able to understand the meaning of the expression "first-fruits." Believers of this dispensation are called "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures" (Jas. i. 18); and the Church is called "the Church of the first-born ones written in heaven." (Heb. xii. 23.)

Hence the saints of God stand in pentecost a risen people, partakers of resurrection life, and united to a risen Head, who is seated at the right hand of God. Paul therefore writes to the Ephesians: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. ii. 4-6.)

Of the wave-sheaf we read: "Ye shall bring a sheaf of the first-fruits (רֵאשִׁית) of your harvest unto the priest: and he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: *on the morrow after the Sabbath* the priest shall wave it" (Lev. xxiii. 10, 11); and with it there was to be offered a burnt-offering, and its meat-offering, for a sweet savour. There was no grinding of the corn, no sifting of the flour, and no *sin-*

offering accompanying it. All was perfect; and the type presents to us the perfect Saviour, who needed no sin-offering to render His sacrifice acceptable; the wave-sheaf needed neither grinding nor sifting.

But of the pentecostal wave-offering we read: "And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that ye brought the sheaf of the wave-offering; seven Sabbaths shall be complete: even unto the morrow after the seventh Sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat-offering unto the Lord. Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave-loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven; they are the first-fruits (בְּכִירִים) unto the Lord." (Lev. xxiii. 15-17.) We notice here that the two wave-loaves are made of corn flour that has been ground and sifted, as that from which chaff and bran had been removed; and then, in order to mark the presence of sin, *leaven* is mixed with it, and there is the accompaniment of a sin-offering.

Thus, while the passover and the wave-sheaf represent Christ dead and risen, the pentecost with its wave-loaves represents a dead and risen Church, following and connected with her Head risen and glorified; for "in one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." (1 Cor. xii. 13.)

The pentecost was in the third month, and thus is linked with the giving of the law from Sinai (Exod. xix. 1); and here arises another connection, which is very important; for the outpouring of the Spirit was the bestowal of "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which, through death and resurrection, "made us free from the law of sin and death . . . that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 2-4.)

Before contemplating the pentecostal power of the Holy Spirit, it will be well to look a little into the

contrast between the operations of the Spirit as seen under the Old Testament, and His operations under the New, that we may attach to each its proper relative importance; otherwise we are in great danger of being misled, and of attaching a higher importance to certain forms of manifestation than God's truth would warrant; for we are prone to set an undue value upon that of which our *senses* take cognizance.

Israel had God's "good Spirit," who instructed them in their prophets, wrought with their leaders and judges, made Moses so mighty in word and in deed, secured victory to Joshua, nerved Samson's arm for his marvellous feats of strength, made Elijah's ministry so mighty in miracle, and Elisha's history so sweet in healing grace and goodness. All these actings of the Spirit of God we contemplate with wonder; but they are wonders that stir the heart of the natural man as well as our own. The anointing of the prophet, of the priest, or of the king, was upon the flesh, and touched not the inner and higher life, and led not into the higher and holier sphere of the presence of God, but acted according to the outward character of the Jewish dispensation.

But when we come to the prophecies as connected with the future, the operations of the Spirit are of another character. Then the Spirit comes as the "Spirit of Jehovah, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord;" and the object is to "make of quick discernment in the fear of the Lord." (Isaiah xi. 2, 3.) And when the anointing of the Messiah is spoken of in Isaiah lxi., we read, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance

of our God; to comfort all that mourn," &c. How marked is the contrast between the manner in which the Spirit acted in His power on and through the prophets, and judges, and kings of old, and the manner in which the acting of the Spirit in Christ is spoken of by the prophet.

Let us now turn to the gospel of John, which we might almost call the gospel of the Holy Ghost. In chap. i. the Lord stands before John the Baptist, and he says of Him, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. . . . And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon Him. And I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God." (vv. 29, 32-34.) He who in the passover was revealed as the Lamb of God was to be revealed in the pentecost as the Baptizer with the Holy Ghost, gathering the first-fruits of the harvest around Himself in the unity of the body of Christ, into which believers in Him are baptized by Him.

Too little is made of Christ as the Baptizer; for He was to stand in relation to His disciples in this baptism of the Spirit unto resurrection life, as John did to his in the baptism of water unto the confession of sin.

The Holy Ghost is often spoken of by many as the one who baptizes. This is not so. Christ baptizes, and the Holy Ghost is the divine element of life into which the Lord baptizes. 1 Cor. xii. 13 should read, "*In one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.*"

Two points are particularly noticed in the descent of the Spirit on Christ in His anointing after His baptism; the one is the *descending*, and the other is the *remaining*. The passages quoted already from Isaiah show what that anointing involved; and in the gospel of John we

have unfolded by our Lord the various operations of the Spirit of God. But while the operations are various, they are all united into one in "the promise of the Father," as all the varied effects of the death and resurrection of Christ are joined in one to the soul when by faith He is received. He then baptizes with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, and in that one act all that the Spirit accomplishes is sealed and secured to the believer.

In John iii. the Holy Spirit is revealed as the power of regeneration and life; in chap. iv., as the power of communion, as a well of water springing up into everlasting life; and in chap. vii., He is the power of service, as rivers of living water flowing out towards others. To the woman of Sychar the Lord says, "If thou hadst known the gift of God (*i.e.* Himself) . . . thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water," which "whosoever drinketh," He adds, it "shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." At the feast of tabernacles, in reference to the "rivers of living water," we are told, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified."

The gift of the Spirit is not a promise to a few, but to all who believe. Christ and His Spirit are the portion of all, and no fresh act of endowment is needed to make them ours; but truly faith needs to open its mouth wide to receive what God has given, and to drink in what God has poured out so abundantly.

Let us now turn to the last discourse of our Lord, and there notice what the promise of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, includes—a promise which was not fulfilled till Jesus had died and risen—a promise of which the Old Testament saints knew nothing, though the Spirit of God had come on them in mighty power, and had wrought many signs and wonders by them—a promise which might and did embrace many of the

wonderful manifestations of the Old Testament, but which in its essence and character was distinct from them, and rose immeasurably above them. Balaam, and Saul, and Judas might possess these manifestations, like those rejected at the very gate of heaven, of whom we read that they say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them (says the Lord), I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matt. vii. 22, 23.)

We will try to enumerate the various characteristics of the Holy Ghost in His advent in power in the Church of God, as promised by our Lord in John xiv. xv. and xvi. and it will be noticed that there is scarce an allusion to miraculous powers. These had marked the pre-pentecostal period of our Lord's own ministry; there was nothing essentially or peculiarly pentecostal in them; and more than that, our Lord had warned His disciples against an undue estimate of such miraculous power, when He told the seventy, "Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding *in this rejoice not*, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven." (Luke x. 19, 20.) The most characteristic features of the Spirit's presence are the following:

1st. He was to *abide for ever* (ch. xiv. 16), in contrast with His transient visits under the old dispensation. As in the anointing of our Lord the Spirit descended and remained on Him, so was the pentecostal Spirit to remain with the Church to the very end. To this point we would recall the attention of some who regard the baptism of the Spirit as something of the past, because certain outward signs are wanting which, as we have noticed, existed before this baptism had taken place at all.

2nd. He comes as the *Spirit of Truth*, indwelling the believer, to make him acquainted with all the truth and the realities of God and His kingdom; not giving truth under types and symbols, but in a revelation that unfolds all mysteries, and makes known to the soul those things that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived, but which God hath prepared for them that love Him. He who is the Spirit of Truth alone can prepare the eye, the ear, and the heart to see, to hear, to understand, and to receive the truth which lies within the domain of the Spirit alone; for "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God," and He gives unto us "the mind of Christ." (1 Cor. ii.)

3rd. He is *the Comforter*, the Paraclete, our Adviser, Exhorter, and Advocate; for more than all this is included in that precious word. The faithful few in Israel had often called on God, and been heard; had sought His protection, and found it; had asked God's presence, and obtained it; but here all is included in the indwelling of the Comforter, and of this there was nothing in the Old Testament. Nationally God dwelt in Israel, but individually He had to be sought as one outside, "not far from any one," as Paul tells the Athenians, but not ever present, according to the promise of the Father.

4th. *He shall be in you.* The Spirit had been with the people of God, but henceforth He was to abide in them, a dweller in a temple that He was to prepare for Himself. "What?" exclaims the apostle, when guarding against light thoughts of sin under this solemn realization of the indwelling Spirit of God, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.) Such had He never been before, but now He was to be the source of the living water that was to flow out of the belly of the believer.

5th. He is sent *in the name of Jesus.* This is a very

important point, for it connects His mission and His work with the name, person, and work of the risen Son of God. We have already seen this connection in the relation in which pentecost stands to the passover and to the wave-sheaf. The Holy Ghost is sent by the Father in the name of the Son, and hence it is said, "He shall not speak from Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear that shall He speak." This gives a character of its own to the advent of the Spirit, making Him the channel of intercommunion between the believer and the risen Christ, conveying to the soul the words of the Lord, hearing at the throne, and speaking to the heart what He has heard, the ever present revealer for the absent Lord.

6th. He shall *teach you all things*; thus John says, "Ye need not that any one teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him." (1 John ii. 27.) This does not mean that the believer needs not the help of Christian teaching, but that the indwelling Spirit gives witness to the teaching that is of God; and he needs not to be told, "This is of God;" as elsewhere it is said that they shall not need to say, "Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest;" for God's children are "God-taught," and have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil.

7th. He shall *bring all things to remembrance*, whatever Christ said. How wonderfully was this fulfilled in the gospel records, and how sweetly is it fulfilled to the listening ear of the child of God, who cries in faith to be taught more of the blessed ways of the Son of God; for the Spirit makes revelations of Him through the Word, and causes Him to live over again in living words and living actions, by the remembrance of what He said and did. We need the Holy Spirit to bring home to our memories the heavenly records.

We are too prone to be content with something very far short of pentecostal revelations of Christ, and hence the feeble hold they have on our hearts and upon our lives. To see Him, and to hear Him, as if verily with us in our soul's experience, is what we need; and this is what is promised here.

8th. He shall *bear witness concerning Christ.* (Ch. xv. 26.) Here the Spirit of pentecost is described as the witnesser of Christ, as we read in 1 John v. 6-10. The Spirit, the water, and the blood, all bear witness to the dying, crucified, and risen Christ; and "he that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. . . . And this is the witness, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." The personal and direct character of the witness of the Spirit is beautifully illustrated by our Lord's words immediately following: "And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning;" showing that as those who saw and heard could bear witness of what had been, so would the Spirit of God bear witness concerning Christ.

9th. He shall *convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.* (John xvi. 8-11.) He becomes God's witness to the sinfulness of man, to the righteousness of God in a risen Christ for all who believe, and to the coming judgment on the rejecters of God's salvation, because the prince of this world is judged. This is God's ministry of grace and truth, of mercy and of wrath, to a world lying under the wicked one. There never was such a witness before; for "the times of this ignorance God winked at" (or overlooked); "but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained." (Acts xvii. 30, 31.)

10th. He will *guide into all truth.* (Ch. xvi. 13.) There is here a thought beyond that of teaching all things (as in ch. xiv. 26), of which we have already

spoken; it implies that Shepherd care and guidance which is so beautifully described in Ps. xxiii. 2, 3, Isa. xl. 11, and elsewhere, fulfilling the promise, "I will guide thee with mine eye." (Ps. xxxii. 8.)

11th. He will *show things to come*; for He is the Earnest of those things, the pledge to faith, that all will assuredly be fulfilled on which faith now rests, and towards which hope looks forward. Thus the certainty of the resurrection is linked with the presence of the Spirit that dwells in us. (Rom. viii. 12.)

12th, and lastly. He will *glorify Christ*; for He will take of Christ's things and show them unto His people. This may well wind up the glorious unfolding of what the Spirit is come to do; and we ever need to be reminded that Christ is *glorified*. Surely God would not have us remain in ignorance of what it is so essential to the glory of Christ that we should know fully; for just in proportion as it is known shall we be able to take Paul's place, and say, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.)

Such are some of the characteristics of Him who was to come to the Church as the "Promise of the Father;" and may we all prayerfully ponder over what God intends the advent of the Spirit really to be to His Church. Miracles and signs, mighty and wonderful, had been from the beginning, as manifestations of God's presence, but to such there is no direct allusion in our Lord's discourse on the coming of the Holy Ghost in these chapters under review. We do not say they were not intended to be included; they doubtless were; but those things to which our Master particularly drew the attention of His disciples, and to which He directs ours, are not the outward and visible things, but those which were of infinitely more importance, and which

belonged, and could belong, exclusively to those who were really born again. Judas and false apostles and false prophets could find nothing here, however much they might prophesy and do many wonderful works.

The coming of the Holy Ghost at pentecost therefore, in the light of our Lord's teaching in these chapters of John, is primarily to be looked at as fulfilling His promises of inward and spiritual blessings; and we deem this to be most important to remember, otherwise the outward and the visible will assume a prominence which God never intended, and the real pentecostal standing of the Church will be denied, because of the absence of what is not *essential* to it, as it has been, alas! by most, either theoretically or practically. In a tract recently published we read to our amazement the following sentence: "This same operation of the Spirit, *which we have not now*, is called also—1. The baptism of the Spirit. 2. The receiving of the Spirit. 3. The sealing with the Holy Ghost. 4. The anointing. 5. The clothing with power. 6. The promise of the Father." Thus that wherein the supreme glory and character of our dispensation consists is virtually denied; and when that is gone, what remains but to fall back on the weakness of pre-pentecostal times, and the craving for those outward signs of God's presence which rather belong to an earthly than a heavenly people?

We would conclude this part of our subject with the suggestion, that the Joel character of pentecost seems to be connected with a still lingering Jewish hope, which was gradually being set aside till the full glory of the heavenly calling of the Church came out in the ministry of Paul; and the Jewish hopes were for the present altogether set aside some years after by the destruction of their city and temple by the Romans, as seems referred to in Heb. viii. 13, where that which waxeth old is said to be "ready to vanish away."

(*To be continued.*)

“LIGHTNINGS FOR THE RAIN.”

Ps. cxxxv. 7; Jer. x. 13; li. 16.

“THE God of all grace” is also the God of creation, and of the natural world around us; and abundantly does He use things of the earth and the heavens to teach us of His ways with us in our souls. The Old Testament is specially full of this; and amongst its many passages of this kind we have the remarkable repetition in these three different places of the words above quoted. “Whatsoever Jehovah pleased,” says the psalmist, “that did He in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.” And this is the God who made the nation of Israel His own, both by creation and by miracle; and will make them His own by grace also in the millennial age through the cross and death of Christ, having already made us His own, by grace and eternal life, who have at this present time believed in Him, whether among Jews or Gentiles.

This is He who “causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth,” even in the most arid desert, and with the most burning sky (see 1 Kings xvii. 44); who “bringeth the wind out of His treasures,” drying up by it the deluge to set free the imprisoned ones in the ark (Gen. viii. 1), and driving back the waters of the Red Sea to make a passage for the Israelites. (Exod. xiv. 21.) And He it is also “who maketh LIGHTNINGS FOR THE RAIN.”

It is not surprising that the Spirit of God should point to this way of our God in creation amongst others.

God might have sent the gentlest rain, as well as the heaviest and most abundant, without ever linking it with lightnings. Lightnings are perhaps the fiercest and most scorching flame that God in creation gives. The forest tree blasted and riven, the melted metal and the vitrified earth, all made so in but a moment of its passing, all tell of the more than furnace fierceness of its heat.

And yet it is the lightning-flash, with its power and its terror, that God so habitually links with the cooling and fertilizing rain, that the very storm is welcomed, in spite of any work of destruction it may do, for the sake of the drink which it brings to the parched soil, and the swelling by it of "the river of God" till it "is full of water."

Who does not see a lesson in all this? and who among children of God, and especially afflicted and tried ones, does not need to see it?

All who are saved and blessed by *Christ's cross* may learn it; for never was the darkened storm and the scorching flash of God's wrath more dreadful than at Calvary. Sinai did not equal it.

"The tempest's awful voice was heard;
O Christ, it broke on Thee!"

But it was only on the sinner's substitute, and upon the sinner's sin, and not upon the sinner. The thief at Jesus' side, who had but just before been hating Him and casting reproaches in His teeth (Matt. xxvii. 44) in company with the other thief, no sooner turned to the God-smitten, wrath-smitten, dying Son of God than he proved how truly God maketh "lightnings for the rain," for salvation's words came down on his sin-parched soul as a doctrine "that dropped as the rain," and a speech "that distilled as the dew," "as small rain upon the tender herb, and as showers upon the grass." "To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise" was as cooling and fertilizing rain to the burning wounds of his guilty conscience, and the barren soil of his sin-hardened heart. And from that solemn but happy hour he, and every other of such ones, might say—

"Thine open bosom was my ward,
It braved the *storm* for me;
Thy form was scarred,
Thy visage marred,
Now cloudless peace for me."

In this sense all saved sinners joy to tell that God, our God, is He that "maketh lightnings for the rain."

But the *afflictions* of His Church, and of His saints, have always taught the same lesson as their redemption did at the tree.

The storm gathered upon the Church at Jerusalem in its earliest days, as we see in the threats of the rulers at Jerusalem of all that man could do; but its thunder, and all man's fiercest hate, brought them only “a plentiful rain,” by which God “confirmed His inheritance” (Ps. lxxviii. 9); for Peter and John, being let go, went to their own company, and with them betook themselves to prayer, saying, “Lord, behold their threatenings;” and as they pleaded the name of “the holy child Jesus” (for they offered up, as Samuel did of old, the “sucking lamb”—1 Sam. vii. 9), even then, as in Samuel's days, the “thunder” of God's power was against their enemies; for as they prayed “the place was shaken” to tell that the God of power was there, but only the showers of refreshing blessing came upon them; for it says “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost,” “the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul,” “and great grace was upon them all.”

Truly our God is He that maketh “lightnings for the rain.”

“When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick, and thundered loud,
He with His Church has ever stood:
His loving-kindness, oh, how good!”

But in Stephen's instance we see the same in an individual believer. “They gnashed upon him with their teeth,” and hurled on him, as it were, the hailstones of persecution's *utmost* storm; for in killing the body “they have,” said our Master, “no more that they can do” (Luke xii. 4); but as they stoned him, the same “plentiful rain” did but the more make Stephen's soul as a watered garden; for he overcame evil with good, and fell asleep, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.”

And out of the Church's loss of Stephen came its gift of great grace to it by Paul.

Is it not true of our God that He "maketh lightnings for the rain"?

But Job is one over whose history we seem to write this glorious prerogative of our God with an especial emphasis.

In every way the storm did burst upon him. The wickedness of the Sabeans and the Chaldeans in carrying off his herds; the "fire of God" from heaven upon his sheep and their shepherds; and "the great wind of the wilderness," killing and burying all his children at a stroke beneath the ruins of their eldest brother's house, were but the beginning. The tempest swept all this away, and then came upon his very flesh; he was one ulcer from head to foot till his friends did not know him, and to his own wife his "breath was corrupt." Ill speeches also, both of wife and of friends, only made the storm feel heavier.

And, hardest to bear of all, sinful temptations to murmuring were let loose upon his soul, and "arrows of the Almighty" drank up his spirit.

Yet all of it was only the wondrous pathway of Him who "maketh lightnings for the rain."

No wonder James says (chap. v. 11) concerning Job, "Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the *end* of the Lord; that the Lord is *very pitiful*, and of tender mercy;" for who can come to the latter end of Job and not see that it was every way more blessed than his beginning? Not merely with flocks and herds and other earthly things with which to worship God, and to benefit his fellow-men, but with a living and a worshipping grace in his soul, which brought blessings at last even on his fault-finding "friends" by his praying for them.

Truly the storm and the lightnings in Job's case yielded a "plentiful rain."

Well might Elihu describe God's way in the thunder-storm with its "voice that roareth," and its God-directed "lightning unto the ends of the earth," ending with the "bright light that is in (on) the clouds," and the fair weather (rather "golden splendour") that "cometh out of the north" (the dark and stormy quarter of the heavens—see Job xxxvi. 26 to end of xxxvii.) in order to illustrate to Job what God's spiritual ways were with him at that time of affliction.

And the very whirlwind and storm which Elihu had so described and seen, as it were, in vision coming, God instantly Himself speaks from (see chap. xxxviii. 1); but the doctrine from it drops on Job "as the rain;" and God's speech from it so "distils" on his tried spirit "as the dew," that, like Moses, in Deut. xxxii. 3, 4, he now "publishes the name of Jehovah," and "ascribes greatness unto our God, who is the Rock, and His work is perfect; for all His ways are judgment; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." Verily, when God "maketh lightnings for the rain," it is not only for His own glory, but, like every "plentiful rain" that He sent of old, it is to "confirm His inheritance when it is weary."

But the three passages in which this expression occurs belong especially to *Israel as a nation*, and in them the God of "the vapours," "the lightnings," and "the wind" will abundantly make Himself known.

It may not be easy to tell whether Jeremiah makes his twofold quotation of these words from the Psalms, or the psalmist from Jeremiah; the latter is probably the truth; but anyhow the threefold occurrence of them is remarkable, and blessedly tells how in an evil day faith sings and triumphs still in God.

Invasion and captivity had swept over Israel as a tempest, and Jeremiah had felt as much as any its desolating sorrow. The sweeping "wind," the "clouded," blackened heavens, and the scorching, withering "lightnings," were fit emblems for the fire

and sword, and ruthless havoc made by Chaldean and other armies, and the change to them from the land of their fathers into captivity; but

"Faith can sing through days of sorrow,
All, all is well,"

and can boldly testify in the midst of it, that all of it is in the hands of Israel's God, and that He is One who not only causes "the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth," even till He has "clothed the heavens with blackness" (see Isa. l. 3), and "brings the wind" of the desert (see Habakkuk i. 9, where the Chaldeans are thus compared) "out of His treasures," but also "makes lightnings for the rain" out of even captivity and the sword, with which to bless the godly remnant, who in their sorrows turned still to Him.

Thus the psalmist sung, in Psalm cxxxv. 7, even though he might be *alone* in his singing; for it is for himself alone he speaks in verse 5, though calling on Israel to join him.

And thus also the captive Jeremiah testified, first in chap. x., to Israel to keep them from "the ways of the heathen," for in all their captivity they still were dear to God even "as the apple of His eye" (see Zech. ii. 8); and in chap. li., in the very same words, to guilty Babylon, "sitting upon its many waters" (*i.e.* the Euphrates and its many canals), "abundant in treasures, whose end was come, and the measure of its covetousness." And she also is told that He who "maketh lightnings for the rain" was "the Portion of Jacob" (see chap. x. 16; li. 19), and was no dead idol, but was the "former of all things: and Israel was the rod of His inheritance: Jehovah of hosts His name;" implying by this that He was riding on the storm, and ruling it, for showers of blessing on His people, which we know came to pass both at the return of the remnant in Haggai's and Zechariah's days, and still more when "the dayspring from on high"

beamed on them by the Son of God from Galilee; and Pentecostal blessings by His death and resurrection plainly told that to Israel also God had made the lightnings for the rain.

Yet the thousands blessed at Pentecost, and quickly afterwards, were but the "former rain" of Israel's blessing as a people: their glorious "latter rain" is yet to come; and God's "lightnings" will make the way for that also.

All the Scriptures testify how solemn that "day of the Lord" will be, the evening-time of which will be light to them. (Zech. xiv. 7.)

Habakkuk describes it: passing on from the Chaldean invasion of his own time to the far future and more solemn day, he says, "The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of thine arrows they went, and at the shining of Thy glittering spear." But he instantly adds: "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, even for salvation with Thine anointed." (Hab. iii. 11, 13.)

And David says that the Ruler over men, by whom the sons of Belial will at that day be "burned with fire in the same place," will be to Israel as the light of the morning, and as tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. (2 Sam. xxiii. 4.) And Solomon adds: "The King's wrath is as the roaring of a lion; but His favour is as dew upon the grass." (Prov. xix. 12.) And a millennial age will throughout it still be telling of Israel's God, that He maketh lightnings for the rain.

And surely all "these things written aforetime" are not only "written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are to come," to keep us from the murmuring evil heart, but also that the most tried ones amongst us, whether in service or in suffering, "through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."

Be it so for Christ's sake, to the glory of God! Amen,

H. D.

MEPHIBOSHETH.

MEPHIBOSHETH was in a certain way connected with David in humiliation, in power, and in his coming again to Jerusalem. He was taken up by David when he was sunk in obscurity, and when David was in power, in consequence of transactions which were finished and ratified years before Mephibosheth was born. But when once he became acquainted with David personally, he could not give him up; he could freely resign earth and its possessions, but not David. Hence when David was returning to Jerusalem after his temporary rejection Mephibosheth was on the lookout for him, and met him with joy.

Mephibosheth reaped the benefit of a *past transaction*.

In 1 Sam. xx. we read, "Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And Jonathan said unto David, . . . The Lord be with thee, as He has been with my father. And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the kindness of the Lord, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy kindness from my house for ever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David. . . . And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul."

Even this covenant was not the origin of this lasting friendship; for going further back still, to 1 Sam. xviii., we read, "And it came to pass, when he [David] had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. . . . Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and his bow, and to his girdle."

Thus has the Spirit recorded the beginning and development of that love, and the covenants and transactions that resulted. Beautiful are such counsellings and communings of brotherly love, a love too that was mingled with tears, as we see in 1 Sam. xx. 41, 42: "As soon as the lad was gone, David arose out of a place toward the south, and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed himself three times: and they *kissed* one another, and *wept* one with another, until David exceeded." Here was mutual love finding vent in tears; but *David exceeded*, even as our lips and hearts can willingly own that our David always exceeds.

"He was a Man of sorrows,
And when He gave relief,
He gave it like a Brother
Acquainted with the grief."

In 2 Sam. i. 26 we have also David's lament: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been to me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women."

As we recall this narrative, and think how Mephibosheth afterwards reaped the benefits of this love, does it not remind us that the blessings that flow down upon us are the results of a past transaction?

"My sins are blotted out,
Since Jesus died for me;
My times are in a Father's hand,
My steps in His decree.
Jesus in heaven appears,
For me to intercede,
And countless benefits proclaim,
'The Lord is risen indeed.'"

When we trace things to the fountain-head, it often puts them before us in a new light, and unfolds new beauty in them.

Let us now turn to 2 Sam. ix.: "And David said, Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake? And Ziba said unto the king, Jonathan hath yet a son,

who is lame on his feet. . . . Then king David sent, and fetched him out of the house of Machir. . . . Now when Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, was come unto David, he fell on his face, and did reverence. And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, Behold thy servant! And David said unto him, Fear not: for I will surely shew thee kindness for Jonathan thy father's sake" (compare Eph. ii. 7), "and will restore thee all the land of Saul thy father; and thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. . . . And Mephibosheth had a young son, whose name was Micha. And all that dwelt in the house of Ziba were servants unto Mephibosheth. So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat bread continually at the king's table; and he was lame on both his feet."

Time had elapsed. David was the exalted one. The house of Saul had melted away under the curse for rebellion. But David remembers the days of his affliction, and searches for Jonathan's son.

Jesus is now the highly exalted One, at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens; but He does not forget the travail of His soul, and He searches and enquires after us. He did so when we were buried in the obscurity of our sins. He took us up with our broken limbs, maimed like the thieves who suffered a cursed death on the cross, and whose legs were broken that they might *never* escape, lest a vestige of life might yet remain in them. He has placed us at His table to eat bread there continually, not servant-like, to have the spirit of bondage (*v.* 6), but to hear the precious "Fear not," and to possess the spirit of sonship, saying, Abba Father; to feel at home in our Father's house.

How young Micha must have enjoyed the new state of things! (*v.* 12.) And we too in resurrection shall remember no more the sorrow, no more the lame feet so often mentioned, the results and remains of the

curse (2 Sam. iv. 4); but enjoy our portion, admiring our Lord with children’s hearts and children’s eyes, the dew of His youth ever resting upon and keeping our spirits young and fresh. “They sang, as it were, a *new* song.”

Now we come to the final scene in 2 Sam. xix., and as regards Mephibosheth we need not feel disappointed. He had learned to value David’s person, to value his presence so much that he could trample earth’s possessions under foot. “My lord the king is as an angel of God: do therefore what is good in thine eyes. For all my father’s house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at *thine own* table. . . . And Mephibosheth said unto the king, Yea, let him [Ziba] take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house.”

Beloved fellow-pilgrim, have we entered in any measure into Mephibosheth’s experience? Are we learning to say, like Mephibosheth, in respect of this poor world and any who grasp at it, “Let him take all,” as we contemplate the fulness and beauty that there is in Christ Jesus our Lord? And when *He* comes again, shall we not ever be seeing fresh beauty in Him?

“My eyes shall see Him in that day
Who gave His life for me;
And all my rising bones shall say,
‘Lord, who is like to thee?’”

J. W. W.

“THE WINDOWS OF HEAVEN.”

Gen. vii. 11; Mal. iii. 10; 2 Kings vii. 19.

A LESSON may be learned by linking together the three places in which this expression is used. In Gen. vii. 11 it tells us of the awful power of the wrath of God. The opening of the “windows of heaven” swelled up a flood by which “all the high hills that were under

the whole heaven were covered." Those windows of heaven then opened told of the omnipotent anger of God.

But ages roll on. Man's sin after the flood is greater far than it was before it; and in each succeeding age of Old Testament history it only increases. In Malachi's days a climax is reached. A covering of religious orthodoxy placed upon the evil to hide it only makes the iniquity, as it were, of still more mountain-towering height.

But God has "windows of heaven" for mercy and for blessing, as He had in Noah's days for deserved doom (see Mal. iii. 10); and He declares He will cover all those "high hills" and "mountain tops" of their sin with His omnipotent power to bless, if only they truly turn to Him.

Israel's state three hundred years after, in John the Baptist's time, shows that they only hardened their hearts, and refused that flood, that mighty down-pour, which was waiting to deluge them with grace and with blessing; for the pinnacle tops of religious orthodoxy, and pride, and covetousness, reared their heads with unblushing boldness still in their land and in their temple, which Herod built, and of which they so boasted; so that John the Baptist told them their boast of being sons of Abraham was vain; and Jesus warned Capernaum, that though "exalted to heaven" in her own esteem, she would sink to but the deeper hell.

Unbelief has an awful power to prevent even the "windows of heaven" from opening for blessing over those who indulge in it. In Elisha's time, besieged and starving Samaria was, as it were, flooded with provisions in a single day, and all its hunger-bitten people eat and drank in abundance; yet the nobleman on whose hand the king leaned saw it with his eyes, but never tasted it; for he had doubted, and perhaps ridiculed, God's power to make any such windows. "Now,

behold," said he to the man of God, "if Jehovah should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be?"

But no single individual's unbelief in God's almighty power and readiness to bless, nor even Israel's unbelief as a nation, can finally close either the windows of heaven in the day of wrath, or those same windows in the day of blessing. Both must even yet come, and both must come by Christ.

The flood-gates of God's wrath sank Him down to their utmost depth of woe, and the windows of blessing have raised Him to their utmost height of joy (see Ps. xxi. 6), that He should pour out both according to the will of God, and make all who believe in Him richly to partake of the blessing.

Individuals may shut up from themselves this heaven of blessing and of love which is just over them—as, alas! numbers do—but the boundless fulness is still there. God is not less able to bless, nor less willing, because they perish. (See Job xxxv. 6; Prov. ix. 12.)

And the present unbelieving generation of Israel may still shut up from themselves the omnipotent blessing of God's "windows of heaven"—their own God; and they are doing so, and they will; for, alas! like the nobleman in Elisha's days, they believe in no such "windows" at all; and scorning God's rich provision for them in Jesus, His Son, they will ere long exceed all the former "high hills" of their national iniquity, and will receive a false Christ, "who will come in his own name" (see John v. 43); and they will bring upon themselves a judgment deluge, not of waters, but of flaming fire, from Jesus' own presence and voice at His coming. (See 2 Thess. i. 8; Rev. i. 7)

But the "windows of heaven" for blessing must be opened upon that nation, however much the Malachi and present New Testament generation of them shut them up by their unbelief. God's "gifts and calling"

of them are without repentance. They are "beloved for the fathers' sakes," and must be blessed.

God will yet "pour upon" them "the spirit of grace and of supplications." "They shall look upon Him whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him;" and not only shall all the high hills and mountain tops of their iniquity be covered from God's sight, and cast into the depths of the sea of His love to them in Christ (Micah vii. 19), but every hill and mountain of their land shall tell aloud of what God's opened "windows of heaven" have then done for them. "The mountains shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills, by righteousness," because the true Solomon reigns. And from his still better portion in the heavenly city above Isaiah shall then see his own prediction to them fulfilled: "Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace; *the mountains and the hills* shall break forth before you into singing, and all *the trees of the field* shall clap their hands." (Isa. lv. 12.) No wonder he adds, "It shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

But those same "windows of heaven" for blessing were available for that *remnant*, in Malachi's evil day, who "feared the Lord, and spake often one to another, and thought (or counted) upon Jehovah's name," and thus they became God's jewels, however much the nation as a whole had failed to be such.

"Even so at this present time also," says Paul, "is there a remnant according to the election of grace;" and not only upon those who were Jews by nature, but upon us who were Gentiles, all this omnipotence of blessing from the very "windows of heaven" would be poured, did we but more put God to the proof, and yield Him our very selves as those whom He has ransomed out of an Egypt world, and has made to be His own in Christ. We are not straitened in God. Oh that we may not be in our own bowels!

WATERS ASSUAGING.

Whenever in an affliction we are praying our God to do the best for us—the very best—in view of His praise in us and by us *for ever*, we cannot wonder that He should bestow upon us as lengthened an instruction in leading us *out of* that affliction as He has in leading us into it.

God's instruction of Noah and His other saved ones in the ark was by a hundred and fifty days' increase of the waters, and then by another one hundred and fifty days *and more* of equally gradual decrease of them.

When once the rebellious had perished (which they seem to have done in one day—see Gen. vii. 11, compared with Luke xvii. 27, and 2 Peter iii. 5, 6), why not hasten the rest of the solemn work, and speedily liberate the family of the saved ones from the confinement of the ark? But no; *the wind* must do its lengthened work of drying up, as the *rain* had done all its work of deepening the flood.

“This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.”

D.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

WHAT is the meaning of 1 Cor. xv. 29?

The allusion to baptism in this resurrection chapter seems beautifully appropriate when we remember that Christian baptism is into resurrection through death, and not as John's baptism, into death alone. The latter was like the confession of a lost sinner, who, though he saw a hope in the future, had it not yet as reality, for Christ was not yet risen from the dead. Now all is changed. But if not—if Christ has not risen—if we are not to rise from the dead, why are believers in Christ baptized for the dead? *i.e.* baptized

on the ground of their being dead men, who by faith have been quickened together with Christ and raised up together with Him. (See Eph. ii. 5-6.) If there is no resurrection of the body, why are we thus baptized? for our resurrection in type is the earnest of our resurrection hereafter to be with Him for ever (see Rom. viii. 11); and if the ultimate fulfilment is not to be, then the earnest is a lie. Paul never contemplates eternal bliss apart from the resurrection; and the happiness of the intermediate state is one in hope of the future, as much so as now; and hence the apostle argues that if there is no resurrection, our faith, our baptism, our hope, are all together resting on a lie, and are worthless.

1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. With reference to the silence of women in the assembly (page 124), is not the case of *unmarried* women different from that of the married?

The question is not as to married or unmarried women, but as to *sex*. (See chap. xi.) The deep and blessed instruction as to the manner of glorifying God refers to *all* who have "*long hair*;" and the sharp reproof of the apostle to *any* woman who will not keep to the comely position assigned by God to her sex is, "*Let her also be shorn.*" Yet his tender care for all true helping women is seen in Phil. iv. 2, 3. Such are greatly needed at this time, and we should be sorry to discourage any sister in Christ who is seeking to serve Him in any true womanly ministry. Even as respects *teaching*, as a correspondent points out from Titus ii. 4, there is a wide sphere, and one but little occupied, we fear.

Luke xvi. 5-7. "As stewards of the mysteries of God, let us watch against the tendency to write fifty or eighty when a hundred is due. When God gives us His word, we must not make a lower standard if we cannot walk up to it. His word is absolute, and we must ever fully admit its claims."

JESUS "IN THE MIDST."

God's whole delight is ever in His Son, Christ Jesus the Lord, whether in Him as the One before all things and eternally with Him, or as the One by whom He created all things and sustains them, or as the "Heir of all things" through redemption. And God has marked Him as the acknowledged Heir by the place He has already given Him.

There are different resurrection aspects of our Lord which express this acknowledgment of Him. Raised from the dead to the "glory which He had with the Father before the world was" (see John xvii. 5), is one. "Set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (see Heb. viii. 1), is another; and so is His position as the Lamb "*in the midst* of the throne and of the four living creatures, and *in the midst* of the elders." (Rev. v. 6.)

Indeed God's thoughts of Christ, and especially His value for the great redemption work of Christ, may be blessedly learned from the passages which speak of Him as "*in the midst*."

Let us then consider them. First, the wonders of Christ's *death* are expressed by this phrase. Jonah was a type of Him in His death, burial, and resurrection; and we hear Christ's own voice as we read Jonah's prayer "unto Jehovah his God out of the fish's belly." (See Jonah ii.) As we hear him say, "Thou hadst cast me into the deep, *in the midst* of the seas," we are reminded how perfectly God "made all our iniquities to *meet* on Him" who took our place—the "greater than Jonah;" and we do not wonder at the next words of the verse, "The floods compassed me about; ALL thy billows and thy waves passed over me." Thus God made Jesus in His death to be surrounded with all our sins, and all our guilt, and all

its doom, and poured upon His sinless soul *all* the wrath the whole of it deserved.

"Jesus, the One who knew no sin,
Made sin to make us just;
Worthy art Thou our love to win,
And worthy all our trust."

This view of Jesus "in the midst" is solemn indeed; yet it is God's foundation for all other placing of Him "in the midst" which He shows us in His word. Jonah came up from the midst of the waves of the Mediterranean Sea simply to point men to Christ, and showed by his failure in that work that he was in himself only the sinful "son of Amittai;" but Christ is raised from "the midst" of all the billows and waves of God's full anger against sin to that resurrection "dry land" where He dies "no more."

Nor is it the "dry land" of triumphant and eternal *life* only to which His depths of death have raised Him, but to eternal glory also. And in view of the day when He shall take His power and reign, John saw Him thus in vision: "I beheld," he says, "and, lo, *in the midst* of the throne and of the four living creatures, and *in the midst* of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which (eyes) are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." How exact the contrast of the words "in the midst" in this vision to that considered before! Not a billow nor a wave of death and woe but was round Him then, and the waters came in unto His soul; so not a joy nor an honour that even God Himself can give but is now His; for He is "*in the midst* of the throne," possessing, that is, *all* that the throne of God has to give Him.

"HE *fills* the throne, the throne above,
He *fills* it without wrong;
The object of His Father's love,
The theme of heaven's song."

Hence it is called "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxii. 3); for as the Lamb once slain,

Christ is raised again to that same eternal glory which He had with the Father before the world was. And it is this position of Jesus, as "in the midst of the throne," that the millennial age will manifest; for Rev. iv. and v., which give the vision of this united "throne of God and of the Lamb," are a millennial scene, and not one of the ultimate and abiding new earth and new heavens, as is shown by the "lightnings and thunderings" in chap. iv. 5, and by the mention also of "the sea" and the creatures in it in chap. v. 13.

What a contrast will be Jesus' reign in that age to the hour of His sorrow! and that too upon the same Palestine! The very land of the three hours' darkness, where the Son of God was sunk "in the midst" of His people's sins, and God's wrath due to them, is to be the land in which, and over which, He will reign from "the midst of the throne," and from it over the whole earth!

"Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." (Isa. xxiv. 23.) "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Jehovah, and His name one." (Zech. xiv. 8, 9.)

Well may one say—

"Thou land of the cross and the glory,
Whose brightn ss at last shall shine
Afar through the earth, what a story
Of darkness and light is thine!
He died as a lamb, as a lion
He watches over thee, nor can forget
His desolate exile of Zion:
He waits to be gracious yet."

Not till His kingdom-day, and His saints are reigning with Him, will this glory of Jesus "in the midst of the throne" be visible, or be fully exercised; but even now we have the earnest of it: first, on behalf of the

gospel throughout the world (see Matt. xxviii. 18, 19), "All power is given unto ME in heaven and upon earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations;" and secondly, on behalf of His churches of this present time, on whom in Rev. i. 4, 5 "grace and peace" is pronounced "from Jesus Christ," as not only "the faithful Witness" and "the First-begotten of the dead," but also as "the Prince of the kings of the earth;" the One, that is, who sways kings and their governments at His pleasure, even now before the day when He comes forth visibly as "King of kings, and Lord of lords." The Lamb "in the midst of the throne" is therefore a vision to us for our present trust beneath His kingly care, as well as a sight of what we shall ere long share with Him when we live and reign with Him.

But Jesus risen and glorified is also shown us as "*in the midst* of the seven candlesticks." The position HE occupies is still the same: HE is "*in the midst.*" Christ is God's centre for His assemblies now, as HE will be for all God's goodness and all His glory in the next age of divine reigning power. We are thus taught to know the Lord Jesus as now filling the whole area of all His present locally-sundered assemblies, as HE will ere long fill the whole earth with His throne-power.

He gathers His churches round Himself now as truly as HE will one day gather the homage and submission of the whole world to the footstool of His throne when he reigns, for HE is "*in the midst*" of the seven candlesticks. And as in that kingdom-day no rebellion against God and Himself will escape His sight, but "the sinner" (in Zion) will die, though only "a hundred years old" (see Isa. lxx. 20), instead of being allowed to reach full millennial length of life (see also Prov. xx. 8), so has He now the "eyes" that are "as a flame of fire" "*in the midst*" of the churches of His precious blood-bought saints. Oh

that, as His gathered ones, gathered to Himself, we more remembered that our Lord Himself is still as truly in the midst of His various assemblies, linking each assembly with Himself, and each assembly also with all the others, as in the happier days of the apostles, when each assembly contained in its fellowship all the known saints in its locality!

In Ezra's and Nehemiah's days, when a remnant came up from Babylon, there might be but a few in Jericho, a few in Hebron, or in any other of the once populous towns and cities of the land; but they still had the same Jerusalem, and the same temple in it, for their worship at the annual feasts, as when of old three times every year the highways to Zion were thronged with all the males of the whole nation.

And so with us in this more favoured dispensation of the mystery of Jew and Gentile now made one new man in a risen Christ. Its eighteen hundred years have made many changes, and very sad ones; but "Jesus Christ is yesterday and to-day the same, and for ever;" and the position God has given Him towards His saints of every locality is also the same as when He so long ago revealed Himself to John in Patmos: HE is still "IN THE MIDST" of His saints, scattered though they are over the earth.

The "candlestick" character of united local testimony and heavenly light-bearing for Christ may be lost—and is very likely everywhere—but from His blessed position "*in the midst*" HE not only addressed Himself to His churches as such, but HE graciously added in each case, "He that hath an ear, let Him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches." What a kind provision were those words for our sad days! So that if there be but *one* in a locality that hears His voice, and welcomes it, then all the good things shall be his which were to have been the portion of the whole church of Christ of that place. Just as Isaiah's glowing pages mourn over a backsliding people, but

close with the gracious word, "To *this* man will I look, even to *him* that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." (Isa. lxvi. 2.)

But the risen Jesus is also seen "in the midst" of *each* assembly of His saints. This we learn from John xx. 19, 26. It was the position He took amongst His people the very first day of His resurrection-life, and again on the eighth day; and He has surely done so ever since, wherever they have gathered together to remember Him any "first day of the week," or any other day of the week. This position amongst His assembled ones is very instructive. It shows Him owning all of them as equally the gift of His Father to Him; and tells of His ability and His readiness to bless them all, and of their being all alike dear to Him. His very position "in the midst" of them, no nearer to any one of them than to any other, seems to remind us of His own words (John xvii. 10), "All mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them;" and of His being able to say also of even the feeblest of them, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (John xvii. 16.)

It is just this attitude of Christ in each assembly of His saints that makes it so good for us to meet together to "remember" Him, especially at the Lord's Supper, but also at other times; it is then that the hearts of *all* are made to burn within them, like those of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; and a Saviour and Friend is felt to be among them, who is as much recognized as belonging equally to them all, as they all alike partake both of the bread and of the cup.

The ark of the covenant, with its blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, was the symbol of God's presence with His Israel of old; and both for rest and marching, and for worship, its place was "in the midst" of the camp (see Numb. ii. 17; v. 3; Lev. xvi. 16), that in every corner of that vast camp every individual might feel as much linked as any other with the God of

Israel, who had redeemed them out of Egypt, and had made them all alike His own. See also the equality of the ransom-money—half a shekel—which all had to pay at their numbering as a people. "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel." (Exod. xxx. 15.)

It is this equal nearness of all to the risen Lord that so gives the happy freedom, and the warmth also, of family love to meetings which are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus; while Jesus "in the midst" so keeps Him in the view of all, that the forwardness and the sluggishness of the flesh are alike kept in check, and the holy liberty of His presence makes room for the godly use of all that variety of gift, be it more or less, by which the assembled ones build themselves up on their most holy faith, and by which they exhort one another; for with Jesus really "in the midst," no weakness of the assembly as a whole, nor of any single one in it, will be forgotten. In both the cases already referred to in John xx. it was their *weakness* that brought Him thus amongst them. On the first occasion, in verse 19, the closed doors told of the trembling hearts of all of them "for fear of the Jews," which needed His presence and voice "in their midst" to strengthen their faith; and in verse 26 His presence amongst them was for the sake of Thomas as a *single one*; for had He not Himself said, in the days of His flesh (Matt. xviii. 14), "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that *one* of these little ones should perish"? So Thomas must be cared for, and the stumbling-blocks must be removed out of *his* path.

And the greater the trial of His saints, and the deeper their sorrow, the more may His presence "*in their midst*" be counted on, if only it is indeed *to His name* that they are gathered. This is especially shown by the well-known and much-loved passage—"Again I say unto you, That 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. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 19, 20.)

Our Lord's assurance of Himself in their midst, there given to but "two or three," is confidently used as warrant for any and every gathering of ourselves together as His saints that really is "to His name." And rightly so. No one would wish to call in question, or to weaken this its general application. But does not the context show that it has a special application also to the sorrow His church may at any time have over an erring one, who is even stubborn in his ill ways?

This is the subject of the passage both before and after this oft-quoted verse. The whole context is our Lord's guidance as to how to deal *with the trespassing brother*; and the last previous mention in the passage of two or three was the "two or three witnesses" who had gone to the aggressor quietly to convict him of his trespass, and to leave him without excuse, if he did not then and there confess it.

But the case is supposed of their not succeeding, and of the voice, too, of even the entire "church" not being bowed to by him. On this comes, of necessity, the sorrowful task of putting him away from them. But our Lord instantly gives the most precious encouragement to *prayer*, declaring that if only two "agree on earth" to ask anything, it shall be done for them; for if the praying band be but "two or three," provided they are gathered *unto His name*, He is "in their midst," thus giving efficacy to their prayer.

Does not the context imply that it is the "two or three witnesses" who were compelled to arraign the guilty "brother" before the church, and also to take their part with the church in putting him from amongst them, who are thus encouraged to labour for him still in *prayer* to his and their "Father which is in heaven"? and that it is especially to the "*name*" of the Lord Jesus they are gathered, because that

name has been by the erring one so dishonoured? They plead that injured "name" with the Father, and ask for that name's sake his restoration. Who can wonder that Jesus is especially "*in the midst*" of such a praying "two or three" as this?

Under Moses' law the witnesses against any crime were to be the first to stone the guilty one; but under the gospel of the grace of God, and in His church, they are to be the first to plead for him at "the throne of grace," even though the church is unable, for Christ's name sake, to continue him in fellowship with them. At such an hour of theirs and the church's sorrow, how blessed for them to have an especial assurance of His being "in their midst."

One other use of "in the midst" may be named as giving a practical issue to those which have preceded. It is Wisdom's voice in Proverbs viii. 20: "I walk" (see margin) "*in the midst* of the paths of judgment, that I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures." The whole passage is singularly beautiful, and is full of glorious grace, and in the whole of it we hear the voice of the Lord Jesus.

It is He who dwells in prudence (see v. 12), and finds out knowledge of witty inventions (or skilful plans); it is He who teaches "the fear of Jehovah" (v. 13); who tells us also that kings, princes, nobles, and all judges of the earth, are under Him, and have their power from Him. Yet so gracious is He, and so unlike is He to the kings and nobles of this world, that whoever loves Him is at once dear to Him; nor does He keep the earliest applicant waiting who seeks Him. (See v. 17.)

Nor only this. Wealth also belongs to Him as well as rank. He has riches that are linked with righteousness, and are unstained with iniquity, though they are so great; the "fine gold" and the "choice silver" of earth are not equal to them. (vv. 18, 19.)

And now follows Wisdom's way of imparting these pure and lasting treasures to those who love her; viz., she walks "in the way of righteousness, *in the midst* of the paths of judgment;" and as the sheep in John x. know the Shepherd's voice, and "follow" Him, so Wisdom's children are led by observing and following Wisdom's footsteps.

"In the midst of the paths of judgment" is very significant language. It appears to mean equally distant from the ditch of sin and the pit of ruin, whether on this side or on that. And is not this blessedly true of the footsteps of our glorious Lord? Dangers to us as His saints are never on *one* side only, they are always both right and left of us as we journey on; and it is just this that makes the entrance to life not only a "strait gate," but its subsequent road also a "narrow way." The traveller must be in danger from *opposite* directions in order for his path to be a "narrow way." Hence the value to us of HIM who walks "*in the midst* of the paths of judgment," and by thus drawing us to "follow His steps" gently but surely, delivers us "from ALL evil" (Ps. cxxi. 7.)

His blessed steps were as far removed from the formalism and ritualism of the Pharisee as they were from the infidelity of the Sadducee. The snare of the Herodian could no more entangle Him into a resistance of Cæsar's authority than it could make Him forgetful that Israel was Jehovah's people. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's," were words to tell how truly His lips kept Him "in the midst of the paths of judgment."

And not in His public teachings only; the same in His private life. When only twelve years old, His three days' separation from His parents, and his words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" were followed by His going down with them to Nazareth, and being subject unto them. He thus equally avoided neglect of the public claims of God's

word on the one hand, and the family claims of earthly parents on the other.

We know it was the same all through that blessed thirty years of life at Nazareth. He knew how to divide His time between the synagogue, with its precious books of the law and the prophets (in the public and private reading of which He must have so delighted), and the home life, with its "carpenter's" labour, so as not to neglect either the one or the other. We may be sure He knew how to avoid too much sleep, as well as to "lay Himself down in peace, and sleep" (Ps. iv.), when His God and Father would have Him; how to keep aloof from asceticism, as much as from too much familiarity with others; for He loved solitude, and yet could say, "I am a companion of all them that fear thee." (Ps. cxix. 63.)

If Paul had learned both "how to be abased, and how to abound;" if he had become instructed "both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Phil. iv. 12), so as not to be puffed up in the one state, nor depressed in the other; if his feet were thus kept in any measure "in the midst of the paths of judgment," we know it was a grace that he drew from the now risen Lord Jesus, who had on earth left those footprints for him. Paul himself tells us so; for he instantly adds, "I can do all things *in Christ* which strengtheneth me." (v. 13.)

There are strong contrasts in the Holy Ghost's precious precepts for us as God's children.

Husbands are to love their wives, and are to "nourish and cherish" them, as Christ does the church (Eph. v.); yet are "they that have wives to be as though they had none." (1 Cor. vii. 29.) We are to "weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that do rejoice" (Rom. xii.), as leisurely and as tenderly as those who remember that we are ourselves also in the (mortal) body (Heb. xiii. 3); yet are "they that weep to be as though they wept not; and they

that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not." (1 Cor. vii. 30.) We are to be good stewards of even this life's things, carefully laying by each first day of the week for the wants of others, according as God hath prospered us; yet are "they that buy to be as though they possessed not." We are to hold "the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," all as ours, because we are Christ's (1 Cor. iii. 22); yet are we to use this world as not much using it; "for the fashion (or form) of this world passeth away."

And what shall keep us within these precious limits? Only the same power that kept Israel "in the midst" of the Red Sea, and made its very waters "a wall to them on their right hand, and on their left." (Exod. xiv. 29.) The footsteps of the God of Israel went before them, and they but followed on; and the weeds* of that otherwise entangling path became but as a carpet for their feet.

So with us through this otherwise trackless wilderness of life. Let us but see Him, and keep Him in view, who walks "in the midst of the paths of judgment," and as His redeemed ones we shall not only be delivered from even the most opposite kinds of danger, while days of danger last, but more than this: at His looked-for coming again we shall find His gracious aim accomplished, of which in the next verse (v. 21) He even now tells us, "That I may cause those that love Me to *inherit* substance: and I will fill their treasures."

In that day not a service rendered to one of Christ's, not an evil shunned out of love to Him, but the treasures of His glory will wondrously repay it to every servant of His who did the one and avoided the other.

Oh, then, may every remaining step we tread be planted in His footsteps, who walked on earth below, and now walks above "in the midst of the paths of judgment!" Amen and Amen. H. D.

* Red Sea is in the Hebrew "the Weedy Sea." The same word is used in Jonah ii. 5, "The *weeds* were wrapped about my head."

JESUS IN THE SHIP;

OR, CHRIST ALL-SUFFICIENT.

MARK iv. 35-40.

THIS is one of many recorded incidents in the life of the blessed Master illustrating the simple but important truth—CHRIST ALL-SUFFICIENT.

That we have and shall have His presence to the end we are sure, for He has promised it, and He cannot lie. What we need is, to believe it, and understand what that presence ensures to us. As believers, we readily say, "Everything;" for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and we are complete, filled up, completely furnished in Him. Yet it may interest and profit us to trace through the gospels a few examples of the fact, that it was enough that He was present.

The first scene to which I would call attention is that of His first miracle ("this beginning of miracles"), the marriage in Cana of Galilee.

They wanted wine; their resources failed. There was need, and would have been shame perhaps to some; but it sufficed that He was there. Gently discouraging nature's interference urging Him to action, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" He quietly commanded the servants (who had been instructed to obey) to fill the waterpots with water; then at His bidding they gave to the governor of the feast not water, but wine.

I do not stop to comment on this, but only call attention to the admirable fact, that this beginning of miracles shadowed forth His tenderest connection with the Church, and His own chief joy; while in the next recorded act, the purging of the temple at Jerusalem, we see an earnest of His action in Israel on the earth, subsequent to the gathering of the Church to Himself in the air.

Let us now follow Him to Bethesda, "the house of mercy," and mark His ways there. The assembled multitude of impotent folk had gathered to the pool, each doubtless hoping to be the successful one, and to return cured. Among them was one who had often been there, and as often failed of a cure. Others stepped in before him; he had none to help. Diseased and helpless, yes, and friendless too, yet he had come; and must it now be as at other times? Shall he again miss the blessing? No; for Jesus was there, and that sufficed. He knew his case, and in His tender pity and unfailing wisdom appealed, not to his strength, but to his desire, "*Wilt thou be made whole?*" To this question the impotent man replied by a full description of his case. Then He who gave to the troubled water its virtue, cured without it. The cripple proved the all-sufficiency of His presence; he arose, and walked.

In chap. vi. of this gospel we find Him in other circumstances, yet sufficient for them, surrounded by a hungry multitude, with little food, and by His disciples, with little faith. Conscious of His own ability, and knowing what He was about to do, He tested their little faith, and drew out their thoughts by His question, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" The disciples estimated (*v.* 7), and Andrew described their resources, "five barley loaves, and two fishes," saying, "What are they among so many?" The facts were fully known—one cake to a thousand hungry people, but not half a fish! To satisfy with these was to them hopeless; but JESUS WAS THERE. With His wonted dignity He commanded that the multitude should be seated. He then took their all, gave thanks for it, and it was distributed to the multitude. They all ate, and doubtless wondered as they did so, were filled, and left. His presence was enough. On another occasion when the faith of the disciples was tested, not by a hungry multitude and little food,

but by stormy wind and raging waves, contended with alone, for Jesus was in the mountain, whither He had made His opportunity to retire; I say made His opportunity, for the narrative will show His management to secure privacy. Having fed the multitude, He first sent the disciples to sea, then sent away the multitude, and after that retired into the mountain. An example to us. There are opportunities for being alone with God which naturally present themselves; but sometimes we have to make them by wisdom and faith. Have them we must, if we would be happy and flourishing in soul.

For wise purposes the disciples were allowed to toil in rowing for three watches of the night, while Jesus was in the mount. In the fourth watch, when the storm, we suppose, had reached its full height, and their strength had well-nigh failed, at the very suited moment Jesus neared them, making the very wave, which they perhaps imagined would sink them, His chariot of deliverance. Having quieted their fears raised by His approach, and pitied Peter's weak faith by giving him the sign he asked, viz., to walk on the water, and saved him when that weakness showed itself in fear of sinking, at length Jesus enters the ship, and all is calm. *It was enough that He was there*; and they worshipped Him.

His presence calmed *that* storm, and allayed *their* fears. This is *our* toiling time, and Christ's time for intercession, sympathy, and deliverance. "Yet a little, very little while, and the Coming One shall *come*, and will not tarry." May we trust, hope, and patiently wait.

On the occasion in Mark iv. 37, Jesus was present, but asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship. The wind arose and raised the waves, and these aroused fears in all hearts but one. Jesus slept, perhaps from fatigue (for He was very man); but we are sure it was to test their faith and display His power. It was not

the sleep of indifference, nor such as Jonah slept; neither was it to distress His companions in the ship; but, like the man's birth in blindness (John ix.), "for the glory of God, that the works of God might be manifested."

The disciples awoke Him, saying, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Alas! what words, "Carest thou not?" Unworthy thoughts to have of such a friend! "We perish!"—an impossibility with Jesus in the ship. As well say that the Church will perish in her storms below. Then Christ must fail, for nought can separate them; He the head, they the body, together constituting the perfect man, "the Christ." (1 Cor. xii. 12.)

He arose, and as His presence sufficed for their safety, He quickly proved that His word was enough for calm and peace. He stilled the tempest, and quietly chid them for their fears. May we grow more skilful in the life of faith, on the Son of God—trust Him at all times, and be saved from every unworthy thought of Him who loved us unto death.

All this, I judge, had its answer in their subsequent spiritual condition and experience during their Master's absence in the grave. To that period He referred when He said, "A little while"—*i.e.* from the moment at which He spoke—"and ye shall not see me." (John xvi. 16–23.) He would be in the grave—answering to sleep; and "again, a little while" (from His burial), "and ye shall see me;" *i.e.* in resurrection. The little while of His absence was the time of their sorrow, but of the world's rejoicing. The resurrection would disappoint the world, but restore to them their joy for ever. "Your joy no man taketh from you." This He illustrated by the travail pains of woman, and the joy of birth. He taught them the same lesson when He said, "I will not leave you orphans; I *will come*;" and He did so in resurrection. Again, the little while of His absence on the Father's throne is the Church's

time of sorrow and conflict; but He will soon see us all again, and *our* hearts shall rejoice, but *chiefly* His, and that for ever.

The next example of this truth, *Christ all-sufficient*, which I will notice, is in Mark ix. 14-19. The Lord Jesus on His return from the mount of transfiguration found His disciples involved in a difficulty with the questioning scribes, a discussion in which, viewed from a natural stand-point, they would be silenced. In Christ's absence, a man had brought to the disciples his son possessed of a devil; but they could not cast him out. Respecting this failure the scribes and Pharisees drew them into discussion, possibly concerning the cause of that failure, and perhaps taunted them. However that may have been, Jesus at the very suited moment arrived, put Himself between the disciples and the scribes, took up the question, sheltered His disciples, reprov'd the nation for their unbelief, and cast out the devil, again proving that His presence was sufficient.

Again, what a bright illustration of this we see in Bethany, in that happy, favoured family of three, all beloved of Jesus; for "Jesus loved *Martha*, and her sister, and *Lazarus*," and they loved Him in return.

Often, doubtless, when He returned from Jerusalem, weary and sad with His day's service there, did they refresh His body with their hospitality, and His spirit by their love. For Him Bethany, "the house of the afflicted," had charms, and He had charms for the three. It was as the garden of lilies to Him. (Cant. vi. 2.) When absent He was missed (as every saint should be), but especially so on this occasion; for while He was away sickness entered, and death and sorrow followed. Jesus the Healer and the Life was not there.

All this was for a purpose—the display of resurrection-power, preceded by groans and tears, redemption's type. I might say much on the Master's ways on the

occasion, and on the difference between His thoughts and speech and those of the disciples and others; but that is not my object. Let us observe that it was enough that He was there.

He was not there when Lazarus died; and Martha and Mary said truly, "If thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Nor did He return to the house while it was the house of death and sorrow; for Martha, her sister, and friends went out to Jesus, and all in company went to the grave. Listening to their speech, He responded to their tears by groans and weeping. Again He groaned, and then with the voice of power called forth, *to them* the dead, *to Him* the sleeping one. Yes, death—which came not into His presence—there, as in Jairus's house, and at the bier at Nain, owned His presence as the resurrection and the life, and gave place. The scene was changed. Lazarus was restored; the family circle was again complete; the sisters' tears were dried; the sympathizing friends were glad. Jesus too rejoiced; for He had said, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me." And His next recorded visit to the house was to sup, when the resurrection-man sat at the table, Martha served, and Mary anointed His feet. Surely we see again that His presence was enough—Christ all-sufficient.

Passing over, although *not forgetting nor slighting* the solemn scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, let us next consider the circumstances, thoughts, and feelings of the apostles and disciples during the little while of their Master's absence in death and the grave. Their circumstances were those of bereaved and scattered ones, and they were the subjects of disappointment and sorrow. They had, as they supposed, lost Him for whom they had given up and left their little all, and that in hope of the kingdom, with its distinction and honour. They understood not the cross, nor the resurrection (Luke xviii. 34); they were sorrowful, while the world rejoiced; they refused to be comforted,

because He was not. The women too, in their love and ignorance, wept disconsolate; and Mary said to her undiscovered Lord—seen, but not discerned—“Tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away.” But the other little while of which He had spoken to them passed, and they saw Him again, and their hearts rejoiced.

Mary Magdalene first, then the two going to Emmaus, and in the evening of the same day the assembled disciples proved the reality of His presence and its power: “Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.” It was enough that He was in their midst.

After such sights and greetings, first as disciples, then as witnesses, having been breathed on, endowed, and commissioned, one would scarcely have expected anything but steadfastness and patient waiting for their Master; but not so. Tried by His absence, they failed in patience, and Peter, with six of his brethren, returned to their occupation, Peter taking the lead, saying, “I go a fishing.” They went and toiled, toiled all night, but caught nothing; and no marvel, for the Master had not sent them. Unbelief prompted Peter, and his influence led the rest. The Master had called them from their boats and nets to catch men, to fish for souls. He had cared for them, and that so perfectly as to be able to say, “Lacked ye anything?” and they were obliged to answer, “No.” But they appear to have forgotten this, and they fished, yet in vain, because without His command and presence.

They were not steadfast; but He was faithful. Having loved them, He loved them to the end, and therefore He again appeared to them. In the morning He stood on the shore, and put the pointed, touching question, “Children, have ye any meat?”

Endearing title and gentle tone, “Children”—yet stirring question—“have ye any meat?” as if to say, For you to fish unbidden is fruitless toil. Then, to show His power, He bade them cast their net on the

right side of the ship. They did so, and found. They landed, and the first thing that caught the eye was a fire of coals, fish thereon, and bread—a meal provided for them; but without their aid. Thrice-blessed teacher! who taught by deeds as well as by words. Himself, yes, He, the Lord in resurrection, had provided food and dressed it, and as He invited them to dine, seemed to say, Why go a-fishing? See how I now, as ever, have been caring for you. The entire scene is marked by solemn teaching to Peter and the rest; but blended with encouragement. Yet His presence sufficed to gather and to comfort them.

Having considered the blessed Master and Lord as in the days of His flesh, at different times and in different places, under various circumstances and connected with different persons, and found that He was all-sufficient; remembering also that His presence is as real now as then, real to faith, and that He is ever the same, let us, beloved in the Lord, learn to deal directly with Him, and with the Father through Him. Whatever the circumstances may be, whoever the agents employed, may we rise above all to Himself; then we also shall prove Christ all-sufficient. H. H.

PENTECOST; OR, THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT, POWER, AND MINISTRY.

(Continued from page 208.)

WE have already noticed the types of Pentecost, and the "promise of the Father" connected with it, and we now have to contemplate the fulfilment of the promise as given in the Acts of the Apostles. During forty days the Lord had "shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs," and in His last words to His disciples He "commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have

heard of me: for John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." "Ye shall receive power," He added, "after the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Having spoken these parting words to the little band of His disciples, He ascended into heaven, and after ten days the all-important promise was fulfilled in the pouring out of the Spirit from on high. "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come they were all with one accord in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

In explanation of this, which excited the wonder of all who saw and heard it, Peter says: "This Jesus" (whom they had slain) "hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear." Christ had not only been raised from the grave, but had been exalted to the highest heavens, and there at the right hand of God, He received the Spirit, which, as the result of His death and resurrection, He now pours out upon His people, in which they are baptized into one body, of which He is the Head, and they the members.

The outward circumstances in which they were found deserve notice; for we are told they were "all with one accord in one place." When God works there is harmony between the outward and the inward. They who were "in one place" were so "with one

accord," and while thus together they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, the whole house being also filled with the rushing mighty wind from heaven.

This is at once characteristic. The action of the Holy Spirit was not only to be an individual power, as a tongue of fire resting on each, but was also corporate and collective, uniting into one whole those who henceforth were to know themselves as one in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; and who, having the one Spirit, were henceforth to be of "one accord" and of "one mind" in testimony and service here on earth.

Let us mark a little minutely what is said of this pentecostal manifestation. The first point indicated is the "sound," the echo (*ηχος*), from heaven. It was as if the bells of gold had given their utterance from the High-priestly robe of Him who as King and Priest had entered in within the vail, and it was echoed from above, and was to be re-echoed forth in the ministry of the gospel of the grace of God. This voice from heaven was characterized further as like a rushing mighty wind; that is, as Alford explains it, it was as of a violent breathing, or blowing, borne onward, which accompanied the descent of the Spirit. In the breathing or blowing (*πνοη*, translated *breath*, Acts xvii. 25) we are reminded of similar expressions indicative of divine power (Gen. iii. 7; Exod. xv. 10), where the breath of God comes forth for quickening or for destruction; and the word "borne onward" (*φερομενος*) speaks of its irresistible force—carrying all before it, and is applied by Peter in his second epistle (i. 21) to the action of the Spirit on the prophets, who were *borne along* (*φερουμενοι*) to utter, not their words, but God's.

Further, there was not only the sound that met the ear, and the wind that filled the house, but the sight that met the eye; there were seen cloven or divided tongues of fire, and they sat upon each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. The

tongues of fire remind us of one of the features of the new-covenant baptism, which was to be "in (εν) the Holy Ghost, and fire." (Matt. iii. 11.) Fire is everywhere used as a symbol of the irresistible power and holiness of God, and the tongue is brought into prominence as indicating the ministry which was to be in word and in power from Him who is the Word made flesh. To speak worthily of Him, tongues of fire (*i.e.* of holiness, of light, and of power), fitly describe what was needed for such a ministry.

The wind and the fire, indicating the presence and power of God, remind us of what is said of the angels in Psalm civ. 4: "Who maketh His angels spirits (or winds), and His ministers a flaming fire?" That which there marks God's overruling hand in the outer creation, marks it here in the new creation, in the advent of the Holy Ghost; and He who walketh on the wings of the wind, and who covereth Himself with light as with a garment in the physical world, in the Holy Spirit comes no less near, and is no less present in the assembly of His saints, turning the upper room in Jerusalem into the very vestibule of heaven, as the manger in Bethlehem had been turned before, by the presence of God manifest in the flesh; and we can say with Jacob, "How dreadful" (*i.e.* deserving of reverence and godly fear) "is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." (Gen. xxviii. 17.) Truly Acts ii. presents to us the house of God, the heavenly Bethel, so very near to heaven itself, that it is as its very gate.

The only other feature to be noticed is the speaking "with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." This is most significant. The confusion of tongues in Babel, and the call of Abraham, although more than three hundred years apart, are connected together; for the separating of the families of the earth into distinct "peoples and tongues" led to the calling out of Abraham to be the father of a nation

around which the halo of sanctity was to rest, as God's exclusive and special possession; hence the oft-repeated expression "holy people," "holy city," "holy hill," "holy land," &c.; all else was unclean, and the Mosaic economy came in to surround this people, their land, and their worship with laws and enactments that were to keep them separate from all peoples. The Hebrew language was the holy tongue in which God had ever addressed Israel, but seldom speaking in Gentile tongue to Gentile nations. Now all is to be changed. The narrow wall is broken down, and every man hears the wonderful works of God spoken in his own tongue wherein he was born. The judgment on Babel was not to be removed, but grace is to triumph over it, and again to make out of many peoples and languages one people—"a holy nation." Well might all stand amazed, and well might the hatred of a national Judaism, conscious of the fact that God was speaking to mankind outside the Jewish circle, seek to destroy what they would not receive, and mocking say, of that which overthrew their established boundaries, "These men are full of new wine."

All this indicates a new dispensation, one wherein the Spirit was to be poured upon high and low, young and old, and no longer to be restricted to prophet, or priest, or king, but to come upon all flesh—an earnest of that time yet future, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.

But, as we read Acts ii., what may especially surprise us is the contrast between the Peter of Pentecost and the Peter of the gospels. Here is the same man, but how changed! He had preached before; had healed the sick and cast out devils; but now he is instinct with a new life—his tongue is all fire, his heart burns, and his words fall with the power of God upon his hearers. What a mighty change has Pentecost wrought! and by this change the real character of the

pentecostal outpouring may be judged, and the magnitude of the results produced may be estimated. The hearers are pricked in the heart, and say to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's answer is, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you" (Jews), "and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Gentiles), "even as many as the Lord our God shall call." (*vv.* 38, 39.)

We would especially call attention to the moral and spiritual power exhibited on this wonderful birthday of the church, raising those under its influence, from childhood to manhood, and from feebleness and weakness to dignity and courage; and that not by a slow process of education, but by a miraculous inflowing of that mighty agent poured out by God so richly—the Holy Ghost given as the birthright of the Son of God, and the purchase of His death-agonies.

Let us now take a passing look at the miraculous powers connected with this outpouring of the Spirit. As has been remarked, miracles had been performed by our Lord and by His apostles before Pentecost; but now the miracles assume a different character in the hands of those empowered to perform them, and they are accompanied with a demonstration from above, which spoke of a risen and glorified Christ, by whom at Pentecost His church had been baptized. The healing of the cripple by Peter and John illustrates this, producing the bitter opposition from the priests and scribes, and hence when loosed from confinement the apostles meet to pray, and ask the Lord to give them boldness to speak the word, and that signs and wonders may be done in the name of the "holy child Jesus." This latter request was answered in chap. v. 12-16, when the sick were brought into the street that the shadow of Peter passing might fall on them, and

also from all the country around, and "were healed every one." So also we read of Stephen, that he was "full of grace and power," and "did great wonders and miracles among the people." These miraculous powers, however, were nothing new; but the "grace and power" shown in them were altogether new, and fulfilled the words of our Lord, "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;" for the Spirit had been poured out, because Jesus had been glorified.

There are in the Acts four distinct occasions on which the Spirit is represented as coming down on believers, and only four. First, in Jerusalem, on the Jews and Jewish proselytes, as we have already seen; second, on the Samaritans (ch. viii.); third, on the Gentiles in Cæsarea (ch. x.); and fourth, on John's disciples at Ephesus (ch. xix. 1-7). In the case of the Samaritans we find that, after their conversion through Philip's teaching, the apostles went down and laid hands on them, "and they received the Holy Ghost." In the case of the Gentiles there was no laying on of hands at all, but the Spirit fell on them, and they spake with tongues. In that of John's disciples, Paul baptizes them in the name of Jesus, and then lays hands on them, and "the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

In viewing these different cases, we would point out the peculiar character of each.

That which happened on the day of Pentecost must be regarded as representing the whole church of God, and linking that church in resurrection life with Christ, forming thereby one body, into which were afterwards to be gathered in one, all who throughout the dispensation were to become members of Christ.

In regard to the case of the Samaritans we have to remember our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria: "Salvation is of the Jews." They regarded their mountain, near which, at Shiloh, the tabernacle had

rested so long, as possessing equal or greater sanctity than Jerusalem; and in their enmity to the Jews, ignored their claims. These claims the Samaritan converts, having to wait the arrival of Peter, must own; for he was to be the appointed channel by whom they were to be received into the pentecostal church of Christ.

On the other hand, the Jewish prejudices in regard to the Gentiles were so strong, that God, in the case of those in Cæsarea (contrary to the custom elsewhere), shed on them the Spirit, and gave them to speak with tongues, even before they had been baptized at all, thereby showing to the Jews in Jerusalem that the wall of partition that separated Jew from Gentile was to be for ever broken down in Christ. Of the importance of this to the church of God, the whole history of her early contests and struggles in the Acts and Epistles bears witness—struggles which have reached down to the days in which we live.

As to the disciples of John, they might have claimed a position of their own, and hence regarded John's baptism as sufficient to introduce them into the Christian church, and to secure to them all its privileges. This is set aside by Paul's first baptizing the twelve disciples at Ephesus with water in the name of the Lord Jesus; after which, by the laying on of his hands, the Holy Ghost came on them.

In looking at the history of the facts touching the outpouring of the Spirit, we cannot but see that the pentecostal effusion in Jerusalem is to be regarded as dispensational, and not as confined to those only on whom it came, or to be transferred by apostolic hands from one to another. Those who believed in Jesus, and were baptized into His name, were told by Peter that they should "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost," even as they themselves (the apostles) had; and there is not the slightest intimation that the apostles laid hands on any for that purpose in Jerusalem; nor

is there in the teaching of our Lord anything to lead to the thought that such would be necessary. All we read on the subject in the gospels points to the risen Head of the Church as the One who would receive the promise from the Father, and would pour out as a stream of life and power from heaven that communication of the Holy Ghost, which from that moment would dwell in the living spiritual temple, as really as did the fire from heaven continue to burn on the tabernacle or temple altar after it had once come down from God.

For especial purposes the fire might come down again and again, and so had there been several outpourings of the Spirit; but the gift from heaven was never to be withdrawn, but to abide with the church for ever. We can therefore only regard the *visible* outpouring at Cæsarea and Samaria as exceptional repetitions of what had taken place in Jerusalem, and designed for special purposes, which passed away with the occasion. We have learned the lesson through them that they were given to teach; but God would *not* have us learn that after receiving Christ by faith, we have to wait for something, or some person, to lead us into the fuller blessing of the gift of the Spirit of God—a misconception which has done incalculable mischief in the church, and has led many to look and to wait for something yet to come, instead of laying hold by faith on what has been given already.

We shall see clearly that this is the teaching of Scripture when we come to consider Pentecost in the light of the clearer teachings in the epistles, and in the further unfolding of all those gifts of the Spirit whereby those who receive them are fitted for the work to which Christ has called them in His body, the Church.

H. G.

GOD AND HIS WORD;

OR, THE BELIEVER'S RESOURCES.

"I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."—ACTS xx. 32.

SUCH sentences of Scripture as the above are precious in themselves as inspired utterances; but their aptness and beauty are the more manifest by reason of the connection in which they stand, being supplied by the Holy Ghost for the special occasion and circumstances. God takes pleasure in displaying the beauty and power of His word in the midst of human ignorance, sorrow, difficulty, and need.

To have wealth, to know it, and have power to use it, is the highest ambition of most men of this world. But for a man to be rich, and yet under the delusion that he is poor, and will die in the workhouse, how wretched! For a child of God to know his riches, and use them, how blessed! But the effect of ignorance and unbelief on the soul is similar to that of the delusion of the millionaire. May we grow in the knowledge of our riches in Christ, and in skill to use them.

In this Scripture the Holy Ghost reminds us of our resources, and points us to the need for them. God *and* HIS WORD, not God without the Word, nor the Word apart from God, but God *and* the Word of His grace. God first. The value of the Word consists in this: it reveals God, and the design of that revelation is to bring us to Himself. When brought to God we value His word, and exclaim with the psalmist, "In God will I praise His word."

This name God is all-comprehensive, implying the full deity; and its connection here is beautiful. I think I see divine guidance in this, that the man who from the day of his conversion had to do immediately with the Lord Jesus should commend believers to God; *i.e.*

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Had he said, "to the Lord," *i.e.* the Son, we should have concluded that he associated the Father and the Holy Ghost in his mind; for whichever is at any time prominent, the other blessed persons are in association and closest fellowship; but Paul commended them to God and His word.

All that the titles "Father," "Son," and "Holy Ghost" imply and ensure is ours, at all times and for all purposes consistent with the character and will of God. This is true of Christians individually, and also when assembled together.

These resources are sufficient for the *individual believer*.

God Himself is sufficient for his rest, satisfaction, and joy of soul, with fulness, perfection of wisdom, and power to preserve and to deliver, to work in him all that is well-pleasing in His sight by Christ Jesus. And *His word* is sufficient for instruction, for conviction, for amendment and education in righteousness, to comfort, encourage, admonish, direct, restore; in a word, to mould into the image of the Christ of God according to Rom. vi. 17. (See margin.) Hence the child of God, who delights himself in God, and heeds in all particulars His word, will be happy and preserved, walking in the paths of holiness; he will be in his measure an answer to the description given in Psalm i., and realize and exemplify the truth of Psalm xcii. 12-15; he will be independent of all changes in circumstances here, sufficient for every service to which he may be called, and superior to all his enemies and difficulties.

Of this there are many bright examples in Scripture, and it may be helpful to notice a few.

Look at Abraham; follow him through life, and you will see that when he was right with God (the only proper condition of a saint) he was happy, looking higher even than Canaan; that he was also fruitful and victorious. God gave him *Himself*—"I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward;" and also *His word*—

“I will show thee;” “I will give thee;” “I will make of thee;” and these were sufficient when enjoyed.

Moses also, when about to return to Egypt—commissioned to deliver Israel, yet shrinking from the responsibility—was thus encouraged: “Surely I will be with thee,” and “I will be with thy mouth;” God and His word; and whenever he was true to these he found them sufficient.

David too, when right-minded, proved the same; while the very sorrow and shame resulting from unbelief in God, and neglect of His word, only make it manifest by contrast. What had he when in secret he slew the lion and the bear? Jehovah. And what when he encountered Goliath and conquered? or when hunted like a partridge on the mountains? When at Ziklag, having lost all, and when his men spake of stoning him (1 Sam. xxx. 6), what had he left but God and His word? They sufficed; he encouraged himself in God, pursued his enemies, conquered, and recovered all.

What had Elijah in his day of difficulty and testimony? What during the period preceding his first appearance before the king? Surely his first words are the answer to this question: “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand;” and, “Thus saith the Lord.” He had God and His word.

What had Jeremiah and Daniel? The same.

And what had He who outshone the brightest examples, the perfect One? Listen to His words: “I live by the Father,” and “as I hear I judge.” See the result in His joy in the Father, and in His constant use of the Word to instruct His disciples, repel Satan, and confound the Jews. As you listen to His voice and trace His steps, take the Psalms as evidence of His appreciation and use of the Word. Their utterances have their perfect fulfilment in Him, as they had in measure in His type, the son of Jesse.

To this cloud of witnesses might doubtless be added our own testimony; for whenever we have held our proper position, and been in our right minds as saints, have we not proved God and His word as sufficient? And whenever our experience has been otherwise than happy, might it not be traced to forgetfulness of God, or want of simple trust in Him, together with neglect of His precious word?

Let us then, beloved, be warned, and encouraged to “*cleave* to the Lord,” and to *stick* to His testimonies. (Acts xi. 23; Ps. cxix. 31.)

If it is thus with individual believers, so also is it with *assemblies of Christians*.

The same resources are open and sufficient for them when gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus. *His presence* is pledged to them, and that presence includes and ensures all they may need. They have also *the Word* as the voice of God to them, whether in doctrine, precept, promise, or admonition, in history or prophecy. Saints truly gathered to Him, trusting Him fully, and duly honouring His word, would certainly be preserved, and prosper.

But it may be asked, Are not gifts or gifted persons needed—such as evangelists, teachers, shepherds, &c.? Certainly; and all such, as needed, should be sought for from the Head of the body, whose presence is promised to those gathered to His name.

All this the name God comprehends; all that Paul enumerates in 1 Corinthians xii. 4-7—the SPIRIT, with diversity of gifts; the LORD, with His different administrations; and God, working all in all. Saints commended to God are commended to the fulness of divine resources, to be ministered to them according to their need.

Gifts have their place and use, and hence their value; yet Paul could show to the gifted Corinthians a more excellent way of edification; viz., the walk of *true love*. Gifts exercised out of communion with God

are not only as dry breasts to the hungry babe, but instruments of mischief and sorrow. As given by Christ, and used for Him, they are blessed helps, and as such should be desired and valued; nevertheless in the assemblies of believers simple faith in God, and appreciation and use of the Word of His grace, will edify and preserve.

If any company of saints lacks, yet desires these helps, let them really trust God and use His word, which they have, making known their requests to the blessed Head of the body, who delights to nourish the members; and they may reckon on the faithfulness of God to supply their need and edify them. He will keep their fellowship for them, and bless them; and although they may not have the bright gifts among them which others have, yet walking in truth and love they will prosper.

But it may be said that those whom Paul commended to God and the word of His grace were elders (afterwards called bishops or overseers—*v.* 28), and that they possessed gifts, miraculous powers, not now discernible in the Church. Most true; but they were so commended, in order to take heed to the flock and feed the Church. This they could only do by leading those saints, through the Word, from themselves to God, and by directing their own walk according to His word. Thus walking, their hearers would be their imitators, and they would trust and walk in fellowship with them. (1 Thess. i. 5–8.) As to the miraculous gifts, for some of them at least, I judge there is now no place, as the gospel which was then attested by them is *in name* now acknowledged.

God and His word are still sufficient for and free to all who trust Him, whether in their individual path or in assembling together. We have only therefore on our part to be true, and we shall find the apostle's commendation to be enough for every godly purpose.

H. H.

"THE APPLE OF THE EYE."

WHAT a precious expression of the unspeakably tender love of God! How richly God uses every emblem and every comparison to make us know somewhat more of how He loves! A father's pity for his children (Ps. ciii. 13); a father's still greater tenderness to a "son that serves him" (Mal. iii. 17); more still, a mother's love to "her own sucking child," and the compassion she feels to "the son of her womb" (Isa. xlix. 15); all these are used to teach us God's feelings for His people in their sorrows; and a bridegroom's joy over his bride is God's comparison for His delight in their blessing.

But more is said than even this. Our care of our ourselves is used to teach us how dear we are to Him. "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. v. 29, 30), is Paul's precious way of teaching us the reality and tenderness of divine love.

And what part of all our tender frame do we guard more watchfully than we do "the apple of the eye"? And in what part do we more keenly feel the intrusion of but a single grain of sand? There is no rest till we get it out. Yet this is given us to teach us how tenderly He feels toward us, and how promptly any injury done to us touches Him. We are to Him—oh, wondrous truth!—as the very "apple of His eye." What a preparation are all such Old Testament teachings for Jesus' own words—"Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 23.)

"So nigh, so very nigh to God,
Nearer we cannot be;
For in the person of His Son
We are as near as He.

“So dear, so very dear to God,
 More dear we cannot be;
 The love wherewith He loves His Son,
 Such is His love to me.”

This comparison of “the apple of the eye” is not used often in the affectionate language of the Old Testament; but, as if to show how it *abides* in God’s heart of love, the three places of its use stretch from the books of Moses to the prophet Zechariah, and thus cover the whole period from the days of Israel’s youth as a nation to the time of but a remnant returning out of Babylon. Through it all they were to Him as “the apple of His eye.”

Moses is the first to use it (Deut. xxxii. 10) when he is describing all the care with which he had himself witnessed God’s way of nourishing and guarding His Israel in the wilderness. “He kept him,” says Moses, “as the apple of His eye.” And what less could Moses say of HIM who had shaded Israel by day with His cloud, and with it had cheered them by night? who had gently dropped on them His manna, and had followed them with His stream from the rock? who had on their behalf turned back the sword of Amalek, and had made the would-be cursing of Balak and Balaam to be but as the flying bird which passes over and does not pounce? (see Prov. xxvi. 2) whose “gentleness,” in short, “had made them great” (Ps. xviii. 35); or as Paul puts it, “He suffered their manners” (Greek, perhaps, “He nourished them as a nurse nourisheth her child”) “in the wilderness”? (Acts xiii. 18.) No wonder that Moses’ heart so joyed in God, and said that God’s strength was as “eagles’ wings” bearing them, and His tenderness was a keeping of them as “the apple of His eye.”

And in his death Moses individually found it so; for he sank to his rest on mount Nebo without either pain or weakness (see Deut. xxxiv. 7); and when

dead, it was God Himself in His own tenderness who buried him.

David is the next to use the same figure. Ages had elapsed, and Israel had too well fulfilled in their history the prophetic song of warning which Moses before his death had sung and written for them in Deuteronomy xxxii. But God was still the same, and this faith always knows. Persecuting Saul was on the throne of Israel, and the nation was groaning under the monarch of their own blinded choice, whom God had given them "in His anger," and was ere long to take away "in His wrath." (Hosea xiii. 11.)

And this was the time for David to plead with God all he had learned from Moses of God's perfect tenderness, and he does it in Psalm xvii. 8. "Keep me," he says, "as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings."

What perfect comfort for him at a time of such bitter trial! Saul's javelin might aim at David's life, but David knew himself to be dear to God, even as the very "apple of His eye." And as the ready eyelid drops and guards in a moment the pupil of the eye from the hurtful object so near, and just about to touch it, so did God make the mountain at "Selahammahlekoth" and the darkness of the cave at Engedi (1 Sam. xxiii. and xxiv.) to be as His eyelid for David's protection.

"Why should I ever careful be
Since such a God is mine?
He watches o'er me night and day,
And tells me, 'Mine is thine.'"

But David, having "served his own generation by the will of God" in these precious things of faith and patience, "fell asleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." Generations of Israel succeeded him in a still darkening course of sin against their God, till, even when chastened by years of captivity in

Babylon, they only became Babylonish, and only some fifty thousand cared to return to their own land.

Yet “nothing changeth God’s affection;” and it is for the help of this little remnant that He raises up Haggai and Zechariah as prophets, and sends words by them of as much tenderness and love as of old by Moses, when He loved Israel in her youth (Jer. ii. 2)—words, if possible, even more tender and encouraging.

The feeble remnant needed to see that the arms of Jehovah’s unchanged and unchanging love were ready to receive them when they freed themselves from Babylon, and returned to their desolated city and land; and that though Tobiah the Ammonite and Sanballat would hate them and oppose them, they would still be dear to HIM as “the apple of His eye;” and this is just what God, through Zechariah, assured them. “Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts: After the glory hath He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you *toucheth the apple of His eye.*” (Zech. ii. 7, 8.)

The feeble remnant, that is, of later days, was just as much the object of His tender care as the whole “seed of Abraham His friend” (Isa. xli. 8) had been in their youngest and freshest days.

What an encouragement to them to go forward and build the wall of their city, and the temple of their God, and to cleanse themselves—both priests and people—for its worship!

And so with us in our fuller and richer dispensation. “Seven candlesticks of gold” is Christ’s emblem for the churches of His saints in that last book of Scripture—the book that most tells of Babylon evil; and when they no longer listen as churches, the same words of love and cheer are to be the portion of him “that hath an ear,” whoever it be among His own. The dragon may seek to devour the woman, and failing in that, may “make war against the remnant of her seed,

which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. xii. 17), but they still are tenderly precious and dear to Him as "the apple of His eye;" and neither the power of the dragon can destroy them, nor the subtleties of the "false prophet" deceive them.

"What cheering words are these!
 Their sweetness who can tell?
 In time and to eternal days,
 'Tis with the righteous well.

"In every state secure,
Kept as Jehovah's eye,
 'Tis well with them while life endures,
 And well if called to die."

One other passage remains where "the apple of the eye" is spoken of, and we may well put it over against these already dwelt upon; for surely God's watchful and exquisitely tender care of us as His saints should move us to treasure up, and to watch over and obey, with equal tenderness of heart, all His revealed mind and will; and this is just what the passage in question (Prov. vii. 1-4) teaches us to do: "My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as *the apple of thine eye*. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman; that they may keep thee."

How suggestive! God's perfect and tender care of us frees us from all earthly care that we may delight ourselves in His law (see Ps. i. 2), and meditate in it "day and night;" yea, that we may treasure His word somewhat as He in His love counts us as His treasure. Let it be to us the apple of our eye, since His love makes us and all our matters to be to Him "the apple of His eye." (Comp. Matt. vi. 31-33.)

Balak and Balaam found they could not curse even

the "utmost part" of God's Israel (see Num. xxiii. 13), not even the outmost edge of them, so dear were they all to God, even as "the apple of His eye." Oh that we might henceforth guard with equal jealousy every "jot and tittle," every precept, and every promise of the word of His grace! As dear as we all are to Him, so dear should it all be to us.

No wonder Paul said to Timothy, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. . . . Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them." He knew how dear the Church is to Christ, and every labourer in it; and he wished all guides in it, and all the flock they guided, to recompense that loving care of Christ by a love in return that kept His words.

If His commandment is to us as our life, and His law as the "apple of our eye," we shall then indeed "say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and shall call understanding our kinswoman;" and we shall know the truth of our Lord's reply to Judas (not Iscariot): "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv. 23.)

H. D.

UNION.—Those who have no bond of union but Christ, and the Word, and the Spirit, will always *seem* un-united in the eyes of organising, arranging man. "What do these feeble Jews?" will always be the contempt in which true builders will be held by such. And more than this: we shall always be liable to much discouragement from within; the rubbish will *seem* to us so much, and the stones so hard to get out. *But* we triumph still in God, our God; and if it overcomes us, since it cannot overcome Him, we will still cry, "Victory," even with our latest breath.

A DINNER OF HERBS WITH LOVE.

Notes of Remarks at Leominster Conference, August, 1876.

LET us consider Prov. xv. 16, 17 in connection with a few words in the epistles to Timothy and Titus.

I fear we have often sacrificed to the sumptuousness of our table the *love* that is the most important thing of all.

The first thing we have to cultivate is love, and this is equally true whether for ourselves individually, or for assemblies; but how strong is the tendency in all of us to think first about the portion we are to feed upon, instead of the state of soul that will enable us to profit by it. The Lord does not want to stint us, He is ready to give us the stalled ox when we are able to bear it; but rich food will profit us little, without that love in our souls which will make even simple herbs a precious portion.

It takes very little of the sincere milk of the Word to make saints fat. A crumb apiece was enough to feed multitudes, but it had first passed through the Master's hands; and as that was the secret of its marvellous sufficiency then, so must it be with all our ministry now.

In small meetings where there is little gift, God's children are often found complaining, and asking, "What have we here?" Oh, if the little gift be but passed through the Master's hands, it will be found blessedly sufficient for feeding the souls of His saints!

There is nothing more dangerous than going after sumptuous feasts; for if that be our object, we are but too ready to sacrifice both love and truth for the coveted enjoyment.

Now with these thoughts I wish to link three prominent words in the epistles to Timothy and Titus—"faith," "a good conscience," and "the Word."

In these epistles the word "*faith*" seems to have a peculiar significance. All through the epistle to the Romans *faith* signifies that wherewith I lay hold, but here the word is used in an objective sense, as the thing on which I lay hold. Now there is no greater danger than a separation between the clear grasp of the objective *faith* and a *good conscience*. The one without the other is like a ship with all sails set and no ballast, and the sure consequence will be shipwreck, not indeed as to salvation, but as to virtue, honour, faithfulness, and fruitfulness.

The greater the grasp God has given us of truth objectively, the more important is it that it should go deep down into our consciences. A little with the fear of the Lord is better than all dainties, and Satan coming in to mar.

Look at 1 Tim. i. 19, 20: "Holding *faith*, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning *faith* have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymenæus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme." God has not revealed to us the particular line of false teaching or blasphemy here referred to, lest we should limit the application to an isolated case. There is no greater blasphemy than to *talk high* and *live low*, and yet how common this is, when a good conscience is not as diligently and humbly maintained as that growth in knowledge which all are prone mainly to covet.

Israel made the name of God to be blasphemed among the heathen, because, while bearing the name of Jehovah, they lived worse than the very heathen themselves.

A very little will cause His name to be blasphemed; and because we are careless in small things, God suffers us to fall in great things. He cares very much for our honour, and the remembrance of this ought to stir us up to care for God's honour.

It is said of John Wesley that on one occasion, being

urged to defend himself from the accusations of some who had traduced him, he replied, "When I gave myself to the Lord I did not keep back my reputation." So if we are jealous for God's name in all we do, we can leave Him to take care of ours.

Let us be very careful that we do not confound such a leaving of our reputation in God's hands with indifference as to the way in which the world may regard our conduct. We cannot overestimate the mischief that has been done through Christians saying "I don't care what the world thinks of me." But let us remember that if a man has not a good report of them that are without, we have no right to countenance him in any ministry. Let us not allow an unwise charity towards those who say they are God's servants to make us forgetful of the faithfulness to God Himself that is first required of us.

Compare for a moment 1 Tim. iii. 9, "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience," with that chapter on "love," 1 Cor. xiii. A rightly-exercised conscience will be under the power of love. God would not have us undervalue any of the gifts and virtues spoken of in this chapter, but He would certainly have us understand that it is better to come short in any of these than in love; so that in regard to all such rich endowments of the Holy Ghost we must still say, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith."

Those who would take the place of ministry must hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience, and they must be proved men. Those who help on unproved men must share in the responsibility of all the mischief that ensues. Oh for the common-sense in these things that would be exercised by a man of business in the things of this life! I would not trust the building of my house to any man who strayed into the town calling himself an architect, and why should I commit the solemn work of preaching the gospel or

teaching saints to any untried man, merely because he styles himself an evangelist or a teacher?

We shall find in the end that the greatest common-sense consists in implicit obedience to the word of God in everything, and in the matter before us a remembrance of the command, “Let these also first be proved,” would deliver us from many a sad mistake.

I may sum up in this threefold exhortation,

Hold the faith (1 Tim. i. 19);

Hold a good conscience (1 Tim. iii. 9);

Hold the Word (Titus i. 9);

and would only add in conclusion, that when God's children are complaining that they have a poor table, if they would but cry to Him for a richer sense of His love in their hearts, they would soon have to own that their simple dinner of herbs is a rich and satisfying portion.

H. G.

“LOVEST THOU ME?”

JOHN xxi. 15.

Two sat and heard the Lord;
One on His breast reclined;
The other, conquered by his sin,
Had treason in his mind.

Both had long known the Lord;
Walked with Him day by day;
And John was ready now to serve,
But Judas to betray.

Two met in Simon's house;
One took the judgment seat;
The other, won by Jesus' love,
Wept contrite at His feet.

And in His presence now,
With saints around His board,
There are who as His people sit,
Whose hearts have sold the Lord.

Oh, search my heart, O Lord!
Draw it to things above,
That I with truth may humbly say,
Thou knowest Whom I love!

M. W.

PENTECOST; OR, THE SPIRIT'S ADVENT, POWER, AND MINISTRY.

(Continued from page 252.)

WE have already considered Pentecost as foreshadowed by the types and prophecies of the Old Testament; we have looked at it as the great "promise" of the Gospels, and we have also seen its fulfilment as recorded in the Acts; we have now to see the further light which the teaching of the Epistles gives on this most important subject.

In the first chapter of the epistle to the Ephesians Paul unfolds the mystery of the Church of God, looking backwards to "the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord," and onwards to "the dispensation of the fulness of times" in the ages to come; and he links together the past and the future by the present, pointing to the death of Christ, and to the operations of the Holy Ghost, as the foundation and means by which the great consummation is to be brought about.

In chapter i. 13, 14, he writes: "In whom also (*i.e.* Christ), having believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." This text is very comprehensive, connecting the presence of the Spirit in the Church with the promises given by our Lord in the gospel of John, and with the full redemption in the future, of which the Spirit is the earnest. The Spirit of Pentecost is to remain with us and in us till we are "presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24), according to the "promise of Christ by the gospel."

It is of fundamental importance to us that we hold clearly, not only that the Spirit of God is with us, as He was with the Old Testament saints, but that He is

with us and *in* us, according to the promise of Pentecost, to fulfil in us all that our Saviour told the disciples He would accomplish for them, as that other "Comforter," till the Lord should come in person to receive us unto Himself.

In the contemplation of this, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Now He which stablisheth us with you unto Christ" (*eis*, not *ev*; that is, having as its object the forming of Christ in you), "and hath anointed us is God; who hath also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." (2 Cor. i. 21, 22). It may be painfully true, that neither as individuals nor as assemblies do we realize much of this mighty establishment for which the anointing and sealing of the Spirit is given; but we must not belie the precious truth that it is ours in its fulness, whether it be realized much or little. God's promise has not failed, though our faith in it may, and we may need to be reminded that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

It is, alas! true that many seek to excuse their weakness, on the ground of some supposed change in the dispensation; and others, who boast much in the Spirit's abiding presence, know but little of His inward power. Still, God's gifts and callings are without repentance; and this is illustrated by God's words, through Haggai, to the believing remnant returned from Babylon. To them the power of the dispensation must indeed have seemed to have failed; but God remained, and therefore His word was, "I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: *according to the word* that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so *my Spirit remaineth* among you: fear ye not." (Hag. ii. 4, 5.) God linked the Israel of that day with the Israel that came out of Egypt. They were united in the same covenant, enjoyed the presence of the same God; and the same Spirit who spoke in Moses dwelt among them, and was speaking in Haggai and Zechariah

then. So now, ours is the church of Pentecost, and God would speak to us in similar words, and assure us that He is with us as He was on that Pentecost day of new covenant grace and power, and that the Spirit of that day is the Spirit who now dwelleth in us, the Church of the living God, the true Israel, in one continuous indwelling.

Outward manifestations may vary, but the reality remains the same. As to any change in manifestation, we must bow to the will and wisdom of God; but as to the blessed reality of the Spirit's indwelling, we are bound to maintain our hold on the immutability of the eternal covenant, and we cannot think of failure there without denying God. Thus, while in Israel's pre-captivity period we find God manifesting Himself on their behalf by the most wonderful miraculous interventions under Moses, the Judges, and the Kings, in the post-captivity times we never hear of one miracle, but yet see the most marked providential interferences that we find in the Bible. Witness the histories given in Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. God had changed the outward character of His dealings, but the presence and protection of God were as real in one case as in the other. It is not difficult to see the reason of the change; and if there is a similar change in the manner of God's dealings with us in the present day, as compared with the Church in early days, we have not far to go for a reason. Does not the condition of things around us explain it all? and have we not, like weeping Israel on their return from captivity, to accept God's dealings, and to confess that He is righteous, and in humble gratitude to thank Him for His own presence and Spirit still, that have never failed, and that will abide to the end, according to His promise? Did we remember more from what the Church has fallen in obedience and love, we should complain less of what we have not, and with adoring gratitude thank God for what we have.

John had introduced the Messiah as the Baptizer in the Holy Ghost, and Paul tells the Corinthians that “*in* [*ev*, that is, the Spirit is not the *agent*] one Spirit *were* we all baptized [aorist tense, not the perfect] into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. xii. 13.) Without this there could be no fellowship in the Church; and to deny our baptism of the Holy Ghost, would be to deny our relationship in the body of Christ, and our standing in the Church of God; for there is now, not only one body, one Spirit, and one hope, but also one Lord, one faith, one baptism, even as there is one God and Father of all. (Eph. iv. 4-6.) We cannot possess one without possessing all; we cannot deny one without denying all; and on this sevenfold unity hangs the relation of each member of the body to the whole Church of God, till we all come unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Need we follow this further? The epistles are full of what the Spirit of God is *in* and *to* those that believe, who have therein “an unction from the Holy One, and know all things.” (See 1 John ii. 20-29.)

We must now come to the gifts and ministry of the Spirit in their relation to the Church and to the individual believer. We have seen how in the Spirit we are baptized into a body, and thus incorporated into Christ, becoming thereby “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” (Eph. v. 30.) This secures the individual relation of each member of the body to the whole, and by the present operation of the Holy Ghost each one has a band and joint of supply of nourishment from the Head, and is being fitted and prepared for its ultimate ministry and service in the kingdom, for which everything here is preparatory, and then will be manifested in each believer “that Jesus is Lord,” to the glory of God the Father.

We would call attention to the distinct relations of

“God,” “the Lord,” and “the Spirit” to the Church, as shown in 1 Cor. xii. 4–6. Much error arises, and many false principles are advocated, by confounding together what God in His word distinguishes. “There are diversities of gifts (*χαρισματα*), but the same Spirit. There are diversities of administrations (*διακονια*, ministries), but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations (*ενεργηματα*, workings), but the same God, who worketh all in all.”

The “gift” (*charisma*) is from the Spirit to the individual; but the “ministry” is from Christ to the church, as the “working all in all” is from God, who places each in the body as He will.

What then are the gifts of the Spirit above alluded to? The word *charisma* occurs in several passages, and refers (1) to the “gift” of life, and the “free gift” of God’s grace to the sinner—Rom. v. 15, 16; vi. 23; xi. 29; (2) to the various gifts bestowed by the Spirit on believers in Christ—Rom. i. 11; xii. 6; 1 Cor. i. 7; xii. 4, 9, 28, 30, 31; 1 Tim. iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 6; 1 Peter iv. 10; (3) to the natural endowments of man by God—1 Cor. vii. 7; and (4) to the pecuniary gift to the apostle for poor saints—2 Cor. i. 11.

From the use of the word in the above passages (and it occurs nowhere else in the New Testament), we ought perhaps to attach a larger signification to it than is usually accorded. Some draw too absolute a line of separation between gifts proper and natural endowments, and we would especially draw the attention of such persons to 1 Cor. vii. 7, where the use of the word *charisma* is connected with that which belongs to man by nature, apart from what is purely spiritual. Some confine “gifts” to what alone is supernatural, and hence deny the existence of gift (*charisma*) in the Church now, because there are no miraculous manifestations; and some in consequence go so far as to deny that the Church has at present any Pentecostal standing at all.

There are a few passages which give in detail what the gifts spoken of here are. In Rom. xii. 6-8 Paul enumerates them as follows: *Prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhorting, giving, ruling, shewing mercy*. In 1 Cor. xii. 20 he mentions *apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, gifts of healing, helps, governments, and diversities of tongues*. In Eph. iv.*11 we read of *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers*; and in 1 Peter iv. 11 the apostle sums them all under the two heads of *speaking and ministering*.

From the above we find the following distinct services designated "gifts," by the possession of which certain members of the Church were qualified to be (1) apostles of Christ—as distinguished from those spoken of as apostles or messengers of the churches; (2) prophets; (3) ministers; (4) evangelists; (5) teachers; (6) exhorters; (7) givers; (8) shewers of mercy; (9) rulers and pastors; (10) workers of miracles; (11) those who had gifts of healing; (12) helpers; (13) tongues. We cannot here attempt to detail the character and sphere of these several gifts, but would make a few general remarks, which we trust may be helpful towards a clearer understanding as to what "gift" really is. Among these there are five only which are essentially miraculous—apostolic ministry (in its higher sense), prophecy, working miracles, healing, and speaking with tongues.

In the bestowal of all gift, we are to regard natural endowment as an ordinary, if not a necessary, concomitant. The God who created, and the Spirit who endowed, and the Lord who appointed to the ministry of His Church, act ever in harmony; and we are to guard against the danger of supposing an antagonism between the natural creation and the spiritual. In every gift of God (or *charisma*) for the Church under the administration of the Head, regard is had to the spirit and soul and body of the possessor. For example, a woman may have a faculty for rule, but her sex

precludes its exercise as a *charisma* in the Church of God.

Natural endowment becomes a *charisma* in the new man under the anointing grace of the Holy Ghost; and thus the eloquent Apollos, who spake and taught diligently, before the way of God had been known to him, became afterwards a mighty helper in the ministry of the Church. Did the *charisma* supersede the natural eloquence? No; it used it. Did it set aside Paul's learning? No; it humbled it to the feet of Jesus, and used it for Him, when speaking to the Pharisaic Jew, or to the learned heathen of the Areopagus. The anointing of the Jewish priest rested on the members of his body; and the anointing of the Holy Ghost, which communicates the real *charisma*, anoints for heavenly use all that we are in spirit, and soul, and body, and presents it to Christ to be used as He appoints, and not as we will. On this ground the gifted woman learns to be silent in the Church, because Christ has commanded her not to speak, and she shows subjection to Him who is the Head of the body, and uses her gift in its appointed sphere.

This connection between the natural and the charismatic is seen illustrated again in the case of rule and eldership. In 1 Tim. iii. the apostle, in speaking of the qualification of an overseer or ruler in the Church of God, which is one of the gifts of the Spirit, says, "One that ruleth well his own house; for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how can he take care of the Church of God?" (*vs.* 4, 5.) There is no such thing as an *office* of rule; and the *gift* of rule lies first within the sphere of a natural qualification for rule.

Again, what is giving or showing mercy spoken of as among the precious gifts of Romans xii. but that generous, liberal, loving spirit which, as a gift of service to the Church of God, makes the possessor of it a bountiful giver or a tender nurse, wherever the fitting opportunity for their exercise presents itself?

In the church generally the idea of a *charisma* has

been set aside, and ministry has been made to depend on natural adaptation, aided by college training, the divine guidance of the various members by the Head being excluded. With not a few on the opposite side the question of the exercise of ministry has been looked at in theory as exclusively one of *direct* bestowment from the Spirit, apart altogether from natural endowment. The result has been that what is natural has been unduly depreciated, and the *charisma*, instead of being stirred up and developed by careful and prayerful exercise, has been allowed to dwindle down into a ministry that has lacked the needful training, and is therefore weak and unprofitable, although there may be an acknowledgment of dependence on the Head. In the case of the natural body there must not only be guidance of the members by the head, but the members need proper exercise for their right and profitable use. The command to stir up gift is all-important, and with it we would couple our Lord's words, "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have." (Luke viii. 18.) Without this stirring up of gift in constant preparation for use by the Head, the *charisma* becomes as the garden of the sluggard, overgrown with weeds and brambles. The sword will have lost its edge, and the stones of the sling their smoothness; and instead of God-honouring and God-honoured service in the great battle-field, we shall find Goliath not slain because the stones were not smooth, and therefore came short of the mark. We have to present to God our best, as well as to expect the best from Him, and in no sphere is this more important than in that of our service.

We would call particular attention to the pastoral epistles to Timothy and Titus, especially to the first epistle to Timothy, an epistle full of the most pressing commands, and the most searching requirements for all godly ministry, in whatever direction it may lie. Notice

Paul's words: "Till I come, give attendance (let the mind be occupied with it) to reading, to exhortation, to teaching." Surely this implies a service that was intended to cost Timothy much, in order that his "profiting might appear to all." To this end he is commanded not to neglect the gift that was in him, but to "meditate upon these things" about which Paul has written, and "to give himself wholly to them."

It was thus that he was to "study" (*i.e.* give diligence) "to shew himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim. ii. 15.)

As stated before, the Spirit bestows the gift, "dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. xii. 11); but God's place in the diversity of operations, whereby He works all in all, is not forgotten. We read, "God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it pleased Him" (v. 18); for "God hath set some in the church, first apostles," &c. (v. 28.) Thus it is that the Spirit has fitted, and God has placed, each member in its appointed place; and under "the administration of the same Lord," who is the Head of the body, those fitted by the Spirit, and set in the body by God, are directed and used.

He of whom the Son said, "A body hast Thou prepared me," is here seen setting the members in the body, and tempering the body together, so that there should be no schism in it (v. 18, 24), but that each should be "holding the Head, from which all the body, by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. ii. 19.) This relation of God to the whole, which is sadly overlooked, is alluded to by our Lord when He says, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman," even as in the family it is the Father who exercises discipline, and the Father who will for ever wipe away the tear. (Rev. vii. 17.)

Not only is the simile of the "body" used to

show us how the Pentecostal power of the Spirit from the risen Head flows into every member, but that of the *building* is also used to exemplify the same truth. "In whom" (*i.e.* Christ), says the apostle, "all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God *through the Spirit.*" (Eph. ii. 21, 22.) So Paul, writing to the Corinthians, exclaims, "What! know ye not that your body is the *temple of the Holy Ghost* which is in you, which ye have of God?" (1 Cor. vi. 19.)

What but the power of Pentecost on the believer could ever make such prayers realities, or such utterances as anything but hyperboles, as those recorded in the inspired petitions of the first and third chapters of the Ephesians, particularly the latter? We must either accept Pentecost as a mighty reality with us now, mightier far than outward manifestations and miracles would of themselves ever indicate, or the prayer becomes an objectless effusion of mighty thoughts and of heavenly and spiritual aspirations that can never be expected to lie within our grasp. It is this Pentecostal strengthening with might, by His Spirit in the inner man, that alone can enable us to enter into what follows: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." It is this that we need to realize, and for this we ought to pray; and whatever else God may see fit to bestow with it of miraculous endowment, or aught else, we may gratefully thank Him for, but may our earnest desire be, that a deeper knowledge of the power of Pentecost may be abundantly vouchsafed by Him "who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in

us." And what is this but the power promised by our Lord ere He left His disciples: "Ye shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me"? (Acts i. 8, margin.)

There is no witness for Christ, and no power in gospel testimony, but under the outpouring of the Spirit; and may the Lord grant unto His people to hear His loving words: "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom (*εν ω*) ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Yes, thank God, the Spirit sent forth from the Father, on the glorification of Christ, remains with us to the end, and will present the Bride faultless to the Bridegroom in that day. "So my Spirit remaineth among you," saith the Lord: "fear ye not." H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Does not the ordinance for the sick named in James v. 13-16 hold good in the Church now?

To this we would answer that it does, but that it has to be distinguished altogether from the miraculous gifts of healing mentioned in 1 Corinthians xii. 9, 28, Mark xvi. 17, 18, and similar passages. The case in James is one of prayer, and that not by one possessing a gift of healing, but by the elders of the church to which the sick one belonged, and therefore not applicable to unbelievers, or those outside the fellowship of the church. But hence questions arise which make painfully manifest the feebleness of our present position as to both eldership and church-fellowship. To those, however, who are content to go back to the New Testament, we believe the command, "Let him call," and the promise, "The prayer of faith shall save (or make whole) the sick," hold good, and rest on a higher ground than the prayer of an individual believer for the same object, as given in that word of encouragement, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." With the loss of church obedience

church prerogative has been lost sight of, and the power to bind and to loose set aside, except by Rome and her followers. With the prayer for healing comes in the notice of the special case of sin; *i.e.* some specific sin or sins which the sick one may know to be the cause of his sickness under the chastening hand of God. Such sin has to be confessed. The anointing with oil is commanded no doubt as a symbolic act, wherein the unction and power of the Spirit is realized as the only source of healing and of strength, and it is to be done "*in the name of the Lord;*" that is, on the authority of that name. (Compare Acts iii. 6.) Hence the whole ordinance is to be regarded as of a very solemn character. It is a *church* action for the sick, the elders gathering around the sick brother or sister at his or her request, and directly calling down the Lord's help on the sufferer. This is one of the many proofs given to us of the reality intended to encircle the fellowship of the Church with all its members, thereby attaching to it a sanctity and a value but little understood, the need of which is therefore little felt.

What is the meaning of 1 John v. 16?

The "death" here spoken of would appear to be the death of the body as a chastisement for sin. Thus we are told that the Corinthians were punished, some with weakness, some with sickness, and others with death, because of the dishonour done to the Lord at His table. (1 Cor. xi. 30.) The difficulty of the passage lies in the answer to the question as to how we are to know what is a sin unto death, and what not; and this is probably a practical difficulty that nothing but close communion with God can remove. Prayers to be answered must not be the self-willed desires of our own hearts, but the desire of the heart that has put God's glory uppermost, and learnt to say, "Even so, Father: for it seemeth good in Thy sight."

What is the meaning of "*sin in the flesh*" in Rom. viii. 3?

"Sin in the flesh" is another expression for "the old man," and the condemnation of the one (Rom. viii. 3) is the same thing as the crucifixion of the other. (Rom. vi. 6.) That is, it is the corrupt principle which is inseparable from human nature as at present existing, and is in God's sight identified with every soul while the soul remains unregenerate. Christ was sent by God in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for, or concerning, sin, that is, all sin, both in nature and fruit, to condemn this evil principle by dying on the cross, and thus to give power to the believer to die to it also, and to become in God's account for ever separated from it, and henceforth identified with the principle of "the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Yet the old man, or evil principle, remains with the believer as long as his present life continues; but it is no longer himself, for "he that believeth not is condemned already;" but "there is no condemnation" to the believer, because that which condemned him is now condemned; while the unregenerate man is under condemnation, because sin in the flesh has not been in God's sight condemned in him. The law only "worketh wrath;" it cannot therefore do anything for the benefit of man. It is in fact his condemnation, while the cross of Christ is the condemnation of that which laid the man under the condemnation of the law. But when we are delivered from the old man by its condemnation (Rom. viii. 3) or crucifixion (Rom. vi. 6), the law which was before our judge becomes our inseparable ally, and its righteousness is "fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. viii. 4); answering to the expression, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10.)

J. H. B.

THE CROWNS OF SAINTS.

Read JOHN xix. 5; ROM. v. 17; REV. i. 5; iv. 4; v. 9.

WE sometimes sing—

“ Shall we ever all wear a crown ?”

and we answer—

“ Though not on earth, yet in heaven
We shall all wear a crown.”

And by God's abounding grace this is true; for ALL His saved ones will wear a crown. We go to meet a *crowned* Saviour and Lord, and as sharers of His resurrection life and triumph, it were indeed unfit that any of His raised and glorified ones at that day should be without a crown.

But there are crowns which some of God's ransomed ones will for ever wear, which others of them will not; for beside the crowns common to all saints—the gift of the grace that saved them by the blood of the Lamb, there are crowns which by the grace of God they win, and which can belong to none but those who do win them.

Let us trace some of the Scriptures which teach us this.

But first of all let none of us forget that all our crowns in that day, whether those given to all, or those obtained by only some, are from the grace of Him who was crowned with thorns, and redeemed us at the tree.

“ Sinners in derision crowned Him,
Mocking thus the Saviour's claim;
Saints and angels crowd around Him,
Own His title, praise His name:
Crown Him, crown Him!
Spread abroad the Victor's fame!”

And when He comes again, the glorious reward to Him of His crown of mockery in death will be, not only the “many crowns” on His own blessed head as He rides

forth in "white-horse" power (as we read in Rev. xix. 12, "On His head were many crowns"), but all the crowns also of His "many brethren," whether those gained or given; for the grace by which to *win* a crown came as truly by His death as did the redeeming grace that gave a crown to all. Far and wide as the eye can reach that whole scene of crowned, reigning joy will, all of it,

"Spread abroad the Victor's fame."

No wonder, then, that at the very outset of the visions in the book of Revelation, of the things that must shortly come to pass, we see in chapter iv. 4 the *crowned* worshippers—the twenty-four elders—gathered around the "God of all grace," who fills His "rainbow" throne. And these cast their crowns before that "rainbow" throne, and not only say, "Thou art worthy, O Lord," &c., but, in chapter v. 9, the same crowned elders equally join in singing to the Lamb, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Thus shall we ere long worship before "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. xxii. 1), for ever ascribing all we shall then possess to that God who "*spared not* His own Son, but *delivered* Him up for us all" to the rough death of thorn-crowned mockery, and to that Lamb of God who was no less willing in bearing it.

Revelation iv. and v. then of itself shows that redemption does give a "crown" for ever to those who come beneath its blessed power. Compare with this Paul's words, "They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall REIGN in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. v. 17); also, "Unto Him that loves us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us *kings* and priests unto God and His Father." (Rev. i. 5.)

But there are crowns that may be won or lost besides the crown that is given to all through redemption, and which cannot be lost when once it is possessed. And it is to these crowns, and to the way of gaining them and of losing them, that we so need to have our prayerful attention turned.

There are three kinds of crowns which are put before us to be won: a "crown of *life*;" a "crown of *righteousness*;" and a "crown of *glory*."

THE CROWN OF LIFE.

The first, the "crown of life," is connected with suffering *persecution* for Christ, and, if need be, death itself for His sake. (See Rev. ii. 8-10.) Our Lord tells the Smyrna church His delight in their riches of grace—"I know thy tribulation and poverty, but thou art rich." He next tells them of a yet further opportunity they would have of bearing for His sake. A ten-day burst of persecution was near, and some of them would be cast into prison; but this was their opportunity for obtaining an unfading eternal crown. "Be thou faithful unto death," says the Lord, "and I will give thee a crown of life." Not that the tribulation would necessarily be "unto death," but their faithfulness was to be such as would *die* for Christ rather than deny Him. And if it were such, whether they were actually put to death during the approaching ten-day trial or not, He who delights as much to recompense even the *hazarding* a life for His sake and the truth's sake as He does the suddenly *losing* it, would reward it with "a crown of life."

What an opportunity! The crowns of reward from Christ are as "unfading" as that of our eternal redemption (comp. 1 Peter i. 4 with 1 Peter v. 4); and only think, an eternal crown for only a few days' fidelity!

The three Hebrew youths had one short hour of bitter trial; they might have escaped it by bowing

to the image that king Nebuchadnezzar had set up; perhaps others of their Hebrew fellow-believers did so, saying, as Naaman did about the house of Rimmon, "The Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego would not; just as Daniel, after them, made such good use of the *thirty days'* edict of Darius against prayer to any but himself, and faced death in the den of lions, rather than lessen the frequency of his prayer to the living God, or even hide its publicity. The narrative shows how blessed they were at the time; but the testimony concerning them in the glorious catalogue of Heb. xi., that they "stopped the mouths of lions, and quenched the violence of fire," may be taken as sufficient proof that as they shine beyond most in the Church's records now, they will stand distinguished above others in the resurrection morning by the "crown of life" which they thus earned.

And if it be true that any of their less faithful cotemporary fellow-saints, dreading the furnace and the lions' den, gave way in the short season of fierce temptation, and were ashamed when they saw those who had been "faithful unto death" come out unharmed, and felt the loss of honour and privilege they had themselves incurred, how much more will such feel that loss when, in the morning of the first resurrection, there is no "Well done" for them similar to the chaplet of honour placed for ever on the brow of those who were faithful when they were not?

And might not the words "faithful unto death" be written over many an injury meekly endured for Jesus' sake, and many a reproach borne even in our time? True, the suffering did not go so far as death (yet it has done so even in our own days in the case of the dear Madagascar martyrs, and others like them); but though the persecution stopped short of death, the faithfulness did not. Thus too in our own feeble days, many, many more than we know have earned,

and are earning, the "crown of life" with which we shall see them crowned when our Master comes. May none of us slight the present opportunity of gaining it!

THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

But there is the "*crown of righteousness*" as well as the "crown of life" (see 1 Tim. iv. 6-8); and this stands connected with life-long service and toil for Christ, whether in the gospel work to the unsaved, or ministry of any kind in the Church.

Paul had told the elders of Ephesus that, in his three years' night and day labour among them, he had not counted his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course, and the ministry, which he had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God (Acts xx. 24); and afterwards he writes to Timothy, "I am now ready to be offered" (or, I am already being poured out), "and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Paul's service was life-long, and had been very largely unrequited. Some, like the Philippians, had cheered him with their gifts of love; but his delight had rather been to make the gospel "without charge" (see 1 Cor. ix.), and by "night and day" work, as at Ephesus, to provide, by his tent-making, for his own and his fellow-labourers' needs, as an example to his fellow-saints thus to support the weak. All this was superadded and unrequited service: he might have avoided it. The Lord had ordained that they who preach the gospel, shall live of the gospel; but he would not have it so in his case; 1st, that he might be an example to the saints to willingly renounce even their just and righteous claims, whether it was their liberty to "eat meat," or any other right they possessed; 2nd, that he might frustrate the schemes of such as claimed to be apostles, but were not (see 2 Cor. xi. 12); and 3rd, that by thus suffering for the

gospel's sake, he might share its triumphs; and by thus running his race, as one "under law to Christ," he, and all like him, might win "an incorruptible crown."

In 1 Corinthians ix. we see him running for this crown; and in 1 Timothy iv. we see him with his body still well "kept under," just finishing his appointed race, and almost at the goal; assured in himself that the coveted and long-loved prize is his, he sinks to rest at the winning-post of a dying hour that was "gain" to him, because to him "to live had been Christ." (See Phil. i. 20, 21.)

He calls it the "crown of righteousness" which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give him at that day. And what a fitting name for it! It was the assurance that he should be *righteously* recompensed for all the loss that he had suffered for Christ's sake, whether in the Church or the world, that made him call it "the crown of *righteousness*," and call the Lord, who would give it him, "the *righteous* judge."

So assured was Paul of this, that he exhorted others to be assured of it also. He tells the Thessalonians that their "patience and faith" must be recompensed, and that it was "a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God," who would recompense glorious "rest" to them, and overwhelming "tribulation" to their persecutors. He says the same to every individual and more private servant and sufferer of Christ; and assures the domestic servants in the Church, even the slaves, that they served "the Lord Christ," and that any service they did to earthly masters, and any wrong they suffered at the hands of such, the righteous Lord would not fail to repay in the day of "the inheritance." (See Col. iii. 24; Eph. vi. 8.)

What a store of "crowns of righteousness" does all this open to our view! Surely there is not a saint but may as truly win this crown as he may the "crown of life!" And as a conscious winner of it, he will be one of those who "LOVE His appearing."

All saints "look for Him" when "He shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28), and are such as "wait for God's Son from heaven" (1 Thess. i. 10), or they would not be saints at all; but those who, after they were Christ's, have gone on "laying up treasure in heaven," by willingly denying themselves now for Jesus' sake, these have their *heart* in heaven, as well as their treasure (see Luke xii. 33, 34); and no wonder it is said of them that they "LOVE His appearing."

And well they may! They have "sown in tears," they then will "reap with rejoicing." They bore wrongs, heart-piercing wrongs, and slights and reproaches, which they never told to any except to HIM for whose sake they bore them; but even now they say—

"Oh, how will recompense His smile
The sufferings of this 'little while!'"

They sacrificed the present for the future; they did not value "the mammon of unrighteousness" except by means of it to "make to themselves friends who should receive them into everlasting habitations" (see Luke xvi. 9); and it is at Christ's appearing that those who here below were aided and blessed through their means shall shout their heavenly welcome. Oh, may all of us be such as in this way "love His appearing!"

THE CROWN OF GLORY.

But a third crown that may be won is the "*crown of glory*." Peter directs us to it when speaking of himself and others as elders in the church, who "feed the flock of God" with a willing and God-taught unselfish love.

This character of crown seems to point specially to all that ignominy, and poverty, and reproach of men which a shepherd-like "spending and being spent" for the despised "flock of God" is sure to bring on such as addict themselves to it; and the "crown of

glory" is put before such, that when they are "reproached for the name of Christ," they may rejoice and may already feel the "spirit of glory and of God" resting on them. (1 Peter iv. 14.)

It was to Peter that the risen Lord had so repeatedly said, "Feed my sheep; feed my lambs;" and these memorable words gave the character to his after-life and service; and the earthly end of that service had been shown him; viz., others girding him and leading him where he "would not." (John xxi. 18.) Ignominy and reproach—even to death, that is—were to thicken on his path as an elder in the church and an under shepherd even to the last; he was to feed the flock, but not to expect to eat of the milk of it, nor to clothe himself with its fleece. Nor did he wish to.

Had he not been "a witness of the sufferings of Christ"? Had he not seen what the false and hireling "shepherds of Israel" had done to HIM who was "shepherd and bishop" of his and others' souls? Had he not seen Zechariah xi. fulfilled before his eyes in his divine Master's rejection and death?

Israel's shepherds were of three kinds—the priest, the prophet, and the monarch, or magistrate; but of them all Jesus had to say, "The three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul abhorred them, and their soul also abhorred me" (Zech. xi. 8); and the issue of their hate of Him is in that same chapter. All outside and national insignia of shepherd-office are gone from Him; His staff of beauty and bands alike broken, and He Himself sold for the common price of a slave (see Exod. xxi. 32), "thirty pieces of silver."

In Scripture page, therefore, and in precious fulfilment of those pages at Calvary, Peter was a witness of the shepherd "sufferings of Christ;" but both on the mount of transfiguration, and after on mount Olivet, in His resurrection body, Peter was a witness also of His shepherd glory; for on the "holy mount" there were His saved ones, Moses and Elias, with Him; and

at Olivet they saw Him as their glorified Shepherd, "lifting up His hands," and blessing them even as He ascended.

Well might Peter himself love an under-shepherd's unselfish work, and seek to stir us to it by showing us the "crown of glory" that awaits all who thus pursue it.

The very two whom he had seen on the mount with Jesus were themselves, in their day, no ordinary under-shepherds, and had suffered not a little in their shepherd work; and there he saw them "in glory." One was Moses: and well did Peter know what he had given up and suffered for the sake of the Old Testament flock. It was the sight of his Hebrew brethren and their sufferings that ever first moved Moses to risk his favour with Egypt and Pharaoh's court for their sakes. And when he fled, it was by a shepherd's occupation for forty years at Horeb that God not only gave him a wife and family, but trained him to be every way a shepherd of God's flock, whether as "king in Jeshurun" and judge (see Exod. xviii.), or as priest, with his tent placed between the congregation and Jehovah (see Exod. xxxiii.), or as prophet (see Deut. xviii. 15). Then, subdued by the vision of the "burning bush," so as to be not a "lord of the heritage," but only an under-shepherd appointed by Israel's God, to whom alone all the bush belonged, Moses goes in the strength of the God of grace and glory who had sent him, and is "faithful in all God's house as a servant." And never was he more so than when at last he submits to the announcement that he is not after all to lead the flock over Jordan, and meekly asks God to raise them up another in his stead, and without a single bodily infirmity to make life weary to him, he goes up mount Nebo to die, that God might be more glorified in his death than even in his life. Surely Moses was no ordinary under-shepherd of God's flock; nor was Elijah.

More kingly for Israel was Elijah than king Ahab ; more priestly for them than the false priests of Baal ; and true to God and the twelve tribes as a prophet in the very presence of all the four hundred prophets of the groves. All the three characters of a God-appointed shepherd in Israel were as truly seen in him as they had been in Moses in earlier days. And, Moses-like, he endured the poverty and the reproach which a true shepherding of God's flock must ever bring on such as have grace to give themselves to it, whether in Old Testament or New Testament days.

He not only himself suffers under the very famine which his own prayer had brought on the land for the people's good, but even when at last, at mount Carmel, he turned the "people's heart back again" to their own gracious God, their obedience was so feeble and so short-lived that Elijah, like Moses, still has no rest below. Jezebel hates him ; Ahab counts him his "enemy ;" and Ahaziah, Ahab's son, sends captains and their fifties to take him.

Such were the sufferings of "the spirit of Christ" in an under-shepherd ; but Elijah was stedfast under all the reproach, seeking God's glory, not his own, and never more so than when, like Moses, he took meekly the reproof from God that he ought not to have pleaded *against* Israel (see 1 Kings xix. 14), and at God's bidding not only anointed Elisha as a successor in his room, but with an unenvying, submissive spirit made his more favoured successor his personal companion, and rejoiced for Israel's sake if Elisha had a "double portion."

These were the two under-shepherds whom Peter had seen on the holy mount ; and long after the scene was over, as he pondered it, he could recall "the sufferings of Christ" in these two faithful servants ; and as to the glory to follow, beside remembering how God had Himself buried Moses, and had taken up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, he now had seen these

under-shepherds as "*two men in glory.*" (Luke ix. 30, 31.) How like to His own word, that such as do thus feed the flock of God shall receive a "crown of glory that fadeth not away!"

And there is no saint that may not win for himself or herself this "crown of glory" as surely as he or she may the "crown of righteousness," or the "crown of life." For what child of God is there that may not be, in some sphere or other, an under-shepherd for others' souls, and that will not encounter "reproach" if faithful in it?

It is not every one, even amongst God's children, that will, like David, take your loving and faithful smiting of him as a "kindness," and your reproving of him as an "excellent oil" (see Ps. cxli. 5): you may get the look or word of reproach for doing so. Solomon says, "He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame; and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot;" not that it is wrong to "reprove" and to "rebuke." Paul bade Timothy do so (2 Tim. iv. 2); but he must expect to be hated by some, and spoken ill of for doing so. You must needs "*dare* to be a Daniel" if you mean to be one at all. But in that path of service, alongside of reproach and scorn, there will be the richest present communion with the Chief Shepherd, as well as the "crown of glory" from Him when He comes.

We see this in Solomon's Song i. 7, 8. When the church (or the individual believer) is longing for the most continuous and unveiled communion with Christ, and says, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside (is veiled) by the flocks of thy companions?" the answer is, "If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the Shepherds' tents." Keep fellowship, that is, with all saints (compare Ps. cxix.

63), and have some "lowly work to do" for me—some kids "to feed beside the Shepherds' tents;" that is, be in your measure an under-shepherd, and you will secure to yourself a closer and more intimate fellowship with Him who is the Shepherd of all the flock.

And yet she had already borne reproach. Only a little before (see *vv.* 5, 6) we see that any past fidelity had exposed her to ill treatment; her mother's children had been angry with her, and by making her "keeper of the vineyards" for them had made her as sun-burnt and "black" as the tents of Kedar. But she had willingly submitted to it ("Mine own vineyard have I not kept"), and in spite of her uncomely exterior knew herself "comely" within, and had joys of her soul like "the curtains of Solomon." So linked together are the "reproach of Christ" and shepherd-fellowship with Him in His shepherd ways.

"Life," "righteousness," and "glory" then are a part of the "unsearchable riches of Christ" bestowed on *all saints* as their blessing and their birthright the moment they believed, and are secured to them for ever; but there is a fulness in Christ for every one to win a *crown* in all these three, as well as to possess them by heavenly birth; and as it was by Christ becoming ours by faith we received them at the first, so it is by "abiding" in Him, and by grace to us through Him, that any shall win one or more of these crowns from His hands at that day. And this abiding in Him must be to the end, or the crown that would have been gained may yet be lost.

LOST CROWNS.

"Hold that fast which thou hast," says Christ to Philadelphia, who up to that time had kept His word, and had not denied His name, "that no man *take thy crown.*" The crown of reigning given through redemption none can take; it is the everlasting possession of even the feeblest and most unwatchful of saints; but

the crown of reward may be lost, another may take it from any one of us.

Abraham took Lot's crown. They left Mesopotamia together; and Lot seems at first to have been as truly a pilgrim as his uncle; and even when he first began to live in Sodom it was only as a "sojourner" (see Gen. xix. 9,); but, like Demas in Paul's time, he loved "this present world," and far from retaining his crown of reward, or recovering it when lost, it was to his uncle Abraham he was indebted for being brought out of Sodom's overthrow (see Gen. xix. 29), as well as for his rescue years before when taken captive by the king of Shinar. (See Gen. xiv. 16.)

Abigail took David's crown in the matter of his unholy anger against Nabal, her husband, when by her promptitude, through grace in her, she stayed him back, and his four hundred men with him, from avenging himself on Nabal and all his house.

Paul took the crown of the Corinthian saints when he wept for them with "many tears," and wrote to them with "anguish of heart" (2 Cor. ii. 4) about all their lax and carnal ways as an assembly, both in practice and in doctrine, by which they had for the time lost their crown of honour; and wisely teaches them that not "schisms" only but "heresies" also would come, in order that "they that were *approved*" (*i.e.* such as had grace to win for themselves the crowns of less stedfast saints) "might be made manifest." (1 Cor. xi. 19.)

And how many the crowns are that may thus be gained in our own sad days of fellow-saints' declensions, alas! who can tell? "Ye did run well" (Gal. v. 7) might still be said of too many; but oh for the grace to say it tenderly to the erring ones of our time, as Paul said it to the Galatians, when he would not use even an amanuensis, but sent them the earnest and gentle reproof in his own handwriting, spite of the "large letters" in which his bad eyesight obliged him

to write it. (Gal. vi. 11 should be, "Ye see with what large letters I have written to you with mine own hand.")

Matt. xviii. 15-20 must be our guide how to win the erring "brother" who has in some matter lost his crown, if we would ourselves get any crown from our Master at His coming for our dealing with him. And this very passage teaches us that it is not by *effort* only for such, whether Old Testament victories or New Testament pastoral visits and letters, but by PRAYER for them, "effectual, fervent *prayer*," that we shall most serve Christ, and obtain both their blessing and our own. Abraham prayed for Sodom, and the fruit of his prayer was Lot's being brought out, and his children.

And the "two or three" who "agree on earth" (Matt. xviii.) to ask anything, and obtain it because they meet to His name and have HIM in their midst, are they not the "two or three witnesses" of verse 16, who pleaded WITH the erring one, but could not prevail with, and now are pleading FOR him with their "Father in the heavens"?

Oh the blessedness of *prayer* on behalf of fallen saints! There is in it a present profit to such as give themselves to it, and a future crown also; and may-be even yet a restored walk below, and out of it a crown of reward at last to the fallen ones prayed for as well.

The mightiness of prayer on behalf of fallen saints is the subject also of James v. 17-20, and 1 John v. 14-17.

Such are some of the Scriptures on the crowns of saints.

And for God's glory in us and by us for ever, and for Christ's praise, who would not wish to win the richest crown that can be won, and wish also that every saint might do the same?

Even men say "the throne is the fountain of honour;" and it is the glory of earthly monarchs to have a numerous and high-ranked nobility in their kingdoms, as well as a great multitude of subjects (Prov. xiv. 28), and all of them honourable and happy.

It was part of David's joy and honour to have "captains" and "mighty men" of various ranks and orders around his throne, as well as all the many thousands of Israel beneath his sway. God has given us the detail of those specially honoured ones (see 1 Chron. xi. and xii), and has told us some of the days of sorrow, the caves of affliction, and the scenes of deadly strife, from the exploits of which their ranks and honours came.

And shall not "the throne of God and of the Lamb" have far more numerous, more glorious, and more enduring honours flowing from it? Not only all the glorified, all its "perfected just men" (see Heb. xii. 23), who worship around it and before it, supremely happy, all of them bearing "the image of the heavenly;" not only—

"By the Spirit all pervading,
Hosts unnumbered round the Lamb,
Crowned with light and joy unfading,
Hail Him as the great 'I AM;'"

but also a glorious array of specially distinguished ones, who will be leaders of the heavenly song, and of the heavenly army, as by grace they were fore-front ones here below in suffering and sorrow and reproach for Jesus' sake, and for the word of God.

And none will worship with a deeper reverence, nor own themselves deeper debtors to the "God of all grace," than those will who on earth best used that grace, and made most by it of future crowns of reward. For it is the "ruler over ten cities" who in that day says, "Lord, thy pound" (*i.e.* not my "trading" merely, but thy pound) "hath gained ten pounds." (Luke xix. 16.)

Well may we "teach and admonish one another" (Col. iii. 16) in the hymn we sometimes sing—

"The crown! the crown!
Ah! who at last shall gain it?
That cross a crown affords;
Press on, press on,
With courage to obtain it,
The battle is the Lord's."

Be it so with us. Amen.

H. D.

"SORER PUNISHMENT."

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God" (and put Him to an open shame), "and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? . . . It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."—HEB. x. 28, 29, 31.

IN this passage we are taught:

1. That there is a sorer punishment than "dying without mercy."
2. That the Son of God is worth more than the sacrifices of Moses.
3. That the guilt of treading under foot the Son of God is greater than that of despising the law of Moses.
4. That God makes you judge, and expects that you will give proportionate damages. "Suppose ye."
5. That God expects you to award a punishment equal to your estimate of His Son above that of a bull or a goat.
6. That God puts an infinitely higher value on His Son's blood than on that of a bull or a goat.
7. That worthy punishment will be awarded according to the dignity of the One trodden down.
8. That God wants no partiality for His Son, nor vindictiveness in the sentence on the offender. "Shall he be thought *worthy*."
9. That the punishment of which you think the offender worthy, will test your estimate of the Son of

God. If the punishment you award is small, then you "suppose" that there is not so much difference between the common blood of an animal and the blood of the Son of God. It is the price you set on His dishonour that tells your estimate of His worth.

10. That as the difference between the Son of God and an animal is infinite, so no finite mind can compute the degree or the duration of that punishment of which he is worthy that hath trodden down the Son of God.

11. That he who limits the punishment of such an offender, limits the worth of the Son of God; limits the value of the redemption He has wrought; limits the song of the redeemed; limits the gratitude due to the Saviour; and limits the guilt of the rejectors of His grace.

12. That he who says that it would not be just for God to inflict so much punishment on such an offender, takes upon himself the place of the sovereign Judge; says he can hold the balances of the universe; decide eternal destinies; weigh a world's guilt; and determine for God what actions He ought to perform. A.

THE SPIRIT'S UNITY.

EPH. iv. 1-6.

"ONE body and one spirit; through Jesus' blood
One bond of hope to all whom He doth call;
One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God
And Father over all."

O Lord, may these Thy sevenfold cords so bind
Our hearts in love and gratitude to Thee,
That in Thy service we may ever find
Our truest liberty!

High is Thy call; but Thou who callest art
Most patient, pitiful, and kind alway;
O grant us then the understanding heart
To hear Thee and obey.

In lowliness and meekness, Lord, may we
Dwell in Thy love, and in Thy grace increase,
Striving to keep the Spirit's unity
In the sweet bond of peace.

S.

BOANERGES.

THE WARNING VOICE IN JOHN'S EPISTLE.

THE epistle of John came in with the voice of a true Boanerges, "a son of Thunder," on the Church of the first century. The beloved apostle had seen many separate between faith and a good conscience, and had observed how, as Paul said, they had "made shipwreck." (1 Tim. i. 19.) The shores of the sea on which the Church had been sailing for its first seventy years were strewn with the wrecks of those who had begun well, but had not continued to the end. Many were the stony-ground hearers who had begun by "receiving the Word with joy;" but their faith, like their joy, was only "for a while." (Luke viii. 13.) They had "no root in themselves," and therefore they "endured but for a time." (Mark iv. 17.) All was temporary. Faith was temporary; joy was temporary; endurance was temporary. The root had not gone down, and there had been no upward growth and fruit. God had come in, and had proved the unreality of what seemed very promising in the beginning, and the result was that the sun had scorched, and the winds of temptation had blasted. Much, too much of this, had the beloved apostle witnessed; and his epistle tells us what he thought and felt, and what the Spirit of God gave him to write as perhaps the Spirit's last message to the Church.

It was not in vain that the Lord called his name Boanerges. His love had a fiery zeal in it that made him a "son of Thunder," and fitted him to lift up a solemn voice of warning that would test the reality of profession, and make the professor of unreal truth, or shall we say, the hypocritical professor of unrealized truth tremble as he thunders out, "He is a liar."

The epistle, in a small measure, reminds us of our Lord's solemn farewell to Jerusalem Pharisees in Matt.

xxiii. Paul had spoken of justification by faith, and Peter had written of the "living hope" of resurrection, and John says, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous;" and, "If we say we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth;" and in speaking of regeneration he gives six marks that are to point out him that is really born of God, and these are:

1. That he does righteousness. (Chap. ii. 29.)
2. That he is not committing sin; *i.e.* living in it. (Chap. iii. 9.)
3. That he loveth; for God is love. (Chap. iv. 7.)
4. That he believeth on Jesus as the Christ. (Chap. v. 1.)
5. That he overcometh the world. (Chap. v. 4.)
6. That he keepeth himself, and the wicked one toucheth him not. (Chap. v. 18.)

Surely these signs are not given us in vain, but are given that we may examine our hearts, and consider our ways before our God, and make sure work of salvation, lest any fall after the examples of unbelief given to us; and instead of having a joyful entrance into the kingdom, hear the voice when least expected at the very gate of heaven, "Depart; I know you not."

John saw how many were going on with a lie in their right hand. They knew not that it was a lie, because they had not received "*the love of the truth*, that they might be saved." They had loved the world too well to see it false; they were deceived because they would not see. This epistle is pre-eminently a testing epistle, given to the church by her wise and loving Head, that she might not be deceived by appearances, or estimate anything above its real value in the sanctuary of God.

The very commencement of the epistle unfolds its character. John says: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our

hands have handled, of the Word of Life." The apostle begins with what "was," and with the *reality* of that eternal life which was from the beginning, and had been manifested to men in the person of the Word made flesh; and the One who was manifested personally to the apostles is now spiritually manifested to us.

But there is a progress in that manifestation which it is worth while to ponder over a little, as our perfect security against the lies and the unrealities with which the devil seeks to blind the eyes of those who believe not, and wherewith, alas! he dims the vision of many who have truly believed to the saving of the soul. We are not ignorant of his devices, alike in the case of the saved and of the unsaved; and God would put us on our guard, and say, "Look to yourselves," "Take heed to thyself," "Keep yourselves in the love of God," that so stirring up ourselves we might indeed lay hold on God; and he who lays hold on God, in the reality of what He is, will ever be safe against all the pretensions and claims of that which is false and is not.

We observe then that John asserts the reality of the Word, and of all belonging to Him, by a fourfold revelation:

- 1st. In something we have heard with our ears.
- 2nd. In something we have seen with our eyes.
- 3rd. In something we have looked upon and gazed into.
- 4th. In something we have handled with our hands.

This presents to us a faith that progresses, and that rises from the far-off hearing of the ear, which when responded to saves the soul, to the near and intimate handling by faith of the Unseen, which tells of brightest and deepest fellowship with Christ here, as with One on whose bosom we can, like John, lean at supper.

1st. Of the "*hearing*" of faith. We are told that faith comes by hearing, and it is by hearing, that with "the heart man believeth unto righteousness."

The first call of distress, the first touch of faith,

saves with an everlasting salvation; for "he that shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Such is the promise of the everlasting covenant. Yet is this all to which we are called? Are we to be content with the knowledge that we are saved by the hearing of faith? Surely not. But, on the other hand, let us be on our guard lest we make high attainments necessary to salvation; otherwise we do away with the foundation that God would lay in His own perfect grace, that salvation is "not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of God that sheweth mercy." There are, however, steps and advances in faith, and every advance makes the truth which we believe more subjectively real in our hearts and experiences.

2nd. Of the "*seeing*" of faith. Faith has eyes as well as ears, and he who aims at seeing by faith what he has already heard by faith, will be advancing towards that revelation which is made of the Holy Ghost to the *eye* of faith, of which Paul speaks in his prayer for the Ephesians: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your heart being enlightened." The Church of God in the present day deeply needs to know more of this revelation of the Holy Ghost, this taking of the things of Christ and revealing them unto us. Let us ask ourselves, Has the truth of God that saved us become a *revelation* to our own souls? Is it what we have *seen*, as when Paul, caught up, saw heavenly things so near, so wonderful, that while he speaks fully and freely of the great things of the gospel of the grace of God, the revelations of what he then saw could not be spoken? We would not compare any of our highest revelations with the revelation made to Paul when caught up into the third heaven, but it will serve to explain what we mean as comparing small things with great, and help to stir up our hearts to higher expectations in the pathway of faith.

We would not discourage the trembling, but we would stir up the slothful, and point all onward to the goal that is set before all, lest, thinking faith has no higher flights and no nearer contemplations, the soul be content where God would never have any content. We would have it written on the hearts of all, that they who honour God by seeking the higher and the holier will not be disappointed. It is a great point in Christian life to know what God has provided for faith's exercise, and growth, down here; for while "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," it is also equally true that "God hath revealed them unto us of His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the *deep things* of God."

It is to these deeper things that we would direct all our hearts, so that what the ear has heard the eye may also see, and thus a double witness be given to the reality of the precious things of God's grace and kingdom.

3rd. Of the "*looking upon*" of faith. We have here a still further advance. It is no longer a simple seeing, but a continued fixing of the eye upon the object presented to it. Not the passing glance, the occasional sight, but the permanent looking upon and beholding to which faith advances, the gaze of adoration and worship which occupies the mind, and absorbs the contemplation.

This feature of faith was illustrated in the life of Paul. He never took his eye off Christ, and the vision grew in brightness upon his soul, as from year to year he contemplated the glory of Jesus of Nazareth, as it had been revealed to him on his way to Damascus. The vision thus looked upon from day to day had conformed him into its likeness, and he could say, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." He was an imitator of Christ, because he had become a constant beholder of Him. The one follows the other as a necessary consequence.

4th. Lastly, of the "*handling*" by faith. That which we handle must have come very near to us, and this is the result of what has gone before. The unseen draws near, and the eternal comes within our reach, as we are found looking upon them; and then and then only "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Paul's vision must have been very clear, and his grasping and handling of eternal things very firm, to have enabled him to write of sufferings and affliction such as his, that they were "light," and "for a moment" (temporary). And this same firm hold of what was unseen, and of that eternal life which had been manifested, enabled him to estimate aright "the weight of glory," which was both "exceeding" and "eternal."

Our Lord's word to His doubting disciples was, "Handle me, and see that it is I myself;" and so is He ever saying to our doubtful and distrustful hearts, seeking to lead us into a brighter and calmer assurance of faith which will make life's troubled and perplexed pathway bright with the realities of Christ and of eternity.

John's epistle reveals to us the importance of this realization of the eternal life, because "it is the last hour." (*ἀπα* ch. ii. 18.) Many antichrists had gone out from the true Church of God, and if this realization was important to drive out those who had "crept in unawares," how much more solemnly important is it in the days in which we live, in which a Laodicean lukewarmness has stricken hands with the anti-christianity of the day, and maintains a fellowship with anti-christian worldliness, of which John says, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

God has not left us powerless in our circumstances of difficulty; we have "an anointing from the Holy One," and are therefore responsible for knowing all things; *i.e.* all the anti-christian forms which darkness may take. Yet, alas! how little is known, how uncertain

are the steps of God's own children! how ignorant often are they of first principles! Why is this? It is because there is not an abiding in what has been "heard from the beginning," and the power of the anointing is not maintained.

The third chapter opens with the precious assurance to faith, "Now are we the sons of God;" and this stands as the witness of the manner of the love where-with we have been loved. But as if many were professing to be children of God who were not, the apostle immediately adds: "And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth (*i.e.* lives in sin) hath not seen Him, neither known Him. Little children, *let no man deceive you.*"

Profession had grown, and self-deceived men were seeking to deceive; and as Christ had come to destroy the works of the devil, those who were on Christ's side could not be building up by a sinful life what Christ had died to set aside, and in this (whatever might be the *profession*) the difference between "the children of God" and "the children of the devil" was manifested.

The word "*manifest*" is a remarkable word in this epistle, as if the great object all through was to make *manifest* life and death, righteousness and unrighteousness, Christ and the devil, love and hatred, and to make them appear to us as they are in the sight of God, in the life and walk of each professing Christian. "God is light," and every thing is brought to the test of that light; and "God is love," and our ways are tested and measured by that love.

The two "*messages*" in this epistle have reference—the first to *light*, and the second to *love*. To this we would also call particular attention, as on these two words the burden of the epistle rests. "God is light" (chap. i. 5), and therefore those who really belong to God necessarily "walk in the light, as He is in the light." "God is love" (chap. iv. 8), and therefore he

that is born of Him loveth the God that begat him, and his brother also.

Those divine characteristics of light and love are the appointed touchstones by which the reality or the unreality of everything is to be tested; and as the "son of Thunder" tells us that he who says he has fellowship with God, who is light, and walks in darkness, is a "liar," he says also, "If any man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar." (Chap. vi. 20.) May these solemn words touch and exercise all our hearts, that we be not deceived!

Fellowship with God in this light, *love* to all the brethren, and *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ, are the three great points in this epistle; and in connection with the latter we have this precious record from God, that "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life." All hangs on Christ, and on the reality of our possession of Him. It is not as we hold a doctrine, or contend for a creed, but as we have a personal Christ that "*we know (i.e. realize the fact) that we have eternal life*" (v. 13); that we have our petitions answered (v. 15); that he that is born of God sinneth not (*i.e. liveth not in it*, v. 18); that we are of God, and that all the world lieth in wickedness or in the wicked one (v. 19); and that Christ has come and given us an understanding to know Him that is true. (v. 20.) All this we *know*, and hence the final warning, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." Idolatry turns away the heart and the eyes from these glorious realities which we know, not only because we have been so told, but because the Spirit of the truth dwells in us, and enables us to discover the error, the lie, and the idolatry wherever it is found. The Lord give us ears to hear the Boanerges voice of the son of thunder uttered in our hearing, and make the writings of the apostle John a deep and solemn lesson to us all.

H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

WHAT does Gal. vi. 6 teach ?

It teaches the obligation of the taught to the teacher in the Church of God. Each member of the body of Christ has to communicate to others of that which he has ; for no one lives to himself, and no one possesses for himself in the household of God. Hence the man whom God has empowered to instruct is under an obligation to so instruct, remembering he is God's servant ; and he who possesses any of the " all good things " that God bestows is under an obligation to communicate of the same to him who teaches the word. Then follows the solemn warning, " Be not deceived." All we communicate, whether in teaching or in the giving of our substance, is a sowing for eternity. As has been the sowing, according to its character and end, so will be the reaping ; and the day of the Lord will reveal the chaff and the wheat in all taught, and in all spent. The thought in verse 6 is carried on to verse 10, where the command is enlarged from giving of the good things possessed to the teacher to doing good unto all, and specially to the household of faith. Verses 6-10 should be read together. If all who are taught felt more this responsibility, there would be more blessing to their own souls in the teaching they received. Whenever we fail we are the losers.

What is the meaning of John xiv. 12 ?

During our Lord's earthly ministry He had sent His disciples to preach the gospel of the kingdom, to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to raise the dead, to cast out devils, with that striking word, " Freely ye have received ; freely give." The powers exercised by our Lord were given to them to exercise in His name ; but now He is about to leave them, as He says in the

verse named, "I go to the Father." He was to be no longer in the place of weakness, of rejection, and of sorrow, but of glory and of power. The heavens *must* receive Him whom the earth rejected. His work of suffering and of sin-bearing would soon be over, and then He would sit down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb. i. 3); hence the significance of His words, "And greater works than these shall he do; *because* I go to the Father." The works in the Acts were mightier than those of the gospels, because the presence of Christ with the Father led to the mission of the Holy Ghost. Yet all that is recorded in the Acts as done by the disciples, in the name of Christ, and in the power of the Spirit, whether of gospel testimony and saving grace, or of healing power (see Acts v. 11-16; vi. 7, 8, &c.), is regarded as the work of the risen Jesus. It is the proper sequel to His work here. The book of Acts is described by Luke as the continuation of that work of Christ of which the gospel gives the commencement. The one tells us "of all that Jesus *began* both to do and to teach," and the other tells us of what was afterwards done through His people; but the source of the work is the same—Jesus Himself, and therefore the work is His, whoever does it. "Not I, but Christ," says Paul; hence all boasting is excluded, and Jesus obtains the glory.

What is the force of the word "*world*" in Eccles. iii. 11?

The word here rendered "*world*" is one which is almost universally translated "*eternity*," "*ever*" (עולם), and the proper signification of the verse alluded to is: "Everything He made beautiful in His time: also He gave eternity (to be) in their heart, without which no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." This verse contrasts with the preceding. There we find that all

now is travail, which God has given to the sons of men to be afflicted or exercised with. It was not so once. All was made beautiful, and God could call it "very good." God has written this on the heart of man in letters too deep to be effaced, much as man may seek to put away from him a futurity of bliss or of woe; and it is the only solution of the deep and dark enigma of the life that now is. It is there that that which now seems crooked in the moral government of God will be straightened, and all that seems dark will be brought to light. In verse 14 we read, "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it." As eternity is written by the finger of God on man's heart, so is it also stamped on all that God does. This is one of the deep lessons of this valuable book, but little read by most, and less understood.

How shall we read the Scriptures to most profit?

1. Expect to find Christ in them, and God's mind about Christ, and about such as believe in Him.

2. Expect to find in them God's ways with His saints and servants in ages past, in this present time, and in the ages to come.

3. Expect the same also as to Israel and the nations.

4. Read to obey; the "comfort of the Scriptures" will follow.

5. Read them all through, from Genesis to Revelation; an Old Testament and also a New Testament portion every day.

6. Read most frequently such books of Scripture, and such parts of books, as your soul's state, or your circumstances seem most to require.

7. Read according to obvious connection of sense, and not merely by divisions of chapter and verse; and lastly,

8. Read all, and always, with prayer and meditation.

“THE END OF ALL THINGS.”

1 PETER iv. 7-11.

THIS is the *December* number of the *Golden Lamp*, and it is one of the many voices to its readers of the still approaching “end of all things;” and we may well hail the growing nearness to us both of our Lord’s return and of His millennial reign, and of that final new earth and new heavens which shall remain for ever. And equally ought we to stir each other by this very lapse of time to abound but the more in works of faith and love, and, as Peter says in the verses above quoted, to be “sober, and watch unto prayers.” (See Greek.)

In the course of his epistle Peter has been glancing into the ages past. He has noted the prophets’ testifying beforehand “the sufferings of Christ, and the glories which should follow,” and who prophesied of that very salvation which has now come to us by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (see 1 Peter i. 10-12); he has spoken also of the preaching of even Noah’s time, and the similarity of it to God’s testimony now (1 Peter iii. 19, 20); and he has declared that the continuous aim of the gospel in every age has been that men might be righteously condemned who have rejected it, and that those who are blessed by it might live here below “according to God in the Spirit.” “But the end of all things,” he next says, “is at hand;” *i.e.* these fulfillings of the Old Testament prophets by the preaching of those whom the Holy Ghost, come down from heaven, now strengthens to preach (compare also Romans i. 2, and xvi. 25, 26) will not last much longer; and the solemn and godly actings of this testimony in condemning its rejectors, and bringing to God and to salvation and godliness

such as welcome it—this will not last much longer. "The end of all things is at hand." The past ages cannot be gone over again, and even this present age, which is to faith's view the shortest of any—for it is only a time of VISITING the Gentiles, so very short, that it is spoken of as "the *hour* that now is" (John iv. 23, and v. 25)—has the sands of its hour-glass nearly run out. The gospel rejectors—of whom he says, "What shall the *end* be?"—have not much longer for their scorning; and the patient and suffering witnesses for Christ have not much longer to wait and to endure. Who can wonder that the aged apostle adds, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayers"?

Nor does he exhort to prayers only, but (*v.* 8) to that LOVE to all saints which, like a mantle, has sufficient width and size in it to enable you to love them all, spite of "a multitude of sins" in them; and (*v.* 9) that diligence too, as well as love, which makes us watch, as Abraham did at his tent door just before Sodom perished, for opportunities of showing "hospitality without grudging," hastening to show ourselves "good stewards of the manifold grace of God," the little while that remains, whether it be in things of doctrine or of this life's goods. (*vv.* 10, 11.)

And all this with a view to God in all things being "glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Truly the apostle's spirit flows on along with the words of his pen, and he seems in his own soul to reach the glorious close.

But though so near the end, there was time enough even yet for a "fiery trial," which was to try them (*vv.* 12–19); and so there may be time enough now. "Ten days" was time enough to test the Smyrna Church. (See Rev. ii. 10.)

But the blessed "END" before us makes us count all the suffering, and the "grief that intervenes," as not worthy to be compared with that "END" of our

faith which we have already received, "even the salvation of our souls." (1 Peter i. 9.)

All truth is summed up and shines forth in Jesus Himself; and He is our "END," as He also is our "beginning." Thrice He thus declares Himself in the book of Revelation. "I am the beginning and the end" is His own word. In Rev. i. 8, in connection with His churches, both as to their present state and their day of crowning; in Rev. xxii. 13, in connection with that holy city, the bride, and her fulfilment of her millennial day of reigning with Him over this earth below; and once more, in Rev. xxi. 6, as to that perfected new creation, of new heavens and new earth, when the final blessed "It is done" shall reveal Jesus as God's "END" for ever in sabbatic rest and joy, and as our "END" also of salvation and blessing fully accomplished.

Well may we both sing, and also watch and pray, as we cry to each other at the close of the year—"The end of all things is at hand." H. D.

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE.

O LORD, though all good gifts are sent by Thee
From heaven above,
Yet chiefest of them all abide these three—
Faith, Hope, and Love.

Here Hope lights up our path, and Faith can say,
Thou knowest best;
Whilst Love, on gleaming pinion, wings her way
Straight to Thy breast.

And when at length in glory we behold
Thee face to face,
Then Faith and Hope, owning the half untold,
Shall turn to praise.

But as the depths of heaven in some clear lake
Reflected be,
So Thy Love, mirror'd in our hearts, shall make
Us like to Thee!

KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE:

THEIR CHARACTER AND ACTINGS.

“Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the Same is known of him.”

1 COR. viii. 1-3.

THERE are particular reasons why the instruction afforded in this Scripture should be attended to by us in such a day as this, because Satan evidently is endeavouring to play off knowledge against love as a principle of union among saints.

Now it is important to attend to what Scripture says of *knowledge*, that we may judge whether (1) it is likely from its *character* to answer the end of a uniting principle, and (2) whether God has meant it to be such.

We have here a very explicit statement upon both points. Its character is given, “Knowledge puffeth up;” whereas of love it is said, “Love edifieth;” that is, builds up; and surely this is *uniting*. And we have it illustrated in what follows, by the way in which knowledge acts, and the way in which love acts. *Knowledge* sees its liberty (to eat), and uses it in careless disregard of the destruction of the weak. *Love* also sees its liberty (for love lies in the bosom, and has a large understanding of all things), but foregoes its use of this liberty, and saves the conscience of the weak, and thus keeps him from destruction. Is not this edifying? Is not this uniting?

It is not intelligence therefore, deep understanding of the things of God, which is to be shunned (for love has this); but it is its not being put into the hands of love. It is knowledge setting up *for itself*; it is its wearing another character and form than love. If you say of it, “It is knowledge,” then from God’s word

we must say of it, "It puffeth up." If any one says he "thinks he knows anything," we must say, "He knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." But if you say, "He *loveth* God," then we say, "The same is known of him." He *knows* God. Once he hated God; for he knew Him not. Now he *discovers* what He is. "God is love," and we love Him as such, as it says, "because He first loved us;" and it follows by one of those Scripture deductions which the little children delight to accept: "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth Him also that is begotten of Him;" or negatively thus: "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" If he *love* not God, he *knoweth* not God. He may have "knowledge;" but he knoweth not *as* he ought to know. That is, the form *knowledge* should take is that of *love*. And all else is vain; it puffeth up. How can it edify or unite the saints; or be, in more general terms, a uniting principle? It *founds* distinctions; it *constitutes* differences between saint and saint, and it nourishes pride, and hence judgment and division. Whereas *love* sends a brother down to my feet to wash them; sends him to serve me, to bring me up to what he has attained to.

It may be thought by some that the knowledge spoken of in these verses is a very restricted thing, and concerns the question of meats and drinks and the like only. But this is not the case. A question of apparently little moment often brings in a point of great importance. What is there in a surplice, or in a rood-screen? Nothing, except as knowledge sees the truth compromised when compliance is enforced. Both alike make the worshippers profane, and bring in again the distance that God has been at such pains through the blood of the cross to remove. And so it is here.

At the bottom of the question of "eating" lies the knowledge of the one true God, and the nothingness of all false gods. (*vv.* 4-7.) It brings in the

Christian revelation of the one true God. It is the true light that now shineth, and the darkness consequently is now revealed; for the light makes it manifest. Now it was THIS that some came short in. "Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge;" that is, that full knowledge which taught them that an idol is nothing in the world; and so what is offered to an idol is God's, and so to be partaken of. They came short in the knowledge of the one true God. They knew and loved Christ; they possessed the standing and condition of an accepted child and saint of God; but they came short in a point of knowledge—of a knowledge, observe, of the one true God. And what is the office of the Church, save to build them up in the knowledge of God and of Christ (Eph. iv.) "till we all come unto (*eis*) the unity of the faith, and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God"? Now, if there is to be growth in this, there must be defect. Progress implies deficiency; and deficiency implies not merely a blank sheet as it were in the mind and heart, but much ignorance, perhaps stubbornness, and possibly error, to be removed; and that implies patience, grace, aptness to teach (a moral quality, not an intellectual endowment merely), and a waiting upon infirmity; in short, a heart governed by the law of Christ's heart (Gal. vi. 2), *bearing* others' burthens, foregoing liberty, as here.

Now *knowledge* says, "I will make my weak brother accountable for having my knowledge. (*vv.* 4-7.) He has no right to be stumbled in the presence of my liberty, which should be his, because he dishonours God, and dishonours Christ."

See how zeal might—perhaps did—supply a language in this case, similar to that which we hear now. "What a dishonour done to God to doubt for a moment, or to hesitate through conscience of an idol, to eat what is God's! It is denying God's title to it. It is setting aside the true revelation of Himself."

And indeed it is a precious revelation that is here

made. "One God, the Father ($\epsilon\kappa$), of whom are *all things*, and we ($\epsilon\iota\varsigma$) *to or for Him*" (comp. Rom. xi. 36); "and one Lord Jesus Christ ($\delta\iota\alpha$), *by whom are all things*" (*the same* all things as are ascribed to the Father—creation, providence, redemption, &c.), "and we by Him." It is the revelation indeed of the *blessed* God; such knowledge is blessed. But then—what mere knowledge mistakes—this God is love, and the revelation of Him to the soul is *in love*. And any knowledge, pleaded to justify a zeal opposed to the love of Him in the person of one of His weak saints, He expressly condemns: "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, *ye sin against Christ.*" It seemed like zeal *for Christ*. Assuredly it would be pleaded to be such. Doubtless appeals would be made to vindicate the *honour* of Christ. *Knowledge* of Scripture would be taxed to bring forth pleas for punishing this disregard of His honour. Scripture would be turned against itself. But Christ has plainly enough, as here, declared to us what makes for His honour; and is He not allowed to be heard for His own rights as to what makes for His glory?

"When ye sin so against the brethren, . . . YE SIN AGAINST CHRIST," is a word that should speak volumes to us. "*Wherefore,*" it adds, "if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." As if it should say, "You have wrong thoughts of what makes for my honour. You think you know me; but to know me is to love me; and to love me is to love mine, as I love them. To become like me is to know me; and *your* knowledge, instead of this PRACTICAL knowledge of me, I will not accept."

And this God never did. "Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the

poor and needy; then it was well with him: WAS NOT THIS TO KNOW ME? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for covetousness, and for to shed *innocent blood*" (thy weak brother, who has not attained to thy knowledge), "and for oppression, and for violence, to do it." (See Jer. xxii. 15-17.)

Look also again at Jeremiah ix. 1-9, 12-14, 23, 24: "Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches. But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he *understandeth* and *knoweth* me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for IN THESE THINGS I DELIGHT, saith the Lord."

His delights are with the sons of men: for the day-spring from on high hath visited us. His delights were in His well-beloved Son; for He ever did those things which please Him. His delights are in His people, when He sees in us the things that He delights in—His own character, as revealed and *known*. Not now Jewish knowledge merely, which was righteousness, but love. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink (though for them there needs the knowledge of the one true God to possess liberty), but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For in these things he that serveth Christ is accepted of God, and approved of men." Let every soul give to this his hearty Amen.

ANON.

DIVINE GUIDANCE.—Two "lamps" are mentioned in the book of Proverbs. "The commandment is a *lamp*, and the law is light;" and again, "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord (literally, Jehovah's *lamp*), searching all the inward parts of the belly." (Prov. vi. 23; xx. 27.) May not these two proverbs, in the order here given, remind us that the Word and the indwelling Holy Ghost combine to form our all-sufficient guidance?

CHRISTIAN COMMUNION: WHAT IS IT?

WHAT is the meaning of the term "communion," which is so constantly in use? Does it relate to our animal, mental, moral, or spiritual nature? or is it compounded of more than one? The subject needs enquiry; for, as in every thing in which the soul is concerned, we are prone to look upon that as praiseworthy which, as human beings, is simply *natural* to us.

If I see lambs sporting themselves in the field, running hither and thither in company, with many a frolic which they would not practise if alone, I am led to conclude that their fellowship is merely animal, resulting from the goodness of their Creator, who thus enhances the joy implanted in His creatures by the mutual outflowings of life. In the sports of young children, where the mind is as yet undeveloped, do we not constantly witness an increase of pleasure when brought together? Such fellowship is of the same nature as the other. Infancy is not capable of anything beyond.

But when mind begins to expand, mental communion is added to and increases that which is merely animal; as may be traced upwards from the plays of boys to the combinations of grown persons, whether for the purpose of eating and drinking, for musical parties, sight seeing, &c.; all which enjoyments would be diminished were it not for the company.

Thence we advance to confederations more decidedly mental; science congresses, philosophical, educational, astronomical, and other such societies, formed for the enhancement and diffusion of knowledge; which pursuits, as we well know, are greatly encouraged by combination. Here the mental predominates over the animal.

A further element—the moral—appears if benevolence is the object of association. Here the heart is brought into exercise; the finer feelings of humanity. The delight of doing good to others greatly enhances such fellowship. The mental powers too are employed in devising schemes for carrying out the plans; while the animal nature, though not absent, shrinks into obscurity.

Endless are the diversities of such associations—political, commercial, educational, theological, social, philanthropic, &c., wherein these three elements are often combined in different proportions; all deriving their strength from communion in a common object. And all this may exist without any reference to God, or acknowledgment of Him.

However praiseworthy the objects, or beneficial to mankind; however indispensable such combination and fellowship may be in order to accomplish the object; however disinterested and self-denying the motive; still, without the recognition of God and subjection to Him, the main feature, which renders them acceptable to Him, is deficient. They partake somewhat of the nature of Cain's offering to which He had not respect; not however rising so high in character, for that was offered to God.

And this leads to the enquiry, What fellowships are pleasing to Him? Not losing sight of those natural relationships which He has Himself established, as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, rulers and subjects, for the due discharge of which all of us are responsible, the question has to do with those religious fellowships which are apt to be regarded as voluntary, or left to our own discretion.

The first, the foremost, the essential pre-requisite is *fellowship with Himself*. All else must be counter-working. Could the bricklayer and carpenter determine on building the house without reference to the architect? They might possibly raise a useful and hand-

some structure, exercising much skill, science, and labour thereon; but if it were not after the design of the architect, and not carried out in exact accordance with his plan, could he look upon it with approval? Probably the building would have to come down, and the labour bestowed be considered worse than useless.

And must not the Architect of the earth, who has framed it after His own wisdom and skill for the abode of man, whose unceasing desire and effort has been to do good to fallen humanity, must He not be first consulted by His poor, blind, ignorant, self-willed creature, as to the measures to be adopted to remedy the mischief of the fall? Man could never have even conceived, much less brought about, the sovereign remedy provided by his God through the death of His dear Son Jesus; still so repugnant to the natural mind, that he turns from it with extreme dislike.

Until therefore the enmity is subdued and the heart brought into reconciliation with God, accepting His offered mercy through the crucified, risen, and glorified Saviour, there can be no fellowship. Often there is great semblance of religiousness, but no reality; no tie of affection to bind the heart to God; no concurrence of thought, desire, or action. All is variance.

But from the moment the rebel surrenders, humbling himself before God's dear Son, from that moment fellowship is established. He is no longer regarded in the heavens as a stranger or foreigner, but as a fellow-citizen of the saints, and of God's household. The heart heretofore filled with alarm at the thought of God, with dread of His anger, and consequent bitterness against Him and those who love Him, is now at peace as regards Him and them.

Here is *spiritual* communion. His fellow-believers seek the face of God, and so does he. They revere the Father and the Son, and this same thought is awakened now in his heart. They trust in Christ Jesus for salvation, and so does he. So far there is

communion. It is but feeble ; it is yet in its infancy ; but it is real ; nay more, it is divine. It is the operation of God's Spirit in the soul. The work of Satan is to dissociate from God and His people. The work of God is to draw them to Himself and to one another. These designs are entirely antagonistic.

The child of God however soon learns that the maintenance of practical communion with God involves an amount of self-restraint for which he is little prepared. His associations have hitherto been with the world. The taste of the old wine, long familiar to him, has such attractions that he is by no means disposed to part with it, though he values the new. How opposed to the purposes of his Father, who, having supplied him with new wine, desires him to abstain from the old ! The communion is impaired, not broken ; for his loving Father sustains it, bearing long with his unwillingness ; leading him tenderly and gently towards a concurrence with His purpose. Separation from the world that lieth in the wicked one is contrary to the natural heart ; and, though often approved of and attempted, is seldom accomplished ; by some perhaps only when the natural life is drawing to a close on the death-bed : a sufficient indication that the communion with God is far from complete.

Other causes also contribute to obstruct this fellowship. The child is but imperfectly acquainted with his Father's will. Reading the Scripture with this object before him is not very common ; and the consequence is a wandering in darkness. His former education also is adverse. Taught to admire the prowess of the heroes of antiquity, the meekness and lowliness of mind shining so brightly in the character of the Lord Jesus are beyond the horizon of the eager and impulsive day of youth. The influence of the multitude around, steadily pursuing the broad road to destruction, has great effect in misleading. The experienced Christian well knows how many other things

there are interfering with his fellowship with God, deadening the conscience, and inducing him to hide himself from His sight.

But in addition to all these there is another class of hindrances, arising, strange to say, out of Christianity itself, even out of the very word of God. One person has discovered a neglected truth, which he values. His neighbour's eyes are not open to receive it, and the tendency is to look down upon, disregard, and ultimately reject him. There is a severance, perhaps enmity. Can the Father's communion with both, or with either, be the same as when His children were loving each other? He brought them together, and now they choose to separate.

It is quite possible for the soul to be in communion with God upon one point, and out of communion on another, indeed upon many points. For instance, among many other things that might be adduced, and which, though they do not interfere with the soul's salvation, yet greatly mar its fellowship with God, as well as its progress in knowledge of Him, leading also to final loss hereafter, may be mentioned—

(a) The boasting of life. (James iv. 13.)

(b) Anxiety about the cares, possessions, desires of this life.

(c) Doubts about salvation; fears because of personal unworthiness.

(d) Quarrels unhealed; angry thoughts.

(e) Sins unconfessed.

(f) Disbelief of the promises.

(g) Selfishness.

(h) Dislike to brothers or sisters in Christ.

(i) Sectarianism or party spirit.

Even if I approach the altar, and there, with an awakened conscience, remember that my brother has something against me, perhaps a hard word, an unkind act, or perhaps my turning my back upon him, is it not imperative that I must first be reconciled to him

before God can accept my offering of praise and thankfulness?

As I sit at my Lord's table, can He be content if I turn away any of His servants unless He explicitly bids me? Would not communion with Him be interrupted were I to presume to do so? Can He smile upon me while I am cutting off members of His body so precious to Him? My audacity might justly bring on me suited punishment.

Endless are the diversities of communion. See that father tossing his babe in the air. The child capers and crows with delight. The father reciprocates. Both are in communion: the child to the full extent of its capacity; the father, far beyond in mind, shares in the animal joy of his child. As it grows and becomes capable of comprehending its parent's desires, and likewise obeys, the fellowship, passing from the animal into the mental, is greatly heightened. In proportion also as the moral principle of subjection enters, the fellowship matures. Then the son is admitted into the full counsel of the father. Nothing is then kept back from him.

The child of God is fond of forming communions. Sometimes they are of mere animal sympathy—association with those with whom he is united by ties of nature, long-established usage, attachment to places or persons, music, &c. He cannot give reasons for so doing, but thinks and asserts it to be right. Sometimes they are formed on the mental element—sentiments he approves of, favourite theories, attractive eloquence. Sometimes they are based upon the moral element, where the scheme has been sanctioned by the wise and good, supported by the moral and the respectable, with whom it is thought an honour to be associated.

All these motives however might equally be alleged by worshippers of Buddah or of Baal. They have in them nothing specially connected with Christianity,

the religion of Christ Jesus, the Crucified, the Risen, the glorified Son of God.

True it is that in such societies we hear about Him with more or less clearness and earnestness; but such is not the *communion* established by Him. The laws of such bodies are not dictated by Him, but by man; it may be by good men, but still by man; not by the Spirit of God.

The laws of Christ's communion are precise and imperative. We who are redeemed out of an evil world are to gather ourselves together unto Him outside the camp; not to the name, opinions, or practices of any person or party; not in assumption or pretence, but in reality. In other cases, it is true, the Royal Standard, inscribed with the cross, is hoisted; but, unhappily, man's will gives efficacy and importance to the party flag above it.

The hearts of Christ's humble disciples are becoming more and more ill at ease under their sectarian position—longing for union with one another, according to His oft-repeated command. So many, however, and so great are the impediments, that they know not how it is to be brought about. The numerous attempts have so signally failed, that the object is looked upon as hopeless, and by many is given up in despair. They therefore remain as they are, forgetting that the "ceasing to do evil" precedes the "learning to do well." If the child is obedient in this preliminary act, his Father will lead him gently and prudently into clearer apprehension of His purposes. Only let him not take counsel with man, not with flesh and blood, but let him attend to the directions long since given in the divine Word.

There are other conflicting motives not yet adverted to—stubbornness, self-will. Let us hear how the divine mind regards them: "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

Does it not seem to follow from hence that no

arrangement whereby intercourse of all Christians is narrowed or restrained is worthy of the hallowed name of "communion"? The term has been debased so as to designate every religious association formed by the self-will of man, looking at all beyond its pale as unworthy. "Our communion," "communion with us," are phrases intimating too often that God and His Christ are exclusively concerned with that particular party, and that none others are noticed.

Our loving Father seeks and holds fellowship with all His children. Our gracious Master spreads the mantle of His love over all His redeemed family. The Spirit of God binds the whole together in one body—in the bond of the peace which Jesus has obtained for us, and bestowed upon us. Any one interfering with or obstructing this large, this comprehensive unity, must bear his iniquity.

If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another. But if we prefer darkness, then those human communions follow, every one of them at variance with the commands of our Lord.

Full communion with Christ obliges me to enter into His thoughts, His feelings, His designs, and to make them my own. Anything short of this is imperfection. His people lie very near His heart. I must think of them as He does, love them as He does. To have full communion with Him and them I must cherish in my heart His affections towards all of them. Any emotion opposed to this cannot be of God; and if not, whence is it? May our communion be "the communion of the Holy Ghost." R. N.

2 Cor. vi. 14-16.—"*Fellowship*" implies the holding of something with another; "*communion*," common interests, resulting from oneness in life; "*concord*," agreement in sound and voice; "*part*," a share in some common object; and "*agreement*," the entertaining of sentiments in common.—*Soltau*.

ENOCK; OR, THE BELIEVER'S WALK AND HOPE.

GEN. v. 21-25; HEB. xi. 5, 6.

THIS instance of faith, and the honour put upon it by God, is in keeping with the object of the entire record of Heb. xi., which is to illustrate the power of faith. The design of the Holy Ghost is to give practical examples of the definition of faith contained in verse 1: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." For this reason the manifestations of unbelief in those who are named are passed over as being out of place; they are faithfully recorded in the history, but not repeated here; grace is magnified to the glory of God, and the manifestations of nature, as exceptions to that grace, are not remembered.

Moreover, the order in which Enoch is named in Heb. xi. is instructive. His name follows that of Abel, the man of God, whose faith was exercised towards God in sacrifice or worship, by which the walk with God must commence; for until Christ has been received by faith, and we worship the Father, He and we are not agreed, and consequently cannot walk together; as it is written, "Can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos iii. 3.) This holy agreement with God in Christ is salvation.

Again, in this record Enoch's name immediately precedes that of Noah, who illustrates God's preservation, and the passage or transit of the preserved in Israel and the nations through the great tribulation and judgments on to the millennial earth, and eventually to the new earth; whereas Enoch foreshadows the translation or catching up of the church into the air, to be for ever with the Lord. (1 Thess. iv. 17.)

Enoch answered to his name—"initiated, dedicated," for he was taught of God, and predicted wonderful

things ; he was also devoted, for he walked with God as one dedicated to Him ; and he enjoyed the testimony that he pleased God, and was taken up. He is easily distinguished from Cain's son of the same name, after whom Cain named the city that he built ; for our Enoch walked with God, and was translated because no city on earth was to be his portion or joy.

The Holy Ghost significantly divides Enoch's life into two parts or stages : " Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah : and Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." (Gen. v. 21, 22.) Whether we regard the birth of Methuselah as the time when his father began to walk with God, or (as I am disposed to regard it) as the Holy Ghost's commendation for its continuance, the mention is instructive, as it proves that when there was most to attract and bind his heart to earth he walked with God. Amid the joys and cares of family life, as a husband and a father, he held on his course, and that in spite of the earthliness around him. By such a walk he honoured God ; and God having first borne witness that he pleased Him, honoured him by taking him to heaven without dying.

The history and the Holy Ghost's comment join in testimony to his praise ; but the most remarkable reference to him is made by the apostle Jude in his epistle, where, having described certain fearful apostates from the faith, he recognizes in such the persons prophetically described by Enoch : " Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." He foretold that which is even yet future, and he himself happily illustrates the church's ascent to the air before the judgments are executed on apostate Christendom ; for

if the saints are to accompany the Lord when He is revealed from heaven in flaming fire to judgment, they must be taken up previously.

Thus was it with Enoch; what of ourselves? If all that was written aforetime was written for our learning, surely his history may instruct and encourage us; let us therefore now seek to trace the answer to it in ourselves.

In our life, as in that of Enoch, there was a moment and a point at which we were brought to agreement with God, into fellowship with Him, in order that we might walk with Him—a moment when that which was ever true in Him essentially and without measure became true in us in our measure: *light* and *love* became ours. He was ever light and love, but we once were enmity itself and darkness; but by grace the darkness was chased away, and we became light in the Lord, were able to behold the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and loved God because we had been first beloved of Him.

Thus by acquaintance with the Lord Jesus as our perfect Saviour our walk with God commenced, the blessed event fraught with glory to God and joy to us; and yet it was but the beginning of an endless life of blessedness. We became Enochs, were introduced into the secrets of life, light, and joy, of which those not born from above, not taught of God, cannot even conceive.

We are Enochs also because we are “dedicated, devoted.” Chosen of God the Father from everlasting in the Son of His love, given by the Father to the Son, and bought with His blood, quickened into life by the Holy Ghost, we chose Him; the choice was mutual; it must be so to be a happy one. What happiness is there to a man who chooses a woman from whom his love has no response? Surely none, but rather misery, as many a man has proved.

Jehovah's counsels are His delight. He calls the

things that be not as though they were, and the fulfilment of them gives Him infinite joy. Those counsels determined that those whom He chose should in due time choose Him, and give themselves to Him. We are therefore His by choice, by purchase, by second birth, and by surrender; we are dedicated ones, and would follow on to know Him and His will more perfectly, and so more fully walk with Him. I say more fully, because our agreement with God by faith in the Lord Jesus for pardon and peace was but the beginning of obedience; there are all the after-steps in agreement with His word, the expression of His will. For this we need increasing light and power; light to show us our defects, those points in our conduct in which we are not agreed with God, and consequently do not walk with Him in them, and grace and power to correct our ways, and to effect those which the light reveals of His will, and so more fully to walk with God, and please Him.

This is growth in knowledge and in grace, which God our Father has commanded, for which He has made full provision, and which He also expects. Room for such growth will always be found until we are perfected in the image of His Son. "When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."

The mark of honour put by God on Enoch's faith was his translation; and our hope is the coming of the Lord. Translation without seeing death will most certainly be the happy portion of those who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, and we would, in subjection to His will, desire it; notwithstanding, "whether we wake or sleep we shall live together with Him."

Our proper hope then is the coming of the Lord, and that for the following reasons:

1. Then we shall know and enjoy individually perfect conformity to Him. We shall be "like Him."

2. Then shall we collectively know and enjoy the Church's perfect conformity to Him, the perfect and manifest unity of the body to the glory of God; and then the world shall know that the Father loved us, the members, even as He loved the Son, the Head of that body.

3. Then shall be the time of Israel's blessing, and that of the nations.

Each of these is made to depend on the descending of the Lord into the air, and His subsequent revelation from heaven. In conclusion, let us notice the intimate connection between the walk and the hope.

Abel became a witness of the coming sacrifice in which God delights; and He delights in those who present it.

Enoch, having walked with God, and enjoyed the testimony that he pleased Him, was made, in honour of his faith, a witness to the coming of the Lord and the translation of His saints.

In our case also the walk and the hope are connected; they act and re-act on each other. If by grace we walk with God by doing His will (and just in the measure in which we do so), we shall look forward with confidence and joyful expectation to the coming of the Lord to consummate our heaven-born desire and hope. Again, as we anticipate His coming, we shall seek so to order our spirit and speech, thoughts and actions as to be able to look up and say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

This is effected *only* by the power of the Holy Ghost. The imagined and boasted wisdom and strength of nature, of the flesh, come not into the question; it is the obedience of *faith*, the exercise and development of the new creature in Christ, to whom all the promises are made and all the precepts are given.

May that blessed Spirit perfect this in us till that day.

EVENING HOURS.

I AM sitting in the twilight,
 In the silence of the day,
 And I see the shadows lengthen
 As the sunshine fades away.
 Mingling lights and shades are hovering
 On the landscape soft and still,
 And the silver moon is rising
 O'er the distant wooded hill.

Oh, true picture of my passage
 Through the evening of my days,
 All the energies of nature
 Yielding slow to life's decays !
 Here, through grace, I calmly ponder
 All the way that I have come,
 And see light begin its shining
 On my near-approaching home.

In that moon I see reflected
 The radiance of the sun,
 And the spreading dimness shows me
 That his daily course is run.
 But no night is stealing o'er me,
 I am watching for a star ;
 For the " Morning Star " of promise
 Sweetly cheers me from afar.

Yes, a morning full of brightness
 Dawns serenely on my view,
 And in resurrection glory
 Saints are glistering like dew.
 Never there shall waning daylight
 Tell me darkness has begun ;
 Never there shall growing weakness
 Bid the work of love be done !

Soon by living flowing fountains
 Shall my willing steps be led,
 And with hidden manna nourished,
 By the Lamb I shall be fed.
 Ne'er again shall pain or sorrow
 Mar the quiet of my breast,
 Or the shadow of to-morrow
 Cloud the happiness of rest.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

How are we to reconcile Matt. xxviii. 19, with the recorded practice in the Acts, of baptizing into the name of the Lord Jesus?

The command in Matthew is definite—to baptize those who believe “into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;” and apart from any other consideration, a *command* must maintain its ground above any recorded practice. It has been thought by some that Matthew is Jewish, and refers to a future time; but the context, and especially the word of promise—“Lo, *I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age*”—does not accord with this. The supposition that in the gospel of Matthew our Lord overlooks the present dispensation, and here points on to the future blessing of nations *as nations*, is out of keeping with the fact that in no other gospel are the *present* mysteries of the kingdom of heaven so fully unfolded; and the command at the close of Matthew harmonizes with those of Mark and Luke, and tells of the present world-wide but elective mercy of God through the gospel, in contrast with His previous limited working within the Jewish fold. The explanation of the apparent discrepancy is not difficult. Our Lord gives us the formula in Matthew; and in the varied narratives and expressions of the Acts we learn what the rightly administered baptism did: it baptized unto the Lord Jesus, even as the antitype, the baptism of the Spirit, baptizes into the one body of Christ; and thus standing in Christ, we find our blessed relation secured to the Father, Son, and Spirit. It would further seem to be a coming short of the whole aim of Scripture to leave out the name of the Father in that initiatory ordinance which symbolizes our having been brought back to Him through the atonement of Christ and the regeneration of the Holy Ghost. In connection with this, we would refer to

the thrice-repeated "Jehovah" in the Aaronic blessing (Num. vi. 24-26), and also to the doxologies and benedictions of Scripture (see Rev. i. 4, 5, iv. 8; 2 Cor. 13, 14, &c.), where the threefold name is given or implied. (See also *Golden Lamp*, vol. vi. pp. 163-167.)

Please explain Acts xxii. 16.

The Jewish kinsmen of Saul of Tarsus would well understand his being baptized as a confession of past evil and uncleanness, from which he now turned, and his calling on the name of the Lord as his profession of faith in Jesus, whom they had murdered, as raised from the dead, and henceforth his Saviour and Lord. It would be the *public* washing himself from his past sins, as his heart and conscience had already been *inwardly* cleansed by faith in the Lord Jesus on the Damascus road. Baptism in this light was familiar to the Jewish people. See 1 Cor. x. 2; also "wash," "washing" (Greek, baptize), Mark vii. 4, 8; and John's baptism, Matt. iii. 6. D.

May the words, "*Let these also first be proved,*" in 1 Tim. iii. 10, be applied to all ministry?

We would say, Undoubtedly. The word rendered "deacon" is the common word for minister, or attendant (*διακονος*); and "they that have used the office of a deacon" is simply, "they that have ministered." In Phil. i. 1 we read of "overseers and ministers," and so here in 1 Tim. iii. The command given that ministers should be proved before they are recognized in the place of ministry, is only a carrying out of Paul's words to Timothy himself—"Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins." All have to be proved before they are owned, and the "being found blameless" of verse 10 may be connected with the words "he must have a good report of those that are without" of verse 7; for the word "likewise" of verse 8 links together what goes before and what follows.