

THE BASKET:

WHEREIN ARE TRUTHS FRESHLY GATHERED FROM THE
WORD OF GOD, OR TAKEN FROM OLD STORES.

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BY

THE LATE DR. MACKERN.

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THE BASKET :

Wherein are Truths freshly gathered from the Word
of God, or taken from old stores.

PREFATORY WORD.

THE Basket is a familiar vessel in every home, serving divers uses therein, convenient alike for the reception of our simplest and most precious things.

To serve the same simple office in the household of faith suggests the design and title of this occasional paper—to present and preserve therein words of comfort and encouragement for the children of God, with such exhortation as may be found convenient in its season. The Word is given from the Father of lights, which He hath given as milk and meat to nourish into full growth those whom He hath begotten as a certain first-fruits of His creatures, chosen in Christ Jesus. Every word of God is pure and golden, serving thus as light and food for the new-born children, most precious because it proceedeth out of His mouth who is light and love.

To hold forth the holy writings with their authority as the Word of God is the prime purpose of this paper. From the beginning it was so; the Spirit pressed on the man of God that this was the chosen channel of communication, divinely given, and profitable for teaching, correction, and for instruction in righteousness.

Every word thus given from God is essential for the sustenance of the soul; no earth-grown food is found convenient for it. The Christian partaker of the divine nature hath, therefore, from the Holy Spirit, a fountain of water springing up into eternal life; while forth from him who believeth in Jesus as Son of God floweth forth rivers of living water. Thus, as the diver in the depth of the sea is debtor for the breath of his life brought or sent from above, and by which alone he is kept superior to the conditions in which he is placed, so with the Christian; he is set here to experience in obedience and dependence that without God—without Christ—he is and can do nothing.

Salutary and essential lesson for the children to learn in this school of God! Thus we discover eternal purposes hid in all through which we pass, whatever it be; led by the Spirit, we *do* know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to whom all is known for eternity. In the household of faith there is service and servants given from the Head of the house.

where the Holy Spirit guides the subject soul. Men of Issachar knew the times they were in; and so with Paul and those who followed Christ with him, displaying the motive of true service, the labour of love, the ready mind unmoved by filthy lucre. Such are noted and commended in Scripture. Neither are the unfaithful servants passed over; nothing escapes the eyes of fire of the One who with feet of fine brass walks amid the golden candlesticks, and whose voice, as the voice of many waters, will wake up the most cauterised conscience among those who in His absence say, "My Lord delayeth His coming," and rule over His heritage. In fine, none can stand in His day save he whom the Lord commendeth.

The full purpose and final end in eternal counsels in Christ Jesus—in His person, work, and reign—is, that God may be all in all,—a new heaven and a new earth, the tabernacle of God with men; God Himself shall be with them—their God.

Finally, there is, we all know, deep in the heart of man, the need and desire for rest. His philosophers, politicians, and poets, have sought it for him long and diligently; the candid among these sages declare it cannot be found among changeful conditions which are wholly opposite to rest—conditions which are of the very nature of the volcanic platform on which we tread to-day, beneath whose thin crust heave to and fro fierce,

fiery forces with their kin, the tumultuous heart of man, alone held in check by the will and word of Him with whom are the issue of all things. Rest!—there is absolutely none save under the gathering wings of eternal love, secured in righteousness, revealed from faith to faith. Christ, as a man, passed through the heavens as the One who vindicated the name and way of God among men, and is now exalted on the throne of the Father. When former things are passed away, He who now shepherds the flock will lead them into the home prepared, His Father's house, to enjoy His rest, share His glory. The cry of the heart for rest satisfied in a worthy way—in permanence based on perfection—that of God!

Then shall each rest truly in that love which taught each here through trial and chastening not to trust in vain resolutions or aught of our own, but only in the heart that loveth us and the hand that holds us until Christ comes again.

WOMAN IN THE WAYS OF GOD.

PROVERBS xxxi. EPHESIANS v.

WOMAN was the immediate channel of the wide disaster which has fallen on the fair creation of God.

The woman being deceived, was in the transgression led by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life; she succumbed to the subtle suggestions of Satan, refusing the commandment of the Lord God for that which the devil urged for their aggrandisement—Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

Wholly fatal the pursuit of knowledge which maketh man its aim and end, ignoring God and His glory; thus doth the wisest among men record for us—He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow, and so it was seen under the sun; “I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.”

The heart of the first woman was already alienated while she debated with the deceiver. Good food, delight for the eye, wisdom to elevate, was seen in the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. She took and ate; she gave to her husband, and he did eat; and hard upon this most injurious act came the inexorable judgment of the Lord God—expulsion from the garden of Eden with the sentence of death in themselves.

Thus the first page of man's sad story was turned, since blotted by many bitter tears ; for sin had entered, and death through sin, upon the good work of creation committed to man's care and responsibility.

Thus the first woman as wife is found doing evil to her husband, and not good, in the very outset of their union. Clearly, then, she cannot be the virtuous woman portrayed here by the wisdom of God in the Proverbs ; for her husband is not found in the place of honour in the gates, neither is her praise uttered by his lips when he answereth God as to his action. On the contrary, he is found in disobedience far guiltier than the beguiled woman ; for Adam was not deceived, but, loving the creature more than the Creator, he was proved waster of his Master's goods, and lost the committed stewardship of the good work of God. He was ignominiously driven forth out of the planted garden to dig and delve among the thorns and thistles with sweating brow, until the crumbling walls of his house of life returned unto the ground out of which he had been taken—dust unto dust ! Moreover, the way of the tree of life was jealously guarded by cherubim and the flaming sword, the executive of God, until the coming of the seed of the woman, the second Man, to take up and carry forth in true dependence and absolute obedience eternal counsels in His own person. Herein woman again is discovered as the direct

channel of glorious and gracious purposes. Mercy rejoiceth over judgment, and the edict of the Eternal God is declared in the ears of His guilty creatures—I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed ; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Thenceforth the way and work of God flows on to appointed issues in the person of Seth, through such fouled channels as Tamar and the adulterous wife of Uriah the Hittite,—by the daughter of hostile Moab, the gentle Ruth, onwards to the wondrous night when the mystery of godliness was announced by heralding angels to humble shepherds of the field, and in the fulness of time the Virgin Mother brought forth her first-born Son, begotten in her of the Holy Ghost, whom Joseph, reputed father, called by His name Jesus.

Thus God the Eternal Son was born into this world as the holy thing called Son of God, Son of the Highest, heir of the throne of David, over the house of Jacob ; of His kingdom there shall be no end. One blessed among women there was whose womb bore and brought forth this wondrous Child, the seed of the woman !

“Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed the fruit of thy womb.”

No need here to dwell on the way and work of the Man Christ Jesus on the earth ; it is known

and gladly owned by every true-hearted subject child of God, and is the joy and rejoicing of the saved soul. The Holy Spirit has given us this wondrous summary in 1 Timothy iii. :—Confessedly the mystery of piety is great. God has been manifested in flesh, has been justified in the Spirit, has appeared to angels, has been preached among the nations, has been believed on in the world, has been received up in glory.

Hence the foremost features of Christianity are the exaltation of Christ as a man into the glory of God, consequent upon His having glorified God on the earth and finished the work given Him to do ; and subsequent, and based upon this accomplished work, with the ascension of the rejected heavenly Man up to His Father's throne on high, the descent of the Holy Spirit on earth to gather together in one all who are in Christ. Then appears the great central counsel of God, the *mystery* hidden throughout the ages in God. It is the body of the Christ, the members taken from the nations as from among the Jewish people, joint heirs, a joint body, and joint partakers of His promise in Christ Jesus by the glad tidings,—“ One body, one spirit, one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; one God and Father of all, Who is over all, and through all, and in you all.” (Eph. iv.)

This body, completed in the formative power of the Holy Ghost, will be the complement of the

risen Man, who is declared the first-born of all creation, even as the first-born from among the dead. And as the man in nature leaves the rightful claims of father and mother to be united to his wife, so (the mystery is great, but) it shall be thus also as to Christ and the Church.

The figure of this was displayed in the sleeping Adam and the builded woman, Eve, whom when he saw he saluted as "bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh." Even so the last Adam, the Lord of all, calls the redeemed Church His Eve, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

In view of God's way with us in grace as to practical conduct, the husband is to love the wife as himself, the wife to fear and honour the husband; as to this, it must be repeated in our enquiry for the virtuous woman, the first woman, as wife, wholly failed, and that by despising the commandment of the Lord God.

Therefore turn from the creation—once fair in the sight of the Creator, but now soiled and groaning in His eye and ear, for over it the slime of the serpent Sin hath gone, spoiling His handiwork—and learn that God hath not left us without a Redeemer,—One whose name shall be famous in Israel, who will not be in rest until He hath finished His labour of love; "Jesus having loved His own which were in the world, loved them to the end."

And now we have to learn this beyond and above all created things; beyond all Adam and his Eve knew in days of innocence in Eden ; beyond all Abraham and his seed owned and enjoyed in Emmanuel's land, in the bounteous land of corn, oil, and wine; beyond all victories of heroic David; beyond the splendour of Solomon; beyond his stored knowledge and world-wide wisdom; for He who was before Abraham, the Lord of anointed David, the greater than the crowned Solomon, had come as second Man and last Adam, before promised by His prophets in holy writings; come of David's seed according to the flesh, marked out Son of God in power, according to the Spirit of holiness by resurrection of the dead—Jesus Christ our Lord !

To Him, now crowned with glory and honour—the Holy Spirit ever witnesses to us ; Him, our Saviour in the glory of God, we consider, and as we learn of Him there, know the power of His resurrection, and the eternal results which rest thereon; thus, like Stephen, the heavens open to faith, and we behold the Son of Man at the right hand of God; and it is as the called ones of Jesus Christ, ceasing not to follow Him with the eye and heart of faith, we learn and attain the power of resurrection-life ; not alone the power to do, to work, but the given power *to be* conformed to His own image. No monkish mortification, no perfection or improvement, of the flesh. For that God's weapon is *death*, even the death of the Cross !

God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, are now occupied with the new Man—the body of the Christ, the Lamb's wife, the assembly of which the Lord Jesus is the Head.

Christ is the Head of every man; but woman's head is the man, and the Christ's Head, God.

Again; while we ponder the prophetic word as to the virtuous woman, while we own that hitherto she hath not appeared among the daughters of men, while it hath been owned that many daughters had done virtuously, yet God—who had at the first said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him"—now seeketh a peerless bride—one that excelleth—for his peerless only-begotten Son. Type and shadow had, in the oracles of God, dimly declared this high purpose: thus, the graphic picture of the call of the bride out of Mesopotamia to leave home, kinsmen—all, to follow the man—the eldest servant of Abraham—to be joined to one whom she alone knew by report of the servant; yet she followed in simple faith across trackless deserts, until where the wilderness ceased. Upon the field the child of resurrection, Isaac, comes forth expectant, and she with him enters Sarah's vacant tent, henceforth to be the companion and comfort of the son who was heir of all.

But as he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, now in accomplished union, based upon death and resurrection, we simply wait His coming

again. Christ, as man, as a merchant, hath searched through this dark, sinful scene, and found the object of His heart's desire. He left the glory He had before the world was, and came forth on this journey of love, paid the full price, gave up His life. The treasure was hid in the field, this world. He bought the field for the sake of the treasure, dear to His heart beyond the wealth of rubies and all precious things ; He was content to give all to secure as the chief joy and ornament of His home and heart this one pearl of great price.

(The rest, God willing, in another "Basket.")

A LIVING SACRIFICE.

ROMANS xii. 1.

THE body of the believer in Christ is in the sight of God a holy vessel, and is claimed by Him as such and sanctified. "Sanctify them by the truth ; Thy word is truth." This giveth the Christian a moral dignity which no man in nature hath, and enableth him in view of the compassions of God to yield the body thus ennobled in intelligent service as acceptable to God.

OBEDIENCE.

OBEDIENCE doth underlie all true action and hath alone upon this earth received its full and sufficient illustration before God in the person of the second man, the last Adam, the Lord from heaven.

“Lo, I come : in the roll of the book it is written of Me to do, O God, Thy will.” “I do always the things which please Him,”—marking thus His person, His work, and His way on the earth. Incarnate, He stood alone, holy harmless, and separate from sinners—the anti-type of the meat offering (Levit. ii.) in His stainless humanity.

All around, Satan had made man the facile instrument of his will for vilest uses, to which was added the crowning iniquity of the religious cabal and conspiracy to put out the light of the world, for His person is the true light which, coming into the world, is light to every man. He turned not from this, for it lay in His path as the perfect servant of God ; and by faith He is seen obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

The calm, unhesitating, unquestioning obedience of the Christ of God to the written Word and the Holy Spirit, wholly commands the worshipping homage of the subject soul. In it we discern the living illustration of the royal law of liberty. It

is the river of water of life submitting to be bound by its banks, that thereon may bloom and blossom the tree of life with its gracious fruit and healing leaves, for His own whom He loves.

Obedience is, in truth, perfect liberty when God is its source, its power, and its object.

LET US PURSUE THE THINGS WHICH TEND TO PEACE.

ROMANS xiv. 19.

GOD loves peace, and it is the inalienable portion of those who are loved of Him as taken into His favour in the Beloved. The groundwork of this in righteousness is stated in the fourth chapter, and the consequences in the early part of the fifth; it is peace with God, and it is true evidence of the moral state of such as are subject to the Holy Spirit—that the peace of God which surpasseth every understanding guards the heart and the thoughts by Jesus Christ. With such there will be surely order and due restraint of spirit, soul, and body, as they go forward like those borne on the bosom of a calm and flowing river.

DEAD FLIES.

ECCLESIASTES X.

THE preparation of precious ointment needs the utmost nicety in bringing the ingredients together to preserve the balance of each in its place and so secure a complete result. This is the aim of the apothecary in his art, out of various materials to make a characteristic whole, in order that the savour of his good ointments shall be held in esteem.

Oils, ointments, balms, spices, are much used in the Word of God as figures of the person and offices of the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit; designed to show us how God valueth that which displays and maketh known His glory and gracious purposes in Christ. Thus, too, the Christian is one who hath oil in his vessel with his lamp; and the assemblies are seen as golden lamps: and it is written, The place of the candle is on the candlestick. Whatever mars this precious motive of God to form Christ in each of the redeemed is of the nature of dead flies, which causeth a stinking savour instead of that which the virgins love and follow; for the constraining love of Christ is better than wine, making glad and rejoicing those who know Him. Dead flies may be found in the

assemblies of the people of God, and in the homes and hearts of each. The apothecary jealously excludes such from his composition, to keep it grateful and healing ; and so must each Christian, in order that all he is may be sweet and wholesome and comely for Christ. Thus alone will he be in the attitude of waiting where the Spirit and Bride say, Come !

Wherever the Christian passeth he must leave the sweet savour of Christ, *or* that of its opposite, which cometh from the presence of dead flies ; for the action of one who hath eternal life is always positive in result, never negative. Christ must be seen, heard, and handled in each or some mark and token of the old man, whose savour ever betrays its source in the flesh which breedeth dead flies. The man of God could say by the Holy Ghost, I am crucified with Christ, and no longer live ; I, but Christ lives in me. It is this kind which maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge, and is unto God a sweet savour of Christ, and so to all who are His, nay, to all around ; for such life and its sweet action is of large benefit and blessing, like the liberal air, laden with pure sunshine and the healing balm of flowers and fruits for the benefit of all. Like Christ : acting, moving, living in the Spirit, he cannot be hid ; it is Christ in him. For the eternal word was spoken to disciples left behind for a little time on earth. "Ye are My witnesses." How needful, then,

that the Christian man and woman considereth well their way before God and man. In nature we recognise that all light cometh from the sun, who was made the greater light to rule the day; so, morally, it is declared of the Word of God, "In Thy light we see light." Let each so use it in subjection to the Holy Spirit that he stumbleth not himself, or others dear to the heart of Christ. Let His name, which is of the nature of good ointment, healing and grateful to the suffering spirit, be much used of each who know its virtues and praise its power; and thus may the afflicted, the broken-hearted, the blind and bruised among men be again attracted as of old; for He was lifted up for this—to draw unto Himself. Speak, therefore, and show forth alone of Christ,—He declared plainly of God the Father. The crucified, the risen, ascended, and coming Lord Jesus Christ is the good ointment of God, the odour of which filleth His house.

It is given to thee of God, O Christian, to enjoy this for ever, in time and for eternity.

Be careful that thou in no wise suffer in it the intrusion of the flesh—the fertile breeder of dead flies.

Finally, to confirm what has been set down as to dead flies and their source, it will be enough to the subject soul to speak what God the Holy Spirit hath put into our mouths: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man

shall sow, that also shall he reap. For he that sows to his own flesh shall reap corruption from the flesh ; but he that sows from the Spirit, from the Spirit shall reap eternal life."

Again, ever memorable words of the Lord Jesus, wholesome in warning to all,—

"That (which is) born of the flesh is flesh."

Again, the manifest works of the flesh are named,—

"Fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, strifes, jealousies, angers, contentions, disputes, schools of opinions, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revels, and things like these."

Let the stinking savour of such and the following warn us of the presence of dead flies, for in the fidelity of God even a little folly readily betrayeth itself in those whom He hath brought into the place of wisdom and honour in the crucified and risen Christ :—

Fair appearance in the flesh.

Want of subjection one to another.

Profane, vain babblings.

Foolish and unlearned questions.

Holding gain to be the end of piety.

Roots of bitterness.

Bitter emulation.

Strife in the heart.

Evil speakers.

Boastful, arrogant.

Disobedient to parents.

Lovers of self.

Lovers of money.

Lovers of pleasure.

Itching ears.

Given to filthy lucre.

Ungrateful, profane.

Malicious words.

THE TONGUE.

JAMES iii.

THE tongue is fire. Fire we know to be an excellent servant when rightly governed and obedient, but a most dreaded and destructive tyrant where it obtains the mastery. The tongue is fire, the world of unrighteousness, untameable, though it be a little member, declared to be an unruly evil, full of deadly poison, the defiler of the whole body, capable of setting fire to the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.

Sharp words, and significant of that which has been proved an unsettled evil. Though all species of beasts and of birds, creeping things of the land and of the sea, have been tamed, yet the tongue, God saith, no man can tame.

How practically true do we find all this, if we had but grace to own it, in every hour of our little day. When emulation and bitter strife rise up like mists from beneath to cloud the intercourse of Christians and dim their communion with one another in the things of Jesus Christ given of the Holy Ghost, what loss to each, to all; for this is to boast and lie against the truth. Before God our place—the place of all in Christ—is silence and subjection, until the Holy Spirit bids us rise to speak and act. Such are wise and understanding;

their good conversation betrayeth its source from above in meekness of wisdom ; the fruits are unquestioning—good fruits which hath their source in God—the fruit of righteousness in peace sown for them that make peace.

Contrariwise, any one who seems to be religious and is afflicted with an unbridled tongue and flux of words, deceiveth himself, and maketh his profession vain. Pure religion hath a quality separate from this ; and holdeth itself unspotted from the world, which loudly asserteth itself in its high places ; while the child of light seeketh rather to go to the quiet house of mourning to let the warm rays of the heart of Christ and His words of love fall and enter into the heart of the lonely orphan and the weeping widow.

God displayeth Himself as the Father and Husband of all such desolate ones ; the children of God seek to be imitators of Him according to the measure of the love and sacrifice of Christ.

Let us learn of Him who is meek and lowly, that we may acquire that which He admireth—the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.

It is said to be the glory of God to conceal a thing, and that there is a time to keep silence and a time to speak, and that a word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. How wondrous is the illustration of this given in the Epistle to the Ephesians, when the mystery as to which God hath kept silence throughout the

ages, hidden in Himself, was made known through the assembly gathered to the name of the risen man Christ Jesus, and then in fit time announced among the nations by the Apostle Paul.

Sublime silence of eternal wisdom now broken because God hath been manifested in flesh and has been received up in glory !

Let the believer who hath received rivers of living waters beware of all contact with bitter water, which defileth the sweet. The tongue is the outward opening for such, and it must flow forth either sweet or bitter ; it must be either blessing or cursing ; and either God and the Father must be blessed, or those made after His likeness cursed. Brethren, we must judge as to this. If thy tongue is hot and would fain utter thy mind even as the fool, seek to cool it with God's sweet water which cometh down from above. Forget not—a little fire kindleth a great wood ; and by thy hasty word much mischief and wide desolation may be spread—earthly, natural, devilish. Yield rather in your place the fruit of righteousness in peace sown for them that make peace.

WISDOM is the right use of information—of what I know as true. Christ is made unto us wisdom.

WE shall find three great subjects in the Bible—the creation (now under the effect of the fall); the law, which gave man a rule—to man in the midst of this creation to see if he could live there according to God, and be there blessed ; and the Son of God.

WHOLESOME WORDS.

EVEN THE WORDS OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

WHOSO speaketh sound words to his fellows to strengthen, sustain, encourage each in their place before God in a day of difficulty, is truly a helper. Where there is so much in the Babel in the midst of which we live and move in this day of man's assertion of himself, to distract the ear and heart, the trumpet which gives no uncertain sound is a true power to guide amid the war of words and speculations raging all around. In the thick and gathering night, with a dangerous coast on his lee, what cheer to the anxious navigator to have before him a trustworthy chart, the steady sentinel light of the friendly beacon, with a ship under him which obeys the guiding hand of the helmsman. We have to own that the grace of our God and Father has provided for us in the perilous times in which we are found and has carefully noted in Scripture the hidden dangers which lie beneath the smooth smiling surface of the course of this world.

The Spirit of God hath spoken by appointed men, and given needed counsel in the form of sound words, to which we do well to give earnest heed in this day of darkness and delusion.

Christian, refuse to drink at creature springs, turn wholly from the hewn cisterns of men ; the

well-spring of wisdom is a flowing brook ; living waters are thine from forth the smitten Rock—Christ !

HE that watereth others shall be watered.

Forbearing one another in love.

Watch thou in all things.

Be sober in all things.

Endure hardness.

Swift to hear.

Bowels of compassion.

Slow to speak.

Endure afflictions.

Slow to wrath.

Be not high-minded.

Kindness.

Be ye doers of the word.

Lowliness.

Be pitiful—be courteous.

Meekness.

To all these add LOVE.

GOD IS LIGHT.

GOD IS LOVE.

“LET YOUR GENTLENESS BE KNOWN
OF ALL MEN.”

PHIL. IV. 5.

THE divine life in the Christian expresses itself thus in all true moderation, not insisting on one's rights after the manner of the natural man, but found in subjection to one another, in mildness and balanced behaviour, whose true repose and calm dignity plainly declareth that which the mouth witnesseth—the Lord is near !

THE PROBE.

WHEN we stand with the skilful surgeon at the bed side of the sick and behold him bring forth his instruments, we know that his experienced eye has detected the unsound place, and the probe must be applied to search the depth and extent of the disease. It is a painful process, but we own it as needful for true restoration of the body to health. Consider it thus : man as a sinner *must* be brought to know and feel his real state before God—the righteous God. Righteousness is unsparing, lowers not the standard of God. His own nature and eternal purpose in Christ—crucified, risen, and exalted on His right hand. Therefore we find the instruments of divine surgery supplied by the Holy Spirit, and the law is the probe, of which there is clearly indication as to its lawful use. (1 Tim. i. 8-11.)

The surgeon seeks to secure a sound body, and so the sharp knife follows the track of the probe. The apostle declares war to the knife against all that is opposed to sound teaching according to the glad tidings of the glory of the blessed God, with which he had been entrusted. Let us remember the character of the latter times, of which the Spirit speaks expressly—the apostatizing from the faith, the mind given to deceiving spirits,

the cauterised consciences and the unnatural restraint from the use of that which God hath given to be received with thanksgiving, and of which one hath said in comment,—“ I believe the creature, fallen through Adam, belongs to the faithful, and those who know the truth by God’s speaking to us and our freely speaking to Him. This has set all on a new footing, because we have met God again, the word of God having put us into communication by grace. And the faithful and those who know the truth have availed themselves of it, and come and enter into intercourse. It is no longer by nature, but by the word of God.”

Christian! forget not for a moment your precious place and privilege in the risen Christ; hold to it as a good soldier through darkening days and perilous times; be robust and real in your action, for you are not your own. Be a living sacrifice to God; mingle not with this mere human kindness, and beware of leaven; let not the salt of our God lack in the sacrifice. The honey of human nature spoileth the sacrifice; the salt hath the preservative virtue which our God esteems, He suffereth not leaven therein.

Child of resurrection! know no man after the flesh.

Man of God! remember, you are called by glory and virtue.

Servant of Christ! forget not the lawful use of the probe when that intrudes which is opposed to

sound teaching ; but in this, as in all thy ways, let all be done as it becometh us in the bowels of Jesus Christ and according to the compassions of the heart of God.

EXPERIENCE.

VERITABLE Christian experience is stored up for us in the Epistle to the Philippians ; it is the apprehension in the power of the Holy Spirit of what Christ is for us before God ; it is the divine life in men and women on earth expressing itself in the unhindered presence of the Holy Spirit in all lovely ways around, fulfilling the joy of the apostle, who yearned over them in Christ—thinking the same thing, having the same love, joined in soul, nothing done in the spirit of strife or vain glory—the same mind found in them which was also in Christ Jesus. To such the words come—“ For the rest, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are noble, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”

“ OUR God is a consuming fire.”

CHRIST makes us *now* superior to circumstances, if the eye of faith rests calmly on Him.

MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

“MASTERS, give unto servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.” Colossians iv. 1.

Whoso would be well and truly served in this world must needs remember the conditions of true service. Among these the recognition and due reward thereof is brought before us in the communications of the inspired apostle to the assemblies. God, who taketh thought for oxen, is thus seen as considering such as bear the heat and burden of the day, and would have His people in this, as in all things, in the full current of His mind, that each may carry forth in practical action that which illustrates Christ in us.

GOOD WORKS.

“THE word is faithful, and I desire that thou insist on these things, that they who have believed God may take care to pay diligent attention to good works.”

“Let ours also learn to apply themselves to good works for necessary wants, that they may not be unfruitful” (Titus iii. 8-14).

Man in himself needs the comfort and control of rule and restraint, even as the child is comforted and sheltered by the walled garden rather than by the wild freedom of the fenceless plain.

An incessant and ceaseless cause of calamity in our households and the assemblies is idleness of body and spiritual laziness ; this last may exist even where there is an itching ear for hearing about truth. Therefore the word—"If ye know these things, blessed are ye if ye do them."

The want of due and wholesome activities in all practical ways in the individual works incalculable ill, and is provocative of much which is uncomely in the Christian, and of gravest shame and sorrow in the assembly.

God gave body, soul, and spirit for action, invites and directs it for His ends of blessing in and toward all. The aim and object is thus seen around, and appeals for our aid in all eloquent ways, in sighs of sorrow, in sickness, in need, and many perplexities.

Behold your Lord and Master when here, pressed on all sides—a wearied man (John iv. 6), yet ceaseless in the activities of love amid the work given Him to do.

GOOD CONFESSION.

CHRIST witnessed a good confession before Pilate that His was a kingdom, but not of this world, and pronounced the ever-memorable words—"I have been born for this, and for this I have come into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth hears My voice."

THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN.

PROVERBS xxxi. EPHESIANS v.

WHAT wealth of rubies may compare
With her, the woman true and fair,
Whose husband safe his heart can rest
Upon her pure and virtuous breast ;
Whose daily life is one of good,
Seeking wool and flax and food,
Gathering wealth with willing hand,
That she may thus each need command,
And like the ships which sail the sea,
She, too, may bring prosperity.
Blessing her household, she doth rise
Betimes, that each may find supplies ;
And on the field her eye doth rest—
The vineyard blooms with produce blest ;
Her girded loins strongly stand
To move her arms and supple hand.
She tasteth that her work is good,
Convenient for the household food.
Her candle ever burneth bright,
An atmosphere of cheerful light ;
The distaff and the spindle too
Within her hands yield produce due ;
She spreadeth forth her open store
To feed the needy and the poor.
She smileth at the snow-clad ground,

Her household all in scarlet found ;
While coverings of tapestry delight,
She stands in silk and purple bright.
Her husband, known within the gate,
Where he among the elders sate,
Linen fine and girdles true
She maketh and bartereth too.
Thus, strength and honour in her home,
She shall rejoice in time to come.
While wisdom is in all her speech,
The law of kindness she doth teach.
Her faithful eye doth rest serene,
And measures all with modest mien ;
While well-won bread she duly shares
With those who bear her household cares.

O woman blessed ! O woman true !
The praise of husband, children, due ;
Many daughters have done well,
But thou the chiefest doth excel.

O woman blessed ! O woman dear !
Thy heart the Lord Himself doth fear ;
No trust in favour or in youth,
Thy ways are still the ways of truth :
Its fruit thy hands shall fully share,
Its works shall thus thy ways declare.
O woman blessed ! thus God doth show
The wonders of His ways below,
And would in this picture let us find
The transcript of His perfect mind ;

So pure, so pleasant, are the ways
Of Him who thus His heart displays,
And to His creatures doth impart
The joy that moves the Eternal Heart ;
And yet withal retaineth still
The guidance of His sov'reign will.
He gives the life—the power too,
The motive and the object due,
That all may through Redemption's story,
Resound the burden of His glory !
The Church, the Eve of Christ's own choice,
His loving heart doth now rejoice ;
And He the Father's word doth wait,
To come for her with love elate.
Yet while He waits would have her show
His wondrous witness here below ;
Be as this woman, that His heart
May safely trust her to impart
Comfort and help and solace, stay,
To those who falter on God's way ;
To those who are His children dear,
But know not yet His counsel clear ;
Who shrink amidst the paths of light,
Amazed amid His glories bright.
To turn each heart from all around,
In which before their joy was found ;
To turn to Him whose glories beam
In Christ—the Risen Man supreme ;
Shedding light and glory round,
Where richest grace in Him abound ;

Who on this earth by faith was seen
'Mid shame, 'mid sorrow, calm, serene ;
Intent upon the work of love—
To bring His own to God above ;
To set each there in peace, unmoved,
Cleansed and clothed—in Him beloved !
But while He patient waits the word
To send Him forth, the glorious Lord,
The Son of Man, the Lord supreme,
The Light that shall through all things beam,—
His gracious purpose doth appear
To shine through all His members here ;
The witness of God's grace and love
On earth to walk in Christ above.
The Church of God, confessed the Bride
Of Him, the Lord, once crucified ;
To stand with Him within the gate
Where glory, honour, blessing wait
To magnify the love which gave
Himself for her to cleanse—to save,
That she might with Him wholly be
Bright in Redemption's liberty !
Glorious purpose—rich in grace,
To see the glory of His face ;
To be with Him within that scene,
Whose wonders eye hath never seen ;
To sing the songs whose burdens bear
His praise to every opened ear ;
To see as seen—to know as known,
To reign with Him upon His throne !

Glorious purpose—wondrous grace,
To gaze unhindered on His face ;
To look on Him who 'midst the throne
Shall God's eternal purpose own !
With those who know the eternal word
He'll stand confessed the risen Lord.

The Church, in God's full purpose blest,
The Lamb has now His bride confest ;
The mystery of His will made clear
By Him to every opened ear,
That she, the Church, in glory bright,
Shall shine in all His radiant light
Without a spot. His love, all fair,
Will rest on every saved one there ;
And His own heart, well satisfied,
Will joy in her His chosen bride.
Without a wrinkle, spot, or stain,
Redeemed by Him, the Lamb once slain,
Amidst the garden of her God,
Where erst no footsteps e'er have trod,
This Eve its chiefest joy will be,
Through Him who is of life the Tree.
And there upon the throne the Lamb—
Her Saviour, Lord, the great I AM—
This pearl—pure and precious gem—
Shall deck His glorious diadem.
Amidst the songs of seraphim,
Amidst glad echoing cherubim,
Amidst the praise of creatures bright,
She shall dwell with Him in light.

MY FATHER'S HOUSE.

JOHN xiv.

KNOWEST thou the eternal home so fair,
Where Jesus bids us rise and come,
Where He the Son amid the many sons shall share
The love, the fulness of His glorious home?
Knowest thou of it, O child of God—
Hast thou thither oft in spirit trod?

Knowest thou its fragrant airs, its fadeless bloom,
The clustering glories of that gracious place,
Where He whose name as ointment doth perfume,
Its light all streaming from His glorious face?
Knowest thou of Him, O child of God—
Hast thou oft with Him in spirit trod?

Knowest thou the home by perfect wisdom planned,
(High on seven pillars built, it firmly rests)
Where, fully furnished, meat and wine doth stand,
Its maidens trooping forth to seek the guests?
Knowest thou of it, O child of God—
Hast thou oft this home in spirit trod?

Knowest thou the joys of our eternal home,
The way familiar to thy weary feet?
He trod it all that He might bid us come
And rest with Him within its shelter sweet.
Knowest thou the way, O child of God—
The way in spirit hast thou often trod?

Knowest thou the light that lightens all this home,
Shedding fresh glories on its perfect rest?

God is the Light from whom all light doth come,
To seek, to save, to shelter in His breast.

Knowest thou this Light, O child of God—
Does light still lighten where thou hast trod?

Knowest thou the heart that waits at home,
Yearning to quickly come and take us there?
He waits ;—we wait for God to bid Him come
To call His own unto His home so fair.

Knowest thou His heart, O child of God—
His steps in spirit hast thou often trod?

Knowest thou His love, opener of the home?
'Tis God—'tis Jesus—the Eternal Son ;
It is He who died that we might come
To share the victory which He hath won.

Knowest thou His love, O child of God—
Hast thou in spirit with His Spirit trod?

“The Father Himself hath affection for you, because ye have had affection for me, and hath believed that I came out from God” (JOHN xvi. 27).

WOULD'ST thou feast the Lord of glory?
Feast the poor, the sick, the blind.
Know'st thou His life's blest story?
Ways of love in Him thou'lt find.

Make the feast,—call not thy own ;
Call the poor, the sick, the lame ;
Thus recompense thou dost disown,
To glorify thy Lord's great name !

BETHANY.

JOHN xi, xii.

CALM the hour, the time how sweet,
When, lowly lying at Thy feet,
 She drank the living Word ;
By faith received Thee as God's Son,
By faith believed the victory won,
 And hailed Thee as the Lord !

When sorrow swept their earthly home,
She waited still for Thee to come,
 To speak the living Word.
Though Lazarus lay within the tomb,
Faith still beneath its awful gloom
 Hailed Thee as the Lord !

How sad, how solemn, when she cried,
" Hadst Thou been here he had not died,
 Lord of the living Word !"
She bent before that awful gloom,
Her torn heart shuddered o'er the tomb ;
 Yet still she owned Thee, Lord !

Thy Spirit groaned,—yea, Thou did'st weep
O'er one Thou lovedst in death's dark sleep ;
 No hope but in Thy Word.
The cave, the stone, the faltering heart,
Were there to bid all hope depart ;
 But Thou wert there—the Lord !

Away all doubts, away the stone,
Away all fears,—thus Thou alone
 Mayst speak the living Word !
Come forth! give forth, O death-bound tomb,
Thy tenant from its hateful gloom
 To greet his living Lord !

O wondrous scene, O heavenly hour,
That gavest thus God's perfect power
 To wait upon Thy Word !
When tears and gloom and fears are fled,
And Lazarus, raised from out the dead,
 Hails Thee, his living Lord !

Behold again this glorious scene,
When Lazarus, Martha, Mary seen
 With Thee, the living Word.
The centre Thou, the supper spread,
Where Lazarus lay and freely fed
 With Thee, his living Lord !

And Martha served ; while Mary's part
Brought nard and hair and loving heart,
 To balm the living Word.
And Thou, Lord Jesus, on Thy feet
Received the homage, odours sweet,
 Which owned Thee—Christ the Lord !

THE VINEYARD OF THE WELL- BELOVED.

ISAIAH v. MATTHEW xxi. 33.

On light came darkness in that land,
Where Abraham, Isaac, Israel stand—
The witness of their God.
The light had waned—the darkness fell,
And brooding weighed its baleful spell
Where faithful Abraham stood!

Emmanuel's land—the land divine,
The land of olives, corn, and wine,
The land whose bounteous breast
Received the vine Jehovah brought,
Which He Himself by Moses sought
To plant within His rest.

The vineyard was a fruitful hill,
The husbandman of choicest skill ;
He sought the choicest vine.
He built the tower and wine-press too,
The middle wall of fence right through,
To guard the golden wine.

The planted vineyard, wine-press—all
Were given to those whom He did call
From Egypt's fiery plain ;

That they might in due season yield
The produce of this chosen field,
Render His own again.

In season due the servants came
To seek their Master's righteous claim—
The produce of the vine.
Unrighteous hands the servants slew,
Unrighteous hearts denied the due,
The sovereign right divine.

But last of all came forth the Son,
The Heir of all their Lord hath done,
To make His Father's claim.
These wicked men rose up and slew
The One they owed all reverence due,
Denying His right and name.

Behold the vineyard barren—bare,
The object of such ceaseless care,
'Mid broken wall and waste.
No more the pruner's care adorns,
The hedgeless vineyard brings forth thorns ;
The rain it doth not taste.

No light now rests upon that land
Where Abraham, Isaac, Israel stand—
The witness of their God.
There Gentile dogs go to and fro,
As ravening wild beasts prowling go,
Where faithful Abraham

But yet again the light shall break,
The Sun of Righteousness shall streak
The clouds with light divine ;
And all shall see that glorious land
Spring forth again at God's command,
Brimming with golden wine !

For Christ shall come, and be admired
By all His saints in righteousness attired,
In His own glorious land.
He there shall find the fertile vine,
He there shall drink the golden wine
New, with His faithful band !

RISEN WITH CHRIST.

CHRISTIAN, risen child of God,
Seek the things which are above ;
Christ thy Saviour earth hath trod,
To set thee free 'midst light and love.

Give thy heart to things in heaven ;
Wean thy heart from things below :
His heart, His home, to thee is given ;
On Christ thy heart, thy all bestow.

“If therefore ye be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above, where the Christ is sitting at the right hand of God : have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth ; for ye have died, and your life is hid with the Christ in God ” (COL. iii.).

THE HOUSE OF WINE.

SONG OF SOLOMON, chap. ii.

INTO Thy house of wine,
Lord, Thou bringest me,
Of all Thy ways divine
Thou makest me free.

Thou bid'st me freely feast
Within Thy home above ;
O'er me, of Thine the least,
Spread'st Thy banner—love.

Into Thy house above,
Lord, Thou bid'st me come ;
Thy Father's heart of love
Hast given it for our home.

Thou art the apple tree
Amid the wood of trees,
Among the sons Thou to me
The chiefest of all these !

To sit beneath Thy shade,
To taste the golden fruit,
To be as one Thou hast made
Thyself—Thy ways to suit.

Stay me then with golden wine,
Hold me with Thine hand.

Let me know the power divine
Let me thus before Thee stand.

Happy they who see Thy face,
Happy they who dwell with Thee,
Happy they who by Thy grace
Rejoice with Thee in liberty.

Beloved, Thou art ever mine !
Thy hand around my beating heart
Assures me the choice is Thine ;
God hath joined, no man can part.

DEPENDENCE.

1 THESSALONIANS iv. 13-18.

LEANING on Thy tender love,
Lord, we'd go from day to day,
Keep each heart with Thee above,
By Thy Spirit's wondrous sway.

Listening for the archangel's voice
To bid the dead in Christ arise,
And with remaining saints rejoice,
Together meet Thee in the skies.

Waiting thus, O Lord, we'd go,
Remembering still Thy patient grace,
That like Thee we still may grow,
Till we see Thee face to face !

GOD IS LOVE—GOD IS LIGHT.

1ST EPISTLE JOHN.

'Twas not in worlds of light above
That God made known His way of love ;
'Twas not in scenes unsullied, bright,
That He revealed that God is light ;
'Twas not amidst the ambient air,
'Midst glowing suns, or moonlight fair ;
Nor where the myriad creatures creep
Who move amidst the untrampled deep.

'Twas not in Eden's garden fair,
Where all was good for man to share ;
Whence sprang each tree to please the eye,
To lend its shade, its fruit supply,
Where Nature, in her tenderest ways,
Diffused her joy in myriad rays :
Not all creation's glories bright
Could tell that God is love, is light.

Not there came forth the light divine,
Not there did God's full purpose shine,
Not there did He Who dwelt above
Reveal Himself as light and love ;
But in those scenes of ceaseless shame,
Where sin still burned unholy flame,
Where in its fierce and fiery breath
Man wasted, moth-like, unto death.

There Jesus came—the incarnate One—
God's peerless, perfect, lowly Son,
Where 'midst sorrow, sin, and shame,
He showed His Father's holy name,
His life shone there in purest light,
As light 'midst darkness, burning bright ;
Then crowned by death His life of love
To bring man up to God above.

LEVITICUS xiv.

Two birds alive and clean ;
One bird alive, one dead ;
One slain in the vessel seen ;
Its fellow in the free air fled !

Sweet symbol of the unseen !
Type of the Christ of God !
For blood to make us clean,
He bore God's righteous rod.

Cedar, scarlet, hyssop—all,
Sprinkled with blood are seen ;
That each may hear His call—
“ I will ; be thou clean ! ”

HEED not thou thy doubting heart,
Look not on the threat'ning wave ;
Cling to Christ, whose mighty part
Is sent of God, to seek—to save !

THE IMAGE OF GOLD.

DANIEL, chap. iii.

O GOD, we bow—we worship Thee,
Beholding thus these children three,
Kept pure in Thy fidelity !

The golden head may rage and rave,
The furnace ravin like the grave,
Yet Thou art mighty there to save.

The king may bid the image rise
On Dura's plain before men's eyes—
A tower of pride beneath the skies !

The king may bid the princes all,
And those who tremble at his call,
Before this image dread to fall.

The king may bid the music sound,
The signal thus to all around
To worship prostrate on the ground.

The king may bid the fiery flame,
Threaten those who shun this shame,
And only own God's righteous claim.

The king may bid his mighty men
The furnace fierce re-heat again
With seven-fold power its fiery rain.

But all in vain the king's decree ;
Jehovah kept His witness free,
That He alone must worshipped be.

The gold may glitter, silver buy
Man from God's true liberty;
The righteous, they alone are free !

O God, we bow and worship Thee,
For Thou alone hast set us free
From sin and death's captivity.

CHASTENING.

HEBREWS xii. 5, 11.

FAINT not beneath the Father's hand,
Though He the scourge severe apply ;
Firm in thy place in patience stand,
In spirit exercised thereby.

Despise not thou His chastening hand—
'Tis tender, true, and faithful love
That moves Him thus, that each may stand
In light and liberty above !

Bow beneath His gracious hand ;
Love doth chasten every son,
That all may in the glory stand,
Partaking all that He hath done.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

GALATIANS v. 22, 23.

PRECIOUS fruit of God's own way
Love the light of every day ;
Joy upsprings with gentle peace,
Suffering long doth never cease ;
Gentleness and goodness glow
Amid the light where God doth go ;
Faith doth act in power divine ;
And meekness, temperance, combine
To bring the fruit the Spirit gives
In him who for God's glory lives.

BLESSED ARE THE DEAD WHICH DIE
IN THE LORD.

1 THESSALONIANS iv. 13-18.

HAPPY spirit, calm and blest ;
Gone to thine eternal rest ;
Gone to Him whose faithful love
Hath brought thee up to God above.

In His presence thou art blest ;
On His heart thine doth rest :
There 'midst light and love divine
God's eternal rest is thine !

THE TEN VIRGINS.

MATTHEW XXV.

THE night was dark, and darkening still,
O'er each valley, plain, and sea ;
The shadows ceased from off each hill ;
Creeping came tranquility.

The air lay hushed with breath of night ;
The pulses of the earth were calm ;
The midnight hour was at its height ;
Silence fell with healing balm.

Ten virgins, heavy-headed, slept,
Lamps in hand, yet all was gloom ;
The silent moments onward crept ;
Darkness, dreary as the tomb.

When sudden rose the startling cry,
As break the ice-fields of the north,—
On slumbering souls beneath that sky,
“Behold the Bridegroom,—go ye forth !”

Then straight arose these virgins ten ;
The lamps to trim, their hands employ :
But five were found whose vessels then
Had oil to feed the flame of joy.

Supreme the moment—He had come
For whom these virgins waited long ;
The wise with Him *within* His home,
'Mid light and love with bridal song.

The night was dark,—oh, dark and drear !
In vain the cry—the door was shut !
What words fell on each foolish ear,—
“ I know you not !—I know you not ! ”

O FATHER, God ! the Source of all ;
On Thee may all Thy children call :
That each may learn to fully know
Thy gracious ways while here below.

Let peaceful wisdom, gentle, pure,
Bring forth good fruits which may endure ;
Thus sown in peace, the root in love
On earth may grow for God above !

LET love toward all
In each abound,
That Christ in us
Be ever found.

Let love through all
In each one shine ;
'Tis Christ in us,
The light divine !

THE FLIGHT OF THE DOVE.

GENESIS, chap. viii.

O PRECIOUS flight from out the ark,
Seeking rest for weary man ;
The dove, above the waters dark,
Sent forth the scene of death to scan.

The raven, too, went to and fro
Above the deep's destructive breath ;
That bird of omen still doth go
Where all is darkness, all is death.

Again seven days ; the dove was sent
Amid that waste of waters wide,
Seeking shelter—rest : she went,
She came ; lo ! the olive-leaf beside.

Again seven days ; again the flight,
For hearts were weary for the rest ;
When now no more she came at night :
The earth was ready for its blest !

O precious symbol of the Cross !
Of Him who did the work of God ;
Who o'er sin's weary sea did toss,
Who bore the smiting of the rod !

The rod of righteous judgment bore
In His own person on the tree ;
That thus His own might evermore
Rejoice with Him in liberty !

While o'er Redemption's brightening scene
His Spirit, dove-like, seeks our rest ;
Clear shining after cloud and rain,
Clothing with green earth's grateful breast.

O wondrous moment, coming time !
Rich with fruit to God, to man,
When Christ shall stand in power sublime,
True Noah in God's glorious plan !

And every cry, and every sigh,
And every sorrow shall be stilled ;
And all beneath the sunlit sky
With His full glory shall be filled.

To wait for this—to wait for Him,
As holy watchers waiting now,
When He will all God's praises hymn,
God's glories clustering on His brow.

The deluge past, the waters stayed,
The earth will laugh in flowers again ;
The olive-leaf shall be displayed,
With tender grass o'er all the plain.

When all must bow before the Man,
Who came when all was sin and shame,
To work Redemption's righteous plan,
Revealing God's most glorious name !

“Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour.”—Acts v. 31.

TAKEN FROM OLD STORES.

THE SCRIPTURES. ~

I BELIEVE the Scriptures to be the inspired word of God, received by the Holy Ghost and communicated by His power, though, thank God, through mortal men: what is divine made withal thoroughly human, as the Blessed Lord Himself whom it reveals, though never ceasing to be divine. And this is its unspeakable value; thoroughly and entirely divine, "words which the Holy Ghost teacheth," yet perfectly and divinely adapted to man as being by man. (No. 1.)

THE CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF THE EPISTLES.

"First those that are certain: 1 and 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Corinthians; Romans, Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon; the last four when a prisoner. Galatians was written from fourteen to twenty years after the apostle was first called, and after he had laboured some time in Asia Minor, perhaps while he was at Ephesus, as it was not a very long time after their conversion: 1 Timothy, on occasion of the apostle's leaving Ephesus,—when exactly is not clear. 2 Timothy was written at the close of his life when about to be martyred. It is questioned if Paul ever got out of prison. If he did, 2 Timothy was written when he was seized the second time. Titus refers to a journey of Paul's to Crete; it is not said when; perhaps, it has been thought, when he resided so long at Ephesus. It is morally synchronous with 1 Timothy. It has not been the purpose of God to give us chronological dates for them, and in divine wisdom. The moral order is

clear. The way in which 2 Timothy refers to the ruin of what 1 Timothy builds the order of, is plain enough. Hebrews was written late, in view of the approaching judgment of Jerusalem, and calls on Christian Jews to separate themselves from what God was about to judge. The Epistle of James was written when this separation had in no way taken place. Jewish Christians are still seen as forming part of the Israel not yet finally cast out, only owning Jesus to be the Lord of glory. But, as all the catholic epistles, it was written towards the close of the apostolic history, when Christianity had been widely received by the tribes of Israel, and the Jewish history was now closing in judgment. In 1 Peter we see that the Gospel had widely spread among the Jews. It is written to the Christian Jews of the dispersion. The second of course is later, at the close when he was about to put off his tabernacle and would leave them in writing the warnings apostolic care would soon no longer furnish. Hence, like Jude, it contemplates grievous departure from the path of godliness on the part of those who had received the faith, and a mocking of the testimony that the Lord was coming. 1 John insists on its being the last time. Apostates were already manifested, apostates from the truth of Christianity denying the Father and the Son, as well as with Jewish unbelief denying that Jesus was the Christ. Jude comes morally before John. There false brethren had crept in unawares, but the evil is pursued to the final rebellion and judgment. It differs from 2 Peter in viewing the evil not simply as wickedness but departure from first estate. Revelation completes this picture by showing Christ judging in the midst of the candlesticks; the first having left its first love, and threatened, if it did not repent and return to its original estate, to remove the candlestick: the final judgment being in Thyatira, and in Laodicea; and then shows the judgment of the world and the

return of the Lord, the kingdom and heavenly city and eternal state. This general character of departure and failure stamped on all the last books from Hebrews to Revelation is very striking: Paul's, save 2 Timothy, which gives individual direction in the midst of ruin, though prophesying of this state of things, express the labour and care of the wise Masterbuilder. The interest of their date is in connection with His history in the Acts; but Hebrews, and the other Epistles, and Revelation, all show predicted departure already set in, (for even 1 Peter, which is least so, tells us the time was come for judgment to begin at the house of God,) and so the judgment of the professing Church, and then prophetically of the world risen up against God. This closing character of the catholic epistles is very striking and instructive. (No. 1.)

THE BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

It will be remarked at once that the character of the first three Gospels is different from that of John. The principle of this difference is this: the first three present Christ, though in different characters, to man to be received, and show His rejection by man. John begins with this as the starting point of his Gospel, being the display of the divine nature, and what man and the Jew was in presence of. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came to His own and His own received Him not. Hence we have sovereign grace, election; man must be born again, wholly anew; and the Jews are all through treated as reprobate; the divine and incarnate person of the Lord as the foundation of all blessing, and a work of atonement which is the basis even of the sinless condition of the new heavens and the new earth within dwelleth righteousness, together with, at the close, the gift of the Comforter, form the

subject of the Gospel, in contrast with Judaism. Instead of tracing the Lord to the Abrahams and Davids, the roots of promise, or to Adam, to bring in as Son of man blessing to man, or giving the account of His service in ministry as the great Prophet that was to come, it brings a divine Person, the Word made flesh, into the world. What I have just said stamps their character on the four Gospels. Matthew is the fulfilment of promise and prophecy, Emmanuel among the Jews, rejected by them, stumbling thus on the stone of stumbling, and shown to be really a sower; fruit-seeking was in vain; and then the Church and the kingdom substituted for Israel blessed by promises, which they refused in His person; but after judgment, when they owned Him, to be owned under mercy. The ascension is not found in Matthew. I believe for this very reason Galilee in Matthew, not Jerusalem, is the scene of His interview with the disciples after His resurrection. He is with the poor of the flock, who owned the word of the Lord, where the light had sprung up to the people sitting in darkness. The commission to baptize goes forth hence and applies to Gentiles. Mark gives the servant-prophet, Son of God: Luke the Son of man, the first two chapters affording a lovely picture of the remnant in Israel: John a divine person come into the world, the foundation (redemption being accomplished) of the new creation; the object and pattern of faith; revealing the Father; with the promise of the Comforter while away. Paul and John reveal our being in a wholly new place in Christ. But John is mainly occupied with revealing the Father in the Son to us, and thus life by the Son in us: Paul with presenting us to God, and His counsels in grace. If we confine ourselves to the Epistles, the latter only speaks of the Church, save 1 Peter ii., the building of living stones, but Paul only speaks of the body. The Acts show the founding of the Church by the Holy Ghost come down from

heaven, and then the Jerusalem or Palestinian labours of the apostles, and other free labourers, especially the work of Peter, and then that of Paul. With the history of the rejection of His gospel by the Jews of the dispersion the history of Scripture closes. (No. 1.)

SYNOPSIS OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE.

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

To give all this as a whole and perfectly would require the Giver Himself. Even in learning it, we know in part, and we prophesy in part. The more—beginning from the utmost leaves and branches of this revelation of the mind of God, by which we have been reached when far from Him—we have traced it up towards its centre, and thence looked down again towards its extent and diversity, the more we learn its infiniteness and our own feebleness of apprehension. We learn, blessed be God, this, that the love which is its source is found in unmingled perfectness and fullest display in those manifestations of it which have reached us even in our ruined state. The same perfect God of love is in it all. But the unfoldings of divine wisdom in the counsels in which God has displayed

Himself remain ever to us a subject of research in which every new discovery, by increasing our spiritual intelligence, makes the infiniteness of the whole, and the way in which it surpasses all our thoughts, only more and more clear to us. But there are great leading principles and truths, the pointing out of which in the various books which compose the Scriptures, may assist in the intelligence of the various parts of Scripture. It is attempted to do this here. What the reader is to expect, consequently in this Synopsis, is nothing more than an attempt to help him in studying Scripture for himself. All that would turn him aside from this would be mischievous to him; what helps him in it may be useful. He cannot even profit much by the following pages otherwise than in using them as an accompaniment to the study of the text itself.

I propose giving in this work, of which Genesis is the commencement, a short synopsis of the principal subjects of each book of the Bible, to aid in the study of this precious volume that our God has given to us. I do not at all pretend to give the full contents of each book, but only (as God shall grant to me) a sort of index of the subjects, the divisions of the books by subjects, and (as far as I am enabled) the object of the Spirit of God in each part, hoping that it may aid others in reading the book of God. The Bible, in its object, is a whole, which presents to us God coming forth from His essential fulness to manifest all that He is, and to bring back into the enjoyment of this fulness with Himself those who, having been made partakers of His nature, have become capable of comprehending and loving His counsels and Himself.

(No. 2.)

IN the Gospels He helped man in the circumstances into which his sin betrayed him through Satan." (No. 4.)

"EVERY sacrifice salted with salt."

"EVERY one shall be salted with fire."

GENERAL CHARACTER OF THE BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE.

GENESIS has a peculiar one ; and, as the beginning of the Holy Book, presents to us all the great elementary principles which find their development in the history of the relationships of God with man, which is recorded in the following books. The germ of each of these principles will be found here, unless we except the law. There was however a law given to Adam in his innocence ; and Hagar, we know, prefigures at least Sinai. There is scarce anything afterwards accomplished of which the expression is not found in this book in one form or another. There is found also in it, though the sad history of man's fall be there, a freshness in the relationship of men with God, which is scarce met with afterwards in men accustomed to abuse it and to live in a society full of itself. But whether it be the creation, man and his fall, sin, the power of Satan, the promises, the call of God, His judgment of the world, redemption, the covenants, the separation of the people of God, their condition of strangers on the earth, the resurrection, the establishment of Israel in the land of Canaan, the blessing of the nations, the seed of promise, the exaltation of a rejected Lord to the throne of the world, all are found here in fact or in figure—in figure, now that we have the key, even the Church itself.

EXODUS.—In the Book of Exodus we have, as the general and characteristic subject, the deliverance and redemption of the people of God, and their establishment as a people before Him—whether under the law, or under the government of God in longsuffering, of a God who, having so brought them to Himself, provided for His unfaithful people ; not indeed entrance into His own presence, but a way of approaching Him,

at least at a distance, although they had failed. But the veil was unrent: God did not come out to them, nor could they go in to God. God's relationship with the people had at first been in grace; but this did not continue, and the people never entered therein with intelligence, nor understood this grace like persons who stood in need of it as sinners. Let us examine the course of these divine instructions.

LEVITICUS.—The Book of Leviticus is the way of drawing near to God, viewed as dwelling in the sanctuary, whether in respect of the means of doing so, or of the state in which men could; and therewith, consequently, especially the subject of the priesthood; that is, the means established of God for those outside the sanctuary drawing near unto Him, and the discernment of the defilements unbecoming those who were thus brought into relationship with God; the function of discerning these being, in any case that rendered it necessary, a part of the service of the priesthood. There are also in Leviticus the several convocations of the people in the feasts of Jehovah, which presented the special circumstances under which they drew near unto Him; and, lastly, the fatal consequences of infringing the principles established by God as the condition of these relationships with Him.

Here the communications of God are consequent upon His presence in His tabernacle, which is the basis of all the relationships we are speaking of. It is no longer the Lawgiver giving regulations from above, to constitute a state of things, but one in the midst of the people, prescribing the conditions of their relationship with Him.

But whatever be the nearness and the privileges of the priestly position, the sacrifice of Christ is ever that which establishes the possibility and forms the basis of it. Hence the book begins with the sacrifices which represented His one perfect sacrifice. As presenting the work of Christ in its various characters and diverse

application to us, these typical sacrifices have an interest that nothing can surpass.

NUMBERS.—In Numbers we have the service and walk of the people, figuratively of the saints through this world: and, consequently, that which relates to the Levites, and the journey through the wilderness. Now, as Leviticus ended with regulations and warnings respecting the possession of the land, and that with regard to the rights of God, and consequently to the rights of His people, the Book of Numbers brings us to the moment of the entrance of the people into the land at the end of the wilderness journey, and speaks of that grace, the effect of which was to justify the people, notwithstanding all their unfaithfulness.

The first thing to be noticed is, that God numbers His people exactly, and arranges them, once thus recognized, around His tabernacle: sweet thought, to be thus recognised and placed around God Himself!

DEUTERONOMY.—*This book takes up Israel just on the borders of Canaan, and insists upon the faithful maintenance of their relationship with God, and on obedience to His commandments, as the only ground on which Israel can enter and continue therein, adding warnings as to the consequence of failure in obedience. It takes in the main the ground of their historical state.*

The book may be divided into three parts. The first eleven chapters insist upon obedience, presenting various motives to lead the people to it. Then come, as far as the end of the twenty-ninth, divers commandments; to which are added, by way of sanction, the consequences of obedience and the curse upon disobedience. From the thirtieth to the end we have things to come, the blessing of the people, and the death of Moses. (No. 2.)

THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT AND THE GIFTS.

ACTS ii. 33-38.

THE time was now fully come. God had made Himself manifest. Israel ought to have confessed to-day Messiah to be Emmanuel, even God *with* us. And faith should have seen in Christ dead and risen how God is *for* us. But He was now about to assume a new character, and to take an immense step in advance, even God *in* us. This could not be without the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus. Where that blood was sprinkled, the Holy Ghost could come and dwell. And therefore they gathered together, according to the word of the Lord, expecting, as He had said to them, to be baptized of the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

“When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.” God introduced this new thing in a manner suitable to His own wisdom. Suddenly there came a sound from above, for it was the Holy Ghost coming down from heaven, and God was pleased to vouchsafe an outward sign accompanying this unprecedented fact,—“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.” It is true that the Holy Ghost had descended before, but this was to dwell in one man—the man Christ Jesus. In His case there was no preparatory work; but the very manner of the descent of the Spirit, as well as of that appearance which He chose to assume in descending on the Lord Jesus, attested the immense difference between Him, in whom was no sin, and us, however blest and delivered. But we are delivered *from our sins and sin*; and this mighty work of God’s grace is through the

suffering unto death under judgment of Him who had no sin, and through the power of His resurrection.

For Jesus the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of a dove—a beautiful expression of self-adaptation on the part of the Holy Ghost toward that man whom He could come to and abide in without blood. That well-known emblem of purity the Holy Ghost could adopt in thus coming down to be in the Son of man. But in man's case—that is, the believers who were assembled in Jerusalem awaiting power from on high, as the Lord told them—the form was not as a dove, but tongues ; cloven tongues, and as of fire also, were the suited image. Cloven tongues, because God now would send forth a mighty and far-reaching testimony. Whatever the responsibility of Israel, whatever the witness to be borne in that land and to that people, God, who knew the end from the beginning, had His eye on, and even in this very fact looked to, the spread of the good tidings, and the going out to Gentile as much as to Jew. The tongues were “cloven” ; but they were “as of fire” also. There had been the judgment of sin in the cross. There was that in man which needed to be judged, and which, in fact, was judged of God already in Christ as the offering for sin. Hence the tongue as of fire was the witness that (whatever might be the display of the power of the Holy Ghost, and however evidently in the fulness of grace) it was grace, here as everywhere else where sin is concerned, reigning through righteousness by Jesus Christ our Lord. (No. 6.)

A new thing appears in the cross of the Lord Jesus. He who had fulfilled the law, He who was the heir of the promises, takes the curse instead of the crown—takes the judgment of God instead of the kingdom of God. Then was done that most wondrous of all deeds—the outpouring of all that God felt and could express against sin on the person of Him who knew no sin ; all that God could do in holy indignation against evil on the One that had done no evil, neither

was guile found in His mouth. He who was His own Son, the object of His perfect delight and absolute eternal favour,—He was given up to unsparing judgment, God Himself dealing with Him as He never did with another, and never can with another again. The very glory of the person of the only-begotten Son, which gave Him power of endurance, made God's wrath so much the more intolerable to be borne. The fact that He was God, and in the relation of Son to the Father—that, therefore, He both had the nature of God, and knew the love of the Father as none ever had or knew—added ineffable poignancy to the sufferings of the Saviour in that awful hour. But “it is finished”; and thenceforward God's righteousness begins to be (not promised merely, but) revealed. The subject may not be wholly traced out in the Epistle to the Romans; but, at the least, a very important part is given there, especially that which is in view of man's wants. In 2 Corinthians the Spirit looks at another part of God's righteousness, which we are made in Christ. But the great point here is, that Jesus is glorified above in the glory of God. Not that this is absolutely omitted in Romans; for, as we all know, it is just alluded to very briefly in chap. viii., inasmuch as the design of the epistle calls for fundamental truth, rather than the heavenly height to which divine righteousness entitles. This would have interfered with the then current of the Spirit, which was to bring out life in Him risen from the dead, rather than to reveal the place of glory to which Christ is gone on high. But, beyond doubt, the most indispensable requisite for the display and foundation of God's righteousness (as Scripture shows it, if looked at as a whole) is, that God should enter the scene of death, where Jesus lay the sacrifice for sin, having become responsible in perfect grace for us. Thereon He raises Christ up from the dead, and, finally, sets Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

WEeping FOR JERUSALEM.

WHAT would you think of persons escaping from a wreck caring nothing for their companions left behind ? A thousand in the ship, perhaps only twenty saved ! The stately ship gone to pieces ! Must they not take it to heart ? Must not their joy have a fringe of sadness on it ? Their position is surely a grave one.

How are we feeling about other Christians ? Thousands are immured in religious forms, who do not know that they are saved. Thousands who *do* know that they are saved, do not know where they are, and have no comfort in Christ. Thousands who have a measure of individual rest in Him, have no sense of being members of His body on earth, and therefore cannot witness for Him. Must not all this touch the true heart ? And then the fearfully gross departure from the truth ! Must not *that* affect it ?

There is too much levity about us. In Ezra's day there were those indeed who shouted for joy when the foundation of the temple was laid ; but the chief of the fathers, who knew what the original temple was,—wept !

I am not called to do anything wonderful, but simply to devote all my energies to Christ's interests on earth ; and this is within the compass of anybody. Joseph did so when he gave commandment concerning his *bones* ; Ruth when she abode with Naomi ; the widow of Luke xxi. when she dropped her two mites into the treasury. All that is wanted is simplicity and purpose of heart. Paul, the leader and master-builder, was reduced to a unit, for he says, " All men forsook me." " Nevertheless the Lord stood by me and strengthened me." The Philadelphian has but a " little strength," but a little strength does all the work. The great thing is to use the little strength we have in simple faith. It may be latent ; you must *use* it, turn it to account. " The way of the slothful is as a hedge of thorns ; but the way of the RIGHTEOUS (not the diligent) is raised up as a causeway." (No. 4.)