

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 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.*

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THE GOLDEN LAMP.



GOD AS OUR SANCTUARY.

JER. xvii. 12; ISA. viii. 14; EZEK. xi. 16.

THE opening of yet another year in the waiting-time of saints below, who still wait for the Son of God from heaven, may well endear to us more and more the character of our God as the Sanctuary of His people. We often sing—

“Through time, with all its changing scenes,
And all the grief that intervenes,
Let this support each fainting heart,
That THOU our SANCTUARY art.”

And truly there is not a single painful discovery of our own sinfulness that time or experience can bring us, nor is there any combination of outside difficulties in either social or public matters that can occur, in which God, as our Sanctuary, is not an all-sufficient Refuge for us. The whole word of God beams with this precious truth, both in the doctrines it teaches and the triumphs of God's people that it records. But the above passages in which the word “sanctuary” is used do especially teach it us.

In Jéréemiah xvii. 12 we read: “A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary.” The context sufficiently shows what leads the prophet to this triumphant language. He had been declaring the heart of the sons of Israel, whether others' or his own, to be

"deceitful above all things, and incurably so." (See Heb.) By this he implies that none but Jehovah HIMSELF, the heart-searcher, could really tell which was the man that was trusting in man, and was making "flesh his arm," and which was he who was trusting in Jehovah, and "whose hope Jehovah is." Others might learn these two opposite classes by visible results, but only Jehovah could know them in the present secrets of the heart.

Jeremiah had other griefs of life, more indeed than most have. He shared the afflictions of his nation, as Paul also in this dispensation filled up that which was behind "of the afflictions of Christ" for His body's sake, the Church. For instance, only in this very context Jeremiah was forbidden to form any new family relationships, or to indulge his social feelings. (See Jer. xvi. 1-7.) But with all these outside griefs, surely the deepest sorrow to him, and others like him, would be the knowledge that they carried within them still the "desperately wicked" heart; just as Paul, in Rom. vii. 25, owns that he serves "with the flesh" (if he gives way to it) "the law of sin." Plagued with this worst of all sores and plagues that can afflict a child or servant of God here below, what could be sweeter to them than to rise above it, and to escape from its subtlety and power by this, that Jehovah, as "a glorious high throne," was the place of their sanctuary from these assaults and snares of indwelling sin?

Surely this is the first and chiefest blessing in having God as our Sanctuary; viz., as a Refuge from our sinful selves. Thus Paul triumphs in Rom. vii. 25 and chap. viii., rising above his bitter experience in Rom. vii. Thus also, in Heb. iv. 11-16, after speaking of the two-edged and heart-searching power of God's living Word, he gives the blessed assurance of the "throne of grace," and of Jesus as our great High Priest upon it.

In Isaiah viii. 14 Jehovah of hosts is again the sanctuary, but the context is quite different. The words are: "Sanctify Jehovah of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be for a SANCTUARY; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel."

The context treats of the political confederacies which the ten-tribed kingdom had already made, and which Ahaz, king of Judah, had begun to resist by making a counter-confederacy with the king of Assyria. God's jealousy was justly awakened by this, and He sends Isaiah to Ahaz to warn him that such unequal yoking of himself and his people with a heathen monarch would only end in his own confusion, and proclaims Himself to Ahaz as the Sanctuary and Refuge of all His people in their earthly troubles. There is no word here about the "desperately wicked" heart, as in Jer. xvii.: the call for faith in God as a sanctuary is rather respecting outward circumstances. Isaiah is bidden to present before the king the mighty name of IMMANUEL, "God with us," and to tell him that Israel's confederacy with the king of Syria shall not stand, and that all his plots to invade Immanuel's land shall come to nought. Isaiah makes the strength of that name his own, and cleaves to its precious meaning. "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for GOD is WITH US."

What a lesson is here given for us in days of social and political agitation like these on which the year 1883 is opening! Oh for grace, like Isaiah, to glorify God in the ties of *family life* in days when this is too little done, even by God's own children—days in which man's dark religion is making sons and daughters to pass through the fire in the arms of Moloch—the Moloch arm of *superstition* on the one side, or of *infidelity* on the other!

Thus the Isaiah passage on the "sanctuary" stands connected with a few "disciples," and a binding up of the Jehovah law amongst *them*.

The Ezekiel passage resembles it in this, that God speaks of only a feeble few of His people "far off among the heathen;" but declares, "Yet will I be to them as a **LITTLE SANCTUARY** in the countries where they shall come." (Ezek. xi. 16.)

The context here is of a more solemn kind still. In Ezekiel viii.-xi, the sins and punishments of Jerusalem are such that the Shechinah of God's visible presence leaves the holy place, and ultimately leaves the city itself for the mountain on the east. Nor can any intercession of the prophet obtain from God any remission of this expression of wrath against Jerusalem. On the contrary, one of the wicked princes of the people falls dead in Ezekiel's presence, as a token of the judgments that are coming. (See chap. xiv. 13.) But the prophet does obtain this gracious promise to the scattered few who remained godly: "I will be to them as a little sanctuary."

No evil day, therefore, that can come—not even at the judgment close of a guilty age—can possibly rob God's faithful remnant of God Himself as their sanctuary. Nay, more, an additional expression of tenderness is used, and God speaks of Himself "as a **LITTLE sanctuary**." He must ever be what Jeremiah calls Him, the "glorious high throne from the beginning," as respects His mighty attributes of power, and wisdom, and faithfulness. But the more we who trust in Him are feeble, and few, and scattered, the more He can and does make Himself known to us as One able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and who knows all the points in which we are tempted. Thus He can be to us "**as a little sanctuary**," full of every living tenderness, and of all adaptation to

our circumstances, as He also is of divine eternity and resurrection omnipotence.

Or if the Hebrew in this place be taken to mean "a sanctuary for a little time," this only in another way expresses God's sufficiency for His people. Their temple at Jerusalem might be destroyed, and its worship interrupted, but their God would be to them as a temple meanwhile, and "a little time" would imply how soon God could restore them to their land, and end their days of mourning. Meanwhile God can be a substitute for everything; but not all things put together can be a substitute for God. Thus in similar banishment from mount Zion and its solemnities David could say, in Psalm cxli. 2: "Let my prayer be set before thee AS incense: and the lifting up of my hands AS the evening sacrifice."

But there is for us in Scripture an entirely different use of the word "sanctuary." God speaks of His people making Him a sanctuary, as well as of His being a sanctuary for them. "Speak unto the sons of Israel, that they bring me an offering . . . and let them *make me* A SANCTUARY, that I may dwell among them." (Exodus xxv. 1, 8.)

How fittingly this follows the consideration of all that God Himself is as a sanctuary for us! Responsibility ever follows privilege; but here it does so in an especial sense, and in a most happy way. Now that He does so much for us, and so blessedly makes Himself our Portion, it is even a yet greater token of His perfect love that He invites us to do something here on earth for Him. We all know how rejoiced we are when an earthly friend does but allow us to be of some service to him. How much more may it well

"All our inward passions move,"

when our God asks us to make Him a dwelling-place in this—to Him and to us—wilderness and barren world!

The attributes and qualities of God as a sanctuary for us are just those we need in order to feel free and competent to make a sanctuary for Him.

It was so in Israel's case. Redemption out of Egypt by the blood of the Lamb, a safe and straight passage through the "weedy sea," spite of Pharaoh's hosts, and the gracious supply of manna and water in the desert, gave Israel release from guilt and from care, and were their motive-power for giving "willingly" and with their heart the Lord's offering for the formation and service of a sanctuary for God.

And so with us. To know that the "throne of grace" is ours for all our daily-discovered sinfulness, and that Jesus, "at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2) is ours, by whom to resist all "contradiction of sinners" with which our outward path may be opposed; to know also that the whole conflict is but a "light affliction," and "*but for a moment*;" "*for yet a little while*, and the coming One shall come"—all this may well dispose us to employ all we have and are in order to give God pleasure, and that too without a moment's delay.

Only be it remembered, that whereas the great qualification for having God as *our* sanctuary is for us to feel and own our worthlessness and weakness, and our need of Him, the one great demand made on us as "God's joined workers" (1 Cor. iii. 9, Greek) in building Him a sanctuary is this, that it shall be according to the pattern showed us from heaven, and that no allowance or place shall be made for wisdom, or will, or plan of our own.

May this forming and hallowing of ourselves as a sanctuary and a dwelling-place for God be our ceaseless occupation during any portion that may be given us of the year now opening. Amen.

H. D.

DWELLING TOGETHER IN UNITY.

FROM AN ADDRESS ON PSALM CXXXIII.

SOME of the truths which may be learned from this psalm are urgently needed at the présent time. May the Lord help and guide in referring to them.

Behold! This exclamation of the Holy Spirit calls our attention to something remarkable, just as in John i. 29 we read, "*Behold* the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." What is it then that is so remarkable that the Most High thus calls our attention to it here? It is this: *Brethren dwelling together in unity.* "*Behold how good and how pleasant it is*" in His sight. The unity of natural families is good, but very imperfect; fleshly unity cannot please God perfectly. At present the only unity on earth which pleases God in the highest sense is the unity of Christians—brethren dwelling together in unity.

God is a Father, the great Parent. From eternity He would show that He had a Father's heart; He would gather together a family of children—His own children; and to show the riches of His grace He would gather them from among lost sinners, by redemption, and make them perfect in glory. But He must first take them out of sin and ruin on earth, so convincing them, by His Spirit, of sin, and righteousness, and judgment, and revealing the perfect salvation He has provided in His once crucified and now risen and glorified Son, that they receive Him as their Saviour.

The heavenly Father sees all who are really Christians on earth as one, parts of the same family; but for their

blessing, their union in love, and growth in grace, He divides them into smaller families—churches—such as those at Rome, Corinth, Philippi, &c. The Church on earth was intended to be one large family composed of smaller families.

The union of Christians is a wonderful thing. They are one in Christ, His members, all resting on Him and trusting in Him. This is the basis of their union; and the growth of each church, and of each individual, is in grace, in knowledge of God as He is revealed in Christ, and in holy love; the love of God is the practical cement, like mortar to bricks. It was seen to be so at the day of Pentecost. (Acts ii. iv.)

Now we see the Church on earth, as a whole, in great disorder and confusion; but the Scripture shows us that the Christians in individual churches may still dwell together in holy love and unity. We should notice particularly that the letters of the Lord Jesus to the seven churches in Asia were written long after the coming of much evil into the Church, probably sixty years at least after the day of Pentecost; yet the holy Lord, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, saw nothing necessary to reprove in the church at Smyrna, or in the church at Philadelphia. This is a fact of great importance.

"To dwell together." Ah, what a trying, testing thing this is! How easy it is to see one another now and then, and to think highly of each other, because we know so little of each other; but knowing something of each other's characters, frailties, and infirmities, what patience and grace are needed *then* "to dwell together in unity!" Yet we see this is possible, and we know it pleases God.

"It is like the precious ointment." This ointment is called, in Exodus xxx., where its composition is mentioned, "an oil of holy ointment," and it is said, "It shall be an

holy anointing oil." At the anointing of Aaron it was poured on his head (Lev. viii. 12), and so copiously, that it ran down "to the skirts of His garments." The oil in Scripture represents the Holy Spirit. "God *anointed* Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power." (See Acts x. 38.) God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him.

The copious outpouring of the oil on Aaron seems to represent the unlimited pouring out of the Spirit on the Lord Jesus; and the dwelling of brethren together in unity is like a great outpouring of the Spirit; as it is written, "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul . . . and great grace was upon them all." We are apt to think that great gifts of preaching or teaching must necessarily be accompanied by great love; but experience teaches us that such is not always the case.

One of the Lord's very great desires for His people while they are here on earth is, that they should love one another, should dwell in love, should walk in love. And this requires a large allowance for different degrees of knowledge. The ground of meeting at the Lord's table is the belief of the gospel—the receiving of Christ. (Of course in the early days of Christianity they baptized all who believed.) The only truth required to be known is the truth contained in the gospel. If the greatest sinner has manifestly repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, he is entitled to take his place at the Lord's table. Putting any superstructure truths as a ground of meeting is sectarianism. But, it may be asked, should not the knowledge of the truth that Jew and Gentile form one body in Christ be laid down as a ground of meeting? No; by no means. The multitudes who believed of old were not kept out until they had learned any superstructure

truth. The title to enter heaven is a sufficient title for reception to the meetings of Christians on earth. They "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Rev. vii. 14.) Instruction in the truth of God should then follow.

The various gifts of the Lord Jesus, by the Spirit, "to the Church, which is His body," are to this end—to make increase of the body "unto the edifying" (building up) "of itself in love." Without love there is no growth; nay, there can be no life. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." We should pray then, not only that He would give us evangelists, but also pastors and teachers. (Eph. iv. 8–16.) Oh, how few, how very few, pastors there are! How very few there are who desire to be pastors! Oh, how we should pray that the Lord would send us real shepherds, who, according to Ezekiel xxxiv., would imitate the Good Shepherd, the Great Shepherd, who, being alive from the dead, is also the Chief Shepherd. But are there not those who give words of instruction and exhortation? Yes, there are. Thank God for every true man who is thus gifted, and using his gift. But in nine cases out of ten they have not the capability or the desire to be shepherds. Christians who meet simply as Christians at the Lord's table suffer sorely, sorely, from the lack of shepherds. They are God's ordinance for the Church; and the pride that would reject pastoral care is not from above, but from beneath. It is a terrible evil, and partly, perhaps, proceeding from this, other evils are coming in, such as narrowing the ground of union, separating and dividing because of petty strifes, tempers, and such like; while in the midst of all this shame it is said, "The temple of the Lord are we!" Ah, Christ died, and rose, and lives, to gather, not to scatter; that is the work of the wolf. Ponder these words of the Lord: "Every kingdom divided

against itself is brought to desolation ; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." (Matt. xii. 25.) HE HAS SAID IT. Look also, in Gal. v. 16-23, at the consequences of not walking in love, not walking in the Spirit. What a horrid catalogue of works of the flesh ! And even they are not all ; for the list closes with these words—"and such like." "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

I appeal now to individuals. Can *you* do anything to hinder these evils or remedy them ? Yes ; much, very much. How ? You can seek, through grace, to imitate the Lord Jesus, to take the lowest place. (Matt. xviii. 4.) Jesus still washes the disciples' feet. (John xiii. 1-17.) Oh, gratify Him in seeking to do so ! Pray and strive for it. Be, like God, a peacemaker. (Matt. v. 9.) Remember what Mordecai said to Esther : "Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this ?" (Esther iv. 14.) Child of God, are you not blessed with believing Abraham, and entitled, through abounding grace, to realize these two portions of the blessing pronounced upon him in Gen. xii. 2 : "I will bless thee . . . and thou shalt be a blessing" ?

"As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." The dwelling together of brethren in unity is thus also compared to the dew, which is used in Scripture literally and figuratively as descriptive of blessing. (Deut. xxxiii. 13 ; Hosea xiv. 5.) In a hot climate, where rain was not frequent, and vegetation was suffering from the rays of a burning sun, what a boon the heavy dews were, what refreshing they would give ! And this dwelling in unity is not only like the abundant and fertilizing dew of Hermon, but our minds are then carried to Zion ; *"for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even*

life for evermore." Yes; there the Lord, in the land of Moriah, blessed us in Abraham (Gen. xxii.), and there the Son of God died and rose again, that He might send forth the glorious gospel of the blessed God. When a company of believers is dwelling in unity and walking in holy love, though there may be infirmity, the Lord looks upon such an assembly, each loving all His people, and striving to take the lowest place, and He says, "There is life for evermore." Yes; where there is such a company, there is the fruit of Calvary, of Christ's death and intercession. May this life of holy love be more and more seen in God's elect. So shall we be a joy to Him and to one another.

J. P.

CHRISTIAN LIBERALITY.

(Notes of Addresses.)

I. GIVING MADE EASY.

IF I were to call what I am about to read a *receipt*—something worth knowing and proving—I might call that receipt "*Giving made easy.*" Let us hear it in the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians: "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings [collections] when I come." (1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.) These are standing orders for the Church of God. "As I gave order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye."

This laying by in store each first day of the week as God hath prospered is the practical carrying out of the exhortation in the Proverbs: "Honour the Lord with thy substance" (not with the lips only), "and with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled

with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Chap. iii. 9.) God claims the first-fruits, and when they were withheld, what was the word by Malachi? "Will a man *rob God*? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." Then instead of the blessing comes the curse. But the command is repeated: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Now though we do not take this in the letter for ourselves, we may learn from it the mind of God.

The order as to giving, in 1 Cor. xvi., may be carried out to the letter if the wages are received weekly; and as God hath prospered, a portion yielded by the willing heart may be laid aside for Him. But if God provides for us in any other way the spirit of the order may be observed, and according to the income, from whatever source, let the tithe be laid aside. I do not mean literally the tenth; you may give a fifth if you like; but let God be honoured with the first-fruits. Giving will then be made easy. There will be no such questions as, What can I afford? What shall I give? or, Can I part with my money? No; there it is all ready. When a call comes from God, whether at my door or from afar, from China, India, Spain, or any other country, it can at once be responded to. With much entreaty you say, "I beseech you to *take it*." (2 Cor. viii. 4.) It is laid aside, waiting for the Lord's call. You will oblige me by carrying out God's purposes." How perfectly easy is such giving!

Now the word is to each one, "*Let every one of you;*" and I suppose not one of us is poorer than that poor widow

who gave her all. "It is accepted," remember, "according to that a man hath." Beloved friends, when the sacrifice first called for is made, in response to the greater sacrifice made for us, it becomes an easy thing to give. When we have yielded our whole selves to the Lord, I suppose we have made no reserve as to our possessions, and surely the first-fruits of gold and silver is not too much for our God. How often we sing—

"Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my life, my soul, my all!"

And what is our all? We have heard of the gifts of a company of believers averaging rather more than the widow's two mites; but were all of them widows or in her position? Is that the way to expect a blessing in basket and in store? Beloved friends, if Paul's advice, or rather his commandment, were only heeded, instead of miserable doles being squeezed out for carrying on God's work in the world, I believe God's treasury would be groaning under the accumulated weight, and we should have to entreat the servants of God to take God's own property and use it for His own work. (T. N.)

II. HOW TO OBTAIN HEAVENLY RICHES.

Have you ever observed how often the word "*riches*" is repeated in the epistle to the Ephesians? In chap. i. 7 we read, "In whom we have redemption through His blood according to the *riches* of His *grace*;" verse 18, "That ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the *riches* of the *glory* of His inheritance in the saints;" ii. 4, "But God, who is *rich* in *mercy* hath quickened us together with Christ;" iii. 8, "Unto me is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the *unsearchable riches* of Christ;" verses 14-17, "For this cause I bow my knees to the

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that He would grant you, according to the *riches* of His *glory*, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

Now why should the apostle have written so much on this theme to the Ephesians rather than to the Galatians or Corinthians? Can we find any reason why he especially unfolded to the Ephesians the blessed heavenly truths with which we are so familiar?

Some answer is to be found in the Acts of the Apostles. In chap. xix. we read that at Ephesus "many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it *fifty thousand pieces of silver*;" that is, as Mr. Newberry tells us in the margin of the *Englishman's Bible*, about £1,875. Is there any difficulty in finding a connection between Luke's narrative in the Acts and Paul's epistle?

It has been said, that of the gifts mentioned in the gospels the only amount stated is the widow's two mites, which make a farthing. The Lord has told us the sum as men reckon, and has put His own estimate upon it. Now here we have another sum, very great by contrast, and doubtless highly estimated also by the Lord. It was not a collection for poor saints, but it was a putting together of costly books, and sacrificing them for Christ. These books might doubtless have been sold for money; but, lest others should be harmed by them, they made a pile, and burned them all.

Mr. Hoyle could tell us how the priests at Leon collected all the copies of God's word that he had circulated, and then made a bonfire of them, the smoke of which would rise in judgment against themselves. But the odour of the Ephesians' offering must have been well-pleasing to God. We learn also that these books were their means of living,

so that both their capital and employment were gone—their all was sacrificed for the Lord. “So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.”

Have we not thus a simple clue to the remarkable fulness of the epistle to the Ephesians, and to the especial mention of *riches*? Into the bosom of those who had sacrificed earthly things God delighted to pour His heavenly treasures, and they would value them.

What then is the application? If we cleave to earthly things, can we expect an unfolding of the riches that are in Christ? We may have the *words* of this epistle on our tongues, but what shall we know of their value and blessedness? With the needs of God's service crying out on every hand, if we cling to our money, and give God, it may be, not a tenth, but a hundredth part of what He gives us, is it to be wondered at that there is spiritual poverty and leanness? “Now ye are rich,” was the apostle's solemn word of rebuke to the Corinthians, and it will apply to us if we keep all or nearly all to ourselves, and are not rich toward God. May our hearts heed the warning given by the Lord to Laodicea, “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich.” “There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.” (Prov. xiii. 7.) (M.)

III. BLESSINGS OF POVERTY.

It is well to remember that the *poverty* of the Macedonians made them *liberal*. A rich man who gives largely and yet has plenty of money can scarcely be called liberal. It is he who gives at a cost, like the blessed Jesus, that is truly liberal, and it is a great blessing when God places His children in circumstances where every *shilling* bestowed costs them something.

The Macedonians mentioned in 2 Cor. ix. 2 include the

Philippians, to whom Paul also wrote respecting this matter. "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly," he says in chap. iv. 10, "that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again." He did not mean that they had not cared about him, but that they had had no opportunity of showing their kindness. And if we love God's children, we shall, like the Philippians, find opportunities of helping them. Often we rest satisfied with *thinking* they are not in need, and fail to *ask*. "Not that I speak in respect of want," says Paul: "for I have learned in whatsoever state I am *therein* to be content."

A grand reason for contentment is the promise given in Heb. xiii. 5: "Let your behaviour be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." In the Old Testament, covetousness is desiring to have something that belongs to another; but in the New Testament, sin deepens because Christ has come, and covetousness now is rather the *loving* that which we already have. What a calm this promise, if believed, would bring to thousands of ruffled spirits and groaning souls! Let me be content, each might say, for God has ordered my circumstances that angels might wonder at the grace bestowed on His child, and that I might honour Him as I have never yet done.

"I know how to be abased." Ah, friends, we do not quite like that! We have to take a smaller house, or to spend less on ourselves, and we do not like it. "I have learned," says the apostle, and he went down willingly, as his Master went down before him. To be forced down by circumstances is one thing, but to go down cheerfully for one's Master is quite another thing. "I know how to abound." Mark the order. I do not think we ever know how to abound until we have learned how to be abased; both are difficult, and have to be *learned*.

Mark also the emphasis of the apostle—" *Everywhere.*" At Corinth, at Ephesus, on the sea, in the prison, when his back was scourged—" *Everywhere.*" Who of us can say this? "Everywhere and in all things I am *instructed.*" This is not an ordinary word; it is used almost exclusively for priestly initiation into certain mysteries in the heathen temples. Yes, surely there is a mystery in it, and there is a step by step in the initiation. It is not jumped into all at once, and so the Lord again and again brings His people into peculiarly trying circumstances. "Initiated both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through [in] Christ that strengtheneth me."

Let us now look at some passages in the gospel of Luke that tell of the poverty of Him who for our sakes became poor, and may they, by God's grace, touch our hearts. Chapter ii. 7: "She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger; because there was no room for Him in the inn." Did God do the best for His Son when He gave Him only the manger? Yes; there was a divine purpose in it which eternity will unfold; and oh that we may learn that there is a divine purpose in the things of our own little histories! And may we accept whatever God sends us, and say from our hearts, "God is doing the best thing for me."

In Luke viii. 2, 3, we read: "And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto Him of their substance." Why did not God send down the angels from heaven for His Son as He did for Elijah? We may be sure it would not have been the best thing for His Son, for these women, or for us, or He would have done so.

He is doing the best thing for us all. It is a mark of very great favour when God puts us in trying circumstances, but it requires a spiritual mind to discern this. In the making of porcelain and earthenware, the heating of the furnace depends upon the quality of the material used. As God wanted to bring a vessel of the purest, brightest glory out of the humanity of the Son of God, He was put into a furnace of the most intense heat possible. If we are content to be a common vessel, God does not put us into the heat that He intends for a more valuable vessel. May we seek the spiritual mind that will enable us to bear the heat and the pressure through which we must pass, if we would be vessels for His praise.

One passage more I would refer to, in Luke ix. : "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." The man is silent now. May we learn what is involved in following Christ (for He would not have us ignorant), and then may we seek grace to follow.

We might take up other scriptures in connection with our blessed Lord's life and sojourn down here, but we have had enough to show us the meaning of that word : "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." May we so learn it that we may imitate Him, and great will be our blessing if the Lord makes trials and difficulties a rich opportunity for manifesting *costly* liberality. (H. G.)

IV. EQUALITY BY GRACE.

I suppose we are profitably self-concerned and humbled by the words we have heard on our habit of giving. May it continue. But are we not also humbled at finding how

unlike we are to our Lord? We soon shall see the One who, from the poverty of the manger, trod the path of poverty until He reached the poverty of the cross and the grave. We shall see Him of whom it was rightly said, that He only rode upon a borrowed beast, and was laid in a borrowed grave; but we shall see Him, as we know, with all the riches that are His now and for evermore. When we remember that He will make us share those riches, oh, how humbled we should be that we do not now better resemble Him in poverty! I do not only mean as to grace of heart, but as to availing ourselves of the channels afforded us by which to get poor; namely, by helping the needs of those dear to us for Christ's sake. Let me add a brief word.

In 2 Cor. viii. 13 Paul said, "For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance may also be a supply for your want: that there may be an equality." These verses call to mind the word in Acts, as to great grace being upon the early Christians, so that they had all things common. But I would remind you that there were circumstances calling for that grace. Of the three thousand souls who had gladly received the Word, and were baptized, many had left their homes, and come up to Jerusalem at the annual feast; but God having met them with the blessed word of the gospel, they did not want to go back; and the Jerusalem saints acted in the spirit of the Master, when He said of the five thousand in the wilderness, "They need not depart." There was thus a genuine reason for their having all things common, and there was blessed grace to meet the need of the occasion. Now Paul seeks the same grace among the Gentile churches. "I want," said he, "that same grace of equality. You

Corinthians should not be living like kings, when some of your fellow-saints are wanting daily bread. Do not pamper the idleness of some person who mistakenly claims to be of the ministry, but supply the genuine need of your fellow-believers."

Equality in the manna was by a miracle; in the New Testament it is by grace. Miracle was needed by the Israelites; for they were a people in the flesh, and had the grasping covetousness of the old Adam nature in them. But Paul said, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." This grasping of what you have, need not be in you. Be equal. Do not let God have to break into our savings bank, and bring us down in that way to the level of our fellow-saints. Let not God be obliged to do this by His own hand upon us, but let Him do it by His work of grace in our hearts. When you and that brother whom you helped stand around the throne you will have an equality of glory. He will not need help then, but let him have it while he is in the poor mortal body. As there will be equality in glory then, let there be equality by the power of grace now.

"Thanks be to God that put into the heart of Titus the same earnest care for you." We have not to go far to find channels through which to become as poor as our Master. "The poor," said Jesus, "ye have always with you." Whosoever we meet let us do them good, with wisdom and discretion. Christ first shared the poverty of the mother that gave Him birth, and at last He became poor for the whole Church. He was poor at the beginning, according to the poverty that was close to Him, and the circle of His poverty went out till it reached the cross. So may we be enlarged. Many a heart would give but for want of faith. What shall I do to-morrow or next week? We need both the warmth that delights

to give and the faith that can trust God. He cannot make us poorer than He made His own beloved Son. A comforting fellowship His would be to us ! (H. D.)

V. "OF THINE OWN HAVE WE GIVEN THEE."

This is a subject for much meditation and much prayer. I have found that it is a great help to contentment, and then to faithfulness, to remember my entire forfeiture of all good in the first man, and to ask myself the question, What could I, as a child of the first Adam, claim at the hand of God ? Could I claim heaven ? Could I claim pity ? Could I claim a mite or a crumb, a draught of water or a breath out of hell ? No, brethren ; so terrible is our ruin in the first Adam that to breathe out of hell is a mercy and a favour. We deserved nothing but judgment in the first Adam. We obtain eternal glory in connection with the last Adam.

We are, then, simply recipients and stewards, not proprietors. God gave from His bosom His best gift, and presented it to us. With the mighty hand of faith we took it ; and then we waved Christ in the presence of God, saying, "Of thine own have we given thee." He gave His Spirit that we might know our need, that we might see the sufficiency of the provision, and take it, and rejoice in it. And when we thank God, and offer praise to Him for the indwelling Spirit of God, what are we doing ? "Of thine own have we given thee."

Then, in the question of gold and silver, if a man should give up everything he had in the bank, in the stocks, or in land, turn it all into gold, and then distribute it until he had nothing left, would he have anything to boast of or to glory in ? Nay, "Of thine own have we given thee."

We are therefore but stewards, and this tells me I am

accountable to God for the use of every breath I draw, and every moment of time; for the exercise of every mental power, for the use and turn of every limb, and for the use of every fraction of gold, silver, or copper with which I have been entrusted; and the judgment-seat of Christ will soon be set up when we must give account of the expenditure of every farthing. Every farthing uselessly spent upon myself is capital and interest sunk for ever; but every sixpence given to a poor saint, or in the service of Christ, will bring a thousandfold interest at the day of Christ; and if we sow our money into this grave, shall I say, Christ will give it a resurrection at His judgment-seat, and then we shall marvel at the accumulated interest. We are stewards then; we are not proprietors. "Ye are not your own." I do not belong to myself; I do not belong to Satan, praise God; I do not belong to the world; I do not belong to the Gentiles. I am bought out and out for Christ, as a member of His body—indwelt by the Spirit. I am His steward, and accountable therefore to Him for all I am and have. "Ye are bought with a price." If I have sixpence in my pocket, I can say, between me and my fellow-man, "That is mine;" but can I say that to God? Oh, no! I cannot say of anything that it is mine, or that I am my own. I wish to learn this truth better, to be a more apt scholar. I think sometimes I have been so many years in God's school, and yet I am but as a dunce when I hold up this mirror—this mirror of *giving*, which the Spirit holds up before you and me. Let us look into it and try our ways, and see if we have adjusted ourselves by this heavenly standard. But what a mercy we have a heart to do it at all! What a mercy that there is blood before the throne—that the living Christ is in heaven to meet every description of imperfection!

I would add this, dear brethren: God's *goodness* is world wide; His *fellowship* is restricted to those who have received Christ. Let His unbounded kindness be our pattern; let us do good unto all men, specially to them who are of the household of faith. Our fellowship is to be restricted to those who are the members of Christ's Church; but if the kindness of God is universal, we are not to forget the poor and needy in the outside world. "Be ye imitators of God as dear children." (H. H.)

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Did Israel leave Egypt the night of the Passover?

SCRIPTURE is plain that they did so. (See Exodus xii. 41, 42.) After the Passover they were commanded to keep the seven days' feast of unleavened bread, and they were constrained to eat their bread unleavened, for they had no time to prepare themselves any victuals, but had to carry their dough unleavened, because they were "thrust out of Egypt." (v. 39.) This is very significant, and teaches us that the land of Egypt (the type of the world) was no place for keeping the unleavened feast in holy separation to God. The Passover was kept in Egypt; but the feast of unleavened bread, which immediately followed it, was observed in the wilderness, as they went up out of Egypt. They were three days between Rameses and the Red Sea, so that the feast lasted till the fourth day on the other side of the sea.

Where do we get our Lord's genealogy as through Mary?

It is considered that Luke gives the genealogy of our Lord through the line of Mary, and hence the expression, "*As was supposed the Son of Joseph.*" It was not customary among the Jews to put the names of females on their genealogies, and therefore the husband's name is brought in. Throughout Luke's early chapters Mary is the principal figure, Joseph being only incidentally named. It is otherwise in Matthew. There Joseph is a leading person in the history, and there it is distinctly said that "Jacob begat Joseph, the husband of Mary." The genealogy in Luke shows our Lord's descent as through the royal line of David, though not through Solomon and the line of Jewish kings.

STEDFASTNESS.

1 Cor. xv. 58.

IF ever this blessed fruit of the Spirit was both required and tested, it is *now*. Look where we may, in the light of God's word, we see turning aside. Persons professing Christ are found returning to things which once they gave up for Him in order to be obedient to the Word. Attempts are everywhere being made to trample out the line of demarcation between the Church and the world by relaxing from strict obedience to the precepts of the New Testament; by abandoning principles held at one time with firmness; and by confounding things that differ, both in doctrine and practice. There are, indeed, very many bright and blessed exceptions, but they only make the too general defection more manifest.

This is a humbling and sorrowful reflection, but it does not surprise those who carefully read the words of Christ and His apostles. It is written, as declared by the Lord Jesus, "Because iniquity shall abound the love of many shall wax cold;" and, in the words of Paul to Timothy, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived." And again, "In the latter times some shall depart from the faith."

Such being the case, we would bring forward the subject of "stedfastness," and invite prayerful consideration of it, taking to ourselves, and pressing on our readers, the exhortation given to the Corinthians, "Be ye stedfast."

Stedfastness occupies a prominent place in Scripture, and is connected with doctrine and practice, with service and suffering, with faith and the hope of the Church,

and some reference to these different connections may be helpful.

Whilst various words in the original, all represented by the one English word "stedfast," convey the general idea of *firmness* or *stability*, yet there are shades of difference which it will not be uninteresting or unprofitable for us to notice.

In the word of God the Holy Spirit is pleased to give us both the *positive* and *negative* sides of this subject, and God teaches by contrast.

In the case of Israel, as recorded in Ps. lxxviii. 8, we see the negative side. They "set *not* their *heart* aright, and their *spirit* was *not* stedfast with God;" and in verse 37, "For their heart was *not* right with God, neither were *they* stedfast in His covenant." Defective in love for Jehovah, their spirit was not stedfast nor was there in their ways firm obedience to His law. Their heart being divided, they were both inconstant in their worship and unstedfast in their general life.

But what Israel was not, Israel's Prince *was*, and that in perfection. Let us listen to His voice. In Isaiah l. 5, 7 we hear Him saying, "I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I have *set my face like a flint*, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And in the gospel narrative, when the time of His ascending approached (which could only be effected by His first descending into death), "He *stedfastly set His face* to go to Jerusalem." (Luke ix. 51.) The word used in this passage implies a setting firmly, or establishing, and in His purpose and way He was immovable. Thus was it with the Master, and He bids us follow His steps.

In Acts ii. 41, 42 we read that those who gladly received Peter's word were baptized and added by the Lord to the Church; and the Holy Ghost's testimony is, "that they

continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers ;" that is, they were firm in their adherence, cleaving as to a person, or as the limpet does to the rock : they persevered in the profession of faith in Christ, and so proved themselves His disciples indeed. (John viii. 31.)

In 1 Cor. xv. 58 Paul makes a practical application of the subject of the resurrection, and exhorts believers to be "stedfast, unmovable." The idea conveyed in this passage is, being settled, well founded. In Heb. iii. 14 the "partakers of Christ" are characterized by holding the beginning of their confidence "stedfast" or firm "unto the end." In 2 Peter iii. 17 we are warned against "being led away with the error of the wicked," and falling from our own "stedfastness."

Taking these passages together, we find that stability, as of a foundation, adherence as to a person, steadiness and firmness, as of a grasp with the hands, or of a well-placed foot, are all comprehended and taught by the one word "stedfastness." For what we experimentally know of this excellent thing, let us be thankful, and at the same time seek to increase and abound in it.

This grace or fruit of the Spirit is manifested, as we have said, in different spheres or circles, from the closet outwards, and in connection with "the faith," *i.e.* the truth, with faith as a principle, with love and its service, with suffering, and with the hope of glory.

(1.) It is both needed and tested in *the closet*. The discipline of the closet, involved by our responsibility to God whilst there, constitutes the sharpest test of faith, patience, and subjection. How often does nature—that is, the flesh—seek to avoid the closet, or when in it crave to hasten out ! This proves the need of a stedfast purpose of heart, in order to continue waiting upon God.

(2.) Stedfastness of purpose is needed also in *the family*. There must be a determination to uphold God's honour, and enforce the claims of His word, in ruling the house and training the family for Him; otherwise, peace of mind will be disturbed, and service hindered.

(3.) Without stedfastness we cannot behave aright in *the assembly*. It is impossible to walk happily, usefully, and honourably, either towards God or our fellow-Christians, in our corporate capacity, without it. Uncertainty of purpose will result in instability in all that we undertake.

(4.) Likewise, in order to a consistent walk before *the world*, stedfastness is most requisite. To it we are exhorted in the word of God, and in that Word we have bright examples of it for our imitation, pre-eminently the perfect pattern, the Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

For all the spheres above enumerated, *stedfastness of doctrine*, according to the word of God, is indispensable. Of the four things stedfastly continued in by the early Church, to which we have already referred, "the apostles' doctrine" was the first; and this entirely agrees with the order observed by Paul in his second letter to Timothy (iii. 16, 17), where, in commenting on the value and varied uses of the Word, he says in the first place that it is "profitable for doctrine."

Doctrine is of the utmost importance; for whilst mere abstract doctrine is neither saving nor sanctifying, we could know nothing of the Saviour or salvation, of sanctification or the Sanctifier, without doctrine; for all that is to be known of God, of Christ, of the Holy Ghost, of sin, of pardon, of heaven, of hell, of creation, and of redemption, must be learnt through the doctrine or teaching of Scripture. For this all Scripture is profitable, and in its teaching we should ever continue *stedfast*.

What doctrine is there, that is of God, which the

devil does not deny, or seek to corrupt, either directly or through his agents? Old forms of false doctrine are constantly reviving, and new forms of error continually appearing. How needful, then, is it that believers should cleave to the truth! How needful is *stedfastness*, and how sharply is it tested! But let us remember that God is sufficient, and that His grace, sought by us, can and will make us stedfast.

Moreover, this godly, fixed purpose is equally necessary in *practising* the precepts of the word of God at all times and under all circumstances.

Satan opposes us in every act of obedience, and disputes every progressive step which, in its relation to himself, must be an aggressive step; yet we are called to patient continuance in well doing, to "resist the devil," and make him flee, and for this also God is sufficient.

Of this line of conduct we have an early and bright, although not perfect, example in the father of the faithful. Having promptly carried out the charge of God respecting circumcision in the case of all his house, God could bear this testimony of him, "I know Abraham, that he will *command* his children, and his household after him," and he was called "the friend of God." Paul also, in New Testament times, although not presenting the perfectly even surface of the fine flour of the meat-offering, as did the Master, nevertheless manifested in goodly measure this *stedfastness* for God and His truth, both in doctrine and practice.

Examples might be multiplied, but space forbids, and the reader can seek them out, and thus be better able to judge for himself of the particular ways in which *stedfastness* is tested, and wherein it is most needed.

Opposition from Satan and the flesh may discourage, a sense of our own imperfections in service may cast us down, and the apparent absence of results, together with

the seemingly great success of others, may exercise us, and we may even be tempted to change from the simplicity of faith in God's word to the use of expedients and helps, which will not stand the test of that Word and the judgment-seat of Christ. These and many other tests of our stedfastness will doubtless arise, and call for the stability, firmness, and adherence to the truth which is enjoined on us. Let us then, beloved reader, "hold fast," labouring patiently, and enduring hardness for Christ as good soldiers, and in due time we shall reap.

Once more, this holy, tenacious grasp is being tested, and will be so yet more, in connection with the bright and glorious hope of the coming of the Lord. Before leaving this earth He promised to come again, and receive us to Himself (John xiv. 3), and He has declared from heaven, "I come quickly;" "Surely I come quickly. Amen." The early assembly expected Him daily, and thousands of children of God in Christendom are now looking "for His Son from heaven;" yet He tarries, and we have therefore need of patience.

Satan will suggest that our hope is vain, and scoffing professors, as well as openly profane persons, will ask, "Where is the promise of His coming?" All this tests the stedfastness of our faith and expectation, and calls on us to "hold the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end," and also to "hold fast the confession of our hope *without wavering*," knowing that He is faithful who hath promised, and that "yet a little while, and the coming One shall come, and will not tarry."

Blessed be God, there is one thing respecting which we have no responsibility, save to believe it, and walk worthy of it, even our standing. This is immovable, unchangeable, based on the perfections of God, which harmonize with the blood of the cross. He has given it to us *in Christ*;

He sustains it *for* us in Him; nor can anything in ourselves, or any person or thing outside us, even touch it. HE hath made us "accepted in the Beloved;" HE hath raised us up, and made us sit together with Christ in the heavenlies, so that the safety of each believer, and of the entire Church, is from and in Himself, to whom be the glory for ever and ever.

Lastly, let us remember that we are not left to ourselves or to our own resources for the maintaining of this stedfastness in its different connections and varied circles; but for this, as for everything that is true and holy, we have the Spirit of God indwelling us, with all His wisdom, grace, and power; even Him who searches the depths of God, and whose power is without limit. Let us, then, honour Him, beloved, by trusting Him, and in our conscious and confessed ignorance He will find His fair occasion for instruction, and in our weakness He will perfect our strength.

"Stand fast in Christ; ah! yet again,
He teaches all the band;
Since human efforts are in vain,
In Christ it is we stand."

H. H.

SELF.—Almost all the difficulties and divisions in the Church of God arise from either self-wisdom or self-love. These are our two great dangers. Now our Lord died at Golgotha; that is, the "place of a *skull*" (Matt. xxvii. 33), and not merely of a "bone." The cross thus gives the death-knell to all our wisdom, as seen in 1 Cor. i. and ii. Then in 1 Cor. xiii. we have the death of self-love. (See verses 4, 5.) Combine self-wisdom and self-love, and you get the man who speaks "perverse things" to draw away disciples after himself, as described in Acts xx. 30.

“HIMSELF.”

“CHRIST pleased not *Himself*.”—ROM. xv. 3.

“CHRIST JESUS . . . made *Himself* of no reputation . . . humbled *Himself*, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

“CHRIST also loved the Church, and gave *Himself* for it . . . that He might present it to *Himself* a glorious Church.”—EPH. v. 25, 27.

“CHRIST also hath loved us, and given *Himself* for us.”—EPH. v. 2.

“OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, who gave *Himself* for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to *Himself* a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”—TITUS ii. 13, 14.

“OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, who gave *Himself* for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”—GAL. i. 3, 4.

“HIS SON . . . who . . . when He had by *Himself* purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”—HEB. i. 2, 3.

“THE SON OF GOD, who loved me, and gave *Himself* for me.”—GAL. ii. 20.

“CHRIST . . . who *His own self* bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.”—1 PETER ii. 21, 24.

“THE MAN CHRIST JESUS, who gave *Himself* a ransom for all, to be testified of in due time.”—1 TIM. ii. 5, 6.

“JESUS . . . who needeth not daily . . . to offer up sacrifice . . . for this He did once, when He offered up *Himself*.”—HEB. vii. 22, 27.

“CHRIST . . . now once in the end of the world hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of *Himself*.”—HEB. ix. 24, 26.

“CHRIST . . . is our peace . . . having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in *Himself* of twain one new Man, so making peace.”—EPH. ii. 13-15.

“THE SAVIOUR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto *Himself*.”

“THE LORD *Himself* shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.”—1 THESS. iv. 16.

“THE LORD OF PEACE *Himself* give you peace always by all means. The Lord be with you all.”—2 THESS. iii. 16.

A LETTER TO SUFFERING CHRISTIANS.

I HAVE sent you some “living water,” some “bread from heaven,” some “oil” and “honey” out of the Rock, some “wine that maketh glad,” some “myrrh and spice,” some of the “sincere milk,” and now “eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

The texts I have transcribed are those in which the little word (but oh, how great !) *Himself* occurs. You will observe how beautifully it is connected with all the various names of the Lord—Jesus, Jesus Christ, Christ, Christ Jesus, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Man Christ Jesus, the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, the Son of God, the Lord—and in how many aspects *Himself* is thus presented. And what has *He* not wrought for us? The power of faith is the power to realize this in the soul, and to speak of things as God speaks of them.

Two of God's ways are especially marked in the epistles. (1) The calling things that be not as though they were. (Rom. iv. 17.) (2) Bringing to nought things that are by things that are not. (1 Cor. i. 28.)

Now faith speaks and acts after the same fashion, for it is of God. In the language of faith we say "all things are become new;" "all things are of God;" "our citizenship is in heaven;" we are "risen with Christ;" we are "glorified;" we are "perfected for ever;" we see "heaven opened;" "we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour;" we "are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Thus we call things that are not as though they were.

Besides this, faith brings to nought present things by things that are not. Thus affliction becomes *light*, and but for a *moment*, because of the "exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" while we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen." We make the power of Satan nought by counting him to be already vanquished, though he still goes about as a roaring lion. We reckon the flesh to be nothing by counting that we have died and are risen, though still we look for resurrection. We say that "old things have passed away" by reason of the sight of the new things, though old things

still remain, and the new things we have never yet looked upon. We bring to nought this world and its allurements by seeing the world to come. The death of Christ stands at *the end of this world*. (Heb. ix. 26.) The testimony that was given to Christ was the proof that the end of the world was come (Heb. i. 2), and the result is that it is "the world to come whereof we speak," as the apostle says in Heb. ii. 5. And yet he has not directly spoken of it at all; but the fact is that the whole epistle speaks about it in principle, because it speaks about the cross and the glory. The cross is the end of all that is old, and there remains nothing therefore but that which is new. This seems to be specially the heavenly calling so dwelt upon in the Hebrews.

All that is behind the cross—whether type or shadow, priest or sacrifice, earthly city or people, law or prophet—all is, as it were, gone, because the cross is the closing up of it all, either in fulfilling, or superseding, or condemning. The next thing therefore is resurrection and the glory, the heavenly city, the unshaken kingdom, the world to come. And the soul of the believer, and the speech of the believer, is occupied with these things alone. All God's dealings with us are upon this principle, that the death of His Son has put an end to old things, so that He treats us as altogether new creatures in Christ Jesus.

If He removes from us, therefore, some of the old things, it is because He would have us look more upon the new. He cannot feel as we do about what we call our *losses*, because He sees only the new things. He may have compassion for us in our weakness and want of faith, but we need not marvel at His often taking away something old, because He beholds all our future joy and glory as present. The certainty of this (if I may so say) enables God our Father to inflict upon us things that cause pain, which He could not do from the depths of His love and sympathy for us unless He called things that are not as though they

were; and if we only exercise faith in this same way we shall find strength under our trials. I see that if the apostle speaks of God supplying the need of His saints, be it only temporal need, he yet looks upon that supply as coming out of Christ's "riches in glory;" he refers everything, every act of God, to resurrection. The ways of God become *new ways* to the believer if once he sees that the cross stands at the end of the world.

These truths would, I believe, be of great strength to our dear suffering brethren. The epistle to the Hebrews, seems especially suited to them in their present state, and their oft-recurring trials. Chapter xi. tells us two things about those that suffer for Christ's sake; (1) that the world is not worthy of them, because they are not of it, but are cast out of it; and (2) that God is not ashamed to be called their God. He is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of faith; and if He is not ashamed to be called our God, we need not be much troubled about what man may say. If the world is not worthy of us, we need not descend into its wretched sunken state.

H. W. SOLTAU.

OUR ONENESS.—As we are one with the Father and the Son, and as there can be no discord between them, so discord and differences between brethren should be a cause of sorrow and contrition. There should not be one discordant word between two children of God. Our prayer should continually be that evil ways, though sanctified by custom, may be felt by us with deep sorrow of heart and abhorrence. Israel forsook the law, and the curse came upon them. We forsake the words of Christ, and though (blessed be God!) we have not the curse, we suffer the Fatherly chastisements of offended love, and our differences and divisions, and consequent lack of blessing, testify of God's judgments.

THE CROWN OF THORNS.

"WE SEE JESUS."—HEB. ii. 9.

"Wearing the crown of thorns."—JOHN xix. 5.

"On His head . . . many crowns."—REV. xix. 12.

LIFT up your heads, ye golden gates,
The Son of God comes out to reign,
While countless hosts of heaven prepare
To follow in His glorious train ; *
He comes with victory's flag unfurled,
To take the kingdoms of the world.

Upon His head are many crowns,
Each bathed in light beyond compare ;
Conspicuous by its absence, one—
And one alone—is missing there ;
Yet, oh ! what peerless grace adorns
Love's foremost crown, the crown of thorns.

No cruel thorns shall e'er again
Press bleeding drops from that meek brow ;
Each anguished trace of grief and pain
Is swallowed up in victory now.
But still *how* dear, that conquering morn,
The memory of the crown of thorn !

'Twas worn for *thee*, His much-loved saint
(Treasure His heart can ne'er forget) ;
Man's hatred wove the curse of God,†
Which love with priceless blood-drops set ;
Yea, matchless love met depths of scorn,
The seal of both, that crown of thorn.

He loved *thee* well, and wore that crown
That He might give a crown to *thee*—
A crown of glory, life, and joy,
To wear throughout eternity ;
Yet never would its rays adorn
Thy brow, but for *His* crown of thorn.

* Rev. xix. 4.

† Gen. iii. 17, 18.

The suffering and the shame are o'er,
 We see Him crowned with glory now,
 Proclaimed in heaven the Lord of all,
 With many crowns upon His brow ;
 Yet, though in wondrous radiance worn,
 Outshines them all that crown of thorn.

But why so peerless then, that crown ?
 Ye saints of Jesus, answer why—
 It tells of love unsearchable
 That led the Son of God to die ;
 He saw us lost, accursed, forlorn,
 And stooped to wear that crown of thorn.

Thou glorious Lover, Bridegroom, Friend,
 I long to see Thee as Thou art !
 That brow enshrined in dazzling light,
 Once pierced for me with hatred's dart ;
 Those eyes' unmingled joy *that* morn,
 Which wept beneath the crown of thorn.

Thy royal diadems that day
 Will fix our rapt, adoring gaze—
 Sweet love-light from that glorious face
 Evoke glad songs of ceaseless praise ;
But, deep in each fond memory borne,
 Will ever lie the CROWN OF THORN.

E. J. A. P.

THE EQUITY OF GOD'S JUDGMENTS.

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING.

God's equity in dealing with Christ is seen in Phil. ii. 5-15. Because of His humbling Himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, *therefore* God hath highly exalted Him. Christ acquiesced in the punishment laid upon Him, saying, "Thou art holy" (Ps. xxii.), though He had to cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Psalm xviii. is a psalm of recompence and retribution ;

compare verses 1-6, 20-27. See likewise God's retribution in Rom. i.—“*Wherefore* God also gave them up” (vv. 24, 26, 28); and in Rev. xix. 19, 20. Gal. vi. 7-9 shows us how equal are God's ways: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for *whatsoever* a man soweth, that shall he also reap.”

Pharaoh's acknowledgment in Exod. ix. 27 was, “I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked;” and this is but a sample of what God will bring out of the mouths of all His enemies, causing them to bear testimony to His equity. Justice excludes mercy, and till justice is met, mercy cannot come. Even the Son of God did not complain when God shut out mercy upon the cross; when, as the guiltless One, He took the place of the guilty ones, under the unsparing justice of God; so will it be with those who perish. As Christians, when they stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, will show forth the equity of God in the place assigned them, even so will there be a deep and unqualified justification of God from the depths of hell. Men will reap just what they sowed, and our God will appear righteous in all His dealings. “The God of recompences will surely requite.” (Jer. li. 56.)

The fact of so many imbibing the doctrine of annihilation is a proof of shallow work in our gospel testimony. Deep ploughing in gospel work would prevent shallow conversions. There is little preaching about the holiness of God; His *judicial* character is not sufficiently dwelt on.

Cain was Adam's firstborn, and his course foreshadowed what all sons and daughters of Adam would come to if left to themselves. Cain's sin was aggravated by refusing the sacrifice. He did not complain of his punishment being unjust. “My punishment,” said he, “is greater than I can bear,” *not* greater than I deserve. He acknowledged

the justice of God, but sought to forget God's retribution, and became a wanderer from God. Compare Cain's words in Gen. iv. 14-16: "From thy face shall I be hid," and the fact that he "went out from the presence of the Lord," with the language of the great company in Rev. vi. 16, after the manifestation of God's power and glory—"Hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb."

The unsaved will have no desire to be with God, even as Cain had none. There is no repentance in hell; judicial fire neither purifies nor reconciles to God. As with Pharaoh, judgments do but harden. In Rev. ix. and xvi. we read that, notwithstanding the plagues, men "repented not" to give God glory.

The solemn acts of judgment recorded in 2 Peter ii. respecting the angels that sinned, the world of the ungodly in Noah's days, the men of Sodom and Gomorrah, are standing witnesses that God must punish sin; and He will do so in the lake of fire. "Then the wicked shall be silent in darkness" (1 Sam. ii. 9); that is, silent under the sense of the justice of God, even as the man without the wedding garment was speechless.

Men will be judged "out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." (Rev. xx. 12.) That will be the only true history of the world. Thoughts and imaginations will then be accounted deeds and actions. (See Psalm l. 19-21.) Rejection of mercy is the crowning sin, as in the case of Cain, of Pharaoh, and of those mentioned in Heb. x. 26-29. As there will be the eternity of holiness in the saints, so will there be the eternity of sin. (Rev. xxii. 11; Mark iii. 29, R.V.) In Psalm lxix. 22-28 we have Christ's vindication of God's judgments. After verse 21 we may joyfully put "Father, forgive them" with all the blessings which flow to those

who believe; but then follow the solemn words of judgment, "Pour out thine indignation." Israel and Christendom will be requited for rejecting mercy; but the case of heathendom is different. Upon what ground, then, will God judge the heathen who have never heard the gospel? Rom. i. instructs as to the accountability of the heathen world. Darkness of mind came upon them, as upon Israel, on account of the rejection of God's revelation. Israel rejected the law of God and Christ Himself; the heathen rejected the revelation of God in creation. The heathen, who by nature have no law, have the law written in their hearts. God's throne is inviolable; His righteous claims can never be foregone. Hence the demand to the uttermost farthing, which can never be paid, and an eternal hell.

God's character can only be learned from the Scriptures. That doctrine which magnifies the love of God and ignores the justice of God is but a counterfeit from Satan. In Rev. xix. songs of praise arise at the judgment of the great whore. The hallelujahs of the saints ascend, called forth by the wondrous blessings of God and by His righteous judgments, and her smoke rises up for ever and ever. The sufferings of Christ have an infinite value; sin is an infinite wrong, and demands infinite atonement or infinite judgment. In Rev. xvi. 5-7 the altar responds to the judgments of the vials, and owns that God is just. So in Ezek. x., the fire of judgment was taken off the altar. The rule of judgment is the rule wherewith Christ was judged. The cross of Christ and the punishment of the lost go together. (John iii. 36.) God's lovingkindness will be stamped upon every act of His, whether in creation, in redemption, or in the eternal judgment of the unsaved (see Psalm cxxxvi.), and He will be justified in His sayings. It is ours to bow our hearts, and to love and adore Him as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

WORSHIP, SILENT AND ORAL.

WHERE do we first find human beings *orally* worshipping? The act of Abel in offering the lamb; of Noah, Abraham, and others in sacrificing upon their altars, was doubtless worship; but we do not read of worship with the *voice* till Israel was brought out of Egypt. *Redemption* is seen beautifully in type here—redemption by blood, in death and resurrection. Israel was a risen people; they had come up out of the Red Sea, and then Moses burst forth in words which will be coupled by-and-by with the song of the Lamb.

Let us remember that our life now ought to be one unbroken stream of worship till it ends in glory. Let us aim at this in our occupations, our houses, our employments; let us ever be *worshippers*; let us live in God's presence; let our hearts be with Him, and let us lift them up in silence to Him, or with the voice of praise and thanksgiving.

What is the highest instance of worship in the Bible? I believe it is the last act of the Lord Jesus, when "He bowed the head and gave up the ghost." I do not think God ever had *higher* worship than that; for He never had higher obedience, and the two are inseparable. He will never have a head bowed again in holy blessed reverence as that head was bowed. His voice had not uttered the word *Father*; He had to keep it back because God had forsaken Him; but when the burdened heart of Jesus was at length released from its fearful load—when the heavy pressure of the hand of God in judgment was removed—He was able to say, "Father, into thy hands I commend

my spirit;" and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost. *That* was worship. Worship is delight in God—subjection to God, rejoicing in having such a Father; not talking of oneself, except to talk of God; not thinking of oneself, except to think how near one is to His heart—letting out oneself in joyful, happy adoration of the blessed God, cheering our hearts by learning more of Him, and being better acquainted with Him.

H. W. S.

PAUL'S CALL TO HIS LIFE-WORK.

Acts xiii. 1-4.

IN days of activity like the present it is well for us to draw what light we can from the lives of those whose experiences are given us in the sacred volume. In the New Testament Paul's life has an especial claim on our attention as one of which God has seen fit to give us the fullest details. Our present object, however, is to refer to one epoch in his inspired biography; namely, that wherein he is called forth to the work for which God had chosen and fitted him.

At his conversion he was told what he would be called to suffer for the name which had sounded in his ear from heaven on that memorable midday as he drew near to Damascus. "Jesus of Nazareth" was henceforth to be his one theme, and the setting forth of His kingdom and glory his one purpose in life. Immediately, therefore, we find him preaching in that name, and when persecution arose he found his way into Arabia, where he remained three years. Of this period God has given us no account; but we gather from his allusion to it in his epistle to the Galatians that it was there he received from God that

preparation for his ministry which made him the unfolders of the great mystery of the Church. Arabia was his school, and not Jerusalem. Paul had sat at the feet of human instructors; and in certain respects their instruction was not to be despised, for God used it to fit His servant for His purpose; but he had very much to unlearn, and had also now to learn from God, and He took him aside to teach him. Moses was trained in a similar way, and who can tell what he learned during those forty years in which he fed Jethro's flock, never seeking, like Jacob, to acquire flocks and possessions of his own, for he took nothing back with him into Egypt? Moses and Paul had to learn in secret from God, and both of them received communications from God as to their special service—Moses, that he should be Israel's deliverer; and Paul, that he should carry the gospel to the Gentiles. In both there was that quiet waiting which marks the consciousness of a divine commission, till God opened the door, and sent His servants forward in their work.

Paul comes back to Jerusalem, and thence at the command of God departs for Tarsus. There he remains till Barnabas goes to find him, as Aaron went to find Moses. Barnabas then brings him to Antioch, where "for a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people," and by their hands relief was sent to the brethren in Judea. In the opening of Acts xiii. we find them again in Antioch, and it is to this period of Paul's life that I particularly seek to draw attention.

Paul had now been converted about ten years. In Damascus, in Jerusalem, and in Antioch he had been engaged in preaching and in ministry to the church. His stay in Arabia and in his native city, Tarsus, must have occupied about five years, during which it seems probable

that he was a learner, awaiting his commission, till God used Barnabas to bring him to the front.

In the church at Antioch, about the year A.D. 46, there were certain prophets and teachers, as Barnabas, Saul, and others, who ministered to the Lord and fasted. They were waiting on God, and the Holy Ghost said to them, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." It was not a private intimation given to the men themselves, but a command to the church, "Separate ye for me." The Spirit might have acted directly without the intervention of the church, but He did not. Have we not a lesson here; namely, that God seeks to cultivate fellowship among His servants, particularly in their giving of themselves to any special work?

God was not sending Paul untried. For ten years he had walked before his God, and for some years before His church; and even now God does not tell Paul to go, but tells the church to separate him to His service. This at once establishes a link between Paul and the church at Antioch. Now, is not this link practically wanting in the present day? We hear of godly men saying they are led to go here or there, and who does not but rejoice that any have it in their heart to consecrate their lives to His service? But in thoughtful minds the question too often arises, "Are they sent of God? Has the Holy Ghost called them to the work?" It may be truly said, we have not now the prophetic voice amongst us to speak for God; but it is equally true, as a painful fact, that there is little ministering to the Lord and fasting in connection with our service. At Antioch it was not an individual waiting merely, but a collective waiting upon God; for the command, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul," was the divine answer to their ministering and fasting. The church at Antioch had grown in numbers and in the power of the

truth, and may remind us of Israel when they were seeking fuller possession of the land (Judges i. 1), and the question arose, "Who shall go up for us?" They ask God for counsel, and He gives the answer, "Judah shall go up," and as a consequence we read, "The Lord was with Judah." So it is here. The gospel has to go forth to the ends of the world, and the question is, "Who is to go?" God answers the question, and says, "Send Barnabas and Saul."

Though we have not now such direct announcements from God, should we not have the sure indication of the Master's will, were consecration real, and self-will kept down? He will still guide the subject heart and the broken will, and respond to the united prayer of His people.

The answer to the prayer of the church in Antioch had come, and we read, "And when they had fasted, and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away." This continued waiting upon God is very precious to contemplate, and as the result the hands of the church are laid upon her messengers, thus identifying the church with them, and they are sent away with their sympathy and their prayers. Paul's commission to the Gentiles is now, as it were, in his hand; but for ten years he had awaited this sending forth, and in little more than twenty years he ended his work, and laid down his commission at his martyrdom. The scene at Antioch ends with these words, "And they being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed." So went Paul forth with Barnabas, sent out by the Holy Ghost and by the church.

In this way Paul's first apostolic journey began, and at its close we read: "And thence they sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled." We are then told

that "they gathered the church together," and "rehearsed all that the Lord had done with them," telling how wondrously God "had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles."

There is a deeper meaning and a more extended application than we often suppose in our Lord's words to the church: "What ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven"—a closer link between the church on earth and the Lord in heaven than we think.

In the spirit of independence of these days we too often hear earnest men claiming to be free from control, but this is a great mistake. Scripture everywhere demands mutual fellowship and mutual subjection, and were this more sought and more cultivated, the double binding of earth and heaven would bring incalculable blessing to the church at large, and to the servants of the Lord in particular, as the result would manifest.

We do not say there may not be exceptions; to all rules there are such; but we think the exception has become too much the rule, and in consequence the church's sympathies are not drawn out, and faithful servants are forgotten. Surely if the Head needs the members, the members stand in need of one another. If the Head says not to the feet, "I have no need of you," the members should surely never say so one to the other! True fellowship will need much patience on all sides; but it is a part of the divine discipline to temper the body together, and the believer whom God has really called and fitted for any service will have that demonstration of the Spirit which will carry all consciences and all hearts with him, and he will then go forth from the church in any given place as Paul went forth from Antioch, "recommended to the grace of God," and commended to fellow-saints elsewhere.

H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

In connection with Matt. xxviii. 19, how are we to understand Paul's saying, in 1 Cor. i. 17, that he was not sent to baptize?

THE commission to preach, to baptize, and to teach, was given to the Church; but it did not necessarily imply that one person must do all three. Some might be evangelists, and some teachers, and so Paul did not regard baptism as his work, though at times he baptized. In the same way Cornelius and his friends were not baptized by Peter, but by those who accompanied him. There may have been a further reason in the mind of the apostle, which led him to baptize only the earliest converts, leaving it for them to baptize those who followed, and he thanked God that he baptized none of the Corinthians except Crispus and Gaius, lest any germ of sectarianism should be sown, and any should say they were baptized in *his* name. Much harm is often done by evangelists baptizing professing converts, and then leaving them, not unfrequently, as a sorrowful legacy to the church. In all our church concerns fellowship is of the utmost importance, and this is more secured, as a rule, by following the example of the apostle in this respect. Let those baptize who have to take the oversight of the baptized, or let it be done with their concurrence.

Does the word of God warrant expectation that God will make an assembly of saints (who living in the Spirit, are also walking in the Spirit) to be of one mind and one judgment?

THE larger an assembly, the greater the need of the apostle's exhortation: "Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." In the path which is worthy of our high, heavenly, and holy calling, the Lord of peace Himself is found, strife and vain-glory are not seen, murmurings and disputings are not heard. Where there is lowliness, and meekness, and likeness to Him who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart," where there is *exercise* of long-suffering and forbearance in "love" which "never faileth," there will certainly be the "diligent endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "Only by pride cometh contention: but with the well-advised is wisdom;" that is to say, the contentious man is proud and ill-advised, yea, worse than foolish; for "he that is hasty in spirit *exalteth* folly." Pride and folly never find place in "never-failing love."

Among the answers of Scripture, therefore, to the question pro-

posed is this: "With the lowly is wisdom." The *weaned* children of Ps. cxxxi. are the "brethren who dwell together in unity" of Ps. cxxxiii. Again, those who walk in the love of 1 Cor. xiii. are those who, while they are *long-suffering*, MANIFEST their *kindness*; for love both "suffereth long and is kind." Such do not behave themselves unseemly, are not provoked,* whatsoever be the seeming or actual provocation; for by the Spirit they learn to "bear all things." And these are they who receive the solemn exhortation: "By the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Those in an assembly who take delight in pleasing God find it their happiness hourly to be "working out their own salvation" (with reverence and filial trembling) from everything unlike the ways of Christ, from all strife and vain-glory; not looking each one "on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." If, then, there arise a difference of judgment in the assembly, and those who have wisdom and grace to care for the welfare of the company wait upon God, and if all pursue the course to which they have been accustomed UNTIL all are of one mind and one judgment as to anything new, all will be kept in peace; there will be no breach of that heavenly bond, "the bond of peace," and the prayer of those who have been waiting upon God will be answered.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory;" nor let anything, I say again, be done but that which has been already done, *until* all are perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment concerning anything *whatever* that anyone may propose to be done which is in any measure questionable. "Is Christ divided?" asked Paul of the divided Corinthians. "Was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?"

If we feed upon Christ, we shall dwell in Him (see John vi. 56); and dwelling in Him, we shall be conformed to Him. If we ponder Phil. ii. 1-16, and like portions, with prayer, divisions will be hateful to us, and will be prevented. He who was "equal with God" "humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" "was made a curse," that we might be delivered from the wrath to come and have eternal life. "Consider Him," saith the apostle; and again, "With all lowliness" "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called." Let every man in all things be a "sweet savour of Christ to God," and all difficulties will vanish.

W. H.

* "*Easily* provoked" is not a correct translation. Compare B. V.

STRENGTH IN WEAKNESS.

FROM NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON 2 CORINTHIANS XII.

BY MR. THOMAS NEWBERRY.

A MOST unwelcome task was here laid upon the apostle Paul by the Corinthians, yet for the honour and glory of his Lord and Saviour and for their benefit, he did not shrink from it. Though they were his own children in the faith, they had been beguiled into questioning his apostolic authority, and it became necessary for him to re-establish it in their minds. To do this he had to make himself a fool by boasting, though he only stated the truth. Carrying their thoughts back in his history, he came to "visions and revelations of the Lord," when doubtless he received from Him the great truths of the present dispensation. While it was given to Peter to open the door of faith to the Gentiles, revelations concerning the Church were especially communicated to Paul.

"I knew a man in Christ," he writes, "above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." It is the privilege of the believer now to enter in spirit into the holiest by the Holy Ghost, who dwells in us and unites us with Christ in the glory. By the blood of Jesus "we have boldness to enter into the holiest," and this is none other than the "third heaven" into which Paul went. But there

was something peculiar in his case; for he was "caught up" *personally*, whether in the body or out of the body he knew not.

Scripture recognizes three heavens: (1) The atmospheric heavens, where Satan and his emissaries are, and from whence we receive the "fiery darts." (2) The starry heavens, of which God says, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by their names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth." In this second heaven Satan has now no place; for our Lord's words, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven," teach us that all the angelic host do God's will there, though it is not done in this rebellious world. (3) The third is the spiritual heaven, our place of worship. The three heavens are shown in figure in the porch, the holy, and the holiest, of Solomon's temple. The porch was open to daylight; the holy place had the seventy lamps; and the holiest, where God dwelt, had the Shekinah glory.

It was in the third heaven that Paul received his revelations. The secret of the Church of God, then unfolded to him, is far above the thoughts of man. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa. lv. 9.) The thoughts of God can only be learned in the heavenlies, as the transfigured Christ can only be seen in the mount of transfiguration.

The apostle calls this third heaven paradise, and Ps. xvi. thus describes it: "In thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." The soul enjoys God's presence at the fountain-head, and thence, from the throne of God and of the Lamb, flow the rivers of living water. It was into paradise that Jesus

entered when He had finished His work, and paradise is restored to the believer now. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." (Ps. xci. 1.)

Speaking of the man caught up into paradise, the apostle says, "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." We have thus two persons in one—Paul as he was in himself, and as the man in Christ caught up into the third heaven. So also we have in one person the worm Jacob and Israel the prince of God. In our own experience we know something of Jacob with the crippled thigh, broken down, conquered. Would that we knew more of Jacob hanging upon the mighty One, of whom God could say, "As a prince, thou hast power with God and with men;" that is, would that we knew more of Romans viii., while we also learn out Romans vii.—out of weakness becoming strong!

When we can say, "God is my strength, my all," of such an one we may glory, rejoicing and boasting in what grace has made us in Christ. The apostle could also say of himself, "less than the least of all saints;" and he gloried in his infirmities, in the reproach of the Corinthians that his bodily presence was weak and his speech contemptible. "Be it so," he could say, in the spirit of John the Baptist, "He must increase, but I must decrease;" and that they might not think of him above that which they saw him to be he would not enlarge on his visions and revelations, only adding, "But now I forbear."

On the contrary, he still tells of his abasement: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me,

lest I should be exalted above measure." While he was in the third heaven there was no danger of his being exalted, nor are we in danger while in spirit we are dwelling in the holiest.

"The more Thy glories strike mine eyes
The humbler I shall lie."

Isaiah was not puffed up when he saw the glory of the triune God. (Isa. vi.) John was not exalted when he saw the Son of man in His glory in the midst of the seven candlesticks. (Rev. i.) The overwhelming majesty of the Lord lays man in the dust. The danger is found when we come down among our fellow-saints, and begin to measure ourselves by others and compare ourselves with them. Even Paul was not free from this danger. Neither Peter, James, nor John had had such revelations as were communicated to him, and lest he should be lifted up above measure, the thorn that was given to him was not taken away. After Hezekiah had been healed, he "rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up." The good Physician knows that prevention is better than cure, and in His own wisdom He kept back Paul's pride, putting him, so to speak, on low diet.

What mistakes we make when we think that this affliction or that trial will hinder our usefulness! Paul's thorn was in the flesh. Sometimes the messenger of Satan puts a thorn in the spirit, and we are lifted up with proud thoughts. It is better to have it in the flesh; for then we are kept humble. What Paul's thorn was we are not told, and for a wise reason; because those who had a similar thorn might even be lifted up thereby and think themselves Pauls.

"For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." Oh, what mistakes we often make in

prayer! Such are our thoughts, and such was the thought of the kite when it cried, "Oh this string! Where would I not rise, if it were not for this string!" But Paul's thorn was to him what the string is to the kite. The thorn was a gift from God; the one who brought it was a messenger from Satan; but Paul saw rather the purpose of Satan than the hand of God.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."

The thorn was really the token of God's loving care to fit Paul for His service.

"And He said unto me" (literally, "*He hath said*"—the perfect tense; that is, it was a word for to-day as well as for fourteen years ago), "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is not less trial, less opposition, less peril, less infirmity, that we need. Even without these we should not be sufficient for the conflict. What we really need is a sufficiency of grace; "for my strength is made perfect in weakness." This was the lesson that Paul had to learn by means of the thorn in the flesh. The messengers of Satan teach us lessons that angels never learn.

In order to have this spiritual strength from Christ, human strength must be set aside, and we must learn what weakness really is. In the paradise of God there is no Satan, no temptation, and a different lesson has to be learned; but to know our weakness, we must be in the conflict. Paul thoroughly learned both lessons.

"Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." The more there is of infirmity, the more room there is for the power of Christ. Paul was willing to be set aside that Christ might be seen, that the strength of Christ might

rest upon him; he was willing to be the worm, that the excellency of the power might be of God.

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong." In the consciousness of his own weakness he was really strong—"strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." It is well to learn our weakness, if it is the means of teaching us the sufficiency of divine strength.

"WOE IS ME!"

"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts."—ISA. vi. 5.

IN these days, when "knowledge is increased," it is well to discern the difference between the *possession* of the "sword of the Spirit," which is the word of God, and the *wielding* of it in the power and unction of the Holy Ghost.

A man may be "thoroughly furnished," so far as knowledge of the Word is concerned, and may yet fail in ministering that Word so as to win the Master's smile. As servants, we have not only to hear His word and learn His will, but that Word must first, with its keen edges, be felt on *ourselves* before we can expect to be used for the profit of others.

Moses understood that God would deliver His people through him long ere he was qualified to do the work in God's way. Had he not, during forty years in the desert, learned his own nothingness, he never could have borne with God's people as he did. But the training in the desert ended in *the presence of God*, and he then learned

the lesson we all need, that "no flesh" shall glory in His presence. (1 Cor. i. 29.)

Job seems to have drunk deep draughts from God's storehouse, hearing of God "by the hearing of the ear;" and we should have said that he was a well-taught believer. Just look at him as he is described in chap. xxix. In his presence the nobles were listeners. His word was appreciated: "When the ear heard me, then it blessed *me*." But mark, power was lacking with his words, or the hearer would have blessed *God*. He caused "the widow's heart to sing for joy," and *Job's* righteousness was apparent to all. Those who were at a loss what to do came to Job; his word left the wicked nothing to say, and he delivered the prey. But Job's rest was rather in his uprightness than in God.

In this description do we see our own picture? Our old nature is quite willing to delight in what adds lustre to the person. Truth that was once learned at the feet of the Master may in this sense become a snare. Those to whom God has abundantly revealed His mind are at least *in danger* of falling into Job's sin, and of misusing His blessings like Israel, as depicted in Ezek. xv. 14, 15. May the Lord more and more lead us into *His own presence*, so that in experience we may say, like Job, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." Then, but *not till then*, shall we have erring brethren sent to us with good prospect of their restoration (see Job xlii. 8), and the further honour promised to the Church in Philadelphia. (Rev. iii. 8, 9.)

Similarly Peter had to learn *himself*, by his utter denial of his Master, before he could strengthen his brethren (Luke xxii. 32); and he seems to have remembered this lesson even to old age. (See 1 Peter i. 6; v. 10.) In order that Paul might bear to the glory of God the abundance

of revelations granted to him, it was necessary that a thorn in the flesh should be given to him.

In God's dealings with Isaiah the same unerring wisdom may be discerned. The prophet had received God's truth to deliver to His people, and was giving it out in no stinted measure. The previous chapters display the keen, cutting character of his words against Israel; but the Lord knew that His servant was on a dangerous errand. Occupied as he must have been with Israel's sin and Uzziah's presumption, he was especially liable to forget *his own* condition; but He who provided the thorn for Paul, and allowed the world to heat a fire for Peter, is not unmindful of Isaiah, and therefore presents Himself to His servant in all His threefold holiness. *One look at Him* lays Isaiah in the dust.

In these days, while we may bless God for giving us truth as to the failure and wickedness of Christendom—truth which shatters all that is not of God, and lays low the accumulated traditions of centuries—are we sufficiently alive to the necessity, nay, the privilege, of keeping the *Lord* ever before our own eye, and thus realizing how *we* come short of "the glory of God"? Or are we so occupied with the sin of our brethren, and *their* departure from this or that truth, as to forget that which can only be learned in His presence—that *we*, as well as those among whom we dwell, are men of "unclean lips"? If so, we have never realized in any measure Isaiah vi.

Though Isaiah could tell Israel of their sin, applying God's truth with all faithfulness, he yet lacked *one* thing, as we learn from this chapter. He may have been tempted to say, "*I* never would do as Uzziah did;" but a sight of Jehovah in His glory turns every pleasant thought of self into corruption, and his word is no longer, "*Ye* rulers of Sodom," and, "*Ye* people of Gomorrah," but, "Woe is

me!" Yet it is ever true that he that humbleth himself under the mighty hand of God shall be exalted in due time (1 Peter v. 6), and no sooner does Isaiah take his place in the dust than God hastens to lift him up. The unclean lips are touched with a live coal from that altar on which the sacrifice had ascended, accepted in God's presence, and Isaiah's own iniquity is taken away. Before this he was a prophet equipped with truth; he is now the humble man of God, little in his own eyes.

So, when we realize our failure, fresh contact with the Lord Jesus restores our souls, and we become of like spirit with Isaiah; not less faithful, but *more gracious*.

While seeking to make known the truth, do we not need to keep the Lord before us, that we may speak in meekness as He would have us? Again, if we desire to wash a brother's feet, can we be in a right spirit to do so unless we are *low enough* to look up into his face; in other words, taking the place of a servant, and not of a superior? Paul ever remembered to speak as one who had "received mercy" (1 Cor. vii. 25; 2 Cor. iv. 1; 1 Tim. i. 13, 16), and our danger lies in forgetting what we *were*. (Eph. ii. 11.) The remembrance of this would beget in us a chastened spirit, most needful when we seek to use the sword of the Spirit against the evil of our brethren.

Israel of old kept the feast with the "bread of affliction" (Deut. xvi. 3); and God would have His people do so now, lest knowledge puff us up, and we get occupied with mere *position* instead of seeking entire subjection to and fellowship with Himself.

During this "little while" our calling is to "follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. ii. 22) with all those whose hearts have been purified by faith (Acts xv. 9), and who have thus been made fit dwelling-places for the Holy Ghost;

that is, with the whole family of God. Our calling is to go along with "the lowly" (Rom. xii. 16), even as Moses left Egypt's court for the company of redeemed slaves and brickmakers. This involves suffering (Col. i. 24; Eph. iii. 1; Acts ix. 16); but it is the position in which our Master *left us*, and where He expects to *find us*. (Luke xii. 43.) "He led them out as far as to Bethany;" that is, "the house of affliction." There may we go out *to the Lord*, and we can go no farther "till He come." *Then* we shall be led into the Father's house, with its "fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore."

Let us, then, not be weary in well-doing, as Moses was when he said, "Hear now, ye rebels," and twice smote the rock (Num. xx.); or as Elijah was when he fled to Horeb (1 Kings xix.); and "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." (Gal. vi. 9.)

D. Y. S.

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST.

HEBREWS ix. 24.

CHRIST, our Sacrifice and Victim,
 Bore our sins upon the tree;
 Christ, our Priest in resurrection,
 Bears our names and makes us free.

Borne as Israel was by Aaron,
 Graven on His loving heart;
 Bound by heavenly ties fast to Him,
 Never, never more to part. Exod. xxviii. 28, 29.

Borne, as well, upon His shoulders:
 Here our safety we may see,
 Set within the golden ouches—
 Type of His Divinity. Exod. xxviii. 12.

Oh, the wondrous love and power—
Love to succour, power to keep!
 'Tis the tender Shepherd's shoulder,
 Bearing home the wandering sheep.

T. R.

EXHORTATIONS ON PRAYER.*

ON ASKING HARD THINGS.

IN the history of Elijah let us notice two points : first, the correction of his great mistake ; second, the "hard thing" that was asked of him by Elisha.

First. "What doest thou here, Elijah?" was the Lord's enquiry. (1 Kings xix. 9.) Instead of going to mount Zion, the hill of grace, he went to Horeb, the mount of blackness, where Moses met God and hid his face for fear. (Exod. iii. 6.) It was not for Elijah to meet God there, but where Moses heard the voice from the atonement-seat. The wind, earthquake, and fire were as voices telling him this. "There I will meet with thee," was God's word to Moses (Exod. xxv. 22); namely, at the mercy-seat or "atonement-seat." The word "to meet" means to meet by appointment. We do not go back to Moses to assure our hearts that we have eternal life, but we often forsake the atonement-seat. 2 Cor. iii. teaches the difference between the two covenants, the first of which, though glorious, is done away, that God might keep us in the covenant of grace. But remember that Elijah was not a vessel set aside, but one fitted for highest uses.

Second. The queen of Sheba had all her hard questions answered (1 Kings x. 1) : wherein, then, did the hardness lie when Elijah said to Elisha, "Thou hast asked a hard thing"? (2 Kings ii. 10.) Certainly not with God. Is the difficulty with God or with the creature? The hard thing with God is to withhold. "He could there do no mighty work, because of their unbelief." (Mark vi. 5, 6.) Many

* Notes of exhortations given during a day of prayer preceding a conference of servants of Christ.

have begun well, and gone out of the way like Jacob. Elisha was a man of strong will for God, and He delights to see a heart intent on His service. The difficulty lay in Elisha's not having faith to receive. Having given us His Son, God desires to make us share in His joy. The difficulty is to have the vessel empty. God can and will quickly fill it. Christ is on high to give richer blessings than were bestowed on Elisha when Elijah was caught up. We ought to have something better than even the Pentecostal blessings of the early Church; for even then there were murmurings of the Grecians against the Hebrews. (Acts vi. 1.) All difficulties in the way of blessing lie with us. Put them into the hand of the heavenly Elijah, and He will sweep them all away by the power of the blood of the cross. Christ was always the man of Pentecost, and all fulness now dwells in Him for us. (R. C. C.)

Elisha rent his own garment and put it aside, and then took up that which fell from Elijah. Let us do the same. The weakness of the Church of God arises from a want of this. Let us not put on Elijah's garment over our own.

DANIEL'S PRAYER.

On the subject of prayer, let us note the connection between verses 2 and 3 of Daniel ix. In verse 2 we read, "I Daniel understood by books;" and in verse 3, "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications." We often utter in our prayers things which are not in accordance with the revealed will of God, and, of course, are disappointed in not receiving what we ask. We must first be instructed by the Word; then our prayers will be in unison with it. Daniel adds, "with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes." These are things little thought of nowadays. We should be sin-bearers, not in the sense of atonement, but as those who sigh and cry

over God's dishonour and the Church's reproach. 'It is easy to confess a sin that does not touch our conscience; but where the conscience is touched, sin becomes a burden. The expression "dreadful God" (v. 4) means the One whom we should fear. In verse 7 Daniel remembers those "near" and those "far off." We should likewise remember not only our own company, but the whole Church of God. "To *us* belongeth confusion of faces *we* have sinned," said Daniel; but how little we link ourselves on to the sins of others, how unwilling to bear part of them! "To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses" as well as "righteousness." He reminds God of His relationship to His people, and adds, "Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us." Do we know what it is to feel that the Church of God is a reproach to the world? May Daniel's prayer touch us, by God's grace, as it ought!

(H. G.)

THE PENTECOSTAL SEASON.

With reference to Pentecostal blessings, we learn from Lev. xxiii. that it was on the first day in the new week that the "holy convocation" was to be held—a type of new creation. The time of the Pentecostal offering of the two loaves was reckoned from the offering up of the wave-sheaf. (v. 10.) Thus the Church in resurrection springs out of the "corn of wheat" which had been buried. (John xii. 24.) The two loaves were to be baked with leaven. Leaven indicates the power of evil, but the working of leaven was arrested in the baking. The sin-offering of verse 19 is absent in the offering of verse 13, which was a type of Christ Himself. Pentecostal harvest (v. 22) is still going on. Though we are not reaping thousands in a day as at the beginning, still we are in the Pentecostal season, gleaning one here and another there. The harvest comes first, and then the gleaning.

REMNANT BLESSINGS.

A marked difference is to be observed between Israel's deliverance from Egypt and their deliverance from Babylon. In the latter case, though the sea was not divided, nor plagues sent, nor miracles wrought, yet God moved the heart of Cyrus on their behalf. The Jews had much of value with them, silver and golden vessels, &c., and they would have been a valuable prey to the Bedouins of those days, but His hand protected. Faith is always ashamed to go down to Egypt for help. They were a remnant, but still God was with them. God alone was their helper, and Ezra was ashamed to ask the king for a guard to help them against the enemy, because they had said to the king, "The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek Him." (Chap. viii. 22.) So now; there may not be thousands, but only a remnant; no shaking of the house where we assemble (Acts iv. 31); no gift of tongues or of healing; no miracles. Yet, as in early days by the riverside the heart of a Lydia was opened, a Timothy, taught from a child to know the Holy Scriptures, was made wise unto salvation, and a eunuch was led in the desert to confess Christ, so we glean in shops, in railway-carriages, or by the roadside. God is with us; yes, God is still with His people; His power is present, His grace is near. We must not expect more than the word of God authorizes, but let us thank God and take courage. (P. G. A.)

DEFILED PRIESTLY GARMENTS.

In preaching the gospel to the unconverted we often use the passage, in Zech. iii. 1-10, about the taking away of Joshua's filthy garments and his being clothed with change of raiment; but does it not primarily belong to us as believers? Are there not defiled priestly garments among us? Joshua was a man of God, but the adversary

was present to resist him. His priestly evil had to be purged, and our filthy garments must be taken away before God can use us on behalf of others. The atonement of Christ puts away all defilement, but we need to learn what we have in Christ before God. Peter was saved as a rebel; he was defiled when he denied his Lord; but his Master put the sin away and restored his soul. Referring to past failure, the word to Joshua was, "If thou wilt walk in my ways." Our failings should ever make us very tender towards others. (W. N.)

ON HELPING BACKSLIDERS.

Backsliders and wounded ones are often robbed of the confidence that "the just shall live by faith." If we would help them, we must teach them to come back to whence they started. Christ loved us before the foundation of the world, He loves us now, and He will love us to the end. Joseph loved his brethren before his rejection, during his rejection, and after their reconciliation. Moses interceded for Israel before the tables of the law were broken, after the worshipping of the golden calf, and also after the law was placed in the ark. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

PRAYING ARMED.

Do we remember that Ephesians vi. teaches us, we need the whole armour of God to pray in? We are constantly in danger of going to prayer unarmed. Are we not often conscious of praying with ungirded loins? Our feet must be "shod;" not to be turned out of the way, though it may be rough and thorny, and our course should be a straightforward one. We are not to step out of the way to avoid difficulties, hence we require to be well shod. The "preparation" of verse 15 is that preparation of soul which the gospel gives. If we only half believed

the gospel our prayers would be different. It is easier to preach a full gospel to sinners than to hold a full gospel when on our knees. Perhaps we never get so many darts thrown at us as when on our knees, and therefore we need the "shield of faith." The "sword of the Spirit" teaches us to link our prayers with our Bibles; we must see that our petitions are according to God's will. Even in prayer we are to be crowned with the "helmet of salvation." Let us then stand armed, "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication." May we never let go our prayers till we have the answer. Paul could do without the money of the saints, but he could not do without their prayers; hence the request, "For all saints and for *me*."

H. G.

MEDITATIONS AT THE LORD'S SUPPER.

THE CROSS OF CHRIST.

WHEN the Lord comes in His glory, and receives us unto Himself, He will have time to teach—and we to learn, without distraction, dulness, or infirmity—the value of His death on the cross, and what His expectations of it were. This is one of the chief reasons for our longing for His coming quickly. Let us be thankful for the little which we have learned; for we know truly what we do know, being taught it by the Spirit of God, but we shall ever be learning. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the new Jerusalem, and the Lamb will be the light thereof.

The world's Christ is not the Christ of God, and the world's gospel is no more the gospel of the cross than was the golden calf the God that brought Israel out of

Egypt. No one can know anything of the cross who is not taught the guilt of sin ; as we grow in the knowledge of this, and know more of the cross, we discern more and more the justice that bruised Christ. God had the choice, whether to leave us as He left the angels that sinned, or to provide an atonement ; whether He would have us for His own, or not. But there must be the death of the Surety for us, and redemption wrought out, "that He might be just, and the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus."

There is a great distinction between Christ in Gethsemane and Christ on the cross. (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42, 44.) "O my Father!" was uttered three times in Gethsemane ; and notice how carefully the Spirit of God adds, "saying the same words." Contrast this with chap. xxvii. 46 : "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" quoted from Psalm xxii. The words "My God" show the uttermost of faith, whilst the word "forsaken" indicates the very depth of sorrow. The whole of Psalm xxii. was in the heart of the Lord Jesus on the cross. A man of faith once said, "Thou art become cruel unto me." (Job xxx. 21.) But when Christ sank in the deep mire of our sins, He said, "Thou art holy!" and looking on to the future result He added, "O Thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." Though crucified, He had all the twelve jewels of the breastplate on His heart. Now that He is seated at the Father's right hand, what are His hopes concerning His people ? Into these we have to search.

In Gethsemane God was not fulfilling the office of the sin-avenging Judge ; but on the cross Christ was sustaining the weight of sin's heavy load, and God was visiting sin on Him in judgment. When upon earth Christ had the perpetual testimony of the Father's approval. But when the hour of the cross came, the Son must be smitten.

In **Genesis** xxii. this is foreshadowed. In whose hand was the knife in that chapter? In the father's hand. Isaac was spared. There could be mercy then, because there could not be atonement. In Christ's case there could be no mercy, because by Him only could atonement be made. So the Father becomes the sin-avenging God. In **Gen.** xxii. we read: "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him." But at the cross the word is, "Awake, O sword . smite!" (**Zech.** xiii. 7), as if the sword had slept till then. In **Rom.** viii. 32, "He that spared not His own Son," is used in the same sense as in **2 Peter** ii. 4: "Spared not the angels." He spared not His own Son, and now He cannot but have mercy on us always. All the blessings of God in Christ are written in the blood of His Son. Nothing but mercy can come into our cup. What a contrast there is between Paul's experience in **Phil.** ii. 27—"Lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow"—and the experience of Christ in **Ps.** xlii. 7 "All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me!" The disciples could not watch with Christ, for they were dull of hearing; and so an angel came to strengthen Him, but could not watch with Him. The disciples could not, for lack of understanding; they would not have it that Christ should die; His words were to their ears as those spoken in an unknown tongue. We should watch and suffer with Christ, and we add to His glory when we share both. Shall we not also seek to rejoice with Him? He craves it, and we add to His joy when we thus share it with Him. Let us, then, make joy a chief part in all our service.

(R. C. C.)

THE MANNER OF GOD'S LOVE.

The apostle John spoke of the Lord Jesus as being in the bosom of God. (**Chap.** i. 18.) John had himself reclined on Jesus' bosom, and in his first epistle (**chap.** iii. 1) he

speaks to children who have got into the bosom : " Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! " Let us try to realize what it cost the Father to place us there. Notice how John begins : " Behold what manner of love ! " Look ! look ! But who can fathom it ? Eternity will unfold the manner, and show us what that love means. There is, perhaps, nothing so difficult to comprehend as the manner of the love of God. He takes worms of the dust, and puts them into His bosom. But the fact of the love of God has grown so familiar to us, that unless God quickens the truth in our souls, the devil will cause our familiarity with it to have a very deadening influence upon us. The truths of God must become realities to our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. There can be no greater mischief than a profane or intellectual handling of them. Those who know their Bibles best are in the greatest danger of this snare ; and unless we read God's word as worshippers, we shall fall into it. God seeks *worshippers*. (John iv. 24.)

We require the application of the blood of Christ to our consciences to keep the heart sensitive to heavenly things, and to enable us to cultivate ungrieved communion with the living God. As with Moses, profane curiosity must be checked, and we must learn, with him, to put off our shoes from our feet when we seek to look into the things of God. Remember those words in John xvi. 15 : " He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. " When the truth of God thus becomes a *manifestation* to us, we are above all the Satanic influences around us. Knowledge in the flesh puffeth up ; love in the Spirit buildeth up. We need to dig down deeper and deeper into the truth of God—to search " as for hid treasure ; " then we shall " understand. " (See Prov. ii. 1–9.) It will then be no longer a matter of texts learnt, but of truths

living in the soul. Oh that we may have a realization of this love into which we have been brought! Our chief thought should be, not "daily bread," but our Father's name, His kingdom, and His will.

Let us look into the result of the love of God. Angels are not made "sons," but sinners are. In making us sons, God has put an insurmountable wall between the world and us. "Therefore the world knoweth us not;" it neither owns nor comprehends us. Satan tries to pull down this wall, by levelling down the Church and levelling up the world, until there is a common platform upon which the world and the Church can meet and shake hands; whereas there should be a mutual antagonism, for God put enmity between the seed of faith and the seed of the serpent. But the question of sin and of holiness is often estimated according to man's standard. Holiness is thus brought down to the limited range of human judgment; and sin, instead of becoming exceeding sinful, is made to appear a little matter. One of Satan's arts in the present day is to get us into a place where we can mingle with the world, and share in its popularities. Let us flee popularity. The world may look upon living saints as madmen and fools; but let us say, with Paul, "If we be beside ourselves, it is *to God*."

"Now are we the sons of God." What then are we left here for? To teach us the use of our swords. God wants us to realize what the heavenly panoply is, and to know how to use it. He has given us these weapons that we may keep the world, the flesh, and the devil under our feet. "Quit you like men," wrote the apostle to the Corinthians. Nothing requires so much warning against now as the doctrine of Christianity made easy. When Joshua was called to destroy the Canaanites, he did not say, "God will do it, we need not fight;" but he toiled

and travelled all night. He fought first, and God thundered afterwards. (Josh. x. 9.)

"Now are we the sons of God." The devil seeks to bring in doubts by leading us into temptation, and causing us to question the divine reality of God's word. A man who was converted at eighty years of age was once much cast down by doubts, when some one told him the devil had been bringing in those doubts and fears. "Has he?" said the old man. "I will bring my Lord Jesus to answer him." His word is sufficient. There may be corruption around us and within us, but still we are sons. Romans v. tells us of being justified by faith, and of peace with God. Chapter vi. has to do with our standing in Christ, in whom we have a new Head, a new Master, a new nature, and a new Husband. Thence comes the conflict of chap. vii. The nations of Canaan were to be driven out by little and little, and this is true in our warfare.

"It doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." Christ is not yet manifested in glory ; we are looking forward to that. "Manifestation" is an important word in John's epistle. There will be the future manifestation ; but the children of God are also to be "manifest" now (chap. iii. 10), even as that Eternal Life which was with the Father was manifested on earth. But when we see Him "as He is," we shall be like Him. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." (Ps. xvii. 16.)

"Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Sin is lawlessness. That which is contrary to His will, to His likeness, is sin. God would have us see sin in its deepest depths, that we may see holiness in its highest heights. We have no right to any idea of holiness short of the image of Christ. "Whosoever abideth in Him, sinneth not," or "is not sinning ;"

that is, sin is not his habit. Sin is in him, but he is not in sin. The first of the seven marks of regeneration given in the epistle is righteousness—"Everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him." (Ch. ii. 29.) The divine seed is in him who is born of God, and because of it he can no longer live in sin, as he did before. A mere profession will not prove us children of God. Notice John's thrice-repeated "If we say," and thrice-repeated "He that saith." God give us such a knowledge of our sonship as shall result in a manifestation of spiritual life. (H. G.)

THE DAY OF HIS ESPOUSALS.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand."—ROMANS xiii. 12.

Eyes that have watched through the darkness now brighten with gladness ;

Hearts that have wearied with waiting now throb with delight—
Strong, in new hope, to press on through all shadows of sadness,
Leaving behind them for ever the glooms of the night.

Oh, happy day! We have longed for thee, watching and weeping ;
Longed for His coming, the glory and crown of thy bliss :
Yearning to see His fair sunshine from height to height leaping,
See the dark wilderness bloom 'neath the breath of His kiss.

Here—where He toiled in dishonour, and suffered in weakness,
Yielded Himself in His love to the shame of the cross ;
Bore the forsaking of loved ones with infinite meekness ;
Died by the anguish mysterious of measureless loss—

Here shall He conquer and reign in ineffable glory,
Reign with His saints who have shared in His sorrow and shame ;
Here shall be told through "the age" His unparalleled story,
While all the nations exalt His Omnipotent Name.

Wouldst thou be with Him, and share in the joy of His crowning,
Share in the song and the feast of His sacred delight,
See the proud city that crucified, reverently owning
Jesus of Nazareth Lord of the world, and its Light ?

Take then His name on thyself, with His shame and His sorrow—
 Portion of all who obey Him in single-eyed love :
 Humbled to-day, thou shalt shine in His glory to-morrow ;
 Poor upon earth, glad possessor of riches above.

Oh, what rewards for His loved ones, of honour and treasure,
 When the King cometh triumphantly claiming His own !
 Well may we sing, looking forward to fulness of pleasure—
 Seeing Him, knowing Him then as we also are known.

Yet, ere that day of delight breaks in beauty and blessing,
 Tempest must herald its sunrise, and death mark its dawn ;
 Fast to the conflict the powers of darkness are pressing,
 Eager to bar the advance of the brightening morn.

Impotent enmity ! Yet, ere its death-fires malignant
 Soil with their lurid dishonour the vanishing night,
 Grant us, our Lord, to be rapt to Thy Presence benignant ;
 Shelter Thy saints in Thy secret pavilion of light ;

Till with Thyself, Lord, in luminous splendour down sweeping,
 Smiting rebellion to ruin, Thou bringest Thine own
 (Ended for ever our weariness, watching, and weeping)
 Into the wealth of Thy kingdom, the light of Thy throne.

E. S. W.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Who are we to understand by the king of Tyre in Ezekiel xxviii. ?

SCRIPTURE language goes beyond the lesser and the visible to the greater and the invisible. Thus in Matt. xvi., when the Lord says to Peter, "Get thee behind me, Satan" (the same words that he had used in Matt. iv.), He was not calling *Peter* Satan, but He saw a Satanic suggestion in Peter's words. So here the king of Tyre is a historic person of the then period, a prophetic person of the future ; i.e. an impersonation of the antichrist of the latter day, to whom Satan gives his throne, his power, and his authority. Of this historico-prophetic person Ezekiel speaks, seeing in him not man only, but one in whom "the anointed cherub" who had "been in Eden" dwells. It is this mystic language in Scripture that gives its profound depth to very much that otherwise is pure hyperbole. But there is no hyperbole in Scripture ; and whenever there is the appearance of it

we need to look below the surface—through the immediate into what lies beyond, and then language will fall short of, but never exceed the reality. See, for instance, the statement made of Satan and the serpent in Gen. iii., where, under a strange combination of the outward and the inward, the bodily form and the spiritual reality, we read: "On thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat." Compare with this what is said of leviathan in Job xli.: "He is a king over all the children of pride;" and God's words regarding the king of Tyre: "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, *till* iniquity was found in thee. . . . Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty. . . . I will cast thee to the ground. . . . I will bring thee to ashes," &c. These passages seem to convey the same thought as is expressed in the words of Gen. iii. 14.

What connection is there between the rivers mentioned in Gen. ii. 10; Ps. xlvi. 4; Ezek. xlvii. 1-12; Rev. xxii. 1, 2?

IN Scripture running water is in the Hebrew "*living water*," and is typical of the Holy Spirit's presence and power. The heavenly reality is shown in the "river of water of life" that flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Rev. xxii.), communicating life, joy, and blessing. Ps. xlvi. and Ezek. xlvii. present the earthly type which will have its fulfilment in the future in the earthly Jerusalem; but the faith of the child of God gives it a spiritual accomplishment now. The river in the garden of Eden is a beautiful symbol of this. All these rivers are thus linked together as type and antitype, symbol and reality.

Is the parable of the prodigal, in Luke xv., applicable to the unsaved?

THE first verse seems to answer the question, and to show that the whole chapter is our Lord's justification of Himself in receiving "sinners," on the ground of the divine attitude towards them; the three parables apparently showing the attitude of the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the Father. The objection is sometimes raised, that God is not the Father of the *sinner*. He is not called so here. Parables are allegorical representations, and must not be literally understood. The title of God as Creator has a wide application; but the Fatherhood of God is strictly limited in the New Testament to those who through faith are "born of God," and hence, whether Jew or Gentile, can cry, "Abba, Father"—the use of the Hebrew and Greek words implying this. The literal interpretation of other parables of our Lord—as, for example, that of the ten virgins—leads to similar difficulties.

ON POURING OUT THE HEART TO GOD.

COUNSEL TO A CHRISTIAN IN A DIFFICULT PATH.

YOUR desire to walk with God in all your circumstances comes from above, and He who has given you the desire will Himself be glorified by fulfilling it. Feed therefore upon the word of God, which testifies of Christ, wherever you are, and you will feed upon Christ. Feeding upon Christ you dwell in Him, and *dwelling in Him your circumstances meet you in Him*, and thus you will find Him, even as you desire, "walking with you in all your circumstances."

You know there are no difficulties with God, and seeing that almighty power is to usward (Eph. i. 19-23), and "worketh in us" (iii. 20), we are able to obey the command to "be strong in the Lord" (vi. 10), and so to resist the power of the adversary.

There are no difficulties with faith—impossibilities enough with unbelief. Christ is not only the power of God, but the wisdom of God, and we are in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom; so then we have power to resist, and wisdom to withstand, all the wiles of the devil.

One reason why we oftentimes fail in difficulties is that we do not sufficiently ponder the ways of Christ. When He was suffering the pains of the cross, when all His disciples had forsaken Him and fled, and all they that passed by were laughing Him to scorn, He told out to His heavenly Father *what He saw*—"They shoot out the lip, they shake the head;" and also *what He heard*—"He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him." Portions of Ps. xxii., you may observe, are thus not only prophecies

of what would come to pass, but also show us what our Lord would say to God during the awful sufferings He had to endure when it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him—"They pierced my hands and my feet;" "They part my garments," and so on. This is the heavenly pattern for us.

It is a joy to me to perceive by your letter that your aim is communion with God. *He* has the sweetest and most constant experience of communion who makes present circumstances to be the occasion thereof. When David "fled from Absalom his son" (Ps. iii.) how great was his trouble! His people, headed by his wicked son, in increasing numbers rose up against him, and spake against him, as if God had ceased to be his helper. Does David speak only to himself, or to the people around him, of his sorrows? He does not complain against God, saying, "Alas! what shall I do?" but he makes the circumstance an occasion of communion with God, saying, "Lord, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me; many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God."

Now consider what follows—how exactly it suits the beloved "sweet Psalmist of Israel." "*But thou, Lord, art a shield for me.*" What matters, then, how many rise up against him? "*My glory.*" What matters, then, what they say of his soul? If man makes him bow down his head, what matters it if God is "*the lifter up thereof*"? However painful our circumstances, and however "difficult," what shall we say of them compared with the circumstances of the beloved king, whose son and people were pursuing him to take away his life?

But a greater than David gives us again and again the perfect example. "False witnesses did rise up against me." "Jesus answered nothing; so that Pilate marvelled." In like manner, if we pour out our hearts to God, silently

repeating to God the words we hear, or tell Him of the deeds we see, we need answer nothing. The Lord always opens His mouth for the dumb. (Prov. xxxi. 8, 9.) Mary left it to her Lord to answer Martha, and He also replied for her when Judas accused her of wasting the ointment.

W. H.

SUCCESS IN SERVICE.

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS.

THE LORD JESUS AND THE APOSTLE PAUL.

CHRIST was the "polished shaft" which always hit the mark; He ever walked in fellowship with the Father. Now we are called to fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, not chiefly for our own joy nor for our own glory, but for the joy and glory of the Father and of the Son. Do we really believe this, and bear it in mind, as something on which to exercise our hearts from day to day and from hour to hour?

How precious the words in John iv., "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me!" The hungry, thirsty, and weary One said this as He sat on the well; but now He sits on the throne. "I have meat to eat that *ye know not of*," probably implied a lack of sympathy and fellowship. We know what it is to say, "We have meat to eat which the world knows not of," as we do the will of God.

Individually we are responsible to know and fill our place, it may be behind a counter, or it may be in a kitchen. The highest success is in seeking every moment to please the Father. "I have laboured in vain" (Isa. xlix. 4), was the language of the rejected One—the least successful of preachers, but the most successful in being constantly well-pleasing to God the Father. Whilst Christ never could fall, He could be preserved: "Behold my Servant, whom I uphold." He was preserved in the way of

perfect success in pleasing God. He finds His meat in the same thing now ; for having finished the work, He is now unfolding it.

Though there was great success in Peter's preaching at Pentecost, when three thousand men (women not included) were "added" in one day, and at another time five thousand (Acts iv. 4), yet we see a still greater success in Acts xxii. 22, when Paul stood on the castle stairs bearing testimony amidst the fiendish hatred of the audience, and heard the shout of, "Away with such a fellow!" The greater success consisted in Paul's knowing more of Christ through sharing more of His rejection ; for they had also said of Christ, "Away with Him!" How much there was of Christ in Paul rejected ! He identified Himself very closely with his Master in life and in death, and this was the secret of his never growing cold or turning aside. If we do not seek to please God in *all* our ways, we shall be in danger of deserting our colours. Paul did know and did eat the meat that the Lord was wont to eat, and he could say, "We are unto God a sweet savour of Christ in them that are saved and them that perish ;" and this we should seek to be also. If we turn our eyes away from the business of pleasing God, we shall certainly be more or less discouraged, and distrust our calling. At the close of his service Paul did not say, "I have finished my work ;" but, "I have finished my course," or "race." The Redeemer finished the work, and the redeemed finish the race.

God takes time to pay His servants their wages. He will not set aside any servant who is fit to work ; we set ourselves aside. No labourer for the Master need beg for either work or wages from Him. In this and other lands thousands beg for labour, but God is *seeking* labourers. God's answer to Christ, in Isa. xlix., was, "It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the

tribes of Jacob. I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth ;" and Paul quotes from this chapter in 2 Cor. vi., "We then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that *ye receive not the grace of God in vain*. For He saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee." Christ looked beyond the present, and so should we. Let us look right on and see what is in store for us. That will enable us to leave our wages with God, and He will not be our debtor. Don't let us be in His debt. "Son, give me thy heart" (Prov. xxiii. 15, 16, 26), tells us what is due from us. The present rejection of Israel is only an occasion with God to glorify His name through us His children.

(R. C. C.)

WHAT IS SUCCESS ?

NOTES OF AN ADDRESS ON JEREMIAH'S EXPERIENCE.

THERE is something darker in Jeremiah's history than in that of any other faithful man of God recorded in Scripture. Throughout his journey Jeremiah was a weeping prophet, in sympathy with a weeping God, who mourned over the desolations of His covenant people. After passing through all the sorrows of Jerusalem, he was taken captive to Egypt, and there his history ends. The Jews have a tradition that he was slain there.

In Scripture names often have much significance. Thus *Jeremiah* means "Jehovah will exalt;" and *Lazarus*, in Luke xvi., means "God will help." Now both these men passed their time on earth in peculiarly trying circumstances of misery and woe, quite at variance with what might have been expected from their names; yet God's dealings show that they were rightly named. The poor

beggar, full of sores, laid at the rich man's gate, had, as his life's lesson, to learn to say, "Thy will be done." The devil may have mocked at "God will help," and men may have done the same; but in due time God *did* help. We see the veil drawn aside, and angels are there to bear Lazarus above. Men saw the dogs, but not the angels; they saw the misery, but not the bosom of eternal rest. In Jeremiah we see a man of sorrow and suffering ending his days as a captive in an alien land; but God will manifest his eternal *exaltation* in due time.

Jeremiah was probably only about twenty years old when called to the prophetic office. His whole history *seems* to give the lie to what God said to him at the first: "I am with thee to deliver thee." (chap. i. 8.) He stands alone; his people would not hear, and rejected his testimony; yet his ministry was a mighty success. Why did God have Jeremiah as His servant? Because God's heart was bleeding, and Jeremiah was in sympathy with God, a man whose tears for God fitted him for His ministry. God's heart was sorrowing for Jerusalem, albeit He was about to destroy it, and God wanted a man who could weep, and He found one. But as to what man might call *success*, Jeremiah had none, and after forty years he had to follow into Egypt his rebellious people, whom his voice had failed to lead to repentance.

To have a heart in sympathy with God is the highest success, the highest service, and will secure the fullest "Well done." Jeremiah, the man of tears, becomes the type of the Man of sorrows, so that the very Jews thought that He was Jeremiah (Matt. xvi. 14), for He, too, wept over Jerusalem, and yet prophesied her doom.

Let us look around now. What does the Lord think of the Church as He sees it wounded, bruised, scattered, and hood-winked by the devil? These are days especially for

weeping—for Christ Himself to weep, for angels to weep, and for us to weep. Who is prepared to be a sacrifice for the Church? Has Christ any among His people to weep with Him, and to sorrow with God? In Acts xx. Paul foresaw evil coming in, and he taught “with many tears.” There was more in those tears in God’s sight than we are aware of, and God put them into His bottle. (Psalm lvi. 8.) The two witnesses of Rev. xi. are to prophesy clothed in sackcloth; and well may we manifest the same spirit, when worldly influences are at work on the right hand and on the left. It is easy to stir up our indignation, but not to draw forth our tears.

How hopeless seems the ministry of Jeremiah, as he laments, in chap. viii. 20, “The harvest is past!” This will ultimately be the language of tens of thousands in Christendom. But Jeremiah was not without his consolation: “Upon this I awaked and beheld,” he says, in chap. xxxi. 26, “and my sleep was sweet unto me;” and in Lam. iii. 55–57 he was able to say, “I called upon thy name, O Lord, out of the low dungeon. Thou hast heard my voice.

Thou drewest near thou saidst, Fear not.” In the daytime he had sorrow in his service, but in the night-time his consolations were very sweet. In order to have the consolations of the gospel, we must share in its rejection. Whatever befell the gospel befell Paul, so closely did he ally himself with it. Look at Jeremiah in the dungeon for his testimony. Sight says, “God has forsaken;” but faith, even at the bottom of a dungeon, says, “Thou hast heard my voice.” “By faith” runs through Heb. xi. By faith some gained victories, and stopped the mouths of lions; by faith “others had trial of cruel mockings.” “Our God can deliver,” said Shadrach; “but if He does not, it will be the same, we will obey Him.” “By faith” we may be burnt to death, or “by faith” we may escape

the fire. There is more faith in seeing Isaac laid dead on the altar, awaiting resurrection, than in waiting for his birth. We want to get hold of faith's power in dark times, especially in the days in which we live. If the patriarch had never gone to Moriah, we should never have learnt the triumph of his mighty faith. Are we ready to say, "Our God can deliver us, and if He does not we are satisfied"?

It is comparatively easy to walk in faith's bright roads; but we need a faith that will uphold when all is dark, such as was manifest in the last days of one of the martyrs of Terra del Fuego, as he lay dying of starvation, with no one near but God, while angels gathered round and saw a dying triumph. Jeremiah was prepared to walk with God in the dark paths of faith. So it should be with us. He was brought low, ready to die of hunger, the last loaf in the bakers' street gone, and his testimony rejected; it was darkness all the way through. He did not escape the coming judgments he foretold. Why did not God spare him this? Because He did not choose. He had something better for him than that. Jeremiah was warning the Jews against going down to Egypt, and yet God allowed him to be taken there himself. He was not responsible for those calamities, but had to drink the cup to the very dregs. In Jeremiah's Lamentations we see a striking picture of Immanuel's woe. Like Paul, he was a sweet savour to God in those who were saved and blessed, and also in those who perished. More he could not have been, less he would not be. Oh, how high through all eternity will this man of God be! There are things in the pathway of faith that God's children know very little about. If we had hearts to grieve, and eyes to weep, there would be a divine stamp of Christ upon us, and on our lives, which otherwise is lacking. (H. G.)

STEPHEN.

ACTS vi. vii.

NECESSITIES or circumstances often bring forward or more fully develop those whom God has fitted for His work ; but there must be the fitness or there can be no development. It should be the aim of each servant of God to be "a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. ii. 21) ; and they who answer to this description will prove the truth of the word : "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much." The reward of faithful service is often the opportunity for still further service even here ; and when the time of service in conflict is for ever past, they who have served faithfully in the midst of so much to hinder will, in the unbroken rest of God and of His people, still find it their joy to serve Him. (Rev. xxii. 5.) In these chapters of Acts we have the record of the service of a faithful witness, to whom the honour was given of being the first to follow his Lord in laying down his life for His sake.

We are not informed how much time had elapsed since Pentecost before the events recorded in Acts vi. occurred, but many suppose that the death of Stephen took place about five or six years after the ascension of the Lord. The opposition the apostles had met with from the rulers had not prevented the spread of the gospel. The stripes laid upon them (thirty-nine on each probably) deterred them not in their service ; for "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name" that was extolled in heaven, and proved to be so mighty upon earth. "And

daily in the temple" (that is, in one of its courts), "and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus (as) the Christ." (Acts v. 41, 42.) The result of all this was a multiplying of the number of the disciples; but, as always where the flesh is, with increased numbers difficulties arose.

It seems at the first to have been the custom of the apostles to minister daily to the need of the poor, and especially to widows, out of that which was placed at their disposal; and "there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." The Hebrews were Jews of Palestine; the Grecians were also Jews, accustomed from their residence in other lands to speak the Greek language, but revering the temple and the law of Moses equally with the Hebrews. We do well to note the spirit in which this complaint was received by the apostles. They neither disputed the fact nor attempted to excuse it, but at once sought to remedy it, and in so doing furnish a beautiful illustration of the word, "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good." They were fully conscious of the greatness of the work to which they were called, and plainly told the multitude, "It is not reason (or fit) that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables;" but recognizing the importance of placing the latter service in proper hands, they added, "Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

How weighty is the word as to their own course—"But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the Word." Let us mark the order. *Prayer* stands first. There can be no ministry of the Word in life and power from a prayerless soul. There may be plenty of

mere talk, which is as wearisome to men as it is obnoxious to God; but no feeding of Christ's sheep or quickening of dead souls. How expressive, then, is their resolve—"We will *give ourselves continually to prayer*." To pray is good; to *give oneself* to prayer is still better. When we think of the prayers of Paul for all saints, and, above all, of the prayers of our Lord, some of us may almost ask, What is prayer? Then again, how definitely is the great business of the apostles stated—"the ministry of *the Word!*" Paul only exhorted Timothy to follow in his own footsteps when he gave him the solemn charge to "preach the Word." In those days "the *word* of God" was deemed sufficient to accomplish the *work* of God, whether in religious Jerusalem or in dissolute Corinth. (Acts xviii. 11.) Do *we* believe it is or is not still enough?

The decision of the twelve "pleased the whole multitude," and they chose seven men, "whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands upon them." Thus were the murmurings hushed, and the result was a still further multiplication of the disciples; for even "a great multitude of the priests were obedient to the faith." (v. 7.) This verse seems to picture the Church at Jerusalem in the height of its outward prosperity, and it might well have seemed to some that Israel as a nation would soon be brought to the feet of the Lord. But the fuller development of the truth provoked opposition from another quarter.

The first thing that strikes us with regard to the seven is the fact that they all bore *Greek* names, which seems to imply that they were Grecians or Hellenistic Jews. If so, it affords evidence of the truly yielding spirit of the Hebrews, and their readiness to trust those who may have had some ground for the complaint mentioned in verse 1. There can be little doubt that all the seven were faithful

men, who diligently discharged the service committed to them ; but just as we have the records of the acts of only *some* of the apostles, so of these seven only two are particularly noticed, and for this reason apparently those two are named first. Philip is brought before us in chap. viii., as carrying on the great work of preaching the gospel, and the way in which he is spoken of in chap. xxi. 8 shows that he continued that blessed work. But Stephen, whose energy and success provoked the fierce enmity of the Hellenistic Jews, is the one whose brief career is most fully sketched for us by the inspired writer, and we cannot read the record without being convinced that both in spirit and in testimony he really anticipated the great apostle of the Gentiles, with whose history so much of the book of the Acts is taken up. Taking the correct reading, *grace* for "faith," in v. 8, we have a twofold description of Stephen : first, as "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost ;" and then, "full of grace and power." Here is the secret of his effectual service and testimony. He wrought great wonders and miracles among the people ; but that these were all subservient to his preaching is evident. He may have been the first to see and set forth clearly the transitory nature of the Jewish dispensation, and this apparently aroused the Grecian Jews against him. Amongst the latter, doubtless, was Saul of Tarsus, in the energy of youth, and with every passion stirred to its depths against those who owned the once-crucified Nazarene as the Christ of God.

Stephen met all their reasoning, not simply in the vigour of natural intellect, but in the power of the Holy Ghost ; hence "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake." There was not only the force of argument, but there was a *power* in the man which they could neither withstand nor comprehend. Once again

therefore they resort to subtlety and falsehood, and even as they had procured the Lord's condemnation by false witness, so now they seek to silence His servant by the same method. They hire men to bear witness against him; they inflame the people who had hitherto looked with favour upon the apostles, and placing Stephen before the council, they prefer a charge that was peculiarly fitted to arouse the indignation of that body. And here again we have a striking parallel with the trial of the Lord Jesus. In His case words He had once uttered were twisted, incorrectly repeated, and a meaning was assigned to them very different from that which He intended; so here, the teaching of Stephen was evidently perverted. That he had spoken of the passing away of the Mosaic economy, of the fading of the glory of the Old Covenant before the greater and abiding glory of the New, and of the "customs" of Israel being superseded by the greater liberty of the gospel, we may well believe; but the statement that he had spoken "words *against* the holy place and the law" we may be quite sure was false. This was the construction they put upon them, just as his asserting the supreme dignity and authority of Christ as "Lord of all" was interpreted as speaking "against God," which it undoubtedly would have been if Christ were not God as well as man.

How expressive is verse 15! The members of the council sat in the form of a semicircle, with the high priest in the centre as president. The accused was placed exactly opposite the high priest, so that "all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Is it too much to believe that that scene was recalled in after days by one at least who sat there, and that from Saul of Tarsus the writer of this narrative may have received the information he gives? How must he have remembered that scene when, years

after, he stood before that very council, occupying, it may be, the exact spot where Stephen now stood !

The heavenly aspect of the only man who was undisturbed in all that assembly might well have spoken to their hearts if they had not been hardened against the truth. The glory on Stephen's face might have borne witness to them that God was speaking by him as truly as He once spake by Moses, whose face shone when he went out from His presence with His words for the people. But he had been brought there to be judged, and the high priest put the formal question—"Are these things so?" To this question Stephen replies at length, proving, both in his calm bearing and in his words the fulfilment of the Lord's promise: "It shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matt. x. 19, 20.) At the same time his statements show that he had been a diligent student of the Scriptures, and was full of them.

In divine wisdom Stephen begins his address in such a manner as to gain the attention of his audience, shewing that he was well acquainted with the history of the nation, and that he highly prized its record, though he also felt the force of that side of it which they ignored; for the solemn truth of Israel's sin found no place in their hearts. He was charged by them with speaking against *God*, against *Moses*, against *the holy place*, and against *the law*. But his very first word tells that the God of Israel was to him "the God of glory," while further on he expresses his true estimation of Moses, declares the way in which the temple should be regarded, and concludes by charging them with the sin of not keeping that law in the possession of which they boasted. But there was one great charge Stephen had to bring against them, and that

was the charge of rejecting God's chosen One, and it is when this is seen that the force of his address will most truly be felt. He shows that the nation had been rebellious from the first, and that they had never understood or fallen in with the ways of God, and also that God had not allowed man's evil will to frustrate His gracious purposes, but that in spite of, and even by means of, that opposition He had surely fulfilled them. To this he hastens.

Having stated the great truth of the call of Abraham, and mentioned the promise given to him, he quotes the twofold prediction of Israel's sojourn in Egypt, and subsequent deliverance, and shows that the fulfilment of each part of this prediction was brought about by one who had been *rejected*. The man who was rejected by his brethren became the saviour of the *family*, and the man who was rejected by the people became the deliverer of the *nation*; and in each case God made the rejection a stepping-stone to the predestined result. With verse 6 compare verses 9-14, and with verse 7 compare verses 20-36. Joseph was God's chosen instrument for blessing to the family, yet "the patriarchs, moved with envy, sold Joseph into Egypt: but God was with him;" and when "great affliction" by reason of the dearth came over Canaan they were glad to obtain bread from the man whom they had despised.

But it is upon the history of Moses that Stephen dwells at greater length. This Moses in whom they now gloried was once refused, and was hidden from Israel for forty years before he was sent for their deliverance. To feel the force of verses 35, 36, we want, as it were, to catch the very tones of the speaker: "*This* Moses whom they refused HIM did God send. HE brought them out. *This is that Moses*" which said, "A prophet shall God raise

up" (v. 37) ; so that Stephen did not put Moses and Christ in antagonism to each other.

We might almost wonder that at this point Stephen did not proceed to tell them once more that that Prophet of whom Moses spake was none other than the One whom they despised ; but it is quite possible that they saw the drift of his argument, and showed such signs of impatience as caused the Spirit that filled the prophets of old to lead Stephen to adopt their strain, and once again to charge Israel as a nation with those sins of former days of which their present state was the result. They were guilty of rejecting Moses a *second* time even after their great deliverance by his hand, and in rejecting Moses they rejected God. They gave themselves up to idolatry, and brought down the solemn sentence of judgment—"I will carry you away beyond Babylon."

At verse 44 Stephen seems to turn to the specific charge of speaking words "against the holy place." He reminds them that for centuries before the temple was built God was worshipped in the tabernacle, and that after the temple was erected He Himself had reproved the formalists of Isaiah's day, by asserting that He needed not, and in one sense would not own, any earthly dwelling-place. They were almost bringing God down to the level of heathen deities, who were always thought of as dwelling in their temples, and by using the beautiful title, "The Most High," Stephen silently places Him in contrast with all such.

It seems difficult to resist the impression that there is here (v. 50) a break in the address of Stephen, and that he was not able to say all he would have said. The power of the truth may be felt even where it is resisted, and this seems to have been the case with those who listened to these searching words. This reference to the temple and

reassertion of truth that had stirred their enmity may have caused them to give expression to their growing impatience, which led Stephen suddenly to pause and fasten upon them the charge of resisting the Holy Ghost, as their fathers had ever done, and of further following in their footsteps by betraying and murdering the Just One. To these solemn charges they can find no answer, yet they will not bow to them. They were cut to the heart; but it was with rage, and not contrition, and "they gnashed on him with their teeth." But the faithful witness has not quite finished. The God of Israel will give one further testimony to these representatives of the nation.

Being "full of the Holy Ghost," Stephen was permitted to behold a wondrous sight, and to declare what he saw. He had begun by speaking of "the God of glory," he closes with the vision of "the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." We cannot wonder that many have loved to dwell upon that word *standing*. The uniform testimony of Scripture is, that "Christ *sitteth* on the right hand of God." Does not His standing here express the intensity of His interest in what was taking place in that hall of judgment, and His readiness to succour His servant, who was standing for His sake where He Himself had once stood, and to receive him when his testimony should be finished? The last statement made by Stephen was calculated to remind them of that occasion when the Holy One of God stood in their midst. He had then told them, "From henceforth shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luke xxii. 69), and now the witness is borne to them, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." It was doubtless to mark the fulfilment of the Lord's word that Stephen was led to call the Lord the *Son of man*.

This was more than they could bear. They "cried out" in horror; they "stopped their ears," as if to shut out the voice of blasphemy, and running upon him with one accord, "they cast him out of the city, and stoned him." His two last utterances show how fully he had drunk into the spirit of Christ; they are like the echoes of the Lord's own words upon Calvary. As the Lord had committed His spirit to the Father, so now the servant commends himself to the Lord with the words, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." And as the Lord had prayed for His murderers, so Stephen "cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And thus "he fell asleep." The sting of death was gone; for His eye was upon Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, and the utmost his foes could do was to put him to sleep. Striking is the antithesis in the twofold statement so unhappily separated in the A.V.: "*He fell asleep*, and Saul was consenting unto (or well pleased at) his *death*."

"Men thought the sufferer dead,
And high exultings kept;
But on his blood-stained, stony bed
The saint serenely slept—
Wrapped in the banner of the cross,
His all the gain, theirs all the loss."

In that solemn scene Saul of Tarsus stood out very prominently. Little thought he how the prayer of the dying martyr was to be answered for him, and that he should one day follow in his steps; and the Church in its great lamentation over Stephen as little thought the ravenous wolf would, through the mighty grace of God, become the most faithful shepherd it has ever had.

We ought to notice that the repetition of the statement with reference to Stephen, that he was "full of the Holy Ghost," is very significant; it expresses a *permanent* state,

rather than any sudden impulse such as prophets of old were the subjects of, and this is characteristic of the dispensation. Paul exhorts believers to be "filled with the Spirit." This is the privilege and responsibility of *all* the saints of God; yet, alas! how little we know of the blessedness of it. Let us further mark that when a man is full of the Spirit his eye is fixed on Christ. When Christ was upon earth the heavens were opened unto Him, but it was to show the interest of heaven in Him who was then down here. Now the heavens are opened that we may look up and behold Christ there. What Stephen beheld is recorded for our sakes, and may the consideration of it stir us up to deal with whatever hinders our being "full of the Holy Ghost and of faith," so that we too may see the glory of God and Jesus at the right hand of God, and may set our affection on things above where He is.

W. H. B.

NOTE.—In one or two statements in Acts vii. there are some obscurities. In verse 16, the A.V. states that Jacob *and* the twelve were buried in Shechem; but the R.V. simplifies this by rendering "And they were carried over unto Shechem," the pronoun referring to the sons of Jacob only, and not to Jacob himself. Jacob was buried in Machpelah. (Gen. l. 13.) We are distinctly told that Joseph's bones were buried at Shechem (Josh. xxiv. 32), and here we learn that the bones of his brethren rested by his. Jerome states that in his day the tombs of the twelve were shown at Shechem. The greater difficulty is in the statement as to the purchase of the ground, which the narrative in Genesis plainly ascribes to Jacob. It has been suggested that there may have been a *double* purchase, that Abraham bought it first, and that Jacob, to avoid disputes on his return from Haran, bought it a second time, and having again lost possession recovered it by force. The difficulty of retaining possession may be seen in Gen. xxi. 22-32. In this case, as in many others, if we only knew the *whole* history, the statements would be as clear to us as they were to those who first heard them. In the end of the verse also the better reading simplifies the statement, "The sons of Hamor in Shechem." Hamor may have been the name of the *head* of the tribe, and afterwards taken by others in succession, like the name Pharaoh in Egypt.

A LETTER TO YOUNG BELIEVERS.

BY THE LATE MR. LEONARD STRONG.

"GRACE be to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ," is the constant desire expressed by the Holy Ghost, through the apostles, for the saints, even the believers in Christ Jesus. This desire should therefore attract our attention, and cause us to examine ourselves as to whether we continually experience and live in the power of this *grace* and *peace*.

GRACE.

It was grace in God that gave His Son for us while we were yet sinners. It is grace that has abounded to cover all our sins with the blood of His own Son; that has crucified our old man with Christ, and quickened us together with Him, raising us up together, and making us sit together in heavenly places in Christ. Yes, it is grace that has breathed into our souls the breath of a *new life*, even the life that came down in Jesus, which every believer receives, and in the power of which he walks with God. That grace, which has abounded over our sins, and caused us to live through righteousness, now extends to *all* our need, and *every time* of it. It is only as we feel weakness, poverty, emptiness, that we can learn the *fulness of grace*; and our heavenly Father is continually letting us come into trying and difficult circumstances, that we may learn the power of His grace to meet our trials, to succour us in our need, and bring us unharmed through the fire. Be not therefore cast down. Strengthen your feeble knees. You are in the wilderness *on purpose* that you may learn God as "the God of all grace." Remember

the lesson taught to Paul, when he sought by persevering prayer to have his trial removed, and was answered: "My grace is *sufficient* for thee." And mark how cheerfully he submitted: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me: . . . for when I am weak, then am I strong."

PEACE.

Peace is consequent on grace; it is brought to us through grace, and maintained in us by grace. Jesus brings peace and maintains peace in the conscience. Peace within flows from "peace with God;" indeed, true peace within is peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The first word Jesus spoke when, after His resurrection, He came to His disciples, was, "Peace be unto you." There cannot be peace within where there is doubt or anxiety or care; therefore we are told to cast all our care upon God. "Be careful for *nothing*." "Let the peace of God *rule* in your hearts, to the which also ye are called." Let us *stand in grace*, and we shall *walk in peace*.

LOVE.

Can it be said of you as of the Thessalonians, "But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another"? Remember that every one that loveth God will love the children of God. And true love to God is to be increased by realizing in our souls more of His wondrous love to us. "*Behold* what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." I trust you fully understand that our love to God does not obtain for us pardon, acceptance, sonship, and heirship of glory: these are all secured in Christ through faith in His finished work.

FRUIT-BEARING.

Your power for fruit-bearing—bringing forth the fruits of righteousness—is another blessing received through faith in Christ. In dying, as to your flesh, with Christ on the cross, you are become dead to sin, to the law, and to the world. Being dead with Christ, we are set free from all hindrances to fruitfulness; and through our resurrection with Him we are brought into the full power of fruit-bearing unto God. This is the newness of life in which we walk. We are married to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Being set free from sin by dying with Christ, and made servants to God through rising with Christ, we have our fruit unto holiness, and the end eternal life. Fruit-bearing, then, is the effect of our union with Christ.

But mark, beloved, the great blessings accompanying an obedient walk and diligent fruit-bearing unto God. It gives much glory unto the Father (John xv. 8); manifests us as Christ's disciples indeed (John viii. 31, 32); obtains for us honour from the Father (John xii. 26); and brings us into close communion with the Father and the Son through the Holy Ghost. It makes us experience how Christ can manifest Himself unto us and not unto the world (John xiv. 21–23), and also brings us into the position of receiving answers to prayer—aye, to have whatsoever we ask—and thus we obtain blessings for other saints. (John xv. 7, 16; 1 John iii. 22.)

OUR RELATION TO THE WORLD.

In order to faithful service to God here, in order to please Him in all things, we must learn from the Word what our relation to the world is as risen saints, and what is the extent of blessing the world is to receive through us. It is clear from the Scripture that we are to be wit-

nesses to the evil in the world, and to the judgment coming upon it; and we are to tell of the refuge that God has provided for all who will flee from the wrath to come. The Church will not convert the world, but we are only a "first-fruits unto God," a gathering out of all nations to be a body for Christ, to be glorified and admired when He comes. Seek, therefore, the increase of the body by drawing sinners to Christ out of the ruin around you.

I hope you all walk as "*holy* brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling;" that you are not seeking rest or pleasure in things of earth, nor laying up treasure, nor seeking respectability or rank or high things in this world which crucified your Lord. I hope also that you are walking in simple faith in Christ, in love to one another; that you are not choking the word with the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches. Beware of the love of money! it is a root of all evil. If you covet money, you will err or stray from the faith; and though you may be recovered, you will pierce yourselves through with many sorrows.

CHRIST'S PERSON AND THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Remember the words of our Lord: "The disciple is not above his Master." Walk as He walked. Cleave close to His person, know Him, love Him, talk to Him; lean on Him, take all counsel with Him. The constant sense of His presence and love will banish from your hearts the lusts of other things, and make your hearts burn within you with joy unspeakable. Remember the presence of the Holy Ghost in each member of Christ; acknowledge His presence also in the midst of your assemblies; and while you are delivered from the error of supposing a building of bricks or of wood can be a house of God, do not forget that you are to be builded together as an habitation of God through the Spirit.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

How can John iii. 15, 16, 36, which speak of eternal life as the present possession of all believers, be reconciled with Mark x. 30; Rom. ii. 7; 1 Tim. vi. 12; Titus i. 2, which represent it as something yet future?

THE possession of an inheritance, and the full unhindered enjoyment of it, are different things. We have "redemption through His blood," and yet we are "waiting for . . . the redemption of our body." So eternal life is possessed by the believer the moment he receives God's testimony about Christ, and accepts Him as God's salvation; but the full realization of eternal life is set before us as the grand hope of the gospel, when we shall be like Christ, seeing Him as He is. In the same way salvation is past to the believer as he stands in Christ; present as wrought out by the Holy Ghost; and future as to its ultimate fulfilment in the purpose of God. (Compare 2 Tim. i. 9; Phil. ii. 12; Rom. xiii. 11.)

What is our responsibility in regard to national sins and immoral legislation?

IN regard to all such matters the attitude of the prophets of old may to some extent be a guide. Our responsibility involves (1) A conscience in exercise as to the wrong committed against the divine will in all injustice and immorality; (2) A prayerful intercession with God, as Jeremiah interceded for Judah, or Paul for his nation; (3) A warning protest against unrighteousness, as Christ protested against Israel's sins, and warned them of coming judgments. Yet all this lies outside the arena of political contest, in reference to which our only safe course is to keep aloof, while "the potsherds strive with the potsherds of the earth." (Isa. xlv. 9.) There are many, alas! who enter into the strife of moral and religious politics, suffering thereby, though they may not know it; there are some who carelessly ignore altogether the evils in question; there are but few who take a stand for God, being much in prayer, and lifting up the voice in the church of God against all that violates truth and right. The latter course would bring a mighty indirect influence to bear upon the conscience of natural men in matters of moral right and wrong; while we should not need to descend from our holy, prophetic watchtower, whence alone the strife of men can be viewed in the calmness of God's presence. (See Hab. ii. 1.)

“THE PRAYER OF FAITH:” WHAT IS IT?

PRAYER is the expression of the need and desire of the child of God, or it may be only the utterance of the creature's necessity. It is the appeal of helplessness to One who is able to help.

The cry of man, fallen though he be, is not unheeded by the faithful Creator. He who hears the young ravens when they cry (Ps. cxlvii. 9) is not unmindful of the wail of woe or distress that comes up to heaven from the heart of unregenerate man. The history of many, if not of all, unconverted lives will bear witness to this; for while the rebel has no righteous claim on God, sorrow ever finds uncovenanted mercies in the God of all grace. We premise these remarks because some would seem to question their truth, and thereby rob our God of some of His attributes of mercy and goodness, which He manifests even to those who are His enemies. Our subject, however, is the prayer *of faith*, the breathings of the heart of one who has learned to trust.

The “prayer of faith” signifies more than the prayer of those who believe in God. Of very many of our prayers we fear it must be said that they are not the prayers “of faith.” It has been well said, that all Israel believed that God *could* slay Goliath, but there was but one man in Israel who believed that He *would* do so.

There are many things we may rightly ask God for, about which we have no assurance that they will be given, even as a child may ask his parent for something, while quite uncertain whether it will be granted, and in reference to which he is willing to accept either the refusal or the

bestowal of love. Such prayer, however, cannot be called the "prayer of faith," though it is the prayer of filial confidence, and comes from a loving and believing heart.

To this probably all saints of God attain; but is there not something beyond that has to be aimed at? Otherwise the mighty utterances of Christ in regard to prayer would seem more hyperbolical than true. Let us seek to get at the root of this matter, for it probably involves far deeper consequences and higher realizations than we are at all aware of. To many, perhaps to most, there will arise, on investigation, a painful sense of the comparatively little answer received in proportion to the much prayer offered. Prayers are, alas! too often vague and not definite, good but not expectant. If words were prayers, and such words were answered, the aspect of the whole church of God would be changed; for deadness there would be life, and for coldness and lethargy a burning zeal that would make itself felt. We ask, What is amiss in so large a portion of the prayers of the church of God? and what is it that makes it so hard to believe that Christ means exactly what He says by such words as, "Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that *whosoever shall say* unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have *whatsoever he saith*. Therefore I say unto you, *What things soever ye desire* [or ask for], when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark xi. 22-24.) We would not seek to stagger faith, but we do seek to stir up the consciences of saints, that they may see whence the Church has fallen, and exercise heart and faith to attain what most have never dreamt of reaching.

To assist us in this enquiry, we will point out a few passages which may help to place us in our right position

regarding this solemn matter, involving as it does the reality of all our worship, and which may enable us to wrest from the enemy a weapon too often used against Christians—that all prayer is vain—because of the painfully patent fact that the great bulk of prayer gets no answer, never reaches the throne of God, and consequently has no place in the records of heaven. We ask the question, then, What is "the prayer of faith," and what are its characteristics?

It is well to recall one title by which our gracious God has called Himself—"The Answerer of prayer;" and that of Him it is said, "Unto thee shall all flesh come." (Ps. lxxv. 2.) It is His prerogative to hear, His glory to answer, and hence arises in Ps. cvii. the repeated cry, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!" We may also remind ourselves of these words of Him who came out of the bosom of God—"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke xii. 6, 7.) God's promises are but the reflections of His gracious character, and He desires to fulfil every word He has spoken; but this fulfilment hangs on necessary conditions in us, His redeemed children, who are being trained for that sphere into which we are called in Christ. Hence every promise contains a stated or implied condition which our just and wise God cannot set aside, consistently with our good. Let us notice some of these conditions which are the characteristics of believing prayer.

1. *Abiding in Christ.* Our Lord says, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John xv. 7.) This blends the desires of the saint with those of his Master, and continued fellowship moulds the will and subjects the desires

to Him in whom we abide. This is shown in the words of Ps. xxxvii. 4—"Delight thyself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thy heart." There is a great secret here, and we cannot too solemnly press upon our hearts the truth that our desires will be in harmony with our delight in God.

2. *Laying hold of God.* To this the Lord points in Mark xi. 22: "Have faith of God" (margin), which implies that prevailing prayer is the result not only of a faith in God, but of a faith that has God for its source, God for its object, and God for its authority. This is of immense importance, as it takes faith out of the region of the will of man, as well as out of the power of man.

3. *Being without doubtings or misgivings.* Our Lord says, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark xi. 24.) So we read, in James i. 6, "Let him ask in faith, nothing doubting (*diakrinein*); for he that doubteth is like a wave of the sea;" and the apostle solemnly adds, "Let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." This same thought of not doubting is beautifully illustrated in Rom. iv. 20, where of the father of the faithful (or rather of believers) it is said, "*He doubted not (diakrinein)* the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." It must, however, never be lost sight of, that undoubting faith can only rest on an undoubted promise, rightly applied; all else is presumption, not faith.

4. *Accordance with the will of God.* Of this John writes, "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." (1 John v. 14.) But how are we to know the will of God in what we ask? Herein is involved the whole question of our soul's communion with God. He only can know the

will of God who walks with God. The Bible gives us general principles of action; but to know how to carry them out, and how to act in all the matters wherein individual and personal guidance is needed, nothing but "mouth to mouth" fellowship with God can suffice. (Num. xii. 8.) Do we want to know "what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"? Paul gives us the path. It is through the renewing of the mind, and the presentation of the body as "*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God.*" (See Rom. xii. 1, 2.) This leads us into the holy place, and there, like Moses, we hear the voice of One that speaks, not far off, but face to face. (Num. vii. 89.) We need a listening worship—the worship of the ear, as well as the worship of the tongue. Then will be heard the still small voice, saying, "This is the way." Prayer *then* has no misgivings, but coming with an unlimited assurance "we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him."

5. *Obedience of heart.* In our Lord's words as to asking what we will, and its being done (in John xv. 7), there would be great danger but for the double "if" by which our obedience is thoroughly tested. But when the obedient ear has received the words of Christ, and the heart knows what pleases Him, and does it, then personal requests become fewer and secondary, and what concerns our Father's name, His kingdom, and His will (Matt. vi. 9-13), assumes an increasing place in our hearts and prayers.

Our Saviour's words relative to Himself teach us a similar lesson, and we have to tread the same path. "The Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please Him." (John viii. 29.) Therefore at the grave of Lazarus He could say, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me," though Lazarus was still dead in his grave. The answer was His beforehand.

We would note here the juxtaposition in Mark xi. 24, 25, of the promise made to prayer and the precept of forgiveness, which just gives an example of the many broken precepts that may hinder the answer to our prayers. Promises are addressed to us in our normal condition, as obedient children abiding in Christ, and when that normal condition is violated, and we come into the abnormal condition of those who are far off and outside, we have no claim on the promises to faith, just as Lot, who loved the well-watered plains of Sodom, had no part in the promises made to him who dwelt under the oak in Mamre, to whom God came as a visitor, and tarried as a guest.

Such are a few of the conditions to which these unlimited promises to prayer are subject. God deals with us in all wisdom, but also in all prudence. In all *wisdom* in having eternally secured the salvation of His people in Christ, and in all *prudence* in making all His infinite promises dependent on the condition of our souls, of which He alone is the judge. Thereby He secures our standing steadfast in that grace in which He has called us in Christ, and our walking humbly with our God. The bestowal of these precious and glorious promises on the unprepared heart would be its sorest punishment. The thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan, fitted Paul to bear the gracious revelation of the glory, and it is only as we are fitted to receive the answers to our prayers that they come. There are prayers innumerable, right in themselves, the answers to which we are utterly unprepared for. Were they fulfilled, we should be overwhelmed with astonishment and blinded with the glory of the vision. Hence the need that we prepare ourselves, and be prepared by God, to receive what He is infinitely willing to grant to all able to receive it. It is easy to ask to sit on the right hand or on the left of the Son of man in His king-

dom; the prayer and the desire may be high and holy; but he only could bear that nearness who had been baptized into the depths of Christ's baptism, and who had in his measure drunk of the cup that his Master had drunk. It is to such the place will be given; for there is no favouritism in heaven, and if one be higher than another, it will be because they have so won Christ.

The prayer of faith, then, concerning any matter is prayer springing from a living faith, which enters into the mind of God as revealed only to faith. It is not, we repeat, simply the assurance that comes out of a longing heart, but a conviction that gives certainty through loving, obedient communion with God, from the heart of one who knows His will, and goes not beyond it, in desire or prayer.

In conclusion we would apply these thoughts to the passage in James v. 15, where we read, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick;" that is, shall make him whole. Here is an unlimited promise; but, as we have pointed out, very much is implied in the condition, "The prayer of faith." There are cases, as in 1 John v. 16, when faith cannot ask; there are cases when the spiritual mind leaves a brother sick, as Trophimus was left by Paul at Miletum. (2 Tim. iv. 20.) We say not this to discourage prayer for restoration to health; nay, we are commanded to pray one for another, that we may be healed; but that is far different from the mightier word to faith, "*He shall be saved,*" or "*healed.*"

Sickness needs far more exercise of heart and conscience than it receives. God speaks by it, and happy is he who hears the voice and is exercised thereby. May saints of God be kept in this matter from the much false teaching that is abroad. We may recur to the subject on a future occasion.

ON PROGRESS IN DIVINE LOVE.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES.

THE epistle to the Ephesians shows us that the love of God is a searching, sealing, satisfying, and sanctifying love. It is the love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, not merely forgiving our sins and meeting all our necessities, but making us "sit together in heavenly places in Christ."

In divine love there is an *education*. (Eph. iii. 17-19.) Even in earthly love there is education. In the sickness of children, and in their troubles, the love of the father and mother is called forth, and the children's love is strengthened and increased. Do we not fail to make progress in this divine love as we ought? There is a purity and a felicity in love to be enjoyed by us even now—foreshadowing the love and felicity of the glory. "*Now abideth faith, hope, love.*" This education in love should lead to our being "filled with all the fulness of God."

Edification in love (Eph. iv. 15, 16) is secured by gifts very diverse, yet with unity as their object as in 1 Cor. xii., where we see their combination and perfection. Christ sent down the gifts spoken of in chap. iv. 7, 8: "He gave gifts unto men." There is not one child of God who is not able to edify another; for is there anything our hearts can conceive that can edify like love?

There is also *imitation* in love. (Eph. v. 1, 2.) The Holy Ghost expects us to walk in that love in which we have been educated. All the blessings of the gospel are given before we are asked to walk as imitators of Christ. We are to be imitators of God, not of each other. "Walk

in love," not according to our conception of love, or after the pattern of any saint, but after the pattern of Christ, the matchless Son of God. His love is a constant, recovering, restoring, soothing love.

Love looks for the *glorification* of the future. (Eph. v. 25-32.) What must be the love of the Lord Jesus that He should love to present us to the Father? Oh that our hearts entered into His love as they ought! It is as though Christ had said, "I long to have you here by my side." Who will drink into joy like the Lord Jesus, when He shall have the Church of the first-born with Him? For this He is working and waiting. In this Scripture, reference is made to the Bride as on the day of marriage, in all her beauty and loveliness. It is not enough that Christ should present the Church to Himself; He desires her to be "glorious;" His blood has washed her white as snow; He has covered her with that spotless, seamless robe of divine righteousness; His Spirit sanctifies her, having cleansed her; and in His own time the day of presentation will arrive. (J. V.)

IN the first epistle of John, Christ as the risen and ascended One fills up that discourse of His in John's gospel, which is contained in chapters xiv.-xvii. In the gospel we have Christ speaking to us in the days of His flesh; in the epistle He speaks through the apostle from the bosom of the Father. In John xv. 14 we find the path to the communion of His love wherein to walk in the fulness of the friendship of our God: "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you."

When God is most a Father He is most a Sovereign, and these commandments of Christ are surely our highest authority. The obedience of love aims far higher than the law as given from Sinai. Love has an iron will. Love

is the only term or condition of communion, and cannot be dispensed with. Christ's love is always the same. Suppose any member of Christ be found like Lot in Sodom, His love is the same, but the communion is not; for His love cannot then go out in bosom friendship.

The fairest things of the flesh are the greatest enemies of faith. You may put down drunkenness, and unseat covetousness, which is far worse, but "philosophy and vain deceit," of which we read in Col. ii., are worse than both; and to meet them we need heavenly wisdom. The crucified Son of God is made unto us wisdom, because He unlocks the bosom secrets of the Father. If we are to learn and to be imitators, we cannot follow afar off. Imitators must follow closely. If I am an imitator of God and of Christ, it is not possible for me to imitate anyone else. Follow saints only as they follow Christ. "Be followers of me," said Paul, and every servant of Christ ought to be able to say the same. Let us beware of our tendency to copy the faults rather than the excellencies of one another. All the excellencies of Elijah's character were in Elisha. A double portion was given; that is, plenitude for his ministry. How was this? He kept his eye on God.

The longing of Christ to have us is according to His love in dying for us. We shall far exceed holy angels in capacity as much as we do in relationship. The "body of humiliation" is to be "fashioned like unto His glorious body." When we have the fulness of our capacities we shall have the whole book of His glory unfolded to us.

Now is the time when our Lord is preparing the work "without," and making it fit for Himself: then He will build His house. (Prov. xxiv. 27.) "In due time Christ died." (Rom. v.) "Why not before?" man asks. God took time. Infinite wisdom could not suffer it to take place before, and so also "in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

(Gal. vi. 9.) There will then be a due winding up of the things of God. There is a reaping time *now*, but it is only an earnest.

The present course that God is taking with the world is in order to justify His ways by-and-bye. God will not be content with being righteous in His own eyes, or in the eyes of the holy angels; He must have a testimony even from His enemies. (Ps. xxxi. 17, 18; Jude 14, 15.) Every hypocritical prayer, every irreverent word, every scoffer's gibe and jest about Him must be brought out. God will *convince* all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds and their hard speeches, and the sinner will be made to give a testimony to the equity of God, and the equity of his everlasting destruction. God takes time as to sending His Son again. Meanwhile, if self-wisdom and self-will do not hinder and unfit us, it is natural for God to pour into us His love in Christ. Let us be so guided by the Word, that we may know how to represent Christ fitly before all with whom we have to do. (R. C. C.)

ABIGAIL'S WISDOM,

AS SEEN IN THE TURNING AWAY OF DAVID'S WRATH.

1 SAMUEL XXV.

THE wife of Nabal, the Carmelite, was no ordinary woman. No sooner does she hear of her husband's taunting reply to the messengers whom David had sent than she appreciates the extent of the danger to which he and the household are exposed. To be in command of four hundred warriors—desperate men, ready to do his bidding—and to be mocked as a runaway slave, was, she judges, more than human nature could bear; aggravated too, as that mockery was, by the contemptuous refusal to send any supplies for

the need of his followers. The persevering way in which Saul sought his life could not but cause irritation. Constant fear of death at his hands, hunger, and destitution, would all combine, as she judges, to make David for the time oblivious to the high position awaiting him, and to the motives and conduct suited to that position. To one who could thus read the heart, the course to be adopted at once becomes evident. No time was to be lost. The enemy must without delay be met and stopped, or destruction would be upon them all.

Nabal's feast was all prepared, the guests had assembled at his house, and the mirth had perhaps begun. From these large preparations she selects an ample supply ; the asses are laden ; all is sent on with the servants along the road the invader is sure to take. No thought of rousing the household to flee enters her mind. She does not even alarm her husband and the guests by telling them of the impending peril, and urging them to escape for their lives. While their safety is upon her heart, her thought is far higher, far grander. She does not hesitate to encounter alone all the danger of confronting the lion in his path, to turn him from his fell purpose.

She had calculated rightly. There he is, full of fury, with his four hundred armed men—enough to make the stoutest heart quail at the sight, much more that of a woman. But all is at stake. The destruction or the safety of the family depends upon herself. Go on she must.

The first object that meets the eyes of the enraged men is the food so wisely prepared for them. Bread, flesh, figs, raisins, wine are in readiness for the hungry and thirsty—a sight well calculated to divert their attention from the murderous purpose in view. We are reminded of Jacob's adopting a similar course when apprehensive of the wrath of Esau : " I will appease him with the present that goeth

before me, and afterward I will see his face ; peradventure he will accept of me." So Abigail seems to have reasoned and acted.

But what was in David's heart at this time ? His own goodness in having taken care of Nabal's flocks, and the insult he had received from him. Overlooking the danger he and his men were incurring from Saul, disregarding his habitual reverence for his God, and the kingship to which he had been anointed, with the mercies extended to him amidst his many failures, he seems to have lashed himself into a fury so violent that nothing less than the slaughter of all Nabal's household could appease it. Every principle, both divine and human, is for the time renounced. Mercy and pity find no place ; ferocity alone usurps dominion. The same person who had so beautifully restrained himself from slaying Saul in the cave is now found imprecating curses upon himself or his enemies if he does not then and there destroy every man in the family. Injury may be endured ; insult inflames beyond endurance.

In this frame of mind Abigail encounters him. She falls at his feet, takes upon herself the whole responsibility of the offence as the representative of the family, owns him as her lord, and solicits him to listen to her appeal. A proud or angry spirit would have been far from such humiliation. Hers was the mode to deprecate wrath ; the other would only exasperate.

Having acknowledged the offence, and made her submission, she speaks of her husband, and what he may do, as beneath the notice of him whom she addresses, on account of his want of wisdom, saying that, if she had been aware of the arrival of the messengers, no such reply would have been sent. Then, rising in tone as the occasion demands, and in the audience of the men by whom he is surrounded, she brings him at once into the

presence of God. "And now, my lord, as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, seeing the Lord hath withholden thee from coming to shed blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal." David had for the time altogether forgotten the authority of the God of Israel—forgotten the prohibition against murder, forgotten that God had promised to seat him on the throne. There was nothing to bring back all this to his recollection save the feeble voice of a suppliant woman. By this voice God restrains him, and restores him to his senses. The madness of passion had deprived him of reason. His God is thus keeping him back from adding guilt to guilt, saving him from dyeing his hand in the blood of his neighbour. The helplessness of Nabal is introduced as a further reason why one like David should not condescend to do him injury, accompanied with the expression of her own desire that all his enemies might be equally prostrate before him.

Then, in a very humble manner presenting her large offering as a tribute from a subject to a sovereign, she requests forgiveness for the transgression she has imputed to herself, on the plea that the Lord will certainly raise him to the throne; for that the Lord fights for him, and that wickedness had not been found in him all his days. Thus did this wise woman uphold the drooping faith of her future king, and restore his soul. The last remark must have been most pungent, considering what he was then bent upon doing; yet it was brought forward in a way that could not be otherwise than gratifying.

Referring more directly to the persecution he was passing through from Saul, she reminds him that his life is as secure as that of the living God Himself, and that his enemies, whoever they may be, have only the prospect of being certainly whirled away as a stone from a sling.

In concluding her appeal, she expresses the desire that when God shall have fulfilled His promise of placing him upon the throne, and when he sits there as the ruler and administrator of justice, he may be spared all compunction of conscience, all pang of remorse, that would surely be experienced were he "to shed blood causelessly, or to avenge himself with his own hand." For herself she does not desire to be thought of until that day arrives.

We must remember that Abigail was no pauper asking a gratuity, but the wife of a wealthy man, who at this time was holding "a feast, like the feast of a king." All his property seems to have been in her hands, some of which she thus uses to save his life; while David's position was that of a proscribed man, a fugitive, hated by his sovereign, who sought to put him to death. Had David carried out his intended purpose there would have been real ground for the indignation of Saul, who as a king was bound to avenge the slaughter of his subjects.

But the faith of this noble-minded woman saw beyond. Contrary to all present appearances, she was sure that God would protect this fierce man, deliver him from all his dangers, and exalt him to the kingdom, simply because He had so promised, and by the hands of Samuel had anointed him. Her heart fully concurs with God's expressed design. Had her object been limited to the safety of her husband and the household, she had but to give them notice of the approach of the enemy, so that on reaching the house there would have been no one on whom to wreak his wrath. Her aim is far higher; her monarch's character is at stake. He must be delivered from his blood-thirstiness, and restored to a sound mind. Above all, he must be restored to fellowship with God. All this she sets herself to accomplish; and for this end, despising the peril she encounters from a lawless soldiery, exasperated at the

insult offered to their leader, and placing her life in her hands, she throws herself among them, not knowing but that they may be told to slay her and her attendants.

Then with what divine wisdom does she supplicate David to recollect himself, to remember the high position in which his God had placed him, to look beyond the present to the future !

Could anyone say that in thus acting she had stepped beyond the limits of female modesty and propriety? Could it be said that in counselling David she had done what God had forbidden? David did not think so; for thus he addresses her, "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, who hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood." The war-demon has departed; the balance of his soul is restored. He acknowledges the hand of God in his deliverance from the hateful passions that were raging within him, at the same time blessing her, the honoured instrument through whom these mercies had been bestowed upon him.

With what joy and thankfulness must she have returned on her homeward journey, seeing that the Lord had defeated a host of armed men by her feeble voice, rescuing their leader from his guilty purpose, transforming him into a friend, and saving her household from destruction !

And with what gladness of heart must David have rejoiced at his escape from his own madness! When she afterwards, on the death of her husband, became his wife, must not his gratitude to her have been great? She had ventured her life to deliver him from the commission of an awful crime, which must for ever have burdened his conscience. Whenever he looked upon her he could not but recall how, under God, he owed his restoration to her wisdom, her courage, her gentleness, her faithfulness, and her humility. May we seek like grace from God. R. N.

DAVID AT MAHANAIM;

OR, GOD'S COMPASSION IN AFFLICTION.

"Though He cause grief, yet will He have compassion according to the multitude of His mercies.—LAM. iii. 32.

IN fleeing from Jerusalem at the time of Absalom's rebellion, it would seem as if David's haste was partly caused by a guilty conscience; for though "the conspiracy was strong, and the people increased continually with Absalom" (2 Sam. xv. 12), we read notwithstanding (v. 23), that when "the king passed over the brook Kidron, all the country wept with a loud voice." But David was no longer "bold as a lion." His failure in the rule of his family and of the nation made him sensible that he had brought this sad trouble upon himself.

But though God in faithfulness chastised His child, He could not forget to be gracious, and gave him many tokens for good at this time. Thus, before David encountered Shimei's curse (chap. xvi. 5-8), God had afforded him anticipatory solace in the devotedness of seven specially-named faithful followers. Ittai, Zadok, Abiathar, Ahimaaz, Jonathan, Hushai, and Ziba were so many witnesses to David that God had not forsaken him. His appeal to Ittai the Gittite, as a stranger, not to imperil himself by accompanying him, only brought out the touching reply, "As the Lord liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be."

David has, however, to pursue his weary way—yet with opportunity in God's kindness to refresh himself

(chap. xvi. 14)—till, passing the Jordan, he comes, closely followed by Absalom, to MAHANAIM.

Here did God deal with him in signal kindness. The spot itself was enough to rouse hope, though perhaps in David's disturbed state of mind he might find in it cause of discouragement. On the one hand he might remember that his ancestor Jacob had been here, and had given to the place its name, "Two Hosts," in commemoration of his having been met there by the angels of God in his flight from Laban, and in his dreaded approach toward Esau. (Gen. xxxii. 1.) On the other hand, a heart looking out for some omen of evil would bear in mind that while Jacob's face was toward Canaan, David's was turned from it.

As if especially to lead him to encourage himself in God, David is now permitted to receive striking proofs of affectionate loyalty in the behaviour of Shobi, Machir, and Barzillai. (Chap. xvii. 27-29.) Conflict between the saddened king and his rebellious son is imminent; yet these three declare unhesitatingly for him whom they acknowledge to be the anointed of the LORD, and they prove their whole-heartedness by their ample offerings for the rest and sustenance of himself and his army, seeing that they were "hungry and weary and thirsty." Does not all this exhibit the *tenderness* of God, who "doth not afflict from His heart" (Lam. iii. 33, margin); who "woundeth and His hands make whole"? (Job v. 18.) May not this incident afford comfort to those who are now passing through trial, and perhaps even disgrace, conscious of the fact that through their own sin the trial and disgrace have been brought upon them? Was there not a sweetness as well as a bitterness in Peter's tears? Did he not see in the look of his denied Lord love as well as rebuke?

Let us consider briefly what Scripture says of these

three—Shobi, Machir, Barzillai. There is something noteworthy about each.

Shobi appears to have been of the royal family of Ammon. Of this there is not absolute proof; but it is not improbable that he was brother of the Hanun, king of Ammon, mentioned in chap. x., whose shameful response to David's friendly embassy led to the loss of his crown, and the subjugation of his people. (Chap. xii. 29-31.) What an opportunity for Shobi to seek revenge! Why does he not take advantage of the present occasion to aim at the restoration of the independence of Ammon? Doubtless, because he had no sympathy with his brother Hanun in his distrust of David, but rather with his father Nahash, who, in showing kindness to David (chap. x. 2), had thus exhibited his faith in David's God. The fame of the shepherd lad who had saved Israel in the day of Goliath's defiance had reached the surrounding nations, and there were many among them who feared the God who blessed Israel. (Ps. lxxvii. 7.) The fidelity of Shobi, then, must have been very grateful to David.

The loyalty, too, of Machir, the son of Ammiel, would remind David that his kindness to Mephibosheth, Saul's grandson, when living with Machir, had borne fruit. (Chap. ix. 3-5.) Especially would this be the case, seeing that through Ziba's lying slander (chap. xvi. 3) the king had reason to suppose that Mephibosheth was seeking the kingdom for himself. Thus David could count upon the assistance of one who might have been tempted to favour the interests of the house of Saul. Such loving service might well soothe the wound inflicted by the treachery of his own familiar friend Ahithophel.

The application to ourselves is obvious. Have there not been times when we have been well-nigh crushed by the desertion of a friend, or by a church trouble, perhaps

in some unexpected quarter? And has not God at that very time afforded us a counterpoising consolation from some unlooked-for source? Only One has God ever forsaken of those who trusted in Him, and that righteous One He forsook that He might always deliver us. (Ps. xxii. 1-5.)

Barzillai, the last of the three, seems to have had the chief part in succouring the king. (Chap. xix. 32.) Respecting him we notice three points—

1. His name means "of iron." Iron is noted for hardness and strength. (Chap. xxiii. 7; Dan. ii. 40.) Barzillai was not one to go with the stream. The hour of trial, which proved the dubious loyalty of many, only made his the more clear. In him David experienced that "there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother." (Prov. xviii. 24.)

2. He was "a very aged man." At the age of fourscore he could look back upon Israel's history at the time of national disgrace under Philistine or Ammonite oppression, during the feeble reign of Saul. He had watched with admiration the entire course of David from the day of his first anointing by the hands of Samuel (1 Sam. xvi.), and may have been one of those who went to Hebron to make David king. (1 Chron. xii. 38.) At his time of life he was not the man to transfer his allegiance from David to his rebellious son.

3. He served David out of pure love. The king would have rewarded him (chap. xix. 23), but Barzillai would not go to Jerusalem. In the feebleness of extreme age he thought the life of the palace would be uncongenial to him.

Are we not taught by this to value *proved* men? Many there are whose principles have never been really tested, who break down and break away at the first grave trial. Such will always take up with the new thing, or the new

person. But the Church has its Barzillais also. Let tried saints in hours of weakness and failure look to God to comfort them with the steadfast help of such.

One great lesson, then, to be learned from David's stay at Mahanaim is this, that God does not desert us in our backslidings. Is there any reader of this paper who has gone away from the Shepherd in whose voice he once delighted? Let such an one be assured that God still loves him, and let him find comfort in every gracious dealing recorded in Scripture, whereby God would show him that he is not forsaken. David's restoration to his kingdom was no easy matter; but it was accomplished at last. "Why speak ye not a word of bringing the king back?" (Chap. xix. 10.) *He was brought back.* May this speedily be the happy experience of any backsliding children of God now!

J. C.

ON OUR LORD'S USE OF "FATHER" WHEN ON THE CROSS.

WHEN our blessed Lord delivered Himself up into the hands of men He said, "This is *your hour*, and the power (authority) of darkness." (Luke xxii. 53.) Of this, in John xvii., He speaks in His prayer, "Father, *the hour* is come;" and also in the garden to His disciples, "*The hour* is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Matt. xxvi. 45); or, as it is given in Mark xiv. 41, "It is enough, *the hour* is come." This hour is also spoken of in John's gospel as "*His hour.*" (Chap. vii. 30, viii. 20.)

We draw attention to this expression because it indicates the Saviour's conception of the new position He was to take, of subjection to the dominion of darkness and of

death, as involved in that word, "The authority of darkness." It was not simply a power which a mightier power might set aside, but an "authority" (*exousia*) that a righteous will had to submit to, though possessed of full power (as such) to set it aside. To this our Lord refers in John x. 17, 18: "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father."

In this "hour" then, to which He refers, we see the Lord of life, in obedience to the will and commandment of the Father, yielding Himself up to the authority of darkness and death, and hence to the will of him who had "the power (*kratos*) of death; that is, the devil," the prince of darkness. (Heb. ii. 14.)

This purpose was revealed in His baptism when He said, in reference to it, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness;" but now the purpose of sin-bearing (*i.e.* of bearing its condemnation), for which He came into the world, was to become a fact, and this awful fact caused the agony of that hour in which He was pouring out His soul unto death, and dying the just for the unjust.

"This hour" placed Him who was the spotless sin-offering in a double relationship to God the Father; on the one hand, of infinite delight, as the holy fulfiller of His will, the accomplisher of His purpose; and, on the other, of distance, as occupying the place of the guilty.

In reference to the one He could say, "Therefore doth my Father love me," as typically representing the savour of rest and delight expressed in the altar-sacrifice, which ascended in holy fragrance to heaven; while, on the other hand, He was "made sin;" that is, the punishment of sin

rested on Him, which is typically presented in the consuming of the sin-offering with fire outside the camp.

It is well to remember that, in Old Testament language, *sin*, the *sin-offering*, and the *punishment of sin*, are all three expressed by the same word; for God regards each as equivalent to the other, and *sin* can only be measured by the *atonement* for sin.

The twofold position occupied by Christ at Calvary drew forth, on the one hand, the filial cry, "Father," as uttered in the first and last words spoken on the cross; and, on the other, the sin-bearer's cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" For us guilty sinners He was the guiltless sin-bearer; the guilt was ours, not His; the curse was His, not ours. Hence personally He could say, all through the hour of His bitterest woe, "Father." As if to testify this to us, His prayer for His crucifiers was, "*Father*, forgive them; they know not what they do;" and as He expired His last uttered words were, "*Father*, into thy hands I commend my spirit;" and yet, as God's sacrifice for sin, He says, speaking to God in His judicial character, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" realizing in the depth of His soul the full force of the words in Psalm xxii. 3, "But thou art holy," yet never letting go faith's triumphant "MY."

Again, the "I thirst" is as if spoken out of the consuming fire; and the cry immediately afterwards, "It is finished," tells abroad that in His death all that the holiness of God demanded was fulfilled. His work was done, and the mighty Saviour kept His Sabbath in the tomb.

We refer to this subject because a statement in page 41 might lead to the inference that atonement was made by the suffering on the cross, short of death; but we know that "without shedding of blood is no remission," and wherever "blood" is spoken of as atonement, *death* is

always intended, just as "inquisition for blood" is really retribution for murder.

May we be kept as humble worshippers at the foot of the cross, and avoid all profane gazing into its mysteries.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Does the command in 2 Thess. iii. 14, to "have no company" with a person, involve excommunication from the assembly?

It does not appear to us to convey that thought, but rather enjoins the withholding of *private* fellowship from a disorderly walker with a view to make him feel ashamed, and seek spiritual restoration. He is therefore not to be counted as an enemy, but admonished as a "brother." Among the various degrees of discipline this seems to come next in gravity to excommunication, according to Matt. xviii. 17, when the one put outside the Church is to become to us "as a heathen and a publican." It is further to be observed that the disorderly walk here referred to consists in not working and in being a busybody. The withdrawing from such disorderly persons is spoken of very differently from the putting away of 1 Cor. v. It may be replied that in 1 Tim. vi. 5 withdrawal is mentioned in connection with grave divergences from truth; but it must be borne in mind that the words "from such withdraw thyself" are omitted in some of the oldest MSS.

Does Scripture warrant putting out of an assembly one who has married an unconverted person?

GRIEVOUS as this evil is in the sight of God, and contrary to His express command (1 Cor. vii. 39; 2 Cor. vi. 14-18), we do not see that Scripture warrants excommunication for it. As in other matters, the sin may be aggravated by the measure of knowledge of the mind of God, and by the rejection of admonition. But in the face of such direct disobedience there cannot be true fellowship with God or with His children, and on this ground repentance and confession need to be pressed on the disobedient one, and in such a case the instructions regarding disorderly walk would apply. This would lead either to spiritual restoration or to deeper declension. But in all discipline not immediately demanding extreme action, patient, prayerful waiting is called for, to allow time for God's dealing with the soul. Loving counsel on this subject given early to young converts individually, would tend to prevent such marriages and the consequent life-long sorrow which they involve.

IS PSALM XXIII. THE LANGUAGE OF THE LORD JESUS?

How precious has this much-loved psalm always been to all saved sinners who have known it! "I am living in the twenty-third Psalm," was the first word of greeting which the writer received on one occasion when visiting a sick saint. Simple words they were of a working man, who suffered greatly in cancer for seven years ere he fell asleep; but they only expressed what a multitude of his fellow-saved ones have also felt. They too have often lived in Psalm xxiii., and they have found it to be as God's manna in the desert, as His stream from the once-smitten Rock, and also as God-given language of victory over their spiritual foes, whether Canaanites or any other. By its help, too, they have looked on to similar triumph all the days of their life, and then to "the house of the Lord for ever" as their holy and blessed home.

Edifying pages, almost without number, have been written on these precious six verses, and their beauty and their worth have given birth to many favourite hymns. It is not, however, any exposition of the psalm as a whole, nor any general expatiating on its cheering teachings, that is now attempted, but simply the consideration of the question asked above, Can Psalm xxiii. be safely and consistently considered as the utterance of the Lord Jesus Himself?

That still more richness and beauty would be found in the psalm; if it could be so read, many will very likely allow. The devout searcher of God's word would then feel himself in distinct fellowship and oneness of spirit with Christ when he read it, and any reading of Scripture in

which this sense of fellowship with Christ is possible is not a little gain to our souls. It is especially in the *book of Psalms* that this oneness of spirit between Christ and the believing reader is so often felt and enjoyed. Our Lord Himself said, on His own resurrection-day, "All things written in the Psalms concerning me." Paul also recognizes this fellowship which we have with Christ in the Psalms when to the Corinthians he quotes Psalm cxvi. 10, and says, "*We* having the *same spirit* of faith we also believe, and therefore speak." And in how many other psalms, too many to mention, is this fellowship with Christ *felt* by the reader.

But there are psalms which cannot be so read, and for the one simple reason, that they have in them the confession of personal sin and failure on the part of the psalmist, and that not in a vicarious or substitutionary sense. Such are Psalms xxxii., li., lxxiii., and some others. From such psalms we utterly exclude the thought of Christ being Himself the speaker. HE never "kept silence" (see Psalm xxxii. 3) ; nor was HE ever "envious at the foolish" (Psalm lxxiii. 3) ; still less had HE to say, as David had, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. li. 5.) The question before us is, To which of these two classes of psalms does Psalm xxiii. belong ?

That the Lord Jesus was Himself a *Lamb* and a *Sheep* of Jehovah's pasture in "the days of His flesh," both before and after He came forth as "the good Shepherd," most would very likely freely admit ; just as He was also a victim before He became a priest in resurrection.

If so, then, as One fed and led by His God, He could indeed say, "Jehovah is my Shepherd, I shall not want."

But the clause, "He *restoreth* my soul" (v. 3), seems to stand in the way of the *entire* psalm being applied to Christ, inasmuch as it looks like restoration from spiritual

backsliding; and this could never be true of Him. But the Hebrew verb here translated "restoreth" is of a wider meaning. It is used some sixty times in the Hebrew scriptures, and its root-meaning is to turn, or turn back.

In about one-half of its occurrences it *does* mean to turn back from moral and sinful wanderings; but in other places it does not carry with it of necessity any such meaning, but implies simply to turn back a person's steps, that he may tread and tread again the paths he has often trodden before. Thus it is used of the wanderings to and fro of God's pilgrims in the desert paths *given them* to tread, and that without necessarily implying any *sinful* straying at all—somewhat as Noah's dove went forward and back again over the waters, but always returned to the ark. Indeed, the exact form of the Hebrew verb here used is found in Psalm lx. 1, "O *turn thyself* to us again," where, of course, it cannot possibly mean anything more than the repeating by God of His former ways towards them.

Viewed in this light, this clause of our psalm would mean, "He *turneth back* my soul;" *i.e.* "He maketh me as joyfully ready to go *back again* over ground I have often before trodden as I was the first time I ever trod it, and when it had to me all the freshness of novelty."

What a deliverance is such a state of mind from all the dulness and weariness which sameness and monotony of circumstances would otherwise cause! God's saints are largely "the poor of this world," as James describes them; and their service to their God consists very much of repetition and sameness rather than variety. This is true in the family, the household, the workshop, or on the farm. In family relationships, in household duties, in manual occupations, whether of town or country life, we have to live over and over again

"The daily round, the common task,"

The wheels of life move on by the turning up again and again of the same spokes of which each wheel is made. The few steps—it may be *very* few—from the closet of God's word and prayer to the workshop, and back again to the closet for more grace and strength, and then once more to the workshop again, are the steps most frequently trodden by the vast majority of saints. What joy then if Jehovah's unchanging love and care, as "the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls," makes us as ready and as happy to tread it any number of times as we were at the first! True, there is no freshness in the *circumstances* to give either cheer to the heart or elasticity to the steps; but if all "want" is shut out according to verse 1, and we are fed and rested by the tender grass and the quiet waters of verse 2, we are then prepared to follow our "Jehovah" Shepherd as He leads us to and fro over the same ground, and our "SOUL" within us is made as willing as our steps are plodding and regular. Compulsion and necessity of circumstances might turn back our outward *steps*, but only the Shepherd Himself could lead to and fro our willing "*soul*." As verse 3 says, "He turneth back my SOUL."

The monotony of outward life now alluded to must have been specially true of our Lord Himself. What sameness of circumstances there *must* have been in His obedient thirty years at Nazareth! for to the last, when He came forth into public preaching, He still was known as "the Carpenter." During all those years, surely no two buildings could have been more familiar to Him than the Nazareth synagogue (see the words, "as His custom was"—Luke iv. 16) and the workshop of His parents' house! Surely no piece of ground could His blessed feet have trodden so often as that between the two! But, like the swallow, that hawks its food to and fro, keeping on the

wing for hours together, so, we may be sure, did His willing steps go over that bit of ground as many years, and as many times each year, as His Jehovah-Shepherd would have Him go; and still could this obedient One say:

“He turneth back my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness.”

Very different indeed to Him must the workshop have been from the synagogue; for he was “an alien” to His “mother’s children” (Ps. lxxix. 8), and “neither did His brethren believe in Him.” To work alongside of them from day to day must have been far more painful to Him than it was to Joseph when his brethren “hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him.” (Gen. xxxvii. 4.) To leave them when the meal-hour came, and go to the synagogue and read the books of the law and the prophets, or hear them read, must have been no little daily relief to Him; but it is good to think He was as punctual and as ready for His Jehovah-Shepherd to turn back again His steps to the less pleasant workshop as He had been to leave it for the synagogue; for to *practise* the scriptures was even sweeter to Him than it was to read them and to understand them. And this must have gone on, more or less, till His thirtieth year, only with increasing delight to His willing “soul.” Surely these were those “paths of righteousness” in which His Shepherd was leading Him for Jehovah’s great “name’s sake”—an unchanging name, never better learned by us or more magnified than when it supplies us with enduring and overcoming grace.

Repetition must have marked also our Lord’s three and a half years of public life; for the feasts of Jehovah came regularly round, and the utmost range of His ministry was Palestine, with its seventy miles of width and a hundred and fifty of length, thus affording little of the variety of our modern days. What narrow range was this for His

feet to keep treading, who only spoke, and the whole earth received its frame, and the spacious heavens were built ! Yet could His supreme love to His Father make Him delight in His utmost emptying of Himself and in His narrowest surroundings. And no wonder, since He was always on His willing way to the bitter cross and the dark and narrow grave.

But this would lead us to verse 4 of our psalm, where we see Christ contemplating the utmost darkness—"the death shade" itself—as still before Him ; but He knew His Jehovah-Shepherd would bring Him through it.

We abstain from tracing Christ in these clauses, as very likely none feel the same difficulty in applying them to Him as they might the clause, "He restoreth my soul."

It is the more pleasant if Christ can be seen, and His voice heard, all through this psalm, since it is thus brought into closer link with Psalm xxii. and Psalm xxiv., before and after it. Christ in His dying and redeeming love in Psalm xxii., and Christ in His millennial reigning day in Psalm xxiv., may well have Christ in His wilderness experiences (and His people also) in Psalm xxiii., coming between the two.

The practical lesson to us from what has been advanced is simply this—not to faint, nor be weary at any length or narrowness of the pathway of life given us to tread.

In Num. xxi. 4, the murmuring of the children of Israel was not at this or that fierce attack of enemies, but simply "because of the way ;" for the king of Edom's pride had greatly lengthened their monotonous journey through the desert, and the sameness of even the manna provoked their evil hearts to call it "light bread."

May God keep us on our wings of faith, and love, and hope, above all such temptations to fainting or complaining !

H. D.

“HIS WORK IS PERFECT.”

DEUT. xxxii. 4.

How perfect is the work of God, the only Wise,
Though faulty oft it seems to sorrow-darkened eyes !
Each stroke is from a wise and skillful Master's hand,
The keenly-cutting edge is under His command.

Unto His own dear Son our souls He will conform,
E'en though to bend our wills He lead through many a storm ;
Though fierce and fiercer still the flame around us burn,
And light that seemed to cheer He into darkness turn.

In counsel wonderful the glorious plan He drew,
When in unbounded love His people He foreknew ;
When those foreknown He did in grace design to raise
With His Beloved Son to His eternal praise.

His counsel standeth firm, His will shall yet be done ;
Perfect He soon will make the work He has begun,
Purging the dross and tin that hide the precious gold ;
Then to anointed eyes His Son He will unfold.

And though the gloom grow dense, and though the night seem long,
Though storms still wildly rage, and blows the north wind strong,
Yet JESUS draweth near, 'tis His own voice that speaks,
And peace doth fill the heart that only JESUS seeks.

The mists are all dispelled, we gaze with face unveiled
Upon this glorious One, afresh to us revealed ;
And gazing we become more like unto our Lord,
More moulded to His will, more subject to His word.

Yet still for Him we wait, abiding in His love ;
For that blest hour we look when we shall rise above ;
When, even as He is, our Saviour we shall see,
And to His image fair each saint conformed shall be.

And then when we review the way God led us here,
We'll see that *all was well* when we were filled with fear ;
Throughout that endless day no question e'er shall lurk,
But perfect praise shall own how PERFECT IS HIS WORK.

W. H. B.

“THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FLOCK.”

SONG OF SOLOMON i. 8.

ISRAEL'S history is full of admonition, as showing us how far a people standing on redemption ground are capable of departing from it. All their failure was the result of losing sight of God. On the shores of the Red Sea God was fully before them in His mighty power, and they sang His praise; but, as we well know, after a few days of want their sight was obscured, and they murmured. Yet all the while He was there, the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night bearing witness, and their unbelief had to be rebuked, as the disciples were rebuked by the Lord for their want of faith in the storm on the sea of Galilee. (Mark iv. 40.)

As we in some measure see our own picture in Israel's history, it may be helpful to turn to the precious words of Canticles i.; for in the light of Eph. v. 31, 32 we can say that Solomon's Song speaks to us of Christ and the Church. The Bridegroom of the Song is too perfect to represent any other than Him who is “the chiefest among ten thousand,” and the “altogether lovely One.” The description of the bride, on the other hand, well befits us. Among the one thousand and five songs which Solomon wrote, the Song of songs is pre-eminent, and its divine authorship is evident, because in it Solomon speaks so much of his Lord.

“I am black, but comely,” is a suited word from one who has been so near her Beloved as to say, “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” It is the language of confidence from the heart that understands His love, and values it more than all that earth can give. (Ps. iv. 7.) It is

her testimony to others, that she is black as the tents of Kedar, comely as the curtains of Solomon.

The opening scene of the Song shows us that the bride has not been idle. Like busy Martha, she is wearied and jaded with her labours of love. Jealous of her Lord, she says, "Look not upon me, because I am black, and because the sun has looked upon me." My bronzed visage tells of hard toil all the day; look not on my labour, for it is faulty, and my motives have been wrong. "My mother's children were angry with me; *they* made me keeper of the vineyard; but my own vineyard have I not kept."

Such is often our experience, is it not? How much we undertake at the promptings of others! Unsent by the Master, we do things to please others. We attempt, it may be, to keep the vineyards (Acts xx. 28), because *they* wish it. But, alas! when our Lord comes into His garden (Cant. v. 1) we have no fruit to give Him.

How different was it with the Master Himself! Sanctified and sent to do all He ever did—whether speaking to the multitude by the sea-shore, or conversing with Samaria's daughter as He sat, a wearied man, on Jacob's well—He was *fruitful* in every thing. Rejected testimony yielded patience and joy (Luke x. 21); successful ministry yielded peace (John iv. 34); the cross yielded long-suffering and love. (Luke 23, 34.)

It was not more *work* Paul desired at Colosse, but more *fruit*; his prayer was that they might be "fruitful in every good work." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." But it is only as we draw so near our Lord as to say, "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth," that we can go forth at His bidding, and in all our service yield fruit to Him. (Gal. v. 22, 23.)

There may be plenty of work and little fruit. Thus the Lord says, in Rev. ii. 19, "I know thy *works*, and charity,

and *service*, and faith, and thy patience, and thy *works*; and the last to be more than the first." Does not Rev. ii. 5 show us what is wrong?—"Repent, and do the *first* works." The first works are done from the constraint of love. After a time the works may even be more than at first, while love is lacking.

In the case of the bride, we learn, from chap. i. 7 of the Song, that though wearied and fretted with her toil, her heart is true to her Lord; she may sleep, but her heart waketh. Nothing short of Himself can satisfy her. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest thy flock, where Thou makest them to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that is veiled?" (See margin compared with 2 Cor. iii. 13-18.) In other words, "Why should unbelief mar my joy, and rob me of the sense of Thy presence?"

The answer soon comes, "If thou knowest not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the *footsteps of the flock*." As if He had said, "I am here, just where you are; I go with the flock as I did when faithless Israel turned back from the borders of Canaan."

Oh, wondrous love, that follows and traces our erring footsteps! If, when Adam fell, an angel had asked, "Where is Jehovah Elohim?" would he not have learned by tracing Adam's steps to the tree under which he had hidden? Had Joshua and Caleb gone alone into Canaan with the thought that they would surely find Jehovah in the land of promise, would they not have been sadly disappointed? But retracing their steps, and following Israel's footsteps, they would soon have beheld the lowly tabernacle of their God, and found themselves again under the shelter of the cloud. (Ps. cv. 39.) Was there ever love like His? "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them *unto the end*." (John xiii. 1.)

We shall miss our Lord if we forget those we cut off, and do not follow them till restored. (Ezek. xxxiv. 4; Matt. xviii. 17-20.) We shall miss His presence by high-handed turning away from those who have not faith to follow on. If we heed not the sheep who go astray, we shall lose the fellowship of the Chief Shepherd, who goes after the straying as well as the lost. (Matt. xviii. 13; Luke xv. 4.)

Oh, how Satan robs us of full communion with our Lord by shutting us up, not in nunneries or monasteries, but in our comfortable meetings, where all is uniform and correct! We are not without His presence, blessed be His name! But if a mother's love is seen in the sick-room as it never can be in the sitting-room, is not the love of Christ especially learned in caring for the failing ones? (John xxii.) Is not the depth of the Father's love made known in the prodigal's restoration? (Luke xv.)

Some of us came out from a withered, lifeless orthodoxy to gather around a living Lord; but are we not often conscious now of a cold, aching void, such as we formerly felt? Are we longing to find Him whom our souls love? Then let us remember the "*footsteps of the flock.*" Let us seek the erring; let us deal out our bread to the hungry; let us bring the poor to our house, opening the door wide to receive the wounded; let us not "hide" ourselves from our brethren, *then* shall our light break forth as the morning, and our health speedily increase. (Isa. lviii. 7, 8.) Then shall the Master, when He comes to recompense for the care of His sick and wounded ones, have more than the "two pence" to bestow on us. (Luke x. 35.) We shall then no longer have to say, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" But looking down on the tents of crooked, erring Jacob, we shall see them in His light, and say, "How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles, O Israel!"

DIDYMUS.

THE FOUNTAINS OF BACA.

PSALM LXXXIV. 5-7; 2 COR. i. 4-7.

Yes ; thou must weep if comfort thou wouldst bring
 To others' pains ;
 Weeping, in silence, trains the heart to sing
 In tender strains
 That sink into the lonely, aching breast,
 And charm to rest.

Yes ; thou must weep if mourners are to bless
 Thy words of cheer—
 To find their anguish soothed by thy caress,
 And presence dear ;
 Thine eyes must rain, the tempest thou must dare,
 With bosom bare.

But oh the joy to comfort those who mourn !
 Such bliss to earn
 Is worth the price that, weeping, thou must pay.
 The eternal day
 Will bless thee with the fruit of pain and tears
 Through golden years.

E. S. W.

PAUL'S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY.

NOTES OF A BIBLE-READING ON 2 TIMOTHY II.

"THOU *therefore*, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." The "therefore" seems to be connected with verse 14 of the previous chapter—"That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." "Be strong" to keep this deposit against all assaults ; act the part of a standard-bearer, and defend the truth against every attack.

In Eph. vi. the expression "strong in the Lord" is used in connection with the conflict against the powers of darkness ; here the subject is the Church, and the preservation and handing on of the truth.

"My son" is better rendered "My *child*." It indicates the parental relationship in which Paul stood to Timothy ; he was his child, his very image, and "like-minded" with his father. See Phil. ii. 19-23 : "Ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with a father, he hath served with me in the gospel." In Acts xvi. we find the first mention of Timothy, probably about fifteen years before, and we here learn how he had grown ; he was no stunted child.

"Be strong in the grace." Stephen was strong in the grace that was in his Lord when, like Him, he prayed for his murderers. That grace was "sufficient" for him, and he was not "overcome of evil." Grace is that which comes out of the fulness of Christ to meet our need. It is the infinite resources of Christ poured into our beggared hands.

"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," and in addition to strength in grace we need the *truth* referred to in verse 2 : "*The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*" What we suffer from is painful diversity of mind, and working after many patterns. When Israel had sinned by making the golden calf, and dancing around it, saying, "These be thy gods," Moses goes outside the camp ; they gather round him, confess their sin, strip off their ornaments, and are spared through his intercession. Then the grace of God comes in, and all needful instructions are given for making the tabernacle. Everything is to be made according to the heavenly pattern, as shown to Moses. Is not the truth here similar ? Wherein we have departed from the heavenly pattern let us judge ourselves,

and say, "I acknowledge my sin unto Thee," and God will say, "I will instruct thee, and teach thee."

Those who have the truth of God should seek after men competent to teach others, and should commit to them what they have received. The neglect of this is one of the great causes of the lack of power in ministry at this time. We drift into the thought that the Lord will *give* us something, instead of buckling on the armour to *learn*; we take it easy, expecting we are going to turn out ministers of the word of God without reading, study, and prayer.

It is *instruction* in the Scriptures that we need; not human power, not apostolic succession. Paul does not hand on official titles, but solid instruction. After ten or twenty years' ministry of the Word in one place by some servant of Christ, how is it that frequently there is scarcely a man able to build up the saints of God?

Some think they must leave all human systems, and then have everything in chaos and disorder, so as to become unsystematic. That is not God's way. God is not the author of confusion. He has a system, and does not leave things without law, order, and direction. If we leave the systems of men, let us see to it that we have not carelessness, talk of the lips, and confusion, but God's order as well as God's word. An emancipated slave without a master is a miserable being. While we take care not to be "the servants of men," let us be true servants of Christ, and true stewards of His word, handing on intact and unimpaired all that we have received. Timothy must take the place of Paul, and each receiver must become an imparter. There should be a living testimony from mouth to mouth, and from hand to hand.

Let us be prepared for false doctrine, and know how to deal with it from the word of God. It is not enough to

know the A B C of the gospel. Let the child go and tell that Christ has saved him; but let us who are older seek to get into the breadth and length of God's word, and be like well-read scribes, bringing out of our treasures things new and old. Let us not remain in ankle-deep waters, but go on till we swim in the broad ocean. (Ezek. xlvii. 5.)

Some are content with the same measure year after year; they remain babes, and need to be taught again "the first principles of the oracles of God." Let us go on to perfection. The epistle to the Romans gives us our foundation; the epistle to the Hebrews leads on to the superstructure.

"*Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.*" Timothy was to be strong in grace to teach the truth, in accordance with which was to be his service and his suffering. It is only the man who endures hardness that can retain the truth he has learned. The preceding verse may be called God's college, and this verse God's armoury. To hold the teaching of the college, you must be armed and ready to die daily. Of the Lord we read in Isaiah l. that He set His face "as a flint." Not that He was a flint; His was the most sensitive face the world ever knew, and it never had an unkind look; but so far as turning from service was concerned, He made His face as a flint. So was it with the one who wrote this epistle to Timothy. Paul was unmoved in his course by any prospect of suffering.

The three emblems that the apostle next uses give us the forms in which hardness is to be endured. There is to be the hardness of the *soldier*, the hardness of the *athlete*, and the hardness of the *husbandman*. Do not let us be over-anxious to make our circumstances *easier*. Christ began with poverty, and grew still poorer. *Remain* under

hard things, like the soldier who from the beginning to the end of a campaign looks for nothing but rations. If the earthly conflict be difficult, we shall have God with us in the fight. The more we tread the path of faith, the more difficult will it become. The great matter is, not to rid oneself of a burden, but to wait till God lifts it off. Then we can praise Him. The normal state of a Christian is to have a cross every day. The Lord does not say "*Seek a cross,*" but "*Take it up.*" Let us make up our minds to bear burdens to the end—the cross, the cross, the cross here, and then the crown for ever.

Let us continue, then, the road up the hill Difficulty. The word of truth, verse 2, will lead to suffering, and the grace of verse 1 will lead to the patient endurance of verse 3. Jeremiah never got rid of his tears till God wiped them away. An inch off the cross is an ell off the glory. If a man is wholly devoted to God, his path will not be an easy one. We can easily avoid a cross, if we like to do so.

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier." The soldier illustrates the principle of *unreserved surrender* of self. He gives up his own will that he may be entirely under the control of another.

The Spirit's teaching here is unfolded by Deut. xx.: "Ye approach this day unto battle fear not, and do not tremble. The Lord your God is He that goeth with you to fight for you." Then comes the testing: "What man is there that hath built a new house planted a vineyard betrothed a wife? What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart." From Luke xiv. we learn that there are hindrances which lie in the way of reception of the gospel—

a piece of ground, a yoke of oxen, a wife—and the very same things hinder good soldiership.

In the matter of discipleship the Lord tells us the difficulties (Luke xiv. 26–33), and bids us *count the cost*. The flesh never changes, and the hindrances of our unconverted days are the very things that hinder us in our converted days also. If we forget our Egyptian experience, we shall not be prepared for the wilderness experience which follows.

“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully.” The illustration of the wrestler teaches us *implicit obedience to law*. There is a course marked out, a goal, and also rules. (1 Tim. iv. 15, 16.) When the apostle says, “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us,” he tells us that Christ “endured the cross,” and we must have in view “the fellowship of His sufferings,” and also the apostle’s aim, “that I may *win* Christ.” Ours is a straight course from the cross to the glory, and we must run “looking off unto Jesus.” The eye must be steadfastly kept on the goal. The word of God marks out our course, as stakes do a racecourse. To obtain the crown of the Master’s full approval we need to take heed to the whole word of God.

“The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits.” The illustration of the husbandman teaches *patient toil* in the field given us to till. What a contrast between the man following the plough, going on slowly from morning till night, and the man who rushes forward to battle, or runs a race! It is easier to run a little way than to walk a long distance. Patience puts the cream on all our work. “First partaker” may be read “*chief* partaker,” the word being the same as in 1 Tim. i. 15, “*chief* of sinners.” He who has sown a field will enjoy more than others the fruit of it, because of all his toil.

He "shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him." (Psalm cxxvi. 6.) As they are laid down in the presence of God, He will see what the patient toil has yielded. The one who works hardest may not have the most success. To the Thessalonians Paul writes, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?"

"*Consider what I say, and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.*" Paul casts Timothy upon "God and the word of His grace." We can give to no one understanding; we may give knowledge, but God alone can give understanding. A person may be very well taught, but without understanding from the Lord his knowledge will be misapplied.

It is very helpful to be able to read the Scriptures in the original languages; it brings one into the immediate presence of God, so that one hears, as it were, the tone of His voice. Jehovah speaks then face to face, and not through an interpreter. But the great matter is, "*Consider what I say,*" what "I, Jehovah, say." Give your undivided attention, listen to His word, and ask by the Spirit that He may write the instruction of His word on the fleshy tables of the heart. Go up into the mount, like Moses, and do not come down until He has written His command by His finger on your heart. In Luke xxiv. 32 we read that Christ opened the *Scriptures* to His disciples, and then (v. 45) He "opened their *understanding*, that they might understand the Scriptures." We need both. All that a teacher can do is to set forth the Word; God must prepare the heart to take it in. The soldier needs his drill, and so do those who fight for God. Bible readings for the young are needed to continue the work of the Church, if ministry is to be profitable and enlightening. Our nourish-

ment does not depend upon how much we eat, but upon what we digest. The teacher may give out much, but the question is, What do the hearers take in? There is much about "understanding" in Psalm cxix.: "Make me to understand;" "Give me understanding," &c. You cannot ask a schoolmaster to give you understanding, but you may ask your divine Master to do so.

"*Remember Jesus Christ.*" (Omit "that.") It is the Person, not the fact, that we are called upon to remember. Christ is the One whom we are to follow, the true pattern of personal, faithful service. "*Jesus Christ*" points to His life on this side the cross; "Christ Jesus" to Him as risen and glorified. "Remember Jesus Christ," writes Paul to Timothy; be His good soldier, and be prepared for an early death and a rough one.

"*Of the seed of David.*" Does not this remind us of David's suffering and endurance before his time of reigning came? The Son of David, born to the kingdom, had to say, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought." Yet surely there is hope connected with the corn of wheat buried in the ground. "If it die it bringeth forth much fruit." So the apostle says, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus. Death worketh in us, but life in you." (2 Cor. iv. 10, 12.)

"Remember Jesus Christ *raised from the dead according to my gospel.*" "Knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you." (2 Cor. iv. 14.) "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." In Phil. iii. we see a man desiring to be *altogether* conformed to Christ in His sufferings and in His death, looking forward to resurrection.

Those who gathered to David in the cave of Adullam,

risking their lives for him, and afterwards having a place around his throne, are typical of those who follow Christ. The character of our soldiership is to be according to the character of Christ.

"Wherein I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds; but the word of God is not bound." The gospel Paul preached was a suffering gospel; they turned it out of doors, and he was prepared to suffer likewise. Let us not go where the message we carry is not accepted, but let us suffer with the gospel. With God's enemies we can have no fellowship, but we can pray for them. "They can bind me," said the apostle, "but they cannot bind God's word; it can still '*run* and be glorified.'" And even his bonds he turns to good account, as we learn from the epistles he wrote when a prisoner. In Ephesians iv. 3 he reminds us of a better bond—"the *bond* of peace;" in Colossians iii. 14 that "love" "is the *bond* of perfectness;" and again, while telling Philemon that Onesimus was begotten in his bonds, he loves to write of the "*bonds* of the gospel." Thus does he teach us how to get profit out of our afflictions.

"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." When the sorrows of saints are very great the word "elect" is often used. (See Matt. xxiv. 22; Luke xviii. 7; Rom. viii. 31-39.) "Knowing, brethren, your election of God." (1 Thess. i. 4.) When Moses had to go amongst the brickmakers God says, "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. I have surely seen the affliction of my people." Moses could then go and cast in his lot with them, though he was a prince and they were brickmakers, because he knew that God loved them. We are in danger in these days of forgetting the doctrine of election. Let us keep in mind

how Christ preaches it in the gospel of John: "No man can come unto Me, except the Father which hath sent Me draw him ;" "all that the Father hath given Me shall come unto Me." (John vi. 37, 44.)

In our gospel ministry let us ever remember to preach repentance toward God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to take the word of God as a whole. Preach the holiness, the righteousness, the justice of God ; preach also His mercy, His forgiveness, His faithfulness, His grace, and His love. But do not be afraid to preach the doctrine of election, as we have it in Romans ix. The moment anyone is afraid of any chapter of Scripture there is something wrong. In writing to Timothy the apostle thinks of the "eternal glory" as the portion of the elect, and therefore he is ready to endure all things for their sake during the little while of his sojourn on earth.

We now have the *fourth* of Paul's "faithful sayings" (the fifth is in Titus iii. 8). "*It is a faithful saying : If we died with Him, we shall also live with Him.*" A cheering certainty to us, for every true believer has died in Christ ; that is a past fact ; now comes the present tense : "*If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him : if we deny Him, He will also deny us.*" As believers we have power in proportion as we suffer ; the recompense will be in the reigning day. What we shall be recompensed for will have cost us something. All that Christ has was obtained through suffering, and so will it be with us. "If children, then heirs ; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ ; if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together," or "with Him." So also in proportion as we deny Him, He will deny us. "*If we believe not, He abideth faithful : He cannot deny Himself.*" We shall find it true, whether we now believe it or not. The denying here corresponds with the burning up of the wood,

hay, and stubble of 1 Corinthians iii. A man will then lose what he thought he had gained for eternity, for Christ disowns his work. Hebrews xii. teaches us that the faith of the Lord Jesus rewarded His death with joy, and Paul says, "From henceforth let no man trouble me : for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus," the stigma, the brands that showed how he had suffered for his Lord.

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." Instead of suffering there is a tendency to *word-fighting*. The word for *striving* here is different from the striving for masteries in verse 5 ; that meant contending in the games with a view to a crown. How solemn is the apostle's charge against strife of words ! Let us beware of "words to no profit," and remember how dangerous to hearers is strife about them.

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." In the Old Testament we have a type of this in the dividing of the sacrifices into pieces, and laying them in order upon the altar. In this careful dividing of the truth Timothy was to show himself to God a proved man, like a soldier who has been tested in the war. Abraham was a proved man the moment he took the knife to slay son.

"But shun profane and vain babblings : for they will increase unto more ungodliness." If the word of truth is not rightly divided, and word-fighting ensues, then will there be a further descending to "vain babblings." Let us neither go with babblers, nor listen to their babblings ; let ours be a living faith in God's word that will work by love, and let our knowledge of the truth be such as shall lead to godliness. (Titus i. 1.) The babblings lead to ungodliness,

and become a spreading, eating canker, ending in the denial of fundamental truth, and not only unsettling, but overthrowing, the faith of some.

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal." It has two marks; the inward—"The Lord knoweth them that are His;" and the outward—"And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Abraham was known by God, and he separated himself from Sodom. God knew Lot, but he did not separate himself from Sodom, though he groaned in it, and vexed his righteous soul. In Nahum i. 7 we read, "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him." The house may be in never so ill a condition, but the foundation remains the same; and where there cannot be church fellowship, there may be individual godliness.

A "great house" has a variety of "vessels," not only "of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth, and some to honour, and some to dishonour." The vessel unto honour must be purged from all the evils previously referred to—strifes, babblings, iniquity. It is not outward separation from persons that is required, but purging from evil things within. The vile vessels may be put to use, even as Paul uses Hymenæus and Philetus to warn us against departure from the truth. Compare with this, "Moab is my wash-pot," while of Judah it is said, "Judah is my law-giver." (Psalm cviii.)

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Who are meant by "the sons of God" in Genesis vi. 2?

IN Psalm lxxxii. 6 we read: "I said, Ye are gods, and all of you children (sons) of the Most High;" and these words are quoted by our Lord, in John x. 34, 35, as applying to man—to those "to whom

the word of God came." Here, however, the expression "sons of God" is used in contrast with "daughters of men;" and as "man" stands in antithesis to "God," it seems to mark out those in the line of Seth who "called themselves by the name of the Lord" (Genesis iv. 26, *margin*), thereby distinguishing themselves from the seed of Cain. But in Genesis vi. we see the breaking down of that distinguishing separation which had preserved a godly remnant. The mingling of the two seeds led to great things; but the whole race hurried on in violence and corruption till the flood came and destroyed them all—Noah alone maintaining his integrity, and walking with God. The marked recurrence of these evil features in our days is a loud call to the children of God to heed the command, "Be ye separate."

How is the forgiveness of our trespasses on the condition of our forgiving others, as in Matt. vi. 14, 15, to be reconciled with such passages as Eph. iv. 32, where forgiveness is absolute and unconditional to the believer in Christ?

THE forgiveness of the *sinner* at the bar of God, judicially considered, is absolute and free, resting solely on the sin-bearing of Christ. In this aspect the believer stands forgiven and accepted in Christ; but in Matt. vi. 14, 15, 1 John i. 9, and similar passages, our relation to God as *children* comes into view, and we need parental forgiveness to secure to our souls the joy of our family relationship. Sin judicially forgiven, and for ever put away from the sight of the Judge, may yet be remembered by the Father, who has to correct and chasten His children to make them practically partakers of His holiness. Hence in Matt. vi. God is spoken of as "your heavenly Father." The relation of Father secures salvation, but it also ensures discipline, because God's love to those who are born of Him cannot lightly pass over what grieves His Spirit and renders us unlike Himself. It is this which gives its sweet significance to the prayer our Lord taught His disciples, beginning with the words "*Our Father*," according to which we can only say, "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." The objection to the use of this petition, on the ground of its *conditional* character, is untenable, because the answer to prayer generally is, by the Lord's words in John xv. 7, made conditional on our obedience. "*If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.*" Our prayers have no guarantee of being heard apart from our obedience.

SANCTIFICATION AND CONSECRATION.

NOTES OF ADDRESSES AT A CONFERENCE.

IN the setting apart of Aaron and his sons for priestly ministry (Exodus xxix.) a bullock was offered as a sin-offering, and one ram as a whole burnt-offering, which ascended to God as a sweet-smelling savour, a savour of rest. Concerning the other ram, the ram of consecration, we read, "Thou shalt take the other ram; and Aaron and his sons shall put their hands upon the head of the ram"—showing identification, as in the other offerings. "Then shalt thou kill the ram, and take of his blood, and put it upon the tip of the right ear of Aaron and of his sons, and upon the thumb of their right hand, and upon the great toe of their right foot, and sprinkle the blood upon the altar round about."

In this chapter there are two main subjects—*sanctification* and *consecration*; and there is a danger of our confounding them, as the translation sometimes does. But they are perfectly distinct. Sanctification is setting apart, and consecration is the filling the hands of the priests in their service and approach to God; for every priest must have something to offer.

Sanctification is separation from evil, or, in the full sense of the word, separation from evil and setting apart for God. Now what is it that sets us apart for God? The answer is, The blood of the Lamb. What separates from evil? The blood of the Lamb. The value of atoning blood is that it separates the soul from sin, from its consequences, from its present condemnation, and from its eternal ruin. It is on the ground of that atoning blood that God is able

to say, respecting the repentant sinner who believes in Jesus, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." That precious blood has closed the gates of hell, and opened the portals of heaven. By the blood of the Lamb we are redeemed from eternal woe, and redeemed to God.

But in this chapter there is another aspect of the separating power of the blood. As applied to Aaron and his sons, we see the entire man, from head to foot, set apart from evil unto God. We are delivered not only from hell and the eternal consequences of sin, but from the present power of sin; for Christ not only died to redeem our souls, that we should not go down to the pit, but to deliver us from this present evil world.

Our Lord expresses the meaning of this sanctification with regard to Himself in that word spoken in His prayer to His Father, "For their sakes I sanctify myself." He could not make Himself more holy, in the popular sense of the word, than He was before; but He did set Himself apart, as a Nazarite, from all earthly joy, until that day when He shall drink the new wine with His ransomed ones in His Father's kingdom.

We should, then, be separate from this world, not only because it is at enmity against God, as manifested in crucifying His Son, but because Christ has set Himself apart from it unto God, that we might be sanctified through the truth, and so realize our oneness with Christ that every faculty of all our powers might be set apart to God in fellowship with Him. The blood, as it were, should stand sentinel at the ear, that we may watch and hear the instructions that come to us from the word of truth. It should make us careful what we listen to, and what books we read, lest anything from without should enter in and defile. I well remember, when a boy, reading with intense

interest Homer's *Iliad*, and the charm that it had upon my youthful imagination. I cannot read it now. Why? The blood is on the tip of the ear. The sense and value of atonement shuts out all such things; they have no charm now.

Further, the blood was put "upon the thumb of the right hand." The priest who went away from that consecration service with the blood on his right thumb could not easily put his hand to unhallowed work. So also when that precious blood was put upon the tip of the right toe, it became a duty to keep the foot in the ways of God. Can we tread unhallowed, forbidden paths when faith sees the blood of atonement?

But there is something in addition to the blood. "Thou shalt take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil; and thou shalt sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his sons, and upon their garments." We have said that the blood separates; the oil unites. The blood of Calvary has closed the gate of hell and opened the gate of heaven. When Jesus died the veil was rent in twain. The believer now has boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; but there must likewise be the power of entering. The blood gives us the title to enter, but it is the Spirit of the ascended Christ that gives us the *power*. The blood of the Lamb has redeemed us from the *lowest hell*. The Spirit of Pentecost has united our souls to Him who is in the *highest heavens*. At Calvary we see the right to communion; but the Comforter enables us to enjoy it. In Israel's case God not only provided the paschal lamb in Egypt, but He bare them upon eagles' wings to Himself; and they who wait upon the Lord renew their strength, and mount up with wings as eagles. Calvary, then, is the spoiling of principalities and powers, the closing of the gates of hell. Pentecost is the

mighty Conqueror sending down the chariot to lift us up to where He is. This is the teaching of the blood and of the anointing oil. The blood separates the link below; the oil forms the link above. The oil unites us with Christ at the right hand of God, one Spirit with the glorified One. What, then, separates us from sinners around? The blood of the Lamb. What gives us the fellowship of the saints? The baptism of one Spirit into one body.

In the case of the healed leper, the oil was only put where the blood was put. The two go together; and those who are redeemed by the blood have been anointed by the Spirit of God. But we tread the heavenly courts not only as cleansed lepers, but as a holy priesthood. Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, we worship Him who is a Spirit by the divine Pentecostal Spirit. If we attempt as redeemed ones to worship God, and bring in the energy of nature, it is only to put strange fire on the altar. The sons of Aaron alone could draw nigh to worship in the sanctuary, or to minister at God's altar, and that *by reason of their anointing*; and it is only by reason of our anointing that we have power, whether in service or worship. While Christ has charged us to go out and preach the gospel to every creature, it is only by the energy of the Spirit of God that we can really do it.

"Aaron and his sons with him." This shows us our association in living spiritual communion with the High Priest of our profession in the holy of holies. It is in fellowship with Him that we are hallowed and set apart, and also consecrated. Do we know what the true consecration of the priesthood means? Believers are very fond of saying, "Nothing in my hand I bring." That will do very well for poor sinners coming to the cross, but it will not do for worshippers within the veil. God says, "None shall appear before Me empty." What

boldness it gives to be enabled to go into the presence of God and present by faith before Him the self-same sacrifice that the High Priest is presenting for us within the veil !

One thing more we may learn is, as to our soul's sustenance. Those parts of the offering that filled the hands of Aaron and his sons were afterwards put on the altar ; the rest they fed upon. Set apart by the blood, anointed by the Spirit, we form a sacred priesthood, and eat of the food of the altar. Christ crucified feeds our souls, and truly His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. (T. N.)

Sin in the flesh is the plague within, of which the apostle speaks in Rom. vii., and which remains in the believer unchanged in its enmity and hostility to God. That which is born of the flesh remains flesh, and the Spirit does not make it subject to the law of God, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit. But is there any condemnation on account of this ? No ; for sin has already been atoned for on the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Who shall condemn ? It is Christ that died." It was Christ who was made sin for us, although He knew none, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. That blessed Jesus who sits at the right hand of God answers the question as to condemnation. Then again, "Who shall separate us ?" We read in 1 Cor. vi. 17 : "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit ;" in Rom. viii. 2 : "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." We are now in Christ, we are no longer in the flesh ; we are in the Spirit, and not in the old man ; we are to count it crucified on the cross. Let not this be a question of feeling, but of faith. God has revealed it. It is on the

ground of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus that we are called upon (having trusted in His precious blood) to reckon ourselves, as He has reckoned us, put to death on the cross of His dear Son. (Rom. vi. 11.)

When God spoke to Abraham, and said, "I have made thee a father of many nations" (Gen. xvii. 5), did he feel he was a father of many nations? Did he consider his body that was dead suddenly quickened? (Rom. iv. 17, 18, &c.) No; it was dead already; but he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief. So oneness with Christ is a divine revelation; hence the Corinthians were exhorted to be steadfast in the faith. They were taught by the Holy Ghost that they were members of the body of Christ, of Him who is the head in heaven. Hence the command in Col. ii. 7 is to walk in Him, rooted, built up in Him, established in the faith, as we have been taught. There can be no separation from Christ, even as there can be no condemnation. We are united to Him as the One risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of God. If we are to see the flesh crucified on the cross, it must be by those eyes of faith which the ungrieved Holy Ghost gives. May the Lord enable us more and more to know the separating power of the blood and the uniting power of the Holy Ghost!

(J. S.)

When the priest was set apart for God (Ex. xxix.), and the blood of the sacrifice was put upon the ear, the thumb, and the toe, the oil was sprinkled upon him in his entirety; but in the case of the leper the oil was applied as definitely as the blood to the tip of the right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and to the great toe of the right foot, but *upon* the blood. The cleansed leper's hands were then marvelously filled with a variety of precious offerings for God. The leper's experience was an individual experience. The

priests were anointed on the ground of family birth; the leper on account of his own sense of need.

In the epistle to the Romans the same distinction may be seen between believers *as a whole* and believers in their *individual* experience of uncleanness. In chapter v. all believers are seen justified by the blood, and then the Holy Ghost sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts. In chapter viii. Paul becomes more personal, and in effect says, "I am the filthy man of chapter vii. and the triumphant man of the end of chapter viii." He does not say "I" in chapter v., but in chapters vii. viii. he speaks personally. It is as if he would say in chapter vii., "I have stood in the presence of my God, and have learned that I am a leper;" and in chap. viii. he stands a stronger man than ever; for in it he not only says, "There is no condemnation, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus freed me" (R.V.) the moment I believed, but he says, "*I* am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, shall separate." These are pages of experience for every-day life, but especially for such as are most in the front in God's gospel work, and in His church work. The only leper in Israel's camp in Num. xii. was in the house of Aaron; it was Aaron's own sister. We have yet to learn what the issue of this flesh is, and to mourn it; we learn it as Moses learnt it, in the leprous hand. (Ex. iv. 6.)

Uzziah the king was another fore-front person, and also a leper (2 Chron. xxvi.); and at his death Isaiah was taught that he and the nation were morally lepers also. (Isa. vi.) As worshippers cleansed with the live coal off God's altar, we have to preach the gospel of the grace of God to a leprous generation; therefore we have need to learn again and again Romans vii., that we may have again and again the enjoyment of Romans viii.

(H. D.)

THE ABUNDANT ENTRANCE.

A SHIP may come into harbour almost a wreck—sails gone, masts lost, and cargo thrown overboard, showing how disastrous has been the voyage. Another may enter full sail and well-laden, having successfully weathered storm and tempest. So also one Christian may enter into his heavenly rest “scarcely saved,” having been almost lost, like the person described in 1 Cor. iii., whose work is burnt up, and who is saved “yet so as by fire.” Another may enter the joy of his Lord with a “Well done, good and faithful servant;” his work approved, and himself finding not only an entrance, but an abundant entrance, into the everlasting kingdom.

A solemn question for each believer is, Which of these is to be mine? And in order to answer this question, and gather a little light and counsel from our heavenly Father’s treasury, we would turn attention to 2 Peter i. 1–11, words written for us by the Spirit of our God to stir us up, and to put us in remembrance of what stands before us, for gain or for loss, in that eternity towards which we are so swiftly hastening.

The first four verses tell us of our standing in Christ through that “precious faith *in* the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ.” This is the only passage in the New Testament in which the expression the “righteousness of Christ” occurs. In the epistle to the Romans we read of “the righteousness of God” as revealed in the gospel—a righteousness that exacted the utmost penalty of His broken law from the suffering Surety, God sparing not His own Son, and thus revealing the unbending, unalterable righteousness of the divine sentence against sin. God’s decree was, and is, “The soul that sinneth shall die,”

and the death of Christ in the sinner's stead reveals the righteousness of God, whereby He can righteously forgive all who accept His appointed atonement, while at the same time it reveals the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The cross of Christ tells of "the day of salvation" and of the riches of God's grace, but it also tells of "the day of wrath," and of "the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

We thus find the foundation of our standing in the righteousness of God in Christ. Development and growth are found "in the knowledge," personal and practical, "of God and of Jesus our Lord." "Life eternal," our Lord says, "is to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." It is in this knowledge that "grace and peace" are multiplied, and that the life in Christ becomes a life more abundant (John x. 10); for "divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness" through the "precious promises," whereby we are made "partakers of the divine nature." In the power of a risen Christ we are called to maintain our standing, all that we need in order to escape corruption being secured to us so that we may be "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Through the bestowal of the divine nature in regeneration, and of divine power by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, surely we can say, "All things are ours;" for all the resources of God, who hath called us to show forth "His own glory and virtue," are at our disposal.

Thus we are reminded of our responsibility, and in verse 5 (R.V.) we read, "Yea, and for this very cause, adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply virtue;" that is, God has come forward in infinite grace and met our utmost need, first of our sins in giving redemption through the blood of Christ, and then of our weakness in giving

the Spirit's indwelling power, and now He claims on our part "all diligence." The word in the original is not merely *giving* all diligence, as in the A.V., but implies the bringing it in alongside of something else already spoken of.

The thought contained in this word is most important. God has done His part for you; He has made full provision in Christ: now do yours; and what is that? It is to bring all diligence to bear in the use of all that God has placed at your disposal. Here lies the secret of the essential difference between one Christian and another. God may give five talents to one and only two to another; but if the "all diligence" of each doubles what he has received, God regards them with equal approval; they stand precisely on the same footing, and both receive an equally abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord. But the measure of the abundance indicates the measure of the diligence, and therefore he who received one pound and gained other ten will receive proportionately more than he who only gained five.

The word of God is full of utterances maintaining this essential principle—that God deals in righteousness with those whom He first saves in grace. "To him that hath shall more be given." "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." "The diligent soul shall be made fat." Paul had a race set before him, and he ran it; a battle, and he fought it; a faith, and he kept it; and hence felt sure of an abundant entrance into the glory; for the righteous Judge had in reserve for him "the crown of righteousness."

On the subject of diligence, and of its opposite, slothfulness, much instruction may be gained from the study of the book of Proverbs. But when we speak of diligence we do not refer primarily to outward work, but to diligence of soul in communion with God, in prayer, and in reading of His word, on which depend results in service; for dili-

gence must begin within, if it is to be effectual in that which is without. The lack of this makes service legal, and work barren and fruitless.

In verses 5-7 we have a list of heavenly graces, which we are to seek diligently to add to that precious faith in which we stand. We will briefly enumerate them: (1) *virtue*; that is, courage to obey; (2) *knowledge*, the outcome of obedience; (3) *temperance*, better self-control, as that which holds all in subjection to the will of Christ; (4) *patience*; that is, endurance under trial (compare James i.); (5) *godliness*, as that to which all trials are to lead; (6) *brotherly kindness*; that is, love of the brotherhood of faith; (7) and lastly *love*, a divine love that embraces all, saint or sinner, friend or foe. We will not enlarge more upon this glorious catalogue, but may our hearts be occupied with it, and may our souls be exercised regarding each particular.

It is as these things are in us and abound that we become neither barren (idle) nor unfruitful. The two words are not identical; for, alas! how much active work there may be, and yet no fruit. Wood, hay, and stubble may be built up with great toil, only to be burnt up. All idleness must be unfruitful, but all activity is not fruitful. Fruit can only exist when there is an abiding in Christ and a cleaving to His words.

This diligent abounding in activity and fruitfulness leads "*unto the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*;" that is, to an increasing acquaintance with Him, a growing up into Christ.

When, however, "these things" are lacking through want of diligence in the divine life, blindness and short-sightedness come in. The near becomes great, and the distant small; things of time are important, and things eternal are little heeded, till even the very standing in the cleansing of the precious blood is forgotten, and the ship-

wrecked soul, almost lost, is only with difficulty saved. Such will have to learn through eternity what has been sacrificed and lost in time through sloth and negligence.

Now come in the final words of the apostle with which we began, "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things" (that is, those of which the catalogue has been given) "ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (R.V.)

Let us seek to act like Joshua, who, because he knew God was with him, did not take it easy, but in one of the most momentous periods of his warfare "went up from Gilgal all night;" and then "the Lord discomfited" his enemies, and they "slew them with a great slaughter," the Lord also casting on them great hailstones from heaven. (Josh. x. 9-11.) It was thus David met Goliath; he sought five smooth stones, and then *ran* to meet the man who dared to defy the armies of the living God.

May the Lord in mercy stir up all our hearts and arouse us from our dreams; for we are in much danger of dreaming of battles never fought, and of victories never won. The Lord awake His saints to the stern reality of the life and godliness to which we are called. H. G.

WHITHER SHALL I GO ?

TO THE "PLACE OF REPAIR."

(Joel iii. 16, margin.)

To the *place of repair* will I fly—
 To the harbour of safety so nigh,
 That the Lord whom I love
 May there quickly remove
 Each spot that offends His pure eye.

TO THE "PLACE OF REFUGE."

(Prov. xiv. 26.)

To the strong *place of refuge* I run
When temptation would scorch like the sun ;
On Christ would I lean,
He my rock and my screen :
For me He has victory won.

TO "QUIET RESTING-PLACES."

(Isa. xxxii. 8.)

In the *resting place* quiet and sure,
Far away from the world and secure,
I gaze on His face,
Who once stood in my place,
And so to the end shall endure.

TO "THE EVERLASTING ARMS."

(Deut. xxxii. 27.)

In the *arms everlasting* I lie,
To the heart of my Father so nigh,
There breathe out my praise
For His marvellous ways
While journeying home to the sky.

TO "HIS FEET."

(Luke x. 39.)

And low down at *His feet* would I learn,
Whene'er from His service I turn ;
No lessons so sweet
As those learnt at His feet—
His words make my very heart burn !

TO MY "WATCH-TOWER."

(Isa. xxi. 8.)

On the *watch-tower*, up high, would I stand,
For surely "the Lord is at hand ;"
I know not the day
He may call me away
To serve Him in yonder bright land.

THE MORE EXCELLENT WAY,

AS DESCRIBED IN 1 COR. XIII.

CAN we conceive a number of our fellow-creatures becoming suddenly possessed of remedies for all the ills that afflict humanity? Strange in every way as it may reasonably appear, such was nevertheless the case. Through the overflowing mercy of the Most High, such power was entrusted to certain members of our fallen race for the unspeakable benefit of those around. At Pentecost, in the city of Jerusalem, a place just before rendered infamous by the murder of their Sovereign, was this wonderful favour bestowed upon some poor men who acknowledged Jesus of Nazareth as their God-appointed King. Consequent upon His ascension into His Father's presence the Holy Spirit was sent down to this earth, bearing with Him these momentous endowments for the children of men. A rushing, mighty wind, filling the house, indicated the approach and presence of the Spirit. The recipients were not invested with jewelled crowns, chains of gold, or any earthly tokens of nobility or official dignity. Cloven tongues, like as of fire, divine emblems of authority, sat upon each of them. Filled with the Spirit, they were thus, as servants of the Lord Jesus, indicated as the special agents for the display of God's goodwill to man.

Immediately they begin to announce glad tidings, perhaps only partially known to themselves before, in languages of which they had previously been entirely ignorant. That they were "unlearned and ignorant men" brought out more fully the reality of the miracle. The wisdom of God in their previous selection was now clearly evinced.

Though the immediate occasion 'called forth only the power of speech, the munificence of God extended far beyond. Various gifts which are mentioned in the epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, and Ephesians, all bestowed by the same Spirit, may, for the sake of a clearer view, be thus arranged—

1. Gifts for the body : Healing, miracles.
2. For the mind : Wisdom, knowledge, prophecy, languages, interpretation, teaching.
3. For the soul : Faith, exhortation, discernment of spirits.
4. For control in the church : Apostles, prophets, teachers, helps, governments.

Looking at these gifts, do we not learn how great and profound was the consideration, the solicitude, the tenderness of the living God our Father, of His beloved Son, and of His Spirit, for those whom He had redeemed unto Himself? No necessity had been overlooked ; each was provided for.

If bodily disease occurred, those persons who possessed the gift of healing would hasten to restore health, whatever the nature of the malady might be. The lame man at the temple gate ; the cripple at Lystra ; the cures and casting out of devils in Samaria (Acts viii. 7) ; the restorations effected by the shadow of Peter (Acts v. 15) ; and by the handkerchiefs and aprons from the person of Paul (Acts xix. 12)—these are familiar instances. But beyond these, astonishing as they are, was the restoration to life of the dead bodies of Dorcas and Eutychus. Such was and is the power of the Holy Spirit, by whom all the people of God are sealed unto the day of redemption, when, by the same Spirit, God will cause these our mortal bodies to arise with vigour altogether new, no longer liable to death or decay.

Though we naturally think of the body and its attendant

circumstances as of primary importance, what would the poor body be, even in resurrection, apart from a corresponding intellect? The body may be in health, yet useless, if destitute of mental faculties. The gifts for the mind are all-important, and were lovingly granted. Compare the most eminent men of antiquity, however great their attainments, with the poor fishermen of Galilee after the great day of Pentecost. These knew nothing of science or art; but on which side was the superiority of mind? While the most advanced of the philosophers were blindly groping after something they knew not what, and either worshipping the things made by human hands, or an imaginary idea held in reverence by their forefathers, these men were now able to tell them of the Creator of heaven and earth; of His desire to save them from the consequences of their guilt; of the means He had taken for the full accomplishment of this gracious purpose in the vicarious offering of His beloved Son; of resurrection, and of the life to come. This wisdom and knowledge, so familiar to us, was unknown previous to Pentecost. This was elevating knowledge; this is heavenly. All else is earthly; useful for our time condition, but not beyond.

The ability to foretell the future—another mysterious endowment—likewise raised them high above their fellow-men, who are ever craving for intelligence of this description, and prone to exalt those who profess to gratify the desire. To be the personal recipients of the divine counsels is a high dignity; to utter, to comprehend, and make them known to others, not in one single language as of old, but in many dialects, conveys a greater amount of favour than was granted even to Joseph or to Daniel.

Then, for the further strengthening of the souls of such as were already saved through faith in the Lord Jesus,

there were those among them to whom the Holy Spirit gave such conspicuous faith, that they counted not their lives dear unto themselves. Forgetting things behind, and reaching out to those before, they were able, in the midst of deep affliction, to comfort others with the consolations wherewith God comforted themselves; and as examples to the flock, they exhorted them to continue in the faith, and to conduct themselves as disciples of Christ and as children of God.

Further, as regards the necessary supervision and control of those newly brought to Christ, as yet uninstructed and undisciplined in the ways of God, the Holy Spirit bestowed in the church supernaturally-endowed apostles, prophets, teachers, helps, governments, for the perfecting of the saints unto the work of service; that each might be taught to use his gift in building up his fellow-saints into the One Body, the body of Christ, which corresponds with the human body, inasmuch as no part is inert, but each individual part contributes its active energy to the well-being of all the others, and reciprocally receives strength and nourishment from the harmonious action of the whole system. This interior action is altogether distinct from any exterior service that may be performed, as the vital health of each portion of the human frame is indispensable to its external activity and usefulness.

This, the divine scheme, was, however, not carried out. Human infirmity hindered its development. Like every other purpose entrusted to the hands of man, it at once failed. These supernatural gifts were soon withdrawn, and have never been restored. The causes are not far to seek. The disintegration of the body made the gifts inapplicable. Had they been continued, it would have fostered, increased, and sanctioned the division into parties, to prevent which was a main object of their

bestowment. What the family of God has thereby lost, it is impossible to calculate.

But as to the recipients of these vast and splendid endowments, their former condition remained unchanged. Their fellow-countrymen still recognized them as Galileans, and the Sanhedrim at once perceived that they were unlearned men. While these new gifts were in full and brilliant exercise, and their faith in the Lord Jesus, and devotedness to Him, most eminently conspicuous, the human nature, with its tendencies, was not eradicated. Their boldness, fortitude, and resignation before that violent assembly of rulers did not preclude partiality in the distribution of alms, though this was soon rectified. Human infirmity still remained. Even in such men as Barnabas and Paul, both full of the Holy Ghost, dispute, in which an unyielding spirit, so contrary to the meekness and gentleness of Christ, was evinced, and produced estrangement between these devoted friends and fellow-labourers in the gospel, men who had hazarded their lives for the sake of the Lord Jesus. In the Corinthian assembly, the members of which "came behind in no gift," it is seen that these very gifts gave rise to self-exaltation and disturbance, frustrating the very purpose for which they were bestowed. Highly does the apostle estimate these precious gifts; and encourages the desire and prayer to obtain them; yet he finds it essential to prevent the abuse of them. Two modes in which they might be abused are mentioned. Though the spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets, yet would they talk at the same time; and those able to speak foreign languages would speak, though no one present understood them. Each being emulous of his own gift, he would display it, whether to the benefit of others or not.

This tendency the apostle has to check, and his mode of

doing it shows the wisdom from above. He brings to their notice a more excellent way, a way more in accordance with their Lord's commands, as well as His example. *Love* is the choice remedy, the actings of which principle he proceeds to describe, putting himself in the three first verses as the impersonation of the idea he deprecates, as he does elsewhere, in Rom. vii. 9-25, and 1 Cor. iv. 6.

He first declares that the ability to talk human, or even angelic, languages, if love be absent, does not elevate him above the position of a horn or a cymbal; and this, from one who spoke more languages than any other man, is putting the faculty very low indeed in comparison. Sound without utility may be profitable to those outside the pale of the Church, but it is wearisome to those within.

Next he takes up a higher class of gifts, those which indicate mental superiority, the possessor of which is still more apt to pride himself. Prophecy, unlimited wisdom and knowledge, faith such as could remove mountains (Matt. xvii. 20) may be mine, he says; yet if love be wanting, far from being aggrandized, I am inferior to all. It is worthy to be noticed that these are the qualities which engage the highest esteem among the faithful. He who possesses them in any measure, however minute, is at once raised above his fellows by concurrent acclamation; he attracts followers, becomes a centre of admiration, a party leader. And this weakness still prevails, though he who surpassed all others in these respects declares plainly, "Without love I am nothing." He explains afterwards what the Spirit desires us to understand by love.

The hope of reward appears in the next expression. Property given away for the sake of Jesus (Matt. xix. 29) will be restored a hundredfold. Life surrendered for His sake will be munificently rewarded. But there is a possibility of these acts being done through ostentation or

desire of renown, in which case, though others may benefit, such acts profit not the giver, love being absent. The love that entails reward must arise from love to the Lord Himself, or to His people as belonging to Him, or in other ways of obedient service which He has commanded.

Having thus shown the pre-eminent importance of this fruit of the Spirit, he proceeds to show how it operates both in its negative and in its positive aspects. Of the fifteen points enumerated, nine may be said to be negative—what love does *not* do; six positive—what it *does*. All of them relate to the intercourse of Christians, whether in the assembly or elsewhere. All of them have special reference to the misuse of the gifts of the Spirit. Again, all of them have a still wider bearing upon human life generally. For these are principles which, were they adopted and obeyed, would put an end to all discord between man and man; would soften the asperities of his nature; totally change the character of his domestic, social, and national relations, transforming his present course of conduct into a demeanour like that of God. In whatever measure they are adopted, the character becomes so far transformed. They seem indeed to contain an expansion and embodiment of the summary of the second table of the Mosaic code, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Long-suffering among Christians is indispensable to their concord. Irritability is part of our corrupt nature. Rather than control it, we find it easier to isolate ourselves. By abandoning fellowship we obstruct our own growth and the growth of the other members of the one body.

Love does not envy the gifts bestowed by God upon another of His children, nor does it boast of its own, nor is it inflated thereby. In lowliness of mind it esteems others better than itself, so thorough is the self-renunciation.

Love is not discourteous, either by look, gesture, word, or conduct. Politeness is an idea well understood, though difficult to define. It results from respect due to others, and is combined with the relinquishment of its own immediate personal objects. No one reading the narrative in Gen. xiii. 8-11 could fail to perceive the contrast between the grandeur of Abraham's courtesy and the discourtesy, to say the least, in the behaviour of his nephew. Love is not irritated, nor does it impute bad motives. It does not rejoice in wrong-doing, but with the truth it does rejoice. (Rom. i. 18 ; ii. 8.)

Love's activities are further enumerated. It is kind, gracious both to bad and good, imitating God. It does not omit its kindness, even where it meets with nothing but opposition. Moreover, where perverseness or ill-will is displayed, love conceals it, covers it from observation. If it cannot be so concealed, love is ready to believe any explanation that may be tendered ; but if there be no reasonable ground for such belief, love still hopes for amendment ; and if further experience should destroy this hope, love, unwearied, continues in endurance.

Herein, indeed, is presented to us an epitome of the conduct of our God towards ourselves, whether as His children or as we were when yet strangers and enemies. Over and above the desperate wickedness of Israel as disclosed in the books of Moses, there was one circumstance more exasperating than all, which God never mentioned for many centuries, keeping it concealed till at length constrained to let it be known. In Amos v. 25, 26, this fearful iniquity is disclosed.

The love of the Lord Jesus towards His servants is also presented to us in the conduct here prescribed, every particular bringing to our minds the gentleness of His ways towards ourselves.

Likewise we may discern the love of the Spirit, so greatly grieved by our coldness, perverseness, ignorance, and obstinacy, yet never naming to others the ill conduct He daily witnesses. Nevertheless it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Resistance to the strivings of His Spirit brought on the deluge; continued resistance to His Spirit brought on the rejection of Israel. (Acts vii. 51.)

The love never fails. The period for prophetic utterance will close, though for the time highly important. The season for becoming acquainted with and speaking other languages will come to an end, and likewise that for the attainment of our present measure of knowledge, which is limited, though bestowed by the Spirit. Our present acquaintance with the deep things of God, and consequent ability to make them known, is only partial; but in the perfect condition, the state in resurrection, these limitations will be at an end. While these are transitory, love is durable, for ever permanent. On this account also its superiority is manifest.

As an allied consequence of the temporary nature of these endowments, the apostle recurs to a well-known feature of human life; namely, that the objects and desires of infancy are not those of mature age, and so the importance of these gifts fades away in comparison with what will be hereafter. The self-aggrandizement, to be obtained by the display of them, is also inconsistent with the glorious epoch in prospect.

A further argument in the same direction is that we are for the time being but imperfectly acquainted with one another. Each is an enigma to his neighbour, only partially understood. In the day that is coming there will be no concealment, no disguise. The purposes of our God in regard to each of His children will be well known by the

other children. The temperament, liabilities, tendencies, temptations, circumstances, course of education, &c., will be no longer hidden. Fraternal and cordial communications, as we wander together along the banks of the river of life, will unfold the secrets of the ways in which the Lord was leading us while below, bringing forth from each heart acclamations of joy and thanksgiving to Him who has washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and His Father.

The idea that we shall ever know God as thoroughly as He knows us, cannot be entertained; for not only is it impossible for the creature to know as much as the Creator, the finite as the Infinite, but such a conception is altogether foreign to the purport of the chapter, and extraneous to the line of argument.

The concluding words of the passage have often been strangely separated from their connection, and made to appear as an abstract statement. Can it be true that in the heavens the children of God will have no occasion or opportunity for the exercise of faith or hope? On the contrary, will there not be the perpetual employment of both? The happiness of a beloved child in its parent's house is not diminished by the consciousness of being dependent on its father for everything it needs, and the expectation that all that need will be supplied. Faith and hope are thus in constant exercise, closely uniting together parent and child in affection. Were this link wanting there would be distance arising from independence.

The *now* abiding of faith, hope, and love is the carrying out of what has been said in verse 7. The pressing, the urgent necessity for maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of the peace (the peace already established by the Lord Jesus between the converted sinner and his God, and mutually between His children) demands that we

should earnestly practise the tender consideration there enjoined: "Love *believeth* all things, *hopeth* all things." Both the faith or belief, with the hope, are at present requisite. Hereafter they will not be wanted. For when we see each other clad in the resplendent white garments, with none of our hateful passions or erring natures remaining, there will be no place for them. It is owing to failure in cultivating them now, and to the abandonment of this all-prevailing principle of love, that the existing wretched state of discord and disunion in the family is owing. What excuse we shall be able to give before the throne, I know not.

This commanding, principal fruit of the Spirit, far from throwing the other fruits into the shade, tends to bring them all forth in fuller and richer abundance, to ripen and mature them, to the glory and praise of our God.

R. N.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

In interpreting the Canticles, to whom would "the watchmen" refer?

IN a song such as this we would regard the watchmen as the ministering spirits, sent forth for the service of those who shall be heirs of salvation (Heb. i. 14), and who hold in their hands the dispensational and providential dealings of God. Hence in Canticles they point to the instruction and discipline which God through them administers to His Church and to individual saints. In Canticles iii. 3 they serve for guidance, and in chap. v. 7. for chastening, the same word being used in the latter case, though rendered "keepers." It is somewhat in this way that Nebuchadnezzar regards the administrator of God's judgment, when he hears of "the watcher" who gave command to cut down the great tree, and uttered God's sentence against himself: "This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." (See Dan. iv. 13, 17, 23.) These "watchers" are God's watchmen, carrying out His will.

LEISURE FOR PRAYER.

THE thought of *leisure* for prayer is conveyed in the Greek phrase in 1 Cor. vii. 5,* rendered by Alford, "that ye may have undisturbed leisure for prayer." The word which is used here, *scholazo*, is derived from the noun *scholé*, a school, a place of leisure for learning, and suggests many matters of contemplation in connection with prayer. Prayer without ceasing is the habitual privilege of the child of God, and without it the spiritual life will flag, and faith, hope, and love will cease to grow; but there is something more in the passage before us, and to this we would call attention; for if ever undisturbed leisure for prayer and communion with God was needed, it is now, to prevent our being carried away by the impetuosity and restlessness of the times in which our lot is cast.

Illustrations of such seasons of special prayer are not wanting in the life of our Lord. After He had taught and healed "great multitudes" "He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed." (Luke v. 16.) When about to choose His twelve apostles, we are told that "He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God." (Chap. vi. 12.) When for the first time He was going to give a prediction of His death, we read, "And it came to pass as He was alone praying." (Chap. ix. 18.) So also on the mount, before His transfiguration, Luke tells us that "He took Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray" (v. 28), and to these and other instances must be added that ever-sacred scene in the garden of Gethsemane before His passion.

* σχολάζετε τη προσευχη.

These were special seasons, and the Man of prayer, who hallowed His whole life with its breath, has thus left us an example of going apart to some spot where unhindered He might hold continuous communion with His Father. In the minds of the disciples a peculiar sacredness evidently attached to these seasons; for we read that on one occasion, "as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray." (Luke xi. 1.) They waited till He ceased, we know not how long; but they left their Master undisturbed, and when His season of prayer ended, they came to be taught how to pray themselves, and in a few short words He gave them the key-note of every prayer that ascends from our needy and weary hearts to the Father in heaven.

In reference to Elijah's mighty prayer for the withholding of the rain, and again for its outpouring, James tells us that "he prayed earnestly," or, literally, "in prayer he prayed." To be "*in prayer*" implies an undisturbed abiding in the attitude and spirit of prayer, and did we know more of this we should know more of the presence of God, whose face is sought in real prayer, and in due time is found, and then we should be "praying in the Holy Ghost."

Oftentimes our prayer is little more than an act of homage; it ought to be far more, and it is for this that unbroken leisure is so helpful. It seems taken for granted by the apostle that such occasions would be sought for by all saints, even, if need be, to the temporary disarrangement of the usual order of family life, and of daily work.

Our souls need "schooling" in the matter of prayer, and this is difficult of attainment amidst the daily claims of life. Where impossibilities lie in the way, God can and will make good to the waiting soul all its needs; but when

there is the possibility of taking advantage of such seasons, let not the claims of family life or of business life too readily stand in the way. For certain ends unwonted means are necessary, and this our slothful spirits are slow to realize. We read in Solomon's words that "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat." (Prov. xiii. 4.) Seeking implies toil, and the woman who lost her piece of silver lit the candle, swept the house, and sought *diligently* till the lost piece was found. Thus God seeks the poor lost sinner, and thus we must seek His face; and let us remember that God has not told us to seek Him in vain, as if it were a bootless toil, but as an infinite reward is offered when He says, "Seek ye my face," may our hearts reply, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." (See Ps. xxvii. 8.) How many Penuels should we then find in our journey through life! It might be a continual Penuel all the way through, till we stand in the presence of the King.

Canticles iii. 1-5; v. 2-8, might profitably be pondered in order to learn the sorrows, the losses, and the sufferings which befall the soul when communion has been broken through spiritual slothfulness. To avoid this, then, we need not only habitual prayerfulness, but those unhindered seasons of communion which, whatever the cost of time or of aught else, will amply repay the seeking saint, and give a freshness and a vigour to his heavenly life that will leave its impress, and mark him as one who has been on the mount with God. Moses was distinguished from his fellows when he had been those second forty days and nights in Sinai with God; for his face shone, and told where he had been, and the children of Israel were afraid to look upon him.

Let us seek to enter more into our Saviour's words to His disciples—"Come ye yourselves apart into a desert

place, and rest a while." (Mark vi. 31.) It is well to be called from our work and our self-occupation with what we have been doing and saying.

It is well to *work*, but it is better far to *be*, and this is only attained through that abiding in Christ which involves more than we often conceive—more watchfulness and more prayerfulness than our laggard spirits are prepared for. The slothful seeker never finds; for the promise is, "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with *all your heart*." (Jer. xxix. 13.) Oh for real integrity of heart in this matter of seeking after God! We hear of seeking sinners; would that we heard more of seeking *saints*!

We desire, then, in these days of hurry to press on fellow-saints the importance of seasons of special unhindered leisure for prayer, when we may have time, like Daniel, "to set our face unto the Lord, and to seek by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes" (chap. ix. 3), and have time to wait for the answer. (vv. 20-27.) It was thus the prophet got the vision of the first advent of the Messiah, and thus should we be enabled better to see eye to eye as to the prophetic future. We little know how much we lose through want of thus giving ourselves to prayer. The days call for prayer and intercession. We ourselves need prayer, the Church needs prayer, and intercession is needed for the world; and we have to learn to wait for answers. Let those who have the heart and the ability seek the Lord, that by the sweet fragrance of heavenly-mindedness and heavenly fellowship thereby gained they may be the means of lifting up their fellow-saints into a more Christ-like life, and into a higher walk. For let us remember that what we *are* benefits our fellow-saints far more than anything we *know*. Hence Paul's word to his son Timothy was, "Take heed to *thyself*,"

to the condition of thine own soul, to thy communion with God, to thy enjoyment of the light of His countenance; for he who was to "command and *teach*" the word of God (1 Tim. iv. 11) was himself to be an "*example* to the believers" of that which he taught. It was thus that Timothy would save himself, and those who heard him, from shallowness and instability, as well as from departure from the faith and apostasy. To us belong the triune blessings of the Israel of God, pronounced over us by our ascended High Priest:

"Jehovah bless thee, and keep thee!"

"Jehovah make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee!"

"Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace!"

We have often read these words in Numbers vi. Do we know what they mean? Do we possess the *blessings*? If we do, there has been a seeking of the Lord's face with no careless insincerity. Penuel has been reached, and we have no need to ask after the name of Him who wrestled with us. We have seen God face to face, and find our Immanuel—"God with us"—to be named, "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace." Such is the revelation God makes of Himself in Christ to the soul that seeks His face and will not give over seeking till He obtains what He seeks for. This is the school of God that we need, where we may at leisure seek after that knowledge of God Himself which can only be communicated to the soul by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Thus may we seek, and thus may we find. The treasure is very precious and very costly, and we have to learn its value before we can enjoy any fulfilment of the apostle's prayer in Eph. iii. 14-21.

H. G.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

GENESIS xxii.

"GOD cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man" to that which is evil (Jas. i. 13); but He is wont to test His people in order that He may bring out the faith and patience which He knows to have been wrought in them by His Spirit. When therefore we read that "God did tempt Abraham," the meaning is that God tested or proved him to make manifest his faith and obedience; and not only to make these graces manifest, but also to perfect them. (Jas. ii. 22.)

Let us observe how immediate was the response of Abraham to the call of God. God called him by name, "And he said, Behold, here I am." He was not taken by surprise when God spoke; he knew not what God wanted him for, but he was ready. The secret of this readiness surely was his obedience to the precept given long before, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." (Gen. xvii. 1.) In integrity and uprightness of heart Abraham was walking before God, and so was prepared to obey even such a command as God now proceeded to give him.

As we read this command, we cannot help feeling that there is a deep lesson for us in the very wording of it. It shows us how accurately God estimates the exact burden of each trial that He lays upon any one of His people. We may be in a world where "man is born unto trouble as the sparks fly upward;" but it is nevertheless true that not a single trial can come upon a child of God except through the hand of our heavenly Father, who will never suffer us to be tried beyond what He knows to be our power of endurance. Not by chance does the sorrow fall,

but rather by weight and measure is each affliction dealt out.

The word to Abraham is not simply, "Take thy son, and offer him up;" but, "Take now thy son, thine *only* son *Isaac*, whom thou lovest." As though God had said, "I know he is thine *only* son, the one in whom rest all thy hopes as to the fulfilment of long-cherished desires; I know he is thine *Isaac*, the joy of thy heart and of thy house; I know, too, thy *love* for him, and it is with the knowledge of all this that I call upon thee to offer him up to me." He fully knew the demand He was making, and He knew also that His servant and friend was by His grace able to respond to it. As one has said, "God knew that He spake to an Abraham, and Abraham knew that he had to do with a God. Faith had taught him not to argue, but obey." There is no delay on the part of the man of God, no questioning, no murmur, but simple obedience. We must remember that Abraham *saw* not the end of the trial as we see it, who have the full record before us. All he had was God's command, and we learn from Heb. xi. 17 that the secret of His obedience was *faith*—"By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac."

It is well to consider how much depended upon the life of this long-looked-for son. The fulfilment of every promise that God had given to Abraham hung upon his life; the blessing of all nations, the redemption of God's elect—yea, the very foundation of the new creation—depended upon that life for the surrender of which God now called. Abraham may not have taken in all that we with fuller teaching can discern; but he knew that the faithfulness of God was bound up with the life of Isaac, for the simple reason that God had linked his name with the promises, saying, "My covenant will I establish with Isaac;" and again, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."

(Gen. xvii. 19, 21; xxi. 12.) In the fact of Abraham's having accepted, or received to himself,* the promises we may surely find the stay of his faith.

The reference to the promises in Heb. xi. indeed seems made to enhance the sacrifice of Abraham; but, on the other hand, he knew that it was GOD who had spoken, and the word of the unchanging God was the rock of His servant's heart in that hour of trial. He knew that Isaac *must* live; for with Isaac was the covenant to be established. But if Isaac was slain, how could he live? Such a question nature could most naturally ask, and ask in vain; but Abraham was above nature. As God had triumphed over nature in giving him this child of promise, so Abraham triumphs over nature in the path of faith and obedience. He had hold of God as the living God, and his heart grasped the mighty truth of resurrection, "accounting that God was able to raise up even from the dead;" and therefore he could say to the young men, "I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." (v. 5.) How important it is to have God's word in our hearts! Abraham was keeping God's precepts, and thus was ready at His call. He evidently had God's promises laid up in his heart, and his soul was stayed upon them in the time of need. The one who deals truly with the word of God will always find God Himself at hand, and in leaning upon what He hath said the heart will lean upon Himself, and say, "He only is my rock and my salvation: He is my defence; I shall not be moved." (Ps. lxii. 6.)

If the whole chapter shows the victory of faith, surely verses 7 and 8 show especially the *calmness* of faith.

* In Heb. xi. 17 the R.V. reads, "Yea, he that *gladly received* the promises was offering up His only-begotten Son." The word expresses the hearty reception for himself of what God had promised.

Isaac, we may suppose, had often seen Abraham worship, and knowing that a *lamb* was necessary as well as fire and wood, he suddenly asks his father, "Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" If anything could have disturbed the father's heart, such a question must have done so; but however it may have been pierced it was not disturbed. In the calmness of faith Abraham casts his son upon the same God upon whom his own heart was stayed, and in so doing uttered words of prophetic import, the complete fulfilment of which we find on Calvary—"My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." But the very question reminds us that in many types of old we have contrasts as well as similarities. As we see the true Isaac bearing the wood of His cross to Golgotha, we listen in vain for any question that corresponds to that which fell upon the ear of Abraham. As an obedient son Isaac stands before us as a fitting type of Him who had the law of God in His heart, and came to do His Father's will, both as he walks by his father's side, and as he suffers himself to be bound and laid upon the altar; for no young man of twenty would have been bound by an old man against his will; but we could not say we have a perfect picture of fellowship, for the simple reason that Isaac was ignorant of the part he was to have in the matter until he reached the spot where the altar was to be erected. The blessed Son of God, on the contrary, not only as He went to Calvary under the burden of the cross, but also through the whole journey of His wondrous life, fully knew that by the appointment of God He was to be the victim, and thus went forward both in the perfect obedience of Jehovah's servant, and the perfect fellowship of Jehovah's equal.

The only word expressive of *haste* in this chapter is

found in verse 11, when the Angel-Jehovah calls from heaven—"Abraham, Abraham." Only once is the name used in verse 1. Here it is repeated; for God Himself made haste to arrest Abraham's hand, to stay the anguish of his heart, and express approval of his faith. Here again we find a contrast. God could and did spare Abraham what He did not spare Himself. When His hand raised the sword of eternal justice to pierce the heart of His only-begotten Son, who had from eternity been the object of His love, no voice could be raised to arrest that hand, or prevent the infliction of that stroke which laid Him in the lowest depths. The true Seed to whom the promises were made must actually surrender Himself to death in order that they might be fulfilled, and the way laid open to everlasting life and blessedness for all the children of the covenant. But as far as Abraham was concerned the offering was complete, the surrender was perfect; and as such God owned and accepted it. In Heb. xi. 17 two tenses are used for the word *offered*—the first denoting *completeness*, and the second intimating *arrest*; the first expressing God's acceptance of the offering as a finished thing, the second reminding us that He did not permit the knife to fall.

What a beautiful illustration of the fear of God Abraham's conduct affords—"Now I know that thou fearest God." God measures that fear, not simply by sentiment, but by self-denial and obedience. The fear of God has a much more prominent place in Scripture than it has in much of the teaching of the present day; but when we consider that God deemed this the highest commendation He could give of Abraham, in that moment of supreme devotion and obedience, we may well long to know more of it. Of a greater than Abraham it was said, "He was heard in that He feared."

And now in verse 13 we see the fulfilment, in their *first* meaning, of the words with which Abraham cast his son upon God, and have before us a very definite picture of the grand truth of substitution in connection with sacrifice. God did provide; for "Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh;" meaning, "Jehovah will provide;" and men of faith turned it into a proverb, and strengthened one another with the assurance, that "in the mount Jehovah will provide." How many godly souls may have been cheered by that precious sentence, and comforted by the light those words gave during the centuries of Egyptian bondage and afflictions before Jehovah appeared to deliver His people!

God allowed Abraham to reach the utmost limit of endurance, but did not call him to go beyond it. He required him to grasp the knife without the slightest hint that he was not to use it; but in the moment of deepest suspense light broke in upon the gloom, and the voice from heaven brought gladness to the heavy heart. He had pursued the whole journey without any intimation that a substitute would be found, but in the mount Jehovah provided one. Must not this have been a loud whisper to those who were taught of God, all through the darkness and gloom of the ages that preceded the manifestation of the Christ? "Where," many might have asked, "is that long-promised Seed?" But the household of faith knew that Jehovah would provide. And we who have learnt on Calvary how He has provided the Lamb for the great burnt-offering may well be comforted by that blessed title of our God given to us by His "friend," and remember that, however dense the gloom, and however deep

the need, it standeth written, "In the mount Jehovah will provide."

Once more is Abraham addressed ; for "after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise." (Heb. vi. 15.) We have now reached resurrection ground. The heir has passed through a typical death and resurrection, and from the dead Abraham has in a figure received him back to his bosom. It is the *third* day ; for three days in Abraham's heart and purpose has Isaac been surrendered to God, and now he is given back again. And if the measured tones in which at the first God made the demand told Abraham how fully He knew what it meant, the repetition of the words, "Thou hast not withheld thy son, *thine only son*, from me," shows us that when the trial is past God does not forget what it has been. The record is laid up with Himself, there to abide for ever. God tries the faith, which through the revelation of Himself by His Spirit He has wrought in the heart. He sustains the faith He tries, and commends the faith that has stood the test. All such faith will be "found to praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ," when sufferings borne below have done their work, and the fruit of them only abides. With reference to the prolongation of trial, one of former days has said, "God defers on purpose, that our trials may be perfect, our deliverance welcome, our recompense glorious."

Without attempting to dwell upon the weighty subjects embraced in the following verses (15-18), we may note that the results of obedience and endurance are deeper discoveries of God Himself, and also that His promises are based upon death and resurrection ; to which we can add the blessed truth, that they have all been sealed "by the blood of the everlasting covenant," and shall surely be fulfilled on the ground of the death and resurrection of the

Lord Jesus Christ. The promises before given are now repeated and amplified, and for the first time in wondrous condescension Jehovah utters His oath, and swears by Himself that all shall be accomplished. That oath stands out in its grandeur on the inspired page as the memento of this striking event. It is once called "the oath unto Isaac" (Ps. cv. 9) ; for Isaac had now shown himself to be a prepared vessel for the reception of the promise. Isaac, however, was the representative, first of Christ Himself, the true seed of Abraham, to whom the promises were made (Gal. iii. 16), and then of all who are His ; for "if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 29.) May we more truly become "imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises"! May we so walk in God's precepts as to be ready at all times to hear and obey His voice ! And may we so have His word of promise in our hearts that in the time of trial it may be to us as a rock on which our hearts are stayed ! "In God will I boast, even in His word : in Jehovah will I boast, even in His word." (Ps. lvi. 10.)

W. H. B.

GADARA ; OR, THREE REQUESTS.

MARK v. 1-21.

PLACES are rendered memorable by events, and persons by deeds. If this is true of historical localities and of men of renown, it is pre-eminently true of the Son of man, the Lord of all, the Son of the living God, and of the places in which His mighty works were done. The scenes of His life are fraught with interest and instruction ; written for our learning, they ever have a voice to us. Possessing peace with God, and having access into His presence through faith in the death and resurrection of the Lord

Jesus, we can, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, ever profit by and value increasingly the record of His life. His death atoned ; His life instructs.

What careful reader of the New Testament has failed to notice the striking points in the narrative of the Lord's brief visit to Gadara ? Often read and pondered, it is yet ever fresh, and invites further thought. Our object in this paper is to draw attention to the three requests contained in the portion cited, and to comment briefly on each :—
(1) That made by demons ; (2) That made by Gadarenes ;
(3) That made by the freed demoniac.

THE REQUEST OF DEMONS.

Demons and men are the subjects of desires. Believing and unbelieving men have their preferences and wishes, but all must bow to divine sovereignty, to the ONE WILL.

The unmanageable, self-tormented and tormenting demoniac was tamed by the approach of Jesus, and by the word of His power, and through the possessed man the demons spoke. And it is well to remember that we ourselves are ever being used, for good or for evil, by the Spirit of God or by "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience," even by Satan. May the Lord keep and use us for Himself !

This legion of demons, tormented by the presence of Jesus (their hell upon earth), disclaimed all association with Him, and, being certain of their future destiny, "*besought* Him that He would not *command* them to go out into the deep." They acknowledged His authority they *bowed* to Jesus.

"*Send* us not," for they knew they must obey—"Send us not into the *deep*." What deep ? The Sea of Galilee ? No ; that was far too shallow. Was it a deep of waters ? Nay ; but one of fire. They knew their doom, their final prison

—the abyss, the bottomless pit—and shrunk from entering it as yet.

The abyss they dreaded was that into which John in vision saw the angel cast their prince, the dragon, that old serpent the devil, and Satan, bound with a chain which he could not break, and wherein he was shut up securely, and rendered powerless on the *earth* for a thousand years.

The demons owned the authority of Jesus; certain of their doom, they neither *repented* nor asked for mercy. No; punishment does not subdue enmity, does not reconcile to God. Men will yet gnaw their tongues for pain, but with those tongues blaspheme God without repenting of their deeds. Such will go away into everlasting punishment, in obedience to that awful word, “Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels,” “where *their* worm dieth not, and where the fire is not quenched.” The smoke of torment will ascend for ever and ever, but there will be no *repentance*, no cry for mercy, no faith.

From the abyss the demons shrunk, but as misery is their element and destruction their work, they asked to be sent into the swine. Their desire was granted, and the maddened herd rushed into the lake and were drowned, and perished.

Sad, instructive spectacle, full of admonition as to the awful end of those who are on their downward course in the broad road that leadeth to destruction.

But there was another sight, more interesting, nor less instructive.

THE REQUEST OF THE GADARENES.

The report of that which had happened drew out the Gadarenes to the spot (among them doubtless the owners of the swine), where “they saw the man out of whom the demons were departed sitting at the feet of Jesus,

clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid." Wondrous sight! There he was, a monument of grace and might! And there is a counterpart of this in everyone who, saved by grace through faith, finds rest in Christ now and hearkens to His voice.

But what effect did the sight produce upon the Gadarenes? Did it soften, subdue, convince, lead to faith in Jesus, to salvation? Alas! not so; neither mercy to the freed demoniac nor destruction to the swine produced repentance nor led to the acknowledgment of Jesus as their Saviour; but as the demons shrank from His presence whilst they acknowledged His power, so the Gadarenes beseech Him to depart out of their coast.

How manifestly true is the saying, "Ye must be born again;" for while the world knew Him not, and His own people (the Jews) received Him not, those who did receive Him did so only by virtue of a birth from above, "which were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Strangers will yet submit themselves, yield feigned obedience to the King, awed by His presence and dreading His power; but not being reconciled, they will be found in the army of Gog and Magog in the final attack on God's *earthly* centre, the camp of the saints, the beloved city, and will there be consumed from the earth by fire from heaven. (Rev. xx.)

The Gadarenes, like the demons, had what they wished; for Jesus left them for the lake and for the ship.

When about to embark a third request was made to Him.

THE FREED DEMONIAK'S REQUEST.

And what was his desire? Surely that of every regenerated soul—"That he might be *with Him*." Freed from worse than iron shackles, he was now bound by silken

cords to his Deliverer, and desired not to be parted from Him.

How perfectly natural was such a desire ! Yet he had to learn, even as we now have, that the truest desire, the longing of the most loving heart, must be kept in subjection to the Master's will. "Jesus suffered him *not*."

The great apostle of the Gentiles was once "in a strait betwixt two ;" not between love for Christ and for the world, not between hope and doubt, but between the desire to depart to be with Christ (which he deemed far better than to be here), and continuance in service and suffering. He also was called to bow, to quiet his spirit, and remain for the profit of others ; and this he did cheerfully, triumphantly, until the time came when, no longer in a strait, he could say, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have *finished* my course."

This lesson the happy, freed demoniac had to learn ; for Jesus said to him, "Go home to thy house, and tell them how great things God hath done for thee." Surely this was virtually saying, "I have need of thee in Gadara. They have sent me away ; nevertheless I will remain in their midst through thee. They will not hear me ; but they shall hear *of* me through thy testimony. Thou art needed there ; go home to thy house."

Thus is it now also, both with individual Christians and the Church of God as a whole. The Jews rejected Jesus, crying, "Away with Him, away with Him !" and Gentiles with wicked hands crucified Him. The testimony borne by Stephen, through the power of the Holy Ghost, to Jesus risen and exalted, was rejected by Israel, and the faithful witness was stoned to death. The world still rejects Christ. Yet, notwithstanding, He lives and walks in their midst in those who are the "epistles of Christ,"

His representatives ; and, in so far as they walk even as He walked, they reflect His moral glory.

They are also His witnesses. Satan and the world, both religious and profane, speculative and formal, unite in an attempt to pervert, becloud, or deny the simple gospel of salvation through faith alone in the once crucified but now risen and exalted Christ, the Son of God. But this attempt is in vain ; the message is still being delivered, and is effectual, and must be so until the last sinner ordained to be gathered to Christ by this means shall have been brought to Him. Of this let every true servant of Christ rest assured, and go on proclaiming the good news. Let the unregenerate, deluded wise men of the age, knock their heads against the rock of truth, if they will do so, until they rue their folly ; and let the poor formalist seek to becloud the truth until he covers himself in the mists of darkness, to his own dismay ; but let the heralds of "the gospel of the glory of the happy God" go on in the power of the Holy Spirit, believingly, humbly, patiently, triumphantly proclaiming the message of a present, full, eternal salvation through simple faith in Christ, and in His finished work, and let them be unmoved by smile or frown.

Truth, through the zeal of the God of truth, *must prevail*. Believing this, we have peace, and can be patient and tender, like Him who is the Truth, who once sat in the palace of the high priest in majestic, peaceful silence, whilst His accusers contradicted one another ; nor did He speak until silence would have compromised the truth.

Thus, if I may so say, truth sits unmoved ; thus also should her upholders rest, while they earnestly contend for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints. In this way shall we grace our dignified position, and answer to our honourable title, "The light of the world," taking

the place assigned us by Him who, when here, said, "I am the light of the world." He leaves us here to represent Him; for what is the believer's light but the presentation of Christ by lip and life? Like the freed demoniac, we are needed here. To His gracious claim may God in His rich grace make us faithful and true. H. H.

"ONE ANOTHER;"

OR, OUR MUTUAL BOND OF LOVE AND SERVICE.

THE expression "*one another*" is of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and implies a reciprocity resulting from a divine fellowship that should overcome our natural selfishness and pride, and fulfil in us those sweet words spoken by the Holy Ghost, "If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort in love, if any fellowship of spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." (Phil. ii. 1, 2.)

Most of the passages where the words occur are given in the following texts, which are divided under two heads—(1) Those relating to love itself; (2) Those containing various precepts which flow out of our relationship to God, and to all fellow-saints as "members one of another." (Rom. xii. 5; Eph. iv. 25.)

I. LOVE'S SOURCE AND CHARACTERISTICS.

1. Its *source*. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God." (1 John iv. 7.)

2. Its *authority*. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love another." (John xiii. 34; xv. 12, 17; 1 John iii. 23; 2 John 5.)

3. Its *measure*. "Love one another as I have loved you." (John xiii. 34; xv. 12.)

4. Its *witness* to discipleship. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John xiii. 35.)

5. Its *freeness*. "Herein is love, *not that we loved* God, but that *He loved us*, and *sent His Son* to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God *so loved us*, we ought also to love one another;" *i.e.* to love though unloved. (1 John iv. 10, 11.)

6. Its *results*. "If we love one another God *dwelleth* in us, and His love is *perfected* in us." (1 John iv. 12.) "Every one that loveth is *born of God*, and *knoweth* God." (1 John v. 7.)

7. Its *obligation*. "We *ought* to love one another." (1 John iv. 11.) It is a *debt* we owe to God that never can be discharged. (Rom. xiii. 8.)

8. Its *teacher*. "Ye yourselves are *taught of God* to love one another." (1 Thess. iv. 9.) It comes not from the natural heart.

9. Its *importance*. "*This* is the *message* which ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another." (1 John iii. 11.) Connect this with another message—"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John i. 5.)

10. Its *purity* and *fergency*. "Love one another with a pure heart fervently. (1 Peter i. 22.)

II. LOVE'S SERVICE.

A. *In Christian life, with special reference to personal walk.*

1. By love *serve* one another. (Gal. v. 13.)

2. *Forbearing* one another in love, with *all* lowliness and meekness. (Eph. iv. 2; Col. iii. 13.)

3. *Forgiving* one another, even as God in Christ has forgiven you. (Eph. iv. 32; Col. iii. 13.)

4. *Be ye kind* one to another, *tender-hearted*. (Eph. iv. 32.)

5. *Be subject* one to another. (1 Peter v. 5.)
6. *Have compassion* one of another. In Greek, *Be sympathizing*. (1 Peter iv. 8.)
7. *Pray* one for another. (James v. 16.)
8. *Bear* ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (Gal. vi. 2.)
9. *Use hospitality* one to another without grudging. (1 Peter iv. 9.)
10. *Comfort* one another. (1 Thess. iv. 18, v. 11.)
11. *Have peace* one with another. (Mark ix. 50.)
12. *Follow that which is good* one toward another. (1 Thess. v. 15, R.V.)
13. *Wash* one another's feet. (John xiii. 14.)
14. *Greet* one another with a holy kiss (Rom. xvi. 16 ; 1 Cor. xvi. 20 ; 2 Cor. xiii. 12) ; with a kiss of charity. (1 Peter v. 14.)

B. *In Christian life, with special, but not exclusive, reference to church walk.*

1. *Have fellowship* one with another. (1 John i. 7.)
2. *Receive* ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God. (Rom. xv. 7.)
3. *Exhort* one another daily. (Heb. iii. 13.)
4. *Admonish* one another. (Rom. xv. 14.)
5. In honour *preferring* one another. (Rom. xii. 10.)
6. Let each *esteem* other better than themselves. (Phil. ii. 3.)
7. Follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may *edify* another. (Rom. xiv. 19.)
8. *Consider* one another to provoke unto love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. (Heb. x. 24.)
9. As every man hath received the gift, even so *minister* the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. (1 Peter iv. 10.)

10. *Submit yourselves one to another.* (Eph. v. 21.)

11. *Be of the same mind one toward another. Be like-minded.* (Rom. xii. 16, xv. 5.)

12. That the members should have the same *care* one for another (that there be no schism in the body). (1 Cor. xii. 25.)

13. *Confess your faults one to another.* (James v. 16.)

C. *Passages showing what we are not to do to one another.*

1. *Be not puffed up* for one against another. (1 Cor. iv. 6.)

2. *Lie not* one to another, for we are members one of another. (Eph. iv. 25; Col. iii. 9.)

3. Let us *not* be desirous of vain glory, *provoking* one another, *envying* one another. (Gal. v. 26.)

4. *Speak not evil* one of another. (James iv. 11.)

5. Let us *not* therefore *judge* one another any more. (Rom. xiv. 13.)

6. *Grudge not* (or murmur not) one against another. (James v. 9.)

May He, who has made all believers one in Christ Jesus, write with His own Spirit these precepts on our hearts, that we may show forth His praises, "giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond (or mutual bond) of peace," remembering that "there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is the distinction between Christ our righteousness and our sanctification in 1 Cor. i. 30?

A FEW remarks on this important verse may help to make the distinction clear. In the first place wisdom seems designed to embrace the

three following words, and we would render the passage as in the margin of Revised Version: "But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God, both righteousness and sanctification, and redemption." That is, the divine wisdom is manifested in having secured to us in Christ the three conditions intimated: *righteousness*, as touching the matter of our sins; *sanctification*, as meeting through regeneration the need of our persons; and *redemption*, as meeting in the present and in the future the need of our new relationship. These three points are presented in type in the three great sacrifices of the Old Testament; viz., (1) the sin-offering, (2) the burnt-offering, and (3) the peace-offering. By the *first* our sins are atoned for, and put away for ever, as far as the east is from the west; by the *second* our persons are accepted in the Beloved, and we become in Him children of God and a sweet-smelling savour; and by the *third* the need of the condition of our new nature is met, and in its measure here, and in its fulness hereafter, communion with God is secured, and we have right of entrance into the holiest, in abiding intercourse with God. In all three God's wisdom identifies us with Christ; first, when sinners and ungodly, God justifies us, and makes Christ our righteousness; then when made righteous He brings us into identification with the person of His Son as children, thus making Christ our sanctification; and lastly, He secures to us as His children the enjoyment of that relationship, by making Christ our redemption. Redemption is looked at here in the light of that fulness of blessing which will not be consummated till, at our Lord's coming, we receive the adoption for which we wait, "to wit, the redemption of our body." (Rom. viii. 23.) This is secured to us in Him who has "obtained eternal redemption for us." (Heb. ix. 12.)

How are we to understand, "When he had offered up prayers . . . unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared," in Heb. v. 7?

THE marginal reading of the Revised Version is better, "*out of death.*" The words "and was heard" point to the resurrection, as in Ps. xxii. 21, where we may read, "Save me from the lion's mouth, and from the horns of the unicorns. *Thou hast heard me.* I will declare thy name unto my brethren." Resurrection is always represented as God's answer to the Redeemer's prayers for deliverance. The reason of His being heard was "for His piety," or "for His godly fear," as in the Revised Version. The word here used is *eulabeia*, which only occurs once more, and that in Heb. xii. 28,

where we learn that to serve God acceptably we need "reverence and *godly fear*." It implies a devout regard to the will of God, and a reverent submission to it. (The adjective is used of Simeon in Luke ii. 25, and of "devout men" in Acts ii. 5 ; viii. 2.) In all its fulness this was the essential characteristic of the Son of man, and His perfect fulfilment of man's duty to God manifested Him as the meet sacrifice for God's altar. His resurrection triumph resulted from His perfect obedience, His godly fear consummating on the cross that which His prayers and supplications expressed in the anguish of Gethsemane, "Not my will, but thine be done."

In what way is Christ "the end of the law for righteousness," as in Romans x. 4?

CHRIST has become the end of the law to every one who believes, in that He endured its penalty against sin. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Consequently righteousness is secured to the believer apart from law, for God in Christ justifies the ungodly. In contradistinction to this Paul brings in the attempt of the Jew and of man generally to be justified by works, and shows that it sets aside divine righteousness, the sinner's only standing-ground before God, and seeks to establish in its room creature-righteousness, of which faith's estimate is (as it will be that of Israel in the latter day) that all such righteousness is as "filthy rags." But it is Christ's penalty-bearing, and not Christ's law-fulfilling, that is our justifying righteousness before God. To this agree the words in Romans v. 18, 19 (R.V.): "So then as through one trespass the judgment came unto all men to condemnation ; even so through one act of righteousness the free gift came unto all men to justification of life. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous." In these verses the "one act of righteousness" and "the obedience" refer to the same point in our Lord's history ; that is, to His death. The commandment which He had received of the Father, of which He speaks in John x. 18, was the authority on which He laid down His life ; for "He became obedient unto death," as one over whom death had no claim, and against whom it could make no demand. Death was to Christ obedience to the will of God, not the necessary consequence of His being man ; and hence His death became the *act of righteousness* that met the demands of law against sin, and the *act of voluntary obedience* to the will of God, who so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.

THE LAST WORDS OF MOSES.

DEUT. xxxiii. 26-29.

THE last words of standard-bearers and marked ones in God's Church are often asked for, and always listened to with interest, and generally with much profit. God Himself has given us "*the last words of David.*" (2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7.) Again, the closing verse of Ps. lxxii. 20—"The prayers of David the son of Jesse *are ended*"—invests that whole psalm with yet more interest. Paul's words to the elders of Ephesus (Acts xx. 17-35) gain additional weight from their being his *last* utterances to them; as Luke says—"sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face *no more.*" And Peter, by writing his second epistle as one who must "*shortly*" put off his "*tabernacle,*" claims the more regard for what he so blessedly and so solemnly teaches.

Jacob had spoken godly dying words to his sons as individuals in Gen. xlix., and Deut. xxxiii. 26-29 seem to be the last words of Israel's deliverer from Egypt, and certainly they are worthy of the closing lips of even Moses.

In that precious chapter he had pronounced blessings upon the tribes of Israel separately. He now unites them ALL for a closing benediction under the honourable name of "Jeshurun." "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun." The word "*Jeshurun*" means the little (or darling) righteous one, and is for Israel a God-given title of honour and affection combined, and is used only in Deut. xxxii. 15, here, and in Isa. xlv. 2. How well it became the man who for Israel's sake had esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt," to end the five books he had written with this honourable name for his beloved nation!

Moses' use of the name Jeshurun in this place is all the more interesting because in verse 5 he is himself called "king in Jeshurun." Nowhere else has he so lofty an official title. When the "heads of the people" were all assembled, Moses still stood *highest* amongst them all, even as he had been morally and spiritually the greatest amongst them when pleading for them at mount Sinai after the sin of the golden calf.

Yet it is in this very chapter, where his rank is highest amongst Israel's princes, that he so sinks himself as to be nothing before God, and cries out, "*There is none like unto the GOD of Jeshurun.*" This savours of a true and lowly servant of the Most High, and reminds us of John the Baptist's word—"He must increase, but I must decrease." Solomon showed similar lowliness, and that too when the unparalleled public honour was given him, not only of sitting on his ivory throne, but also of building a temple for Jehovah, which even David might not do. Yet how lowly was his attitude on its dedication-day; he not only heaped up sacrifices far above his own stature—22,000 bullocks and 120,000 sheep (what a pile!)—but he himself both "stood before the altar of Jehovah," and also "kneeled down upon his knees" when he prayed. How instructive when the king, or the lawgiver, is seen thus exalting God immeasurably above himself!

And this same lowly contrasting of himself with Israel's God is seen in each clause of Moses' words that follow: "*Who rideth upon the heaven in thy help and in His excellency on the sky*" is in contrast with Moses himself being only a mortal man below the sky, and walking on the same desert sand as the tribes and the rulers amongst whom he was "king."

Then again, "*The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms,*" is in worshipping contrast

with the *brevity* of his own life as but a creature. True he exceeded all others of his contemporaries, both in length of days and in physical vigour. "Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died : his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." (See Deut. xxxiv. 7.) He went up mount Nebo, knowing that he should never come down again because of his belief in God's word, and not from any bodily weakness, or because "flesh and heart" were failing him. (Ps. lxxiii. 26.)

But he loses sight of all these immunities granted him as he stands in the blessed presence of his and Israel's everlasting God. And he joys to think of Him whom Jeshurun cannot lose. How like to the apostle in Heb. xiii. 8—"Jesus Christ is the same!" In verse 7 the "Hebrews" (pilgrims) had been exhorted to *remember* "guides," then departed, "who *did* speak unto you the word of God" (see Greek), and to follow the bright example such ones had left behind them. The apostle alluded, no doubt, to such as Stephen (Acts vii.), and James (Acts xii.), whom Herod beheaded ; and then, in contrast with the *brief* service of such "guides" in the Church, he says, "*Jesus Christ is yesterday and to-day the same and for ever ;*" i.e., He who is the pilgrims' guide never dies. So in his allegories Bunyan makes Greatheart live on to the end, to guide Christiana and her children, though "Faithful" dies at Vanity Fair, and Christian and others cross the river. So Moses' confidence about Israel was, that when he was in his grave they would still have underneath them the EVERLASTING arms.

Then again, "*And He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee, and shall say, Destroy him.*" Moses had been distinctly told that he should not cross Jordan, nor lead on the nation against a single Canaanite army or town. But he joys to think that the "God of Jeshurun" would

Himself do the battle-work in which he was forbidden, through transgression, to have any part. And that one mighty utterance of Jehovah—He “shall say, Destroy him”—would sweep Jeshurun’s worst foes before him, even the yet future antichrist himself. What exalting of God was this, and what forgetfulness of himself!

With similar confidence Paul wrote of generations of saints then unborn, and said, “Whom He did predestinate, them He also called them He also justified them He also glorified. If God be for us, who can be against us?” And again, in prospect of his own “departure,” he writes to Timothy, “The firm foundation of God remaineth” (see Greek), “having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His.” Verily this is like his utterance in Rom. v., “We also *joy in God* through our Lord Jesus Christ”—a joy that all God’s faithful servants possess more or less.

What wonder that a view of Israel’s peaceful millennial future follows! Jehovah delights thus to refresh the soul of one who was so glorifying God in his “last words.”

“*Israel THEN shall dwell in safety alone ; the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine.*” (“Jacob” points back to sovereign GRACE as the source of all the nation’s accomplished bliss.) “*Also His heavens shall drop down dew.*” Such words describe the thousand years’ Solomon-like (peaceful) reign of Him who died for that nation. Moses was about to have extraordinary bodily sight given him to gaze upon the whole country that Joshua should enter and should conquer ; but to his soul was granted a nobler and more far-reaching vision of Immanuel’s land as it will be under Shiloh’s reign. How good is God to His servants !

John in Patmos was a *servant* as well as a child of his God, and for faithful service was banished to that island ; and oh, what visions were given him, not only of “the

Bride, the Lamb's wife," in her thousand years' heavenly ministry to this earth beneath her (see Rev. xxi. 9 to xxii. 6), but also of "a new heaven and a new earth" which stand eternally! And this book of "the Revelation of Jesus Christ" was given then "to show unto His SERVANTS things which must shortly come to pass." Again we say, How good is God to His servants!

But *conflicts* must be known before *visions*, however sure or true, can be turned into *facts*. And Moses does not cease his "last words" without alluding to *this*. He adds, "*Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by Jehovah, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.*"

Millennial peace can only be ushered in by God's solemn "day of battle and war" (Job xxxviii. 23) as all the Scriptures teach us. But God is as truly at hand for that warfare work as He is for the settled peace that follows it. Israel is "happy" in having Jehovah for "shield" and "sword," and faith knows the victory certain before the war begins.

"The guilt of twice ten thousand sins
One moment takes away!
And grace, when first the war begins,
Secures the crowning day."

But the conflict is none the less a *real* thing. Moses might utter this precious benediction regarding battles then unfought, Joshua might map out the land and cast lots for each tribe, but that other word of God to Joshua remained true—"Every place that the sole of your foot shall *tread upon*, that have I given to you, as I said to Moses." The foot of actual conflict must tread it. "The wars of the Lord" are real conflicts with deadly enemies, and are continued as long as a single one of those enemies

is left standing. This is true both of the *outside* warfare of God's saints with a religious and Christ-rejecting world, and also of the *inside* warfare with the ceaseless lustings of the flesh against the Spirit. Peter and John in Acts iv., and Stephen after them, knew the *former*; so did the early Church of the first two centuries; so also did the martyrs of Queen Mary's reign, and so doubtless *some* do in our own too easy-going days; and others yet will know outside warfare and martyrdom according to the answer given to souls beneath the altar in Rev. vi. 9-11. Paul knew this holy warfare in outward life and also in the bitter conflict of his flesh against the Spirit who graciously indwelt him. He ushers in his triumphs over his own evil nature (in Rom. viii.) with these warfare words—"So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but *with the flesh the law of sin.*" (vii. 25.) And for this conclusion of the matter he was indebted to what he had just before said, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I THANK GOD THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD;" *i.e.*, through HIM I am a delivered man; yet am I also a man in conflict, as he says shortly after, "Therefore, brethren, if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die" (that is, ye are on the road that leads to death): "but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." (viii. 12, 13.) And it is in things of the BODY, be it remembered, as well as of the soul, that the battle has to be fought; for in both, as blood-bought, sin and Satan are ever disputing Christ's claim to us.

But victory, full and eternal, will be ours ere long on the resurrection morning in body and soul; and by Christ and His grace that twofold victory can be increasingly our victory now from day to day. Moses and Paul agree both as to the reality of there being unconquered enemies

still remaining; but, blessed be God, they also agree in Jehovah Himself being for us both the "shield" of our help and the "sword" of our excellency.

With what gratitude to God, and with what thrilling interest, must Joshua and Caleb have listened to these last words of Moses, and have read and re-read them when written! And Paul tells us, that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and *comfort* of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4); that is, might confidently expect to be conquerors in all things. And again, 1 Cor. x. 11: "They are written for our *admonition*, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."

May Deut. xxxiii. 26-29 serve to us the twofold purpose of "comfort" and of "admonition." H. D.

THE TURNING-POINT OF A LIFE.

GEN. xxxii. 27-31.

THIS portion of Jacob's history is very interesting. Hitherto we have known him as the subtle and successful self-seeker, the maker of prudent bargains with God (Gen. xxviii. 20-22) and man. (Gen. xxv. 30-34.) Pursuing right ends by crooked ways, he has been, until now, *spiritually* lame.

From the obtaining of the birthright to his flight from Padan-aram we see his natural craftiness, his guile—all needless, because he had God's promise. But here we see this *Jacob* changed to *Israel*, a man without guile. (John i. 47.) If guilelessness *must be* the characteristic of him who is *truly* a son, it is because it is the characteristic of his Father; and we find this to be so in Jacob's future history. From this point the manifestation of his sin is driven outward. It appears in his body, no longer in his spirit; and thus it serves as a continual reminder and warning.

Now he is to be disciplined through the craft and guile of others, according to the righteous principle, "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again;" and he receives the discipline, and suffers from it, with child-like humility and submission.

But how much blessing there is in these few verses! We see the struggle ended; the darkness passing away; the crafty Jacob become the guileless Israel (type of Him, God's Prince, in whose mouth was no deceit); the fear of death gone; and the sun risen upon him—"upon *him*"—as he passes over this crisis of his history. What a morning of joy—a new man and a new day! As regards earth, there is lameness; as regards heaven, light and warmth. And now his lifted eyes can behold the warlike array of Esau without fear.

He had obtained both the birthright and the blessing by craft, and he yields up both, owning Esau as lord, and presenting his gift-offering (*minchah*).

Truly both birthright and blessing are his, according to God's appointment; but he must wait for the personal enjoyment of them, with his fathers, until the Lord of all takes His power, and reigns. (Rev. xii. 17, 18.)

For us also there is much encouragement in this narrative. Weakness and pain are the fruit of sin; but they are not necessarily the fruit of *present sinning*. They may be witnesses to us to keep us humble and watchful; and, as in Jacob's case, they may be the outward signs of a power that has been broken within by the power of God. If Christ be in us, the body is dead because of sin. Sin has no more dominion; it has done its worst, and we are for ever free from its wages; for our Lord has proclaimed the glad fact, that "if a man keep my saying, he shall never see death." Let us, then, take courage as regards all our pains and sicknesses; for we know that, "whether we wake or sleep, we shall live together with Him." E. S. W.

ADMONITIONS FROM ISRAEL'S HISTORY.

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING ON 1 SAM. iv., vii.*

How is it that with the increased light and truth of these days there is not an increase of power? Have we not, like Israel of old, placed trust in the ark, and not in God? Theories of truth, or of the faith once delivered to the saints, may take the place that the ark had in Israel's mind; and their history teaches us that when there is a low condition of soul, confidence is placed in something visible, and not in the unseen God. It will not suffice us to rely upon principles and on outward orthodoxy; we need the *person* of Christ, and the *power* of God.

There is an important connection between chapters iii. and iv. of 1 Samuel, of which we are apt to lose sight. All Israel knew that the Lord had established Samuel to be a prophet, and through him they might have obtained the mind of the Lord; but when the Philistines come up against them, they wait not for God's word, being perhaps unwilling to receive it through a child. The apostle Paul warns against this tendency when he says to Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth." Naturally we do not like to be taught by those younger than ourselves, even where God has bestowed a gift on them. So it was with Cain and Abel. Compare with these the elder and younger son in Luke xv., and also the Jew and Gentile generally.

God's word should have come to Israel through Eli the elder, but he was set aside through failure; he knew not how to rule his own house, and therefore was unfit to care for the assembly of Israel. Peter reminds elders that they are to be "ensamples to the flock;" and Timothy was also

* Taken at a Conference.

exhorted to be "an example to the believers" in all things. In the midst of the wickedness of Eli's sons and of all Israel Samuel *lived out* the truth. In 2 Cor. iv. 1, 2 we have the *ministry* of the truth and the *manifestation* of the truth. We may have the former without having the latter. On the other hand, there may be a very bright manifestation of the truth, and yet it may be discerned by very few. Many prefer a dead lion to a living dog. (Eccles. ix. 4.) The apostle delights to point out to the Corinthians the few among them, such as the household of Stephanas, who were *manifesting* the truth.

Though Israel knew well about Samuel, they go out to battle without seeking counsel of the Lord, and their effort ends in failure. The elders then say, "Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us to-day before the Philistines?" And without waiting for any answer, they add, "Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies." Their "*let us* fetch the ark" was like the "*let us* build us a city and a tower" at Babel. (Gen. xi.) Observe too the word "it"—"that, when *it* cometh among us, *it* may save us." Eli's wicked sons, who were as lords over God's heritage, went with the ark, and when it came into the camp "all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again." They had shouted at Jericho; but then it was in obedience to God's command, and after seven days of silence, and Jericho's walls fell down; but now their shout was an empty boast. The fleshly tendency to noise is also seen in Saul, when he blew the trumpet throughout all the land after the victory of Geba, saying, "Let the Hebrews hear." But it was Jonathan who had quietly wrought the work with God, and gained the victory. Let us remember that the weapons of our warfare are not to be "carnal," but "*mighty* through

God." When the Corinthians were occupied with "tongues" and oratory, Paul repeats to them the very words with which the Philistines exhorted one another: "Quit you like men." (1 Cor. xvi. 13.) Let it be deeds, not mere words. In contrast with Israel's vain reliance on the ark, David, in the time of his rejection, sends back that ark to its habitation, and rather sought favour in the eyes of the living God, that *He* might bring him back again.

We know what befell Israel. They were smitten with a very great slaughter; the ark of God was taken; Eli's sons were slain, and himself came to his sorrowful end.

In chapters v. and vi. we have God's care for the ark and for His holy name, and the sending back of the ark on a new cart by the Philistines—the worldly example which David afterwards followed, when he had consulted with the people instead of consulting the word of God. We have to be on our guard against *old* carts as well as *new* ones; that is, against everything that is not after God's order, whether introduced yesterday, or sanctioned by the tradition of ages. The Levites' shoulders should bear the ark. As one has well said, "Christianity came into the world *walking*, and has never thriven otherwise."

When the ark was once more in Israel's keeping, their sin in looking into it at Bethshemesh, instead of worshipping God before it, was severely dealt with; and they may have misinterpreted this discipline of God. We have to remember our danger of prying into the mysteries of God, rather than bowing the heart and adoring Him.

Twenty years passed away before Israel "lamented after the Lord," and all this time Samuel must have been going on silently with God, walking before Him, and doubtless lamenting the condition of the nation. God's care for the ark must have been an encouragement to him; and while it was wandering to and fro his own heart would have

given God a sanctuary, according to the word in Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2. Samuel never seems to have been popular; but at length they turn to him, and he tells them that besides the lamenting there must be the putting away of strange gods, the preparing the heart unto the Lord, and serving Him only. *Desire* is not sufficient; for "the soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing." (Prov. xiii. 4.) There must be diligence of soul, and the putting away of evil: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." (Ps. lxvi. 18.) At Bochim there were tears and sacrifices, but no real confession, and no *putting away* of idols, and therefore only increased failure followed. (Judges ii.) How slow Israel was in acting! And so it is apt to be with backsliders. At last they did act; and Samuel says, "Gather all Israel to Mizpeh" (the watch-tower), "and I will pray for you unto the Lord." This was what was needed, and it is the great lack, individually and collectively, even now. The poured-out water was a confession of their weakness; their only resource was felt to be in God. Then comes the poured-out heart—"We have sinned." Confession is difficult. We are ready to say, "I will not do it again;" but not frankly to confess, "I am wrong." But directly there is frank confession, the assuring word as to forgiveness follows. (Ps. xxxii.; 1 John i. 7.)

We have thus significant stages in Israel's history: (1) boasting in the ark; (2) failure before the enemy; (3) resting in disaster; (4) lamenting after God; (5) putting away of idols, and confession of weakness and sin; (6) forgiveness and victory.

Samuel had time to judge Israel, and then the Philistines, hearing of their gathering together at Mizpeh, come against them once more; but now they have to do with God, and not with the ark only. Samuel had given the Israelites the assurance, "*He* will deliver;" not, "*It* will

save ;" and they begin to understand the need of continued waiting upon God : "*Cease not to cry unto God for us.*" But a sacrifice was also needed, they had to learn ; and the "sucking lamb" that Samuel took may remind us of the words, "Thy holy child Jesus," who as the Lamb of God gave Himself for our sins. The expression, "Crucified through weakness," which the apostle used in writing to that church whose self-exalted condition was very similar to Israel's (2 Cor. xiii. 4), conveys the same truth. God uses the weakness of the dying Christ to confound and bring down the mighty things of man.

Samuel still cries to God, and He answers by thundering with a great thunder from heaven, and thus discomfits the Philistines. In three places thunder is mentioned in connection with Samuel's history. (1) When he was himself brought to the tabernacle in his weakness as a little child, his mother, taught of God, had said respecting his adversaries, "Out of heaven shall He thunder upon them." (2) On this occasion, when Samuel enters into the battle for the first time, God fulfils his mother's words, and gives the thunder of victory. (3) In chap. xii., after Israel had rejected God and Samuel, we have the thunder of prophecy, when Israel are warned of their sin in turning away from the God of Ebenezer, and of their idolatry in setting up a king like the nations around them.

Israel's history thus portrays two of our great dangers. One is the resting in a form of truth without God, as they trusted in the ark ; the other is the turning from the living God to mortal man. We may bring in divine elements—it may be truths about the Church of God, and use them in the power of the flesh ; or we may bring in human elements to accomplish divine ends. When we want to set things right in our assemblies we often resort to the first, and finding that does not answer,

we try the other, looking to some man head and shoulders above everyone else, and trusting in an autocracy of the flesh; and then we faint under our bondage.

In Isaiah xl. 28 we read that the Most High "fainteth not, neither is weary;" and they that wait on Him shall not faint. The characteristics of God will be manifest in those who wait upon Him. In proportion to our waiting upon God, His power will be manifest in us. (See Acts iv. 23-35.)

THE PSALM OF FORGIVENESS.

PSALM xxxii.

To dwell upon God's forgiveness must ever be a joy to the one who has experienced it, at least if that one is walking with God. Forgiveness yields the first joy of which the self-condemned sinner is made conscious; and the path of forgiveness is trodden anew day by day by all the pilgrim band, so long as the wilderness is their divinely-appointed place of sojourn. With deeper feeling and truer gratitude, as years roll by, we make fresh discoveries of the fulness and freeness of the forgiveness that comes from our God; but it will be when we sing the new song in the presence of God and of the Lamb, when we shall never again need to be forgiven, that we shall form a true estimate of its real blessedness.

The psalm before us is not the utterance of one who had for the *first* time proved the power of God's grace, but of one who, after years of godly service and many acts of true faith, had through unwatchfulness and sloth fallen very deeply into sin, and had proved afresh how God forgives. While, therefore, it describes the blessedness of the newly-forgiven and justified one, as we learn from Rom. iv., it is also specially precious to those who have learned yet again

and again both the need and the blessedness of being forgiven, and have gained a deeper insight into the awfulness of sin in its varied aspects.

As in the solemn confession of Ps. li., so in the joyful expression of Ps. xxxii., David uses three words to set forth the greatness and manifold character of his offences. *Transgression* is a going out of the way of God's commandments, a passing over the boundary that He has set between good and evil; *sin* is a missing the mark which ought to be the aim of our life, a coming short of our true destiny, a failing to glorify God (see Rom. iii. 22); *iniquity* is rebellion, lawlessness, insubjection to God, the pride and self-will of the creature asserting itself against the Creator. But if there is a threefold description of sin, there is also a threefold description of God's way of dealing with it; and this reminds us of another scripture where we again get these three words. In Isa. liii. we have the same full description of sin, where we learn how God deals with it in judgment, and we may surely say that, without what may be called the great chapter of the cross, we could not fully understand this precious psalm of forgiveness. The God of grace must ever act in perfect righteousness; and therefore, if He forgives transgression, it is because that transgression was borne by the great Surety; if He covers sin, it is because that blessed One sank beneath its weight; and if He does not impute iniquity, it is because He charged the iniquities of His people to the account of Him who in grace took them upon Himself. It is when, by the teaching of the Spirit of God, we learn to say, "He was wounded for *our* transgressions, He was bruised for *our* iniquities," and thus reckon ourselves among the "many" whose sin He bare (Isa. liii. 5, 12), that we are able to enter into this psalm, and to exclaim, "Oh, the blessednesses of the one whose transgression is forgiven,

whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity!" The blessednesses of such are indeed manifold, and every fresh view of the cross must lead to a deeper sense of them. The only thing that can truly cover sin is *atoning blood*, and that covers it for ever. The blood of Christ is the blood of the new covenant, the first blessing of which is the perfect forgiveness and entire removal of all sin.

But there is yet another feature in the description of the blessed man of Ps. xxxii.; he is one "in whose spirit is no guile." Guile is deceit, and it is the natural accompaniment of sin. The one who knows not God as the God of grace cannot be free from guile; for he cannot bear even to think, much less to say, the truth about himself. David, when out of fellowship with God, had known what deceit was; he had tried to deceive God and himself too. He had "kept silence," hiding his iniquity in his bosom, instead of spreading it out before God. But when God is known as the God who is "ready to forgive," all excuse for guile vanishes. What debtor will hide his greatest debt from one who stands by his side, both able and willing to meet every claim? What patient will hide any feature of even the worst disease from the physician whom he knows to be able and waiting to heal? So, if we believe that God is ready to pardon all our sin in its very worst features, and has made provision for our need in its utmost depths, what motive can there be for hiding anything from Him? Yet so feeble are we, and so prone to get careless, that we have need to be constantly stirred in the great matter of dealing truly with ourselves in the way of self-examination, and with God in the way of confession. Much open failure is the fruit of this lack of upright dealing before God. It was by bitter as well as blessed experience that David learnt the lesson recorded for our

profit: "I know also, my God, that thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness." (1 Chron. xxix. 17.)

In verses 3, 4, we see what had been his state of unrest while he kept at a distance from God; and we also get a vivid picture of the condition of one who has some conviction of sin which he tries to stifle rather than allow. As long as he "kept silence," and refrained from confessing his sin, there was no peace, no quietness of spirit; everything was out of course. God was dealing with him; "for day and night," he exclaims, "thy hand was heavy upon me." (v. 4.) God's hand was upon him in chastening, yet in grace; it was *heavy*, but with a merciful pressure. He had taken David in hand, and would not leave him, or there would have been no recovery. His design was to bring him low, and lead him to humble himself, that He might lift him up, and speak peace to his heart. If we will not judge ourselves, God will judge and chasten us, that we may not be condemned with the world.

In verse 5 we see the effect. David bowed and acknowledged his sin; and mark how immediate was God's pardoning response—"Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." God has joined together confession and forgiveness, and has given us such assurances of this as to encourage us to flee to Him at once with whatever burden may be upon our hearts. And as at the first the word of forgiveness breaks the iron chain, so it is all the journey through. Confession of sin in the spirit of self-judgment, and the reception of forgiveness in the spirit of faith, break the power of the sin that has had the mastery over us. This is the only pathway to victory.

David regards himself as a monument of grace set for the encouragement of others, and says, "For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." (v. 6.) All recorded and experienced

answers to prayer are encouragements to others to seek Him who is ever waiting to bless, and those who do thus seek Him are in a place of security, where the floods of judgment that shall soon overwhelm the world cannot touch them. That place of security is God Himself—"Thou art my hiding-place." The poor sinner who bows as such before God's footstool finds the way straight to His heart; the one whom God forgives He embraces in the very bosom of His love. And those who in their experience wander from that blessed "hiding-place" can only get back to it by way of the "throne of grace." This is a place of absolute safety, of preservation from trouble, resulting in songs of deliverance.

Now, in verse 8, God speaks to His servant, and gives the promise of instruction and guidance. David had chosen his own way, had eaten the fruit of his own devices, and had proved to his cost that the way of transgressors is hard. Sometimes God has to leave us to find out what our own way is that we may be really ready to seek His way; but when we do this we never find Him fail us. In Israel's early days "the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him" (Deut. xxxii. 12); and after their present long and terrible wandering, when they shall have learnt the folly of their own ways, the word will be fulfilled—"The Lord shall guide thee *continually*." (Isa. lviii. 11.) This He is ready to do in the case of all His people; but we need the word of warning—"Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, else they will not draw near unto thee." (v. 9.)* God will hold His people by bit and bridle rather than leave them to reach the bitter end of a self-chosen course of disobedience; but this is not

* Lord Congleton's version.

His delight. He loves to see them keeping near to Himself as held by the cords of His love and fellowship.

And it is only in this place of nearness that we are in a position to receive that guidance which He never withholds from those who sincerely seek it. The spirit in which guidance is sought is most important. Sometimes there is rashness in making a decision, and then a half-hearted attempt at seeking God, as we see in the case of Jehoshaphat when he went down and communed with Ahab, and had not courage to draw back, even after Micaiah's solemn prophecy of disaster. Then again the inclination of our will is often a serious hindrance to divine guidance. There is something before us which we think we should like. We half make up our minds, and then we pray about it, and, it may be, pursue our own course, being permitted to do so by Him who searches the heart and knows that while with the lip we seek to know His way, with the heart we are bent upon following our own. He may leave us to learn our folly, that with truer heart and resolution we may pray, "Teach me thy way, O God; I will walk in thy truth." (Ps. lxxxvi. 11.)

It is well to be reminded, however, that while our own way must lead to disappointment and vexation, the fact of our meeting with trial is no evidence that we are not in God's way. The first turn that Israel took in direct obedience to God led them into a position of such difficulty as to make them despair of deliverance. But God had led them there, and He had done so in order to give them an unexpected salvation, and to put a new song into their mouths. (Exod. xiii. xiv.) Let us learn of Him who was meek and lowly in mind, whose will was perfectly subject to the will of God in everything, and we too shall prove that "the meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way." (Ps. xxv. 9.)

The statement in verse 10 is very solemn—"Many sorrows shall be to the wicked (one)." The contrast in the verse shows that the wicked one is the one who does *not* trust in Jehovah, who pursues the path of pride and unbelief, and not the way of faith and humility—the course of self-will, and not of subjection to and dependence upon God. This unbelief is the essential characteristic of all who know not God, however varied the form in which it may display itself, and the consideration of the fact shows us how soon an unwatchful child of God may approach the path of the ungodly. "Many sorrows shall be to the wicked"—who can tell how many and how great?—"but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about," as a mighty barrier protecting him on every side, shielding him from the judgment due to sin, and sweetening such sorrows as may be found in the wilderness, beyond which no sorrow can ever be known.

The closing word of exhortation (*v.* 11) seems to refer back to verses 1 and 2. With the fuller light of Rom. iv. we learn very clearly that when God forgives sin He justifies, that if He removes iniquity and transgression He imputes righteousness; so that the forgiven one is not left in a negative state, but is regarded by God as positively righteous. Such may well respond to the word, "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice, ye righteous." There is always room for gladness *in the Lord*. Whatever may bring trial, and cause heaviness in circumstances, or even in changes of our own experience, He is ever the same, above all change; therefore we may always be glad in Him. The "upright in heart" are those "in whose spirit is no guile;" and surely if we so know God and His mighty grace as to be delivered from that deceit which is part of our very nature, and are enabled to walk before Him in simple transparency of soul, we shall prove what holy

exultation is; and though our joy may express itself in quieter ways than was the custom sometimes with God's people of former days, yet we may look forward to the time when all the upright in heart shall literally "shout for joy."

W. H. B.

ON RUNNING THE HEAVENLY RACE.

A WORD ON HEBREWS xii. 1, 2, FOR YOUNG BELIEVERS.

THE apostle is here speaking to those who have entered the strait gate, and are in the narrow way.

Just before (in chap. xi.) he had been speaking of the elders, who had obtained a good report through faith, and of those who had fought the good fight, and gained the victory, having been faithful in their time and generation. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off. Some had subdued kingdoms, others had wrought righteousness, and all had been true testimony-bearers.

Now he speaks to *us*, and uses a figure well known in those times. He brings us to the amphitheatre, the Coliseum at Rome, and shows us what it was. There was the arena, the central space, surrounded by tiers upon tiers of seats, with thousands and hundreds of thousands of spectators, who watched the contest of the gladiators, the race of those who ran in the course, or the conflict with the wild beasts. All was under the eye of these thousands of spectators, the emperor frequently presiding in person; and this arena was often the place of death.

The apostle supposes that we are in that arena, encompassed by "so great a cloud of witnesses"—by those, it may be, who have gained the victory—a vast company watching our present course. "Wherefore," he says, "let

us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

In the path in which we have to run we are, then, not unobserved; the eyes of a cloud of witnesses are upon us. If we are not actually under the eyes and observance of the blessed departed, the beloved ones who have gone before us, yet we are under the eyes of angels. What was said of the pathway of Him, our Leader and Lord, who has gone before us? That He was "*seen* of angels" (1 Tim. iii. 16); and, says the apostle, "we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." (1 Cor. iv. 9.) "A city that is set on a hill," our Lord tells us, "cannot be hid." Upon each one of us who confesses Christ many eyes are set. Angels are watching, the devil watches, and the eye of our Leader is on us. Those who have gone before have borne their testimony. Now let *us* lay aside every weight, and the easily-besetting sin, and let us run our race with patience.

Those who strive for the mastery are "temperate in all things;" no weight, no encumbrance is ever permitted. A little thing may prevent the winning of the prize. Two men ran so equally in a race that you could not tell which would gain the prize, when the shoe-latchet of one broke, he tripped, and lost the race. Of how many might it be said, "Ye did run well!" but where are they now? They were tripped or entangled in the way.

"Wherefore let us lay aside every weight." Let us look out for the little *weights* as well as the "little foxes." Let us ask ourselves concerning everything, "Is *this* an obstacle to my upward course?" The word "weight" is a peculiar one; it might be rendered "tumour," and means, not only a weight hanging upon us, but a fleshly outgrowth.

"And the sin that doth so easily beset us." Some sins are so natural to us that they seem to be no impediment. Perhaps a sin has become a habit, and we are so accustomed to it that we do not think it a hindrance. Let us lay it aside, remembering that we have a race to *run*. The loiterer is sure to miss the prize.

And "let us run *with patience*;" for the course may be long. Let us continue on stedfastly, bearing in mind the promise of Isaiah xl. 30, 31: "The youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."

God has put us in the narrow way, and requires us to run the race; and now we come to the secret of the power for it—"looking off unto Jesus." A ploughman who repeatedly carried off the prize at ploughing-matches was asked the secret of his success. "Others," said he, "at first set their eye on the mark, but now and again look at the way before them, and their furrow is then not straight. The secret of success is to keep the eye *always* on the mark." Our eye must be fixed undeviatingly, habitually, on Jesus; then our path will be like that of the arrow. Jesus is our example. He went straight onwards, and "for the joy that was before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." He overcame, looking on to the glory. He set His face as a flint to go to Jerusalem, because the cross was the way to the right hand of the Father. Let us ever be looking off to Him who endured the cross, and stedfastly follow Him.

Now, in order to see one finishing his course, let us turn to 2 Tim. iv. 6. The apostle is there seen just at the close of his race, and he says, "I am now ready to be

offered." It might be rendered "poured out," as he says, in Phil. ii. 17, "If I be poured out upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy." There he was ready to be offered, knowing that the time of dismissal was at hand, the time he had longed for. "I have fought the good fight," he could say; "I have fought with beasts at Ephesus;" I have been in the arena; I have been watched over by my Prince; His eye has seen all the conflict. "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness."

Now let no one be discouraged. Some may think, "Ah, but though all run in a race, only one receives the prize; we may be diligent, but we may be outrun." See what the apostle says with regard to the crown—"which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and *not to me only*, but unto all them who *love His appearing*."

Let us run the race looking unto Jesus, and we shall sit down with Him in the glory. (T. N.)

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Is a person who was a thief, when converted, bound to make restitution of what has been stolen?

THE law of Moses is plain on this point. (Exod. xxii.) Restitution is essential to righteousness, and all unrighteousness is a violation of Christian character. Full restitution may be impossible, arising from the character or the value of the thing stolen; but godliness demands the repayment of all with interest, so far as it at any time lies in the power of the offender to render it. Some have supposed that Eph. iv. 28 settles all past delinquencies, where the thief is told to "steal no more;" but this is an utter perversion of all morals, such as even the world's standard of honesty would reprobate. Confession to the party wronged is the first step of a Christian, and the next is to make good the wrong done, whenever and so far as it may be possible; and every effort to do this, however small, is helpful to the soul. The only thing that can cancel a theft is the forgiveness of the party wronged. We believe the above remarks to hold good of debt covered by the bankruptcy laws of the country, for the released bankrupt is not free before God.

BITTER WATERS MADE SWEET.

THE children of Israel, in journeying through the wilderness to the land of promise, came to Marah. (Exod. ~~xxv.~~ 23, 24.) They could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter, and they murmured.

We also are passing through the desert, journeying homeward to our land of rest. On our way we, too, find the bitter waters of afflicting circumstances—it may be exceedingly bitter—and therewith comes, perhaps, the temptation to murmur.

Let us take a glance at Job's history, and see how his bitter cup was made sweet. The patriarch had indeed to drink bitter waters. He was deprived of his substance, his seven sons and three daughters were taken from him by death, and immediately after this he was afflicted with a sore disease "from the sole of his foot unto his crown." His wife only was left him, and under Satan's temptation she tempted her husband to curse God.

When his three chief friends heard of his calamities they came to mourn with him and to comfort him. They wept, they rent their mantles, and sprinkled dust upon their heads towards heaven; they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights in silence; they mourned and sympathized; *but they did not worship.*

He had been deprived of all his oxen and all his sheep. His three friends brought no bullock nor ram, they offered no burnt-offering; by their silence they left him to ponder his grief, which was "very great."

Thus far, although he could not offer burnt-offerings, as had been his custom, Job was still a worshipper: "he fell down upon the ground and worshipped . . . in all

this did not Job sin with his lips." The adversary, Satan, all this while was tempting Job to curse God.

The patriarch's cup is bitter, but he knows not yet how to turn the bitter into sweet. He complains of God because he died not at birth; he curses his day. He still complains—"Do not condemn me; show me wherefore thou contendest with me." (Chap. x. 1, 2.)

Up to the time of the beginning of his trials Job had been, according to God's own account of him, a perfect and an upright man—"one that feared God, and eschewed evil." But God saw in His servant Job that which Job knew not of, and the furnace was needful to make him manifest to himself and to purge away his dross.

Under the temptation of the adversary this tried servant of God speaks thus to his Maker: "Thou art become cruel to me;" and, speaking of God, says, "He multiplieth my wounds without cause." While answering the speeches of his friends, he justifies himself, contends with God, and condemns the Almighty. (Chap. xl. 2, 8.) Thus the patriarch's dross appears.

He is called upon by Elihu to make confession (chap. xxxiii. 27; xxxiv. 31; xxxvi. 8-11), which he fails to do until the Lord answers him out of the whirlwind.

In the last chapter Job repents, with self-abhorrence, in dust and ashes, going far beyond his former shallow confession, "*Behold, I am vile.*"

The burnt-offering, which prefigures the death of Christ, is offered; he prays for his accusing friends, and is delivered from his captivity. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning. After this he lived one hundred and forty years, and his bitter waters became sweet.

When we are in trial, whether for refining, as in the case of the patriarch, or whether we bring the trial upon

ourselves by our transgression, or Satan, relative, friend, or foe brings it upon us, let us be assured that if we deal aright with God the end will be better "than the beginning." "Behold, we count them happy that 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." (James v. 11.)

Had Job considered that God was preparing him for his double blessing, he would not have said, "Thou art become cruel to me;" but, "Thou art gracious;" "Thou art good, and doest good."

The bitter waters of Marah, because of which the people murmured, saying, "What shall we drink?" were made sweet when Moses "cried unto the Lord," and "cast into the waters a tree" which "the Lord shewed him." Afterwards the voice of the Lord was heard, "Do that which is right in my sight. I am Jehovah that healeth thee."

The scriptures of truth abound in instructions of the Spirit of God how to heal bitter waters and to make them sweet; and these are written for our profit.

Above all, the bitter waters which came into the soul of Christ should be our contemplation. He had, according to Ps. lxi., to be overwhelmed with the waters of God's wrath—deep waters where there was no standing; and those waters came into His soul. God's fierce wrath lay hard upon Him. "Thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

"He was wounded for our transgressions."

"He was made a curse for us."

"He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

"By His stripes we are healed."

When we have such an end in view as that of turning our trials to good account, we should remember the cross,

and consider the means to the end which God has prescribed.

The record of the bitter waters of Marah instructs us that in our wilderness journey we shall meet with bitter circumstances; and the tree that God showed to Moses, which when cast into the waters made the bitter sweet, points to Him "who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree."

If while under trial we prayerfully consider the scriptures which testify of Jesus Christ, and Him crucified and glorified, as for example Psalms xxii., xxiii., xxiv., lxix., lxxxviii., Isaiah liii., together with portions of evangelists and apostles which record His sufferings and glory, we shall find that *by the Spirit of God* our bitter waters are made sweet. *He will instruct us*, when our hearts are softened by meditation on the love of Christ towards us, by the meditation of His death, even the death of the cross, so that we shall be conformed to Him who said, "The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?"

Moreover we shall be taught that the all-wise God Himself has brought about our trying circumstances, and if our circumstances meet us contemplating such scriptures as the foregoing, feeding upon and dwelling in Christ, we shall bring the Lord, in whom we dwell, into our circumstances. Dwelling in Christ, we shall become like Him, and He will make the bitter sweet. The Lord of peace Himself will give us peace always by all means.

The means may be very bitter, but there will be no wrath in the cup; the cup of wrath was drunk and drained by Him who was made sin for us on the tree. Our wisdom, therefore, is to enquire of God if the gold which He puts into the furnace does not call for the refining fire. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." Thus it was

with the patriarch whose 'bitter trials we have been considering.

Was not Joseph better fitted for his office under Pharaoh after his trials in the pit and in the prison?

And was not David better prepared for his service to God in reigning over the people of Israel after he had passed through his bitter experience at the hand of Saul?

The wilderness was to him a dry and thirsty land where there was no water; but he thirsted for God, the living God, and God satisfied his soul in that wilderness of Judah as with marrow and fatness, and his mouth praised God with joyful lips. God was his hiding-place, and He preserved him from the troubles of unbelief in the midst of his trials of faith. Trusting in the unchanging, unchangeable Jehovah, he was compassed about with songs of deliverance, and God's right hand upheld him. His custom was, to pour out his heart to God, whose loving-kindness to him was better than life; and he was evermore rejoicing under the shadow of the wings of the Almighty.

So shall it be with us while we trust in the Lord with all our heart, knowing that "all things are working together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Whatever be the nature of the sufferings of the present time, and however lasting they be, if we compare them with the eternal weight of glory which awaits us, we shall say with the apostle Paul, "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" and with the apostle Peter, Our trials of faith, though now they cause heaviness, shall be found at this present time to be more precious than gold, and hereafter, at the appearing of Jesus Christ, to be unto our praise and honour and glory.

But it is the Spirit of God who comforts us under trial,

turning for us our bitter waters into sweet, *if indeed in these things we hearken to the voice of His word.*

Our heavenly Father has the disposing of all events. Nothing can happen without God. He suits our trials and our comforts to the necessities of our souls. It is for us to trust in Him as the all-wise and all-faithful God.

By the cross of Christ we are entitled to dwell under the shadow of the Almighty. He is our refuge from the storm of circumstances, and our fortress against the power of the enemy. If we abide in Christ, and Christ in us, no evil shall befall us. He will be with us in trouble, and will deliver us according to His word. The sheep of the Good Shepherd, for whom He laid down His life, are to follow their Lord, and each one may say, "I will fear no evil, for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

W. H.

"HE REMEMBERETH THAT WE ARE DUST."

YES, He remembers that we are but dust,
 And will ye dare forget it, thou and he,
 Withholding mutual help and sympathy,
 And letting slip the old sweet love and trust?
 Shall sorrow separate? shall shame divide?
 Nay, when the spirit sinks in self-disdain,
 When self-respect has clothed itself in pain,
 Press ye the closer to each other's side.
 Tears lose their bitterness together shed,
 And prayers, agreeing, know "it shall be done;"
 When paths are slippery better two than one.
 Keep not your hands apart then, humbly tread
 The appointed road together, with full trust
 In God's sustaining grace, who knows that ye are dust.

E. S. W.

ON HEART SEARCHING.

"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."—PSALM cxxxix. 23, 24.

THIS psalm is the expression of the Spirit of Christ as the head of His body, and He would have it to be the language of our hearts Godward, each member of His body living constantly and consciously in the presence of God. His desire is, that in integrity of heart we should walk before Him with every thought brought into captivity, and our whole lives lived as under His eye. Oh that the Spirit of Christ may write these words on the fleshy tables of our hearts as their cherished language! Let us not say "consider *us*" or "try *us*," but "search *me*," as a member of the mystic body of Christ, indwelt by His Spirit.

"*Search me, O God!*" we need to pray; just laying the heart bare and open before God, and willing, as it were, to call Him to our help against these evil hearts of ours; in the consciousness that "the heart is deceitful above all things," that God only can search it and know its depths. We must bring, so to speak, the electric light of God's presence into its dark caverns, its winding corridors and labyrinths. We know there is a High Priest at His right hand, who has been touched with the feeling of our infirmities, who knows what is in human nature; so that while the heart is made bare, we can come boldly to the throne of God for mercy and grace.

"Search me!" The process of sanctification is like the bleaching of yarn, where the yarn is laid open to the sunshine by day and the dew of heaven by night. One of the precious Jehovah-titles is JEHOVAH-KADESH, "*I am Jehovah that doth sanctify you.*" (Exod. xxxi. 13.) Israel

had to keep the Sabbath that they might learn that title; that when every stroke of work was silenced, and all was still, God Himself might do that work. Sanctification is not a work to be done by us, but it is done by God when we keep Sabbath in His presence. It is wrought by God Himself in the fathomless depths of the heart, which He alone can penetrate, and His eye alone can read. The secret of holy walking is to be walking as in the presence of God. We must not trust in our prayers. There are sins of ignorance which hinder prayer. Paul was aware of that, and so when called to account by the Corinthians he says, "I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord." (1 Cor. iv. 4.) And David says, "Judge me, O Lord; for I have walked in mine integrity." (Psalm xxvi. 1.) Our hearts may be conscious of no evil, but we need God to search down into their deeper depths, and thus to bring out a more perfect likeness to His own Son, as the continued shining of the sun perfects the process of bleaching.

"Search me, O God, *and know my heart!*" Here is my heart, not a book closed and sealed, but opened to thee; search it, and see what is there. That was a dark verdict which God pronounced upon the heart of man from the beginning—"that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen. vi. 5.) *Only* evil, not evil sometimes, but continually. If God thus estimates the condition of our hearts, what need there is for this prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: *try me, and know my thoughts.*" If a person got an answer to this prayer, he would never go in for sinless perfection. "The thought of foolishness is sin." How many thousands of foolish thoughts pass through our hearts day after day, more in number than the hairs of our head. "I am sure there is not a particle of dust in this

room," we might say, but let the silent rays of the sun come in, and we see thousands of particles of dust floating in the sunshine; so is it with our hearts, whether we know it or not. Hence the necessity of *thinking* in God's presence, "and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. x. 5.) "Out of the heart are the issues of life," and as a man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. iv. 23; xxiii. 7.) The root of evil walking is evil thinking; this is the secret of all our shortcomings.

"Search me, O God *see if there be any wicked way in me,*" not only any action that I myself should be ashamed to do, but anything which is not pleasing to my Father, and that grieves His heart. The child often does not know the wrong done till he sees the cloud upon his father's face. How much are we like Peter in our self-confidence! I thank Peter for his outspokenness—"Thou shalt never wash my feet." If we know anything about our hearts, that has been in numberless instances their language. Are we willing to put all our ways into the hands of Jesus, that He may cleanse us? The washing of the priests' hands and feet, when they went into the sanctuary, was not to be in any kind of water, they must wash in the water of the laver; and none but our Lord can cleanse us. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." (John xiii. 8.)

What is the conclusion of the Psalm? "*Lead me in the way everlasting.*" "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." May we seek to be led of the Spirit in "*the way everlasting,*" asking God to help us to tread on earth the pathway we shall for ever tread when we get home to glory.

(T. N.)

GRACE.

"By grace are ye saved through faith."

"It is a good thing to have the heart established with grace."

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

IN these three passages the word *grace* is used designedly for three distinct purposes. Salvation is by grace; and when the soul is saved, what do we need? To have the heart established with grace; and this is brought about through increasing knowledge of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle Paul well knew what grace was. In Rom. v. he speaks of the "abundance of grace," and in Eph. ii. of the "exceeding riches of His grace;" and in Eph. iv., when speaking of the membership of the body, he says, "Unto everyone of us is given grace." When saved by grace, God does not send us to a warfare at our own charges. His grace suffices for all service and for all suffering, and teaches us to deny ourselves and to live godly in Christ Jesus.

God's grace comprehends all His dealings with man since the fall. In the garden sin closed man's heart to God, and thus was necessitated another action on the part of God. He must re-open man's heart, as we see in the case of Lydia (Acts xvi. 14), and make him know His grace. The reception of grace is the beginning of life, and then growth in grace and establishment in grace follow. But this sometimes costs terrible conflicts, because of our tendency to legality. Grace is the means by which God cures all the ills by which man is afflicted. It is His remedy for moral evil, for pride of heart, for doctrinal evil, and for ritualistic evil.

In 1 Cor. xv. 10 the apostle says, "By the grace of God

I am what I am ;" and on the same principle the lack and absence of that grace made the Corinthians what they were—carnal saints, babes in Christ. Again, he tells the Galatians, "Ye are fallen from grace." (Gal. v. 4.) They had got under law, and grace was therefore the remedy for the evil in Galatia. Grace makes nothing of man, counts him nothing, until he is a new creature in Christ Jesus. The Hebrews were going back to carnal ordinances, which only serve for those who are dead ; and the apostle tells them of Him who by the grace of God tasted death for them, and of the throne of grace, bids them seek grace to serve acceptably, and warns them against failing of the grace of God. (Heb. ii., iv., xii.)

In Heb. xiii. we read, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp." This will take us outside the moral evil of Corinth, the legality and fleshly works of Galatia, and the ritualistic evil of the Hebrews. But religious corruption, let us remember, is the most subtle form of evil. In gathering simply to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, let us bring in none of those things that the Spirit of God would bring us out of, and then Christ will own and bless us.

But if we take this attitude, what may we expect ? To bear His reproach, even as He said in Ps. lxi., "The reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me." He is indeed the perfect pattern of faith. Let us be followers of Him, allowing the word of God to weigh and rule and guide us altogether. So shall we be found treading in His footsteps. The true value of reproach was understood by Moses, for he esteemed "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." May we be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and be looking for that grace that is to be brought unto us at His appearing.

(W. S.)

ON WALKING BY FAITH.

It is a great matter for every disciple of Christ to settle in his heart that he is called to walk by faith, and not by sight. To come to this conclusion, and nothing less, is prudence. The world knows nothing of faith; all its courses are the fruit of this thought: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." His must be a course of folly whose life is a life of unbelief; but ours is to be a life of faith on the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

Has God made provision for the life of faith to which He calls us? He never makes a claim on us without reason. The revelation He has given us of Himself is His claim, and His provision for us is, that He has done His utmost and His best in Christ.

Moses chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Christ was but dimly revealed to Moses; but God has "provided some better thing for us," and has revealed to us in fulness that same Christ whom Moses dimly beheld.

The examples of faith in Hebrews xi. are not given to us to admire only, or even to copy, but to admire and *excel*. God lays us under this obligation because He has given us a revelation of His Son. There is no wisdom but that of living by faith on things unseen. Whether we are engaged in the closet with God's word and prayer, or in the work of our hands, our wisdom is to walk by faith and not by sight.

The children of this world are wiser in their generation

than the children of light, but we should seek that this might not be true of us. The saved should be the wise, the happy, the holy; and we have provision for this to the full in Christ, if we do not give way to self-will. Christ is as willing to save us from all that would harm us as He is to save a sinner from hell. His word is, "Come unto me and I will give you rest"—rest from anxious forebodings, from the wounds of offended pride or thwarted self-will.

Remember that the fulness of Christ is all ours, and that faith has a right to all that fulness. In Heb. v. 9 we read that Christ was "made perfect;" that is, perfectly fitted to be the Priest for us, the Aaron and Melchisedec. He has presented His *one* perfect atoning sacrifice, and perfection excludes repetition. Angels cannot claim brotherhood with Him, but He is not ashamed to call us "brethren," and He is perfect in sympathy. He feels for us more than we can feel for ourselves. The apple of the eye is tender, but the heart of Christ is much more tender. Our treasure in Him is complete, infinite, and eternal.

(R. C. C.)

THE BOOK OF THE REVELATION:

ITS PLACE IN THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE.

THE Apocalypse forms the very pinnacle of the divine record, and without it the book of God would have been incomplete, and have presented an appearance somewhat like that of an unfinished spire.

The Bible is a perfect whole, and the last book completes the structure, carrying us on, in the fulfilment of the purposes of God, to the time when a new heaven and a new earth, the New Jerusalem and the lake of fire, fill up

the divine record, and bring to pass all that God has revealed.

As we read what God has written of man's evil course from first to last, we wonder, and may well ask, "Is all God's mighty work to prove a failure? and is His divine purpose to be frustrated by the craft of Satan, and the sinfulness of man?" To one who looks not beyond the actual condition of the apostolic churches into the future, the cross must present a failure, and the lapse of ages appears to give abundant reason for the taunt of the sceptic that Christianity has failed. Looking around, we may own that it has failed, whether we contemplate the state of Christendom, or the actual condition of the visible churches. We might read through the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and well weep over our ruins, as he wept over Jerusalem, when he thought of her past, and saw her desolations. It is true that Satan seeks to hide the sorrowful fact from those who ought to see it plainly and feel it most, inasmuch that many boast in their shame, while they mind earthly things, and flatter themselves that the world has become the Church, and boast in their Christian nationalities and their public worship. And all this blindness exists, though Paul told of the working of the mystery of lawlessness, and Peter forewarned of the coming of sceptics and scoffers, and John testified of the uprising of many antichrists, and also foretold greater abominations still.

In the midst of all that there is to discourage and to disappoint, with the love of many waxing cold, and false teachers abounding and corrupting or destroying the faith of many, the book of the Revelation comes before us, unveiling these mysteries of light and darkness, of truth and error, of Christ and Satan, so clearly and so unmistakeably, that it is truly a light shining in a dark place. It discovers to us the various agencies at work, unfolding those devices

of Satan which are ultimately allowed to bring about his own doom. It unveils to us what is dark and obscure in surrounding things, by a graphic and awful portrayal of what all is tending to and will culminate in.

It is not without peculiar significance that on the reading of this book a blessing is promised which is not so directly attached to any other book in the Bible. He who reads it is blessed, and they who listen are also blessed, and why is this? When God came down to see Sodom, He said, "Shall I hide from Abraham the thing which I do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?" And now, when God is about to come down in judgment on a world worse than Sodom, does He not seek that His friends—those who are to reign with His Son in the kingdom of heaven—shall know what He is going to do, and thus have their hearts in sympathy with His, and guide their footsteps aright through the dark sphere of evil that surrounds them?

Ignorance of the future lies at the root of much of the false principles on which so many are acting. They have a lie in their right hand, and do not know it.

Our dispensation is a mystery, and we live surrounded by mysteries. The mystery of godliness and the mystery of lawlessness await the time when they shall become manifestations; when the lawless one and the Righteous One shall come visibly upon the scene, and encounter each other face to face. The Church is a mystery now, and will not become a manifestation till she is caught up to meet her Lord in the air. Then, and not till then, will the oneness of the body be seen, and Head and members become visibly one. So also the apostacy is now a mystery, as we read in Rev. xvii., "Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the

earth," and it will not become a manifestation till out of her shall come the lawless one, the man of sin. The apostacy will then be seen in its true light; false names will deceive no longer; things will be seen to be what they really are; and evil, as such, will be accepted, worshipped, and gloried in. This will seal the condemnation of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

The question is often asked, If the Revelation actually concerns the future only, what is its practical bearing on us? The answer is plain. To understand the secret workings of principles, God's plan is to make known the outcome of those principles when that which hides them shall be taken away, and the veil that the devil has woven to beguile and deceive will obscure no longer.

As long as God works in mystery, so long Satan works on corresponding lines. This suits him best; but when the time of God's manifestation comes, the old serpent alters his plans accordingly, and satanic manifestations take the place of the workings of evil which are now carried on in mystery and under false names. It is thus God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness.

A glance at this wonderful book may here be helpful. In the first three chapters the Church is on earth, and Christ is fulfilling His promise, "I am with you alway, even until the consummation of the age." (See Greek.)

As the High Priest, He is seen walking among the seven candlesticks, and in every message to the churches He brings before those whom he addresses, directly or indirectly, the fact of His second coming, and the reward then to be given to the overcomers.

In the following chapters Christ is seen as the Lamb. "Sit thou on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool," was the prophetic word spoken to Him in Ps. cx.: now He is seen no longer sitting, but standing,

and taking the seven-sealed titled deed of inheritance from the hand of Him who sits upon the throne, indicating that the time has arrived when He is to receive the kingdom.

But it has to be taken out of the hand of the enemy, who is portrayed in unmistakable language as the dragon, the old serpent, and Satan. The contest lies between the Lamb and the dragon, and we are not left in ignorance as to the issue. Agencies are employed on both sides, heavenly and earthly, angelic and human, and after prolonged and terrible conflict the book ends with the victory of the Lamb and the confining of Satan to the abyss; while his chief agents, the beast and the false prophet, are cast into the lake of fire. The thousand years' blissful reign under the Prince of peace now begins, and at its close comes the final conflict, under Gog and Magog, at the instigation of Satan, who has been loosed from the abyss. Fire from heaven ends this rebellion, and Satan himself is cast into the lake of fire. The final judgment now takes place, followed by the bringing in of the new heaven and the new earth, the New Jerusalem being made the temple of God for earth and heaven. It is then that God says, "It is done." The victory of light over darkness, of righteousness over sin, of Christ over Satan, is complete, and prophetic scripture receives its perfect fulfilment. It will then be seen that God has triumphed, and none the less because for six thousand years He allowed Satan and sin to work out their bitterest fruits, and to make plain in the universe of God what the knowledge of good and evil is, with which Satan tempted our first parents.

The historic or "preterist" interpretation of this book has done much to rob it of its peculiar value as unfolding to us the ultimate result of what the world is boasting in—the end of that human development which man fondly hopes will bring in the golden age of peace and plenty.

Predictions of most fearful judgments are "historically" interpreted as having had their fulfilment in commonplace events, such as the overturning of this or that power by another, until the sceptic smiles, and the warnings of God as to the future are regarded as unmeaning jargon. Men are legitimately led to interpret the lake of fire in the same allegorical fashion that makes the sixth seal foretell the overturn of the throne of the Cæsars, or find its accomplishment in the French Revolution. That line of interpretation which makes the dragon anything other than what he is said to be, the old serpent and the devil, makes Satan a myth, and beclouds with mists and uncertainties what God has written that His little ones may know what is coming, in so far as God is pleased for them to know it. Prophetic scriptures, whether of the past or of the future, are veiled on purpose that those may understand whom God means to understand, and that none of the wicked may understand. (Dan. xii. 3.)

All God's word is judicial in its character; that is, it is a test of the integrity of the heart, and of the uprightness of the mind of him who reads it. He who cast the veil of a Nazarene origin over the life and history of the Son of God born in Bethlehem, also purposely throws a cloud of ambiguity and uncertainty around His revelations of the future, and while those who are Israelites indeed—true Nathanaels—will see through it, and read aright the lessons God would teach, they who would be teachers before they have learnt, stumble over these difficulties and make shipwreck.

For the understanding of the book of Revelation the same learning and intelligence are needed as for any other book in the Bible. There are difficulties in prophecy, as in every branch of divine revelation, which a word would have removed, but which God designedly placed there

that we might walk humbly in the truth; remembering that even Paul, who had been caught up into the third heaven, had to confess that he knew but in part, and awaited the fuller light of the future when partial knowledge shall be done away. But while there are difficulties and obscurities, there are certainties about which none need doubt. Let these be held with unflinching tenacity by the humble seeker after truth, and many difficulties that surround those certainties will gradually find their solution, as the main features are more and more clearly apprehended, and become more familiar to the mind. These are the mountain-tops that mark the onward journey, and which can be clearly seen, while there are intervening parts regarding which the Spirit of God must give us something of a bird's-eye view to understand their order.

, Let it be our aim to keep the salient points of this most precious part of our Saviour's legacy clearly in view, centring all distinctly in our minds around the purpose of God in Christ. The book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ will then be what its name indicates, "an opening up" and "an unfolding" to us, as children of God, of this world's history, which will make us wiser in our daily walk, and less liable to be turned aside by those devices which are ever arising in the mind of man to make plain that which God's providence has allowed sin and Satan to obscure. This full clearing up awaits the advent of the Son of God Himself, whom God will send "at the time of the restitution of all things," when "the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord."

God alone can make straight what Satan has made crooked, and He only can number that which the fall has made wanting, and bring in that everlasting righteousness which the cross of Christ is designed to secure.

But God, not man—Christ, not the Church, must accomplish this. The Revelation teaches us this in every page, and this humbling lesson the Church has almost as much need to learn as the world itself, so completely has the Church of God, as a whole, gone back to the “elements of the world,” those “weak and beggarly elements” by which man, according to the wisdom of the flesh, the religion of the flesh, and the power of the flesh, seeks to understand and bring about that which the Lamb in the midst of the throne, with the seven eyes of divine omniscience and the seven horns of divine omnipotence, alone can see and alone can accomplish. H. G.

NOTES OF A BIBLE READING.

ROMANS V.—VII.

THE apostle John sets forth Christ as the Word of God and the Word of Life. Paul reveals Him to us as the last Adam in contrast with the first Adam. The first man was made upright, but with Eve he yielded to transgression; and thus sin entered, and so death passed upon every child of Adam. In Eph. v. we see Christ as the Upright One, the Second Man, the Lord from heaven, cleansing, caring for, and nurturing His bride, whom He loves, and for whom He gave Himself.

Satan is always at work to darken the soul's comprehension of the character of God. If the righteousness of God in Christ be dimly apprehended the soul cannot “joy in God.” Justification is far more than forgiveness; it is not merely a putting away of sin, but God in justifying makes a new creature. He might have forgiven us, and restored us to Adam's place in paradise; but we read: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

The imputation of Adam's sin is the fountain of my sin ; so the imputation of Christ's righteousness to me is the fountain of my righteousness and of my living to God. We must be clear upon what the Spirit says concerning justification if we would rightly understand the practical pathway of holiness.

Law is the whole religion of the natural man, by whatever name he may call that religion ; it has a form of of godliness, but denies the power. The law is the strength of sin, though man's philosophy has never thought of it in this light. The religion of the natural man only makes him the slave of sin. The law is God's iron chain that binds sin on the sinner, and then God's remedy comes in. The law stirs up our self-will by saying, "Thou shalt;" and we answer, "I will not." Guiltiness drives us away from God, as it did the first Adam, and our pride makes us refuse to confess our sin. Light and warmth hasten corruption, and so the light and love that are in the truth bring out deeper and darker evil in those who reject it.

Let us as children of God beware of being under Moses instead of under Christ, and of imposing burdens on one another contrary to the liberty of Christ. The moment we walk in the flesh we are under law. God has not put us under law, but under grace ; but He puts the law inside us, and His power fulfils its righteousness in us. The law outside is a drawn sword, but inside it becomes an intuition, and constrains to love and obedience. The instinct of human love illustrates this. Our iron fetters were struck off, and we are put under the golden chains of love ; but let us take care that we keep love's chains on us. If we walk in the flesh the iron fetters will again gall our feet.

In the beginning of Romans v. we are taught justification by faith, and then instructed concerning the old head and the new One ; in chap. vi. we are taught about

the old and new nature, and the old and new Master; and in chap. vii. about the old and new Husband. From all these antagonisms the warfare follows, which is constant and terrible, yet blessed to the overcomer.

From Rom. vi. 1-11 we learn the foundation of true holiness. In verse 11 the command to each child of God is to reckon himself to have died in Christ his surety; and then, as alive unto God, he is to present his body a living sacrifice through the power of the Holy Ghost. If we enter into our obligation to be obedient to the command of verse 11, we shall be led into all the obedience enjoined in chap. vi., and shall then understand the why and wherefore of chap. vii., and the blessedness of chap. viii. The real contest between us and Satan is, not about salvation, but about *obedience*. All our obedience must spring from love, and not from law.

The law of sin in our members is not the sin that breaks out, nor the sin that is kept down, nor the sin that Satan or angels see, nor that which God blames us for, and for which we are responsible; but it is that indwelling sin for which we are not responsible, which draws forth the bitter cry, "O wretched man that I am!" We should judge sin as God has judged it at the cross. It is the judgment of a heavenly conscience that enables us to say, "It is no more I." The experience of Rom. vii. is what we should seek to attain to, and not to leap out of. Ps. cxix. 176 is David's seventh of Romans.

In Rev. iii. 17 we read of some who speak of themselves as "rich" because they do not see their needy condition; but the Lord says of them "wretched" and "poor," because they do not say it of themselves.

"O wretched man!" shows the anguish and sorrow of spirit I suffer concerning the flesh when walking in the Spirit. I aim at entire obedience, and fall short of it. I

delight in the law, but am kept down by this body of corruption. The soul's aspiration is for the redemption of the body, and this leads it to realize the presence of evil, and to groan, being burdened.

"I am carnal" (Rom. vii. 14) is not like the "Are ye not carnal?" of 1 Cor. iii. 3; it is not applied to the saint, but to the flesh in him. "Who shall deliver me?" I am in captivity in comparison with what my soul longs for.

If sin breaks out in me it is I that do it; if I tolerate it in me I am to blame, whether it comes out or not. The flesh is incurably bad, and knows no other law than the law of sin. Man tries to cure it. God undertakes to kill it through the cross of Christ.

Romans vii. shows the value of the epistle to the Hebrews, making us feel our need of the priestly ministrations of Christ at the right hand of God.

Divine paradoxes abound in the word of God, needing divine illumination to comprehend them. We shall never be humble until we think highly enough of ourselves. If we saw ourselves as God sees Christ, and as He sees us in Christ, we should then walk as wearing princely garments. Let us be humble enough to see according to John xvii. How should we then look upon each other? As in the world, but not of it.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

What is the relation of the Church to the new covenant of Luke xxii. 20?

THE new covenant of Jeremiah xxxi. is similar to the original covenant of *grace* made with Abraham in Genesis xv., as distinguished from the covenant of *works* made with Israel at Sinai. Paul says, in Rom. iv., that the promise made to Abraham, and sealed in the blood of the covenant, is made "sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all." The sacrifices in Genesis xv. were typical of

Christ's sacrifice, by which, in oath, in covenant, and in blood, God has confirmed to us His promises, and revealed to us "the immutability of His counsel." The covenant with Israel has reference to an earthly inheritance, but ours is connected with a heavenly one, even as the father of the faithful himself "looked for the city which hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God." To enjoy the full security of our heavenly standing in Christ, we need to know the value of God's covenant, for His "I will" and oath secure in Christ all the promises, notwithstanding the failings and weaknesses of the creature. Compare Heb. vi. 13-20 with chap. viii., where Christ is called "the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises;" and see also 1 Cor. xi. 25.

How are we to understand "because of the angels" in 1 Cor. xi. 10?

SCRIPTURE frequently speaks of the relation in which angels stand to this present world. They look down upon all that is going on here, and thereby learn the truth and the ways of God. (1 Peter i.) It is said of Christ that He was "seen of angels;" and Paul says, "We are made a spectacle . . . to angels." They are ministers of God on behalf of those who believe, and through them they learn those lessons which man's redemption and life are designed to teach. The earlier part of 1 Cor. xi. points out God's will in that subordination of one to another which culminates in subjection to God. This is at once a lesson and a warning to the elect angels, who call to mind Satan's rebellion, when he and his hosts broke away from their subjection to God, and set up an independent will that had not God for its centre. All eternal right centres in God; the head of Christ is God, the head of man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man. Hence the woman has to show in relation to man the place of subjection. To angels, who witnessed her fall in the garden, and to men, she thus sets an example of submission in circumstances often very uncongenial and very trying. For this reason woman has to carry the token of an authority over her to which she submits, and this token is the veil that covers the head. Hence all that takes woman out of the veiled or covered place in which God has set her, is a violation of her position in the creation of God. In 1 Tim. ii. 13, 14, a double obligation to silence and subjection is enjoined on the woman; first, from the order of creation—"for Adam was first formed, then Eve;" second, on account of her precedence in the fall—"for Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." God's order must be preserved until we all participate in the redemption of the body, when there will be "neither male nor female."

THE HOLINESS OF GOD'S HOUSE.

ISAIAH vi.

THE HOLY VISION.

WHENEVER we turn to this wonderful chapter we are conscious that we are on holy ground. Everything speaks of holiness, though grace most beautifully shines forth. We are called to enter the holy place, and ponder the vision given to the prophet there. He had known something of "the Holy One of Israel," and had spoken in His name to the people; but there was further service in store for him, and for this God would fit him yet more fully.* In the holy place he now beholds the Holy One—"the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train" (the skirts of the royal robe) "filled the temple."

It was Israel's true King who thus manifested Himself in that human form which in the fulness of time He purposed in grace to take for ever. That it was He is clearly stated in John xii. 41, where, after quoting from this chapter, the writer adds, "These things said Esaias when he saw His glory and spake of Him." His throne was high and lifted up, indicating His glory and majesty. In attendance upon Him were the seraphim, awaiting His commands and ready to do His bidding. The word *seraphim* is plural; it signifies *burning ones*, and seems expressive of their intense holiness. And yet such is their sense of the holiness of Him in whose presence they stand, that with two wings they cover their faces, and with two

* I assume that this chapter stands in its true chronological place, though it should be remarked that some whose judgment commands respect regard it as setting forth the first call of the prophet to his service. If it were so it seems strange that it does not stand at the beginning of the book.

they cover their feet, while two are outstretched ready for instant service. Their utterance, too, proclaims this same sense of His holiness. They cried responsively; one spake, another answered, but their expression was the same—

“HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is JEHOVAH of hosts!
The whole earth is full of His glory.”

The repetition expresses intensity, and we also discern in it a reference to the three glorious persons of the Godhead. The might of these created ones is intimated by the statement that “the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried,” while the description is completed by the word, “the house was filled with smoke.” The cloud of Jehovah’s glory filled it, as when the tabernacle was first set up, and when Solomon dedicated the temple. (Exod. xl. 34; 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.)

THE EFFECT UPON ISAIAH.

In the effect of all this upon the prophet we mark three things—confession, cleansing, and consecration.

1. *Confession.* The consciousness of being in the very presence of “the King, the Lord of hosts,” made him feel his own sinfulness. He heard the utterance of the burning ones, but felt that he could not join in their ascription of praise. His mouth was closed in self-abasement, but opened in confession, the form of which was determined by the circumstances in which he found himself. He heard the holy song, and felt that his lips were unclean. “Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.” What a *personal* thing is confession! He does not mix himself with others, and say *we* are a people of unclean lips; that comes in its place, but it is not the first thing. He knows and owns that this is the state of the people, but he begins with *himself*.

Should anyone read these lines who has never had personal dealing with God, such an one is entreated to consider that there can be no blessing apart from this. No priest can come between you and the Holy One, nor can you be lost in the crowd and your individual condition be overlooked. Sooner or later you *must* have personal dealing with Him. It is for you to determine whether it shall be now or hereafter. To come to God now is to secure everlasting blessedness and joy, while to remain in unconcern or self-deception is to court the sentence of unending woe. The day is at hand when, unless you are by His side as His redeemed one, you must stand face to face with the holy Judge, surrounded by angels of His power and everything that tells of unsullied holiness. You will have nothing to cover your face or your person, or in any way to hide you from His searching gaze; but the very purity of His throne and the light of His presence will make you fully manifest to yourself as well as to Him, and compel you to own the justice of the sentence pronounced against you. Oh, how much better to seek His presence now, in the day of grace, when the discovery of your state and the confession of it would lead to immediate cleansing!

Those of us also who have through grace had our lips sealed in self-condemnation as children of Adam, and then opened as children of God to shew forth His praise, have need constantly to consider this great matter of personal dealing with God in the way of confession. How much we have to confess! first for ourselves individually, and then for the Church of God as a whole, like the prophet in the midst of Israel. And if we begin truly with ourselves, we shall deal truly with God on behalf of others.

Confession on behalf of others is to be distinguished from *condemnation* of them. If we fancy we have learnt a little more than others, and are conscious that we stand

in some measure of separation from the traditions of men, it is but according to human nature, and very easy, to look down upon fellow-Christians, and simply condemn everything around us. It is a very different thing, and it needs the Spirit of Christ, just to go down before God in self-abasement on account of our own shortcomings, and in the way of confession and intercession to bear in some measure the burden of things around. But our doing this depends very much upon what we really know of being in His presence. It was there that the prophet learnt *himself*, and it was there that he could speak truly of Israel, not as being above them, but as being part of them and sharing their state, though he was really so far above them as to be God's witness to the whole nation.

2. *Cleansing.* To this a true confession ever leads. The moment the prophet owned his state a seraph flew to him with a live coal from the altar, and, laying it upon his lips, said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." There was no delay. God has taken great pains to show us how inseparable are confession and forgiveness; for it is His delight to magnify His own grace. And is it not our delight to mark the ways of that grace to which we owe so much? It is not only true that the moment a sinner for the first time bows in God's presence as a poor and needy one, he has a perfect forgiveness, but it is equally true that when the child of God goes to Him in the way of confession his cleansing is as instantaneous and perfect.

How beautifully is the way of cleansing opened up to us here! It was a coal from the altar that purged the lips of the prophet. That fire of the altar was expressive of the unchanging holiness of Israel's God; but upon the fire the sacrifice had been laid and consumed. The coal was, so to speak, saturated with the fat of the sacrifice.

Hence it could purge ; otherwise it must have consumed. Does not this remind us that in the cross of Christ the glorious holiness of God is so magnified, and all the claims of His justice are so fully met that, *as the Holy One*, He can act in the way of perfect grace, and purge away the sins of every self-abased sinner ? How deep is the meaning of that word : " If we " (the children of God) " confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness " !

The knowledge of this cleansing is a simple matter of faith ; it depends upon our acceptance of the word of our God. If God's people knew more of the definite and immediate confession of sin whenever conscious of it, there would not be the weakness there often is, and that lack of readiness for simple and hearty worship which is so often felt. Few things are harder than simple confession ; but growth in the knowledge of God, and the habit of dealing with Him as those who are indeed His children, will help us increasingly to have no reserves. The enemy may defeat us when we are unwatchful ; but if when we have failed we at once turn to God, the final victory must be on our side, and the foe will be put to shame. For if our confession and our sense of forgiveness be true, the result can only be a strengthening of the bond that binds our hearts to Him who proves Himself so " ready to forgive."

3. *Consecration.* Isaiah now hears another voice. He had already received the word of the Lord by one of His holy attendants, but now he adds, " Also I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us ? " How beautiful is this ! The Lord does not simply command Isaiah to go, though it was His purpose to send him. He will have *voluntary* service, and therefore graciously gives the prophet the opportunity of offering himself. Many may shrink from this service, but not the

one who is in His presence, and in the enjoyment of the blessing there bestowed. The question shows the greatness of the service, while it brings into view the blessed fellowship of the Godhead. If the Son says, "Whom shall I send?" He adds, "Who will go for *us*?" for Israel's God is the triune Jehovah. So in later days Saul of Tarsus was most distinctly called and sent by the Lord Jesus; but being His servant and apostle (Rom. i. 1), he is equally the servant of God (Acts xxvii. 23), and no less is he called and sent forth by the Holy Ghost. (Acts xiii. 2, 4.)

We may well ponder Isaiah's unquestioning response, "Here am I; send me." He has so accepted the assurance of cleansing that he shrinks not back from any sense of unfitness; while he has so learned the import of the seraphic utterance that the title "the Holy One of Israel" is one of the prominent features of his writings. Then again, he asks not where he is to go, or what to do; he makes no conditions; but, as a true servant, places himself absolutely at the disposal of the Lord. This is consecration indeed. He simply yields himself to the Lord, to be His servant, to do His bidding. This is exactly what believers are called in Romans vi. to do. On the ground of deliverance, by the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, from the sin that once ruled over us, we are called to yield ourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead, and this involves obedience to His word *in everything*. Consecration is no mere sentiment or emotion, but a life-long yielding of ourselves to God, though indeed emotion will not be absent; for no one can live to God without proving the *joy* of so doing.

ISALAH'S COMMISSION.

How sure is guidance to him who is thus yielded to God. The one who offers himself is accepted, and at once

receives his commission. It is indeed a solemn one; for he is sent forth with the sentence of judgment upon the people to whom God had so often spoken in vain. He receives it without a murmur, though one question of love and reverence bursts from his heart: "Lord, how long?" To them that fear Him the Lord makes known His ways, and the answer He gives to Isaiah is so comprehensive as to embrace the entire history of Israel from that moment until the time when, in the spot where the prophet beheld the vision, restored Israel shall rejoice in the glorious reality which it prefigured.

In this prophecy there are three stages, the first of which is *Israel's hardening*. God had dealt with them in much long-suffering and patience; He had borne with them for centuries, and sent them messenger after messenger, but they would not hear or obey His voice. He now intimates that the effect of all future testimony shall be a hardening of the hearts of those who had hardened themselves against Him. This passage is quoted on three occasions in the New Testament. The Lord adduces it as His reason for speaking in parables (Matt. xiii.); John quotes it as explaining how it was so few believed on the Lord (John xii. 39); and Paul reminds the Jews of it when they disputed instead of believing, (Acts xxviii. 25-28.) Yet it is beautiful to see that the sentence of judgment does not prevent the triumph of mercy, where God is pleased to show it. In Isaiah's day there was a godly remnant who were nourished and helped by his ministry. When the Lord quoted the words He could add, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear;" when John referred to them there were still those around the Lord whose hearts had been truly attracted to Him; and when Paul charged the nation with blindness we are told that "some

believed." Thus even from Israel there ever has been and ever must be "a remnant according to the election of grace." Rejection, not acceptance, was the result of Christ's ministry. Those who were taught of God received Him; but in the case of the nation at large, and especially of its leaders, the charge, "*Ye will not come to me,*" is followed by the awful statement—"They could not believe." (John v. 40; xii. 39.) The fact that *will not* thus becomes *cannot* should make us very watchful in our treatment of the word of God, and jealous in the matter of receiving and obeying whatever we may learn from it.

Next follows *Israel's judgment*. The answer to the question, "Lord, how long?" seems to reach far beyond the Babylonish captivity, and to embrace the present period of Israel's dispersion. It is worthy of remark that soon after this vision was given Rome was founded; so that while the power of Assyria, which was to be the first instrument of God's judgment upon Israel, was in its glory the power that was to inflict the final blow was being developed. How literally have these words been fulfilled! The cities have indeed been wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man. The Lord has removed men far away, and great is the vacancy in the midst of the land. The land is desolate, and far away from it its proper inhabitants are wandering as exiles in every nation under heaven; but this cannot last for ever. The day of mercy for them must come, for God has promised it.

Israel's restoration. The meaning of the last verse seems to be: There shall still be a remnant, which shall return, and shall be consumed; but as in the case of the terebinth and the oak when they are cut down there is a stock left to send forth new shoots, so it shall be with this remnant. There shall be a holy seed that shall form the nucleus of the new nation, which shall blossom and bud,

and fill the face of the world with fruit. (Isa. xvii. 6.) In Zech. xiii. 8 we read, touching the future dealing of God with Israel, "Two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third part shall be left therein;" and when this third part has been brought through the fire and purified the word shall be fulfilled—"They shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, Jehovah is my God." (v. 9.) It will no longer be "*this* people" (Isa. vi. 9), but "*my* people," as those who are owned and blessed indeed.

The experience of the prophet will then become the experience of the nation. They will yet learn what true confession, cleansing, and consecration are; they will take their place in deep self-abasement before God; they will prove the efficacy of that fountain opened for sin and uncleanness; and they will be wholly and for ever yielded up to Him, whose grace they will so fully have proved. Then shall the throne, high and lifted up, be in the midst of Israel, and their true King—their long-rejected Messiah—be seated upon it in His glory; and then shall the nation for which He died (John xi. 51), with renewed heart and purged lips, give to Him the glory due unto His name, and worship Him in the beauty of holiness.

May we so learn the lessons of this great chapter as to be more truly to the Lord now, in our walk and ways, what Israel will be then.

W. H. B.

GOD'S THOUGHTS.—"How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!"—Ps. cxxxix. 17. If we did not know God's thoughts toward us how could we read with comfort this psalm, that tells us of God's omniscience, His omnipotence, and omnipresence? We can only bear the contemplation of these divine attributes as we know the infinite grace of His thoughts towards us.

JONAH: A LESSON FOR PREACHERS.

THE book of Jonah, and Jonah himself as there depicted, have ever been a theme of solemn instruction to public servants of God. The very candour with which the prophet records his own sins and failures (for one cannot well doubt that Jonah was himself the writer) contains a lesson; so too John in Patmos does not shrink from telling us his mistake in worshipping the angel, and the reproof he received. Thus the brief record of our own failures may serve as a beacon to warn other voyagers off the rocks on which we have struck.

Jonah lived in the long reign of Jeroboam II. (see 1 Kings xiv. 25), and this puts his book as the *earliest* of all the books of the prophets. Chronologically* at the head of them all, it seems given to show what bitter yet profitable experiences God's prophets passed through, and the pains God took to teach them. Grace *reigns* in God's ways with His servants as truly as it does in His first making them His children. "The grace of Christ as a Master," said one, "is not one whit less than His grace as a Saviour." The book of Jonah shows this.

On largeness of heart it is also a lesson to God's servants in their ministry. It gives us, perhaps, the earliest and largest Old Testament outflow of God's grace to the Gentiles through a Jewish channel. God might have left Nineveh to its sins and its deserved doom, but He sends His Hebrew servant to warn it; and by the depth and fulness of God's pity for the guilty city, Jonah has to learn how shallow was his own, and how clogged was the stream of it by pride and self-seeking. Unwilling in

the first instance to go to Nineveh at all, even when he afterwards did go, how soon he ceased his preaching! It was a city of "three days' journey;" but Jonah seems never to have gone more than one day's journey through it. Very unlike was this to Paul's word to the elders of Ephesus: "Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might *FINISH my course*;" or to the Master's word: "I have glorified thee on the earth; *I have finished* the work thou gavest me to do." Jonah's backwardness and self-seeking in his ministry was not only due to his Jewish coldness of heart towards Gentiles; it was a human sinfulness common, alas! to us all.

Another difficulty in the way of Jonah's obedience was his knowledge that judgment was God's "strange act," and was again and again graciously deferred. "Therefore," says he, "I fled before unto Tarshish; for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." Jonah had seen this to be true in God's ways with his own nation (see Ps. lxxviii.), and he thought God's willingness to delay threatened judgment would be the same in the case of Nineveh. And when this divine forbearance *did* show itself, Jonah was angry, and would have no fellowship with it.

It is confessedly difficult for us also as children to walk with God our Father in these His ways of unwearied, patient grace. Even in our ordinary and more private life as saints we find it difficult, and contrary to our nature to do so. Still more so when the heat and earnestness of public work for God is upon us.

The very meaning of Jonah's name, "*dove*," should have reminded him what he was expected to be in his ministry. But he had not the fidelity of the dove to its owner, for he went off to Tarshish, the opposite direction to that in

which he was commanded to go; nor had he the dove's gentleness, for, more like the hawk, he would have pounced upon Nineveh for its destruction. But God gives His saints and servants heavenly names, that He may conform them to those names. Thus Noah was to be a "comfort" to the human race, preserving it from utter destruction; Joseph ("he shall add") was to go on all his days adding grace to grace, and one godly virtue to another; David ("beloved") was to be the man "after God's heart," to rule His people Israel; and Peter ("rock-man") was to have at last the firmness of the rock instead of the inconstancy of his Galilean nature; and the book of Jonah shows God's holy and gracious way of conforming the son of Amittai to the meaning of his own name.

God's message by Jonah was one of coming overthrow; it was the stern and awful truth of God's wrath and of sin's impending punishment. And such is still God's message to men by us in our preaching. Thus Daniel brought Belshazzar's guilt home to him: "The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified." Thus Peter and John, in telling Jerusalem Jews of a *risen* Christ, showed them their imminent peril, in that the exalted Corner-stone might descend upon them in wrath; of which the Lord Himself had said: "On whomsoever *it shall fall*, it will grind him to powder." (Matt. xxi. 44.) So also Paul dealt with the Gentiles. On Mars' hill he warns elegant and literary Athens that God had appointed a *day* (how like Jonah's word, "Yet forty days!") in the which He would judge the world in righteousness, having in resurrection robed Jesus as the Judge for that day. Nor Athens only; he said the same of military Rome: "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also for the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against *all* ungodliness and

unrighteousness of men, who hold " (literally, hold back or choke) "the truth in unrighteousness."

Thus our message, given us by God to preach, though it has a healing balm, has also an awful edge and a terrible point with which to pierce men and to cut them down. And for this very reason, because coming doom must be declared, it is not easy to go *at all* to preach it, or to *continue* its solemn warnings when we have begun them. The difficulty of carrying any *such* message is twofold. We know how unwelcome it will be to the careless multitude to whom it is sent; and we know not how long it may please a patient and forbearing God to *delay* the execution of the sentence; and meantime we need patience to bear the slighting way in which men will treat a long-delayed threatening. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." (Eccles. viii. 11.)

The truth is, that as God's preachers we need to be in fellowship with Him in both sides of His character and His ways toward an evil world; first, in His unsparing and awful hatred of sin and punishment of it, which will as surely come to pass as God's word has declared it, for God's own holiness and justice demand it; and, second, in His present gentleness toward sinners and His forbearance with them as long as ever He can see in them any turning whatever of heart or conscience toward Himself.

It is just this combination in our God—of holiness and patience, of inflexible purpose, and yet of present delay in executing it, and even of kindness toward the condemned—that we find it so hard to understand, or at any rate to imitate. And yet the God who gave Sodom its daily sunshine was the God who afterwards changed the sunshine into fire and brimstone; and He continued the

one up to the day that He sent the other! (See Gen. xix. 23, 24.) And He who "spared not the old world," but swept away all its multiplied inhabitants with a flood, sustained them in the necessities and even the enjoyments of this life up to the day that the last of the saved ones entered into the ark. Lot misrepresented God as the God of sin-hating holiness by choosing Sodom as his place of residence at all; and he equally blinded the men of Sodom to the meaning of God's forbearance when, Jonah-like, he made himself a place of ease within it. True, Jonah's rest was but a gourd just outside Nineveh, and Lot's was a substantial dwelling in Sodom itself; but the *character* of the sin and the failure was the same in both.

How far away was our blessed Master from either the Sodom mansion of Lot, or the brief gourd of Jonah!

The "*Woe unto thee*" pronounced by our Lord on the Galilean cities, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, in the north of the land (Matt. xi.), was equally and untiringly uttered in Jerusalem herself. (Matt. xxiii.) And though carnal security reigned in Jerusalem up to His death, and Jerusalem's daughters wept for Him, He only wept over her as He saw that her gracious "visitation" was passing away, and her day of doom was coming.

Oh for grace and power—the Spirit's power—for us all, that we may preach with somewhat the pure fidelity and the unwearied patience with which the Master preached! Amen.

H. D.

SECRET SINS.—"Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance." (Ps. xc. 8.) Most of our secret sins, our sins of ignorance, are never known here; they are known only to God, and were laid upon Christ. Hereafter we shall know our debt, and see how much we owed and how much we have been forgiven.

“AT EVEN.”

MATT. viii. 16; LUKE iv. 40.

At even, Lord, they brought their sick to Thee.
The day was at its end, and Thou wast spent
With many labours; and Thy tender heart—
Grieved with the many woes and sins of men,
Which all day long did press into Thy sight
For healing and for pardon—fain had sought
In solitude and prayer to meet with God.

But didst Thou therefore, Lord, deny one prayer
Of all who sought Thine aid, or brought to Thee
Those whom they loved? Ah, no! Thy healing hands,
Hereafter to be pierced for all, on all
Were laid with touch of love and power divine—
(Oh! was there *one* could feel and then forget?)
They came to Thee, and *Thou didst heal them all.*

Dear Lord, this world, which saw Thy life, and caused,
Alas! Thy death, is still as full of woes
As when Thy footsteps walked it. Many a heart
That feels Thy power and knows Thy healing touch
Has dear ones sick with sin, who will not come
To Thee for healing. Give each sinking heart
To know, *at even* THOU WILT HEAL THEM ALL. A. L. B.

TITUS.—Titus was placed as the apostle's delegate in Crete amongst a people prone to fall back into their old ways, and was charged to “rebuke sharply,” and to emphasize strongly on the chaste ways of Christianity, both with “aged men” and “aged women,” and with the young. By “sound doctrine” he was to convince the gainsayers; for “one of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are alway liars, evil beasts, idle gluttons.” (R.V.) Such being their proclivities, the characteristics of Christianity on which Titus was to dwell and to insist were to be those entirely on the side of purification and godliness.

T. R.

ADDRESSES AT A CONFERENCE.

"WE HAVE A GREAT HIGH PRIEST."

IN Hebrews v. we are reminded that He who is the Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec offered up prayers and supplications not only in Gethsemane, but "in the days of His flesh." In Psalm xxii. 2 we read, "O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent." We are assured that the Lord Jesus could not but pray, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and in Gethsemane we have a special example of His sorrow of *expectation*; but this expectation filled His heart all along, though it grew as the hour approached. Psalm lxxxviii. 15 shows this: "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up." How immovable was the love, how immovable the justice, of God! If it were possible to remit sin without vengeance being taken, we can be sure that was the time, when the Son of God made such supplication as "If it be possible." The cross shuts out any "*if*" after that. Hope lay in resurrection.

How solemn is the truth, that the once suffering One, because of sin imputed, must be the Judge of quick and dead. The rule of His judgment will be that by which He Himself was judged. How unbending was that justice! And now how terrible is the delusion of multitudes as to escaping the wrath that is to be executed "on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel!"

But how glorious are the two words "*justified*" (in Romans) and "*sanctified*" (in Hebrews). Am I the guilty one? I am justified by the blood of the Son of God. Am

I the unclean one? I am sanctified by the Spirit. My title is not only to life eternal, but to all that God gives in His Son, because I am joint-heir with Him; my title is one and the same with that of Christ Himself. Let us, therefore, not be as the "babes" spoken of at the end of Hebrews v., but let us enter fully into the encouragement given at the end of Hebrews iv. The apostle writes, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered." Why? They are plain as the noonday sun; but "ye are dull of hearing." Let us take heed not to need this rebuke, but to obey the commandment, "Come boldly unto the throne of grace." Let us come, telling out all the heart; and let us remember that Christ delights to show side by side the greatness of His cross and the tenderness of it. Let us go through and through into all the little things of our daily life and course of service, and make them matters of faith, and then we shall find that we shall not err and stumble even in very great matters.

How glorious a thing it is to rejoice in the truth of chap. iv. 13, "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight!" If we look at the natural man—at his picture as given in his first father—we see that when he became guilty the voice of the Lord in the cool of the day was to him no inviting voice; he could not "come boldly," but fled and hid. Now, though all the family of the human race are equally guilty, Satan has taught them to be more crafty than Adam. He was stubborn, full of pride, and full of terror at once; but he did not tell lies; he uttered no lies to God. Afterwards, a more practised sinner said, in reply to the question, "Where is Abel thy brother?" "I know not." As the first man, guilty and fearful, fled from God, so do the whole race of men every day of their lives, but they cover it up with a cloke of religiousness, and say their prayers.

The *blasphemer*, who says, "There is no God," and the *Pharisee*, are twin-brothers. But as children of God we possess a great High Priest. Oh, let us remember the difference between "there is" and "*we have*"!

Let us, then, use aright what we have. "Seeing then that we have a great High Priest that has passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." It is, strictly, "*through* the heavens;" *i.e.* the heavens that are under sentence of dissolution. He has passed through these; but the heaven that is worthy of Christ, and alone worthy to be called heaven, is God the Father's house, where He displays the brightness of His glory. God our Father seeks us and our worship there. The joy He has in Christ is the joy He has in us, and in our hearts' true affection. If we seek to be true worshippers of God our Father, we shall put all our matters as they now are into the hands of Christ; and whether we have to do with the Church of God or aught else, let us begin and end with pleasing God in Christ. We have no business on earth that is not summed up in pleasing God. Our highest success, which we are bound to attain every day, is the doing the will of God. We are not bound to make the crooked straight in the Church or in the world; but we are bound to please God, according to present opportunities or trials, present sorrows or joys, in little matters and in great, in things of time and in things of eternity. Let me hold fast this, and I shall go on in any service committed to me, and never be discouraged, but shall get great gain and great strength, though as touching the flesh weaker and weaker. (R. C. C.)

"THE DISCIPLE WHOM JESUS LOVED."

In John xix. 29 the apostle John styles himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved," as he does in three other

places in his gospel. Who gave him this title? It was not Jesus, nor was it his fellow-disciples. It was the Holy Spirit who taught him thus to describe himself. Why was he thus called? Some think it was a particular mark of favour, but there is no warrant for such a supposition. John was but one of *three* specially chosen in the sovereign knowledge of the Lord to share the sight of His power, of His transfiguration, and of His sorrow and agony in the garden. Peter, James, and John are thus named together three times—in the raising of Jairus' daughter, on the holy mount, and in the garden of Gethsemane. But on three occasions the Lord had to rebuke John, showing that there was not any spiritual pre-eminence in him over the others, or any special sympathy with Himself: he forbade the man who followed not with them (Mark ix. 33-40); he suggested calling down fire from heaven (Luke ix. 51); and he aspired to a right-hand seat in the kingdom (Mark x. 38); all instances of want of sympathy. Hence we find nothing special in John's character to warrant such a title.

I think we find the secret in his first epistle. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us." (Chap. iv. 16.) John specially *appropriated* the love of the Lord, like Paul, who not only said, "He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," but, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." James, Peter, and Jude never say that, or give us that aspect of His love, though each might have said so. John, as it were, focussed the love of the cross upon himself. We may all in like manner take this title.

The result of this appropriation begat great confidence in Christ, and in His love, and in His presence, and this confidence led John to lean on His bosom. It stirred up no fleshly feeling in the minds of the disciples when the title was used of him, or when he leaned on the bosom of

Jesus. But how different was the case when he asked for the highest place ! The flesh is always *formal* and *forward*. Far from the disciples being offended with John's nearness to Christ, they utilized his affection for Jesus ; for he was the one to draw the secret out of Christ's heart when they desired to know who should betray Him.

What is the practical lesson ? That if we gain more confidence in Christ, we shall be of more use to our brethren. The more we roll our own burdens upon the Lord, the more free we are to take those of others, and our hearts being as light as birds, our brethren and sisters will give us plenty to do, and we shall not arouse the flesh in them ; this is the place of honour.

The Kohathites, who had charge of all the holy vessels, were nearest locally to God, and carried the burdens upon their shoulders ; whereas the Merarites, with less valuable burdens, had carts. Some might say they were the aristocrats with their carriages ; but the Kohathites were nearest to God, and did the so-called *menial* work of burden-bearing. And it is our privilege, the nearer we are to God, to bear burdens, to cultivate, nourish, and increase grace in others.

What an honour was placed upon John because of his confidence in Christ, when He said to him, "Behold thy mother !" "If you rest in my bosom, and stand near my cross, then take care of my mother." We envy John the privilege ; but have we not the same charge given to us ? Look at Mark iii. 34, 35 — "Behold my mother and my brethren !" There is the honour. There are plenty of such mothers of Jesus still among us. Where can we get strength to fulfil the service ? Only by resting on the bosom of Jesus. Remember that in caring for the poorest and the neediest of the flock we are doing like John.

(J. W.)

CHRIST'S DYING LOVE OF THE WORD OF GOD.

How beautifully the simplest details of Christ's loving service run throughout the gospel of John alongside the wondrous things of depth and height of His divine life. In this gospel alone we find the increase of wine at the marriage feast, and the asking water to drink from the woman's pitcher. He was perfect man, human in every way, yet the mighty God. This gospel opens with, "In the beginning," and reveals to us the One who was God's eternal fellow; and in verse 14 we read, "The Word was made flesh," and we see how perfect He was in all features of simplest, purest, most loving manhood. In John xix. we have the juxtaposition of these two things—the human and the divine. There is no cry of woe in this gospel, because we have the silence of woe, telling of its largest and deepest depths, yet in the time of His deepest woe He remembered His mother's natural affection, a feature contained only in this gospel. And here we see Him a perfect Son, committing His mother to the care of a disciple. What mother ever loved her son more? and can she ever in eternity forget that He was her Son? I do not say earthly relationships go on, but does the memory of them cease? Memory will surely be eternal. But what son ever loved his mother more? and will He ever forget on the throne that she gave Him birth? In the hour of His agony He looked down and saw His mother's frailty, age, and widowhood, as we believe, and cared for her.

"Woman, behold thy son!" He said not "mother," but "woman," putting her on a level with the first sinner. He said "woman" twice—once at the marriage in Cana, the other time in the depth of His woe. But my object is to point out Christ's dying love to the word of God. After caring for His mother, His thoughts turn to the Scriptures,

and He remembers one verse of Psalm lxi., as yet unfulfilled—"They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." Every point of mockery had been carried out but one—they had not given Him vinegar to drink. He who weighed and considered His mother's grief weighed every jot and tittle of Scripture. He who saw the trembling tears and anguished face of His mother when the sword pierced through her soul (Luke ii. 35), and who read all her sufferings, gave her the assurance that she would not be lonely during her remaining days, and passed on from what we may call natural affection to the preciousness of the Book of God. "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst." In His own anguish He cries, "I thirst," that they may heap the last indignity upon Him. To the poor thirsty One they bring not water, but acrid vinegar. Why not water? Was there no water? Doubtless, plenty; but their thought was, "Let Him thirst; this will make Him more thirsty." When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, "It is finished." Always remember the double meaning of these words; they tell of the fulness of iniquity and the fulness of love. When He bowed His head our iniquity was filled up to the brim, and His love rose to the full, and overflowed. As the apostle says, "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound." And so when Israel shall have filled up their sin, God will turn the floodgates of His mercy upon them.

While then we learn natural affection at the cross, let us also learn unswerving, unflinching, unwearying fidelity to the Scriptures, cost us what it may. We have sweet relationships of life, and we thank God for them. Let us also ask grace to be Christlike in them, and to set our hearts, as did Christ, to entire obedience to the word of God, even though it fill our cup of suffering. (H. D.)

GOOD-NIGHT.

"FOR SO HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP."

Psalm cxxvii. 2.

A hymn expressive of the custom of the early Christians to bid their dying friends
 "Good-night," assured of their awaking at the resurrection call.

SLEEP on, beloved ; sleep and take thy rest,
 Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast ;
 We love thee well, but Jesus loves thee best—

Good-night.

Calm is thy slumber as an infant's sleep,
 But thou shalt wake no more to toil and weep ;
 Thine is a perfect rest, secure and deep—

Good-night.

Until the shadow from this earth is cast,
 Until He gathers in His sheaves at last,
 Until the twilight gloom is overpast—

Good-night.

Until the morning glory lights the skies,
 Until the dead in Jesus shall arise,
 And He shall come, but not in lowly guise—

Good-night.

Until made beautiful by love divine,
 Thou in the likeness of thy Lord shalt shine,
 And He shall bring that golden crown of thine—

Good-night.

Only 'Good-night,' beloved ; not 'Farewell ;'
 'A little while,' and all His saints shall dwell
 In hallowed union indivisible—

Good-night.

Until we meet again before His throne,
 Clothed in the spotless robe He gives His own ;
 Until we know, as we ourselves are known—

Good-night.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

How are we to appropriate Old Testament promises of temporal prosperity?

WE have to remember that Israel was an earthly people, to whom were given, conditionally on their obedience, earthly promises of good. We are a heavenly people, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. i. 3.) By faith we have now to learn, with Paul, how to abound, and how to suffer need, and to tread in the footsteps of Him who had not where to lay His head. While Peter quotes Psalm xxxiv. in his first epistle (iii. 10-12), he reminds those who would "love life, and see good days," that there is also a happiness in suffering for righteousness' sake (v. 14). The very names by which the faithful are known in the Psalms indicate that even in David's day faith in the living God led those under its influence to be ranked among "the poor" and "the afflicted," "the needy" and "the helpless." This shows us that even then those who through faith entered into the new covenant took their stand very much outside the conditions of the old covenant of Sinai; faith then, as now, always pointing onward to the future. We have to forego the lesser, to secure and to enjoy the greater; to give up Sinai and its temporalities for the heavenly Zion and its eternal realities. At the same time, much temporal good follows obedience, but it comes rather by the way than as a direct fulfilment of promise. Much sorrow has arisen to many a child of God from mistakes made here. Psalm xci. has been taken to secure against pestilence and famine; and when the pestilence has taken away its victim, and famine has ended in death, the bereaved child of God looks round on his desolated home, and thinks God has failed, or that some terrible sin has led to the discomfiture. But Faith has to learn to triumph as much in being overcome as in overcoming, in being sawn asunder as in escaping the edge of the sword. God deals with us in the light of that eternity which lies before us, and gives of temporalities all that He can consistently give, in view of what He has destined for us hereafter. He withholdeth no good thing; but He only knows what is good. Eph. vi. 2, 3 is sometimes referred to, as if the promise of living long on the earth was to hold good to all who honour father and mother; whereas this promise is only quoted to show the importance of the precept, the fifth commandment being the only one in the decalogue that has a promise attached to it.

THE SATURDAY NIGHT OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE WORLD.

MATT. xxvii. 57-66.

To all God's children the first day of the week is rich with thoughts and memories of Jesus rising from the dead, and for ever leaving behind Him the cold, dark, rocky bed of His grave. This triumph of our Lord in rising, and of God in raising Him from among the dead, is the abiding glory of that day of the week beyond the other six, and originated the name, as most suppose, of the Lord's-day (Rev. i.)—the day, that is, on which the Lord Jesus gained His mighty victory. The full and detailed narrative which all the four evangelists give of the events of that day helps to show its priceless value both to God and to us; but they all equally record also the facts and events connected with the *tomb* of our Lord. Details are given us of the Friday and Saturday, and the Saturday night that preceded the resurrection morning; for the reality of Christ's grave, and of His obedient sojourn in it, is as necessary a link as any other in the chain of that perfect work by which He links both His Church and the individual believer with the bosom and the throne of God. The three days and three nights in the grave were needful in order to fulfil the Jonah type of Scripture, as our Lord Himself had said (see Matt. xii.), and also in order to give His trusting ones triumph over death and the grave as well as over sin.

Thus it is that the Saturday night of that ever memorable week becomes a time of no little interest to us. The central object of those affecting hours is the cold and lifeless frame of the Son of Man. There lay the One who

had so short a time before finished the bearing of sin, and the putting of it away by His infinitely precious death upon the tree.

On that tree He had been to God the object of such curse as could not have any blessing mingled with it, and of a wrath that did not allow of one drop of mercy. All that was now over, and He lay in the cold grave as that Holy One whom death could not long hold, and who could not be suffered "to see corruption."

But the scene in Matt. xxvii. 57-66 reveals others also, most opposite in character. His own loving ones are at that tomb, and so are His scoffing and deriding enemies. The "great stone" rolled "to the door of the sepulchre" told of sorrowing friends who had supplied both the tomb itself and its hasty burial rites; and the two Marys who sat "over against the sepulchre," by remaining there when Joseph of Arimathæa and Nicodemus had left, expressed their love yet more affectingly. But to both the richer and the poorer of the little band the lifeless Form inside that great stone door was the most precious thing they had on earth; and so it continued to be up to the dawn of the resurrection morning.

And is not this little band of disciples a picture to us of the "little flock" of followers and lovers of Jesus all through this Saturday and Saturday night of our waiting for Him till He shines ere long in His resurrection glory, and speaks with His resurrection voice? Of us also it is true that every memory of Jesus in His earthly path is precious. In spirit we still truly prize His tomb as we do the manger and the cross; and for the treasure we see in that tomb we turn our back on the world's religion, its power, and its boasted wealth.

Nor are all of the "little flock" now of the same station of life, either in rank or wealth. There are, and always

have been, a *few* in God's Church who are in this respect like Joseph, the "rich man of Arimathæa," and Nicodemus, who was of the Jewish sanhedrim, whose delight it is to contribute of their substance; and the service of the once buried Christ has always opportunities in which such may give their best to Him.

But the two Marys seem to have had only themselves and their best affections to give. They are seen "SITTING over against the sepulchre." It was to them the one spot of attraction. They may have had earthly homes of their own, or may have lost all this in following Him who had gained their hearts by His love to them. At any rate all we here see is the value they attached and the love they bore to the blessed body inside that tomb, although it was now as cold, as silent, and as lifeless as the solid rock and the "great stone" that enclosed it. And to how late an hour of that Saturday night they stayed, who can tell?

In this present Saturday night of God's family on earth it is also amongst "the poor of the flock" that we often find the most touching evidence of love to Jesus, and of closely cleaving to Him. The bulk of God's waiting saints are amongst the poor of this world. "Ye see your calling, brethren," says Paul, "not many noble but God hath chosen the base things of the world that no flesh should glory in His presence." And often their very poverty enriches to them that one treasure they do possess, viz., the love of Jesus. In their company one can more easily and more quickly speak of Jesus Himself—His love and His coming glory—than we can amongst such fellow-believers as have more of this world's goods. It should not be so, but it often is.

But whatever might be the difference in rank among the little band at the tomb, it was to the same Jesus they clung—hidden from their *sight* though He was—and that

too until the resurrection morning came, when God caused their night of weeping to cease, and gave them a morning of joy; and they who had loved most deeply and watched most closely in the Saturday night's waiting, were first and richest in the joy of the resurrection when it came. So now. Though all saints will equally be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, the joy of such as have loved and cleaved to Him most, will of course be greatest.

We have indeed need to study the Church's Saturday night. Even the ordinary Saturday night of each week is an important time for our souls. An old saint, on being once asked why she always had a good Sunday, quickly replied, "I get ready for it the night before." It would fare better with many of God's children if they did the same. To many of our fellow-believers, alas! the close of the week brings extra labour, either manual, or domestic, or commercial, even to almost a midnight hour; and if this cannot be avoided (as it could not, for instance, in the case of *slaves* in the early Church) God is with His weary toilers in the exactions of a hard Egypt world, and can by His Spirit sweetly prepare them for the Lord's-day morning leisure and its hours of worship. But alas for those who, having leisure time at the end of each week, do not use it to get ready for the next day! Happy they who do. As a rule *they* are the chief helpers of the Lord's-day assemblies; and they too, as a rule, are the best and wisest users of the whole of this Saturday night of time, and are laying up for themselves a good foundation for that resurrection morning of eternity which shall suddenly and gloriously burst upon us.

But Matt. xxvii. 57-66 has in it a scene of a very opposite kind. The ways of the world around that same tomb of Jesus are there shown us. Like the sorrowing disciples, *they* also watch it, not with eyes of love, but

of malignant exultation (John xvi. 20), and of hatred to the entombed One and His followers. They well know who it is that lies there in death; they knew the life He had lived, and that only by a mock trial and by perjured witnesses had they obtained even the semblance of a charge against Him. Yet all this does not prevent them from speaking of Him as "that DECEIVER." The cold lips inside that tomb were the only lips ever yet on earth which never did deceive any one. "All men are liars" is the Psalmist's solemn and true verdict against all Adam's race. But there lay the One who was truth itself, in whose lips there never was guile, and in whom there could be no sin. Their guilt was that they had believed neither the language of His life nor of His lips, and hence this awful name by which they called Him; but unbelief always makes God a liar (1 John v. 10), and that whether it be God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Ghost. This darkness of unbelief had made a night time for their souls all the precious little while in which Jesus as a "day-spring from on high" (see Luke i. 78) had visited them as a nation. The god of this world had blinded their minds, so that this light of life should not enter them. Nazareth had refused Him in His thirty years of private life, and now all the land and Jerusalem, its centre, had done all they could to extinguish this blessed Light publicly. As Isaiah says (chap. l. 11), they had kindled a fire of their own vain religion, and were walking in the light of it, and in the sparks that it afforded them, as they exulted around the tomb of Him they had, as they thought, got rid of. Though they knew it not, it was really a terrible Saturday night for them, and could only end in the consternation of the resurrection morning that followed.

So now, in this solemn time of the world's rejection of

a preached Jesus, it is the Saturday night of men's unbelief. Romanism, ritualism, and every other form of superstition is giving birth to the no less hellish evil of open atheism; and Pharisee and Sadducee religionists (in modern forms) are again uniting to exult in having got rid of the once faithfully-preached blood of the cross; and this must go on to the end, as truly as also must the tears and the patient waiting of God's saints. And the same glory of the risen One, which will for ever banish the tears of the little flock, will confound the boasting of the world, and write their doom on the banquet wall of their revelling places, as in Belshazzar's palace of old.

But note also that there are *two* sets of worldlings around the tomb of Jesus as there were two different groups of believers. The Jew and the Gentile are joined in their blindness on that Saturday night of the tomb as they had been in their murder of Jesus on Calvary. In verse 62 the chief priests and Pharisees represent the one as Pilate represents the other; both in the darkness of the same spiritual night time, but by no means with the same degrees of guilt. As usual, the Jew takes the lead in the sin; but the Gentile obediently, for gain's sake, follows him. Instinctively we pity Pilate, while God and man also condemn him; but we see the far darker guilt of those who had long possessed God's scriptures, and were sinning against light and privilege.

So now there is the guilt of those who, like Pilate, have only the beginnings of a knowledge of Jesus, yet sin against even these first gospel mercies; but what shall be said of Christendom and of British Isles? Do not Christ's own solemn words apply to them—"If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness"?

The two worldly classes at the tomb neither loved nor trusted each other; for while the guard of soldiers told

that Jew and Gentile united in distrusting the simple-hearted followers of the Lamb, as if they would say Jesus had risen when they had only stolen His body; on the other hand, the *sealed* stone showed that the chief priests did not trust Pilate's soldiers, but believed they might be bribed to let the body go. What darkness and misery are in unbelievers' hearts toward God, and also toward each other!

To one another, as waiting saints, we may well say, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." To the unregenerate we give our Master's words: "Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light." (John xii. 35, 36.)

H. D.

THE POTTER'S FIELD.

MATT. xxvii. 6-10; ZECH. xi. 13.

"To bury strangers in!" With scornful sweep
 Their proud thought settles on "the potter's field"—
 "There lay the unclean Gentile to his sleep."
 Those priestly hands, though red with innocent blood,
 Yet fear to hold its price, and thus they yield
 Graves for the stranger. "Treasury of God"
 They wot not of.

Blood-bought *in life and death*,
 O Christ, *all rest* to Thee alone we owe!
 Thou art the Potter, and the field is Thine,
 "As God appointed;" held by right divine,
 Won through Thy measureless agony of woe.

And now it lies in silence till the breath
 Of resurrection bids the vessels shine
 With Thy own glory in the eternal Now.

E. S. W.

THE BELIEVER'S BODY AND THE BODY OF CHRIST.

NOTES OF A BIBLE-READING ON ROM. xii. 1-5.

"I BESEECH *you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.*" The word "mercies" here is similar to the "compassion" of chap. ix. 15: "I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion," and reminds us of the sovereignty of God's grace towards us. The word "mercy" in chap. xi. 30, 31, 32, is somewhat different.

"*That ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.*" In Ephesians v. 2 we read that Christ gave Himself for us "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour;" in Romans vi. 16, that we are to reckon ourselves "alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord." In God's love and justice we are bound up in the bundle of life with Christ, and when we present our bodies a living sacrifice to God it is fragrant to Him because of the perfumed sacrifice in which it is wrapped. We present ourselves, not as children of Adam, but as members of Christ. God requires a presentation of the body. From chap. i. we see that with increasing departure from God the body is more and more dishonoured. God claims the whole redeemed man. In Romans vi. 13 the word is, "Yield yourselves unto God and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "Yield" and "present" are the same word in Greek. The Lord does not *take* unless we present. He will not do for us that which He wants us to do. There is always something for us to do, as when the Lord said, "Take ye away the stone."

In John ii. 19 our Lord, speaking of the temple of His body, said to the Jews, "Destroy this temple, and in three

days I will raise it up." He saw in His body a figure of the Head and the members; He always honoured that temple. In 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17, the apostle, in referring to the Corinthians collectively, speaks of them three times as "the temple of God;" and in chap. vi. 19, 20, the body in which each was individually to glorify God is called "the temple of the Holy Ghost."

The presentation of many bodies suggests fellowship; one temple represents unity. Fellowship is God's order. Christ sent out the disciples two and two. Paul links Silvanus and Timotheus with himself in commencing both epistles to the Thessalonians. "Two are better than one

and a threefold cord is not quickly broken . but woe to him that is alone when he falleth." (Eccles. iv. 9-12.) The natural man is satisfied with himself, but saints want fellowship, and those who desire it get it. Moses found a Joshua, Elijah an Elisha, and Peter a John. The only man who is fit to stand alone is the one who most craves for fellowship, as did Jeremiah.

"A living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." When the Lord Jesus was in the world He found in every moment an occasion to do the Father's will, and thus should it be with us. Our chief path of service and of sacrifice lies in our daily duties, and our great danger is self-will. "Holy" must precede "acceptable." "Acceptable" has a deep meaning; namely, that we are well-pleasing to God, and that His will is well-pleasing to us.

"And be not conformed to this world." Having presented our bodies to God, let us not take our pattern from the world; let us beware of tradition and of popularity. *"But be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."* The "washing of regeneration" (Titus iii. 5) was once for all; the "renewing of the Holy Ghost" is day by day.

God works in us as in a new creation. "Paul the aged" is evidently growing younger and younger.

"That ye may prove." We prove the blessedness of God's will, and He proves us. Christ was the "tried stone." (Isa. xxviii. 16.) We see His perfection fully tested in the gospels. "Make full proof of thy ministry," Paul says to Timothy; and we also must be approved. We cannot expect to be accepted by our brethren until we have been proved by the word of God. We have first rightly to handle the ordinary things of life. That which immediately surrounds us will test us. David did not go to the camp of Israel of his own accord or to please himself. God sends him to meet Goliath; He gives him the opportunity, and David accepts it. We must not seek opportunity for ourselves. He is not deterred by Eliab's unjust charge, "I know thy pride," but replies meekly with bridled tongue. The proved man is he who has done the smallest duties well—"faithful in that which is least." Help no one forward to ministry who has not been proved. David would not go with unproved armour to meet Goliath. He had risked his life for *one* lamb. God proves the tenderness of our hearts by little things.

"What is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." If we are taught aright concerning the will of God, we shall choose it because we delight in it. God accepts our bodies, and we accept His will. We only prove the will of God by our subjection to it, and then we can say, "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!" The will of God is learned from His word. Some children of God aim to go through the world creditably according to the world's standard, but do not take heed to refine or exercise their conscience and ways by the Word. Others are not content with the integrity that arises from an unexercised, and therefore an unaccusing, conscience, but test their ways

according to Psalm cxix. When we have respect unto *all* God's commandments (v. 6), we shall find out those faults and defects in ourselves which are contrary to God's will, and by submitting to His word we shall become the opposite of what we were naturally. Thus the proud will become humble, and the passionate meek.

"For I say, through the grace of God given unto me, to every man not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Though we never find Paul confessing that he had been unfaithful, he says of himself in true lowliness of mind, "less than the least of all saints;" yet he also rightly estimates his position as an apostle, and adds, "through the grace of God." Older believers should have harder and faster lines for themselves than for younger ones. We must not expect humility in others when we do not ourselves manifest it. The "measure of faith" should be linked with the "measure of the gift of Christ" in Ephesians iv. 7, where the same thought is conveyed. The measure of faith is according to the proportion of gift, as the hand or foot, or other member of the body, is fitted for its function. The special gift that each servant of God receives should always be the most prominent feature of his character.

"For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." From the truth respecting the believer's body the apostle turns to the subject of the body of Christ, the Church, a connection that we do well to bear in mind. In presenting myself to God I do so as a member of the body. Two things have to be considered by each of us. First, What is my place in the body? Second, Am I well-pleasing to the Lord in it? But the place is not of so much moment

as the manner in which it is filled. If there be no self-will the Spirit will teach us our place, and we shall fill it as a common service to the people of God, as did the Merarites. But what would have happened if they had *chosen* to carry the mercy-seat instead of the boards? (Num. iv. 18, 19.) If we fulfil our service there is no limit to our growth, though we shall remain the same member to the end. The use of a gift ensures its permanence. We see the same David at the end of his life as at the beginning. "God hath set the members, every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him."

However humble our place may be, as man thinks, we have but to please God, not envying those who may occupy a more prominent position. All the special gifts are blended together. The fully-equipped evangelist must be more or less a shepherd, and *vice versa*. But it does not follow that one has a gift to the exclusion of all other gifts. If I think of what God has made me by new creation, I see I could not be so without having been nothing by nature, and less than nothing by sin.

The business of Christ is to present unto Himself a glorious Church. We cannot be useful members of Christ apart from love. Love fits each member for its work. The beauty of each member consists in having affection for the whole body. Let us beware of partiality in our affections arising from partiality in the truth. We must deal with the Scriptures as a whole, and not distort the proportions of God's truth; then perfect harmony of thought and walk will follow. Particular truths are brought out in different epistles, as in James and Romans; but one truth does not mar the other. All scripture is given to us, and all things are ours in the membership of the body, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. There is one body, and we should say of each member, "Your gift is mine," and also, "Your mistake is mine."

“MY MEDITATION OF HIM SHALL BE SWEET.”

CANTICLES ii. 3, 8.

1.

AND canst Thou call me Thy belovèd—Thine—
 Thy choice?
 And bid me speak, because Thou fain wouldst hear
 My voice?
Me hast Thou brought into Thy house of wine,
Me with the right hand of Thy love drawn near,
 That perfect love which casteth out all fear?
 And where Thy glorious banner spreads above,
 Comforted my glad heart,
 Saying, “All fair thou art,
 There is no spot nor stain in thee, my love?”

2.

And may I call Thee my Belovèd—mine—
 My King?
 And hast Thou given Thyself to me, so poor
 A thing?
 To me, who left Thy waiting form divine
 So long unanswered at my closed door?
 Yet when I opened, Lord, how Thou didst pour
 The unknown treasures of Thy love and grace
 Around my wondering heart,
 Bidding all doubts depart,
 And deep, confiding love possess their place!

3.

Oh, I *am* Thine, belovèd Lord! yes, Thine!
 Thy heart
 Desires to have my sinful self; the whole,
 Not part.
 Thou givest me a royal gift divine—
 Thyself, my God, my King! And shall my soul
 Refuse to such a One so poor a dole?
 The all it has to give, and worthless quite,
 Except that Thou, dear Lord,
 Hast told me in Thy word
 That it is dear and precious in Thy sight.

DIVINE OUTPOURINGS.

UNDER this title it may be profitable for us to contemplate *four* of God's special outpourings, and may our hearts enter into the mighty copiousness implied in this expression.

I. LOVE POURED OUT.

In Rom. v. 5 we are told that "*the love of God* is shed abroad" (or, better, *poured out*) "into our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." If we enquire further concerning this wondrous outflow of love, we have not far to seek. The context (vv. 6-8) reveals it, or it is made very plain in such a familiar passage as John iii. 16, which tells us that God sent from His bosom His only-begotten Son, that perishing ones might have everlasting life. This mighty stream came forth unsought into a rebel, ruined world from Him who is LOVE; and as it flowed on it entered our hearts, till then full of an unknown enmity to the God of love.

Not only, however, is there a love poured forth upon us as lost sinners, but there is a yet deeper love—a *Father's love*—of which the apostle says, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God;" and he adds, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." (1 John iii. 1, 2.) Who can rightly speak of this further outpouring of love—the love of an infinite compassion becoming a love of paternal complacency and joy? In no stinted measure has it come, but as the mighty overflowings of the heart of the infinite God, who seeks, in these poor hearts of ours, empty vessels that shall take it in and well it back again into His bosom; for as all is "of Him," so all is "to Him," and in our response He finds the "Amen" to His blessed "Yea."

of promise. Truly "God is love," and from this it follows that "he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

This outflow of love is communicated "by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us," and the word of God is the channel along which it flows into our hearts. As we meditate on Him of whom that word speaks, we grow up into His likeness, and "the fruit of the Spirit" is brought forth, which is "love, joy, peace." Well may we

"Sing of His mighty love—
Mighty to save."

II. BLOOD POURED OUT.

Love poured out needed a channel along which it could righteously flow to sinful man. God found such a channel in atonement. Of this our Lord speaks when at the last Supper He says, "This is the blood of the new covenant, which is shed" (or *poured out*) "for many, for the remission of sins." (Matt. xxvi. 28; Luke xxii. 20.) Thus as God meets the enmity of the sinner's heart by pouring out love, so Christ meets the sinfulness of the sinner's condition by pouring out His precious blood, thereby making a complete provision for all the claims of the righteousness of God.

Forgiveness or remission of sins required the shedding of blood; that is, the forfeiture of life; for God's eternal and unalterable decree is, that "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Therefore we must die in Christ to the demands and requirements of law, and become free from its righteous claims, while by a living faith we are united to Him who is raised from the dead.

In Isaiah we read that Christ "poured out His soul unto death" (liii. 12), and this is equivalent to the pouring out of His blood. A typical allusion to this is seen in the pouring out of the blood of the victim at "the bottom of the altar." (Lev. iv. 7, 18, 25, 30, 31.)

The fact that in this expression the Hebrew word used by the Spirit is the *foundation* of the altar is very significant. It tells us that our God sees in the blood-shedding of His Son the sure foundation on which all God's new creation rests. As the "much fruit" springs from the grain of corn that dies in the ground, so by the death of Christ on Calvary a foundation is laid in Zion which forms the basis and security of all the purposes of God.

III. THE SPIRIT POURED OUT.

Another blessed outpouring mentioned in Scripture thoroughly meets our condition of weakness, occasioned by the fall, even as the outpouring of blood met all the claims of our sinfulness before a righteous God. Of this blessing Pentecost is the witness, and in reference to it Peter quotes Joel ii. : "It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh ;" and, alluding to it afterwards, he says, "This Jesus hath God raised up. Therefore being at the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed" (or *poured forth*) "this which ye now see and hear." (See Acts ii. 17, 18, 33; x. 45; Titus iii. 6.)

How energizing it is to remember that the infinite fulness of the resources of God is placed at the disposal of faith. Not by drops does God vouchsafe this precious power of the Spirit, but as a deep well-spring. As a fountain within does it rise unto eternal life and holy communion (John iv. 14), and also as an overflowing river does it flow forth from Him who draws from the fulness of a glorified Christ (John vii. 37), making service fruitful and ministry mighty.

It is thus God meets the need of those "without strength," not leaving us to our own feeble efforts, but bearing us

along in the arms of His omnipotence, as far and as fast as our faith lays hold of Him. The precious blood secures a foundation for faith equally and in like measure to all, to the weakest as to the strongest, so that one is no less safe than another. But in the apprehension of the Spirit's power there are very different measures and degrees. The Spirit is poured into each vessel according to its relative capacity. It is this which makes the difference between one Christian and another, and it is towards the enlargement of our capacity that the loving care and discipline of our God is directed.

These three gracious outpourings of God meet our three-fold condition by nature, as described by the apostle in Rom. v.—of *enmity*, of *sinfulness*, and of *weakness*—and thus is the mighty energy of our triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—put forth on our behalf, to accomplish for us all that infinite love, grace, and power can do, and to fulfil in us all the good pleasure of His will, the work begun in time being consummated in eternity.

IV. WRATH POURED OUT.

In Rev. xv. and xvi. we see vials filled with the wrath of God, and poured out upon a guilty world; and we are reminded of the opening of the floodgates of heaven, when the waters of death were poured down upon the antediluvian world, by which all were swept away except those within the protection of the ark.

When the outpoured love that gave Christ is rejected, when the blood outpoured in atonement for sin is counted "as a common thing," and when despite is done to the Spirit poured out, there can only be "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" (Heb. x. 27-29); and this is solemnly exemplified in the outpouring of the vials of the

wrath of God. For when all the goodness and long-suffering of God has failed; when love is in vain, atonement in vain, and condemnation is sealed in the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, what remains but that sorer punishment than any which the Mosaic law inflicted, when those who despised it "died without mercy"? And this is nothing less than that "second death" of which God so solemnly warns the impenitent in Rev. xx. 15 and xxi. 8.

It must not be overlooked that as the love of God and of Christ are linked together in the sinner's salvation, so "the wrath of God and of the Lamb" are joined together in a righteous judgment, that shall vindicate the honour of that *love*, of that *blood*, and of that *Spirit* which ungodly sinners disregard to their own eternal condemnation. Despisers shall both "wonder and perish," and suffer the vengeance of righteous wrath, being "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power; when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe."

May these outpourings comfort and warn; and as we reap even as we sow, so will God reap as He has sown, to the praise, the honour, and the glory of His most holy and ever blessed name for ever and ever. H. G.

NOTES AND REPLIES.

Is there any Scripture that would limit the partaking of the Lord's Supper to the first day of the week?

IN the early days of Pentecost, it would appear that the breaking of bread as a religious observance took place every day, and in connection with the ordinary meal. (Acts ii. 42, 46.) And it seems to have been the apostle's object, in 1 Cor. xi., to disconnect the two because of the evils that had arisen from profaning what was designed to be a sacred feast of love and fellowship. Hence the Corinthians were enjoined to satisfy their hunger at home, and to come together to show

forth the Lord's death. From Acts xx. it is evident that the practice of the apostolic churches was to come together for the holy feast on the first day of the week, but as to *preceptive* limitation of it to that day there is none. Example must never be considered as equivalent to precept. The one is absolute in its requirements; the other is left as a guide to the faith and love of those who seek to follow fully, and it may be affected by circumstances. The words "*for as oft*" imply no restriction as to frequency. Had it been the Lord's design to *bind* the feast to the first day of the week, we may conclude that He would have instituted it on that day, and not on the night before He suffered. His own example might even be pleaded for liberty on this point. In a little book, entitled *Meditations on the Acts*, a well-known writer, now with the Lord, thus expresses his thoughts: "At the beginning they broke bread every day. When gatherings were formed everywhere, and zeal had been enfeebled, they met only on the first day of the week, the day of the Lord's resurrection. This was not a rule, but Luke speaks of it as a usage well known everywhere among Christians." We quote this remark because a sense of bondage is growing up in the minds of some, who think it wrong to partake of the Lord's Supper on any other day than the Lord's-day.

THE LAST DAYS.—The "last days," in which we live, are characterized by the apostle as peculiarly difficult, and therefore perilous. One great danger arises from the very activities of real Christians; they are so occupied with their *service* as not to give the Lord Jesus Christ His due place as "the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last." This I regard as characteristic of Laodicea, and our duty is to be very jealous that our worship of God be with reverence and godly fear, and that we honour the person of our blessed Lord, for it is the dignity of His person which gives its value to His work on the cross. "Great is the mystery of godliness." I think I may say that we as Christians see the value of sobriety and righteousness; but do we *walk* with God, like Enoch or Noah, and so value *godliness* that our lives are framed after God's ways and God's thoughts? Do we find the Spirit of the Lord making us of quick understanding in the *fear* of the Lord? (Isaiah xi.) I think much and often pray for the young. What times they will see! How little is home Christianity known now! I go back in my reminiscences to an early date. But our proper date is *from* the future to the present. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand." We are of "the day."—*From a Letter written by the late J. L. Harris in 1877.*