

# CHRISTIAN FRIEND VOLUME 10

by Unknown

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*A collection of articles and writings from Christian Friend Volume 10, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.*

52 Chapters

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## Christian Friend Volume 10

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## Luke 12:34-59

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The previous part of the chapter is addressed to the world, as to laying up treasure for themselves. At verse 32 the Lord begins with the disciples.

The coming of the Lord does not present itself, when we think of it rightly, as a thing we learn; but I see in Scripture that it is constantly identified with all the feelings and character of a Christian, “as men that wait for their Lord.” It does not say, “As men that believe in the Lord’s coming.” The feeling indeed of those who had grown cold was not that the Lord would not come, but that lie delayed His coming.

Luke 12:45. Now in the beginning of 1 Thessalonians, they were converted to wait for God’s Son from heaven. He was a living, personal reality to them. There is a great deal more in the passage; but that is the first thing; they were converted for that expecting Him is the state that becomes a Christian. do not say there is no other motive; for the blessed love He has shown in His death would lead us to follow Him too but still the Christian is a person between Christ’s first coming to save him and His second coming to fetch him out of this scene, and what characterizes him (if, he takes the Word of God) is, that he is waiting for Christ.

It is gone into in detail in Luke 12. You first get the “watching,” and then, secondly, “doing,” while He is away; that is, serving Him. Those who are watching (vs. 37), with their hearts upon Himself, He makes them sit down to meat (a figure, of course), and He girds Himself and serves them. But when you come to doing (vs. 43), then it is He makes them “rulers” over all that He hath. You first get the blessedness of heaven (vs. 37), and then joint-heirs with Him (vs. 44), two distinct things—one watching for Him, and the other doing. You see the Christian knows (if he has really got into his place) that he is a person in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, who is the seal to us of the full efficacy. of Christ’s work on the cross (and our part in it too), and waiting for Christ to come, which will put us into possession. Christ enters into possession not of all things in the inheritance yet, but He is sitting on the Father’s throne till the joint-heirs are gathered, and then He will put them into glory.

With regard to the way the coming of the Lord connects itself, not merely as a doctrine, but interweaves itself with all the thoughts and feelings of the Christian, there are only two epistles where it is not put before them as an object. In one (Galatians) they were too low, and the apostle had to begin at the very foundations with them; and in the other (Ephesians) they were looked at as already sitting in heavenly places. In 1 Thessalonians 1:10 it was part of their conversion. Christ had suffered for them, and was going to come and receive them to Himself. In 1 Thessalonians 2:19 it is the joy of the apostle’s service in ministry. These Thessalonians were dreadfully persecuted, and he longs to know how they were getting on. When he thinks of his service and labor and ministry for them he says, “When the Lord comes, that is the time when I shall have my joy and crown.” Then, in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, it is connected with holiness—another great element in Christian life. We must walk in holiness now if it is to come out “at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints,” and the thing the apostle looked for was that they should be

unblameable at that day. In 1 Thessalonians 4 it comes in again (vss. 13-18); for the Thessalonians thought that those who had died would not be able to meet the Lord. They were so looking for the Lord's coming, every moment, that they thought those who died would be out of the way, and not meet Him. Of course, they did not know everything clearly, for Paul had only been a short time with them; yet they had learned this much, and a good bit more. So, Paul tells them that the dead in Christ are not left out; for when the Lord comes from heaven, they will come with Him. If a person died, they were to comfort one another with the words, "Well, the Lord will bring them with Him when He comes." You see from this epistle how the coming of Christ connects itself with the conversion, ministry, holiness, and sorrows of the Christian; and in chap. 5 it is a warning, still held out as the end they were looking for.

The thing I find most precious in the coming of the Lord is, that the Person of the Lord becomes so prominent. It makes Him, more precious. He is coming to take me to be with Himself. It is the Person who is the object of our affections as Christians. But it will be a grand thing when we are with Him, and of course we cannot be separated. It is not our glory that is the great satisfaction, but being with Him. It sets Christ personally as the One before our eyes.

There is another thing it does. This expecting Him every moment detaches from the world; the life of every one would be changed, all their thoughts and plans gone. There are two things needed in order to look for the Lord in that way—peace with God, and that we love Him enough to care for His coming, and that makes all the difference, of course. If a person was to tell me that some East India-man was coming here, it would produce no effect on me; but if a mother were told that her son was coming, she would, be on the look-out for the arrival of the packet. Of course, we must have peace with God to be able to look for His coming; but it hangs a great deal on the affection of heart to Christ. "To you that believe He is precious." It is wonderful how distinctly Scripture makes being with Christ the thing to hope for. Of course, it is heaven, because He is there; but except the word "paradise" you never get the expression heaven in Scripture. Of course, if I go to Christ, and He is in heaven, it is heaven I go to; the thing that is spoken of is going to Christ. To be sure heaven itself is a paradise, but to "depart and be with Christ is far better." That is what He brings before us as the object -the loving Saviour, who is going to bring us to be with Himself. It exercises the conscience, of course; because if I was, looking for the Lord, evidently it would keep my conscience awake, lest I should have anything that would produce a gap in my own heart when He did come.

It is a striking thing as regards the present expectation, that in all the parables, whether it be Christ Himself speaking, or the apostles by the Holy Ghost, it never supposes beforehand that His coming is beyond the life of the people He is speaking to. It is the present expectation. The virgins that slept were the same that woke. Those who received the talents were the same reckoned with. He would never present to them beforehand a thing that was beyond present expectation. It is evident we should like to be found, whether absent or present, agreeable to Him when He does come. It gives Christ the place. We are poor things; but if we heard Him saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant," what a thing it would be to us! Not that I pretend to expect it—except that they are His own words. There is a little more than waiting in this chapter. "Loins girded about." These flowing garments were to be tucked up, not loose, in going on with things as they are in the world; but hearts in order, according to the word of God "loins girt about with truth," and then "lights burning" a full profession of Christ. The first thing He takes is having our affections on Christ, and

our delight in seeing Him, while we are watching for Him.

There is another thing quite distinct, a very blessed, touching expression of the Lord's love. Here we have to have our loins girded (our hearts in order); but that is now when the Lord is not yet come, but is sitting on the Father's throne; but then He will gird Himself, and make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them. He says, "You won't have to have your loins girded when you come into my house. I shall make you sit down to meat, and serve you." He will make us sit down and feed upon the things that are in heaven at the table there, and He will minister the blessings to us—ininitely more precious. Not merely the giving us things to eat, but Christ Himself ministering them to us. In that sense Christ never gives up the form of a servant; and when we think that Christ the Son of God takes this place, and has taken it, and never gives it up, what a wonderful thing!

If you look at Philippians 2 you see His path. There are the two parts of Christian life - like Christ in coming down (chap. 2), and like Him, in Him, now He is gone up. (chap. 3.) He made Himself of no reputation. He was made in the likeness of man, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and He never gives that up. He never ceases to be a Man, and He always goes down. His first act was to come down from "the form of God" to the cross. John 13 gives one step, and Luke 12 another. Love likes to serve, selfishness likes to be served. John 13 brings out the service He is doing for us now. He could not be the companion of His disciples down here any longer, and what about them when He goes back to heaven? "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me." The time was come for Him to go back to heaven, but He was loving them right on the end, and He would have them with Him where He was going, to God, but they must be fit for His presence. He must have them fit to have a part with Him where He was going, so He sets about washing their feet. They were walking about here in this world picking up dirt and defilement, and He washes their feet. He is our Servant now, our Advocate, and, in virtue of that, when we have failed, the Spirit applies the Word, and we get humbled. As regards our practical state, there is this daily cleansing which comes when I have let in an idle word or an ungracious thought, and I want cleansing. The Spirit then applies the Word to our consciences, and we get humbled and broken down.

Here, in Luke 12, it is the blessing: "Blessed are those servants," and so forth (vs. 37). He will make them enjoy themselves, for His satisfaction is to make them happy. We do not enough believe in Christ's heart towards us, and we have not enough heart for Him either. He values our affections: "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations." What a Saviour He is! It is constant expectation; not waiting merely, but watching. The second part is doing (vs. 43); in a certain sense an inferior part. He has entrusted us with talents, perhaps it may be "giving a cup of cold water; "but it is, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing." The Lord has committed a service to all. Take an apostle, of course he is entirely given up to service, or it comes down to a cup of cold water. The reward is not sitting down and enjoying heaven here, but it is the kingdom, or more than the kingdom. The Father has set Christ over all the works of His hands, and He makes us joint-heirs. But it is much more blessed to be with God Himself, and enjoy Him, than to be heir with Christ, though, of course, that is a wonderful thing. It is especially in the kingdom that the ruling takes place, because Christ gives up the kingdom to the Father after. There will then be no need for power to be reducing a kingdom to order then, for it is all done.

There are two ways of looking at the inheritance. In Peter and Hebrews, as a man walking in this world in trials and difficulties, and looking out for an inheritance reserved in heaven; and then in Ephesians, where I get into the inheritance, I am looked at as sitting in heavenly places, and going to inherit all that Christ possesses. (See Psalms 2) There you get the counsels of God about Christ, and whatever the heathen do, God will make Him king. It is Christ set up in royalty over the earth. If you look at the promise to Thyatira you get that, and also the heavenly part. (vss. 26-28; cf. Revelation 2) A heavenly Christ as well as a royal Christ. That takes the place of what the Church was on earth—the kingdom. The morning star is Christ, as He is known to us; but the characteristic of the sun risen is judgment. A man that is awake at night sees the dawn of the morning; but when once the sun is risen the morning star is not seen. If you look at the sun risen in Malachi 4:2, and so forth, you will see it is deliverance by judgment. And that is the reason you get in the Psalms these desires for judgment; that is the kingdom part. Psalms 8 brings out a wider result than Psalms 2 “Above the heavens.” He is crowned with glory and honor, according to Hebrews 2:5-8. It is more than the kingdom; for the kingdom rule has to do with this earth. But in this wonderful counsel of God He is getting joint-heirs for the same glory as Himself. When Peter was walking on the earth, the inheritance was in heaven; but when I am in heaven, the inheritance will be on earth. We know ourselves that we are nothing, at least, worse than nothing-badness in ourselves, yet God says that in the coming ages He is going to “show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus;” but it all supposes we are settled in redemption. It is a blessed thought, that the Father has given us to Christ. The Father says, “Now I want to have my heart satisfied by having them all around me;” and so He gives us to Christ that He may bring us back fit to be with the Father in that way. “Bringing many sons unto glory”—poor, feeble, wretched creatures that we are that He should take us up, but it shows the greatness of His love. But the best part is sitting down to meat, though the other is wonderful too—sovereign grace taking up warms us and associates us with Christ.

The kingdom part you get in Moses and Elias. (Luke 9) There was Christ along with the saints in glory manifested to the earth. In Luke (which brings out our present place more than the other gospels) it says “they entered into the cloud.” The cloud was what had separated Pharaoh from the Israelites; it had directed them through the wilderness; it hung over the tabernacle; it was where God was; and out of this shekinah comes the voice—I may say it was the Father’s house practically— “And they feared as they entered into the cloud.” It is only in Luke that you get that bit of the transfiguration. The “they entered” refers to Moses and Elias, but it is a difficult matter of interpretation.

Well, there is what belongs to us in Christ. We can sit down quietly at home in heaven, with Christ exercising hospitality to us there, ministering to us—a wonderful thing I am sure. What little, petty things turn us away from God’s thoughts! We have to go through them; for “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world.”

J. N. D.

## Hold That Fast Which Thou Hast

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As those who, have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and who have before is the prize of our calling on high of God in Christ Jesus, we are but little concerned with the rapid flitting by of the, times and seasons. If it has any voice for us, it is only to remind us that the, night is far spent, and the day is at hand; and that it behooves us to have our loins girt about, and our lights burning, in the prospect of the speedy return of our Lord.

One special aspect of our responsibility in view of this prospect is brought before us in the scripture at the head of this paper. It is found in the message to Philadelphia. Passing by the question now as to what constitutes Philadelphia—a question of ever-increasing importance, and which ere long, if the Lord will, may be fully discussed—attention may yet be directed to the fact that overcoming in this church is totally different from that in the other six. In the five preceding churches—with the exception perhaps of Smyrna—it is overcoming by separation, or preservation, from the evil in their respective spheres of responsibility. In Laodicea it is by getting out of one state into another; in a word, by acquisition of what is lacking. But overcoming in Philadelphia is simply maintaining—maintaining that which is already possessed. Thus, “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown, Him that overcometh” (i.e. by holding fast) “will I make a pillar in the temple of my God,” and so forth. The encouragement to hold fast, the reader will mark, is the Lord’s coming. “Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast.”

Another thing is obvious. The need of the exhortation sprung and springs from the fact that there was a danger of losing the precious heritage which had been entrusted to them. Hence to retain the truth would involve conflict, as it has ever done all down the line of the history of the Church until the present moment, and as it will increasingly do until the Lord descends from heaven to gather His own into His presence forever.

Will our readers therefore suffer the word of exhortation? The conviction has been forced upon us, and it is deepened daily, that the one important thing, the one incumbent responsibility at the present moment, is to “hold that fast which we have.” With some—as the saints in Sardis for example—the first duty is to recover that which they have lost; for pulpits from which once were proclaimed the doctrines of grace and the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures are now filled, in many cases, with the advocates of a rationalistic infidelity or of Romish superstitions. Many, on the other hand, and ourselves amongst the number, can thank God that they have hitherto been preserved from the desolating influences of evil doctrine. Our danger is of a subtler kind. It is not open enemies that we have to dread; every true soldier of the faith delights in warfare with such. Our foes are rather they of our own household—foes therefore in the garb of friends—those who stand by and permit the truth to be frittered away. It cannot indeed be denied that truths which when first recovered and proclaimed, were used of God to rouse thousands of His people out of their slumbers, and which encouraged many to forsake all they held dear for the joy of fuller communion with the mind of the Lord, and for the still deeper joy of a more intimate knowledge of Himself, are now either loosely held—held in a way that involves no reproach, no cross—or being tacitly

surrendered.

If this tendency increases, the question of Pilate may again be heard, "What is truth?" The truth is Christ, every part of it being but a ray of the glory that shines from His glorified face at the right hand of God. To hold fast that which we have therefore is to hold fast the truth of all that He is in His person, in His work, in His union with His people, in His headship of the body, in all the relationships into which He, in grace, has entered with His own in all the offices which He condescends to fill, and, in a word, in all His divine unfoldings in the precepts He has given to His people. Well then may He challenge us to hold that fast which we have, because it is in reality fidelity to Himself which is thus enjoined. Who of us is willing, by the grace of God, to respond to His appeal? To do so must, we again remind you, involve conflict. Take, for example, the truest Philadelphian the Church has ever seen—the apostle Paul. Was there ever a moment in his history after his conversion when he could rest from warfare, and from warfare for the truth with those who bore the name of Christ equally with himself? At Antioch he was utterly alone: Barnabas for the moment forsook him, and Peter was the chief adversary, so that Paul had to withstand him to the face. (Galatians 2) What a temptation it must have been to a tender heart like that of Paul's to have yielded the point in charity for the sake of peace! If he had, what would have been the consequence? This we cannot tell; but it is certain that at that moment the maintenance of the truth of God depended entirely on the fidelity of Paul. He was the only one in that Church at Antioch who held that fast which he had; and if he had let the standard fall, what other hand was there to grasp, and to raise it aloft once again, and to lead on to victory? Nor is this a solitary example. Again and again, in times of danger and controversy, he is found alone, and solely because he would not, through the mercy of God, sacrifice one iota of the sacred deposit which the Lord Himself had committed to his charge. So now in proportion to our fidelity we shall be alone; and it may yet again become true, as the prophet declares, that he that departeth from evil will be accounted mad. (Isaiah 59:15, marginal rendering.)

Do we then advocate controversy? Nothing is more withering to the soul—for it is a deadly poison—than controversy, as usually understood. No; what we plead for is a full ministration of Christ, and faithfulness in the defense, of the whole truth of Christ. But even if the truth is held and defended apart from Christ, it is of no value, rather an immense damage to the soul. Hence none but those who are walking in communion with a living Christ can hold that fast which they have, in the sense of this scripture; for no keenness of intellect, no argumentative power, will avail in this battle; nothing but the word of God wielded in the power of the Holy Ghost. On this account the exhortation is prefaced by the announcement, "Behold, I come quickly." The Lord would thus have His soldiers fight as momentarily expecting to see Him face to face. A hymn puts the question—

"Shall we of the way be weary,

When we see the Master's face?"

In like manner, who could tire in the conflict for Christ and His truth, when our hearts are cheered and warmed by the expectation of being caught away from the midst of the strife to meet the Lord in the air one caution is necessary. If as the days grow darker, and the characteristics of the perilous times are more and more manifested, conflict for the truth should, as it must, become hotter and hotter, let us with all the more diligence keep our hearts. We must cherish constant and tender affection for all the saints of God, and this can only be done as long as our hearts are in

communion with the heart of Christ. If conflict makes us hard or severe, we must unsparingly judge ourselves. Like Israel in the land under Joshua, after every battle we must return to Gilgal, so that in all our warfare only the weapons of the Spirit of God may be employed. (See 2 Corinthians. 11:6.)

May the Lord Himself raise up and qualify many who shall be faithful standard-bearers for Him and His truth in this day of confusion and error! E. D.

## The Testimony and Its Witnesses

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It is somewhat embarrassing to saints when subjects of inquiry assume a controversial rather than an edifying character. Now attention has of late been a good deal directed to the Seven churches, and notably Philadelphia, to the unity of the Spirit and to the testimony.

A deep interest has been evinced, and no doubt an earnest desire experienced, to have the Lord's mind upon these things. But a danger exists that in formulating a judgment thereon prejudices and preferences manifest themselves, and schools of thought become formed, the tendency to which is a thing to be deprecated, and its consequences may well give rise to apprehension in the minds of sober and thoughtful observers. Apprehension may fittingly be aroused for another reason also; namely, that the discussion of such topics occupies us with ourselves, and that carries with it the further danger of our making something of ourselves, which is a very real one, and one of no little gravity. Nor is this all; for the emphasizing what is sought to be enforced leads to a distorted presentation of it, and thoughts and expressions not unextravagant in their character come to the surface, and disfigure it beyond recognition.

Admitting all this, however, we may surely be thankful for any light that our teachers can throw upon what God has spoken of in His word. Whatever be revealed is legitimately ours; and however confused our ideas may be, the confusion is in us, and not in it. Could we discover the true cause of so great diversity of judgment as exists on the subjects referred to, we should probably find it mainly in a want of lucidity in their exposition, and in the platform occupied being higher or lower than our own. The interest, however, that has been awakened of late years, while giving rise to no little anxiety for the reasons cited, may be taken to indicate a genuine desire to know what are the Lord's present interests upon earth, and our own relation to them. Nor can anything surely be more blessed, unless it be that entire absorption in those interests which carries the soul along outside itself in the current of the Holy Ghost for the glory of Christ, and this so heartily and so happily that His rights, His desires, and His glories engage us without any question as to them being raised, or our relation to them being reviewed. In this case nothing that is conflicting will be allowed, nor anything allowed that is not subordinated. Loyalty, devotedness, affection, communion, all unforced and fresh and full, have then their happy outflow, and are richly tributary to Him who draws them forth. If I speak of this, it is because none will gainsay how much happier a thing it is to be occupied with His interests, and engaged in them with diligence and delight, than to be either canvassing them or contending for them.

As to Philadelphia, if when it is discussed more care were taken to distinguish its local, its historical, and its spiritual aspects, less divergence of thought would prevail. Again, if in this, and kindred things, the positional were distinguished from the conditional, but both recognized, there would probably be more concurrence of judgment. So as to the unity of the Spirit, it may be asked whether it and the endeavoring to keep it, are not two widely different things, as different as the inclusive and the exclusive. While as to the testimony, has it been sufficiently seen that it and its witnesses are not the same thing, nor are its object and its scope? As to this distinction between

the testimony and, its witnesses, the Lord Himself was on earth “the faithful and true witness,” and He said, “The Father Himself which hath sent me hath borne witness of me.” Thus He was not only a Witness, but the Testimony too in that day; and this witnessing to Him by the Father was, on His departure, to be taken up by the Holy Ghost: “He shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness.” Next, this testimony which Christ was upon earth widens out under the revelation given to Paul to the whole mystery of Christ and the Church, and all the counsels of God headed up in Him, even the mystery of His will. Thus he says, “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, NOR of me His prisoner.” Here again we have the testimony and the witness to the testimony. The former is the thing testified as “the ark of the testimony” which was for all Israel, all of whom should have been its witnesses. Thus it is evident that we are not the testimony, but, as its witnesses, are each of us responsible not to be ashamed of it or of them. As to the former, we should fail in respect to Paul’s “doctrine;” and as to the latter, in respect to his “manner of life,” for these answer to those. Peter was in like manner a witness, and the character of his testimony was the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which shall be revealed. And again, John, in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was a witness, “in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

Philadelphia, the unity of the Spirit, and the testimony, have each a divine character in which default is unknown; they have also their responsible character, being presented, not only for the joy, but for the exercise of our souls. Philadelphia is the divine ideal in the Church’s ruin for every saint, and nothing short of it will satisfy God about us, or should satisfy us before Him who is the holy and the true. In that sense it is thoroughly inclusive; but practically so searching is it that none who look at the corporate thing would say we are Philadelphia; or, seeing himself in the divine presence, would not hesitate to say he was a Philadelphian. Yet there is nothing else which He that is holy, He that is true, and He that has the key, can approve and commend. Then as to the unity of the Spirit, it has primarily its divine character, formed and maintained in power by the Holy Ghost, comprising all saints from Pentecost, indeed all whom God has sealed with the Holy Ghost, and as such is essentially inclusive. But its responsible character is exclusive of all who are not endeavoring to keep it in the uniting bond of peace. Thus its first or divine aspect leads us to exclaim, How great, how comprehensive, and how blessed! But its other or responsible aspect breaks one’s heart in sorrow, that so few and so feeble are its witnesses, answering only to those who are gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus with Him in the midst. So with the testimony, its center and its diameter must not be identified nor confounded. Its center (as need scarcely be remarked) is Christ, the “Me” of John 15:26, and of Acts 9:4, the central and eternally-blessed Object of the divine counsels, in whom all the fullness was pleased to dwell. Thus it is “the testimony of our Lord,” and “the testimony of Christ;” but it is also the “testimony of God,” embracing in its diameter the full revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, Christ and the Church; and that heading up of all things in the heavens and upon the earth in the Christ which constitutes the mystery of His will. And our inheritance in Him, sealed by God with that Holy Spirit of promise which is its earnest, and by which our hearts know the blessedness of relationship to the Father as children beloved, and union with Christ as members of His body—these things and in this connection are no less, the present than the eternal joy of our hearts.

May we rejoice in this testimony and covet to be better witnesses to it; and may our hearts be expanded to embrace, all those who are Christ’s, while our path is so contracted as to exclude any

character of walk or ways that is not the practical answer to His desires of heart toward us! W. R.

## At the Lord's Table

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There are times and moments in our history when God, in His grace coming very near to us, makes us sensible of His presence and love, and when the redeemed soul tastes for a moment a sip of that eternal future that is awaiting it. In no way is this more distinctly realized on earth than in what we are privileged to be occupied with until the Lord shall come, that which was their delight in the beginning. "The, disciples came, together to break bread." (Acts 20:7.)

Not that we ought ever to lose the sense of His presence with us, and, of -what grace has done; for He is always with, us; and there is the eternal, and therefore changeless, sunshine of His favor always beaming down upon us; and the clouds are not from Him. Still, He does at times allow them to come. Most of us, know that there are times when it is not God in the fullness of His grace that is prominently before us, but rather the pressure of other things. It is the hour in our history when we are "perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed; sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, and for a season in heaviness through manifold trials;" for such a season God often sees there is a "needs be," as the apostle Peter says.

But it is He that lifts up. "God, that comforteth those that are cast down," does this Himself. The manner and way He takes with us in this has been the manner of His grace to all His people from the first. He makes His goodness to pass before us, and we are bowed by the sight of it before Him. Thus was it with Moses in this chapter. He had desired (when crushed, and well-nigh in despair as to the people) to see God's glory, and He said, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." And for Moses, what was it? What would God do for him that he may not be overpowered thereby? "And I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by." (Exodus 33:22.) "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.... And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped." (Exodus 34:6,8.) The Lord passed by, and His goodness passed by in proclamation before His servant; and what could he say while, as sheltered there, he beheld it and heard it all? He made haste, bowed the head, and worshipped; and thus, beloved, is it always. Thus is it too with us whenever He makes us sensible of His goodness and of His presence; thus was it too with David when he went in and sat before the Lord. Words are wanting or die away in silence, the silence of worship; for he too is contemplating God, who has caused His goodness to pass before His soul. "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?... What can David speak more thee for the honor of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant." (1 Chronicles 17:16,18.) This is all he can say. Words and expression both fail while the heart is bowed in worship and thanksgiving; for worship is not of necessity expression or language; often silence marks it. For it is as sheltered that we are called upon to contemplate "all His goodness," not now that into which we cannot look (as was the case with Moses), but sheltered, it is "with unveiled face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we see Jesus (who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death) crowned with glory and honor." Soon our portion will be to see Him as He is; but the Spirit causes now all His goodness oftentimes to pass before us; for the Spirit is not only the unfold,

discerning “the deep things of God,” but the Spirit of sonship too, as He also is the bond of union. “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit.” “Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.”

And now what has God to say to us? It is as sheltered, and also as covered, and, beyond all, as guests invited to listen to the Holy Ghost, and partake of the unfolding of all God’s goodness, that we are gathered together to break bread on each first day of the week? May we know how to value the privilege, and also how decorously to behave ourselves in the midst of such abounding grace as this. Here passes in review before the soul the destruction and overthrow of the enemy, and all His host in the Red Sea, while the ark stands firm in the bed of Jordan—both figures of the death of Christ. His goodness had passed before these poor slaves of Egypt and the desert lung again with a song that has not yet died away, nor ever will, but which is renewed and understood now by those who sing it in a desert (the desert of this world) as barren for us as was that which greeted Israel’s eye that day. But it is of the Lord not of the desert. “I will sing unto the Lord; for He hath triumphed gloriously, the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.” God is satisfied, and I (delivered) am now all that He would have me to be; for I am “accepted in the Beloved.” “The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my salvation;” and as to conflict in the land, the carrying out of all that His grace has purposed, we add, “The Lord shall reign forever and ever.” The Lord Jesus, who is with us (Matthew 18:20) the One who has come out of death and judgment, says, “My praise shall be of thee in, the great congregation.” He sings in the midst of the Church, the Leader of the song (Psalms 22), and claims us as His brethren— “lily brethren” (John 20). God now bears to us the endearing name and relationship of Father “My Father, and, your Father; my God, and your God.” He has passed (and we are with Him) into the sense of unclouded intimacy; for the work is DONE. God owns it where He has seated Christ. “Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” (Acts 2:34,35.)

How blessed then to be where, the Lord condescends I, Himself to be I “Where, two or three are gathered together unto my name.” Who would, who could, be absent, if they added, “There AM I,” and if there were any possibility of being present? The place whereat He causes all His goodness to pass before us, and sends us out if into a desert as a rejoicing people, with the song of praise and thanksgiving in our mouths: “The Lord is my strength and song.” Like the disciples of John 20, “glad;” for they saw “the Lord” saw His hands and His side, and heard the blessed accents of His voice proclaiming, as the result of His death, “Peace unto you.”

Have you done then with the world? It is our testimony. Have we passed into this blessed, this unclouded scene? It is what we declare week by week. Would we change places or be anything other than what God has been pleased to make us in, and through Christ “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ?” Would Israel on the shore of the Red Sea go back again? Would David before the Lord change his circumstances? Would Job, before whom God had in those wonderful chapters (38. 39. 40. 41) caused all His goodness to pass, do anything but bow? “Now mine eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself;” this was, and it still is, the answer to the revelation of God’s goodness. And when the disciples have learned, and when we have learned, that He claims us as His “brethren,” what will the effect be upon us? What will it be, brethren, in each one of us if we are still left here? Will you live for Him, whom the world in its pride still rejects, a filled and worshipping people? May it be so while we are left here to show the Lord’s death until He come, and to wait before Him in the blessed anticipation of His speedy coming the second time, “without sin unto salvation.” “The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” H. C. A.

## God's Provision for the Wilderness

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We find blessedly brought out in this epistle God's provision for the little flock passing through the wilderness. In Ephesians all is found in heaven; but as passers through the wilderness, our feet really treading this earth, there is a goodly portion provided for us—all God's stores from everlasting to everlasting found to be what gives strength as we go on—a rich portion for the heart by the way. It is important in this day to know God's thoughts for His people in their hours of weakness.

The end of chapter 1 brings out the thought of "all flesh is grass." So a Jew—Paul, looking at his lineage privileges, and so forth, could say, "Flowers of grass." But there is something eternal—the word of the Lord—of eternal moment. Your position is now according to this gospel; not what "I think"—but what has the Lord spoken? Tidings of good news, beginning with the "seed of the woman." For whom? Not Satan, surely? His head is to be crushed. Well, God wished His glory to be known, His enemies to be put down, and He found out the "seed of the woman" to do it. Don't you talk of yourself, I am so bad; my faith is so weak. Don't you see another Person on the scene—God's Christ? Of course, you will be proved weak; and didn't Christ show out all flesh was bad save His own—the holy, harmless, undefiled One? When a believer in the sense of his weakness gets talking about THAT, he is forgetting the glory of the blessed Lord! In the light I say, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." I remember Christ, and say, "I'll sanction no evil. I want to be just what I am before Him; for there is the Lamb on the throne for me, and what a sinner I must have been to need that blood!"

"As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word." But they were not as new-born, not as young believers; they had gone through a great deal, were as martyrs; but they and you are to desire as babes. I suppose one of the greatest mistakes in many minds is that mercy will do very well for any outside; "But for me who have passed out of babyhood, it's not mercy I want." That there are steps I don't deny—babes, young men, and so forth; but the young man, if overcoming, does not forget what he had in the nursery, and the father in. Christ never could forget mercy; no, never "Washed from my sins," you say, "I must overcome the world." Very true. But when you have overcome, there is always something that still, hinders; and when I get old saints I find them turning back with such sweetness to the blood, and they don't know why, making so much more of Christ in humiliation. Very natural. In the epistles I get the work of quiet bearing on my difficulties; in the gospels His word, beauties and perfection, the riches of His person, and the soul feeds there. For my part I do not ever expect to taste mercy as I shall taste it in, heaven. Shan't I join the song, "Worthy," and so forth? I shall not want mercy there, but I shall never TASTE it as I shall before, the throne.

Another remark in connection, with the taste of weakness and pilgrimage. Romans 8 is the roll-call of a believer's privileges; but you don't find such a taste of mercy as in Romans 5. Three things (vss. 1, 2, and so forth.)—glory in tribulation, rejoice in hope, love shed abroad, not ashamed. The little band must drink of the brook by the way, mercy from first to last. Because the love of God is

shed abroad, that is where the running of the stream is. The “brook” for the pilgrim is not in the mercies of the way, but in the love, in THE HEART OF HIM who humbled Himself, and there the pilgrim turns back and drinks.

“Oh, but I want that love! I lift my eye, but I don’t get the taste of that love.” All very right; but where, I ask, is the stream the apostle presents? In Christ. He recalls to your mind what He did. He died for as “ungodly,” and “without strength,” and the soul going through the wilderness has the very same Christ up there who first met it in the extremity of its helplessness, and shut out forever from God—getting back there to that love; that is, drinking of the brook by the way; not saying, “My leanness, my faith,” and so forth. I am here in the wilderness, brought to my wits’ end; but here is Christ. If Christ’s death did something, His life does much more. People are always wanting to find a stream running along before them. He says, “No; go up to the source, and then you’ll drink of the brook by the way”

If you talk of your deserts you are not fully matured in grace; you forget how He took you up, and that love is the same love that you still have to do with as you go on through the wilderness. What are you individually occupied with? Is it your leanness? Is it the providential dealings of God with you? Say even, is it disciplinarian dealings? Well, do they as they should -drive you out of your circumstances? And where? Do they drive you to despair, or to GOD? Look out of yourselves, that will give you lower ideas of self than looking at your low attainments. People say, “I find no love in my heart.” If you only went a musing on what you were when Christ took you up, you ‘d find the love flowing in. Here Peter refers to it practically—“growing there by milk of the word”—“gospel.”

What do I live upon, energy of my own? No. Has Christ spoken one word to me, and has He got no second word? Nothing more. Has the Lord looked once into my soul, and is it not natural for me to expect it again? How natural for any who tasted mercy—that He is gracious—to taste again that he “may grow thereby!” When unconverted I only knew God as a Judge, not as gracious; but I have found Him a Giver— “gave His Son” and “the Holy Ghost.” I’ve known Him forty-seven years as a Giver. I say, why does He give? Because it is like Himself; the whole place where Christ is answers the question. He is a Giver, and ought not God. to bestow? Who is to be an open fountain if not God? In Eden man proved it; but now God has recast heaven, and put a Man there to be the Giver.

Verse 4. “As a living stone” you can say to the world—that which characterizes me before God puts me into direct contrast with you. I know Christ as “chosen of God, and precious.” I know who this Person is—the elect corner—stone; and because I have acted on that, and owned Him as such, I see the peculiar place a soul gets into who does this; before whom? God. Christ precious to God, commands all the range of His affections; next precious to those who believe. The poor feeble believer in the presence of God finds he has a thought—the counterpart of God’s thought (not as to volume—His is infinite—but as a tiny brook is to a large one)—God saying, “He is precious,” and I looking at Christ, and saying, “Oh, He is precious!”

Precious, I say; do you say He is not? Not all God says He is? If Christ is not Son of God, yea, God Himself, then not only I am lost, but my life is lost also. Why for forty-seven years I have tried to string everything I have done on to Christ, as beads are strung on a string, and you would tell me He is only man. Then where is my acceptance and my life? Where should I be, passing through the Wilderness, in all the deep needs, the little perplexities, even without knowing that

preciousness as something one wants to stay oneself upon? Looking at the cross I say, “He did that for me,” though the Father only knows the worthiness of the Son there. Still we say He is precious, and what a place that puts us in! Is any poor thing groaning here as to themselves or circumstances? What do you think of that, that you have got God’s thoughts about Christ? What strength that gives the heart to say, “Come what may, God and I have the same thoughts about Christ; it puts me at once into the place of blessing”— “Ye are a chosen generation, a peculiar people.” G. V. W.

The Christian is a new man, a new creation in Christ, risen into a wholly new place, on the utter rejection and proved insuperable evil of the first man—proved insuperable in the death of Christ. J. N. D.

## The Cross of Christ

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“The cross of Christ” is where everything is morally perfected. There the whole question of good and evil was solved. The world despises the cross, and God meant it to be a despicable thing – a gibbet. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, that no flesh should glory in His presence.” There, on the basest thing in the world, He has hung salvation. But the moment I am inside I find everything in the cross— the uttermost sin of man in enmity against God, all the power of Satan, but the perfect man in Christ. “The Prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me.” But, on the other side, God is there in perfect righteousness against sin, and in perfect love for the sinner; and as you go on you, find that the new heavens and the new earth— all things in short— will be perfected by the cross. There I have perfect righteousness against sin, and perfect love towards the sinner, and I find peace and rest—not merely rest, but God’s rest; for He rests in His love, in the blessedness of those He has brought near in Christ, and He will bring them into His rest in glory.

We are apt to make a mistake in speaking of our weakness and unprofitableness, forgetting that it is when we have done our duty we are unprofitable servants. When we speak of it we mean our failure, and so when we speak of our weakness of spirituality or conduct we mean failure. But when Paul speaks of weakness, it is that which makes room for power (“when I am weak then am I strong”), and the result fully produced is with the consciousness of there being no strength in us. This is a very different thing from our failure. Our failure ought to lead us to humble ourselves before God for that which led to the failure. If we have not done what we ought, why have we not? We cannot glory in not having done it. There is a strength that the babe in Christ may have and needs— power guided by wisdom, and this does not fail. When we have not been emptied of self, and are full of self-confidence, we must be broken down. Pretension to strength is always in the way for failure. The first step towards failure is forgetting our entire and absolute dependence. As Christians we know we have no strength, but we forget we have no. J. N. D.

## Unity: What Is It?

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“Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah.” (Deuteronomy 6:4.) This was the great central truth enforced by the Lawgiver on Israel. Round it circled all other. There could be one object of love alone, this one Jehovah, to whom every affection should flow (vs. 5), and but one object of worship and service (vs. 13) quoted by our Lord in answer to Satan. This great truth was in contrast to the idols of the heathen—gods formed out of the imagination of the heart, in reality demons, to whom every unholy desire and evil passion were consecrated, and who were worshipped according to the varied passions, lusts, or fears that moved the human heart.

There was beside but one place (12: 5) where this one Jehovah put His name, and in which alone He could be worshipped. Not a single association with what was of idols could be suffered. No high place, or mountain, or hill, or tree, where other gods had been served, but must be destroyed, as well as every vestige of their worship, be it altar, pillar, or grove. Thus was the unity of the testimony committed to Israel to be maintained and preserved. God Himself the one Jehovah. The place of His name— “To His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come.” Every association with what was false had to be destroyed.

Connected with this was another truth; there was one people who were witnesses that Jehovah was God. (Isaiah 43:10,12.) They were and are His people. This is attested by their redemption out of Egypt, by their going through the floods and not being overwhelmed, and through the fire and not being burned; and finally, created as they have been for His glory, by their establishment in glory when their Jehovah shall have destroyed all the power of the enemy, and delivered them from every false god and all association with the idolatrous nations. Consequently, this people must be separated from all others on the face of the earth. (Exodus 33:16.) It was the company of Jehovah with them which made it necessary. They must dwell alone, and not be reckoned among the nations. (Numbers 23:9.) In God’s mind, too, the tribes of Israel were one. Not so in the mind of the enemy. Balak says to Balaam, “Thou shalt see but the utmost part of them, and shall not see them at all.” Could not the part farthest off from the sanctuary be cursed? Nay, “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel.” It was in this uttermost part of the camp that the fire of the Lord burnt among them at Taberah (Numbers 11:2.) He can and will chasten His own; but Israel, in the vision of the Almighty, is seen by Balaam abiding in their tents according to their tribes, and he had to declare of the farthest tent and tabernacle, as well as of the nearest, “How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, arid thy tabernacles, O Israel!”

That the twelve tribes were this one people before the Lord, was represented also by the twelve loaves of shewbread on the one table in the sanctuary, with the pure frankincense upon them. Practically they should have corresponded to this representation of them before the Lord. They, as all others, failed to maintain their place as Jehovah’s witnesses, and in the unity of their tribes to go up to the testimony of Israel: Ten tribes under Jeroboam rallied round the calves of Dan and Bethel, and the iniquity of the other two obliged the Lord to go far off from His sanctuary and to scatter them among the heathen; but the twelve loaves, set in order before the Lord continually,

taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant, with the memorial frankincense upon them, to be burnt to Him as most holy by a perpetual statute (Leviticus 24:5,9), was a figure that they have their place before Him continually (for God hath not cast away His people whom He foreknew), according to the value of the frankincense upon the loaves; and in the end, gathered back from among the nations, they will be one nation, under one King and one Shepherd (Ezekiel 37), and there shall be one Jehovah, and His name One (Zechariah 14:9.)

“To us,” says the apostle, “there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we through Him.” (1 Corinthians 8:6.) Sweet and precious thought when we know Him, that “of Him, and through Him, and for Him, are all things: to whom be glory.” He, the center, and as everything has flowed from Him, and is by Him, so must it be for Him. This opens to us another thought as to unity; for the one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and the one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, are not two but One— “I and my Father are one.” (John 10:30.) And that is more than mere co-equality or co-eternity. His words were His Father’s words. His works done in His Father’s name bore witness who He was. In the salvation and care of the sheep His Father’s and His own interests were identical, and whoever by faith had seen Him had seen the Father, while the rejector who hated Him hated His Father also.

Unity as to God thus being made known in a way different to the revelation made to Israel as a nation in the flesh, it came out through the rejection of the Lord in words and works—a rejection which set aside man in the flesh altogether—that the people who were to be witnesses of this unity must be placed on an entirely different footing. It was the death of Christ which opened the way for the gathering together in one of the children of God who were scattered abroad. (John 11:52.) As Son of man lifted up out of the earth (12: 32) He was to be the center of attraction for all men. On earth the temple at Jerusalem was the religious center, but those who boasted in it rejected Him who came in His Father’s name, and that name was to be declared by Him on earth no longer, but from the place He took consequent on being lifted up out of it. Thus, a people were going to be formed into a new unity; not an elect nation separate from all others with an earthly center, but children of God, previously scattered abroad, now gathered in one, as the fruit of the corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died, His death closing the hopes connected with an earthly Messiah.

It is in view of His death and taking this new place in glory that the Lord speaks in John 17, and here we find unity spoken of in a threefold manner. He takes His place on high, to glorify the Father from thence, in becoming the source of eternal life to a people the Father had given Him, and the character of that life was the knowledge of the Father and the Son. But already on the earth there was a company to whom He had manifested the name of the Father, to whom He had given the Father’s words, and who had known that He came out from the Father, and this company, the eleven, He asks the Holy Father to keep in oneness, “as we” (vs. 11.) We see how intimately this is connected with their taking His place on the earth, and His being glorified in them; and in this request the desire of His heart is expressed, that those whom He had hitherto kept in the Father’s name should be kept in oneness during His absence “as we,” and in the power of the name of the “Holy Father.” There was besides the fellowship of this oneness “for those which shall believe on me through their word” (vs. 20.) The inner power of this fellowship is contained in the words, “That they may be one in us.” This we see in 1 John 1:3, “That which we have seen and

heard. declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” The outer expression we see in Acts 2:42-47. Alas! soon to be given up when grace became feeble in them, and the flesh began to work. What the Lord thus desired was, that there should be a unity of testimony rendered by the eleven, not of agreement merely, but of thought and purpose, “as we.” And also, that those believing through their word should be gathered into the fellowship of this unity, and become the manifestation on earth that the Father sent the Son, so that the world might believe it. In glory this unity will be fully accomplished. The day of faith over, the world will know, when the saints are seen in the same glory as Christ, not only that the Son came as the sent One of the Father, and thus as the manifestation of all the grace and truth which are treasured up in that name of Father, but also that the Father loved them even as He loved the Son. Precious consummation in the heavens of the display of the Father’s love in the unity of glory, “I in them, and thou in me, that they may be perfected into one;” as there will be the display on earth of the glory of the one Jehovah, when Israel will dwell together in unity.

If we ponder the words spoken by Moses to Israel, “Jehovah our God is one Jehovah,” and those spoken by the Son when here on earth, “I and my Father are one,” and the truths we have noticed as connected with either revelation, it should deepen in our souls the sense that all that is of God must gather to Himself according to His own blessed nature, whether in government for the earth or in the glory of His grace for the heavens. Both will be finally consummated; both should have been maintained as set up by God in their respective seasons. On the other hand, it is of the enemy to scatter and to lead man to propose himself as a center of unity. At the very beginning of his history the devil said, “Ye shall be as gods:” Self-exaltation and pride—the crime of the devil—entered in, and as a necessary consequence begat in man the evil heart of unbelief which departs from the living God. The ultimate issue was a scene of unbridled corruption and violence, which was swept away by the judgment of God in the flood. Afterward we do not find a surging sea of unrestrained self-will and passion, government having been established in Noah for its repression, but the self-sufficiency of man expresses itself in an evil confederation at Babel to set up himself and his works. It was there they said, “Let us make us a name,” there they joined together to build a city and tower of slime and brick which should reach to heaven (compare Isaiah 14:13, and 2 Thessalonians 2:4), intending also to make it the center of unity characterized by independence of God. Its character sufficiently marked its author; nor need we trace the workings of the mystery of iniquity from the time of its earliest germs seen in Babel onward, until the full result is reached in the Babylon of the Apocalypse and the man of sin, whose coming is after the working of Satan, to be assured that it was the arch-enemy of God who was then leading men into a unity of independence, which would culminate at the end in open revolt. What could a jealous God do-jealous that His creatures should turn to Him, not merely because He is supreme, but supreme in goodness and love—but scatter them abroad? Must He not gather to Himself in the supremacy of His own nature? Could He brook the pride and self-sufficiency that would do without Him and His love? Luke 15 tells us of the joy of the Father’s bosom in receiving back the prodigal, first to His heart, and then to His home; and we thus learn what will be the joy, tasting it in spirit now, when all are gathered to the Father’s house in the enjoyment of the love wherewith He loves the Son, folded up forever in it, and displayed also as the manifestation of it.

This leads us to another thought connected with the sphere and vessel of the display of this unity, rather than its nature and character. We have seen that it will be perfectly displayed in glory, and that the first man having been set aside in death by the cross, the center of unity now exists outside the earth altogether. The Son of man has been lifted up from the earth, and taken His place in glory. We have been reminded by a beloved servant of the Lord, now gone to be with Him, that while John speaks of the nature of what is to be displayed, Paul speaks of the sphere or dispensation in which it is displayed; but there are connecting links.

In John 20 we find those who had been scattered during those three days of His absence now gathered together by the news of His resurrection. There is a Person known as alive again, and this attracts them as to a common center. It is in weakness and fear they are together, but on the evening of that first day of the week the Saviour comes into the midst of the eleven, and those gathered with them. They are the company on earth that the Saviour owns by His presence. Fifty days after, the same company, in principle, are together, and the Holy Ghost fills the place where they were sitting, and also each one assembled. They are owned by the coming of the Holy Ghost as the company now formed by His presence into the assembly of God—His dwelling place. It has been sanctioned by the presence of the Saviour in its midst, and by the coming and dwelling of the Holy Ghost. The full revelation of this truth was not yet made known, though the fact was accomplished, nor the further truth that this assembly was the body of Christ. In the ways of God it needed that Jerusalem should consummate its guilt by the rejection of the Holy Ghost as the witness of a glorified Christ, ere it could be made known that the Son of man, who had been lifted up from the earth and taken His place in glory, was seated there as head of His body, and that He esteemed those who believed in Him as part of Himself, or that the assembly which had been owned by the presence of the Saviour, and the coming of the Holy Ghost, was the vessel in which it was to be displayed the mystery of God. (Colossians 2:2.) It is the man who wasted the assembly, and kept the clothes of those that stoned Stephen, who was chosen of God to minister the wondrous truth of the union of Christ and the Church, and to unfold as a consequence a unity such as never existed before, presented to us in the figure of the unity of a body with its head and members. We have to go back to the first man and woman in Genesis 2 to find a figure of the great mystery of Christ and the Church— “They twain shall be one flesh,” but “He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit.” Let us remember too, that the man was created in the image of God. He stood for God as the center of the creation in which he was placed, and the woman as one with him. It needed that He who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature, should take His place as firstborn from the dead, the beginning of the new creation, in order that He might become Head of the body the Church. In contrast with the first man who subjected everything to vanity, He has made peace by the blood of His cross, and is the reconciler of all things to God both in heaven and earth, they are to be headed up in Him in the dispensation of the fullness of times. He is head over all things, but head of the body the Church. This body is now being formed by the Holy Ghost, and finally the church will be presented by Him who gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water by the word, in glory to Himself.

In 1 Corinthians 12 we are told that it is by one Spirit that all the members have been baptized into one body; and further, that each has been made to drink of one Spirit. Each member is united to the Head, and each to each by the one Spirit, thus the unity is formed; but each has also drunk of the one Spirit who formed it, and there is therefore a living power of unity. It is this which we are

exhorted to keep in Ephesians 4:3. Moreover, whatever the gifts, ministries, or operations, the apostle insists that it is the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God, with whom they are connected. Had this been realized by the Corinthians instead of schism, unity would have prevailed amongst them; they would not have been puffed up for one against the other. Whatever the distance which formerly had existed between man and man—Jew alienated from Gentile, bond from free—God has now tempered the whole body together. The only middle wall of partition set up by God has been broken down, and of twain in Christ one new man is made, and both are reconciled to God in one body by the cross.

It is the former strict Jew, now a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, who exhorts to walk worthy of such a calling, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. In Colossians 3 love is the uniting bond of perfectness, and the peace of Christ is to preside in our hearts, to which we are called in one body. How necessary that love should be active, and that the lowliness and meekness that forbears should take the place of self-assertion, in order that we should walk worthy of our calling.

The unity of the body can never be separated from its source, or it ceases to be a living reality. "There is one body and one Spirit." If the Spirit that forms the body be one, the body also must be one; nor could there be, as of old, a separate calling and hope for the Jew and another for the Gentile. It is "one hope of your calling." And if there is one Lord, there cannot be many faiths or many baptisms. It may be called the faith of God's elect, the common faith, the faith once delivered to the saints, the faith of the gospel, the faith which is in Christ Jesus, the mystery of the faith; but it is one, consequent on the recognition of the one person who has been made both Lord and Christ. The formation of different creeds and confessions of faith is the denial of the one Lord, and a source of division; and if the faith once delivered to the saints be a matter of doubt and perplexity, it is clear that the Church has been unfaithful to its deposit; for it is the pillar and support of the truth, not a truth; and Christ is "the truth," "the Spirit is truth," and "thy Word is truth," not a creed, though everything in it may be true. All that is connected with Christ, as manifested here in flesh, and anointed by the Holy Ghost, or now as the glorified Man in heaven, testified of by the Spirit in the written Word, is the truth to be maintained by the saints.

Baptism also is intimately connected with the name and authority of the one Lord. Separate from that, it is easy to be divided as to the mode and subjects of it, or to be confused as to its signification—the name is all-important. Would it be one baptism if the subjects were baptized in the name of Paul or Apollos, and not in the name of the one Lord, and unto the full revelation of the name of God as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? The spirit of the one baptism cannot be carried out if it be connected with the set of ideas held by this or that party.

The circle connected with the one Lord may be wider than the one body, because it depends on the professed acknowledgment of His title; and wider still in the whole universe is the confession of the one God and Father, who is over all, and through all, and in (you) all. A denial of His universal supremacy would be a denial of His Godhead. It is the fool who says in his heart "No God," the full-blown result of departure from Him; while the result of the heading up of everything in Christ will be that everything will be subjected so that God may be all in all. The saint now loves to own that all things are of God. He has drunk of the water of life which God gives to him that is athirst; he is brought to God to know Him as Father; and he forms part of that church which, as the

heavenly Jerusalem, will descend out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. It will be the perfect display of the light that irradiates it. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof." Not one saint composing it but will have arrived at complete conformity to Christ in glory, or there would be some parts of the city which could not ray forth the glory which fills it.

It is to every one of us, in Ephesians 4:7, that grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ; no unit is left out, and the gifts for the perfecting of the saints, as well as for the work of the ministry, and the building up of the body of Christ, have been given by Him who has led captivity captive, and descended and ascended, that He might fill all things. That each individual saint should be perfected unto one is the care of Him who fills all things, and the gifts to this end are given "till we all arrive at the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, at a perfect man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ." Paul could say, "The life I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." It was the Son of God whom he preached; for it pleased God to reveal His Son in Him. Paul knew Him, preached Him, and lived by the faith of Him. Each saint also will arrive at the unity of the faith as well as of the knowledge of the Son of God, and each is "predestinated to be conformed to the image of His (God's) Son." Thus, the unity will be established in each individual unit. As each one now grows up into Christ, the body makes increase unto the edifying of itself in love.

Unity must flow from living connection with its source. That source is God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Apart from that, it is the will of man working, and the power of the enemy behind it to produce disruption and confusion. We need simplicity of soul, singleness of eye, and the knowledge of God, to discern these truths, and the power of the Holy Spirit also, by whom alone we can act on the principle of unity, which would refuse everything that is inconsistent with the source of it—God in holiness and grace—and acknowledge only that which gathers to Himself according to the revelation given as an expression of it here. The moment we descend to human wisdom or effort, the rudiments of the world, or the arrangements of men, we deny the power that is formative of unity. May we know better the blessed source of this unity, which loves to gather to itself according to the perfection of that nature from which it flows. T. H. R.

## The Church on Earth

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Mystery envelopes many minds as to the book of Revelation, and the interpretation (understanding) of what is recorded there. This would be greatly dispelled by our seeing God's division of this book into three parts:

1. The things which thou hast seen.
2. The things which are.
3. The things which shall be after these.

These are God's divisions, and not of man (see Revelation 1:19), therefore are they worthy of all attention.

If John obeyed the instructions given him in this verse, the first matter he wrote of was what he alone had seen. Having thus written, he next proceeded to write of "the things which are," the Church, left on earth awhile to be the responsible light bearer for Christ. And lastly, we should expect to read of "the things which shall be after these." All this, in its exact order, we do find in what the apostle writes.

The second writing ends thus: "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Note, therefore, "the things that are" can only refer to the Church on earth, and contemplates nothing save it; for whatever body of people may be taken up in grace by God after the Church has passed away from the earth, they are not under consideration here, and could form, therefore, no part of the "things that are" as it existed in John's day, for, if they did they must of necessity be of the Church, and part of it. We must not transfer the Laodicean overcomers of chapter 3. into chapter 4., where alone we first read of what shall be "after these things."

It may be simply inquired, when did Laodicea and Laodicean overcomers cease to be a part of the things "that are," and pass into "the things that shall be hereafter," since they formed part of the "things that are" in John's day?

One other remark may help the simple.

The Laodicean overcomer shall "sit with me in my throne," says the Lord. Now, who shall share that throne with Him save the Church, "the Bride, the Lamb's wife?" Mark, it is not merely that they reign "with" Him, but they sit with Him "in" His own peculiar throne. If Revelation 20:4 is quoted, it is not a sufficient answer. Reigning "with" (μετα) is not the same as "in (εν) my throne." Those who pass through (or are martyred in) the great tribulation forms no part of the Church, "the things that are," for they as yet are not. H. C. A.

## Laodicea

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Two things have to be carefully borne in mind in the attempt to ascertain the true character of Laodicea. The first is, that there was an actual assembly in Laodicea to which, or to the angel of which, this letter was addressed; and the second is, that this actually existent assembly was taken up by the Lord as a type of a state of things which would obtain at the close of the history of the Church on earth. In other words, there are the historical and prophetic Laodiceas—to say nothing now of the lessons contained in this letter for the Church in every age, continuously from the time of the assembly at Laodicea till the development of Laodicea which this prophetically foreshadowed. This being conceded, another thing follows; namely, that the character of Laodicea actual is the character of Laodicea prophetic. Were there then any Christians, those who were really saints of God in this assembly, in the apostolic days? It is quite true that John's ministry extended beyond that of Paul, but this fact does not forbid our gleaning the answer to our question from the writings of the latter. Turning then to the epistle to the Colossians, we find Paul saying, "For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea," and so forth. (Chapter 2:1.) He also tells us that Epaphras had great zeal, or "labored much" for the Colossians "and for them in Laodicea (chapter 4: 13); and he directed that the epistle itself should be read to "the church of the Laodiceans." It is therefore impossible to doubt that God had saints at that time in this assembly; and this goes a long way to determine the question as to the state of things in John's day, seeing that only about thirty years elapsed between Paul's epistle and the letter sent through John.

But it is said that the language in the epistle itself forbids the supposition. Let us briefly examine it. Take, first, the warning that the Lord was about utterly to reject it because of its lukewarm condition. Can the Lord, it is asked, cast away His own people? Such a question, we submit, is altogether to lose sight of the nature of the epistle, and of the character in which the angel of this assembly is addressed. This assembly—as all the seven—is viewed as a light-bearer on earth, and is thus dealt with in its responsibility as the vessel of testimony. To be rejected in this way therefore has nothing whatever to say (for it is spoken of Laodicea collectively, or in its corporate character) as to the state of the individuals that composed the assembly. No one denies that the assembly as such was in a frightful condition from its self-complacent pride and boastfulness, and that as such it was loathsome to the Lord; but to apply this to the state of every individual in it is scarcely sober exposition.

Remark, in the next place, that down to the end of verse 18 the address is to the angel, the moral representative of the assembly. Bearing this in mind, in addition to what has been said, there will be little difficulty, in the interpretation of the well-known symbols of "gold" and "white raiment." One distinction should, however, be carefully noted. While the Lord counsels the angel to buy of Him gold tried in the fire and white raiment, the angel is exhorted himself to anoint his eyes with eye-salve (not to buy it) a distinction that has a most significant bearing upon the subject in hand.

Verse 19 contains the enunciation of a principle of divine importance. "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten." Is this principle applicable to unconverted professors? We turn to the Proverbs, and there we read, "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of His correction: for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." (Chapter 3:11,12.) Here undoubtedly the words are spoken to one in a known relationship, as the term "my son" plainly shows. So also in Hebrews 12, where this scripture is cited, applied, and expanded (see vs. 5-11); and so also we unhesitatingly assert in the passage before us. Indeed, all possible doubt is removed by the words, "As many as I love" "as many," a distinct class, and, "as I love," marking out a special relationship to that class; namely, the Lord's own people. And it is on this basis that the exhortation is given to "be zealous therefore and repent." Is this the way God speaks to the unconverted? No, it is the method in which the Lord addresses those who have been brought into relationship with Himself; and here therefore applies to those who were mixed up with all this frightful formality, self-complacency, and indifference. It is the warning which He sounds out from the depths of His heart, in order that His people might heed it before the final rejection of the assembly, and judge themselves ere He might be compelled in His love to, lift up His rod and deal with them in chastening in' order to effect their restoration.

Verses 20, 21 are spoken to individuals. "If any man hear my voice." "To him that overcometh." First, then, we have the Lord's attitude: "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." The Lord is here, without doubt, outside when He ought to have been enjoyed within. But is it that He is seeking admittance here for the first time—into the heart of an unconverted one? In other words, Is this the presentation of the gospel? The whole drift of the letter contradicts the thought, as well as the connection in which it stands. That the gospel might be preached from it to any 'who claimed to be Christians and yet were not is quite true; but the question now is, Is this the attitude in which Christ presents Himself as a Saviour to the unconverted? If so, it is without a parallel in the Scriptures. But it is said to answer to Luke 14 There is an important difference. The supper there, in its typical import, is God's supper, and, besides, is for all who will accept the invitation; whereas here it is the Lord who knocks for admittance, and promises that, if the door is opened, He will come in and sup with the one that opens, and that the opener shall also sup with Himself. It is the contrast to Luke 14 in every particular. To maintain this, moreover, is to suppose power on the part of the unconverted; for to open the door goes a long way beyond simple faith in the gospel message. No, what the Lord promises here is a secret and individual enjoyment. He will in His tender grace come in to any who may open the door and sup with them, and then they shall sup with Him—have fellowship with Him in His things; the expression on His part of His greatest grace, and on the part of those supping with Him of the most exalted enjoyment.

Thereon follows the promise to the overcomer; and if no saints of God are found in Laodicea, whence are to come the victors? To assert that there will be none is possible, but surely it is to forget the character both of the Lord's heart and of His ways. The overcomers indeed are especially those who hear the Lord's voice, and having opened the door—in contrast with the worldliness, pride, and self-sufficiency of the assembly as such—enter upon the enjoyment of the Lord's fellowship and of fellowship with Him. Thenceforward He dwells in their hearts by faith, and they are cheered by the promise of association with the Lord in His throne. This is surely a much lower blessing than that promised to a Philadelphian overcomer; but when estimated in the light of the past indifference and unfaithfulness of those to whom it is pledged, its grace and power to

cheer and sustain are at once perceived.

The letter closes with, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." On the above supposition, this proclamation would be made in vain as far as Laodicea is concerned. We can only repeat that such is not the way of the Spirit of God; and we add that the contention will in the end beget that spirit of Laodiceanism which already is asserting itself on every hand. For if the warnings in this letter only concern an empty profession, we may delude ourselves with the thought that we are in no danger from the evils here indicated. E. D.

## The First Epistle to Timothy

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The pastoral epistles of Paul, all three written we may safely affirm after the termination of the apostle's first imprisonment, now claim our attention. In each of them he presents himself in his apostolic character, and that in connection with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, supplying us, by the way in which he introduces himself in these three letters, with a key-note to the contents of each of them. In the one before us, which contains regulations given to Timothy for the right ordering of God's house on earth, Paul describes himself as an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Saviour, and Christ Jesus our hope. Furnished with such credentials, he was fully competent to give directions for matters concerning the assemblies of God. In the second epistle to Timothy, which enjoins individual faithfulness to the Lord at all cost, Paul writes of himself as "an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." And in that to Titus, which dwells on practical piety in every condition of life, he reminds his own child after the common faith of his apostleship "according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth which is according to piety."

Timothy and Titus were apostolic delegates charged with the service of watching over doctrine, and of regulating matters which concerned the well-being and order—the one of the assembly at Ephesus, the other of the assemblies in Crete; and the letters addressed to both would serve among other things to authenticate their mission (1 Timothy 1:18; Titus 1:5.)

Paul had visited Ephesus on two occasions ere he went to Rome (Acts 18:19; 19:1.) On the first occasion he was on his way to Jerusalem from Macedonia. On the second occasion Timothy had left Ephesus, sent by Paul into Macedonia (Acts 19:22), whilst he tarried for a season still in that city, the metropolis of proconsular Asia. Hence it is pretty plain, from the circumstances recounted in this epistle (1:3), Timothy being left at Ephesus when Paul went into Macedonia, that it must have been written at a date subsequent to his first appearance before Nero.

Timothy was to keep watch over the doctrine taught in the assembly. There was need for this. Of what would take place in Ephesus after Paul's death he had warned the Ephesian elders years before at Miletus. How the prediction was verified the Lord's address to the angel of that Church surely intimates. (Revelation 2:2.) But whilst he was still in life he saw heterodoxy getting in there, and the saints in danger of being ensnared by fables and endless genealogies, which ministered questions rather than God's dispensation which is in faith; whereas the end of the command, i.e. what was enjoined, is love, out of a pure heart and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned, which things some having missed had turned aside to vain talking, desiring to be law-teachers, understanding neither what they said nor whereof they affirmed. Such were the dangers at Ephesus to the maintenance of sound teaching to which Timothy's attention was especially drawn. Paul had pointed them out before leaving for Macedonia; he refers again to them in this letter.

About the fables he says nothing more. They were not in any sense from God, and they did not, it was evident, further God's dispensation which is in faith. Nothing which does not do that is of any real profit in teaching. Questions of this kind might amuse and exercise the intellect, but they did

not tell upon the conscience. Of the law which some wished to teach he speaks. That came from God, and is good if used lawfully. It is like a rule which applied to anything crooked shows where it departs from the straight line; and applied to men, when unrighteous and ungodly, shows them what as responsible creatures they ought to be, and wherein they have sinned. Such is its use. It convicts and condemns men of unrighteousness and ungodliness, in a word, of whatever is against sound doctrine according to the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which Paul was put in trust.

Another revelation then had come from God— “The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ,” and, consequent on His death, and resurrection, and ascension, the gospel of the glory of God was to be preached. This met men in their need. The law could in a way, yet not fully even, prove to man his need. The gospel shows how fully that has been met, and Troves the folly of those, when it is really understood, who would be law teachers, applying the law for a purpose, and to those for whom it was not intended by God (1: 9.) The mention of the gospel recalls to Paul the grace in which he shared, a sample, a pattern of the extent of God’s long-suffering goodness. He who was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, characteristics severally true of men in the last days (2 Timothy 3:2), of the Jew in the apostles’ time (1 Thessalonians 2:15), and of the heathen world before the cross (Romans 1:30), had obtained mercy after having opposed the truth through ignorance and in unbelief, the grace of the Lord having surpassingly abounded with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. What the law could not do was affected by the gospel; and Paul, once the ardent champion of Judaism, here stands out as the fullest illustration of grace. “It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance,” he writes, “that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief;” that in him, as chief Jesus Christ might show forth the whole long-suffering for a delineation of those about to believe on Him to life everlasting. How different then are these two revelations of the mind of God, both dealing with the sinner—the former to bring out into fuller belief his sinfulness, and to condemn him; the latter to meet him as condemned that he might be saved, and that perfectly. Hence thinking of the gospel of the glory of God, which shows how fully by the atonement He has been glorified in His very nature and character, nothing could be more suited than an expression of praise— “To the King of the ages, the incorruptible, invisible, only God, be honor and glory to the ages of ages. Amen.”

Now, returning to the purpose for which he wrote this epistle, he commits the charge to Timothy, his child in the faith, who had been marked out by prophecies for this service, exhorting him by them to war a good warfare, holding faith and a good conscience. The faith he was to keep, and to maintain a good conscience as well, the effect of putting away the latter being seen in the cases of Hymenceus and Alexander, who had now made shipwreck concerning the faith, and had in consequence been delivered by Paul to Satan to learn not to blaspheme. Two points are noteworthy here: first, the importance of maintaining a good conscience, and the results that may follow its abandonment; and second, the way God can use the enemy for the profit (if such an one will learn) of the person delivered up to him. Souls once doing his behests are set free from his thralldom by the gospel (Ephesians 2:2.) Professors could be delivered up to him to learn by punishment their needed lesson. Thus, God can use him as a creature in the carrying out of His designs, he himself having no such power over one in the assembly, unless such an one is delivered up to him.

Following on this exhortation given to Timothy for the fulfillment of the service entrusted to him, we have instructions concerning the Church in general (2,3); and after that those which in an especial way would help to guide Timothy in his work at Ephesus. (4-6)

And, first, as to prayer. (2.) The gospel of the grace of God being preached, prayer was to be made for all men, and the spirit of supplication might rightly go out on behalf of rulers and all that are in authority, whatever their ways towards Christians might be, that under the shelter of their rule, government being maintained, Christians might lead a quiet' and tranquil life in all piety and gravity. But whilst this could result from prayer on behalf of rulers, no one on earth was excluded from the offer of grace.

Thus the everlasting interests of any man, whether a ruler or a subject, might form the burden of a Christian's supplication, and be well-pleasing to our Saviour God, who is willing that all men should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth; and this was evidenced by the gospel. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, the testimony to be borne in its own times, for which Paul was appointed a herald and an apostle, a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

Having stated for whom we may pray, and the reason for it, since God is not acting in favor towards one nation, but towards men, the apostle proceeds to give directions for the saints when met together for prayer. All one in Christ, the distinction of sexes is, nevertheless, to be maintained in the assembly, and each receives an appropriate word. The men were to pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without wrath, and doubting or reasoning. A spirit of that kind would be unseemly for those who were to lead the devotions of others. As to the women, the character of their attire and ways were not subjects beneath the notice of the Holy Ghost. Creation order was to be remembered, and the instruction to be drawn from it was to be put in practice. The woman was to learn in quietness with all subjection.

She was not to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in quietness ■συχ■α. "For Adam was first formed, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in transgression." What a simple way of solving the question! God's word in Genesis casts a light on it. His order of acting before the fall, and the history of the fall, both help us in this matter. So not only do these two chapters of Genesis (2,3.) acquaint us with facts of which otherwise we might not have been informed, they also furnish guidance on a point of order in the Christian assembly. But more. If God would maintain creation order on such a matter, and would have His people remember it, He would also maintain His character as a Saviour God, and here declares it. He will preserve the woman through child-bearing, her special sorrow, a consequence of the fall, if they—i.e. the man and the woman—continue in faith, and love, and holiness with sobriety.

C. E. S.

I don't know that, if anyone wanted to be to the praise of God, he could do it better than by being full of Christ. I meet some aged saints full of Christ, saying, "I've done with this world, but I have Christ. The only thing I have got to speak of is what this Christ of God is —He is All." I don't believe anything is better than that. If I look around me I see in saints —not want of intelligence, not lack of knowledge, not want of activity—but what they want is the affections full of Christ. There's plenty of oil in the machine that's full of Christ. If the heart is full of Christ, and full of joy in the Holy Ghost,

then we have got our other portion, our real portion. The early Christians were so full of Christ that all their trials, all their difficulties, sank down into nothing. Why is it not so with us? G. V. W.

## The Nazarite

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In the book of Numbers is brought out the great principle of the energy of the Spirit of God in us while passing through the wilderness. Exodus shows us redemption and relationship; Leviticus, the way of a sinner's approach to God; Numbers, priesthood in the tabernacle in the wilderness. Up to Sinai all had been grace on the part of God with the people. Here is the intercourse of God with them in the tabernacle of the congregation in the wilderness of Sinai (chap. 1: 1.) The principle of the red heifer in chapter 19 is the ground on which all the sacrifices are taken in this book—the energy of the Spirit of God in giving comfort to the soul, taking the ashes of that long ago burnt, and applying it with present efficacy to the conscience that has contracted defilement in its walk through the wilderness.

In chap. 6 we have the positive separation to God in the energy of the Holy Ghost (vs. 2)—“unto the Lord.” So, the Lord Jesus, particularly after His ascension, “For their sakes I sanctify myself,” that we, by the energy of the Spirit in us, should be separate now in the wilderness, walking in white, keeping our garments unspotted by the flesh. Again, the Lord did separate Himself that He might be about His Father's business, and for this did He separate Himself from “His mother's was” (Psalms 69:8)—the flesh, which by sin was under the power of death. He still holds the Nazarite character, because all His disciples are not yet gathered to Him; and now, in a certain sense, with us it is separation from joy—“the fruit of the vine;” we must not let the heart go. In glory it is the great spirit of rest; there will be no need to gird the heart then. Now the effect of the energy of the Spirit is to gird up the loins of our mind lest we get defiled; but in glory we shall let flow our garments, because we shall not fear defilement there. In the city of refuge the man was safe, but he could not go out or enjoy his possessions.

Verse 3: “Separate himself from wine;” that is, joy. The Lord came in character expecting to find joy among men, expecting a response to His love in the hearts of men, but found none, and so was a Nazarite from the first. To be a Nazarite is to be separated from every natural affection which can be touched by death—to be separated unto the Lord. No honey could be offered to the Lord, and now the Spirit is a new power come in detaching us from everything natural. The Lord filled with the Spirit for, service said, “Woman, what have I to do with thee?” All nature by sin has come under the power of death, so the Nazarite “shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother,” “because the consecration of his God is upon his head.” (vs. 7; see also Luke 14:26.) The Lord's tie in nature was with the Jews as Son of David; but all this He gave up as natural, for “when He putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them.” Natural affections come from God, and are therefore good in themselves; but they do not tend to God, being spent on the object. John was a Nazarite from the womb. Paul was a Nazarite and Jeremiah also. So we are Nazarites. Our own proper joy is beyond death; therefore all I give up here which savors of death is just giving up that which hinders a deepened apprehension of the joy and blessing of that life which is beyond the power of death. The Lord broke the link in the cross. “By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit.” (Isaiah 38:16.)

“All the days of his separation he is holy unto the Lord.” (vs. 8.) This is the great principle in the Nazarite—holy to God, and in however short a degree we may attain to that character, yet in Christ it is perfect. All this is a distinct thing from innocence. Adam was innocent, but not separated unto God. Separated unto God supposes a knowledge of good and evil, and yet separation from evil. Adam got the knowledge of good and evil by the fall; the Holy Ghost is come to take us out of that evil. The Spirit is a new power altogether, separating us unto Christ in glory now that evil and self-will have come in. It is a most trying thing to us to know good and evil; for by nature we are in the evil—loving the evil and hating the good. The Holy Ghost is now taking us out of the evil, and here is the pain—His energy in us keeping us from the evil while passing through a world of sin and death. We cannot be innocent now that sin has come in, but we are holy in Christ.

Verse 9: “If any man die very suddenly by him.” Death came in on everything in nature as the sign of God’s hatred of sin. The Spirit of real devotedness to God always was perfect in Christ; but it is failing in us. Wherever the old man works there is the principle of death; therefore, we get into death for the time when the old man is working. Therefore, the word to us is, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;” and again, “Ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man.” All this is solemn. Not only have we peace, but while we are passing through this scene of sin we need to be kept holy and devoted to God by the energy of the Holy Ghost in us.

Verses 9, 12. If I go back from devotedness to God, it is true the hair may grow again; but the head must be shaved close, and the time lost. It is not a question of sin here, but of loss as to the energy of life. A tree that has been much mutilated and broken down will grow up again; it was not killed, but only injured, yet its stature will not be the same as an uninjured tree. It is letting Satan mar and hinder the work of the Spirit. Sampson let his heart go into the weakness of nature, and when we let in nature our strength is gone. Sampson, as a Nazarite, was a type of the energy of the Spirit of God; he let out the secret of his strength, and it left him, and he became weak as other men. True, in due course his strength returned, and with mighty energy he lifted the foundations of the temple. If we are not careful and watchful to keep the secret of our strength in communion with God, and worldliness and sin come in, we may not be conscious of it ourselves, but the truth will appear when we rise to shake ourselves—it may be in service—and we find ourselves weak as other men, and when in our weakness, like Sampson, the devil will put out our eyes. The Lord was the true Nazarite, and He never departed in the whole course of His walk from His Nazariteship. It was not a light thing for Him to tread the path of suffering; but He prayed. In the garden, “being in, an agony, He prayed more earnestly” before the temptation came, and then we see He halted not, He could not. So should we first pass through the trial with God, then God will be with us in the trial. Peter slept and did not pray, and when the trial came he met it in the flesh, and drew his sword. Jesus had prayed that the cup might pass from Him; but when the chief priests and soldiers came, though Satan was in it all, yet He saw the hand of God, and could say, “The cup which my Father hath given me;” then it was no temptation at all, but an act of obedience.

Verse 9: “Die suddenly,” a careless thought, and communion is lost for the moment.

The offerings to be offered. All that was in Christ is presented to God (vs. 20); so we really come in the power of these sacrifices to God; but until the Church be gathered the Lord keeps His Nazarite character.

J. N. D.

## The Things Which Are

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“Write therefore what thou hast seen, and the things that are, and the things that are about to be after these. The mystery of the seven stars which thou hast seen on my right hand, and the seven golden lamps. The seven stars are angels of the seven assemblies; and the seven lamps are seven assemblies.”—Revelation 1:19,20 (New Translation.)

The Spirit of God has been pleased by one expression, “the things which are,” to mark off and separate from the already given vision of the glory of the Son of man, on the one hand, and the future purposes and ways of God with Israel and the nations, on the other hand, that remarkable delineation of the Church of God in its history on the earth which fills the two intermediate chapters; namely, 2. and 3. The fact that John, to whom this Revelation was “sent and signified,” lived in the Church period (at its beginning) as we do (at its close), shows that the term employed is applicable now as well as then.

But there is another fact we shall do well to remember—not only is the Church of God presumably depicted throughout its whole course in the chapters indicated, but first of all there is ostensibly a picture given, by characteristic moral features, of seven local assemblies in the province of Asia. And we may fittingly conclude that these churches were chosen from amongst others because their character and condition rendered necessary their respective epistles, and also made them suitable, when arranged in the consecutiveness in which we find them in the Word, to express, without necessarily indicating that they did, the continuous history of the professing body on the earth. These churches are symbolized by seven golden candlesticks in chapter 1, and the Lord is there seen in the midst of them, as Son of man in judicial aspect, attitude, and attire. Moreover, He has in His right hand seven stars, the mystery of which He Himself explains as the angels of the seven churches.

Now consistency demands that we recognize the force of the terms used equally in each of the cases. The local assembly at Pergamos, for instance, is reckoned as one of the churches as much as is Smyrna, and Laodicea as much as is Philadelphia. Positionally they are alike as to this, and each is symbolized by a golden candlestick, and the Lord is seen in chapter 1 as equally amidst them all. The varied conditions of the local assemblies come out after, and the suitably different ways in which the Lord presents Himself to each, as well as the equally dissimilar messages conveyed. But these things, it may be submitted, do not weaken or annul what is found in the first chapter, where each of the seven is termed a church by the Spirit of God, and is addressed in its responsibility as such, being the assembly of God where it was. Each has its angel symbolized by a star, a heavenly thing of divine creation, and each of these is borne on the Lord’s right hand. And if consistency requires the recognition of this principle as to the seven local assemblies which the Lord had chosen to address, it equally demands its application to the seven in their prophetic or historic character. That is to say, the principle is as sound and as suitable when applied to the differing and successive phases of the professing body, as its history unfolds down to the end, as when applied to Asiatic assemblies locally existent in closing apostolic days.

Further, the same consistency requires that whatever was true in its characteristic and salient features as a real and substantive thing of the local assembly, equally obtains as such in that which it represents in the historical series. And if these local assemblies were undeniably churches of God, in reality as well as in responsibility, and were so addressed, in like manner the prophetic or historic church is, in reality as well as in responsibility, the Church of God all throughout, and so addressed.

We can scarcely fail to see in the angels the bearers of divine light (whether one or many in each case), conveying His mind and will from the Lord, the Head of the Church, to that which stands as His responsible witness on the earth. In this they are upheld by Him upon His own right hand; but in their failure (Philadelphia a bright exception) they become identified with the moral condition of their respective assemblies, and for this are held accountable to Him, whether as having formed that which He condemns, or having been formed by it. Too deeply grieved to address her personally, as similarly with Israel in the day of her deep declension, He communicates His message through the angel, whom, however, alas! He finds so practically identified with them to whom he is sent, rather, than with Himself, whose messenger he is, that he is personally exposed to all the reproof which these words of his mouth ought to have conveyed only to them.

Applying then these principles, we have (1) Ephesus—declension from first love; (2) Smyrna—persecution; (3) Pergamos—alliance with the world; all illustrated with exactitude in the condition and experience of three local assemblies, setting forth that which took place historically in the early centuries of the Christian era, and precisely in this consecutive order, as everyone knows. Agreeably with what is not unusual, but may be said to be the rule in Scripture, the seven is divided; here into three and four, as in other cases into four and three. The last four churches present aspects or phases of the assembly which arose as distinctly in the consecutive order in which they are presented as did the former three; but while the first of the seven lost itself in the second, the second in the third, and the third in the fourth, and cannot be traced as running on concurrently (though wherever you find decline of first love, it is Ephesus; wherever persecution, it is Smyrna; and wherever alliance with the world, it is Pergamos), these remaining four, while arising in consecutive order, and each characteristic in its features of an epoch in the Church's history, yet do not terminate in anything which immediately succeeds, but have a common terminus. They have thus a remarkably additional character, significance, and value, which 'it is well we should tenaciously grasp; for while we have no less than in the preceding three their historical features consecutively presented, we have this further—a fourfold view of the spiritual character of the whole ecclesiastical state of things now existing. Nor can it fairly be alleged that this interpretation of the last four churches is in any way inconsistent with what has been advanced respecting the former three. From the first to the seventh each arises in succession; thus the consecutive order obtains throughout. The only difference in the last four is that instead of each overlapping its successor for a while, and then merging into it, its distinct character continues alongside of the other three, and they collaterally descend to the close of church testimony. A difference to this extent falsifies no principle of interpretation, and is more than warranted by the fact that the division of the last four from the first three has been divinely made; for while in the first three the call to hear is given to the whole assembly, in the last four it comes after the promise, and thus appears to be restricted to the overcomers. And again, the last four are respectively warned or comforted, as the case may be, by the return of the Lord, and this is not found in the

first three. Hence the Spirit of God requires, by these two considerations, that we should recognize a measure of difference between the three and four, without calling, however, for any departure from that principle of interpretation which holds good throughout.

Thus therefore (1) in the seven Asiatic churches we have what is local. (2) In the order in which they are consecutively presented, from the first to the last, we have a full-length picture of the whole history of the Church as God's witness on earth, as each successive phase arose one after the other, which is the historical. And (3) in the last four, arising as consecutively as the other, but differing in this, that they simultaneously exist and run on in parallel lines to the end, we have a spiritual projection of the whole Church, as now existing in its leading features, together presenting it in its entirety. These four we may distinguish as follows: (1) Sacerdotalism or priestly domination, embracing all its phases and wherever they are found, whether in the mother of harlots or her many daughters, which, rampant in the middle ages, has her votaries as numerous as ever, and her principles of haughty intolerance unchanged, speaking lies in hypocrisy, and the conscience seared as with a hot iron. (2) Evangelical orthodoxy, which, priding itself on having escaped Roman priest-craft and heresy, holds jealously to a form of godliness but denies its power, having a name to live while dead. (3) A testimony to Christ and His word outside of organized human religiousness, characterized by separation from evil, and adhesion to the interests of Christ, and to the glory of His person, but despicable in the eyes and insupportable to the tastes of believers generally. (4) A self-glorious latitudinarianism, brooking no restraint, and confined within no bounds, embracing every form of loose principles and neutrality, and that skepticism and radicalism which, whether found in Broad Church, Dissent, or Neology, turns away its ears from the truth, and is turned unto fables, Christ being practically without rather than within.

Surely none can deny that these four things are, whether depicted in the four churches or not, contemporaneous in our day. And while we cannot doubt that every really divine element in Laodicea will sooner or later respond to the Lord's appeal, and doing so will experience His delivering grace from thence before the rapture, so that when the judgment begins it will be only a mass of false and proud pretentiousness, yet would not the saying that every believer now is a Philadelphian, and that every Laodicean, including the angel of that assembly, is now unconverted, be to efface the true character of this Scripture, and thus rob us of its special value in this day? None would affirm that Laodicea as a local church, which Paul (Colossians 2:1, and 4:16), John, and the Lord Himself, each had to do with ministerially, was not an assembly of the saints in that place, however great their declension or low their spiritual state. How then, without doing violence to sound principles of interpretation, can what is said to a converted angel, to be communicated to a saved company be taken to represent only a phase or epoch of the professing body when Godless and Christless, not even allowing for any individual faith and reality? That she sets forth the lowest and most demoralized condition that could be ecclesiastically expressed, and that the mass is utterly corrupt and obnoxious to Christ, to be vomited from His mouth when judgment begins at the house of God, is as undeniable as it is solemn; and that this last phase of the historical church, if we may so speak, will doubtless subsist as a shell without its kernel after all the redeemed are caught up to be forever with the Lord, presents no difficulty. But can it be soberly affirmed, that neither angel nor saint of the local Asiatic assembly was converted? and if not, where is the analogy we should expect? And is it not incompatible with scriptural precedent, that the Lord Jesus should address the Godless and the Christless in His character as the faithful

and true Witness, with the words: "As many as I love I rebuke and chasten; be zealous therefore and repent?" Surely if living in the present epoch or period of church history constitutes us Philadelphians per se, then the force of the epistle to Philadelphia, in its precious comfort and in its soul-searching and heart-exercising character, vanishes; for we impute to the Lord that closing His eyes to declension and incipient apostasy He addresses His whole assembly on earth in terms of distinct commendation without one word of censure or rebuke! And further, if we either make Laodicea to be the world or relegate it to a post-rapture period, we equally make Philadelphia to be the whole Church in its present character, and thus, denying that it has utterly failed (as everything else committed to man's responsibility), are in no little danger of self-exaltation in priding ourselves that Roman Catholicism has given place to Protestantism, and Protestantism has been eclipsed in its meridian height by a higher and brighter testimony still, constituting the culmination of the Church!

In an equal degree these conflicting interpretations involve the anomaly that the Lord addresses as a Christian assembly that which has no title to be so addressed; for they alike deny to it any element whatever of a divine character. The relegation, too, of Laodicea to a post-rapture epoch has the further anomaly of an ecclesiastical thing (owned as such by the Lord Himself) arising after the Church period has altogether closed, and, what is more, included nevertheless in "the things which are." How much more simple and consistent is the thought, that though Laodicea after the rapture may swallow up all that is left upon the earth that is prostituting the Christian name, and continue too its arrogant vaunts and ecclesiastical pretensions to be at length engulfed in Babylon, yet its recognition in the eyes of God in a Church character finally ceases when the body of Christ passes into the glory, just as in a kindred way "the powers that be" will continue unchecked, though no longer then entitled to claim that they are "ordained of God."

I only add that we are told, on the one hand, that the overcomer is nothing special, being simply a believer; and, on the other, that it is everything (as it surely is, to stand for the Lord in an evil day against prevailing declension and approaching apostasy) to be this overcomer; but if to be an overcomer in Philadelphia is simply not to let slip a testimony which is so generally and widely characteristic as to embrace all believers in this period of the Church's history, the overcoming by either of these interpretations is attenuated to a degree that practically disposes of it. The Lord give us to be overcomers in His own sense of the word, and to hold fast what we have in these Scriptures-incomparable in their character and significance in these closing days, taking good heed that no man take our crown. W. R.

## A Neighbor unto Me

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Some have hastily concluded, in reading the parable of the good Samaritan, that the Lord answered the question, "Who is my neighbor?" by pointing out that wherever there is need we should do our duty towards our neighbor. But it should be observed that the man who fell among thieves is not mentioned as a neighbor towards whom the other acts, but the Samaritan was neighbor unto him. This is another principle of acting altogether to what was in the lawyer's mind when he said, "Who is my neighbor?" and stands out in contrast with it, because the lawyer merely wished to justify himself; i.e. to have clearly defined those who had any claim upon him, that he might have no outstanding debts. We know for ourselves the satisfaction in being able to say, "I owe nothing." Thus, what prompted that question was really love to himself, and not love to his neighbor. Where love is in exercise, it asks not Who? but has its own delight in acting apart from the question of who deserves it. And this is the principle of grace which is here shown out in contrast to the principle of law, which was the fulfilling of duty towards one's neighbor. The one is meeting claim, the other is meeting need apart from the question of claim altogether.

And this is why the term "Samaritan" is employed, to present one on whom there was no claim; "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans;" so that the Samaritan acts from himself, and not from any claim the other had on him. And this brings out what the gospel of the grace of God is. It is not the fulfilling of claim or promise, but the acting out of God's love to the lost. There were no promises to Adam, and a sinner has no claims upon God. Forgetfulness of this often keeps souls from having the blessing of the gospel; they will not have it for nothing. If they can establish some claim, whether by their prayers or religious observances, they would like it better. Why? Because this would be to give them some importance but to be of no importance at all is humbling to the pride of man. It was this that kept the Syrophenician woman from the blessing at first. She pleaded the promises in saying, "Thou Son of David," and was thus putting in a claim on Him, when she had none, as a woman of Canaan. She was taking the children's (Jew's) place when she was only a dog, and so the Lord says, "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs." Then she says, "Truth, Lord." She relinquishes all claim upon Him, and takes the place of deserving nothing; but there she gets everything. "Yet," she says, "the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." The "yet" shows she had resources, though not now in the promises or in herself in anywise, but in Him and the love that brought Him down to meet the need of the lost. This was faith in Him, which He at once owns; for although He must deny her false claim, "He cannot deny Himself."

The Lord would willingly have been a neighbor unto the lawyer, and uses the law to produce a knowledge of his need; for the law is not a way of getting righteousness, as the lawyer was using it, but "by" it "is the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20), and this is how God uses the law. The Lord still further says, "Go and do thou likewise;" still that the man might know his deceitful heart, that such a principle of acting, i.e. in mercy, was foreign to his nature altogether, and that thus he might learn his need. We find the Lord always deals with souls according to their state; to a soul with felt need He would never say, "Go and do thou likewise;" or, "Strive to enter in at the strait gate;" as

He says to another, who was merely inquisitive, and not needy.

One in writing on the parable briefly but forcibly marks the point of its teaching in these words: "It is the principle of grace in dealing as a neighbor, instead of the claim of God towards a neighbor."

W. T. M.

## The House of God – Part 1

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Many questions having been addressed to us concerning the formation, limits, and so forth, of the house of God, we propose, if the Lord will, to trace out the subject, in two or three successive papers, from the word of God. There is really no difficulty, if our minds are but subject to the Scriptures, and our hope is that some at least may be helped to a clearer understanding of the question by a dispassionate presentation of the teaching of the Spirit of God.

It is evident to every reader of the Bible that God did not, in any sense, dwell on earth before the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. He visited Adam in paradise, and walked in the garden in the cool of the day (Genesis 3:8); He appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and communicated freely with them. In like manner He revealed Himself to Moses in the desert, at the mount of God, when He commissioned him to return to Egypt as the deliverer of His people; but search the record as closely as you may, not a trace is found so far of His having a habitation on the earth. But after the redemption from Egypt the Lord said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering .... And let them build me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:1,8.)

The thought of dwelling in the midst of His people came thus first from God Himself. And this is in harmony with His own purposes of grace in redemption. We read that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ "hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." (Ephesians 1:3,4.) In that past eternity God dwelt in the perfection of His own bliss; but in the fullness of His grace and love He purposed to surround Himself with a redeemed people that should be for His own joy, and for the glory of His beloved Son—a people who should find their joy in the presence of Him who had redeemed them, and redeemed them at the infinite cost of the death of His only begotten Son. This purpose was first declared, in its germ at least, in Eden, on the failure of Adam as the responsible man. Consequent upon His sin and judgment God announced the Man of His counsels, the One in and by whom all the purposes of His heart were to be accomplished, in the redemption of those who were to be conformed to the image of His Son that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29,30.) Gradually His purposes were unfolded in types and shadows, in His ways with Abel, Enoch, Noah, and the patriarchs, and finally in the deliverance of the children of Israel, on the ground of the sprinkled blood of the Passover lamb, out of Egypt, and from the claims and power of Satan, as well as from death and judgment, as set forth in their passage through the Red Sea. Henceforward they were a redeemed people. The Lord had become their strength and song, and their salvation. In His mercy He had led forth the people which He had redeemed; He had guided them in His strength unto His holy habitation. (See Exodus 15)

Having now chosen and redeemed a people for Himself, the Lord announces, as we have shown, His desire to come and dwell among them. And it will be seen in due time that His taking up His abode in the midst of Israel, while it indicated the whole truth of redemption, was but a shadow of the fulfillment of His entire counsels of grace in eternity; that, in a word, the encampment in the

wilderness was but an anticipation of the time when, after the appearance of the new heaven and the new earth, the tabernacle of God (the Church, the holy city, new Jerusalem, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband—the Lamb's wife) shall be with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God. (Revelation 21) The erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness was the response to the Lord's command to Moses. The people offered willingly; for the Lord had stirred up their hearts, and the tabernacle was made in all things according to the pattern which had been shown to Moses in the mount, even as the Lord had commanded him. (See Exodus 40)

There are two things especially to be considered. The first is the ground on which God took up His abode in the midst of His people. This is made very clear from Exodus 29, after the directions had been given for the construction of those sacred vessels and the furniture which set forth in type and figure some display or manifestation of God, and after the consecration of the priests who were to act for God in ministry on behalf of the people, and before the directions are given for the vessels of approach—those vessels which were necessary for drawing near to God—there is a break, a parenthesis. And this is occupied with an instruction concerning the continual burnt-offering. Thereon it is added, "The tabernacle shall be sanctified by my glory. And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them: I am the Lord their God." (vss. 38-46.)

This account shows three things most clearly. First, that the ground on which Jehovah was able to dwell with His people was the perpetual ascension of the fragrance of Christ as the burnt-offering. Typically, the children of Israel had been redeemed, and now in virtue of the continual burnt-offering they stood before God in all the acceptance of Christ. Hence Jehovah could dwell in their midst. Secondly, as a further consequence, the tabernacle was sanctified by His glory—the tabernacle, the altar, and the priests alike were claimed in virtue of the same sacrifice, and set apart to God according to all that He was as revealed—the claims of His glory having now been met, that glory became also from that moment the standard for everything devoted to His service. Thirdly, the people should know the One who dwells in their midst as the One who had brought them out of Egypt, as, in fact, the God of redemption. If these three points are comprehended, the whole truth of God's habitation on earth, in any age or dispensation, will be understood. It will be then seen that, while a consequence of redemption, it is dependent upon what Christ is in the efficacy of His death, and upon what God is as so revealed.

The second thing to be noted is the actual taking possession of the tabernacle when completed. Moses "finished the work," and eight times it is recorded that all was done as the Lord had commanded him. Jehovah's approbation was now expressed in another way; for, together with the statement that Moses finished the work, it is added, "Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. And Moses was not able to enter into the tent of the congregation, because the cloud abode thereon, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle." (Exodus 40:34,35) God thus took possession of the house which had been built according to His word, and henceforward dwells in the midst of His people, and was known as dwelling between the cherubims (1 Samuel 4:4; Psalms 80:1, and so forth.); i.e. between the cherubim on either end of the mercy-seat. The mercy-seat was His throne, the throne on which He

sat, whence He governed His people, and from whence He dispensed mercy according to the efficacy of the incense and the blood of the sacrifices that were presented before Him on the great day of atonement. (See Leviticus 16)

It should be most distinctly observed that the tabernacle, and not the congregation of Israel, formed the house of God in the wilderness. To lose this distinction would be to confuse the typical teaching of the whole encampment of Israel, as already pointed out in relation to Revelation 21. The people, as such, were not permitted to enter into the tabernacle; God met with them at its entrance. (Exodus 29:42-44.) Moses alone had access at all times (the high priest only once a year) to the mercy-seat (Exodus 25:22), and this in his capacity as mediator, and as such a type of Christ. It is most important to bear these distinctions in mind. At the same time, it is equally of moment to remark that all the people—all the people with their families; all, in a word, who were on the ground of redemption (typically)—were grouped around the tabernacle. God was in their midst, and all the people had been brought into a known relationship with Himself as their Redeemer, all alike could enjoy the privileges of the priesthood which had been instituted on their behalf, and all could approach the brazen altar in the appointed way, and with the appointed sacrifices. It was the only spot on the earth where the Lord had His sanctuary; and as we remember all that this involved, we may understand a little of this place of blessing into which the children of Israel had been brought. Whether they themselves apprehended or enjoyed it is not the question. There were, as we know, stubborn and ungodly souls among them; still, the character of the place remained unchanged. God was in their midst, and on this account, because of what He was in Himself, and because He had opened up a way into His own presence, the camp of Israel was such a place of blessing as was found nowhere else upon the face of the earth. It was therefore no mean privilege to be found numbered with those who surrounded the tabernacle.

But if, on the one hand, it was a place of blessing, it was most surely, on the other, a place of responsibility. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they put out of the camp every leper, and every one that hath an issue, and whosoever is defiled by the dead: both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell." (Numbers 5:1-3.) Again, "I am the Lord your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy." (Leviticus 11:44.) In one word, as these scriptures show, holiness, and holiness according to the nature of the One who dwelt in their midst, was incumbent upon every Israelite who surrounded the tabernacle. Jehovah, as revealed, was the standard for the whole camp (compare 1 John 2:6), for every individual, whatever his state, who formed part of it. Being numbered with God's people was to be brought therefore into a place both of blessing and of responsibility: Into the typical significance of the sanctuary in the midst of Israel we do not propose to enter.

It will suffice to point out here that as its primary idea was God's habitation, so every part of it, together with all its sacred vessels and furniture, was fraught with some manifestation of God and of His glories as hereafter displayed in Christ. This was of necessity on two grounds; first, because it was a pattern of things shown to Moses in the mount, and therefore a revelation of heavenly scenes; and because also it told in every part—boards, curtains, ornaments, hangings, and vessels—of the glories of Christ, inasmuch as He Himself in a later day took the place of the temple of God. (See John 2:19-21.) But it may be added, that the more thoroughly God's thoughts concerning His habitation in the midst of Israel are understood, the more fully will the character of

the Church as God's house be comprehended. E. D.

## Earnest Expectation

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“Behold, a King shall reign in righteousness.” (Isaiah) 32:1.

All creation groans for Thee,  
Travailing with penalty,  
Toiling on with ancient moan,  
Eden’s agonizing groan;  
Throbbing, throbbing, thrilled with pain,  
Longing for Thy kingly reign:  
Her bonds to break from thralldom free,  
With songs and shouts of jubilee,  
At large in “glorious liberty.”  
Lord of that deliverance-morn,  
When creation newly born,  
Lumined by Thy cross and crown,  
Wakes translated to renown;  
Purged from thorns that pierced Thy head,  
Purged by witness from the dead.  
The curse no more, nor penal rod,  
Thy power displays the sons of God,  
And frees creation by Thy blood.  
King of glory, Jesus, now,  
Soon of all creation, Thou  
Earth’s dominion won by Thee,  
Saviour—God in unity!  
Once in groan and travail here,  
Soon from glory to appear;  
Once in sacrifice for sin,

Soon creation back to win;  
Once below amongst the dead,  
Soon to reign creation's Head;  
Lord of life and glory Thou,  
Every knee to Thee shall bow:  
Heaven and earth with rapture ringing,  
Homage through the ages bringing,  
All creation resting, singing!

C. F. C.

#### The First Epistle to Timothy

From this question of order in a prayer-meeting the apostle passes on to that of office-bearers in the assembly. (3.) There were such duly appointed in apostolic days. There may be persons fitted for that work still. If any one desired to “exercise oversight, he desired a good work. Now since the assembly, and the regulations connected with it, were peculiar to Christianity, directions were needed for the instruction of the saints about this. And since the preaching of grace did not set the world right, nor was intended to do that, it was requisite in the existing state of things to describe the qualifications suited for those who should be elders or deacons. This Paul here sketches out. In apostolic times more than one bishop was met with in the assembly. It was so at Ephesus. (Acts 20:17,28.) It was the case at Philippi. (Philippians 1:1.) It was the same at Jerusalem. (James 5:14.) What were requisites for an elder or bishop—for the office is the same—we learn about in verses 2-7; and those needful for one doing deacon's work in verses 8-13; coupled, as in the case of the latter, with instructions about their wives. For certainly the order of the subjects here treated of seems to fix the reference to the women (11, 12) (since it is introduced in the middle of the instructions about the deacons) to the wives of the last-named office-bearers. Titus was commissioned to ordain elders. Timothy, as far as we know, was not. But the qualifications needful for one who would fill either of these offices being set forth in this epistle, we learn, as Timothy might, what manner of persons were fitted to fill them. So when we meet with anyone willing to undertake such service, and who possesses the requisite qualifications, room should be allowed him thus to labor for the good of all. The wisdom manifested in putting such instruction on record is apparent; and though none have the authority to ordain elders now, this chapter is of real value, and a help to all who would have the assembly ordered in accordance with the mind of God. One qualification common to both these offices we would just notice, for the rest need no comment. Both the bishop and the deacon were to be the husband of one wife, μι■ς, γυναικος ■νδρα. This does not mean one who has never remarried. The regulation is directed against polygamy, allowed by the law (Deut. 21:15), and practiced by the heathen. Christianity forbids the practice of it, taking us back in this, as in other things, to creation order; but it does not enjoin, on the polygamist, when converted, the putting away of his wives. How God in His compassion cares for the woman! The polygamist, however, was disqualified as such from being an office—bearer in the Church of God. The burden of such a state of things was thus placed by God on the shoulders of

the right person—the man, not the woman.

What an interest does God take in the assembly to give such minute directions about its orderly walk and internal arrangements! And no wonder when we learn what it is—the house of God, the assembly of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (vs. 15.)

It is His house, so He gives commandments about it; it is His assembly, called out to own Him the living God in opposition to idols; it is the pillar of the truth, so should uphold and exhibit it; it is the foundation, the base on which alone the truth can find a resting-place on earth. Thus we learn something of the inward character and outward service of the Church. But it is not the truth, nor does it teach it, though it upholds it; yet the truth has been manifested, and the mystery, or secret, of piety has been disclosed, and that in a person. “Without controversy,” or, “confessedly, great is the mystery of piety, who was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” (vs. 16.)

Now this was to be maintained by the assembly, and the need for this would appear, when in accordance with the Spirit’s prophetic utterance some in latter times would “apostatize from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received-with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.” Demons trading on man’s consciousness of defilement would suggest as the remedy abstinence from meats and marriage, the things which God has provided for His creature’s welfare, thus making God the author of man’s lack of piety. Man’s lack of it is evident; but the mystery, or secret of it, God, not demons, has disclosed, and in the incarnate One has displayed. He who is the life of His saints, and is in them, is the mystery of it; and in proportion as He is really their example, true piety will be developed in each one. Nothing that God has provided for His creature is defiling. Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer; i.e. by God’s grant to Noah (Genesis 9:3,4), and by the recipient’s thanksgiving. Nothing can be conceived more devilish than such doctrine as the apostle here combats, and the source of which he unmasks—men made the mouthpiece of demons (for the demons are represented in the passage as speaking the lies) to inject into the mind such thoughts of God. Putting the brethren in mind of these things, Timothy would be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished up in the words of faith and of the good doctrine (the opposite of demoniacal teaching) which he had followed.

(To be continued, D. V.) C. E. S.

The moment the will is broken, bearing with patience everything I come across, then joy is unhindered.

Not only have I all I want, but I am all I need to be in Christ.

All that Christ is, and all that Christ has done, is mine in Him.

Had I to perform the smallest act, as that through which I needed to get completeness before God, it would be a denial of the perfectness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## Liberality of Heart

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In Numbers 6 we have had the Nazarite, entire separation from evil, a separation more of constraint, and therefore in one sense painful; but in chapter 7 another principle is brought out—voluntary devotedness to God, called liberality of heart. Blessings were to be “on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren” (Genesis 49:26). At the close of chapter 6 we see divine blessing on his head. In Leviticus 9:23-24, there is priestly blessing following upon the offering of the sacrifice, and now, by virtue of the sacrifice, the Priest is lifting up His hands to bless, only, as Aaron, He can now bless in heavenly joy. As Melchizedek, it will be earthly joy and blessing; but He is not yet come out; but the ground of blessing being laid, the Church has it now in Spirit. When the Lord ascended, He lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples (Luke 24:50-51). “On this wise YE shall bless them” (Numbers 6:23). It is by virtue of the priestly office of Christ, blessing them, keeping them, making Jehovah’s face to shine upon them, “they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.” All that comes to the Church in blessing is from the Lordship of Christ; but the blessing that comes to the children is from the Father, on whom the name of the Father has been put, and blessing must follow. Thus we have priestly blessing after the Nazarite, and then voluntary sacrifice.

This book shows us service, not merely doing certain things, but a voluntary offering up of oneself – a living sacrifice. Prince, in verse 2 of our chapter, means liberality. “My people shall be willing” (Psalms 110). “Willing” and “liberal” are the same word. So in the Song of Solomon 4:12, “the chariots of Ammi-nadib,” meaning a princely, willing people. Again, in 2 Corinthians 8:5, Gentiles had been made willing — “They gave themselves first to the Lord.” Recognized and owned of the Lord, then comes the generosity. Grace wrought it in them, and God calls it their own voluntary will — “The liberal heart deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand,” “every man according as he purposeth in his heart” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

“Take it of them” (vs. 5). The Spirit of God suggests to them just what is wanted, and as it is what is in every man’s heart, there is entire community with individual privilege. There is the privilege of taking ordinary and common things, and offering them to the Lord for “the service of the tabernacle.” These wagons and oxen were given to the sons of Gershon and Merari. Theirs was the most showy and outward service, but was less intimate with God, and therefore had less real honor. Our uncomely parts have more abundant honor. Kohath had to carry on their shoulders. There might be less appearance of service; but we esteem most what we carry on our shoulders. External gift begets external honor. If God has called us to Gershon service, do it well. One priest was as near God as another, there is no difference in priesthood; but in service God giveth to every man severally as He will, and, whatever the liberality, it is just what the Lord wants.

Then, verse 10, came offerings for the altar. National liberality by individual spirituality – “Each prince on his day.” Here again is the individual energy of the Spirit. The Lord said to Moses, “They shall offer” (vs. 11), not, “Take it of them.” Now they come near; the gift is dedicated on the altar. It

is the altar that gives the offering its value. "Christ, through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." Our outward service, the dedication of our lives, is thus identified with this one offering of Christ. What is thus brought to God, done in faith, offered to God Himself, is a savor of a sweet smell unto God. When the altar is finally dedicated, there is a perfect result, the twelve princes have willingly offered; so when the Church is presented to God, it is, so to speak, a perfect weight offered; and, so far as we are led of the Spirit, the result is perfect; but when flesh comes in there is disorder.

In Numbers 6, we have seen, it was priestly blessing for their need; now, in Numbers 7:89, it is "to speak with Him in the tabernacle," within, not on Sinai. God has now intercourse through Moses with a willing people, on the mercy-seat. It is there we get the communion of the mind of God according to the perfect righteousness of God in Christ. What blessed intimacy! He hears a voice in the place of grace in the tabernacle. The tabernacle began on the ruins of the law without the camp, and the Lord spake unto Moses face to face. For us it is written, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things," and, "The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life." J. N. D.

## God and the Witnesses Chosen of Him

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There is (as I judge) in the word of God a revelation of Himself and of His counsels, made to us who are called out to be one in Christ above; and there is likewise an unfolding of His mind and of His ways in blessing to others with whom He walked below. There are also various relations in which He has been pleased to declare Himself in connection with His heavenly and earthly people at different epochs, and to be fulfilled in and with Jesus Christ the Lord. The latter of these great subjects is the present theme, and this was made known in the Old Testament days by types and promises and prophecies, which pointed to and waited “till the fullness of the time was come for God to send forth His Son,” made of a woman, and made under the law, in order that the heirs of promise “might receive the adoption of sons” at “the season appointed of the Father.”

The complete revelation of God and of His glory in and through Christ, as the last Adam and the second Man, is the most wonderful of all the marvelous records in the Bible, and is in fact to faith the very “word of God.” Indeed, from its own nature it embraces the Person, and work, and relations, and offices, and glories of Christ from first to last, “as the Alpha and the Omega,” and overtops everything else, though all besides be connected with Himself, and with His wisdom and power in the final application and display.

In the unfolding of these relations, and of this revelation by the Spirit, there must needs be “sundry times” in which God spoke to the fathers by the prophets, and “divers manners” in which He acted for their fulfillment. Moreover, there were varying ministries—such as mediation by Moses, or sacrifices and priesthood by Aaron; so that Jehovah might dwell amongst His Israel as a nation on the ground of their redemption by blood as well as their deliverance by power out of Egypt. Beside these intermediate ministers, and their respective ministrations, there were likewise figures “of things in the heavens,” given out in the Pentateuch, with the injunction to Moses, “See thou make all things according to what was shown thee on the mount.” It is marvelous thus to see how God transferred the thoughts and purposes of His own mind through Moses, and then by Bezaleel, into forms and patterns which were constructed in shittim-wood, and colors, and pure gold, that the people might be lifted up, by means of these things with which they were familiar, to the perception of “the secret things of God,” with which they were unacquainted. Christ was in this way foreshadowed, as also the anointing by the Holy Ghost, in all that the veils and the curtains of the tabernacle enshrined, with the cherubims of glory upon the mercy-seat in the holiest of all during the journeyings and the encampments of the children of Israel. Other and precious lessons were taught them of the meaning and value of these vessels of the sanctuary, as they saw the candlestick and the table of shewbread with their coverings, and so forth, committed to the care of the sons of Aaron, and preceded by the ark of the covenant of the Lord “which went before to search out a resting-place for them.” What must those have thought and felt who followed this symbolical, but divine, guidance through the wilderness, and understood the meaning of these sacred deposits for the encouragement of faith—those most of all whose eyes were opened, and could look afar off through these signs to the Person and work signified? Nor was this enough; for God had not only typical things by which to unfold His mind, but He always had a pattern man

upon the earth who answered to the revelation He pleased to make of Himself at any given time for His own wisdom and glory, as well as of the relation into which man was brought thereby before God as the object of His grace.

For example, as the Creator of the heavens and the earth He formed the creature Adam “in His own image,” and placed him in the midst where all was good and untainted. Also as Saviour, God in the world that now is, He brought Noah out of the ark under the savor of the “sweet-smelling sacrifice,” by which He established a covenant with every living thing, and left an abiding token by the bow in the cloud that He would no more destroy the earth by a flood. Again, as God Almighty, He appeared to Abraham, whom He called out of the world when “righteousness by faith” was the new principle adopted for a walk with Him as “the friend of God;” and even as regards ourselves, He made him the head of the family of faith, and “the father of us all.” Nor can Joseph be overlooked as closing up the line of the Patriarchs, whether as the object of his father’s love, or as the rightful wearer of the mysterious “coat of many colors.” In all these presentations, and in many others—whether in his own country or in Egypt—he stands before us as the living expression and interpreter of the mind of God. Moreover, “the birthright and the blessing belong to Joseph,” and the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush crowned him.

If we leave the book of Genesis for Exodus, who has not lingered over the Hebrew servant that refused to go out free, but so loved his master, and his wife, and his children, as willingly to become a servant forever, submitting his ear as the obedient One to the awl and the door-post? In a book of service and devotedness as Exodus is, how perfect, and in keeping with the mind of God, is this pattern of the elect servant Son! In Leviticus too, where worship is the subject, the priest and the leper in his leprosy are the prominent picture. But the leper, though defiled in nature, and witnessed to publicly by the covering on the upper lip, and the cry of “unclean, unclean,” can approach God as a worshipper unchallenged, and take his place in the congregation of Israel when the priest has pronounced him clean, and he has offered for his cleansing what was appointed for his acceptance by the law of Moses.

So, in Numbers, where a walk with God in the wilderness journey is the theme, who does not recall “the law of the Nazarite in his vow of separation to Jehovah” to eat nothing that is made of the vine tree, from the kernel to the husk, and to come at no dead body? In the same correspondence with the onward ways of God, we find in the book of Deuteronomy, when “the Israelite had crossed over Jordan, and took his stand as an heir of Canaan,” he was to fill a basket of first-fruits with the produce of the land, in right of possession, and go unto the priest, who was to set it down “before the altar of the Lord his God,” and say, “A Syrian ready to perish was my father.” In the book of Joshua also, where the holy wars of the twelve tribes against the thirty and one kings of Canaan are recorded, the leader and commander of the Lord’s host comes into distinguished prominence at the city of Jericho with his drawn sword in his hand; for the set time was come for “the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth” to take possession of the promised land. Nor was this all; for “the witnesses” in this book of Joshua must needs correspond to the immensity of the title of “the God of the whole earth,” who is passing through Canaan with His people Israel. Therefore, by the might of His power Jordan fled from before Him, and in the sovereignty of his grace the faith of Rahab drew her by the secret of the scarlet line to rest under “the shelter and blessing of the ark of the covenant of the Lord.” At the blast of the priests’ trumpets, and the shout of His people, the walls of Jericho fall down flat; and in the confederacy of

Adonizedec in Jerusalem the battle was the Lord's, like that at the Red Sea under Moses, till all the enemies were slain. Yea, the Lord cast down great stones from above; for He it was "who fought for Israel," for they were His witnesses.

But our main point is to show that, whatever "the sundry times and divers manners" may be, God has always formed someone upon earth to answer to the particular revelation He makes of Himself. Nor does Joshua come behind this correspondence in his day; for if it be as "the God of the whole earth" that He proclaims Himself, and as "the King of Jeshurun who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky," this man of faith and power under the "captain of the Lord's host" commands (in His name) even the sun and the moon at noonday to stand still upon Gibeon and Ajalon, and they obey him. In the records of Israel there was no day like that before it or after it that the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man; and Joshua said unto the captains of the men of war, "Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings; and they came, and put their feet upon the necks of them."

Nor is this "purpose of God" concerning the revelation He makes of His mind, and the relation of "the man of faith" thereto, compromised by Israel's declension and fall as related in the times of the judges. On the contrary, Jehovah's faithfulness to His people rises up into its own height of sovereign grace, as their unfaithfulness towards Him sinks them deeper by departure into the wretchedness and oppression which they reaped. In proof of His unchanging goodness, what words can be more touching than these, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel?" And if at such an hour the energy of manly faith is feeble in Barak as a deliverer, God can take up the weaker vessel (as He has often done since), and put courage into the heart of Deborah to press onward for the day of victory—yea, qualify her to become "a mother in Israel." Precious is her song of triumph when she and the son of Abinoam take the place of Moses and Miriam, and say, "Praise ye the Lord for the avenging of Israel, when the people willingly offered themselves. Hear, O ye kings; give ear, O ye princes, I, even I, will sing unto the Lord." These notes and their composition may be different (as indeed they should be) from the song at the Red Sea; but each is beautiful in the sundry times and divers manners of Jehovah.

It may be too that this song of Deborah and Barak to the Lord "for the avenging of Israel" reached the ears of others who were waiting for this hour of consolation to come in from above. In this light it is interesting to observe that at this period "Naomi heard in the country of Moab how that the Lord had visited His people in giving them bread." This drew her forth, and her two daughters-in-law to return into the land of Judah, which introduces the book of Ruth to us as the fitting answer to "the mother in Israel" who perfects herself in this relation by her daughter Naomi, and her granddaughter Ruth. She (like another Rahab) shines in her own light by "coming to trust under the wings of the God of Israel." These two weaker vessels—Deborah and Ruth, or the mother and daughter—serve in the hand of God to bring out into this picture of faith, "the mighty man of wealth of the family of Elimelech too, whose name was Boaz." Thus they distinguish him, in their turn, as the fit and proper answer to the mind and ways of God in the midst of the darkness and misery of Israel "to do worthily in Ephratah, and be famous in Bethlehem."

Again, a covenant God "puts a son" into the house, as He did when He gave Isaac to Abraham and Sarah as the child of promise. He acts above and beyond all the ruin and wretchedness around, and turns the darkness of night into the brightness of the morning. Who has not, and does

not to this day, read the book of Ruth in the light of the sovereign grace and purpose of Jehovah to bless His people, and bring in His own glory? Isaac “received back again from the dead” was the appointed son and heir for the promises of prosperity and peace “to be made sure” by resurrection finally in Immanuel’s land. And now in its turn the kingdom is to come forward in king David, as the son born to Naomi, and the distinguished monarch of the throne and scepter of Israel. “And the women, the neighbors of Ruth, called her son’s name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David.”

All these witnesses—from Abraham, the friend of God, and the head of covenanted blessing, or the patriarchs with their magnificent promises handed on from generation to generation “till the seed should come” —form an unbroken line as the heirs of Immanuel’s land, and rightly made their boast in the flesh, and by natural descent, as they blazoned forth their genealogies. Besides this circle of birth and pedigree the Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from mount Seir that He might establish a government upon the earth. The Lord came from mount Paran, and He came with ten thousand of His saints. From His right hand went a fiery law; “for the Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.” An entire system of jurisprudence from God exists to this day in the Pentateuch, and was then set up in the world, and maintained through Moses, and Aaron, and the Levites, and their rulers by statutes and judgments. These became connected ultimately with royal authority and majesty under king David in Jerusalem, when the tabernacle of the wilderness, and its haltings and pitchings were over, as well as the traveling days of the people of Israel finished.

David, the warrior king, gave place to his son Solomon, the king of peace, who sat upon “the throne of the Lord,” and thus established formally the theocracy. The tabernacle likewise made way for the temple in all its magnificence and splendor, which became the wonder of the world. The journeyings of the wilderness led on to, and made room for the “promised rest” in the habitation of God, which He then took possession of and filled with His glory.

Jehovah had come out with His chosen witnesses in all these varying characteristics before the eyes of men that they might learn the ascending steps to majesty and greatness, by which such glory was reached, and had been displayed in the kingdom, and upon the throne under the scepter of its sovereign, that nothing before could be compared with it, and nothing that should ever follow could be likened to it under the sun. Personally, too, Solomon had reached as a man the highest place of honor and power out of heaven itself; for God had said, “Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee: and I will give thee riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had that have been before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.” Every previous “witness” had led on to Solomon in all his power and glory, and prosperity and peace were established in the land of Immanuel, and in “the city of the great king,” as the appointed center of order and blessing for Israel and the whole world. Not a bud of early promise to the fathers but had blossomed and brought forth its ripe fruit, and the nation, with its great potentate, sat under its vine and its fig-tree, none daring to make them afraid. There was but one name of celebrity in the wide world, and that name was Solomon’s; but one man of universal homage under the sun, and this witness from Jehovah was Solomon. Yea, more, this figure-man to Israel and the nations of the coming Messiah (like Adam was to an unfallen creation at the beginning) was God’s ultimatum, and given forth to the confidence and faith of His elect people, as finishing up “God’s

own line of witnesses” in this golden chain of conditional blessing. Even Solomon was allowed to challenge the whole race of mankind, and say in defiance, “What can the man do that cometh after the king?”

On the other hand, the prophets came in with their ministry, and God demanded by the prophet Isaiah, in the reign of Uzziah and Hezekiah, “What more could have been done for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” How soon is the fine gold become dim? Alas another “Ichabod” has been proclaimed by the Spirit of prophecy on these heights of majesty and glory in the kingdom of Jehovah, and echoed back to the heavens from the north, and the south, and the east, and the west, like was aforetime uttered over the departing glory of the priesthood in the sanctuary, when the ark of God was carried off into the house of Dagon.

In the face of this new collapse of power and glory we may stop, and put the question naturally enough, why then have we followed this long line “of the witnesses of God,” from Adam in one world to Noah in another? Why then, again, the line of Abraham and the patriarchs, or of Moses and Israel in Egypt, and of Joshua on their way into Canaan? Why also the priesthood of Aaron in the sanctuary, and the royal majesty of David the king, which culminated in the exceeding glory and greatness of Solomon? Why speak of all these illustrious men as “the witnesses chosen of God,” when historically they have become the witnesses of failure and of forfeited blessing, so that “Ichabod” is written on the throne and temple of Jerusalem as plainly as “Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin” is upon the walls of the Gentile monarchs in the palace of Babylon? Why occupy us with a jurisprudence and a political economy for government, set up in a theocracy which has collapsed, and which from its own nature lies outside and beyond the reach of man’s imitation? The narrative of such failures and forfeitures would, it is true, be unavailing, and even cruel and tormenting, could there be no adequate resources in the living God. What avails proving man’s ruin and the world’s bankruptcy, if there were no second Adam in reserve, to begin a new history of His own, as the anointed One before God, in this present world of sin and death, and open another lesson book to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places? The answer to all these questions, and a thousand more, is one and the same, and, like every efficient reply, a short one too “Christ is all and in all.” Be it so, “that God and the witnesses chosen of Him” have closed up a first history, yet were these men likewise serving in a double character, as patterns and figure—men of Him who was to come from God (to those who can receive it), as well as witnesses to God in their day and generation of the inefficiency of all else.

For example, view Adam as the first of these witnesses. And what was he “but a figure of Him that was to come,” when we are able to see everything in the true light of faith and promise, and no longer read God and these witnesses in the blotted pages of their own history? So again view Solomon, the last and most wonderful “of all these witnesses,” and who and what was he but a royal and glorious figure of Him that was to come—Jesus, who drew aside the veil of that covering with His own hand, when He said, “A greater than Solomon is here.”

And what shall be said of all the intermediate “witnesses” between Adam, the created man in innocency, and Solomon, the endowed king in splendor—the man “whom God magnified” and made so great? What do we say? Why, that they were one and all but figures and patterns, each in their times and seasons, of Him that was to come in as “the faithful and true witness” —one who

alone could bear witness to Himself and His Father, who sent Him. True, and most true it is, that all “these witnesses chosen aforetime” were most illustrious, and shone as lights across this dark and dreary world; yea, men of whom the world was not worthy. Yet would they one and all, if challenged, give place to John as “the forerunner of Christ,” and the brightest of all this “cloud of witnesses,” and allow him to be their spokesman as they retire, or say with him, “Whose shoes’ latchet I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.” Or else perhaps be greater still in His greatness when he adds, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” No, even David “only served his day and generation,” as did they all, whether prophets, or priests, or kings; and in his last days and with his last words, when he looked onward in the consciousness that his house was not so with God, yet in confidence of the coming One could say, “He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.” So Moses, when departing, bore witness to a greater than himself when he said to the children of Israel, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you like unto me, him shall ye hear in all things.”

We may fairly close these applications by the words of the greatest of those born of women, as well as on the behalf of his previous witnesses, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly, because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.”

The secret upon which the recovery and manifestation in blessing of all that these illustrious witnesses had forfeited on the earth was known in heaven, and came out when two of these witnesses appeared in glory on mount Tabor at the transfiguration of Christ, and spake to Him of “the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” But we must stop at this mount, this mountain of the Lord, and the voice from the excellent glory, which tells its own tale, and established all the rights of Christ as Messiah beyond the need of any further witnesses. His decease and redemption through His blood sets aside all the mighty obstacles that stood in the way of permanent blessing on the earth, and His resurrection was witness enough on God’s part that the exalted One was the appointed Heir of all things, and King of kings, and Lord of lords. Witness too of His all-sufficiency; for that all things were put under His feet, and He made head over all things; yea, that “all power was given to Him in the heavens and on the earth” for the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption, and to fill the whole world with the glory of God.

Coming events cast their shadows before them, and that is what these witnesses in their varying ministries were doing, and very precious too, as foreshadowing the millennium, and the “times of restitution, of which God had spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began;” and this is the outline as well as the consummation which was proposed to be traced out in these meditations. Well may we say with the apostle, when speaking of the earthly people, and God’s ways and actings with them in dispensational government, whether past, present, or future, as in Romans 11:33,35, “O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out.... For of Him and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.” J. E. B.

## Responsibility

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A Christian, everyone will admit, ought to be a Christian in conduct and walk as well as in name; how else is the character which stamps him as such, the life of Christ in him, to be seen? In these days of worldliness and declension we often have to leave the question whether a person is really a Christian or not. We know that “the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His;” but it is incumbent on “everyone that names the name of the Lord to depart from iniquity.” It is not the walk which makes the Christian, though to walk in some measure as Christ walked entitles such a one to the name; for what a Christian is before God should be reproduced in his walk. Before God he is seen in Christ as holy and without blame in love (Ephesians 1:4), and such a character should mark him now. (1 Thessalonians 3:12,13.) He is in the same position before God as Christ is; he has no other standing; for he is in it as the effect of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. He knows it by the Holy Ghost, which dwells in him, through whom he enjoys all the results of that death and resurrection, whether present or future. His “sins have been forgiven for His name’s sake.” He is in Christ saved forever from judgment; for love with him has been made perfect, so that it can be said, “As He (Christ) is so are we (Christians) in this world.” God sees each believer as such absolutely; he is complete in Christ.

Let each one take it home, and say, “Yes; through God’s grace that is what I am. I will own no other description of me than His. I will take it, and see how far my walk answers to God’s thought about me.” The question is not how far we have attained. Paul had to say, “Not as though I had already attained but I pursue.” But are we walking on the same principle? He could say, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20.) The world and the flesh would never own the lowly Man whom it scorned and crucified to be the Son of God. He was declared to be so, in spite of the world and the flesh, by resurrection from the dead, and as such he was revealed to Paul in glory. A new Person filled his soul, and consequently a new principle of living down here.

As men we gather our motives from men; what others do, we do. We are shaped by the current of things around us which are of the first Adam in all his developments, whether natural or religious; but “the faith of the Son of God,” to whose image we are to be conformed, is altogether another principle of life. Himself too is the object of that life. Ought we not to press this on one another?

Further, has the state of Christendom, which is a witness of the ruin of true Christian profession, altered one bit what a Christian is, and consequently what his walk should be? True, the altered condition of things around us from those of early days, and the varying phases of that which bears the name of Christ, and therefore stands in the responsible place of answering to that name, may and do make the circumstances more difficult in the midst of which Christian walk has to be maintained; but should not I ask myself still, “Ought I not to be true to what I am through God’s infinite grace?”

Again, if we see what the Church is in God’s thoughts, and consequently what it should be down here in answer to those, thoughts, other than individual responsibility will present itself to us. First,

it is the object of the deepest affections of Christ. "He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," to this end, that it might be for Himself. The moment the sense of this was lost decline set in, not in outward walk, but the bloom of the first love was gone. (Revelation 2:4.) By the Church now, in contrast with Israel of old as a witness in earthly places, the principalities and powers in heavenly places are to learn the manifold wisdom of God. Further, upon earth "the Church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth." The Lord's words to the Churches of Pergamos and Thyatira attest how soon the heavenly position was forgotten, and an earthly one assumed, as well as the corruption of the truth by Balaam and Jezebel allowed. The Church in Smyrna had to bear the blasphemy of a rival—an earthly religious system, which had the light for the earth in its day, but had become the synagogue of Satan; but that should have more fully established and manifested the heavenly character of the Church; for the truth, of which it is the pillar and support, is, that He who was manifest in flesh is not now in the world, or among the Jews, but is preached to the Gentiles, an object of faith only in the world, and has been received up into glory. In Pergamos, the place of Satan's throne had become the Church's dwelling. Balaam and Jezebel soon did their work of corruption; and it might be asked, as by the spirit of prophecy of old, "where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?" (Jeremiah 13:20.)

The fresh work of the Spirit in Sardis did not produce in it any witness of the heavenly character of the Church; for it is threatened with the same treatment as the world. A remnant only walks with undefiled garments. In its responsible Church character, it was not "a faithful witness that will not lie." (Proverbs 14:5.) Was there nothing then which the Lord could own as a "true witness that delivereth souls" (vs. 25), and before whom He could grant an open door, even though it had little strength?

We do find in Philadelphia that which, as still having a candlestick character, He does own, and, more blessed still, He identifies it with Himself. It is, as in the other epistles, the angel of the Church in Philadelphia who is addressed; for the seven candlesticks are the seven churches. It, as Smyrna, had a rival (Laodicea it could not be, for that is a candlestick also); but again it is the synagogue of Satan with its pretensions, "which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie, a false witness which speaketh lies," one of the seven things the Lord hates. The Lord grants to this system of Satan that He will make those who are of it to bend before the feet of this feeble Church, and know that He loved it. He acknowledges it in its candlestick character as a witness, and grants it an open door; for it had kept His word, and not denied His name. It is not a question of conversion, but of witness. Lot was a righteous man, but not a witness; nor did he find an open door for his testimony even in his own family, for "he seemed as one that mocked to his sons-in-law." Reality is needed, being true to His word, and name, and the hope of His coming. Surely every saint ought to take the position which the grace of Christ's heart now assigns to all—the Kohathite service of keeping the charge of that which is most holy, because so immediately connected with Christ Himself—my word, my name—and such a service all the more blessed now that the external order of the Church is broken up. To every saint also belongs the position of girded loins and burning lamps, "like unto men that wait for their Lord." It is well to challenge ourselves as to whether we answer to the grace bestowed on us, or whether, like Lot, we fail to be witnesses of the position assigned to every saint.

He was kept from the doom of Sodom, as each whom the Lord knows to be one of His own, witness or no witness, will be kept by Him from the world's coming hour of temptation. The

Philadelphian position is surely to be desired by every saint; it is what the Lord approves. He is sovereign, and when there is break down and failure His testimony may be borne in a way that He could not identify Himself with. The breakdown of Moses was the occasion of the seventy elders prophesying, and two of them-Eldad (God's love) and Medad (love), prophesied in the camp instead of at the door of the tabernacle. (Numbers 11) The Lord identifies the witness of Philadelphia with Himself, and stamps on the overcomer all the character of His own heavenly associations. Our crown is the possession of such a holy service as Aaron's crown was the anointing of His God upon him. (Leviticus 21:12.) We want to know the power of the name of the One who is holy and true, who cannot deny Himself, so that we may hold fast the position of witness which the Lord can thus own, if indeed in any little measure we can say we are of it, as really desiring through His grace to answer in our walk and conduct to what is our proper and only true character in these last days.

T. H. R.

## The Angel of the Church

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It may not be out of place to offer a few remarks on the angel of the Church of Revelation 2 and 3., as it is evident that it will be impossible rightly to understand these chapters unless we know who the angel is or represents.

“The angel” is a designation constantly met with in the Scriptures, and has been generally, and we believe rightly, understood to signify a messenger or representative. No one questions when we read in Acts 8:26, “The angel of the Lord spake unto Philip,” that we are to understand by this the Lord’s representative speaking in His name. So, also in 2 Corinthians 12:7 “the messenger (angel) of Satan” is one sent from Satan, and acting on his behalf. With these Scriptures before us, who can doubt that the angel of the Church can only mean the mystical representative of the Church, not the representative of someone else sent to it? And that this is the only meaning to be assigned to the term is conclusively proved from Revelation 1, 2 and 3.

It is true that our translators, in the heading they have affixed to chap. 2, tell us that the angels are the ministers of the several churches; but we must ever bear in mind that the headings of the various chapters throughout the Bible are solely the work of man, and form no part of the infallible word of God. The apostle was directed (chapter 1: 11) to write the things he saw in a book, and to send it to the seven churches in Asia. In verse 19 what he was to write was enlarged so as to include, not only the things he had seen, but also “the things that are, and the things that shall be after these.” Before, however, he proceeds to open out the things “that shall be,” he is directed to write to the angel of each of the seven churches the epistle bearing its name; and as each of these epistles is addressed to “the angel of the church,” and each closes with the solemn exhortation to “hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches,” it is clear that in the mind of the Spirit the angel stood for the Church, and that the message was addressed, not to the ministry, but to the Church at large. It should also be added that, while “the ministry” is but too generally regarded in Christendom as a body either apart from or else assuming to be the Church, so that we hear continually of “clergy and laity,” such a division is unknown to the word of God, which teaches us that “God hath set some in the Church” (1 Corinthians 12:28), not that He has constituted a class that is to be viewed as separate from it.

May the Lord give us the hearing ear, so that we may through grace profit by the solemn warnings and blessed encouragements addressed by the Spirit “unto the churches.” F. S. M.

### The First Epistle to Timothy

From this point Paul turns to address Timothy more directly, exhorting him, first, as to that which he should avoid; next, what he should cultivate; and then to what he should give himself. He was to avoid profane and old wives’ fables; he was to exercise or train himself to “piety, which is profitable for everything, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” In connection with this we meet with the third of those faithful sayings recorded in the pastoral epistles. (1 Timothy 1:15, 3:1; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8.) “For this cause we labor and suffer

reproach, or strive, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." These things he was to teach, and to be an example, young though he was, of believers in word, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity. Further, he was to give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine, and to be careful not to neglect the gift received through Paul with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery, having been marked out for this service, for which he was fitted by the gift, by a prophetic utterance on the part of some member of the assembly.

Timothy then was young, yet he was placed in authority over all in the assembly at Ephesus. Hence regulations are appended for his guidance in dealing with people whether young or old. (vs. 1, 2.) Injunctions too he received about widows, and the qualifications and the age of such as might well be put on the list to be chargeable to the assembly. Added to this are wholesome words for those who had widows, and for those who as young women were widows. (vs. 3-16.) All this we learn was not beneath the Spirit's notice, for it concerned order and comeliness of behavior in the house of God.

Further, having set forth the qualifications suited for such as desired to exercise oversight, the word of God testifies of His care of such by bespeaking due honor to be rendered to them if faithfully doing their work; and especially were those to be honored who labored, in the word and doctrine as well. All such were to be cared for in temporal matters if needing it. In proof of this, the apostle adduces God's mind from both the Old and New Testament revelation. (Deuteronomy 25:4; Luke 10:7.) One sees here distinctly marked out the difference between office and ministry. An elder was such by virtue of his office. He might, or might not be able to minister in the word as well. To the office he was appointed by the Holy Ghost. (Acts 20:28.) In himself, if a laborer in the word, he was a gift from Christ (Ephesians 4:11), and received for the exercise of his ministry a gift from the Holy Ghost. (1 Corinthians 12:11.) Further, if any elder was complained of, for in the carrying out of his service he might be exposed to the malice of the unruly, Timothy was cautioned against entertaining a charge against him, unless substantiated by two or three witnesses. Thus God would have such protected from malicious prosecutions and attacks, by which a sensitive and faithful servant might be crushed in his spirit. But offenders, whether elders or others, "them that sin," implying, it would appear, the existence of an evil habit unjudged, rather than an accidental fall, Timothy was to convict before all, that the rest might fear. A solemn office he was entrusted with, in the discharge of which he was to be faithful and just (vs. 21), and to avoid any hasty identifying of himself with others. (22-25.)

In the closing chapter (6.) two classes of society, widely different, are seen to be objects of the apostle's care—the slave, who might possess nothing that he could call his own on earth (1, 2); and the wealthy, who had it in their power to distribute to others of their substance. (17-19.) As for the slave, subjection to his master he was to exhibit, whether that master was a heathen or a Christian, in order that the name of God and the doctrine should not be blasphemed. If his Master was a Christian, there was an additional motive for serving him well. The flesh might suggest the despising him as a master, because the slave was his brother in the faith. God's word would remind him of the propriety of serving him well, because he was a Christian, faithful, i.e. a believer, and beloved. These things Timothy was to teach and exhort.

But all might not receive the exhortation, and a different doctrine might be promulgated. Heterodoxy might rear up its head on this as on other points, proving, however, if it did, that the men who taught it, or supported it, did not consent to wholesome words, the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, being proud, knowing nothing, but being sick about questions and strife's of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, injurious speaking (literally blasphemies), evil surmising's, incessant quarrels of men of corrupted minds and destitute of the truth, supposing godliness to be a means of gain. Here we reach the root whence such teaching comes. Godliness however, with contentment, is great gain. On the other hand, the desire to be rich is fruitful in results, damaging to its pursuer both as regards this world and the next. (9, 10.) Such a pursuit Timothy was to flee from, following after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness; striving, too, earnestly in the good contest of the faith, and laying hold of eternal life, to which he had been called, and had confessed a good confession before many witnesses. For the servant and the soldier must work and fight to the end.

Of this Paul reminds him in a beautiful but most solemn way. When Moses was about to depart this life, by God's command he gave Joshua a charge in the sight of all the congregation. (Numbers 27:19.) Now ere Paul departed he gave Timothy a charge, but in the sight of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, putting him consciously in their presence, to keep the commandment without spot and unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; for till His appearing—■πιφανε■α, a different thought and time from His coming for His own into the air—Timothy, as a servant, would not be discharged from his responsibility by the Master taking account of his service. Hence to the appearing of Christ he is here directed. Before God, who keeps all things in life, he was thus put by Paul, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession. The mention of God in this character would embolden him, and the remembrance of Christ Jesus as a faithful witness would encourage him. With their eyes on him he was to go forward, learning how God values a good confession, and will own it, when He, i.e. God, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of those who reign, and the Lord of those who exercise lordship, i.e. the fountain of all authority and rule in the universe, who only has immortality, dwelling in light, which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, will show Christ Jesus to all as His faithful witness here on earth.

To what a future does he point him! And surely with that in power in his soul he would warn the rich not to trust in uncertain riches, but in God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy, to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on that which is really life.

With one word more of exhortation this earnestly written letter closes: "O Timothy, keep the deposit, avoiding profane, vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with you," not "thee;" for though writing to an individual, Paul was wont to remember all the saints.

The wisdom displayed in this epistle in connection with the internal affairs of the assembly, and the earnest and frequent exhortations to maintain and to teach the truth, make it a portion of no little value in these days.

C. E. S.

## Service

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We have dwelt on separation from evil in chap. 6, and on willing-heartedness in chap. 7. In this chapter we have the light, and the manner in which it should shine forth. There are little bits of direction in the book of Numbers. Here it is about the candlestick, showing the energy of the Spirit of God in us in passing through the wilderness.

“Speak unto Aaron.” (vs. 2.) The Lord is in the midst of the seven candlesticks in Revelation 1. The candlestick represents the Church by the power of the Spirit holding up the light— “holding forth the word of life.” Gold is divine righteousness connected with or bearing upon what man is. It holds up the beauty and order of God’s truth—holding forth truth to the world. “The seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.” The light manifested the candlestick, as well as everything else. So should it be now with the Church; not only should the light shine from it, but on it, showing what it is in the mind of God. “According to the pattern which the Lord had sheaved Moses, so he made the candlestick,” according to the perfect mind of God.

By the Church principalities and powers in heavenly places are to learn the manifold wisdom of God. The perfect mind of God is shown in that which gives light to the world. The seven lamps were not only to light up the tabernacle, but to give light over against the candlestick. Angels are to learn in the Church the comeliness of God’s order, the energy too of the Holy Ghost now in the Church, not having the Holy Ghost themselves; so the woman is to have power on her head because of the angels; and Paul wrote to Timothy, that he might know “how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

The Levites (vs. 6) represent the saints in service. Priests, the Church in communion; the Levites are servants to the priests. The Levites are first offered to God. (vs. 13.) “After that shall the Levites go in to do service.” (vs. 15.) Here is the true character of service— “first gave themselves to God,” then God employs them. The Levites are offered for an offering unto the lord (vs. 13), so in Romans 15:16, “that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable.” The Church is not only a witness in the world, but an offering to God. Figuratively, Christ was waved before the Lord in Leviticus 23:11; so also the Church in verses 17, 20. The service of the Levites was entirely the consequence of their being the Lord’s. “The Levites shall be mine.” (vs. 14.) For as it is written, “Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.” (1 Corinthians 6:20.) It is blessed to say, “My beloved is mine;” but it is greater progress and a deeper joy to say, “I am His.”

The Levites (vs. 19) represented the whole of the children of Israel; they were consecrated by the very act of the cutting off of the firstborn in Egypt. The cross of Christ is condemnation to the world, but deliverance to those who believe on Him. He suffered the judgment that we might escape it. He has bought us with a price, just as, in verse 17, “the firstborn are mine.”

In verse 10 we have another principle of offering, of great importance and blessing to the soul to observe—the children of Israel putting their hands on the Levites, thereby identifying the offerer

with the offering. In verse 12 the Levites laid their hands on the head of the sin-offering, the whole thus standing guilty before God; and on the burnt-offering, completely identifying them as accepted in all the perfectness of Christ's sacrifice—a savor of sweet smell to God. Like as He bore our sins, which were laid upon Him, so all our services are accepted through the burnt-offering. Laying my hand on the burnt-offering identifies me with the savor of Christ in the presence of God. In verses 10, 11 they are brought before the Lord, and are offered to Him, that they may serve Him, and all this under the direction of priestly communion. The Church is first brought to God altogether, and then set in service under spiritual priestly direction. Observe, there is no anointing here. The Levites are not only given to God, but to Aaron and his sons (vs. 19), identifying them with Christ in priestly communion. We are to be servants of God under the direction of spiritual priestly communion in the sanctuary. There can be no intelligent, no reasonable, service but that which springs from priestly communion with the Lord, not merely intention of obedience. It is communion which gives power and intelligence in service. (See Acts 7:55.) Besides the positive written Word, we get the mind of God by habitual intercourse with Him—walking with Him, and “proving what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Thus shalt thou separate the Levites. (vs. 14.) The blood which guarded the door-posts of Israel within was the token of judgment upon the Egyptians without. A Levite was not a priest, but a servant; they were not anointed, but were servants to the priests. Communion is higher than service, and it enables our service to be with power and intelligence. We are sons of God doing the work of servants here, just as Jesus when on earth was the Son of God in the place of a servant. Prophets were servants; so preaching the gospel is service; but oil inside the bowl is more blessed than the bowl. All service is inferior to communion; so our Lord said of John the Baptist, “He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.” Only communion can bring true service; all else is only a flare, and will end in failure.

The age (vs. 24) of twenty-five years shows maturity for service; that is, the full energy of the Spirit. Exemption from service was given as a blessing, but keeping the charge remains. The priestly service never departs, but we get greater in it. We, the saints now, are the offering up of the Gentiles to God. True honor in service is that we are wholly the Lord's. It is a saying, that if an angel came down from heaven to earth, he would be as glad to sweep the streets as to be a king, the only honor just to do what God set him to do. We should not be seeking ourselves, but the Lord's glory. God's order in His house, in the sanctuary, is the object of admiration and wonder in the heavenly places—the light of the Holy Ghost shining down over against the candlestick, showing out all its beauty and perfectness after the pattern of heavenly things. J. N. D.

## Readings and Meditations on the Gospel of John

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“In the beginning was the Word.” “In the beginning God created.” The first of Genesis is a history of the other day, of yesterday, compared with John 1 In the beginning, which had no beginning (for we are out of our depths here, and in those of God—eternity and infinity), the Word was. If it is a question of place, it was where no place was; God only was there. Eternity and infinity are as incomprehensible to the mind of man as the idea of God Himself—a cause without a cause; God Himself is the only measure of each. But if you still ask, where? the Word was with God, stated in different terms in the epistle, as “that eternal life which was with the Father.” The Word was God, the Persons distinct. We read elsewhere that in the beginning He was God’s delight, His “treasured store,” the Lord “possessed” Him in the beginning of His way before His works of old, the All to Him of eternity and infinity. Created things were not there, divine affections were. The Father’s bosom was His dwelling-place; this best answers the question, Where? Eternal love looked out upon answering glory, as in the creation “day unto day uttereth speech.”

“In Thee, from everlasting,

The wonderful I AM

Found pleasures never wasting.”

But in our present state we understand divine unfoldings better in connection with the creature. In Micah He is presented as a Man ruling over the earthly kingdom in the strength and in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God, yet Himself the Eternal. In the new Jerusalem, where as Lamb He is the light of God’s glory, we feel Him nearer still in the power of that name, and the glory less distant, though truly feeling what we sometimes sing—

“But who that glorious blaze

Of living light shall tell,

Where all His brightness God displays,

And the Lamb’s glories dwell?”

These remarks refer, of course, to the present effect of these revealings. But besides divine affections, this mutual delight, counsels, promises, and grace were there, purpose and grace, given in Christ Jesus before the ages of time to us, who were, according to these counsels, then chosen in Him.

In Genesis 1:3 God creates, and time begins; the first of John tells me that the Word Himself was the great Creator. “The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth His handiwork.” Eternal power and Godhead may be known from the things that are made; other invisible things of Him, counsels and grace, and glory in the Son, are not learned by anything that was made, but by revelation. “All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.” All things were made for Him also (is not this truth, though connected with

His personal and positional glory as Head over all things, forgotten in modern teaching?); thus He was the beginning and end (object) of creation, before all things and sustaining all things, as another Scripture tells us.

Thus in a few words the multitudinous speculations of the Gnostics, and other heretics, as to the origin of matter, the Godhead, an evil deity and a good one, are swept away forever. The secret of all that man speculated about could only be found in the knowledge of the Person of Him who is here called the Word (Creator and Redeemer, the Saviour and the Light of the world, Revealer of the Father as only begotten Son); but the key—was ever in the hand of God; He is His own interpreter. The things of God knows no one except the Spirit of God, but this is just what man will not allow.

At the very time that John was writing this gospel, men professing to be wise were teaching that the evil principle was the creator of matter, not all an irrational thought when they looked at it in connection with man. All flesh had corrupted its way; they merely reasoned from the phenomena before them without God or the revelation He had given. The world was full of evil, but evil could not come from a good source. They taught that the evil principle was the God of the Old Testament. They denied Jesus Christ come in the flesh; that Jesus was the Christ; that He was the Son of God; they denied, too, the Father and the Son, foundation truths in Judaism and Christianity. “The Messiah—the Father and the Son.” But all this was simply rationalism, the teaching of the “light within;” that “voice within,” as a doctor and bishop of our day tells us, “shall be our teacher when the best of books may fail us;” that is, the light within is a substitute for the light of revelation. “The word of God that lives and abides forever may fail us,” he says, “but not so the light within.” One remembers the words of our Lord: “If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” and adores anew Him who has called us out of “darkness” to His wonderful light.

Another modern Gnostic, an ecclesiastical dignitary, teaches as follows: “The natural religious shadows, projected by the spiritual light within on the dark problems without, were all in reality systems of law given by God, though not given by revelation.” That is, the idolatrous systems of a worship, which was offered to the gods, or to devils rather, in which the practice of diabolical corruption formed an essential part, were in reality “laws given by God.” (See 1 Corinthians 12:2.) “Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led.” What spirit was it that led them, the Spirit of God or of Satan? It is written, “The things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.” But if these idolatrous systems of religion, in which devils were the objects of worship, were given by God, then Christ has concord with Belial; light, communion with darkness!

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (vs. 4.) We have seen that without Him nothing was made that was made. Jesus of Nazareth was the Creator, glorious truth! Here we are taught that in Him was life, eternal life, and in Him only. This is the witness that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in the Son; it is not in the creature, save as a stream flowing in from unfathomable and eternal depths, God’s gift in His own endless grace to once lost sinners. Elsewhere He is revealed as the Light—the lamp of the glory that lightens the heavenly city. The Lamb’s effulgence is the light of the glory of God. In Him are all the promises, in Him all the counsels of God, as through Him also is their fulfillment. “The life was the light of men.” This is

what is called a reciprocal proposition; nothing else was the light of men. This was the true light. The “light within” is not that, but the power of darkness in the human soul. “Ye shall not surely die,” said the serpent; “but your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God.” The “light within” begins with the reception of “the lie,” develops in rationalism (when they “saw that the tree was good for food”) and Gnosticism (“a thing to be desired to make one wise”). A Gnostic is one whose wisdom is the fruit of the “light within;” he is proud of it, because he thinks it is his own. In reality it “comes not from above; it is devilish.”

“Be as God,” the devil said; this was the bait; but when the man of sin appears, coming according to the energy of Satan, he exalts himself above God; this is development in iniquity. The wisdom thus acquired did not profit them; the first thing they saw was their own nakedness; the first thing they did was to hide this nakedness from their own sight, and themselves from the presence of the Lord God, putting those very trees which He had planted for their use, “pleasant to the sight, and good for food,” between themselves and Him. Thus innocence, man’s first estate, was lost, and natural life forfeited; the pleasant fruits of the trees of the garden no more to be enjoyed; thorns and briars were the product of a cursed earth, which they were doomed to till with toil and sweat until dust unto dust returned. Exclusion from Paradise, the way to the tree of life barred up, its virtue a mystery all unknown, the reign of sin unto death commenced in the moral darkness in which they sought to hide themselves from God, now deepened into rejection of the Light itself. “The darkness comprehended it not;” such were the results as to this world of the exercise of the “natural faculties,” and of the “light within.”

Time had wrought no change in the creature when John wrote this gospel; civilization had but strengthened the force of the “natural faculties” for the will of the god of this world. The long-suffering and patience of God had altered nothing in man’s state. See what Stephen says of the favored nation—the Holy Ghost resisted, the law broken, angelic ministry despised, prophets persecuted, those who showed beforehand the coming of the Just One slain; they were only doing then what their fathers had done, their iniquity culminating in the betrayal and murder of the Righteous One.

“He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” For the history of the Gentile world see Romans 1. “They did not think good to have God in their knowledge.” “He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not.” When sin, thus brought into the world, is seen in all but its last development (it was perfected at the cross), the “man of sin” revealed is found to be simply the development of the sinful man of Genesis 3; he exalts himself above all that is called God, sitting in his temple showing himself that he is God. He comes according to the working of Satan; for in the garden the working of evil had its beginning and source in the power and wiles of the adversary. Compare also the history of the lamblike beast who spake as a dragon, and caused all who dwelt on the earth to worship the first beast. When I reflect on the rapid dissemination of false teachings, and the true nature of this fatal error of the “light within,” and competency of the “natural faculties” in the things of God, I feel that I have not said too much on this serious subject.

“The light shineth in darkness.” (vs. 5.) The light that shines in darkness on earth is the light that shines as the glory of God Himself in the heavenly city. He had made good that glory on earth (God was glorified in Him), and He will shine as the light of that glory in the New Jerusalem. “The

darkness comprehended it not." This is God's history of the result. The darkness within could have no fellowship with light; for "from within, out of the heart of man, proceed" all that is opposed to the nature and glory of God. All these evil things come from "within."

"The light of men." How precious to the heart to find that word "man" associated with the thoughts of God, which are to usward in grace and love "The light of men." "The head of every man is Christ." His "delights were with the sons of men." "What is man that thou art mindful of him?" Made lower than the angels, then crowned with glory and honor, where we have its mystery explained. "The tabernacle of God is with men," this for eternity, as the destruction of the veil that is spread over all the nations introduces the millennial reign, which is the reign of man in the person of Christ. R. E.

## The Greatest Trial Often the Greatest Blessing

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“Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away.” (John 16: 6, 7.)

The greatest trial, disappointment, and sorrow to the disciples was the Lord’s announcing to them His departure from them. And yet it would result in their fullest and deepest blessing; for as the result of Christ’s redemption work, and the consequent descent of the Holy Ghost, we know that all our sins are forever forgiven, and that eternal life in the Son is a present known fact. And more, that Christ’s Father and God is our Father and God; that we are temples of the Holy Ghost; and that in receiving the Holy Ghost, we have become members of Christ’s body; are “joined to the Lord,” and can sing intelligently, “One spirit with the Lord.” (1 John 2:12; 5:11; John 20:17; 1 Corinthians 6:17,19; Ephesians 5:30.) How often we have been made to prove that the clouds we so dreaded have been big with richest blessing. (Romans 8:28.)

When God allowed Joseph to be removed from his father Jacob, the latter said, “All these things are against me.” But it turned out quite otherwise in the end; for at the time of famine he and his children, and his children’s children, and his flocks and his herds, and all that he had, were brought near to Joseph; had a dwelling-place in the land of Goshen, and were there tenderly nourished all the years of famine by Joseph. (Genesis 4:5.) This proved that Jacob’s greatest trial was in the end his greatest blessing.

When the Lord Himself was here He said, “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” (John 1:18.) But now that redemption’s work is accomplished, and Christ is gone on high, the Holy Ghost has come down and made known to us the great privileges of Christianity in those words, “No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.” (1 John 4:12.) Another blessed proof that the disciples’ greatest loss turned out to be their greatest gain. Again we find our blessed Lord saying, in John 14, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto the Father.” And “at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” What magnificent results accrue to us as the consequence of Christ’s going to the Father for us, and the Holy Ghost coming from the Father to us! I do not attempt to develop the Scriptures I have referred to, as they so blessedly and plainly declare the marvelous income of blessing, power, and knowledge which we, who stand upon the finished work of Christ, have now that Christ is seated at the Father’s right hand as our Head, and the Holy Ghost dwells in our poor debilitated, but redeemed and soon to be immortal and glorified, bodies. Oh! for more intimacy with Christ where He is, that by the power of the Holy Spirit who is in us we may act and be more distinctly for Him where He is not, until we are forever with Him where He is.

H. M. H.

## Devotedness in Warfare and Worship

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In a former paper the circumstances were considered under which the mighty men and their achievements are presented in 2 Samuel 23, David himself was sustained by the everlasting covenant, made with him in grace, as in acknowledgment of his zeal in seeking a habitation for the mighty God of Jacob; and for his house, though saddened by its then condition, Christ is prophetically seen as He who should be to it “for a glorious throne,” upon whom “they should hang all the glory of His Father’s house.” (Isaiah 22:22-24.) Being thus occupied, God took occasion to set out for us the deeds of the mighty men in full array—they themselves the fruit of David’s faithfulness and zeal for God in a lapsed age. And, finally, we considered how remarkably all the circumstances correspond with those of which the blessed Antitype of David forms the center. Great indeed was the confusion amidst which God’s chosen king moved in Saul’s day; and proportionately grand was the faith of the few devoted ones who followed him through it all. Greater far was the confusion when the Son of David, David’s Lord, walked as the Man of Sorrows here, rejected by His own, unto whom He came in love and blessing. But even this is eclipsed by the notorious evil of a profession, which uses His name only to dishonor it; a “house of God” on earth, blessed with heavenly privileges, yet ripening for judgment. There remains, thank God, the inalienable love which planned the everlasting covenant, the basis of all the “Great Shepherd’s” care for those He now speaks of as “His own” (Hebrews 13:20; Ephesians 5:25-27); and, through the dealings of that love and care, are there not a few enjoying part with Him, who, sharing gladly His rejection here, shall shine to His glory by-and-by on the threshold of and throughout millennial and eternal scenes, and who are distinguished by their zeal against the enemies of God and His people—bound together, moreover, by a faithfulness and attachment to their beloved Leader, which He alone can truly know and justly appreciate?

In considering this portion of Scripture it is well to see that the classification of the mighty men, though taking shape according to the post each held in the army, is pointedly connected with former actions; primarily dependent, in fact, upon the zeal each displayed against the enemies of David. And so particularly is all recorded by the divine pen, that one must be prepared to glean moral instruction from the arrangement, as well as from the other facts. The actions are significant in view of New Testament truth, and no less so is the arrangement.

We are reminded that “the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but are mighty” in their efficacy when used in the Spirit, whose sword is the word of God placed in our hands as part of the whole armor. (Ephesians 6) The Lord Himself could say, “By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer;” and the brethren in Revelation 12 are also represented as having overcome the same arch-enemy “by the word of their testimony,” linked blessedly with the blood of the Lamb, who came “not by water only, but by water and blood.” Moreover, “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” And not alone is this our effectual weapon against the enemies without and around, but the word of God, “sharper than any two-edged sword, pierces to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, joints and marrow,” and so forth, casting down the fabrications of vain man’s philosophy, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the

knowledge of God, leading captive every thought into the obedience of Christ.’ Here is the divine means of sanctification, as we read, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.” It is the basis too; for the Word—Christ Himself—received into the heart in living energy, as life, mortifies what is of the first man, as in a future day the sharp sword with the two edges will do its “strange work” in judgment. (Revelation 2:12-16;19, and so forth.) The Word, is the instrument of grace now, judging everything that hinders communion. It will be the instrument of government then, crushing “all rule, and all authority and power,” which has long opposed the righteous claims of God in His own world. In David’s day, carnal weapons effected this in a manner, becoming the circumstances of his reign as God’s chosen king, and thus foreshadowed the dealings of a future day, just as their use typified the efficacy of the Word, in, through, and by us now against the enemies of God and His people.

The application of 2 Samuel 23 becomes thus easy and natural. One cannot fail to be struck with the detailed manner in which God reviews the achievements of at least the first six mightier, indicating how He regards His people’s successes in a conflict of far more important character in these days. Stern opposition to and overcoming enemies characterized the chief of David’s mighty men; and he whose zeal shone brightest in this respect stands first Adino the Eznite. Thus, does God in type declare His estimate of that sanctification, that separation of heart to Himself, in which one finds all within and around, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” ranged in opposition to Him; feels it with Him, and in faith judges it all.

In the next case we have a particular aspect of warfare exhibited, and war fare it is too, be it remarked. Eleazar’s hand cleaves to his sword. He becomes identified with it, so to speak. It was thus with our Lord. He walked in the truth, and was “the Truth.” He lived by the Word, and was “the Word.” And so is it with His people, in measure according to the faithfulness of their testimony. (Compare Revelation 12:11; 3:8,12; Jeremiah 15:16.)

The vigilance of Shammah in defending the piece of ground full of lentiles, recalls the anxiety of the apostle of the Gentiles that the truth of the gospel should remain with them, and his zeal in defending it. (Galatians 2:5.) It recalls the warning of Jude also to believers, “earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints,” a needful warning even in that needful day; for the enemy was already in the field. And is there not, moreover, a voice for us in this, that that of which “the piece of ground” yielded so abundant a crop, namely, lentiles, is the same of which fainting Esau partook; whereupon he revived, “rose up, and went his way?” (Genesis 25:30)

We have here then the divine order in spiritual warfare typically indicated: first, conflict accompanying a walk in holiness; secondly, the struggle in maintaining true testimony; thirdly, contention for the faith once delivered to the saints, which, being all obligatory, are the essential elements of true Christian walk.

We next meet with something superadded, so to speak, what is voluntary, or, more truly perhaps, what springs from hearts overflowing with affection and esteem for their object, the will being completely subject. Thus, the second three mightier, unasked, risked their lives to procure a comfort for their beloved chief—a drink of water. They knew what would yield him a pleasure (he had longed for a drink of water from the well of Bethlehem), and they counted no personal sacrifice too great in obtaining it, laying themselves open to the charge of rashness doubtless from many who had neither the same love nor the same faith. We see in Mary, so often referred to, a beautiful

example of zeal in a similar service, outstripping those who evidently would have been content with merely the fulfillment of what is obligatory, and found fault with her for going beyond the bounds of ordinary service. It is certainly only devotedness in a service so essentially spiritual, that can at all adequately fulfill what is obligatory; yet true devotedness is not confined in its service of love to the narrow bounds by which man of any standing might circumscribe it, seeing nothing but the worth of its object, and moreover seeing in the blessed Object it is our joy to refer to illimitable worth. It delights to submit first. Mary sat at Jesus' feet as a learner in Luke 10; servant-like, she waited on Him, "sat still in the house" (in John 11) until called to enjoy happy, though silent, communion on the way to the grave, where she saw the display of His power. Then devotedness finds its peculiar occasion for perhaps the sweetest service. (John 12) Ruth's "Entreat me not to leave thee," expressing what she had learned in this line of service, would have been uttered in ill grace had she not fulfilled her obligations as daughter-in-law to Naomi, even as did Orpah, whose devotedness carried her no further than a fulfillment of them.

Worship is of this type of service. We offer it to God. (Compare Leviticus 1-3 with 4. 5.) And it is remarkable that not until the soul is established inside the veil in Hebrews 10, and placed outside the camp with a rejected Christ on earth (Hebrews 13), is the invitation given to "offer unto God the sacrifice of praise." Just as in 1 Peter 2, we as living stones are supposed to have come to the "living Stone, disallowed indeed of men," before offering up "acceptable spiritual sacrifices." Subjection to what is obligatory has the first place with God. How much otherwise is it with men. What effort is abroad to express devotedness by methods of service originating in uninstructed hearts, and carried on in the energy of an unbroken will, which is glaringly heedless of what is plainly obligatory. We see in Saul an example of a man who would substitute one class of service for the other. Rather than obey the voice of the Lord, his insubject heart imagined to bring greater delight to God by sparing Agag and the best of the sheep for sacrifice. How different the offering Paul speaks of in Philippians 2:17! He was ready to be offered, poured forth upon the sacrifice of their faith; but then he could also say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, (therewith) to be content:" he was completely subject. And the devotedness which carried him through all is expressed in chapter 3:7-14.

In 2 Timothy 4:6 we also find him saying, and in an order too, it will be noticed, perfectly agreeing with what we have been seeing in type from 2 Samuel 23 above, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course (of testimony), I have kept the faith." This indeed is an unblemished background for the beautiful expression, "I am ready to be offered." It may be further remarked, that of the three remaining references to warfare in the two epistles to Timothy, a striking correspondence may be noticed between the immediate context in each instance and the characteristic circumstance in the struggle maintained severally by Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah.

And returning to the "three of the thirty chief" (2 Samuel 23), it confirms this whole line of truth to see how that, previous to the record of their special zeal for David, which has already been alluded to, their faithfulness to him as God's chosen king is noticed. They shrank not from the companionship of such as were gathered to him in Adullam since he was their gathering center. A drink of water from such, under the circumstances in which it was obtained and presented, was precious indeed to a soul like David's—too precious for him, and he poured it out before the Lord. How much this tends to throw into relief the supreme dignity of our adored Leader! Is aught too precious for presentation to Him? And does He look for naught similar to this from us? Though

seated in glory, He is the same gracious One who said, in immediate view of His death, “Do this in remembrance of me,” the same who invited His poor disciples to watch with Him when “exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” He “looked for comforters, but (alas!) found none.” He had none to risk life in a desire to yield Him what He longed for. Ever misunderstood, in His “thirst they gave Him vinegar to drink.”, Previously He had to say, “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and now I am straitened till it be accomplished;” and it was so still. But it is now accomplished; the circumstances of “His own” are altered, and their condition. One spirit with Him, judged flesh needs no longer be permitted to overpower with sleep those privileged with the contemplation of His sufferings, nor deter them from fellowship in those sufferings. How blessed to enjoy His approving look as those faithful to Him, not only calling Him Lord, but doing the thing that He says—doing it in that overflowing devotedness of heart and life which never fails to perceive occasions of service beyond the range of what even fellow-believers may deem alone obligatory!

J. K.

## A Few Scriptures Connected

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“There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1); for there is nothing there to condemn. He is glorified (Acts 3:13), and there abides the blessed and changeless sunshine of God’s favor always. And in Him that changeless favor beams down upon me. (1 John 4:17; John 17:26.) I awake in the morning, and there it is in all its fullness. He would have me work on, all through the hours of the long day, with the certainty of it. I lie down tired and weary at night, it may be, but it is still there, still true. “Accepted in the Beloved” abides. (Ephesians 1:6.) And truly, since it has pleased God thus to show the “kindness of God” unto me (Titus 3:4; 2 Samuel 9:1,3) a poor sinner, and since all is “of Him, and through Him, and to Him” (Romans 11:36), I must add, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.” (Psalms 16:6.) To be now “heirs of god, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17), and now to be able to cry, “Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6), and so to turn to Him in everything – what a portion!

It is best to think little of self and talk less. One thing satisfies the heart, to think much of God and His blessed grace, and to speak of it. We shall know this in heaven. There is little in the best of us worth thinking about, and less worth speaking about. But, oh, to be ransomed, and to know it! oh, to be redeemed, and going through this world in the daily and hourly communion with our own Redeemer! Ah! then we learn what paltry little things seek to occupy us, and fritter time away, and estimate them at their right value. Not to be occupied thus is to lose the blessed privilege which He has died to purchase for us, of bathing our souls all the day long in an ocean of love that is fathomless, but changeless and eternal.

H. C. A.

## Christianity

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Christianity has its realization in us in a conformity of nature to God, with which God cannot dispense, and without which we cannot enjoy or be in communion with Him.

In the normal condition of a Christian he is occupied with Christ.

## The House of God – Part 2

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The tabernacle, which had been the house of God in the wilderness, together with its sacred furniture, was carried by the children of Israel into Canaan, and was pitched in Shiloh. (Joshua 18:1.) It was accordingly to this place that the children of Israel resorted with their yearly sacrifices (1 Samuel 1:3), and it was still called “the tabernacle of the congregation” (1 Samuel 2: 22), but also “the temple of the Lord,” and “the house of the Lord.” (1 Samuel 3:3,15.) These latter names did but foreshadow the house which should hereafter be built in Jerusalem. While the children of Israel were pilgrims in the wilderness, and dwelt in tents, God Himself abode in a tent, suiting Himself, as He has ever done in His precious grace, to the condition of His people; but when He had established His chosen in the glory of the kingdom a house was erected exceeding magnifico, which in some measure should be the expression of His majesty who deigned to make it His dwelling-place in the midst of Israel. (2 Chronicles 2:4-6.)

It is not within our present purpose to call attention to the characteristic differences between the tabernacle and the temple, but rather to point out their similarity both as to origin and object. As in the case of the former, so in the latter, the plan was divinely communicated. It was David who was honored to become the depositary of this design; and inasmuch as he was not permitted, according to the desire of his own heart, himself to build the temple, he communicated it to Solomon. “And David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasures thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlors thereof, and of the place of the mercy-seat, and the pattern of all he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the Lord, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasures of the house of God,” and so forth. (1 Chronicles 28:11,12.) Everything that Solomon did and made, in connection with the work to which he had been called, was in accordance with the instructions he had received. The site itself had been divinely indicated, as well as the design and manner of the building. (1 Kings 6:38; 2 Chronicles 3:3.) Though entrusted to human hands to erect, the building was divine; for human thoughts and human conceptions must not intrude themselves into the things of God.

The connection between the tabernacle and the temple, as being both alike God’s dwelling-place, may be seen in two ways. When Solomon had completed the house, he assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel; and we read that “all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king, in the feast which was in the seventh month” (i.e. the feast of the blowing of trumpets, a figure of the restoration of Israel in the last days—Numbers 29:10). “And all the elders came; and the Levites took up the ark, and they brought up the ark and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, these did the priests and the Levites bring up.” And then, after they had sacrificed sheep and oxen without number, “the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim.” (1 Chronicles 5:1-7.) It was the ark that gave its character to the house; for it was God’s throne in the midst of Israel, from whence He governed His people on the basis of His holy law, as is noted here by the statement that “there was nothing in the ark, save the two tables which Moses put therein at

Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.” (vs. 10.)

And now, secondly, the Lord endorsed the work of His servants by taking possession of the new house, even as He had formerly done with the tabernacle. “And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests that were present were sanctified, and did not then wait by course: also the Levites which were the singers, all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, being arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:) it came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord; and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth forever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.” (2 Chronicles 5:11-14.) Following upon this description, we find Solomon reciting the circumstances by which he had become the divinely-appointed instrument in building “an house of habitation” and “a place of dwelling” for the Lord “forever”; and then he knelt down on a brazen scaffold (which he had prepared) before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven, and prayed with respect to the house which he had built, and he concluded his intercessions with words cited from Psalms 132 “Now therefore arise, O Lord God, into thy resting-place; thou, and the ark of thy strength. Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. O Lord God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David, thy servant.” And thereon we read, “Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the house.” (2 Chronicles 6:41,42; 7:1, 2.)

In this manner and under such circumstances did the Lord take up His abode in the temple—the whole scene, the white-robed priests, and their glorifying God with one mind and one mouth, being no dim foreshadowing of the glory of a later day, when the true Solomon shall come to His temple and surround Himself with a righteous and willing-hearted people. But the one point to be observed is, that we find once again God dwelling in His house in the midst of the people whom He had chosen. The difference between the temple and the tabernacle, as before remarked, is shown by the contrast between the wilderness and the land; by the pilgrim character of Israel’s passage through the former, as distinguished from their settled abode in the latter. But in both alike God had His habitation, His house. God dwelt in the midst of the whole of Israel, and, as seen again from the fact that the fire came down in response to Solomon’s prayer and consumed the burnt-offering and sacrifices, did so on the ground of redemption—on the ground of redemption through the value of all that Christ was in His sacrificial work. It had not been possible on any other ground; but because it was on the foundation of all the sweet savor of Christ in His death, He could, spite of what the people were practically, dwell in their midst, and all the people, on their part, could come with the appointed sacrifices, in the appointed way, and at the appointed times.

Thenceforward Jerusalem was the one holy place on earth, the one spot, therefore, to which the heart of every true Israelite turned with thoughts of worship and praise. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.... Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." (Psalms 84) And there on the recurrence of the feasts the people assembled. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together: whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the Lord." (Psalms 122:3,4.) There all the first-born children were carried and presented to the Lord (Luke 2:22-24), and there too the families of His people assembled three times a year. (See Deuteronomy 16) Jerusalem, therefore—because of Jehovah's house—was the one place of blessing in the whole world, and it was no mean privilege to be permitted to form part of the assembly that gathered there from time to time in obedience to the Word. "And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place His name there." (Deuteronomy 16:11.)

(To be continued D. V.) E. D.

When Christianity is being given up on all sides, it is well to know what Christianity is. It is perfect peace and reconciliation with God; we are perfected forever before Him. And as regards, the path in this world, it is the eye on Christ Himself in glory, and one undivided energy to get after Him. Every step we take we get more of Christ, and are more capable of knowing Him; and thus the effect practically is to form us into His likeness. This bringing in of the life of Christ to my soul enables me to see Him in the glory, so that even now I get more like the resurrection I am aiming after. The resurrection from among the dead identifies itself with winning Christ; raising from the dead speaks to us of God's perfect delight in us in Christ. J. N. D.

## Remembrance of Deliverance and Guidance

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Lapse of time comes in here; it is a year since their deliverance, and they are still in the wilderness. When the passover is understood, the present power of deliverance is a very intelligible thing. (Exodus 13:3.) They had been in bondage, but they were out of Egypt and in the wilderness, though not yet in Canaan. They had memory of deliverance, with toil and exercise as the fruits, because they were in the wilderness. So we have the joy and peace of deliverance, not yet rest. They were out of Egypt, but in trouble and trial. They felt it when they said, "Were there no graves in Egypt?" Herein is the exercise and often failure with us; but there is no failure on God's part, because He brings us into the wilderness.

The passover is to be kept as an offering to the Lord (vs. 7) in remembrance of, and retaining full consciousness of, their being the Lord's delivered people. We have spiritually the principle of the thing in the Lord's supper. There is deliverance in Christ, but trial and exercise as to the actual condition here. Unbelief may say, "We shall die in the wilderness," but faith will always keep the passover; it thus recognizes God's deliverance, and this is blessing. Spiritually it is an offering to the Lord, and so by communion we have present joy—a privilege only to faith; for the deliverance has only brought us into the wilderness where we get trouble. We see in verse 9, and so forth, grace and holiness brought together to meet defilement. Defilement now is specially death, because, by the energy of the Spirit of God in us, sin is known in its actual power as death. God brings in the remedy where the need is, the moment it was a question of being kept back from offering to the Lord. When there is the power of the Spirit working in our souls from day to day, there will be the constant detection of sin; for what is not of the Spirit is flesh and sin, and in its power is not merely defilement, but death.) They were delivered from Egypt, which was nothing but defilement, and yet they were defiled so that they could not keep the passover. Where there is any consciousness of sin, there cannot be worship. They could not come to God because they were defiled; for "holiness becometh thine house forever." When the Spirit is grieved there cannot be worship to God, still they were not shut out from Israel, though there must be the humiliation that owns the defilement. We can never return to the power of worship without referring to past failure. There must be humbling and purging from the sin before we can really worship, and the Lord judges of cleanness according to the energy of the life of God.

A stranger (vs. 44) might keep the passover, but he must keep it according to the ordinance and the manner thereof. Grace brings us to God, but it always brings us according to what God is, and therefore never departs from the principle of holiness—the eternal ordinance of God's house in the Spirit. If a man is not spiritually holy, his worship is only an abomination to God. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." (Hebrews 13:10.) That is fleshly ordinances. The real privilege of God's house is inward holiness. In this place of worship God's presence is found; it gives light, guidance, shelter, everything, so (vs. 15) "the cloud covered the tabernacle." God's presence was there. Israel were to know that God brought them out of Egypt that He might dwell among them. (Exodus 29:46.) Hence the power of grace; for whatever is inconsistent with holiness is setting aside the purpose of redemption, "that I may dwell among

them.” The Lord has given us another Comforter to abide with us forever; and saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?” is doubting the power and presence of the Spirit of God. Tempting the Lord is not mere rashness, but doing something to try whether the Lord is with us or not. The presence of the Lord is always with us for blessing, and being with us must necessarily detect sin. The cloud was always there, so that whatever they did should have been in the consciousness that the Lord was with them; the uncertainty from day to day, the want of water, and so forth, cast them for dependence on the Lord.; The difficulties of the way taught them that God was ever nigh to help them. The Lord in His grace will ever keep us in a place of dependence for blessing to our souls. Entire dependence on God always gives entire wilderness blessing.

At the commandment of the Lord the children of Israel journeyed, and at the commandment of the Lord they pitched. (vs. 18.) So Jesus never went but where the cloud led Him to go; thus when they told Him that Lazarus was sick, He tarried two days, and yet He loved Lazarus. It is important that we should not be doing what is evil only, but that what we are doing should be done because it is the Lord’s will. Not a step in my journey, but the Lord has thought about it for me, therefore “we have to run the race set before us.” If the cloud does not move we cannot move, our utter incapacity to act is our power against Satan.

Again, if I have no light on any given passage, this makes nothing of me. If we have no word from God, we can do nothing, because it is by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord that man lives. Paul did nothing for Epaphroditus. (Philippians 2:27.) God healed him in His own way. God charges Himself with this care of us because we are in the wilderness where there is no way, that God Himself might be our way. He will not give us a way that nature can find out; His way is only found out in communion with the Lord. When we say “There is no way,” this will throw us upon God, who will lead us in His own way. In the wilderness there are difficulties, and here is the trial of the spirituality of the saints. The moment we lose the sense of dependence on God we are left to ourselves. Then “there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 14:12.) It is a solemn word, “Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone.” With us it should be not merely doing God’s will, but doing it because it is God’s will.

God delivered the children of Israel that He might dwell among them in the wilderness where there was no way; and His guidance proved that He was among them. The pillar of cloud leads by night and by day, for the day and night are both alike to Him, and to us if led by Him. Peter could no more walk on the smooth sea than on the rough without the Lord. We need willingness of mind to be always led by the Lord. We are children, and so sure of it, that we are willing to be servants. Jesus was Son of God, but took the place of a servant. It was to Him as having taken this place that Satan said, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down,” seeking to cast a doubt on His Father’s care. The certainty of the Lord’s love gives the confidence of obedience; if I count on the Lord’s love I am cast on the Lord’s will. When Israel settled down by the palm trees, they must get up, because it was not Canaan. The Lord may give us a little rest, but we must not settle here.

By virtue of the first passover we have been brought out of Egypt and are now in the wilderness, and while there keep the passover in the knowledge of God’s love in our deliverance.

When the cloud tarried many days (vs. 19) they were’ to keep the charge of the Lord, so while we tarry here we have but one thing to occupy us—God; and if our I “eye be single, our whole body shall be full of light.”

J. N. D.

## Readings and Meditations on the Gospel of John

“There was a man sent from God, his name John,” He came to bear testimony concerning the light, yet in result of faithful and devoted service obtained such witness himself as had never been rendered to man. John was the burning and shining lamp, Jesus the light itself. Saviour and saint bare testimony the one to the other. “He that cometh from heaven is above all.” “Yea, more than a prophet... among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.” Self-occupation always fails in its object. The voice that cried in the wilderness, “Prepare ye Jehovah’s way,” obtained what it never sought. Could he have thought in his lonely, desert life, nourished only from the resources of the wilderness, that he was treading the path that led to such results as these? Honor and praise from the lips of his rejected Lord; for they stopped their ears at the cry, and refused to make straight in the desert a highway for “our God.” This mutual praise, flowing from divine grace on one side, and through grace on the other, is most attractive. How each bore himself (the divine Master and His servant)—the way of the Spirit within—in the day of rejection (for the servant drank of the Master’s cup) we learn from Matthew 11 and John 4 “I thank thee, O Father.... All things are delivered unto me of my Father.” “The friend of the Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” What do the “least in the kingdom of heaven” think of this character of communion? And now this honored servant waits for things as yet unseen; he shared His Master’s sufferings, he must share His glories also; for thus the counsel runs, “If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.”

But in divine things the hidden and inward is always deeper and more precious than the outward, that which is to be displayed than the display itself. (“There was the hiding of His power.”—Habakkuk 3:4.) The white stone, from the hand of Jesus glorified, tells of secret blessings, dearer even than the glory to be revealed to us, and of which we are to be partakers. But in this our day the desert life is shunned, the hidden manna out of mind; the “secret name of undisclosed delight” seems to have lost its attraction.

Verse 9. “The true light was that which, coming into the world, lightens every man.” When the light comes into the world, its rays reach out to the ends thereof; there is no speech nor language where its brightness will not shine. “What the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law.” But in this shining the Holy Land is found to be a very small part of the world’s surface, and a Jew no better than a Gentile. But if sin makes no difference, because all have sinned, grace will make no difference, because the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon Him. Next, we have His actual presence in the world, with the fact that it did not know its divine Creator, as Jerusalem did not know the day of her visitation. At the beginning of their history the nations thought it not good to have God in their knowledge, and so, when God was manifest in the flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, a Light to lighten the Gentiles (to show where they were), these were all found hidden away in the darkness of idolatry; as the Jews, hiding their faces from the Light of Israel; as Adam, when he heard the voice of the Lord God, hid himself amongst the trees of the garden. “Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee,” said the Saviour of the world. But there was to be a taking out of this present evil world, before the great ingathering of the nations for the millennial reign.

There were then those who received Him, but their history offers the clearest illustration of the solemn truth of the all-pervading darkness. The energy and will that brought them to Christ were wholly divine; on man's side power and will were for evil only, being himself of the darkness. In Christ they were perfect. "If thou wilt, thou canst," said the poor leper. "I will" (and can), said the Saviour, "Be thou clean." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem... how often would I... and ye would not." To receive Him one must be born again; but this necessarily brings in God, rich in grace. "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth." To men He said, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life." No, they loved darkness (this was the world's condemnation) rather than light, and why? But were their thoughts, the inward thoughts, of every one of them, better than their evil deeds? for from within, out of the heart of man proceed evil thoughts. See the long, dark roll, and show me any one thing of brightness, if you can. And Himself is ever the touchstone of their moral state. When He called, as we have seen, there was none to answer; when He suffered, none to pity. The "within" of the human heart was a mystery unknown as yet to the disciples themselves. "Are ye yet without understanding?" He said to them (they did not know themselves). He tells them the truth, as elsewhere He opened their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures; and, best of all, has given an —understanding to know Him that is true—to know Himself.

Verse 13. "Born, not of blood." A Jew might have boasted of blood, of belonging by birth to the holy nation. Could he do so before God? Was it not a truth that in this city, the city of the great King, the holy city of our God, the great King and our God was rejected by the people of Israel, joined with idolatrous Gentiles in the bond of common enmity against Israel's Messiah and the world's Saviour?

"Nor of the will of the flesh." The flesh is the moral principle of fallen humanity; it loves to reason, but hates to obey; cannot be subject to the law of God; they that are in it cannot please God; its mind, that it glories in, is enmity against God. It is the seed-bed of human theories and speculations, does not even pretend to give divine authority for them; it speaks from itself, the opposite of the way of the Holy Ghost. "He shall not speak from Himself," but only what He hears shall He speak. He speaks but to glorify Jesus, taking of the things that are His. The Eternal Word speaks of God, the Son about the Father, to glorify Him. This was the mind of Christ: "If any one desire to practice His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is of God, or that I speak from myself. He that speaks from himself seeks his own glory." "The words which thou hast given me I have given them." "I have given them thy word." "The word which ye hear is not mine, but that of the Father, who has sent me." "My doctrine is not mine, but that of Him that has sent me." "Search the Scriptures," He said. That is, in the mind of Christ the Scriptures are of equal authority with the words which the Father had given; and the word of God, He tells us, cannot be broken. His mind is ever the condemnation of that of the flesh. The believer is not born of that, nor of the will of man; it is a ruined race. It is a solemn and important word, meeting us here at the threshold of this gospel. Put negatively, it is true; but of its scope and bearing there can be no question. But many, it is to be feared, are willingly ignorant of its import. The world cannot receive this truth; the springs of human energy (the will of the flesh) would be broken, so that it would cease to be "this present evil world."

In verse 12 it should be "children." He gave those who received Him the right to be children of God. It is the word used almost invariably as expressive of intimacy in nature. They were begotten of God. "Son" gives more the honor and standing, in contrast to their position under the law. In

Galatians 4 we find it contrasted with “bondsmen.” “Because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So thou art no longer bondsman, but son.” In chapter 12 we have “sons of light,” where the honor and moral dignity of such a place is in view. In Hebrews 12:8 it is easily seen that “son” only, and not “child,” could be used.

Verse 14. “And the Word became flesh.” It is not the Father’s counsels about Him, nor the Holy Ghost’s power—not what He was, nor what He did—that we find here. It is what He became. In the beginning eternity He was God, and with God; in the beginning of time, the Creator. “Thou in the beginning of time, Lord, hast founded the earth, and the works of Thy hands are the heavens.” Elsewhere we have His coming into the world presented in connection with the counsels of God, and with the Holy Ghost. “When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, come of woman.” But here it is only His blessed self who is before us, and His relations to us. “Subsisting in the form of God... He emptied Himself, taking a bondsman’s form, taking His place in the likeness of men,” and was obedient in this place, “even unto death.” Here was a wondrous thing; paradise never presented anything like it. The innocent man, in the midst of the garden that the Lord God had planted for Him, falls before the first breath of evil; but here was a Man, holy in the midst of evil, on an equality with God in the divine nature, yet in a bondsman’s form; self-emptied, self-humbled, that blessed Self, obedient even unto the death of the cross. This was the mind that was in Christ, this the side of the sufferings of a love as boundless as the suffering itself, this the “within” of the heart of the Second Man. The unfolding of these depths within awaited the Spirit’s presence. The precious sufferings of Christ for love and for righteousness’ sake, and even those of atonement, were never understood by the disciples during the Lord’s presence on earth, any more than the Jews had been able to look to the end of that which is abolished; that is, the Person of Jesus Christ glorified. Without the Spirit’s presence they were as little able to understand His sufferings as to contemplate His glory.

Become flesh, he tabernacled amongst us (see Revelation 7, where we read, “He that sits upon the throne shall spread his tabernacle over them”—that is, the white-robed Gentile overcomers; and Revelation 21, “The tabernacle of God is with men”) full of grace and truth. I remarked that the disciples never understood these ways of Christ, whether outward ways or those of the Spirit “within.” Before redemption is known, and the sealing of the Spirit, there is no heart nor mind for such blessed studies as these. That He had a baptism of fire to pass through, all His inmost thoughts tried by that consuming fire, and, when tried to the utmost, yielding only a sweet savor to God, this they could not understand. “But his inwards shall he wash in water, and the priest shall burn all on the altar, a burnt sacrifice, an offering made by fire, of a sweet savor unto the Lord.”

Grace and truth were manifested. All “wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth.” “He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.” And the evangelist states in a parenthetical sentence, “We have contemplated His glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a Father.” It could not be that rays of such glory should not have reached them, even before the intelligence that the Spirit’s presence imparts had been given them. There were some who received His testimonies, however feebly, and we know that it was feebly until the Spirit of truth had come. To His own He presents Himself as the object of His Father’s counsels and affections; they all centered in Him, and revealed Him as that object in a glory as of an only-begotten son with a Father. “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands.” “The Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that Himself doeth.” The Father

“hath committed all judgment unto the Son, that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father.” “All things that the Father hath are mine.”

In Hebrews 1 He is presented as “the effulgence of God’s glory, and the exact expression of His substance.” In Colossians 1 as “image of the invisible God.” It is in Jesus only that God is known, as in Him alone we know the Father. R. E.

## Hebrews 10:37

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Only "a little while,"

A moment it may be,

Ere I shall see Him face to face,

Who died, who lives for me.

Only "a little while"

The wilderness to roam,

And then the Father's house above,

My dwelling-place, my home.

Only "a little while"

To walk by faith alone,

And then without a veil to see,

And know as I am known.

Only "a little while"

To tread the path He trod,

And then the home of rest and joy,

The dwelling-place of God.

Only "a little while,"

Then watching will be o'er,

And we shall see Him face to face,

And worship evermore.

Only "a little while,"

Oh, precious, cheering word!

It may be ere this day shall close

I shall behold my Lord.

Then not "a little while,"

But through eternal days,

To sing the never-ending song

Of tribute to His praise.

L. W.

## The Blessed God

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As we pass through wilderness circumstances on our way (often so painful and trying) to the rest of God, there is nothing that so braces the soul and cheers the heart, imparting a fresh spring of life and energy and joy, as the sense of what God Himself is, and, we may add, of what He must of very necessity be, in the deep perfections of His Being. We feel the trials of the way—sorrow, suffering, pressure, need; but the soul that knows God—is acquainted with Him, well knows that of these things He is origin and source because it is His joy to bless, His nature to do good; and thus that only what is good, and worthy therefore of Himself, can ever flow from the heart of the blessed God. No taint of sin, no seed of suffering or sorrow, was there to mar that fair and wondrous scene of a completed creation when the Creator, as He looked on the work of His hands, pronounced it all very good. And as we look at the ruin and the desolation, and feel its sad effects, whether in us or without us, we can only say, “An enemy hath done this;” while we look forward to that blessed and unending rest, the rest of God Himself, in which all shall be the eternal witness, the everlasting display of goodness supreme that must expend, but can never exhaust, itself in the blessing of all within its sway.

And who would not dwell even here in heaven’s own atmosphere, and live in the cloudless light of that sun that never sets—those rays of divine love that finds its delight and satisfaction in diffusing blessedness untold on all around? Truly has it been said that heaven is the scene not only of displayed glories, but of gratified affections, and these last are surely the far richer portion of our eternal inheritance. Even here it is not display that gratifies the heart; its deepest joys are not found in what is outward and visible to others, but it is when its longings are satisfied, its yearnings stilled, its affections gratified—then, and then only, the heart rests. But there—there—it will be the prerogative of the blessed God to pour out a wealth of love, a flood-tide of infinite joy, a river of unutterable gladness flowing from the exhaustless ocean of His own fullness. There will He find His eternal delight in giving, and as we range those fields of glory, and scene after scene of inconceivable blessedness opens out before our gaze, enhanced as all will be by the sense of the depth of the ruin from which we have been brought, and the infinite price paid for our redemption, how shall we bow down in rapturous wonder before our God, and adore the love that has satisfied itself in the accomplishment of our full eternal blessing—the everlasting gratification of every holy affection of which we shall be capable. Then in a fuller, deeper way than in millennial days, will it be true that God “will rest in His love.”

There may be some that may be disposed to feel almost tantalized as they think of the contrast between their present circumstances and their future blessedness; but may I venture to remind you, my reader, if you are a child of God, that the blessed God is the same today that He will be in glory, and that you as much and as truly stand in His favor today as you will when you reach His immediate presence. His thoughts about you, His love towards you, are just the same now as they will be then. His nature—love—is unchanged and unchangeable, and He delights as much in the blessing of His saints today, as He will in that day when neither evil nor enemy shall ever again be known. When the great apostle was stoned and beaten, and hunted from city to city, was he not in

the fullness of divine favor? And when a far greater than he had to say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head," was He not as much the object of the Father's delight as now when seated on the throne of glory?

But while love gives and serves and expends and pours out, it longs to be known, and returned, and confided in; nor can it otherwise be satisfied. If in the Old Testament we read, "My son, give me thy heart," the New tells us of how the returning prodigal was seen when a long way off, and how the father ran to embrace him while his heart was filled with gladness, and the house resounded with joy. If all the gracious activities of love have failed to awaken a true response, it will not cease until it has been heard. And the blessed God, who is love itself, and who knows with what a wealth of blessing and of joy He can enrich the objects of His heart, is waiting in patient love upon you, His child, that you may turn aside for a moment from the busy crowd of earthly circumstances, and taste in spirit now something of the unspeakable blessedness of His presence.

Reader, there are those that can tell you that, when pressed by earthly trial or bodily suffering, they have known such nearness, such communion with the blessed God, as has filled their souls with an incommunicable sense of blessedness. Were these then some peculiarly favored children? He has none. In His family, His heart, His love, His blessing and His blessedness, are for each and all alike, and if some but dimly apprehend these things, it is because they value Him too little to make Him their great object; while others, having set their hearts upon God Himself; will be satisfied with nothing less than the most intimate communion, the deepest enjoyment. Each one, let it ever be remembered, has just as much of the Lord as he really desires.

The tendency with each is to suppose his own trials to be either peculiar in their nature or exceptional in their extent; but granting even that they are so, do they not then afford to our God that occasion and opportunity that His love desires, to show how rich is the grace that will not only stoop in tenderest sympathy to walk with us in our trial, but that will lift us above it in spirit to taste the satisfaction and blessedness of His own presence? Many, no doubt, there are who feel it would be such a relief if they might only tell out their trials to some fellow-saint; but do we not well know that the heart of Him that sits upon the throne, and that once walked this earth in humiliation, is a heart that can enter, as no other can do, into every detail of our suffering or sorrow, and that there is something more blessed and more divine than even the tenderest sympathy, sweet and grateful though it be, and that is when, instead of bringing Christ down, as it were, into our circumstances, we rise into His, and there in that bright and blessed scene let our hearts expand in the liberty and joy of love.

Reader, it is no dream of the night, no fancy of the imagination, I seek to bring before you, but substantial realities that lie within the reach, and are made known as the proper portion, of each soul that is brought to God. He wants to be known, to be enjoyed; and being what He is, how could it be otherwise?

Heaven itself is no scene of mere negations; it is not the absence of sin and sorrow and suffering that gives it its character, neither is it indeed the light and the glory and the many mansions of the Father's house. We may be permitted to speak of these things as its scenery and circumstances; but that which will give it its character, which will constitute its essential blessedness, will be the presence of that Saviour who there is waiting for us—of God Himself too, our Father, who will find His everlasting delight in the eternal joy and blessing of the whole redeemed family.

The scenery and circumstances here are altogether different from what they will be there, but God Himself, the Sun and Center of that vast universe of bliss, is the same now as He will be then, and is as really to be known and enjoyed now as in that day of glory. And if through infinite grace we have been brought into a place of eternal favor, into relationship with the blessed God, do we not well to ask whether we answer to the desires of His heart by our finding now our home in His presence, our portion and joy in His ineffable love, and thus knowing in wilderness circumstances something of that which will constitute the eternal blessedness of heaven? "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3.) F. S. M.

"FATHER, GLORIFY THY SON, THAT THY SON ALSO MAY GLORIFY THEE."

"Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." John 17:1.

There are two great subjects in the gospel of John, distinct, if not separate, and yet blessedly connected in the unity of Godhead counsel, and in the oneness of divine operation. The first is the mission of the Son as "the Word made flesh," come down into the world as "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father," to declare Him, and make Him known. In this perfect manifestation of the Father, veiled in the mystery of the incarnation, the Son could not be hid to the anointed eyes around Him. "And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." And again, as to communicated blessing, "Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace."

Beyond this personal glory He was the pre-appointed "Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world;" and, moreover, marked out by the abiding Spirit as "He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost," and sealed by the testimony of John the Baptist— "I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God." To this must be added the confession of Nathanael, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel;" which became the occasion to Jesus for saying, "Henceforth ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." This precious chapter has thus given in outline the circle of the divine and human glories of "the Word made flesh," who was with God, and was God.

The second great subject in this gospel of John is the mission of the Holy Ghost—when the hour was come that Jesus should depart out of this world unto the Father. As He had said, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter" (or Paraclete) "will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." In fact, Christianity embraces these two divine missions of the Son of God, and of the Holy Ghost, and a new economy is formed on these wonderful changes of place; namely, the departure from this world to the Father by the Son, and from the heavens to this earth by the Holy Ghost, to abide with us forever.

Besides this, the mighty power of God was waiting to display itself anew, in "raising up Christ from the dead," and setting Him far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in that which is to come, as the center of another system.

The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, has thus laid new foundations by redemption, and fastened the corner-stones in resurrection for another creation, "according to the good pleasure of His will, which He had purposed in Himself, to the praise of His glory." By this

exaltation of the Son to His right hand in the heavens, He has “put all things under His feet” as the Son of man; and by ascension given Him to be “the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Moreover, God has made known to us the mystery of His will, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in Him in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will.

The righteous center of this new system of eternal glory is the second man, God’s beloved Son, in whom we are accepted, and in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace. We are introduced and welcomed into this divine circle of blessing as the faithful in Christ Jesus, and are established in love, so that the Spirit’s benediction flows from above according to this new order: “Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is our unalterable portion, and these are our unchanging relations by grace and glory, as new creatures, till we are caught up to meet the Lord. The good pleasure of God purposed in Himself, the counsel of His own will, the wisdom and prudence in which He has abounded toward us, have all found their center in Christ, according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” The exceeding might of God’s sovereign power has made these purposes and counsels matters of fact to us, by the incarnation, the death, and the resurrection of the exalted and glorified Son of man; and in the conscious enjoyment of our adoption as children by Jesus Christ to Himself, we worship and say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Purposed and planned in Godhead counsel before ever the world was, this great mystery, hidden in God, tarried “till the fullness of the time was come for God to send forth His Son.” Waited yet further, till “the Man in glory” had, in righteous title, been exalted into those headships, and installed by the Father of glory as the new center and beginning of the creation of God.

The mission of the Holy Ghost could not be till the Son of man was glorified, and it is in anticipation of His session at the right hand of the Majesty on high that Jesus said to His disciples, “I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him; but ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” The invisible presence of the Holy Ghost on the earth in contrast with a visible Jesus, who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, is characteristic of this epoch of Christ’s rejection by the world, and of His departure from us to be with the Father. Beyond the fact of the Spirit’s presence and dwelling with us, we learn that the Paraclete, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, “shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.”

Again, Jesus said, “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning.” Such are some of the objects of

this glorious mission of the Paraclete, sent down by the Father and the Son; but besides these ministries and their ministrations to “His own which are in the world” till Jesus comes to receive us to Himself, there are yet others. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth... if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”

The great fact of His presence is proof of the Lord’s rejection by the world, and of their sin in crucifying Him “because they believed not on Me.” The righteous One is gone to be with the Father in righteousness, and “ye see Me no more,” and hence the crisis which hangs over this world—“for judgment” from the Judge of the whole earth. For if sin and blood-guiltiness be below, where Jesus was slain, and God has exalted Him to His right hand in righteousness, what an issue remains to be settled. This will be the next great public action of God, and how can this be manifested but by judgment upon Satan, because “the prince of this world?” The usurper, the liar, the murderer from the beginning, is judged. As Convicter of the world, the Holy Ghost is come down from God, on behalf of the rejected Christ, as evidence against it, and by the testimony of His actings: at and after Pentecost by Peter and John, the sin of blood-guiltiness was brought home to them, and of righteousness and of judgment too. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their hearts, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?”

Stephen, a man “full of the Holy Ghost,” yet more completely convicted the men of Israel of sin and righteousness and judgment to come, and they were cut to the heart when he wrote the sentence of death on them— “As your fathers did, so do ye.” They gnashed upon him with their teeth, as the betrayers and murderers of Christ, and filled up the measure of Israel’s iniquity. “But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God,” and sealed this testimony with the first martyr’s blood.

Thus the Holy Ghost, by Peter and John, convicted the nation by evidence from below, where they still were; whilst Stephen convicted and wrote the sentence of guilt and condemnation upon them from the opened heavens, and by the Son of man in the glory of God above.

Moreover, Satan, the prince of this world, was judged (before the time) in the person of Ananias and Sapphira, whom he tempted to lie unto the Holy Ghost, and for which they were carried out dead. Their condemnation and punishment were his, though delayed till the day appointed, when the angel from heaven, and the key of the bottomless pit, and the great chain shall do their preparatory work, and he be finally cast into the lake of fire.

But the Holy Ghost, as Convicter of the world, has a larger and more dispensational character than to the men of Israel; for even to this day, “if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

But we pass on, and follow the Holy Ghost, in His blessed mission, and ministry, and ministrations, as the Paraclete and Instructor of the saints of God, the children of the Father, and the faithful in Christ Jesus. “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He

shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and show it unto you." This great mission of the Holy Ghost, as "the glorifier of the Son," could not take its place, as we have seen, until that greater mission of the Son, as "the glorifier of the Father," had reached its consummation in His perfect obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, followed by His exaltation at the right hand of God.

The devil had done his worst, as the liar and murderer, against God in creation, when Adam fell a prey to his temptations; but man was to become Satan's agent in a far worse outrage than that, now that the Son of God had come down from heaven as the Saviour of the world; for Jesus had showed unto His disciples that He must suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Moreover, Jesus had said, "One of you shall betray Me," and marked out the traitor by giving the sop, when He had dipped it, to Judas. He then, having received the sop, "went immediately out, and it was night." But the darkest hour on earth, and the blackest in the history of man towards God, only led the thoughts of Jesus beyond the treachery of Judas (into whom Satan had entered), that He might interpret the betrayal according to the predeterminate counsel of God. Therefore, when he was gone out, "Jesus said, Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him. If God be glorified in Him, God shall also glorify Him in Himself, and shall straightway glorify Him."

In such a world as this is, a world which lieth in the wicked one, all has to be reversed, and sin must be overcome by death; and death, the death of Christ, become the basis, and His resurrection the glorious power, in the hand of God, out of which "all things are made new." The last Adam must needs put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and make good that word of prophecy, "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction," before He could quit the lower parts of the earth, and ascend up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. He had overcome the world before He lifted up His eyes to heaven, saying, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee," founded upon this precious fact, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." The empty sepulcher below was the witness of His triumph over sin by death, and finally over death by resurrection, having obtained eternal redemption for us through His blood. The first day of the week, and the two angels in white, are a further seal from God of His own glory, and that "old things were passed away" with Adam the sinner in the crucified Christ, and that all things were become new, in life and righteousness, in a risen Lord.

Before leaving this earth for the right hand of God, He formed other and new associations, between Himself as the second man in resurrection life, and those whom He had made "His own," by redemption through His precious blood. A new beginning and another history was thus commenced upon this earth, between Jesus risen and the company of His disciples, amongst whom He again takes His place, but on the footing of His glorious victory and accomplished redemption before God, by His substitution and death. Nor is this all, important and blessed as it is to acknowledge Christ as our "wave-sheaf," and that all things are "of God," who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ; but other relations are to be made known (for the heavenly) with the Father above, as well as (for the earthly) with the Jehovah—Jesus below hereafter. He "saith unto

her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto Him, Rabboni ... Jesus saith unto her, Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things unto her.”

There is little more for Jesus to do below in the world that He made, now that He has taken His new place and title upon the earth, by right of its redemption, and, in the power of His resurrection, standing upon it and taking possession as “the Lord.” As such He gave forth His commandments, by the Holy Ghost, unto the apostles whom He had chosen, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things “pertaining to the kingdom of God.” All is over for which He came down into this ruined and groaning creation as its Redeemer, and He has won every promised blessing back for Himself and for God, as the obedient servant and Son, which had been lost by the fall of Adam, and forfeited by the children of men. Having now made all earthly blessing secure, even to the “sure mercies of David,” He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of the sight of those who looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up to the right hand of God.

Promises and covenants, patterns and types, prophecies and songs, had marked the golden pathway of “Elohim Jehovah” in this fallen creation. As the Almighty, He walked with Abraham His friend, and the patriarchs; and again, as the “I am,” with the nation and its mediator and high priest and the royal line of their kings. All and every one of these are now embodied in Christ, and made “for Him Yea, and in Him Amen,” for their full millennial glory. These are the things which are yet to have their accomplishment in time, and under the sun, for Israel and all the inhabitants of the world; and wait their manifestation when Christ comes a second time to take to Himself His great power, and reign over all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, and to fill the whole earth with the glory of God. J. E. B.

## The Former and the Latter Rain

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It is a true saying, "There is no royal road to learning," though some who learn may be more apt scholars than others. Thus is it in the things of God; there is no jumping into the position of a father in Christ, or of a full-grown spiritual man, save as each saint has been disciplined in the school of God, long or short as the period of discipline may be. Every believer is indeed complete in Christ. In Him he has a perfect standing as well as acceptance; "as He is so are we in this world," but we have to make acquaintance practically with the things which are ours, to increase in the knowledge of God, to grow up into Christ in all things, and to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In order to this there must be diligence in "adding" (2 Peter 1:5), so that we should be neither barren nor unfruitful in this knowledge, and thus have an abundant entrance ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Here we find that the experience and discipline of saints varies much. Very different is the experience of one "whose eyes look right on" from that of the man "whose eyes are in the ends of the earth." The one is going right on his way, and his experience will be the record of what he has found in the way of the Lord's choice, and the supplies of mercy and truth from Him who has made his soul to "lodge in goodness" (Psalms 25:13, margin) while walking in His paths.

Such an one will have an abundant entrance. The experience of the other will, much of it, tell of wanderings and mistakes in and through which he has had to learn himself and his own folly, as also the barrenness he has found for his own soul in the devious paths which have invited his footsteps. It will not be the record so much of attainment as of the fact that he has spent his labor for that which satisfieth not. It is the experience of a Lot, or of those who wandered in the wilderness forty years, rather than of an Abraham, a Caleb, or a Paul. In Lot we see no sense of the calling of God; he was a righteous man, but his faith scarcely rose above himself, and what in his own estimation was for his own benefit; he never laid hold of the gifts and calling of God. In the wanderers in the wilderness we find that, though the calling was known, there was no energy of faith in them to make the calling and election sure. Lot is delivered out of Sodom, and at last the people get into the land, after forty years have been spent in bringing the flesh to nothing. It is an immense thing when the soul really sees what God has taken it up for, when in the sense of what grace has given it lays hold of it, and pursues it as an object, not in any strength of its own, but in the energy and power of the Holy Ghost. There is a countervailing power, but "greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world." If one has not a clear sense of the calling, one cannot pursue it, and if our object is not in accordance with it, it must be something lower than that which God has put before us. Old habits of thought are often a hindrance to our perception. This was the difficulty with the disciples in those last moments of their company with the Lord on earth. He is unfolding to them the place to which He, as the earth-rejected One, was going, and their part with Him there, as well as the desires of His own heart, and His Father's as to them. Peter does not understand the fitness which the Lord's washing by the Word alone could give, nor Thomas that He alone was the way thither; and as to the unfoldings of the Father's thoughts, He has to say to them, at the close of His discourse with them, "Do ye now believe?" and then tell them that they would be

scattered each to his own, and leave Him alone, so little did they understand that their part was with Him. Peter would indeed have taken part with Jesus in his own way and strength, little knowing that to have this part according to the Lord's thoughts the energy of man must tumble down, and "another Comforter" enable him to enter into it.

Without going more into detail, I would only notice that in John 14 the promised Comforter is to be the power during the Lord's absence of knowing the divine Persons—the Father and the Son—and of oneness and living association with them. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in Me, and I in you." And again, to the one who keeps His commandments, "I will love him and will manifest myself to him," and "my Father will love him, and we will come to him." He would enable them also to know the things which were theirs. "He shall teach you all things," and in chapter 16, "He will guide you into all truth." And the things were, what Christ had said to them on earth – "my things" as the glorified One, and "things to come." He would demonstrate also the true condition of things as to the world which had refused Christ.

It becomes thus of immense importance, that the soul should have distinctly before it what the thoughts of the Father and the Son are about us, as now told out by the Holy Ghost sent down, and of equal importance, that we should know the power of the same Spirit, so that in faith we should make good the steps which we take in the hope of the calling.

In the Old Testament the purposes of Jehovah about a people for the earth are recorded by the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of Christ, speaking in prophecy; but the rejection of the Lord from the earth has brought out the eternal counsels of God before the world was. When the Lord was here, He came as "the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God to confirm the promises made to the fathers," and accordingly in Luke 4 He presents Himself in the synagogue at Nazareth as personally anointed with the Holy Ghost, according to Isaiah 61, to bring in Israel's blessings, only to be at once thrust out of the city, and led out to the brow of the hill to be cast down headlong. Yet He manifested the power of the Holy Ghost in casting out demons, and healing every kind of sickness, so that it might have been as the days of heaven upon earth, had the heart of man been capable of receiving the blessing thus come in the person of the lowly Saviour. But, alas! there was the rejection of the power of the Holy Ghost with which He was anointed thus to bless, and of Himself also, until all culminated in the cross, where, according to the determinate counsel of God, He was crucified for Israel's guilt, and also that He might become the propitiation for the whole world.

Ascended up on high, He received the Holy Ghost to Give down here in a twofold manner, as the former and the latter rain upon the earth. The Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost as the promise of the Father, and as the power of blessing for Israel and the earth, attested by Peter quoting the prophecy of Joel, which speaks not of the indwelling Spirit, but of its being poured out on all flesh in connection with those coming days of blessing. In Acts 3 the offer of the return of Jesus Christ, and consequently of these times of refreshing, was distinctly made by Peter to the rulers, and refused; and finally, the Holy Ghost, in that character, was definitely rejected by the stoning of Stephen. There remained His abiding presence as the promise of the Father, unfolding heavenly things (how blessedly to Stephen at that moment!) to a people who must be dissociated now from the earth, and associated with the heavens, which must still retain the rejected One. The earth is now left as it is, and Satan's energy in fallen and rebellious man possesses the scene. It

has had the witness of the blessings in store for it, by the presence of Him who was anointed by the Holy Ghost, and by the coming of the Holy Ghost Himself. It will have to await now the judgment which will sweep the power of Satan from it, "the day of vengeance of our God," ere "the Spirit can be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field... then righteousness will remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever." (Isaiah 32) Then will be the days of heaven upon earth, when the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Till then it is the wilderness still, nor can it be aught else; but we do not wait only for these times of refreshing, but for the summons to meet the Lord in the air, to be with Him in the Father's house in heavenly glory ere He comes, and we with Him, to bring them in. The effects of the cross of Christ will then be made good, both in the resurrection bodies of the saints in glory, and in millennial blessings on the earth; meanwhile the Holy Ghost is unfolding to us all the value of the cross, resurrection, and present place in glory of the Lord Jesus, as well as His coming again; and as dwelling in us, He is our power of present enjoyment of all.

Thus the wilderness becomes the place where the energy of the Spirit of God ought to be known in the present enjoyment of the revelation of the Father and the Son, and as the power of worship and service, and entrance into heavenly things. Alas it is often the place where the flesh in us is discovered, and through the exercise and discipline of the way practically annulled. Still, how blessed to have such a Comforter, faithful to Christ, abiding with us forever, and dwelling in us. It is the former rain we possess, not the latter; the power of the Spirit of God is not yet turning the wilderness into a fruitful field, but filling our hearts with heavenly springs while we are there. If the flesh is allowed, instead of enjoying the heavenly springs, we shall be murmuring because it is a wilderness, and our own blessed portion in grace will be forgotten. If the grace is tasted, there will be joy in tribulations also, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. The tribulations of the wilderness will be the opportunity for the display of the sufficiency of grace; but if the difficulties and privations to the flesh which we find there govern us, then it will be the place which God will use to chasten and judge the flesh, in order to our learning practically what His sentence upon the flesh is.

Every truth connected with the work and person of the Lord Jesus Christ must be applied to us by the Holy Ghost. How can I reckon myself to be dead, save as the death of Christ is applied to me by Him? The water of separation (Numbers 19) is the application of the judgment of sin, which took place 1,800 years ago on Calvary, in present power to the soul by the Holy Ghost through the Word. To talk about being dead with Christ is otherwise a mere doctrine. The Holy Spirit demonstrates the true character of the world and its prince, and unfolds to us what the position is into which the Lord by death and resurrection has led those who believe on Him. How else can I enter into it? The present position of the saints is characterized by His indwelling; nor is there a single blessing, which through grace is ours, that can be known and enjoyed apart from Him, while we are still down here in bodies of sin and death.

It is blessed, as we think of how oft the flesh in us grieves and hinders the Spirit, to see His power so working in an earthen vessel like Paul, that he could be "out of himself to God" (2 Corinthians 5:13), while if he were sober, it was to come down to the actual state of the saints at Corinth; but in

the energy of the Spirit he so looked at everything as it was before God, by the death and resurrection of Christ—flesh gone—and in Him new creation, that he knew nothing else. And while it is as true for us as for him, that in Christ it is new creation, and nothing else, how have we to speak of the actual condition of ourselves as saints, and the wilderness as the place where we are learning to estimate the flesh aright; and as we learn so to do, to find out what is our own true and blessed portion. We have the former rain— “the first-fruits of the Spirit.” (Romans 8:23.) We cannot too much press this on one another. In Laodicea, the apostle’s grief—those “who mind earthly things”—is fully developed. No wilderness is recognized there, nor association by the Holy Ghost with heavenly things. In Philadelphia there is present association with Christ and what is of Him. How can it be but by the Holy Ghost? for “if we live after the flesh we are about to die; but if through the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body we shall live.” Mortifying is by the Spirit, enabling us practically to apply to the deeds of the body the fact that we are dead, that the old man has been crucified with Christ. The slavery of sin in the flesh has been broken, and we are free to live in the Spirit, and thus to enjoy our own true position of sons as being led of Him by whom the cry of Abba, Father, is produced in us. What a moment will it be, when the creation will be delivered from the slavery of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God; that will be the moment of the latter rain. Then we who are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ will have, not only glory ourselves with Christ, but also the joy of administering with Him in grace to the now groaning creation the liberty of that glory.

He’ll bid the whole creation smile,

And hush its groan.

And we are to be engaged in hushing groans with Him! What then is now or place as indwelt by the Spirit? Suffering with Him, and in patience waiting for what we hope for, and have the earnest of, in the first-fruits of the Spirit—that blessed time when we shall have the redemption of the body, and our place of sonship manifested, and when our groans and those of creation will be hushed forever. Then “instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle tree;” till then, we are in the place where thorns are, and where our Lord wore them when He tasted the effects of sin in the suffering which had come in through it. Man, who was set in dominion in the earth, had let the usurper rule it, and till the bright morning of his overthrow, it is the place where those who are going to reign suffer with Him. But while groaning in sympathy with that which groans, it is ours, as having the first fruits of the Spirit, and enjoying the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and those bright anticipations of the moment when the Lord Jesus will take the place of dispenser of blessing in the power of the Holy Ghost on earth and in heaven, if only our poor hearts can hold ever such a trickling of the living water, to let that little rill go out to the need of this poor world. And if we think of our own failure as saints, but know that nothing has failed on God’s side, that with Him there is no straitening, may He enable each one of us that can put his trust in the living God to answer to the cry of the prophetic watchman, “Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.” (Isaiah 57:14.) The stumbling-blocks we encounter are the results of the Church’s, of our failure; it is not a hostile world but a corrupted Christianity that entangles our way; they are not so much the thorns of persecution as the many sorrows of worldly lusts that pierce us through. The steps of the saints drag in the desert, but the heavenly things are untouched. Christ is the same. What is founded on His death and resurrection abides. He is coming to make it good, and, blessed be His name, the

Holy Spirit abides. He may have to be occupied in showing us how little we have answered to our calling, but it is of grace that it is so; for never did He awaken in a heart the desire to lay hold on what grace has given but that it might be satisfied.

May that blessed Spirit who abides with us awaken in the heart of each saint a present answer to the thoughts and desires of the Lord Jesus about us. It is a strange mystery of love, that we who by nature are the very opposites of all that He was and is, should be taken up by Him in grace, and separated by the power of His death and resurrection from all that we were—sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and the measure of our sanctification is His place in glory. But more, that in passing through the wilderness, where our hearts are put to the test, we should learn how that love stoops to wash our feet, so that there should be no hindrance to our having part with Him. There too (in the wilderness) the Spirit unfolds to us; aye, and can fill our hearts with what we shall so soon possess. If the heart of any is thus moved to lay hold by faith of what it will be to be with Him and like Him, will it not produce a corresponding answer in the walk down here, and an echo to the voice of the Spirit and the Bride as they invite the Bright and Morning Star to come?

T. H. R.

Whenever it is necessary to clothe the truth in attractive forms to secure attention, it is a sign that the saints are becoming weary of the bread of God – which is, Christ. (Numbers 21:5)

Readings and Meditations on the Gospel of John

“Of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). This is the second place where the blessings and privileges of the saints are named. In verse 13 the position of children of God was the blessing conferred on all believers. Here it is that of His fullness we all have received. This is the necessary and blessed effect of receiving Himself, and not, as many appear to do, contenting themselves with receiving some doctrinal statement about Him. It is a far different thing to receive Himself; with Himself we receive all that He is. “His wisdom, riches, honors, powers,” all are ours; we see with His eyes, understand with His heart, feel with His affections. “Not I but Christ liveth in me,” said the apostle. “Grace upon grace,” is abundance of grace, grace piled on grace. Oh, what a God is ours, rich in grace indeed Verse 17. “For the law was given by Moses: grace and truth subsist through Jesus Christ.” The law could give neither life nor righteousness, glory (inheritance) nor promise. Weak for righteousness, but powerful to convince of its absence, it dragged the guilty one into court, and left him with mouth stopped under curse. It is precisely here that God’s gift in grace meets us in the person of Jesus Christ. Life eternal and divine righteousness are given to all who receive Him. Grace and truth were now for the first time in the world, in the person of Jesus Christ. They subsist by Him, so the true Light came into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. How blessedly the Holy Ghost proceeds in this unveiling! A Man full of grace and truth in this world, the Light that lightens every man (is light to every man) in a Man down here. Such a One dwelling amongst sinful creatures in their likeness, yet without sin. Instead of sin it was glory, glory like that of an only-begotten one with a Father shining through the darkness, which they contemplated. No one had seen God at any time; it was through a Man that He was to be declared, but that Man was the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father. (Compare 1 John 4:12.)

Verse 19. "And this is the witness of John." Nothing can be more beautiful than the prophet's testimony. He must first answer the query relative to himself; he was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Prepare Jehovah's way." Apart from his testimony or its subject he was nothing. Never before was such a witness upon earth, nor was ever such testimony committed to man. A vessel so formed, prepared, and filled, and for such service chosen, had never been appointed before. The subject of prophetic testimony himself, the voice in the wilderness, the messenger before His face, born into the world by the intervention of divine power, which the heavenly messenger, Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, is sent to announce ("for with God nothing shall be impossible"), filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb, the greatest of earthly messengers, who should go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias, whom he resembled in zeal for the Lord's glory, and desire for the people's repentance. Such was John the Baptist. "Hear me, O Lord," said the ancient prophet, "hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again;" a true priestly prayer—zeal for God, and love for His people. According to Malachi, the prophet would "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers." "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance," said the prophet of the Highest, "and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father ... I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I... He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire."

We know that it was in vain. He came neither eating nor drinking; but all they could say of the prophet of the Highest was, "He hath a devil." The day of the law and the prophets was all but ended; they hung upon the first two commandments (Matthew 12:37-40); but where was love in Israel when Jesus came? "For my love I had hatred." John resembled Elias, not in spirit only, but in making good his testimony in power. His head could not be taken from his body until his course was finished, his cry heard, "A highway for our God," and the Lord Himself fully upon the scene. In how few words how great a history His Nazariteship and life in the wilderness complete the record. A reed shaken by the wind perhaps in man's mind, and that was all; while in the same wilderness an awakened sinner would have heard a voice proclaiming the presence of Jehovah, of Him who would baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire. Gabriel's was heavenly testimony, "He shall be great before the Lord." This was confirmed by the Lord Himself. "There hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." This was the Lord's thought of him who refused to know himself, save as the voice of testimony. Such was the moral shining of the lamp which disappeared at the presence of the light. His answer to their queries, "What sayest thou of thyself?" and so forth, reveal his moral state. "I am the voice... but there standeth one among you whom ye know not." He answers the questions pertaining to himself that he may turn to his only object and glory. Glory indeed; but sorrow without end was connected with it. "They did not know him." "They have taken away my Lord," said Mary. "One whom ye know not," expresses the feelings of one who knew Him in deeper depths, but not more devotedly than poor Mary. "No man," he says again, "receives His testimony;" His own already rejected save amongst the remnant.

Verse 29. "Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." This will be the great result, no sin left, new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. This is part of His glory as Lamb of God. It does not teach that He has done it; His work is done; the effectual testimony and application of its results before God. in due time. In a similar way it is said, "The blood of Jesus

Christ cleanses from all sin;" that is, its property, so to speak. In the Old Testament we find that the blood was not sprinkled on a person a second time, nor the oil typical of the unction of the Holy Ghost. The oil follows the blood; the water of purification, on the contrary, was to be sprinkled as often as defilement was contracted. Living water mixed with the ashes of the victim, memorial of the judgment of sin in the power of the Spirit. The order and application was blood and oil. I refer to the consecration of the priests. They were first washed with water; that is, regeneration; but that is not what God seals. It is to the value of the blood of Christ that the Spirit bears testimony. The water of purification was for failure. "By one offering perfected forever;" "after that ye believed, ye were sealed;" "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet." R. E.

## The Lord Is My Portion

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Thou art Thyself my portion, Lord,  
Whatever may betide –  
My joy all through the desert way;  
My hope until that coming day;  
My meat, my think, my strength, and stay;  
My sure, unfailing Guide.  
Thou art Thyself my treasure,  
Lord, my “riches” evermore;  
All through the changing scenes of time  
All blessings in Thyself are mine,  
And in Thy glory I shall shine  
When time shall be no more.  
Thou art the precious “Lamb of God,”  
Who once for me wert slain;  
God’s judgment Thou didst bear for me,  
That I, the guilty, might go free,  
And share the Father’s “house” with Thee  
When Thou shalt come again.  
Thou art my risen, living Lord;  
Henceforth Thy claims I own.  
I want to follow day by day  
Where Thine own hand has marked the way,  
List’ning to hear, and then obey  
Thy voice, and Thine alone.  
L. W.

## Father, Glorify Thy Son, That Thy Son Also May Glorify Thee

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Ascension to the right hand of the majesty in the heavens has carried our Lord another way for us who are united to a rejected Christ above, where higher glories awaited Him, connected with, and necessary to, the hidden purposes and counsels of God from everlasting, and before ever the world was; and to these we again turn, as introduced in an earlier part of these meditations. The Holy Ghost is the testifier of the exalted Son of man, in whom every thought and purpose of the Father has found its suited center, and will as surely reach its vast and boundless accomplishment. In truth, a revelation of who and what God is has come out from God, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been declared worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing, and is gone into heaven, angels and principalities and powers being made subject unto Him. This revelation of the Father and the Son is the grand subject of the Holy Ghost's testimony, embracing as it does "the mystery of God's will, which He hath purposed in Himself," and "the mystery of Christ," according to this revelation of "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

The opening out of these mysteries in the Father and the Son, and by the mission of the Holy Ghost, had another object; namely, "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence, by the faith of Him," and hence the prayer of Ephesians 3:14.

The time was come for these mysteries, which had been hid in God, to be revealed as centered in Christ, because He had been exalted into the seat of glory, that in all things He might have the pre-eminence; and further, to make all men see "what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things." All this and more was embraced in the mission of the Holy Ghost; for, as the Spirit of truth, Jesus said, "He shall guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come." None but He could be the competent witness of the glory into which Christ had entered; but He came forth therefrom as God's witness, and the evidence to us from above. "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of mine, and show it unto you," were the words of our Lord, adding this, "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, he shall take of mine, and show it unto you." What a portion is ours, through the grace of Christ, and by the Father's love! The Holy Ghost is not only the Paraclete to the saints (as He was the convicter to the world) by His presence here upon the earth, but manifested as such by His acting through the apostles, in their various epistles of comfort and encouragement to the Church of the living God. For example, "Paul is an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus." Nor can we omit to notice again in proof the value and character of the salutation from this boundless love of God, "Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ," as our blessed and unchanging position.

Of all the epistles by the apostles, perhaps that to the Ephesians is where the Holy Ghost is most seen glorifying Christ as Christ, and Christ as the head of his body, the Church, and according to the mystery, for “to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace,” and “that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.” For now in Christ Jesus, the Son of God passed through the heavens, “there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.” By this mission of the Holy Ghost, and from the Son of man in glory, we learn how this unity, and other glories connected therewith, were effected in chapter 1 by God taking out, from the two antagonistic races of Jews and Gentiles below, an elect company as believers in Christ where Christ now is (of whom He says), “that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ.” And then as to the elect Gentiles, “in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory.” The differences, and distance, and the enmity which existed under the sun between Jews and Gentiles is gone; for Christ has abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances. “For He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us”; “so that now in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off” (Gentiles in the flesh), “are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” He came and preached peace to you which were far off and to them that were nigh (Jews); for through Him “we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

It will be observed by the scriptures quoted, that this union between these two elect companies, out of Jews and Gentiles, and their oneness in Christ, “was made by the gift and sealing of that holy Spirit of promise, which was also the earnest of the inheritance,” collectively as the heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; and corporately, with Christ, as head over all things, to the Church, which is His body. This sealing of the Spirit, and this earnest of the Spirit may be individual to faith and in a saint’s experience likewise; but we are occupied in this scripture with the mystery of “the two made one” in the mighty power of God, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and which displays itself to us ward who believe. These new formations for the glory of the Father, and the glory of the Son, and for the glory of the Holy Ghost, are those into which we are brought, and into this unity—likewise, as created anew in and through Christ Jesus. Historically, and as regards the formation of the Church, by the presence and actings of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, and as respects the ways and means appointed by God, the apostles preached to the house of Israel at Jerusalem: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, “Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

Thus began the heavenly testimony, and thus was manifested the elect company out of Israel, who should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. When the time was come for God to take out from the Gentiles a people for Himself, and He would send Peter to Cæsarea, to open “the door of faith” to Cornelius and his house, we all know how he insisted upon the existence of the middle wall of partition, and the enmity in the flesh, as an insuperable objection (saying, “Not so, Lord”) till the opened heaven and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet, and the voice that said, “Rise, Peter, kill and eat,” silenced him. Yea, “the

Spirit," true to His mission of glorifying Christ, and taking of His things, and showing them unto us, said likewise to Peter, "Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them." It was eight years after the elect, out of the untoward generation, had received the gift of the Holy Ghost at Jerusalem, that Peter was sent to the uncircumcision at Caesarea, and as he delivered his message to Cornelius, the centurion, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word, in this way plainly marking out the "first trusters in Christ;" and as plainly who those were on whom, "after they had heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation," the Holy Ghost fell. "In whom also, after that ye believed ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is also the earnest of our inheritance, till the redemption," and so forth. Two elect companies, out of these two antagonistic races of Jews and Gentiles, were thus made manifest; and the sheet from God out of heaven, and the Spirit's directions on earth, were Peter's warrant for accompanying the three men from Joppa. But the instruction by the sheet, or by the Spirit, at that time to Peter did not reveal the further mystery of how these two companies could be made one "by Christ making in himself of twain, one new man." Such an irregular action by Peter, astonished the circumcision which believed, and when the apostles and brethren which were in Judæa heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God they contended with Peter, and compelled him to fall back for his authority on the sovereignty of God and "the mystery of His will" for what had been done. "And as I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us" (the pre-trusters in Christ) "at the beginning.... Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift, as He did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; who was I, that I could withstand God? When they heard this, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, then hath God granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life."

By the sheet from heaven and the leading of the Spirit, Peter was put in precedence of James and the other apostles and brethren, who clung to Jerusalem as God's center of blessing, and to Israel as His elect people; but Peter, to whom had been given previously by Jesus the keys of the kingdom of heaven, had opened the door to the Gentiles, and "loosed them" from their disqualifications upon the earth by faith.

Remarkable as Peter's mission and ministry were, yet was he to be exceeded by Paul, to whom was revealed the secret by which these two elect companies could be made one in a risen and glorified Christ, no longer known as after the flesh, as we have already noticed in Ephesians 1:2. How very blessed it is to see all these antagonisms and enmities slain by the cross, and this middle wall of partition broken down, and the law of commandments contained in ordinances abolished, in order that in the dispensation of the fullness of times God might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him. Oneness, and union, and unity; in life, and righteousness, and eternal glory, in the Son of God's love, were comprehended in "the good pleasure of His will, which God had purposed in Himself, from before the foundation of the world." We may remind each other in passing, that even all His paths drop fatness; and thus in His ways and acts among the children of men, He made at the beginning "a planted garden in Eden, with its great mystery of Christ and the Church," before sin, and death, and Satan had found an entrance, or brought about that fall of falls, the fall of Adam. Again, oneness and union, though not unity, were set forth in the worship of Israel, whether in the tabernacle or the temple, and especially by "the golden table with its twelve loaves of shewbread," and by their blessing, which was summed up in the great high priest, with his garments of glory

and beauty, and that divine but mysterious Urim and Thummim, where lay the connecting—link with the light and glory of Jehovah, in the holiest of all.

On the other hand, what can a ruined world, and a groaning creation, and the fall of man show us, with the usurper, the god of this world as its governing power, busied with the hearts and minds of the generations of mankind that pass in and out of it, by life and death —what can all this show us and perpetuate? What but the violation of oneness, and union, and unity, in life, and righteousness, and glory too; so that the deluge could not cleanse or clear the world that was from its corruption, and the world that is must finally be burned up, and no place found for it any more. What could the living—God do for His glory but what He has done and is doing, in order to bring out of confusion and violence into oneness and union, and out of confederations and hatred into unity and love? This revelation of Himself, and the counsels and purposes which were hidden in God, are the great answer, and are the grand subject of the Holy Ghost's mission; and in testimony moreover to a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, in which God will surround Himself with all that corresponds with what He is through the ages of ages.

The indissoluble oneness, and union, and unity of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and of that mystery of mysteries, the Godhead and manhood united forever in Christ, pervade this glorious and eternal future; and this very Christ is ours by grace, and we are one with Him. By calling and adoption we have now a oneness and unity in heavenly places in Christ, that flows from Christ, as the appointed center, and formed by the Holy Ghost, as children of the Father, “of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named.” (Ephesians 3) Besides this, there will be another oneness and union in earthly places, that flows from Christ, as the Messiah of Israel, when His redeemed people shall be willing in the day of His power. As the King of kings and Lord of lords, He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet; and when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, “that God may be all in all.”

Actually, and in this present time, there is a oneness, and union, and unity in the heavenly places that is formed with Christ, who has made both one; and He sits there as head of His body, the Church, by the wisdom and greatness of God's power, and which is to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. By counsel and power God has quickened us together with Christ (as the two elect companies of Jews and Gentiles), and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. This oneness, and union, and unity which exist in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and which was revealed to us first in the mission of the Son, by the mystery of the Word made flesh (so that as Jesus said to Philip, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father... and believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?”), has been opened out afresh in the person of the Son, exalted at the right hand of God in glory. Moreover, and according to these new formations, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. J. E. B.

## The House of God – Part 3

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The temple of Solomon lasted until its destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Chronicles 36); and Ezekiel describes the departing of the glory of the Lord from it, on account of the abominations of His people, ere it was consumed with fire by the Chaldees. (See Ezekiel 8-10.) During seventy years Jerusalem was desolate (2 Chronicles 36:21; Daniel 9:2); and then, “that the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying, Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord God of heaven given me; and He hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.” (Ezra 1:1,2, and so forth.) The government, because of the sin of Judah and Israel, had been now transferred to the Gentiles, and God therefore wrought, in the first instance, through the instrumentality of Cyrus. The reader will find all the details of the return of a remnant of the two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, with priests and Levites, in response to the proclamation of the king, recorded in the book of Ezra. Not until the second year of their return did they “set forward the work of the house of the Lord.” “And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because He is good, for His mercy endureth forever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid. But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.” (Ezra 3:10-13.)

They praised the Lord with cymbals; while the priests blew with their trumpets, and sang the same song when they laid the foundation as had been sung at the dedication of Solomon’s temple. But many wept—the old men who had been eyewitnesses of the splendor of the former house. The contrast was indeed great. That was built amid the glories of the—kingdom, and at a time when that kingdom was pre-eminent; a time also of peace, prosperity, and blessing; a period which typified the reign of the Messiah, when all kings shall fall down before Him, and all nations shall serve Him. This was commenced by a feeble remnant amid the desolations of the once-glorious city, which men called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth (Lamentations 2:15), themselves the subjects of a Gentile monarch, dependent on him, by the will of God, for permission to build, and surrounded on every hand by adversaries. Still they builded; and finally, after much unfaithfulness on their part, the house was completed, and they “kept the dedication of the house of God with joy.” (Ezra 6:15-22.)

This house took the place of that which Solomon had built. There were, however, important differences. No cloud, no glory of the Lord filled this house, as in the case of the tabernacle and

the first temple; and no fire descended from heaven to consume their sacrifices, as with Moses (Leviticus 9:24) and with Solomon. (2 Chronicles 7:1.) It is this fact which makes the parallel between this remnant and the Church so interesting. Thomas believed when he saw; but the Lord announced the blessedness of those who should believe without seeing. (John 20) This was the position of this feeble remnant as well as that of ourselves. That God accepted their sacrifices and dwelt in His house was with them entirely a matter of faith—faith as based upon God’s word, in the same way, for example, as the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of those gathered to His name is apprehended only by faith, faith begotten and sustained by His own word. (Matthew 18) But so completely did the Lord regard this as His house, that He even identified it with the one it succeeded. Speaking through Haggai, one of the prophets He had used to stir up the people and encourage them in their building, He says, “The glory of this latter house,” or, as it should be translated, “The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former.” (Haggai 2:9.) The house was but one—whatever its outward circumstances—in the divine mind, and hence God’s habitation is equally with Solomon’s temple.

This house existed until the time of Herod the Great, who rebuilt it (though we have no account of this in the Scriptures) on a scale of surpassing grandeur and magnificence, and it was this temple to which Joseph and Mary carried the infant Saviour when they presented Him before the Lord. And it is a most noteworthy fact that, built as it was by an alien king—for while he professed the Jewish faith he was probably of Idumean descent—the Lord Himself recognized it as His Father’s house. Surrounded, and even filled, as it was with corruptions He yet owned it (Matthew 21:12,13; John 2:13-16, and so forth.); and it was not until His rejection by His people had been made manifest that He refused it. Then He pronounced the sentence, “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Matthew 22:38); and thereon He departed and went out of the temple. In patience and long-suffering God bore with His people, and with the corruptions of His house until there was no remedy, and then He abandoned it, as He had done before with Solomon’s temple. On His part there had been judgment mingled with grace and mercy again and again expressed; on His people’s part sin and corruption, which reached their climax in the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah Jehovah indeed who had condescended through so many centuries to have His habitation in their midst.

This closes up until millennial days the period of God’s earthly house; but even so it was only preparatory to the accomplishment of His purpose to dwell on the earth in a more excellent way. The consideration of this we reserve for another time, if He permit. E. D.

## The Testimony of the Presence of God, the Power of Assembling and Journeying

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In this chapter we get the first movement of the armies of the Lord; but before anything is set in motion the trumpets are brought into use. They were for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camp; this was their proper but not their only use. The energy of the Spirit is here brought out in public utterance before all the congregation. As the Levites were given to the priests, so here the priests are to blow the trumpets. The priest is always the type of communion with God, and here is the character of the power of gathering: it is in the power of communion. All the testimony flowed only from the mouth of those in communion with God, the testimony of those in the sanctuary. There were three special uses of the trumpets: first, gathering the congregation together—not here in figure the quickening power of the Spirit, but gathering; the energy of the Spirit in the power of communion bringing out the utterance of the Lord, and acting collectively, calling the assembly. Next, journeying. And when in the land “ye shall blow an alarm;” also, “In the day of your gladness and in your solemn days... ye shall blow,” the utterance of that which is in the mind of God. So when in war; it was not merely supplication, asking God to help them, but a memorial of their calling on God. “Be not afraid of their terror.” They were to blow an alarm; and “ye shall be remembered” in this public utterance of God’s mind; blowing an alarm because God was there to help them—not to call the people to come and help, but calling on Israel to lean on Israel’s strength. Thus it was the power of faith in the consciousness of God’s strength, God’s presence being already there. In 1 Samuel 13:3 Saul blew a trumpet, saying, “Let the Hebrews hear.” This was not according to God’s mind; for he did not say, Let Israel hear, nor, Let God hear, but, “Let the Hebrews hear.” The Gentiles called them Hebrews; God called them Israel.

The natural effect of the trumpet was gathering them together. While in the wilderness there was no question of oppression. There might be trial, but there could only be oppression in the land. It was no privilege to be in the wilderness, it was a trial; but to have God’s presence with them was a privilege. We are in these days leaving the wilderness; we know very little about war, it is more getting out of the world into the wilderness. The natural use of the trumpet was gathering the assembly together, to move onward according to the power of God’s presence, which was with them, and not for war.

We may get oppression by unfaithfulness. The apostles were occupied with the calling of assemblies—the souls of men. They never said a word against the high priest; but when they were called before rulers said, “Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye,” giving no heed to the opposition of men. The saints are not to be “fenced with a spear,” but to exercise and manifest grace. When the tares were found in the field, the servants were not to root them up, but let them grow, because they were not to exercise judgment, but grace. The fishermen gathered the good fish into vessels; their business was with the good fish. The consequence of blowing the trumpet, though it might arouse the enemy, was to bring in God.

In verse 10 there is another use of the trumpet, the utterance recognizing God and the people. "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon" (Psalms 81:3); the old moon had passed away, and now it is the new moon. "Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee" (vs. 7); but now it is "the day of their gladness," and they "sing aloud to God their strength." (vs. 1.) In Leviticus 23 we have first the Sabbath, then the passover and feast of unleavened bread, the waving of the sheaf of first-fruits and Pentecost; but Israel is left until the seventh month. "Speak unto the children of Israel in the seventh month, ye shall have a memorial of blowing of trumpets," then the feast of tabernacles, the day of gladness. (vs. 24.)

Note the sovereignty of God in ordering their journeyings; the directions here are more minute than in the beginning of the book, as showing the energy of the Spirit more than occupation with outward order. In chapter 2 it is simply, "Then the tabernacle in their midst;" here more detail. In Psalms 80:2, "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength," calling on God to act as in those days. The proper place of the ark was in the center, but it went before them; and so in Joshua 3:4, "A way they had not passed heretofore"—death. We have the power and presence of Jesus with us in our journey and our worship. If we are resting, it is to learn God; if journeying, it is for the display of God's power in ordering. Among them ought to have been the resting-place of the ark God's sovereign goodness takes its own place, beyond all set order, in seeking a resting-place for them. Thus it is now, when He putteth forth His own sheep He goeth before them; or resting, "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I." In verse 35, "Let them that hate thee flee before thee, not those that hate us." Faith blows the trumpet, the battle is the Lord's. Then, when it is resting, "Return thou unto the many thousands of Israel." J. N. D.

## Christ is Everything

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God in His grace has centered for us every blessing in Christ. Without Christ we have nothing, nothing but our sins; with Christ we have all things, and therefore want nothing besides Christ. As the apostle says, "All things are yours; for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." Hence the saying of an old writer, "If thou knowest not Christ, it matters not if thou knowest everything besides; but if thou knowest Christ, it matters not if thou knowest nothing besides."

Now it is not every believer that knows Christ. All believers—those, that is, that have peace with God—know Christ as their Saviour. They know Him in this character or relationship; but it is another thing to know Him in Himself; to have such a knowledge of Him as to be intimately acquainted with His mind, character, and ways. Those who thus know Him find their daily delight in feasting on His beauties and perfections. They value Him for what He is, if possible more than for what He has done; albeit these two things can never be separated. The apostle John indeed teaches, that to know Him that is from the beginning is the last and highest attainment the believer makes. This knowledge is the characteristic of the fathers in the family of God. (1 John 2)

Do any then inquire, where can I meet Christ—be in companionship, so to speak, with Him, so as ever to learn more of Him? The answer to this question brings out the special thought lying on our mind. The only place where we can come into contact with Christ is in the written word of God. The Lord then said to the Pharisees, "You search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." (John 5:39.) We find Christ—Christ in every aspect, position, character, and office in the Scriptures; Christ in humiliation and rejection, and Christ in exaltation and glory. The more therefore I read and meditate on God's word, the more I shall learn of Christ.

Be it, however, remembered that Christ, though revealed in the Scriptures, cannot be apprehended by any efforts of the mind. We might read the Scriptures from morning to night without one single ray of the glory of Christ falling upon our souls. It is the Holy Spirit alone who takes of Christ, and shows it unto us, much therefore—may we not say everything? —depends, upon our state of soul. If I read carelessly or hurriedly, if I have unjudged sin within my heart, and consequently a grieved Spirit, how is it possible for me to discern Christ? Like Mary, I must be at the feet of Christ, occupied, with Himself, the eye up to Him, and the ear opened to His voice, if the Holy Spirit is to reveal Him to my soul. Leisure of heart and quietness of mind are essential. But do you say, "How is it possible to have that, absorbed as we are in our daily occupations?" It is the Lord who giveth His beloved sleep. Yea, He can give our souls quietness and rest in His own presence when surrounded even by the storm and the tempest. And then, through some scripture hidden away in our hearts, He can so irradiate it with His own glory as to make it the means of an enlarged revelation of Himself to our souls.

Permit the question, "Do you desire to know more, to have more, of Christ?" There are few who would hesitate to reply, "Indeed we do." And yet it is quite true, as often said, that everyone possesses as much of Christ as he desires. Of the Israelites in the wilderness we read, that they

gathered of the manna every man according to his eating. The appetite determined the amount collected. So it really is with ourselves. Christ never withholds Himself from those who truly seek Him; nay, He responds to us far beyond our desires. The fact is, we want to have more of Christ, and something else besides. This cannot be. It must be Christ alone; Christ our only object, and then He will satisfy even beyond our utmost expectations. Philippians 3 will teach us the true method of pursuing after the knowledge of Christ while waiting to possess, and to be fully conformed to, Him in the glory. Everything is counted but dross, because of the excellency of Christ. For Him the apostle willingly suffers the loss of all things, in order to have Christ alone as His gain. Then two things mark him—concentration and purpose of heart. One thing only is before his soul, and that he resolutely pursues. The glorified Christ, who had been revealed to Him, acts upon his soul like a powerful magnet, draws him away from everything else to Himself, and begets in him the intense desire to know Him ever more fully, to have fellowship in His sufferings, and even to be made conformable to His death, in view of the glorious prospect of being raised from among the dead, when he would be with, possess, and be like Him forever. May the Lord grant to each one of us to be like-minded in this respect to His servant Paul.

E. D.

## Wandering

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“Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way?” Jeremiah 2:36; 2 Chronicles 28:16-23.

“I have against thee, that thou halt left thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and repent.” Revelation 2:4-5.

Back, thou truant! guideless going,  
Gadding much to change thy way,  
Soul corruption, in sowing,  
Broadcast too, from God astray.  
Breaking down divine defenses  
(Lines which mark the way He trod),  
Bold and wayward midst offenses,  
Loins ungirt, and feet unshod.  
Periled truant, drifting, drifting,  
“First love left”—no point to steer;  
Faithless as the quicksand’s shifting,  
Quicksand thou, with soul-wreck near.  
Self-defiant, past controlling,  
Drunken, reeling to and fro;  
Waves like mountains, rising, rolling,  
Rive and rend with wail and woe.  
Oh, what tumult, fiercely raging  
(Whirlwind-reaper, tempest-test)!  
Wildest waves— (no tears assuaging) —  
Cast thee wrecked on sorrow’s coast,  
Wearied with corruption-reaping,  
Conscience craves the path once trod;  
“First love too, aroused from sleeping,

Lifts its own remembrance-rod.  
Oh, what smiting, wailing, weeping—  
Weeping back thy way to God!  
“Weepiest thou thy love’s disaster  
Chiefly from thy soul’s dismay,  
Or for Him thou calledst Master,  
When He turned thy night today?  
“Criest thou for lost communion,  
Lost adornment of thy soul—  
Loss of all the bloom of union,  
With its fervent first control.  
My love like thine, so brief, so broken,  
Slights, alas! the Saviour’s name;  
Still His love—the cross its token—  
Meets thy tears, and grief, and shame.  
Blest contrition, God will teach thee,  
Stranded on repentance-shore;  
One unwearied cloth beseech thee,  
Watching, waiting to restore.  
Oh, what blessing He provides thee—  
Bright renewal of thy soul  
In His passion safe He hides thee,  
None but Jesus maketh whole.  
“First and Last”—He gave thee being,  
In Himself the quickening Word;  
Sought thee, brought thee back from fleeing,  
Back to blessing, back to God:  
All the ways of grace agreeing  
With the counsels of the Lord.

C. F. C.

## Readings and Meditations on the Gospel of John

In verses 14, 29 we have the testimonies of the evangelist and of the Baptist respectively. “We have contemplated his glory, a glory as of an only-begotten with a father.” “Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” These testimonies of the evangelist and the Baptist are characteristic, The Person is the same in each case, but all else different. The evangelist saw Him in the moral glory of the relationship; the creature is not in view here; the relationship was an essential one, eternal and glorious. It was not what He was for any one, but what He was with the Father. (New Trans.) Revelation has no higher heights, the tongue of man no more words. When he contemplated Messiah in the glories of His earthly kingdom, “the prayers of David were ended.”

But with the “Lamb of God taking away sin” the creature is fully in view; it implies what He is for man, but from God. This title is deeper far than that of Messiah or Son of man. The Anointed One was rejected from the beginning, and forbade His announcement as Messiah, taking the greater one of Son of man, in which name He inherits all things. When they slighted Him by this name He took a yet more exalted one; the unknown Son of Man was “the Light.” (chapter 12.) His glories come out as the darkness thickens. But a Lamb as slain, standing with the attributes of God Himself almighty power and divine wisdom—and having a place in the midst of the heavenly throne, who by redemption—toil, the suffering of death, and perfectness of every kind, had won the right—overcome—so as to take the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, and to open the seven seals, is (if one may in thought compare where all is infinitely perfect) a character of glory superior to those of Messiah and Son of man. For this was not an inheritance given, nor privilege conferred; no answer to demand, as in, “Ask of me, and I shall give thee the nations for thine inheritance,” all that will have its place; but this was higher still; His rights, as I think one has stated, were in the throne itself. He took the book out of the hand of Him that sat there, for whose glory indeed He had purchased the inheritance by blood. The saints, who surround the throne set in heaven, praise Him in this name; His title to open the book, redemption by death and suffering, they understand and appreciate.

And now the time of mighty deeds, the day of the Lord, was drawing nigh. It is before the Lamb that the heavenly saints fall down, and that the new song is sung. The Lamb's sufferings and glory had called it forth. (See also Revelation 14) When the Lamb is seen with the remnant on mount Sion, the place of the earthly royalty, the song of heavenly harpers is heard. Mount Sion was the place of interest to the heavenly saints when the Lamb was there. In the heavenly city the Lamb is the light of the glory of God that lightens it. May what we have seen and heard in these heavenly scenes and city of our God teach us better how to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” But besides taking away sin as God's Lamb, John saw Him in another character, as one upon whom the Holy Ghost descended and abode, and this without sacrifice, concerning whom he received this testimony from Him who sent him, “The same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” This could be none other than the Son of God, whether contemplated as anointed Himself with the Spirit, or baptizing others with it. In either case He must be the Son of God viewed here in His human position. There is but One who could be anointed without blood; but One who ascended on high, Man victorious; captivity taken captive, to receive as Man, and for man, the Holy Ghost—gifts for men.

We see in these last verses the two parts of Christ's work. He takes away sin as Lamb of God, and baptizes with the Holy Ghost. The heavenly scenes which we have been contemplating show us how God "Can endless glory weave From Time's misjudging shame."

What here was considered shame was the title to glory there.

Verses 35-42. The gathering commences. The testimony which gathers, "Behold the Lamb of God." Not yet what He does, but the person who passed before them was God's Lamb. It was surely a day of power. The voice that cried in the wilderness, "Prepare Jehovah's way," adds yet another cry, "Behold God's Lamb!" A blessed and a glorious testimony. It needed not many words; for the Lamb of God was none other than the "word of God," and He would "tell us all things." "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God." Simplicity is not wonderful in a man filled with the Holy Ghost; and then, if out of the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks, one name alone is heard. This ministry succeeds. The two who heard John speak leave the minister for the One ministered. They want to know where Jesus dwells. He said, "Come and see." "They came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him that day." The attraction was in the Person. We should like to know what Jesus said; but we have learned greater things than they could then have received, and have power to keep them too, by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

Verse 42. The day following is the second day; the first day is in verse 35. Now Jesus Himself gathers; and mark the contrast between His testimony and that of John. The latter says, "Behold the Lamb"; but Jesus says, "Follow me." Jesus, the lowliest of men, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many, presents Himself as the center and object for man. But "Master, where dwellest thou?" will not be an unheeded cry from anyone who is seeking to know Him.

We do not find the Church here. The gathering is in view of the kingdom, and will be taken up again at the close, when the heavenly assembly is above; but here it is the Jewish remnant which we have before us. The fig-tree, under which the Lord saw Nathanael, was the symbol of Judaism; and his confession, the terms of which are found in Psalms 2, and applied to Christ in His Jewish relations, mark Nathanael as representing the Jewish remnant. The Lord refers to Psalms 8 when He says, "Ye shall see greater things than these" —all creation subject to the Son of man—a name of far deeper import than that of King of Israel. R. E.

Father, Glorify Thy Son, That Thy Son Also May Glorify Thee

By this hidden wisdom, and through the might of His power, God has raised up His Son Jesus, as the beginning of the creation of God, to make in Himself of twain one new man, and seated Him where man never was before, "a glorious Christ," "in whom there is neither Jew nor Greek," and so forth. This unity being formed and established in Christ, as God's eternal center and object, all things are being brought into their new relations around Him, and according to these divine rules and patterns for "the temple of the Lord" and "the habitation of God." Sealed with that holy Spirit of promise in this unity with Christ, as the earnest too of our inheritance with Him in the purchased possession, and having access by one Spirit unto the Father, it follows that the new charter of our calling and portion in the house and habitation of God will be opened out to us. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;" for the new rule and order of oneness is—after the pattern of another genealogy than by

flesh and blood; namely, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” We may add in passing that the teaching of the Spirit, in the epistle to the Galatians, was to insist upon this heavenly “rule” with the family of God as “the household of faith,” and classing them as “the Israel of God.”

We all know how these elders, and patriarchs, and prophets (of whom, the Holy Ghost tells us, the world was not worthy) get their bright records in another epistle (Hebrews 11), and take rank under “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family is named,” as in God’s household of faith, and our “cloud of witnesses.” We may add, moreover, respecting whom “as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever.” Being Christ’s, we (who were Gentiles) are “Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to promise,” and are distinguished in our turn among this family, to which else we never could have gained a title. But now who can challenge our birthrights, “if ye be Christ’s” for we take them from Him.

We have thus this oneness with the saints and this union with “the household of God,” and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, as in Ephesians 2, in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto “a holy temple in the Lord”; “in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Thus we, Gentiles in the flesh, are bidden to remember that in time past “we were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus... are made nigh by the blood of Christ;” for He is our peace who hath made both one. And having made in Himself of twain one new man, it is in this oneness, and union, and unity with Christ that we are now fellow-citizens with the saints. The middle wall of partition, and ordinances, and commandments were all condemned by God, and reckoned as out of date by Peter when he understood the lesson of the sheet let down from heaven, and the voice which said, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.” God has still His household of faith, and we are fellows with the saints; for that we and they are Christ’s, and hold our title to the promises, because grace has widened its circle of blessing “to those who are of the faith of Abraham,” who is the father of us all, and we are made at home in their company.

This oneness with “every family” and with the household of God, and this union in the temple of the Lord, and this unity in the habitation of God through the Spirit, are the formations which He who built all things has come forth to create and maintain. “As God and Father of all,” whether in the families around Him, or in His house; as the Lord in His temple; and as dwelling in His habitation, by the Spirit, at this present time in the earthly places—how truly could Jesus say, in anticipation of this divine building and this master work, “Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth... and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore, said I,” and so forth.

Wicked spirits in heavenly places, with their leader, that old serpent, the devil, have found a fresh occasion for their enmity against God and His anointed One by the revelation of these mysteries of His will and these creations in Christ Jesus; and the saints have found out, in seeking to walk worthy of their vocation, that they wrestle not against flesh and blood, while endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, but “against wicked spirits in the heavenlies.”

The wiles of the devil very soon broke in upon the Pentecostal garden and the plants of the right-hand planting, and a new sin cast its blight upon God's enclosure. A unity was violated by an outrage even against the glorifier of Christ, who was upon the earth, and when in divine operation too. Peter said, "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost? and hearing these words he fell down, and gave up the ghost." Another unity was violated even by this very Peter, whom Paul withstood to the face "For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he separated himself," and did violence to the "sheet from heaven" and to the mystery of Christ, who had made "in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace." There is danger still (if it be not too late to say so) of our limiting "the unity of the Spirit" to something we are endeavoring to keep; and thus reducing oneness, and union, and unity as of God, according to the revelation of His will, which He hath purposed in Himself, down to the littleness of "our" unity in the nineteenth century, of a divided Christendom. The truth of the gospel was also violated, and the unity of "the truth as it is in Jesus" invaded, when certain who believed rose up and said what they did in Acts 15 "Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved;" and the apostles and elders came together in Jerusalem to consider of this matter. The oneness between Jew and Gentile, and their union in Christ, as well as their unity before God in the Spirit, was largely attacked by Satan in other places, and successfully too; so that Paul demanded of some, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" In the Jerusalem council, Peter had boldly declared that God made choice among those who surrounded him, that the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the Word of the gospel and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us, and put no difference between us and them. Or, as Paul said of the Gentiles afterward, "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest," and so forth.

Their oneness with each other in Christ as Jews and Gentiles was denied; and the newly—developed mystery that Christ had made in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace, was violated on every hand; so that no wonder "the prisoner of the Lord" beseeches the Ephesians to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all long-suffering and lowliness and meekness, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." In Christ Jesus, the Head of the new creation, the man in glory, no longer known after the flesh, "the mystic man above," there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, male nor female, bond nor free. All the contrarities are abolished which existed under the sun, and a blessed unity is opened out according to the wisdom and power of God upon a new center and on another basis, where "Christ is all and in all." And this is maintained in the power and unity of the Spirit in all the other circles and relations which are connected with "the good pleasure of His will" "in Christ Jesus throughout the everlasting ages.

If we come down into our own ecclesiastical times, and consider the altered forms of our own difficulties in these last and closing days, and the dangers and snares of the devil which surround us in our path of service for God and for Christ, they are most assuredly of a very different character; and it is on this account that so many parts of the epistles, which contain practical

directions as to circumcision and the law of Moses, and meats and drinks, and days and weeks, or holydays, new moons, and sabbath days, are misunderstood by many and copied by others. A huge Christendom has come into place, and has been formed upon this handwriting of ordinances with its eastern and western churches as by law established, which had no existence in Pentecostal time, when Christianity was formed by the ascent of our Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of God as Head of His body the Church, and by the descent of the Holy Ghost to gather the members of Christ together into this unity, in hope of the nuptial-day when the marriage of the Lamb shall have come, and His Bride have made herself ready. Other and more serious violations and corruptions and outrages upon the oneness and unions and unities in the revelation of the mind of 'God overspread what is now called "the Christian world," and the Jews are personally nowhere to be seen, as converted men, like the three thousand who were added at Jerusalem, or the many thousands of Jews of whom the apostle James afterward spoke to Paul. Nevertheless, these two were the constituent and component parts of the Church of God, as in Ephesians 1, and such were made one in Christ and builded together. Nor can other parts of the epistles in the apostles' days be understood, which insist upon the blessed fact that through Him "we both have access by one Spirit to the Father," unless the middle wall be recognized, which once divided and shut us out. The law of Moses has since come in by the craft of Satan in a counterfeit way, and almost frustrated the gospel of the grace of God; and confidence in the flesh, without actual circumcision it is true, is everywhere, and the world, yes, a Christian world, is in the ascendant by the denial of the separating power of the cross, so that the wrong man is the outcome and rampant.

Moreover, the prince of this world has set up in imitation a oneness for mankind under the assumed fatherhood of God, and an open union of churches and states under the sun, and a widespread unity by a spurious confederacy which aims at "an Eirenicon," or a united Christendom. The epistle to the Galatians was written to expose the violation of this "unity of the Spirit," and comes more and more to the front every day, and is as applicable in this century as it was eighteen hundred years ago; for wherever the law is introduced as a schoolmaster it must have man in the flesh for a scholar, and the world for its college, with its high class too. In proof of the departure from Christ crucified at that time, and from union in life by the Spirit, Paul wrote to them, "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labor in vain." The pope, the patriarch, and the newly-enthroned primate of Great Britain are the three great ecclesiastical heads out of heaven, to say nothing of the prophet of Mecca; and it is enough to call attention to their power and activity in proof of the varied but combined denial and apostacy from the revelation which God has made of Himself, and His Son Jesus Christ as the only and exalted Head over all things to the Church which is His body, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

The vocation wherewith we are called of God in Christ, "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" with Him, is outraged by these counterfeits and assumptions, and the unity of the Spirit violated on this giant scale. God's declared purposes and counsels for His own glory, and the glory of His Son, and the Church's glory now and hereafter, and the blessing of every creature in heaven or on earth, are sought to be supplanted. No doubt in Scripture "the unity

of the Spirit" may in application come down into other relations in which we stand one with another; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you," though the primary object in the mission of the Holy Ghost be, as we have been considering, to glorify Christ, and to take of His things, and show them unto us.

Nor can the two comprehensive prayers in Ephesians, or that in the Colossians (to which I only now allude) be omitted either in the truth of the Spirit or as regards the Spirit's unity. In Ephesians 1 the apostle prays that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you "the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints," and so forth. In the prayer of chapter 3 it is to the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant on, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints," and so forth. The unity itself and our vocation are surely embraced in these two prayers, and the vast proportions and objects declared; and moreover the spirit of wisdom, and strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man, are seen to be our necessary qualifications for entering into this unity of the Spirit, and with this blessed purpose "that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith," or as in Colossians 1, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory." And these actings of the Spirit are essential to the unity itself, and equally so to our fellowship in this oneness and union and unity of the Spirit with the Father and the Son.

We may turn now to the lower ground of our own individual and collective and corporate relations as being likewise included in this unity of the Spirit, but where each of us views himself as a unit, and yet in this unity of life and love and glory with Christ, and through Him with the Father. It is written of us as individuals, "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" and again individually, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us;" and further to us collectively, as in the comprehensiveness of this unity in life, and these relationships in love, and in the hope of glory too, The Spirit itself beareth witness, that we are the children of God: and "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." Possibly the epistle to the Romans, from which these quotations are made, opens out our individual relations with Christ from another point of view as beginning with "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus which hath made us free from the law of sin and death." As a consequence of this power of life out of death, it is written, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." As respects life by the indwelling Spirit, and our individual relationship in love with the Father as children, it is said, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father;" nor can anything separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. This epistle to the Romans (as we know) does not treat of the Church or its Head, nor of our corporate relations to Christ as the Head of His body; but the Holy Ghost is equally true to His mission as the glorifier of Christ, by setting us in these individual relationships with Christ and the Father in life, and love, and glory as the adopted family, and brought into this unity of the Spirit by the Spirit of life, and the Spirit of adoption.

The epistle to the Philippians is likewise occupied with our individual and practical relations as having “the mind of Christ,” and with believers as united to Christ, who has made in Himself of twain one new Man, so making peace; and they are diligently endeavoring to keep this unity, and in the uniting bond of peace, when they say with Paul, “We are the circumcision, which worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have’ no confidence in the flesh.” It is not here or in the Romans that we read, “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body being many, are one body; so also is Christ.” Nor, “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Such relations as these are corporate, and are found in the Corinthian and Ephesian epistles. Perhaps it is not important to distinguish our collective relations, as they so run together in the Romans and Philippians and elsewhere, with our individual ones; though the epistle to the Hebrews addresses us distinctly as “holy brethren, and as partakers of the heavenly calling,” and bids us consider the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Indeed this may be the reason why it is collective and congregational, as Jesus is presented in His personal and official glories in the midst of a professing people, though as Christ He is “a Son over His own house, whose house are we,” and ourselves as having “an High Priest over the house of God.” Such relations would be out of place between Christ as the Head of His body, and ourselves as His members, of His flesh and of His bones; for He could not be High Priest, to that of which He is the Head, without becoming so to Himself.

The popular idea that everybody may worship God as he likes, has moreover violated the holy order and the unity of “the sanctuary, which the Lord pitched, and not man,” and is the bold refusal, if not the denial, of the veil which God has rent from the top to the bottom, and by which we now draw nigh as worshippers into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. It falsifies also the truth of worship, and the qualifications of a real worshipper; namely, “God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth;” and it vitiates the essential fact for unity in worship that there is one God and Father of all who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Finally, this will-worship set up in Christendom is an outrage upon the prerogatives of our great High Priest passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God; for this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us” as the testifier of Jesus come down to maintain His glory in the sanctuary as the great High Priest, “the Father seeking such to worship Him, as worship Him in spirit and in truth.” In all these relations of ours with Christ, and with God in the holiest, whether individual or collective, we see the power of the Holy Ghost in bringing souls into union, and fellowship with the revelation of God’s will, and in the unity of the Spirit, and our responsibility to keep it in its large dimensions.

We pass on now to consider our ecclesiastical and our corporate relations with Christ as Head of His body the Church, to which our vocation, and the unity of the Spirit, and our endeavoring to keep it (as in chapter 4) have been too much limited. Why should we not allow “the unity of the Spirit” to embrace and cover the immensity of the revelation which the Ephesian epistle unfolds, for the glory of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Ghost, according to His divine mission? Besides this we may ask, Is the unity of the Spirit restricted to our corporate and Church relations? What then do the individual relations in the Romans as children of the Father, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, unite us in? What again do our collective and priestly ones in the Hebrews

consist of, if not included in “the unity of the Spirit,” and in virtue of the anointing, which we have received of Him as worshippers in the holiest where God dwells? Again, if the Spirit, and the unity of the Spirit, are not co-extensive with the original revelation of God and with Christianity, as at Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came down to baptize all into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free, it follows that those who say so will limit the Spirit’s action to the period in which they are living, and become Protestants. Or else reduce the unity still lower, and to something they are endeavoring to keep, as the various denominations of this century have done under the generic term of Dissenters. On the other hand, if the comprehensiveness of the Spirit’s action and “the unity of the Spirit” be today the same as it ever was, and we endeavor to keep this square with the meaning of “our vocation” as at the first, and to walk worthy of it, we shall most assuredly refuse to act upon points of difference with one another, much less to divide upon them as the sects do. But, on the contrary, “speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Hint in all things, which is the Head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

There is a peculiarity “for us Gentiles” in chapter 3 which remains to be noticed—how that by revelation God made known to Paul the mystery of Christ, whereby “the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.” He was also to preach among the Gentiles “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” who aforetime were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world. Moreover, “this mystery of Christ” as Christ (who hath made both one) was not in other ages made known to the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. He was also to make all men see “what is the fellowship of the mystery,” which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God. These precious records lead one to ask, how could there be any oneness, or union, or unity outside man in the flesh except by this mystery of Christ, and only then by His making in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace? and further, that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, “having slain the enmity thereby.” How little this mystery of Christ has been before us Gentiles, as showing us the way, and the only way, by which we could have Christ, and be in Him, who were once without Christ; or have access by one Spirit to the Father, who were once without God in the world, and aliens, strangers, and foreigners, these quotations must plainly tell us. How little “this mystery of Christ” for you Gentiles, and by which we reach “the unsearchable riches of Christ I” or how little this parenthetical chapter (as it is called), which reveals it to us, has stood side by side “with the mystery of God’s will” elsewhere, we may well inquire!

In truth, whatever “the mystery of God” may be, or whatever “the, mystery of Christ,” whether in Colossians or Ephesians or elsewhere, all is revealed by the Spirit, and substantiated by Christ and the Spirit, and kept by us in “the unity of the Spirit.” This mission of the Spirit embraces the scope of divine revelation, and these mysteries which were hid in God till Christ had taken His new place on high, and abolished in His flesh the boasted advantages of the Jew, equally with the disqualifications of the Gentile. The Spirit opens out “the mystery of Christ” for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace; for in Christ Jesus where He now is there is neither Jew nor Greek; but Christ is all and in all. “Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now

henceforth know we Him no more;" so if anyone be in Christ he is a new creation, whether Jew or Greek.

The fitting counterpart of this mystery of Christ, the new Man at the right hand of God, is shown forth by the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to Paul, and which is to usward who believe. "Ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth in Jesus: that ye have put off concerning the former conversation the old man... and have been renewed in the spirit of your mind; and have put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."

Consistently with the fact of this new creation in life, and holiness, and truth, and this unity in the mystery of Christ and of God, our apostle says, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying," "neither give place to the devil." He closes up this wondrous mystery of unity, and its completeness in us by adding, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption;" and "be ye imitators of God as dear children, and walk in love." Nor must this comprehensive unity maintain or accept any other standard than Christ in any of our relations below, ecclesiastical or otherwise. "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." So that, in brief, whether as fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, or as in the habitation of God through the Spirit, or as quickened, and raised, and seated in heavenly places in Christ as the head over all things to the Church, which is His body, or as in the hope of God's calling, and of the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, we are in this oneness, and union, and unity by the Holy Ghost as the witness, and power, and seal of our vocation. Nor 'must we limit this vast unity of the Spirit, and what we are exhorted to keep, down to a given century, whether Luther's or our own, though thankful to God for any past or present action of the Spirit in recovering grace for today. J. E. B.

There is no calling for the Christian but the calling to a risen and glorified Christ. Christ glorified is his object; but Christ down here is the pattern for his walk.

## Deuteronomy 26

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This chapter gives a kind of epitome of the book of Deuteronomy. This book is totally different to all the other books in the Pentateuch; for the people are viewed as in the land, and it is the ordering of them in the land. In the tabernacle service the question was, whether they could approach God; the point was going up to God in His holiness; but here it is the worship and blessing of God as in possession of all these blessings. We get both, because it is in going into the sanctuary that we enjoy the blessings.

You do not get here any promise made to Abraham, or anything connected with it. Verse 5 refers to Jacob; it is God delivering the people, and bringing them into the land in responsibility. Chapter 29:29, they were put upon responsibility in the land to enjoy the blessings consequent upon obedience; but supposing they were not faithful, what then? Then he says, "If thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God... then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity," and so forth. (30:2); that is, there is the promise of blessing "the revealed things." But then there are "the secret things," which are, when they had come into the land and lost everything, through disobedience, yet, if their hearts turned to the Lord, the door was not in heaven or hades, but nigh them in their heart (30:14), and if they turned to Him there was recovery; those were "the secret things."

Between chapters 26 and 30 you get the real effect of the law, a curse in chapter 27, and then in chapters 28 and 29 governmental blessings and cursings, and God— restoring them in blessing. It is striking that chapter 27 takes up the law essentially in its character. He puts six tribes to curse, and you have all the curses; and he puts six tribes to bless, and you get no blessings at all. I suppose the blessings were pronounced historically, but we are only told of the curses. In chapters 28 and 29 you get governmental blessings; they would be blessed or not according as they obeyed: that is, a distinct thing from the curses or blessings being pronounced. Chapter 26 was the normal state, the right state of Israel. I have come to bring back to God what He has given me; but the principle was, that they had not defiled themselves with the dead (vs. 14); that is, they had kept the principles of the first covenant.

The priests are left out in Deuteronomy, and the tithes given to the priests are left out too. There were three sets of tithes: the first in Numbers 18, not given to the priests directly, but the increase of the people's fields, and so forth, given to the Levites, who gave a tenth of these tithes to the priests; these were the regular tithes. But in Deuteronomy 12 and 14 you get nothing of that; the people take the tithes, their peace-offerings, and so on, and they go up to one place, for all social enjoyment was to be religiously connected with the place where God had put His name. They were to go up to Jerusalem, a leading principle in Deuteronomy to keep them from idolatry. If it was too far to take their offerings, they might sell them, and carry up their money to the place the Lord had chosen, and buy whatever they had set their heart upon, and feast upon it there. The priests are ignored, and the people go and feast upon it themselves; these were the second set of tithes. The third tithes (which Amos refers to chap. 4:4) came every third year; they eat the tithes in their house, and did not go up to Jerusalem. (See chapter 26:12.) They may have been the

second tithes, and a special ordinance about them. You do not find the first tithes specified at all in Deuteronomy. The first tithes were the tenth part of all their increase given to the Levites. (Numbers 18) The second tithes are in Deuteronomy 12 and 14., not given to the priests, but eaten by the people themselves at Jerusalem. The third are in Amos 4:4 and Deuteronomy 26:12. The priests are ignored in Deuteronomy, except in chapter 18; for there is nothing about going into the sanctuary. I do not suppose there was any sacrifice offered to Jehovah in the wilderness. (See Amos 5:25.) Amos says the people were to go into captivity “beyond Damascus.” (vs. 27.) Stephen quotes it, and says “beyond Babylon” (Acts 7:43), because it was a present dispersion. The priests in Exodus 19 were persons Moses appointed.

The very first verses of Deuteronomy are remarkable; the people took forty years for what was an eleven days’ journey. The book goes on (with a division at chapter 12) to chapter 29; then you come to the secret things after failure. The other was the development of the basis on which they enjoyed the land when they got into it. In chapter 2 they turned and took their journey into the wilderness, and wandered there. All the people perished except Joshua and Caleb; all under twenty survived. Chapter 5 begins the book with commandments and statutes. Up to that Moses had been rehearsing their history with warnings; now he begins with the ten commandments. In chapter 12 he specially marks “the place which the Lord your God shall choose,” which characterizes the body of the book, and which was to deliver them from idolatry, yet they soon had high places. In David’s time Gibeon was a great high place; the ark was at Zion. Chapter 26 is based on redemption, and not on the original promise, only in chapter 30 he goes back to the original promise, and that is “the secret things.” In Numbers it is the end of the wilderness; in Deuteronomy we are found in the land. In Numbers the priesthood closes; for Aaron dies, and it was Aaron who had carried them through the wilderness; his rod budded, not Moses’. You get in Numbers perfect justification after failure— “He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,” and so forth. (Chapter 23:21) The red heifer in Numbers 19 was for washing the people’s feet when in evil. Four prophecies are, a separated people, a justified people, a beautiful people, and Christ’s coming again. That closes the wilderness history, and then I get the being in the land, quite on distinct ground.

Our proper portion is in the holiest, and there I get two things. I have the assurance as to redemption, that I am come to God, that is a settled thing; that is, not counting on God’s faithfulness, but believing in the assurance of that which He has wrought. But then, secondly, I get its application to me; for I am going through the wilderness, and I have to get to Canaan, and there dependence comes in—everyday faith in the Lord to keep me along the journey: “Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” It is a kind of assurance that is identified with incessant dependence on God every step of the way. If I am sitting in heavenly places in Christ, there is no one there to pluck me out of His hand; but if I am walking clown here, it all depends on my dependence on the faithfulness of God. It must be constant dependence, or I am down in an instant. The moment I act in my own will I am wrong. All the “ifs” in the New Testament come in for the journey it would be blasphemous to use an “if” as to salvation; it would be calling in question the efficacy of Christ’s work. For the journey it is a different kind of assurance; it is just as sure; for “God hath spoken, and shall He not do it?” But it is not yet accomplished. Hebrews is full of “ifs;” for we are looked at there, not as in Christ, but as poor, feeble things walking on the earth, and Christ a Priest on high, therefore all conditions were looked at as finally fatal, if not kept; getting

away from Him was apostasy, "If ye continue in the faith," and so forth. (Colossians 1:23), if not, it was apostatizing from the faith. There are no "ifs" in Ephesians, because we are looked at there as sitting in heavenly places in Christ. In Colossians it is a hope laid up in heaven. Philippians always takes up salvation as something to come; it looks at justification as a future thing. In 1 Corinthians 1:7 the apostle says, "God is faithful," and yet he begins to blame them for everything they were doing. (vs. 8 is not standing but experimental work.) "At this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" When I speak of the work accomplished and done, I get that in Exodus 10:15; but there is still the other character, that we are walking through the wilderness, poor, feeble creatures, dependent on God every moment. In Philippians you get a man running a race, and doing nothing else; he has seen Christ, and he must win Him. There is no goal of attainment but Christ Himself; there is never any goal presented to us in this world for attainment; the goal is Christ in glory.

It is a wonderful thing what pains God takes with us, and the pains He takes to tell us all about it too.

Malvern, 1880. J. N. D.

## The Epistle to Titus

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The second in order of the pastoral epistles was written to Titus, Paul's own child, according to the common faith, a Greek by birth (Galatians 2:3), who accompanied Paul to Jerusalem on the occasion of the conference, at which the freedom for all who had been Gentiles from subjection to circumcision and the law of Moses was definitely determined. The presence of Titus with Paul at that time was an illustration of the truth so firmly held by the great apostle of the Gentiles.

A genuine (γεννητός) child of Paul in the faith as Timothy also was, he did not, however, apparently hold the same place in the apostle's heart as his faithful and almost constant companion, the son of Eunice, whom he called his beloved child in the last canonical epistle which came from his hand. (2 Timothy 1:2.) Titus is described as Paul's companion and fellow-laborer (2 Corinthians 8: 23), and the only special service with which his name is connected, previous to the date of the letter addressed to him, is that carried out at Corinth, first in ascertaining for Paul the state of the Corinthian assembly, and how they had responded to his epistle (2 Corinthians 2:13;7: 6); and second, by his return thither to collect their alms on behalf of the poor saints at Jerusalem.

His heart refreshed and encouraged by the manifest tokens of repentance among the saints at Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:7), he was ready, at the apostle's wish, to return there to get ready their contributions, ere Paul himself should revisit them, being full of zeal for the Christians at Corinth. On another occasion, at the close of the apostle's life, we learn that Titus had gone to Dalmatia, doubtless on some service which concerned the saints and the interests of Christ. (2 Timothy 4:10.) But at the time when this letter was penned he was in Crete, left there by Paul after a visit made between his first and second imprisonment at Rome. Crete must have been indelibly fixed in the remembrance of our apostle. Sailing under its lee, abreast of Salmone, on his voyage to Rome, and coasting along it with difficulty, they reached the Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea, in which harbor Paul counseled the centurion and those in charge of the vessel to winter. Had his advice been followed, the owner would not have lost either the vessel or its cargo. As it was he lost both; for, attempting to reach Phenice, a better harbor, they were driven along till they were shipwrecked at Melita. (Acts 27)

What opportunities Paul had of preaching whilst the vessel remained at the Fair Havens, and what results, if any, there were from his presence at that time on the island, we have no means of ascertaining. Nor do we know by whom the gospel was first preached, or any assembly there founded. To Crete, however, Paul repaired when once more free, and an assembly had been established in every city before Paul penned this letter, which, though short, is most useful, the walk and behavior of saints in different conditions and relations of life forming the subject of this communication.

Evidently Titus was one whose special sphere was the Church of God, and he is the only apostolic delegate that we read of commissioned to establish elders. To him Paul writes this letter, which in this resembled the first addressed to Timothy, in that it furnished him with credentials in support of his mission; so that all might know the authority on which— he acted in the island of Crete. "Paul, a

servant” (δο■λoς), “of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging” (or full knowledge) “of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour; to Titus, mine own child after the common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Saviour.”

Important statements are these. There is a faith which God’s word owns. It is the faith of God’s elect. Creeds there might be, religions too, diverse in character one from another. But there is something definite here spoken of—the faith of God’s elect, that which they profess, and the fruits of which are displayed in godliness or piety. There is a hope too of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised from eternity; and all this has now been manifested by the proclamation with which Paul was entrusted according to the commandment of our Saviour God. In connection with this he writes to Titus, desiring for the saints the full knowledge of the truth which is according to piety, and unfolding the communication he had for him from God in connection with things ecclesiastical (1), social (2), and civil. Commencing with things ecclesiastical, he reminds him that he had left him in Crete to set in order things that remained unordered, and to establish elders in every city. Hereupon the apostle states the qualifications needful for one who should fill such an office; for the office of elder and bishop we here see is the same. (Compare 5:5 with 5:7) The term elder was the title of respect; the term bishop or overseer was that characteristic of the work. The qualifications here enumerated are much the same as those set forth in the instructions to Timothy. But since on that occasion a prominent matter was the taking care of the assembly of God, the bishop, Timothy is reminded, should be apt to teach, ruling his house well, and having his children in subjection with all gravity. Here, where the dealing with gainsayers is the prominent thought, Titus is reminded that the children of such an one should be believers (vs. 6), and the bishop himself should hold fast the faithful word according to the teaching, so as to be able both to encourage with sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers. Most needful was that in Crete; for there were many unruly, vain talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths should be stopped; for such perverted whole houses, teaching things which ought not to be taught for the sake of base gain. Now this was not surprising.

It was in harmony with the Cretan character, as described by Epimenides, one of themselves whom Paul here quotes. “They were liars, evil beasts, slow bellies;” i.e., lazy gluttons. No wonder that such trafficked in truth, without regard to the soundness of their teaching. Temporal ends governed them, not the desire to be subject to the Spirit’s teaching nor to gain the Master’s approval. Such were to be stopped, and the bishops in the different assemblies would be doing their duty in watching, that such teaching found no place in their midst. As for the dupes of such teaching, which fell in with the natural bent of the Cretan character, Titus was to “rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men, which turn from the truth. To the pure all things are pure; but to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” Amongst a people like this God had worked, calling out from them His own, who were to break morally with their past evil ways, and to refuse all such teaching and practice as is here condemned.

Nor was it only in the assembly that no such teaching, was to be allowed. The fruits of sound doctrine were to be manifested in the social circle and in the everyday walk of life. (2) So Titus was to speak the things that become sound doctrine, watching over and exhorting the elder men, the elder women, the younger women, and the young men. Discreetness was to characterize each one in any of those classes. The elder men, the young women, and the young men, were to manifest discreetness by their deportment. The elder women would show it likewise in their admonishing the young women as to their duties in life. The special sphere of the woman—home—and the important results which would follow indirectly to the whole assembly, and, it might be, beyond it, from their quiet godly walk, are here simply set forth.

As for Titus himself, he was to be a pattern of good works—in doctrine, showing uncorruptness, gravity, a sound word that could not be condemned, that those opposed should be ashamed, having nothing evil to say, not of you, but of us; i.e. the Christian community at large. After these servants, literally slaves, come in for a word. (9, 10.) Such were to be subject to their own masters, pleasing them well in all things—not gainsaying nor robbing them—that they might adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. In a word, it is Christianity in common life on which the apostle insists, a practice in conformity with the doctrine; for it is doctrine according to godliness that we are called to hold fast. In connection with this the most ordinary duties of life are perfectly compatible; whilst to neglect them would be to afford an opportunity to the adversary to speak injuriously of the word of God (vs. 5) and to speak evil of Christians, and certainly would not be adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. (vs. 10.) To what a service is the humblest Christian called, the lowest in social rank!

But though such would result from the manifestation of Christian life and principles, they are not the motives by which we are to be actuated. Grace is to be the motive, the saving grace for all men, which has now appeared. This furnishes the subjects of it with a motive, teaching, and an expectation. The favor of God in salvation has met us in the depth of our need and guilt. If God has saved us, it is because we were lost and undone, and deserving of His wrath to rest on us forever. Hence that grace teaches us that, “denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly;” i.e. watchful over self, upright in our ways, and manifesting true piety, of which the Lord Jesus is the mystery, expecting the “blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” These things Titus was to speak, and to exhort and rebuke with all authority. And to enforce all this, Paul adds, “Let no one despise thee.”

But the saints were dwelling on earth. Hence there were responsibilities connected with civil government, and a behavior which it became them to manifest before and to men. Subjection to powers and authorities, obedience to rule, readiness for every good work, the speaking evil of no one, absence of a contentious spirit, with gentleness and the manifestation of meekness toward all; these things became the Christian, and should characterize him, as he remembered what he had been (vs. 3), and how the kindness and love towards man (lit., philanthropy) of our Saviour God has appeared, who according to His mercy has saved us through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that, being justified by God’s grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of everlasting life. Saved, redeemed, justified, partakers of the Holy Ghost, and heirs according to the

hope of everlasting life, these blessings, the fruits of the Lord's atoning death, Christians had part in. Moreover, they had part in the washing of regeneration—a washing connected morally with the new order of things, to be established by power in the kingdom when the Lord should reign. Hence, in accordance with the faithful saying here recorded by the apostle, they who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. (vs. 8.) This Titus was to affirm constantly, avoiding foolish question's, and genealogies, and contentions, and strifes about law; for they were unprofitable and vain; and shunning, or ceasing to have to do with, a heretical man after a first and second admonition, his very position condemning him.

One observes the practical character of the apostle's teaching in this epistle. If he speaks of the grace of God, and of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, he reminds us of the practical bearing which redemption by blood should have on our walk. If he speaks of the kindness and love towards man of God our Saviour, he reminds us that we are saved through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, telling us of the character of the washing, and of the power to walk for God in this scene.

Paul looked to winter at Nicopolis, where Titus was to join him, and now telling him of an opportunity for illustrating practical teaching contained in this epistle (vs. 13), and with an exhortation to the Cretan Christians to apply themselves to good works for necessary wants, that they should not be unfruitful, just the opposite to their national character, he ends with the salutation, "All that are with me salute thee. Greet them that love us in the faith. Grace be with you all."

C. E. S.

## The Failure of the Flesh

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### Notes of a Reading

In Numbers 6, 7, 8 and 9 we have had the energy of the Spirit of God in us while passing through the wilderness, and in the tenth the ark going before the children of Israel to seek out a place of rest for them—the only journey of which the Lord in this way was the conductor. In this eleventh chapter we have the history of the failure of the flesh. The whole Bible is just the history of the grace and faithfulness of God, and of the failure of man. The very purpose for which the Lord had brought Israel out of Egypt was, that He might dwell among them; and if difficulties arose, then it was, “Rise up, Lord: let them that hate thee flee before thee”; or resting, “Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel.” But there was nothing in this to satisfy the natural man; flesh cannot feed on the manna. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. “The people complained.” (vs. 1.) Whenever there is complaint in the heart the flesh is at work— “It displeased the Lord.” God being present with us, it is evident we are not satisfied with Him when there is complaining of heart. God has now sent down the Holy Ghost, that “He may abide with us forever.” But the flesh has all sorts of cravings which are contrary to the Spirit, nor can it find anything in the Spirit of God to satisfy it. If, therefore, we have murmuring and complaining of heart, we are not satisfied with what is of the Spirit of God. The heart has got away from God, and has not Him for its portion. Then the flesh is at work. A soul feeding on the Lord will not complain. It may be tried; then it will cry to the Lord. “They cried unto thee, and were delivered.” But complaining is just saying to God, “You are not enough for me.” Trial of heart does not produce complaint; it may bring forth humiliation. “The Lord heard it, and His anger was kindled.” At first it was only a partial chastening, consuming those who were in the uttermost part of the camp. They had got away from the consciousness of His presence, and if they would not know His presence in joy, they must know it in judgment and chastening.

The mixed multitude (vs. 4.) had no possession in Canaan; they “fell a lusting.” When the saints are associated with the world many thereby are defiled. “The children of Israel wept again.” They were looking for present ease and comfort, good things here, not longing for Canaan. We remember (vs. 5); now they were lusting like the mixed multitude. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” They had in heart turned back to Egypt, and, the flesh working in them, could recount all the good things which the flesh had in Egypt; and when Satan is thus drawing us back to the world, we never remember the deliverance, but what we lost by the deliverance. Then Pharaoh is most bountiful. Instead of crying out by reason of hard bondage, we remember the fish we did eat in Egypt freely. This was deception; for they ate it in bondage. We can remember the things of the flesh, but not the things of the Spirit. I may remember that I was happy in communion yesterday, but I must be under the present power of the Holy Ghost to remember what Christ is. The food of yesterday will not do for today. When under the power of present communion, we are sometimes ready to say, “My mountain stands strong; I shall never be moved.” When we’ve lost that communion, all the joy we had in it is gone. It is a constant life of faith in present exercise by the Spirit. When the saint gets into the world all things appear lovely, but then their souls are

murmuring and unhappy. But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all besides manna. (vs. 6.) They did not say that the manna was not there, but there was nothing else. So with us. It is not that Christ is not there, but saying that He will not satisfy us now in the wilderness, where we have nothing at all before our eyes but Christ to feed upon.

“The anger of the Lord was greatly kindled.” (vs. 10.) Moses said (vs. 11), “Wherefore hast thou laid this burden upon me?” Wretched me here his faith broke down. Nor does he now say “thy people,” but lays the burden on his own shoulder and breaks down; for when “I,” proud flesh, did not count upon the Lord’s love, but he began to make himself of importance, he failed. It was true Moses had been sent to deliver Israel, but it was God still; and when Moses got in the flesh, and thought it was his work and strength, he did not count on God’s love. “Have I conceived all this people?” Now in the matter of the golden calf he identified God with the people. Then he did not fail. And when they first murmured (vs. 2) he prayed unto the Lord, but now in the general failure his own faith failed. The Lord pitied His servant, and provided for it by putting some of his honor on others and taking it from him. When the heart gets off the ground of love it counts on sorrow. “Let me not see my wretchedness.” (vs. 15.) Then (vs. 17) God takes from the proper honor of Moses (the life of faith), and puts it on others to share it with him. Himself alone in immediate communion with God, such is the proper honor of the life of faith. In the Church, it is to bear others’ burdens. So with the Lord. “All the vessels of His Father’s house laid on Him.” True honor is to suffer, bearing others’ burdens without comfort from any but God. How different the mind of Moses when alone with God’s counsels, but now “not thyself alone.” (vs. 17.) In the matter of the spies he said, “Thou broughtest up this people.” And the Lord said, “I have pardoned according to thy word” (Numbers 14:20), because he referred it all to God’s glory. There was chastening of the people and merciful dealing with Moses, but with loss of honor, because of the want of the energy of faith. It was not lust in him, but despising the competency of God to guide and help. Though the Church may have lost the honor of the first glory, the Spirit is competent to bless and guide it now. The Lord may not “restore counselors as at the first;” and though He will not bear with present evil, yet present evil does not put the Lord away. If we are saying, “Is the Lord among us?” it is despising the presence of the Lord among His people, and arises from losing the joy of His presence, and then forgetting the power of His presence.

When Moses’ faith fails, then he begins to reason. (vss. 21, 22.) In this he limited the Holy One of Israel; for, whatever Israel’s sin had been, the Lord’s hand was not shortened. No matter what the difficulty we must not limit the present power of the Holy One to carry us through the wilderness.

Eldad and Medad prophesied; it was outside the order God had set up. So when some preached Christ of contention, Paul was glad of it because Christ was preached. “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets!” Whenever the Lord acts by the holy power of truth, let us say, “The Lord glorify Himself.” It is God’s prerogative to act contrary to His set order, and for us to bow to it. In the midst of failure, the energy of the Spirit of God will act spite of the failure.

In verses 31-33 there is a further testimony that the Lord was among them. It was love gave the quails, and they ought to have said, “How could we ever doubt the love of God?” but such was their persevering lust, that on they go to gratify it. It was this brought the anger of the Lord; for while the flesh was yet between their teeth the anger of the Lord was kindled against them, and He smote them with a great plague. Thus we have the failure of Israel, their dissatisfaction with their

portion in Christ, their complaining, and the heart going back to the world. Then the failure of Moses; losing the sense of the Lord's presence, with want of confidence in the energy of the Lord to bear all the burdens of His people. J. N. D.

All difficulty in connection with the reception of the truth, as well as every departure from the truth, arises from the working of the mind. Faith receives what God says, and rests in implicit confidence upon His word.

## The Corn, the Wine, and the Oil: the Divine Delight in Blessing

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It should ever be a joy to our hearts to observe the manifest delight that God has in blessing His people. Did he do it coldly, sparely, or grudgingly, the blessing would be divested of that which constitutes its highest luster, and illuminates it with its brightest charm. But He who “loveth a cheerful giver” has set us an example of His own style of blessing in no degree unworthy of Himself.

How apposite in this connection is the word of the kingdom found in Luke 6:38: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.” But here we have to remark that the words “shall men give,” simply mean “shall be given.” For, observe, this is far, very far, from the way in which men give; and that the Lord has not men in view is evident from verse 36: “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” And how blessedly do these words, “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over,” exhibit the divine fullness and amplitude of blessing: as much as ever the vessel can be made to contain, and even more than that, a “running over” for those around, is the immeasurable blessing that divine goodness lavishes upon its objects. This was then the Lord’s teaching, that His disciples might become like their Father in heaven, imitators of God as beloved children.

Take another word (Numbers 6: 22, 27) “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” How Jehovah here profusely bestows His blessing upon the people, His heart gushing out towards them! He calls Moses before Him to enact this special ordinance, and to impose upon him this new and distinguished function. As king in Jeshurun—the prophetic, the priestly, and the royal officer combined in his pre-eminently typical person—he must be the medium of displaying to Aaron and his sons the style and character of the blessing in all its fullness and richness, in all its depth and amplitude, which God would have pronounced on the people of His love. Not until we get to Deuteronomy 7:7 do we read of Jehovah’s love to Israel, and then how touchingly is it presented, “Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

Is it not fitting that a people so beloved and so distinguished should be taught the real delight of heart that Jehovah had in blessing them? “On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee, and keep thee.” Here we have the first character of their blessing.

It is the blessing of Jehovah of hosts, and its initial feature is security from evil, immunity from that to which all else were exposed. "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about His people from henceforth even forever. For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous." (Psalms 125:2,3.) For us how much more blessed a thing it is. Bodily, earthly, temporal deliverances belonged characteristically to Israel as the preserved of the Lord; but ours is a salvation marked by eternal security, not of a physical but a spiritual order, and which reaches to our very hearts and minds. Thus says the apostle, "The peace of God, which surpasses every understanding, shall guard (or garrison) your hearts and minds by Christ Jesus." Through the grace of God, the eternal security of the believer carries with it a present salvation of the soul (1 Peter 1:9), a future but no less equally assured salvation of the body (Romans 8:23), and intermediately the heart and mind kept by "the peace of God" in the unbroken serenity and profound calm which prevails in the atmosphere of His own essential presence. This is what the Holy Ghost ever seeks to make good to the faith of the children of God.

The next character of blessing is found in verse 25, "The Lord make His face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee." It is evident, from the frequent way in which this shining of the face of Jehovah is found in the Psalms, that it was a familiar thought in Israel. The most remarkable instance is that in Psalms 80: "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh," (the three tribes nearest to the Ark), "stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." (vss. 1-3); also in verse 7, "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." And again in verse 19: "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." The differences in name and title used in these verses clearly indicate the augmenting intensity of the plea for the shining forth of Jehovah's face as the Shepherd of Israel. To us its application is nothing short of the direct enjoyment of Himself, and as such expresses a specific character of blessing which no hearts like ours could or ever shall so appreciate. He never blesses us so supremely as when He makes Himself the object of our hearts, today and for eternity!

But there is a third thing: "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." With what assured confidence can the saint of God go forward when he has the Lord's countenance! It is just this which makes "the path of the just as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." His countenance illuminates the path. To have the countenance of a human patron in any given course imparts assurance and confidence in proportion to the stability of it and him; but what assurance of heart is the portion of them who are countenanced by the Lord Himself! Nor is there any divine thing ministered to us that is more deep, more steadfast, or more assuring to the heart than "the peace of God." As the apostle says, it "surpasses every understanding." "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Thus does Jehovah crown with His own name this thrice-blessed people, closing with the asseveration, "And I will bless them." Who will venture to tell us which stands out most saliently here—the strength of His purpose, or the delight of His heart in again and again and again blessing them?

But we pass on to Psalms 23:5, where the threefold blessing again meets us: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." As in Numbers 6:24-26 we get Jehovah's name presented at the head of each blessing,

similarly is the pronoun found here in each case. The Septuagint reads: "Thou hast prepared a table before me in the presence of them that afflict me; thou hast thoroughly anointed my head with oil, and thy cup cheers me like the best wine." He who provides, provides everything; He who has done it, has indeed done it all. What security for the saint; and what serenity are evidently implied in the word, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies!" It is, not that there is no enemy, but his power is so broken, and the divine resources made ours are so infinite, that we can really ignore him. As the Lord said, "Thinkest thou not that I cannot pray to my Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels"; and as the apostle in a later day tells of "a great door and effectual being opened" unto him, albeit there were many adversaries.

Take another Psalm (104:15), and again we see the threefold blessing: "Wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart." Here also are the bread (table), the oil and the wine, the positions of the first and third being reversed. The bread and the wine, each connected with the need of the heart—its joy and its strength—speak (to us, at least) of Christ in redemption to us; that bread is the bread of God, and that wine cheereth, not only man, but God also (Judges 9:13); while the oil clearly enough speaks of the Holy Ghost, through whom shines forth the glory in the face of Jesus Christ, and through whom only is there any reflection found in our faces; for it is the unction of the Holy Ghost alone that lights up the countenance with the reflection of that glorified One on high. The countenance stands for the person, and thus the face of Moses, as the mediator, so shone when (after his second forty days and forty nights he came down from the mount) that the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him. Of Stephen it is said, "They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel;" and of the Lord Himself, as the glorified Man, we read that God hath "shined in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." And as we contemplate the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. Surely all will admit that this alone can meet the significance of that word, "Oil to make his face to shine."

How fully divine blessing was presented to Israel is evident when we reflect that "the corn, the wine, and the oil," so constantly connected in Deuteronomy and other scriptures, embrace the produce of the field, the vineyard, and the orchard, all made to yield their increase in blessing from Him of whom it is said, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof."

But these things perish with the using. For us they constitute the types only of what our spiritual blessing is in its eternally rich and infinitely ample character and import. The antitype of the corn is evidently the person of Christ Himself, the One who is the fine flour of the meat-offering, and the bread of God. Of the wine we find the antitype in His work of redemption; for in this aspect alone can we understand the heart of God to be cheered by wine. As we read also in John 10:17—"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." And of the oil the antitype is seen in the Holy Ghost poured out—the holy anointing oil, "the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore." (Psalms 133:2,3.)

In this sense how significant is Hosea's prophecy of a coming day, in the which Jehovah shall hear the heavens, the heavens shall hear the earth, and the earth shall HEAR the corn, the wine, and the oil. "Then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people. Yea, the Lord will answer, and say unto His people, Behold, I will send you corn, and wine, and oil, and ye shall be satisfied therewith." (Joel 2:18,19.) Do we go too far in supposing that in that day those precious lessons which the corn, the wine, and the oil supply to us now (even as the priests ate of the first-fruits of them) will be learned by the earthly saints? And that it is in that sense the earth will hear the corn, the wine, and the oil, and the saints will in that (rather than in the natural way merely) be "satisfied therewith?" Then shall the word be fulfilled: "There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in His excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew." (Deuteronomy 33:26-28.) W. R.

## Extract from an Unpublished Letter

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“I see in my late affliction no defeat from Satan in anywise. —Contrary to that, I had been asking the Lord, and earnestly, for more practical separateness to Christ in heaven for myself and His people. And in taking from me to Himself her whom He had given me as a companion, and an ensample of unearthliness, I fancy I can see a lesson quite in harmony with the Father’s love and ways. So far as I walk in heaven I am not bereaved; it is only when walking apart from the glory of Christ, or when the weakness of the earthen vessel is in question, that there is a void and a vacuum for me to bring Christ in to fill. But He guides me afresh, and will lead me Himself whither He wills.” G. V. W.

## Your Father Knoweth

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Precious thought, My Father knoweth,  
In His love I rest;  
For whate'er my Father doeth  
Must be always best.  
Well I know the heart that planneth  
Naught but good for me;  
Joy and sorrow interwoven,  
Love in all I see.  
Precious thought, My Father knoweth,  
Careth for His child;  
Bids me nestle closer to Him  
When the storm beats wild.  
Though my earthly hopes are shattered,  
And the tear-drops fall,  
Yet He is Himself my solace,  
Yea, my "all in all".  
Sweet to tell Him all He knoweth,  
Roll on Him the care,  
Cast upon Himself the burden  
That I cannot bear.  
Then, without a care oppressing,  
Simply to lie still,  
Giving thanks to Him for all things,  
Since it is His will.  
Oh, to trust Him then more fully!  
Just to simply move

In the conscious, calm enjoyment  
Of the Father's love.  
Knowing that life's checkered pathway  
Leadeth to His rest,  
Satisfied the way He taketh  
Must be always best.  
L. W.

## Fragment

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The apostle Paul expects that every individual saint in the little assembly at Thessalonica will register a distinct disapproval of a persistent, disorderly course in one among them by his or her CONDUCT towards such an one: (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.)

It is for the recovery, and therefore surely for the blessing, of the person; it is an individual responsibility as to what is becoming action toward that person, which not one among them dared to ignore or refuse to pay. The offender is not yet looked upon as a “wicked person,” and therefore is not put away from among them.

It is action which would have preserved Corinth from the growth of all that terrible moral evil which grew up, was allowed in one among them (1 Corinthians 5), but finally exposed by the same faithful apostle. Evil which, growing on and for long, bore its bitter fruit among them, and in other and further sorrows than this. (See 1 Corinthians 1:11; 3:3, 4; 4:8; 7:6; 11:18; 14:26, and so forth.) Sorrows and confusion and evil in which all were more or less involved. Disorderly courses, unfaithfully dealt with or allowed among the saints, will end in wickedness and open sin at last, since “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

And—mark it well, for there is no respect of persons with God—where there is not this upright action of the saints towards such a person (whoever he or she may be) there will sooner or later be demoralization and trouble and sorrow in that or in any such assembly.

H. C. A.

## Power for Conflict

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This chapter begins the testimony about the work of power which the book of Joshua presents to us. The books of the Old Testament bring before our souls certain features or characters of the dealings of God with us. In Genesis we have all the great fundamental principles brought out, such as the first Adam, the type of the last Adam; Abraham, the father of the faithful; Isaac, the Son in a figure risen from the dead; and we get these types and figures of God's thoughts all through the book. In Exodus we have the priesthood brought out, and in Leviticus all that is connected with their service. Numbers is the path of faith through the wilderness, though we often see failure in it because of unbelief. In Joshua it is Christ in the energy of the Spirit leading His people through conflicts with spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. Here too failure came in through human weakness and folly. And in Judges the failure and breakdown of Israel when in possession of their privileges. In Joshua we see the way Christ acts in the, power of the Spirit in them, in obtaining their privileges. Saints are now under the leading and guidance of Christ by the Spirit, so in this book. (vs. 14) Christ comes as Captain of the Lord's host, because the Canaanite was still in the land.

As Jesus was led up of the Spirit to be tempted of the devil, so the conflicts of the saints are under the guidance of Christ by the Spirit in us, therefore there are many things, as regards the conflicts we are now in, which it will be of much blessing to our souls to notice, as they teach us our entire dependence on God in every step of the way. The first thing we find here is Jordan standing in the way. This doubtless refers primarily to Israel in the latter day, when the power of evil will overflow its banks, and Israel will have to be restored as through death by divine power. In Numbers it is patience in going through the world. In Joshua spiritual energy in taking possession by conquest of that which is in the enemy's hand, thus enabling us to realize those things which we should never have known but through this divine power in our souls. Thus Joshua is the energy of the Spirit, and not the patience of the Spirit as in Numbers.

Redemption brings us out of Egypt into the wilderness through the Red Sea; that is, through death and resurrection. Then, being brought home to God, they have the knowledge of being a people with Him; for "the Egyptians whom ye have seen today ye shall see them no more forever." And they sing the song of triumph and deliverance from Egypt, as brought home to God, before they begin their journey as a redeemed people through the wilderness. There are two points connected with this. 1st. The Lord declares Himself holy, as in the "burning bush" and the bush not consumed. 2nd. Besides the holiness of His nature, He takes a covenant relationship in the ark of the covenant of the Lord. The proper place of the ark was in the center of Israel, with all Israel around it, "to keep the charge of the Lord." And this is what we are called to do—to watch for the Lord's honor. But when Israel are taking a journey, then the ark quits its place of being kept by Israel, and goes before to seek out a resting-place for them. God thus takes His place as going before them on their journey.

God is not a consuming fire out of His people till the day of judgment, but He is now a consuming fire in His people. The patience of grace is going on with the world now, though “everyone shall be salted with fire”—His people and the world too. Now in the midst of His people His fire is working. His people are offered up to God in Christ first, and then they are salted with fire. The spiritual energy of divine grace is not absent, but the holiness of God in judgment is now in His house, not out of it. God’s fire, although burning in the bush, did not consume it, neither does the fire with which the saint is salted consume the saint. The Lord presents Himself in the burning bush as the Holy One, but as come to redeem; and they were to come back to the bush—the place where He was—and serve Him on that mountain. God started from the bush, and everything contrary to His will must be consumed. The Father judgeth every man sojourning here in the wilderness state; therefore we ought to judge ourselves first in divine intelligence. Redemption was not by the ark, but by the rod on the sea; but when they started from Sinai, where God had made them His people, then the ark of the covenant of the Lord goes before them. So when we have been brought to God and made His people, we are afterward brought to the place His hands have made. We have come to God, but not yet to the place His hands have made, for we are not yet come to our Father’s house; but being brought to God we start from the place of His presence to go through the wilderness. All the dealings of God are centered round the work of Christ. The God of holiness having brought them to Himself, His ark goes before them a three days’ journey, seeking rest for them, and they follow on as the people of His choice, enjoying the knowledge of His presence with them—He going before and leading them on, and giving them patience in the way. “For ye have need of patience” to go round this wilderness. We have not got the world, neither have we got Canaan; so if we are not contented with the manna we have nothing.

At the end of Numbers we see the Lord declaring, when Satan sought to curse Israel by the mouth of Salaam, that He beheld no iniquity in Jacob, nor saw perverseness in Israel; still they do not come into the land yet. Numbers ends in failure, but in an unqualified determination to bring them into Canaan. Acceptance is past, but getting into Canaan is another thing. Moses could not take them into Canaan, and the book of Joshua goes on practically where Numbers ceased. In Joshua is the fact that they get into Canaan; for in the details of this book we get in figure the heavenly condition of the saints now, as in Ephesians—“Sitting in heavenly places in Christ,” but having our conflicts there, too, with wicked spirits. The book of Joshua then shows the heavenly path of the saint’s life now, while the book of Numbers is the earthly path. The Red Sea was death and resurrection by which Israel was brought to God, whereas Jordan is the saint’s moral death—death and resurrection in spiritual power. As such the saint is under the Captain of our salvation—the warrior Christ in spiritual energy. The more the saint realizes what it is to go through Jordan, the great power of evil overflowing its banks so that there is no fordable place to put one’s foot upon, the deeper will be the sense of the conflict; but it is all swept away so that there is no passing through the water at all. To have a heavenly life here, or enjoy a heavenly life hereafter, nature must pass through death. When flesh came to deal with Satan then there were giants, and the Israelites were but as grasshoppers, and they could not go up; so God has to take them round another way.

The ark takes the first place on the journey of death to lead God’s people into it, because through death and resurrection is “the way by which ye must go; for ye have not passed this way heretofore;” that is, nature or flesh had never passed that way before. But now ye must go through

this Jordan with the whole power of death overflowing all its banks. Therefore, when ye see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God remove, “ye shall remove from your place and go after it;” that is, seeing Christ passing through the very same circumstances first, we must remove from our place of fleshly ease and follow after Him. But there is another thing true to us—that the power of spiritual life can only be enjoyed so far as we are dead to the world, and entering with spiritual energy into the conflict. Therefore the apostle, having the sentence of death in himself, could go into the conflict saying, “I am a dead man trusting the living God.” You cannot pass through Jordan without going into it; you cannot fly over it. It must be passed through by the feet; but then Christ passed through before us. We do not learn to pass through Jordan when in it; we learn it before. It will not do to enter Jordan by natural effort; it must be by the power of Christ’s presence in the place of death. When we have courage to follow Christ, then we find Christ, and there is no Jordan at all. Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego were raised in the world by being in Nebuchadnezzar’s court, and therefore got into the fire; but being faithful they found the Lord there, and no fire at all. The moment the priests’ feet touch the waters, the waters cease. Were we to attempt to go through Jordan in our own power, we should be drowned; but when in the power of Christ, when we “behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth passing over before into Jordan,” then we find the water all gone. We are called to take the place in resurrection which Christ has taken, and death has no more dominion over Him. Nearness to God in the place of death is divine power in the saint. The flesh would be drowned by the water overflowing its banks unless there be the manifestation of the superior power of Christ over it.

In John 18, when Judas and the band of men and officers came to take Jesus, He said, “Whom seek ye? They answered, Jesus of Nazareth”; and as soon as He said unto them “I am He,” they went backward and fell to the ground, thus manifesting the superiority of divine life in a man over the whole power of evil. Therefore, we do not get the scene in Gethsemane in this gospel, because it is the Son of God passing onward in divine energy; consequently the waters even do not touch His feet, and the whole power of evil falls down before Him. When we find our feet touching the waters of death, it is the power of the divine life of Christ over the waters of Jordan exhibited in us; for the priests were to “stand still in Jordan.” To the people Joshua said, “Hereby shall ye know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out before you the Canaanites... from the land.” It was but enumerating the catalog of things which were to be the occasion of manifesting the divine power. “The priests that bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the midst of Jordan until all the people were passed clean over Jordan;” so the power of Christ is there until everyone is gone over. If our souls are occupied about going through Jordan, we shall never be able to venture into it; but if we see Christ there, and follow Him without thinking about Jordan, but only about Him, we shall pass right through, and find no Jordan at all.

To Joshua, when the Lord was acting in the midst of His people as Captain of the Lord’s host, He said, “Loose thy shoe from off thy foot, for the place whereon thou standest is holy.”

The Lord does not bring them immediately into conflict, but first gives them the corn of the land—the natural growth of the country—and the manna ceases; for they are now at home. Thus we have not merely the strength we need to get through the evil, but the enjoyment of feeding on that which is the fruit of the land itself—feeding on Christ in heaven. They are circumcised, keep the Passover, and eat the corn of the land: the reproach of Egypt is rolled away. When we have the

taste for heavenly things, we disrelish that which savors of the reproach of Egypt; but there must always be the getting back to Gilgal. From thence begin their conflicts. Then there is the Captain of the Lord's host; for if we enter into conflict without the spirit of dependence we shall fail; there may be undetected sin, which dependence and nearness to God would have brought to light and put away. There was more trouble in conquering Ai by stratagem than if they had gone up trusting in God.

May the Lord teach us how to walk in the spirit of lowliness, and as having full confidence in Him all the way that yet remains before us, seeing it is a path we have not trod heretofore. J. N. D.

## In Christ

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As there seems to be some confusion abroad in regard to the standing of the believer, we purpose briefly to examine it, in the hope of establishing some of our readers in the truth.

1. We ask then, in the first place, Is the believer's standing found in Romans 5:2? That he is there justified through faith, has peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, is brought through Christ into the present enjoyment of God's favor, and rejoices in the hope of His glory, is plainly stated; but does all this—immense as are the blessings indicated—set forth the believer's standing? If so—for so far the believer has not died with Christ; we mean, thus far in the teaching of the epistle—he might still be in the flesh; for as yet it is only the question of sins, of guilt, that has been dealt with. Abraham was equally justified with ourselves, and, though not brought into the same blessings, his standing would then be similar, similar in that he was also in the flesh. The difference, we apprehend, would lie rather in the character of his blessings. It is quite clear that we have in this scripture the believer's judicial position, or, to speak with greater accuracy, the position into which God in His grace has judicially brought him, consequent upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; but we cannot accept this as giving us the truth of our standing.

2. Two scriptures seem to us to speak very distinctly on this subject. The Lord, speaking to His disciples, says, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John 14:20.) The apostle Paul writes, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." (Romans 8:9.) Now it is evident that our Lord is speaking of the time after the coming of the Comforter, the One who should abide with His own forever, dwelling with them and being in them. He adds, moreover, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live ye shall live also." It is then that He says, "At that day ye shall know," and so forth. This surely is Christianity—the Holy Ghost on earth and dwelling in the believer, and through this the believer able to apprehend the position of Christ, that He is in His Father, the believer in Christ, and Christ in the believer. So in Romans 8 there are three connected things—our being in Christ, the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and Christ Himself in us. (vss. 1, 9, 10.) And in the ninth verse the apostle expressly contrasts the being in the flesh with being in the Spirit, the latter conditioned by the Spirit of God dwelling in us. If therefore it is true that every believer who has peace with God has the indwelling Spirit, and that every one such is "in Christ," we are forced to the conclusion that our standing is represented only by these words. According to the contrast drawn by the apostle every unbeliever is "in the flesh," and every believer is "in the Spirit;" also "in Christ," according to the first verse. (We do not here enter into an examination of the precise force of the expressions.) "In Christ," then, we understand to set forth the standing of every believer who has been sealed of God by the Holy Ghost. That there needs an experience and practical condition for the entering into and enjoyment of this blessed truth—that God now sees us, not in Adam, in the flesh, but in Christ—is seen from the position of Romans 7 in relation to chapters 6 and 8; but that is altogether another question.

3. Another thing should be observed. The term "in Christ" is not necessarily of the same force in Romans as in 2 Corinthians 5 and Ephesians; but it has to be expounded in each place in accordance with the distinctive teaching of the epistle. For example, "In Christ," in Ephesians 2:6, undoubtedly implies union with Christ; but this could hardly be said of Romans 8:1, nor, indeed, of John 14:20. As another has said, speaking of this last passage (we quote from memory, but, we think, correctly), "It is not union, but nature and life, and our place in that nature and life." In the same way God's righteousness has a different force in Romans 3 from what it has in 2 Corinthians 5:21. In Romans it is "upon all them that believe," and this to in the place where those that believe are; but in 2 Corinthians 5 we are made God's righteousness in Christ in the place where He is.

4. Again, if the standing of the believer is found in Romans 5:2, the relative significance of the place Christ occupies at the right hand of God is missed. With all reverence be it said that a man, Christ Jesus, though the eternal Son, is in the glory of God. And just because He is there as man, it is also our place, in the wonderful grace of God, according to His eternal counsels. It is not too much to say that Christianity cannot be understood apart from the recognition of the truth that Christ is glorified as man. This decides at once the question of the believer's standing. It cannot, on this very account, be lower than "in Christ" in the place where Christ is. That is the believer's standing now; by-and-by he will be conformed to that standing, for God has predestinated us to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

5. Having then seen that our standing as believers can only be expressed by the term "in Christ," we freely admit, nay, insist upon, the fact that the believer's standing is ever the measure of his responsibility. But a right condition of soul is never begotten by contending for responsibility. It is grace that restores and establishes, and the more fully grace is understood and enjoyed, the more perfectly will the walk of the believer correspond with his standing. To know his standing is a condition for a right walk; but, even if the standing is known, the state will never be right as long as the eyes of the believer are upon himself. The danger, therefore, of the contention that "in Christ" is state or condition, and not standing, lies in the occupation of the believer with himself, and in his consequent efforts (always useless, because they suppose power on his part) to attain to a right condition of soul. The result is only legality.

6. To sum up, then, two things are to be noted. Through the work of Christ for us we are brought into a new position. We were under condemnation, but in virtue of His atoning sacrifice we now stand in the abiding favor of God. God who, in all that He is, was against us on account of our sins, is now for us on account of the efficacy of the precious blood. But this is not all. On the cross God dealt also with what we were, as well as with what we had done. We have been crucified with Christ, and thereby sin has been condemned in the flesh. (Galatians 2; Romans 8.) But if the cross closes up the history of the first man in responsibility, Christ in resurrection has taken the place of the second man; and, consequently, every believer is brought, through the death and resurrection of Christ, into a new place before God. Now it is this new place, namely, "in Christ" (not now in Adam) that represents our standing.

We hope to return to the subject in a future number, if the Lord permit. E. D.

## John 14:19

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It is of vast importance—whether for our fellowship with God in the gospel of His Son, or for our service to Christ in the Spirit, or in hope of the coming glory of the Lord—to see that the confidence and assurance of the apostles for each of these objects rested entirely on the sufficiency of God, and the supply of the grace of Christ. This is remarkably seen in the forefront of the epistle to the Corinthians: “I thank my God always on: your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by, Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by—Him.” And we may remark that this confidence in the faithfulness of God ran along side by side, and to: the extent of His own calling and purpose about them, “who shall also confirm you unto the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Moreover, it is added, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord”—thus establishing and completing the entire circle of their Christian privileges and final blessing, as well as confirming them by the assurance of “grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ” as their present portion.

The epistle to the Philippians shows likewise— that the confidence of the apostle rested on the same basis for himself and for them, and affords us another example of the sufficiency of the supply of the Spirit for the furtherance of the gospel which he preached. Through this too even “the mind of Christ” was to be manifested in Paul, as the new rule for life and walk, in all the danger and opposition that surrounded him in his service for the saints. Accordingly, he speaks to them of his earnest expectation and hope— “That in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.” Nor is this sufficiency of God and grace of Christ limited to himself; but, on the contrary, he says, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” Once more, and on a yet larger scale (which will open up to us the immediate subject of this paper), he writes, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” After this manner it is that Paul encourages these saints to rest their confidence and faith and hope upon the same foundation as his own, and for similar purposes, and to the same extent; namely, “that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christi being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.” This plantation on earth, and this right hand planting, and these plants with their flowers and fruits, only reach their perfection in the garden of the Lord at their transplanting in the day of Jesus Christ, “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Moreover, it is well to observe that “the work” spoken of here, or in the quotations from 1 Corinthians, alike embrace the coming of Jesus Christ and His appearing, and cannot be limited to our existence in this world, or to what is theologically called, the final perseverance of the saints. Maintaining such a notion as this, is only the last enthronement of self (and by the abuse of Christianity too), where it is excluded and brought to its end by the death of Christ. It is in fact only making oneself (as a saint) the object around which new ideas and expectations cling, though

false ones; and in this way, and to this extent, excluding Christ as the only but all-sufficient One, for the revelation of God's intentions concerning us, as well as the way "which it becomes Him" to adopt for their accomplishment. The spring of all present service in communion with the Father, and the Father's love to us, must be in Christ and Christ alone, and He is the glorified object of revelation to us in the Spirit's power now, and for the display of the Father's counsels eternally. Indeed it is out from the secret of God's presence, where the exalted Son of man has been raised "by the glory of the Father," that Paul received his commission from the Lord to be a minister and a witness of the things "thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear to thee." It is in accordance with this heavenly revelation from the Lord in glory, and according to this new order and rule from the Son of man, at the right hand of God, that this apostle dates his mission, and opens out his testimony to the Christ of God, who had appeared to him "above the brightness of the sun," and as such he addresses himself to "all the saints in Christ Jesus, which are at Philippi, or Corinth, or elsewhere."

By such ways and means another and a new-born company of God's elect (believers in Christ, and indwelt by the Spirit) are being gathered out from this world as "new creatures in Christ;" and so identified in life and righteousness, and in the hope of glory with the risen Lord, that Paul refuses to know them after any other pattern and name. Nor will he reckon on any other wisdom or power for the work below, than that which has been wrought in Christ on high, and "which power is to usward who believe." On such a foundation as this is—for another creation, and with the Second Man as the head and beginning thereof, to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed "that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" —what wonder is it that Paul should make his boast in the Lord for the accomplishment of this, and all besides in which Christ appeared to him— "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

Primarily in this Philippian epistle, Christ is presented in chapter 2 in the grace and perfection of His own humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, followed by the glory of His exaltation, in which God has given Him a name which is above every name. He has also issued his decree, "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God has set man for Himself on high, for every end and purpose; but all the unfoldings of the glory of His person, whether upon the earth in humiliation, or in the heavens by ascension, take their rise and spring from who and what he essentially is "as equal with God;" for who besides He could make death a new measuring reed, for His perfect obedience before God as Man, the servant Son? The hidden mystery of Christ unveils itself in this epistle, and He comes forth like the rising sun of a new system to make all plain, which else would be inexplicable as to the purposes of God, and to reveal Himself in His own light to us for their, accomplishment. Under the anointing of the Spirit, how well we understand the mystery, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but Made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men."

This Second Man—for-ordained of God—is become the firstfruits of another beginning for the new heavens and the new earth, in whom we are created anew, in righteousness and true holiness. Besides this there are changes as regards ourselves down here, which correspond to the nature and character of Christ, not only as the Second Man before God, to whose image we shall be

conformed eternally, but as our example while we are upon this earth, from which He has been rejected. For instance, Paul says of himself, "For me to live is Christ;" and again, as to these Philippians, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me."

The changes and differences between this economy, which is characterized by Christ in humiliation and rejection, of which we are speaking; and the previous one which was distinguished by Solomon upon his throne in outward splendor and prosperity, can be easily understood when compared, or rather contrasted, with each other. Such an one as our Lord Jesus Christ, having come forth from the Father, and come into this world to glorify God, and to finish the work which was given Him to do, became a new center for the display of the hidden wisdom and power of God before all the dwellers in heaven and the inhabitants of the earth, as our Kinsman-Redeemer. He entered upon this marvelous work by the mystery of His incarnation; and by the further mystery of redemption through His precious blood, accomplished in His death and resurrection, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him. Moreover, as "the Word made flesh" in Him was life, and the life was the light of men while here below, and He was led by the Spirit, through the length and breadth of this mission, that finally by atonement and propitiation He might reach His appointed place as "the Lamb of God, the taker away of the sin of the world." Lastly, as the fruit and measure thereof, according to the counsels of God, He was declared as "the same is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."

## The House of God – Part 4

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We have already traced the history of God's house from Exodus until the close of the Mosaic dispensation. During the life of our Lord on the earth there were, however, premonitions of the coming change. Speaking to the Jews He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" .... But this, the evangelist tells us, "He spake of the temple of His body." (John 2:19,21.) He said to Peter, moreover, on his confessing that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:16-18.) If we pass now to the day of Pentecost we shall see that God commenced then to dwell on earth in a new and a twofold way: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." (Acts 2:1-4.)

Now this took place according to the express promise of the Lord to His disciples: "And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." And again: "He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4,5.) The Holy Ghost then came down at Pentecost according to the Lord's word, and the effect was that God made His temple by the Spirit in the individual believer (see also 1 Corinthians 6:19); and that He made His habitation with believers collectively, even as Paul writes to the Ephesians, "Ye are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:22.) The believer therefore now was, as his Lord had been while on the earth, God's temple, and the house of God, which is the church of the living God, was now formed. It is the latter truth which is to occupy our attention, and with this object we propose to examine more closely the teaching of this chapter (Acts 2).

Speaking generally, we have in this scripture three things —the building of God's house, the mode of entrance, and the occupations of those who are within, or, to speak more accurately, of those who form it.

1. The building of the house. We read concerning Solomon's temple, that "when it was in building, it was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building." (1 Kings 6:7.) The same thing is seen precisely in respect of the house of God which was built at Pentecost. The disciples were all with one accord in one place and who were they? They were the one hundred and twenty mentioned in the previous chapter, all of whom (for Judas was no longer of the company, having by transgression fallen that he might go to his own place) were living stones which had been by

the grace of God brought into saving contact with Christ, and thus made participators of everlasting life. And the same divine power which had saved them through faith in the Lord Jesus, brought them on this day together, and put them silently in their appointed places on the one foundation-stone to form the habitation of God on the earth through the Spirit. Thus the building was raised. Christ, according to His word, had built His church, and made it ready for its divine Inhabitant. Hence just as when Moses had completed the tabernacle, and also as when Solomon had finished the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house of God (Exodus 40; 2 Chronicles 5), so here, there came suddenly a sound from heaven as of a mighty rushing wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. God manifestly took possession of the house which had that day been erected. Others might come in, and would indeed be brought in, to form part of the house ("And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (vs. 47)); but still the house of God was built. The apostle could therefore say to the Ephesians, "Ye are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit;" and to the Corinthians, "Ye are the temple of the living God." In this aspect the house of God is always looked upon as complete, and yet other believers are continually brought in to occupy their appointed places in the building. This will be at once understood if for one minute we change the term and use "church" instead of "house."

And that the Lord Himself looked upon the house as now built is seen from the connection between the second and third chapters. At the commencement of chapter 3 we read of Peter and John going up together into the temple at the hour of prayer; but the Lord had a lesson for them as well as for us in What occurred to them by the way. There was a man, lame from his mother's womb, who was carried and laid daily, not inside, but at the gate of the temple, to beg of those who entered for prayer or worship. He asked alms of Peter and John, who were, like many others, about to go into the temple. The Spirit of God used the circumstance by leading Peter to heal the lame man, as a testimony to the power of the risen Christ, and for the apostles' and our instruction. The man, be it repeated, is outside the temple, and it was there—outside—that he received the blessing. The new house of God had just been formed, and now the Holy Spirit testifies that blessing is outside of the old house and in connection with the new, a lesson which Peter and John may have failed to apprehend at the moment, but one which has been written for the edification of all whose eyes have been opened by the Spirit of God. Yes, there in Jerusalem, and on the feast-day, with no sound of hammer or ax or any tool of iron, in the midst of an unbelieving generation, and while Herod's temple was there before their eyes, and the object of the veneration of their carnal hearts, the true Solomon had built His Church of precious stones, whose luster and beauty could only be appreciated by Him who had laid them in their appointed place upon the chief corner-stone.

It is also to be remarked that here there were none but living stones, inasmuch as the house in this chapter is of the Lord's own building. (vs. 47.) So far therefore the body of Christ, although the revelation of this truth was reserved till another day—until its appointed minister had been called and qualified—and the house of God are co-extensive. That is to say, every stone of this building was also, though this was not yet understood, a member of the body of Christ; for on this day, including the three thousand souls that repented under the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit through the preaching of Peter, not one was brought in who was not really converted. All were genuine believers. It was they who received the Word who were baptized, and it was those of the same character whom the Lord afterward daily added. This fact must be distinctly stated, and

firmly maintained.

2. The house of God having been built, we find the way very plainly indicated by which souls were to be brought into it. One simple remark may perhaps clear away a difficulty for some before we enter upon this part of our subject. It is often hastily assumed that God brings souls secretly, as it were, into His house; i.e. that if He converts a soul, that soul is thereby brought into His habitation on earth. Let us then for one moment change the term “house” for a “company of believers,” for remember it is the company of believers who have a very distinct and separate existence in Acts 2 that form God’s house, and then we may ask if a soul who is born again is brought thereby into the company of believers? Nay, he may be unknown to them, and in that case could not be said to form one of their number. That God knows such an one as a believer is another thing; but the question is, as we have seen, concerning God’s habitation on earth. And since it is on earth, there is, as we shall also see, an appointed way into the company which compose this habitation. Let us look, in the first place, at the different classes brought before us. There are the one hundred and twenty who have this day been formed into the Church—God’s assembly. There are the Jews standing round about them—the “Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven” (vs. 5), those to whom Peter afterward preached. Then, lastly, there were those to whom Peter refers in his address—“All that are afar off,” a well-known scripture term for Gentiles. We have then that threefold division which the Spirit of God elsewhere makes—the Church, the Jews, and the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 10:32), a representation therefore of the whole world.

Now it was in connection with this inner circle, this central company, the church of God, that Peter, standing up with the eleven, rendered his testimony to Christ. The manifest operations of the Spirit—manifest even to the unbelieving Jews—had produced perplexity in the minds of some, and became for others an occasion of derision and mockery. Peter then, as led of the Holy Ghost, addressed himself to the multitude that came together. First of all he explained from the Scriptures the character of the manifestations they had witnessed (vss. 16-21); then he testified of “Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by Him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know.” He told them of God’s counsel as to His death, and their wickedness in His crucifixion; of His resurrection, which had been foretold in their own scriptures, and of which Peter and those with him were witnesses. (vss. 22-32.) Then he concluded with these remarkable words: “Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” (vss. 33-36.)

This was a very distinct testimony. Jesus of Nazareth, rejected and crucified by man, had been raised from the dead, exalted by the right hand of God, and made both Lord and Christ. What a contrast between the mind of God and the mind of man! And what could more plainly demonstrate man’s guilt and man’s condition? Truly the cross of Christ brought everything to the test, and not only told out what was in the heart of God, but what was also in the heart of man. This testimony of Peter was carried home to the consciences of those who heard, and, pricked in their heart, they said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the

remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” (vss. 37-39.) Now it is this answer of Peter to these penitent Jews that requires our careful attention. Two things were then to be done, and consequent on this there were two blessings to be received. They were to repent, and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Let us suppose for one minute that these Jews had truly repented, and yet refused to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Is it not plain on the very face of this scripture, that in such a case, whatever their state of heart before God, and notwithstanding that they might be truly born again, they could not have been received into the company of believers that stood before them—that, in other words, they could not be brought into the house of God on earth? For what was involved by their baptism in the name of Jesus Christ? “Know ye not,” says the apostle Paul, “that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ” (Christ Jesus, really) “were baptized into” (unto—ε■ς) “His death?” (Romans 6:3.)

It would be, therefore, not only to believe the testimony concerning His death, resurrection, and present place at the right hand of God; but it would be also their identification with Him in His death, so that, accepting death for themselves, they would thereby, in figure, be dissociated from man, and brought upon the ground of association with Christ's death; so that they henceforward would accept for themselves the place of being dead—dead with Christ—in this world. The apostle, therefore, could write to the Colossians—“If ye be dead with Christ... why, as though alive in the world?” and so forth. (Colossians 2:20.) And this death with Christ is Christian ground, and inasmuch as baptism is the divinely-appointed mode of entrance upon it, there is consequently no other way into the house of God on earth. It was therefore necessary that these Jews should repent and be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. The former would be produced by the Spirit of God working through the testimony they had heard; by the latter they would be publicly separated from the nation that had crucified the Lord Jesus—would from that moment cease to be Jews, and be brought into the number of those who were His followers on earth, and these, as we have seen, composed the house of God.

Upon their repentance and baptism two blessings were promised. The first was remission of sins, and the second was the reception of the Holy Ghost. These two things are connected, as a word or two will show. The remission of sins here is, we apprehend, that which the apostles were empowered to administer on repentance towards God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. On the profession of this, and being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, forgiveness of sins was not only entered upon as before God, connected by Him with repentance and faith, but also authoritatively declared by His servants. (See John 20:23; Acts 22:16.) Further, there was the gift of the Holy Ghost. As we have already said, these two things are connected. Everywhere in the Scriptures the gift—of the Holy Ghost is consequent upon the forgiveness of sins. Cleansed by the precious blood of Christ (as seen in figure also in the consecration of the priests and the cleansing of the leper—Exodus 29; Leviticus 14), God seals (anoints) those so cleansed with the Holy Ghost. (See Acts 10; Romans 5; 2 Corinthians 1; Ephesians 1; and so forth.)

Let us recall the divine order here presented. On repentance towards God there was baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, whereby those so baptized were brought out from among the Jews who had rejected their Messiah, and brought into the number of those who formed the house of God. Forgiveness of sins was announced to them from God, and, now in the sphere where God dwells

by the Spirit, they themselves received the Holy Ghost; and then they were not only a part of the house of God, but also, as we see with the disciples in the beginning of the chapter (vs. 4), they were indwelt by the Spirit. The Lord's words to His disciples were in this way fulfilled: "And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever; [even] the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye know Him; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." (John 14:16,17.)

There was yet more in the abounding grace of God. "For," said Peter, "the promise (the promise of these blessings which have been considered) is to you (you Jews), and to your children (these were not to be excluded), and to all that are afar off (the Gentiles—see Ephesians 11-13), even as many as the Lord our God shall call." The Church—the habitation of God—having been built, the gift of grace is proclaimed both to Jews and Gentiles, and the way was declared by which the Jew and the Gentile, in the sovereign grace of God, could pass out from the two outer circles—both of which were in the kingdom of darkness, where Satan reigned—into that new sphere which had that day been formed, where the Spirit of God acted and dwelt.

3. We call attention now, more briefly, to the occupations of those who form, and are within, the house of God. For this purpose, we may add a passage from 1 Peter. The apostle says: "Ye also, as lively" (living) "stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (2: 5.) Inasmuch as Peter deals with the priesthood of believers—the new order of priests, who take the place on earth of Aaron's family—a dignity which now attaches to all saints without exception, he is led to point out their occupation with the sacrifice of praise. It is no longer sacrifices of bulls or goats, but spiritual sacrifices suited to the spiritual house of which they formed part, as well as to those who worshipped God in spirit and in truth. They were indeed to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of their lips, giving thanks to His name. Perpetual praise and adoration were to be heard in this new and spiritual habitation of God. (Compare 1 Chronicles 9:33.)

Turning back to the Acts, we have another aspect of the employment of the saints. It says, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2:42.) They persevered in learning the mind and will of God as communicated by His servants (for at this time none of the New Testament scriptures were in existence), and hence they were brought into enjoyment of fellowship with the apostles (compare 1 John 1:3), in which those newly—converted souls delighted to be found. Then together they were gathered around the Lord at His table to commemorate His death, that death which was the foundation of all the blessings into which they had been introduced; and together also they persevered. in assembling to pour out their hearts in prayer to God.

As we gaze upon this beautiful picture of the house of God, of the energy of the Holy Ghost, producing constant praise and prayer, as well as obedience to the Word, we can truly say, in the language of the psalmist, but with another meaning, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts.... Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee."

E. D.

## 1 Corinthians 3:1-17

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This scripture demands the most careful consideration, as it occupies an important place in respect of the truth of the Church of God. As is so often the case in the epistles, the Holy Spirit uses the condition of the saints as the occasion for the unfolding of a new aspect of the Church. The Corinthian saints were carnal (σαρκινοί), and on this account the apostle could not minister the truth he would have desired, but was compelled, because of their state, to speak to them as “babes in Christ, to feed them with milk, and not with meat,” etc. (vss. 1, 2.) The evidence of their “carnality” was the formation of schools of opinion in the assembly, the existence of “divisions,” the saints ranging themselves around their self-chosen and favorite teachers; some choosing Paul, some Peter, some Apollos, and some even venturing to use the name of Christ to refuse the servants whom He had sent. The apostle seizes the opportunity to develop the true position, both of the servants and of the saints, and of both alike in relation to the Lord. “Who then,” he exclaims, “is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye have believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” It was intolerable to Paul—a heart—rending sorrow, we might say, that the name of a servant, however eminent, should come between the Lord and His people. For what were the laborers? God’s workmen—laboring in unison and fellowship, but all belonging to God.

Proceeding now further, the apostle shows what the responsibility of God’s workmen is in the work entrusted to their care. He says, “According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (vss. 10, 11.) Two things will at once strike the reader in contrast with what has been considered in a former paper. First, the apostle speaks of himself as laying the foundation, and also of himself and others as building upon it. This is a very different thing from that contained in the Lord’s words to Peter, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” And it is this difference which explains the two aspects of the house of God. The work of Christ in building His Church must of necessity be perfect. Himself in His death and resurrection, the Son of the living God (declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead), the foundation, every stone He lays upon it, like Peter himself, must be a living stone. But, as this scripture in 1 Corinthians teaches, He also entrusts the work of building to His servants, and holds them responsible for the character of their work. Paul can thus say, “I have laid the foundation” — as he was the first to proclaim the gospel in Corinth, and thus was the means of forming the assembly of God in that city. (See Acts 18) He had laid the foundation as a wise master-builder, and he warns others as to the manner in which they might build upon it, reminding them in this way of their responsibility to the Lord for the character of their work.

And looking more closely into the details of this scripture, we find that there are, or may be, three classes of builders, and that the testing of their work will take place at a future day. The apostle says, “If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it (the day) shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. (Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?) If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (vss. 12-17.) There are then, as has often been observed, the good workman, and his work good, and who receives a reward; the workman who is himself saved, but whose work is bad and is therefore burnt up, and who consequently suffers loss; and lastly there is the bad workman and his bad work—and both alike are destroyed.

What is meant by the "works" or "building" is manifest from the context. It is putting wood, hay, or stubble on the foundation, instead of gold, silver, or precious stones; i.e. bringing souls into the assembly of God who are without divine life. This may be done in two ways; by the proclamation of false doctrines—doctrines which are subversive of the truths of Christianity, setting aside, for example, the necessity of the new-birth, or the need of cleansing by the precious blood of Christ, so that natural men, men not having the Spirit of God, are introduced into the Church as the result of such teaching; or it may be done by openly and avowedly bringing into the assembly those who are not saved through faith in the Lord Jesus, including in the Church of God other than those who have the title to be within. A third case is possible; namely, the workman being deceived as to the true character of those he may introduce. In one or in all of these ways the workman may fail in responsibility to Christ as to the character of his building. He may seemingly, outwardly to the eyes of men, be a most prosperous and successful builder, while he may in reality be but piling up upon the foundation wood, hay, or stubble, for future and certain destruction. Surely all should perceive what a solemn thing it is to be engaged in building in connection with the Church of God, and at the same time learn that the character of the work done is of far more importance than its extent. Even as in the parable of the talents, fidelity and not success is that which elicits the commendation of the Lord, so here it is the nature, not the quantity, of the work which will meet with reward.

Having pointed out the different characters of building, the next thing to be observed is, that the revelation of the character of the work is left to a future day—in fact to "the day," a term, we apprehend, which signifies the appearing of the Lord. Whatever the sort of building His servants may carry on in the meantime, all abides until the fire—the fire, as usual, being a symbol of the holiness of God as applied in judgment—tries every man's work of what sort it is. We may think or judge that certain builders are doing their work badly; but who are we to judge another man's servants? To their own Master they stand or fall. Besides the fact that we are not the judges, we cannot detect the true nature of any work. We may test the methods employed by the word of God, but as to the work itself there is One only who has the necessary discernment, the infallible knowledge, and the unerring standard to obviate all possibility of mistake; and He is the One whom John saw in the Revelation who was "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and hairs were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire, and His feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and His voice as the sound of many waters. And He had in His right hand seven stars: and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and His countenance was as the sun shineth

in His strength.” (Revelation 1). To “the day” therefore which will be revealed by fire every man’s work must be left, to be pronounced upon after the perfect standard of fire has been applied to it by the Lord Himself. Knowing this, in the very next chapter Paul tells the Corinthians that it was a very small thing that he should be judged of them, or of man’s day, and he reminds them that he could not even give, a true judgment about himself, that the Lord is the Judge, and hence nothing could be truly estimated until the Lord should come, “who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts,” etc. (1 Corinthians 4)

In connection with the truth that all the work of the Lord’s servants will be left for judgment until He comes, there is another important principle to be remembered. It is that the Lord in the meanwhile bears with the work of His servants. We do not mean that He approves of it, only that as the time of judgment has not yet arrived He allows the work to remain, and does not pronounce upon its character. Thus if souls are brought wrongly into the house of God, He deals with them according to their profession, and holds them responsible for the ground they are on. The epistles everywhere bear out this statement. Take for example 1 Corinthians 10 Paul reminds the saints “how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” (vss. 1-5.) Now what object had the apostle in citing these facts of Israel’s history? It was to apply the teaching they afforded to the Church of God in Corinth, and to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours. (1:2.) He expressly says that these things happened to Israel as types—types for believers in all ages; and hence he warns the saints of their danger—the danger of lusting after evil things, of tempting Christ, of murmuring, etc. The “ifs” of the epistles, as they are called, teach the same lesson. We thus read in Colossians 1 “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled.... if ye continue in the faith.” This is not that the reconciliation is dependent upon our persevering in the faith; but rather that if we continue in the faith we are shown (not to God, who knows the secrets of all hearts) to be real believers, and if genuine believers, and not merely professors, we are reconciled. These and other passages of the same kind abundantly prove that God accepts all according to the ground they take. If brought upon the ground of Christianity, professedly associated with Christ in His death, they are spoken to as Christians, they have come under the responsibility to walk as such, and they are warned of the consequences of sin, of departing from the living God as the children of Israel did in the wilderness. (See Hebrews 3:4.) God does not say to them, “You are only professors, deceiving yourselves and others;” but He meets them where they are, supplies them in His word with tests by which such may easily discover the truth of their condition, warns them of the obligations they have incurred by being numbered amongst His people; but exposure and judgment He defers until “the day.” Not that He does not in His government judge them now. He does, for judgment begins at the house of God, but public judgment before all is left until the Lord’s appearing.

Another proof of the above principle is found in the Lord’s attitude, during His life, towards the temple at Jerusalem. The Jews had profaned it in many ways—made it a house of merchandise (John 2) and a den of thieves (Matthew 21), but He still called it His Father’s house; and He continued to recognize it as such, until, finally judging it, He said, “Your house is left unto you

desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” (Matthew 23:38,39.) And immediately we read that “Jesus went out and departed from the temple.” Until that moment, spite of the abuses and corruptions that had grown up around it, He had borne with His people, and regarded the temple as His Father’s house; but now, having judged it and them, the house was desolated by His own departure from it. In the same way—whatever the unfaithfulness of His servants, and however indeed they may corrupt the temple of God—He waits in His long-suffering and grace before He pronounces judgment upon it; and, as also in the case of the Jewish temple, He still treats it as God’s house on the earth.

We conclude therefore, on the ground of this scriptural teaching, that the house of God includes, in this wider aspect, all who have been brought upon the ground of Christianity, not only the living stones, as in 1 Peter 2, but also all whom the Lord’s servants, in their individual responsibility as builders, have introduced, whether believers or only professors. With the word of God in our hands, we may be tempted to refuse the work of this and that servant, deeming it worthless; but all must remember, we again add, that we are not the judges, that the Lord in His own time will make manifest every man’s work of what sort it is, and that in the meanwhile we must not refuse what the Lord has not rejected; that is, we must likewise acknowledge this aspect of the house of God on earth. Salvation is not secured, as this scripture shows, by being in the house of God. Wood, hay, and stubble are there equally with gold, silver, and precious stones. And moreover it must never be forgotten that the fire will test every part of it. It is therefore a solemn thing—solemn both in the view of present responsibility and of future judgment—to be within. It is also a precious privilege to be within the sphere of the abode and action of the Holy Spirit; but this very privilege neglected and slighted becomes the ground of judgment in a future day. Christendom—for Christendom for all practical purposes is conterminous with the house of God—will on this very account be the scene of unparalleled judgments. The measure of light is the measure of responsibility, and the history of Babylon in the Apocalypse reveals the character of the awful judgments that will descend upon a Christless church, on that which still claims to be the church, but from which the Holy Ghost has long departed, and which Christ has long since spued out of His mouth.

The judgment spoken of here, however, is more especially that of the builders. The one whose work abides receives a reward. Called and qualified by grace for His service, and indeed sustained in it by divine power and grace, the same grace rewards him for his faithful labor.

He whose work shall fail to stand the test of the holy fire, and is consumed as wood, hay, or stubble, is himself saved, yet so as through (δύ) fire, but he suffers loss. He had been led astray, though a real believer—led astray by human thoughts and reasonings, and, laboring after man’s methods, he had lost sight of the true character of the house of God, and thus all his service was in vain, and is not only counted as worthless, but draws down upon itself the consuming fire of judgment. The servant therefore suffers loss; he not only receives no reward, but he has also to see that all the energies of his professed life of labor for the Lord have been misdirected and in utter opposition to his Lord’s mind. The third case is sadder still; it is that of an evil servant who corrupts the temple of God. He had taken the place of a builder, and he had labored, it may be earnestly, according to his own thoughts; but by his preaching he had corrupted Christianity, denying its fundamental doctrines, and adapting it to the tastes of the natural man. Himself unconverted, he might yet have been a wise teacher, a man of progress and intellectuality, one

who had shaken off the traditions and superstitions of past ages (as men speak), and known how to harmonize the teachings of the Bible with the speculations of science and philosophy; a man consequently of a broad and catholic spirit, who would look upon all men, in such a land as this, as Christians, denying the distinction between the saved and the unsaved, bringing all alike within the pale of the Church. But the time of judgment has at length come, when his work is examined, not by the light of reason and man's ideas, but in that of the fire of the holiness of God; and what is the result? Not only are the wood, hay, and stubble consumed which such a workman had put upon the foundation of the house of God, but he himself is also destroyed (φθειρω) because he had corrupted (φθειρω) God's temple. What a warning for the teachers of Christendom, as indeed for all who take the place of service in connection with the Church of God! May all such lay it to heart, and seek, in anticipation of the time when every man's work shall be made manifest, to form a true estimate of their service in the light of God presence, and of His word.

Two observations have yet to be made; the first as caution, and the second as guidance. The fundamental error of popery, as indeed of high-churchism and sacerdotalism, if not inherent in the principle of all State churches, lies in the attribution to the house of God as man's building of that which belongs only to the Church which Christ Himself builds. The Church which Christ builds is indestructible; the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Not so popery (or the church as builded by man anywhere); but "her plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire: for strong is the Lord God that judgeth her." (Revelation 18:8.) It is therefore always necessary, when speaking of the Church of God, and what is said of it in His word (if we would be preserved from error, or misconception as to its privileges and claims) to carefully distinguish between the two aspects which are given in the Scriptures. Secondly, we find in 2 Timothy all needful direction for our path and conduct in the midst of all the corruptions which man has brought into the house of God. "Nevertheless," says Paul, "the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ" (Lord, is the correct reading) "depart from iniquity. But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work. Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call upon the Lord out of a pure heart." (2:19-22.) Man may put bad materials on the foundation, but he cannot disturb the foundation itself; he may confound the distinction between the saved and the unsaved, but the Lord is not deceived, He knows them that are His; and the responsibility that lies upon everyone who names the name of the Lord, while waiting for the day which will manifest everything, is to depart from iniquity. Then the apostle reminds us that through the activity of teachers of evil doctrines (see verses 16,18, etc.) the Church, in its outward presentation to the world, has become like to a great house which contains vessels both good and bad. The Lord's servants are to purge themselves from the vessels of dishonor if they would be qualified for the Master's approval and service. Moreover, they are to flee youthful lusts. In other words, they must be separate both from ecclesiastical and moral evil; and they must be found in the practice of every Christian grace and virtue, together with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. Such is the path for the saint amid the abounding and increasing corruption of this evil day. May the Lord give more and more of His beloved people wisdom to discern it, and strength to walk in it to the praise of His holy name.

E. D.

## The Comforter: His Objects and His Instruments

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Whatever means may be used to minister comfort to us as we pass along, it is well always to bear in mind that God is its source; and though He takes knowledge of the sorrows of all human kind, and alleviates them as it pleases Him, yet His own people are His chief objects in this ministry, which is His continual desire and delight.

There are three great channels He uses to thus minister comfort to His people which they ought to understand—channels which are entirely outside the comprehension of the natural mind. Nature is always occupied with its own little circle, and the trials or sorrows found therein; for these and from these it seeks deliverance, and without this deliverance it feels no comfort. But it is not so with the believer. Comfort is continually ministered to him in the circumstances of trial and sorrow in which he finds himself here, and oftentimes without their removal.

In so far therefore as I am as an individual thus occupied in ministering comfort to His people—comfort which of course I must first myself have received—I am in harmony with this desire and purpose of God respecting them. Let us see what these three channels are which He so uses—the means which God the Holy Ghost, the COMFORTER, has continually employed since the moment of His taking up His abode upon earth on the day of Pentecost until now. In order to this I turn to Isaiah 40 “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” God is here found addressing those whom He would use in this blessed service. Then we read three words which are to be spoken by them for His people’s comfort. “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem” (margin to the heart of Jerusalem, He cares for our affections), “and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord’s hand double for all her sins.” Here we have the first testimony of the Holy Ghost, the first drop in the cup of comfort which He administers, the testimony from God Himself that every question is eternally and divinely settled between Himself and them; this to that nation is doubtless future, to us it is present. Every question is set at rest, and those who were once enemies are now at peace with God through the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross; of this the Holy Ghost is the witness in many places, as in Acts 2, also in Hebrews 10:14-17. Here we find that, looking back at it, it is the solid ground of comfort for us now as to Israel by-and-by. The cross, the past of God’s ways, is here used for our comfort, and the Holy Ghost administers it.

Secondly, for our comfort we are instructed that the Lord’s coming is at hand. Solid comfort is this to the soul which has already so blessedly profited by all that God has wrought in the past; i.e. in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here is the future laid under contribution for the present comfort and blessing of God’s people. “The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” This, fulfilled when the Baptist’s voice was heard in the desert, and with reference therefore to the Lord’s first coming, is still the testimony of the Holy Ghost for the comfort of His people, but now it is His testimony to the Lord’s second coming; nearly every part of the New Testament contains it, and with the especial desire of comforting the saints in varied circumstances of trial here. In illustration we think of John 14, the

chapter to which the saints have in such tried moments invariably turned—blessed words which we have so often read, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again.” In view also of the temporary separation of believers by death—it is the same thing— “The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.... wherefore comfort one another with these words.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16,18.) Other passages might be quoted—they are numerous—where the Spirit of God uses in the Word the second coming of the Lord for the present comfort of His people.

And, thirdly, and also for our comfort, we have the testimony of the Holy Ghost concerning the flesh. “The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? “All flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.” Now it is the flesh that “the Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon” which troubles the child of God. Either working in himself as an individual, or working in the church of God, what a fertile source of trouble and discomfort is the flesh And what is the remedy, the comfort found here? To ever hold it in the place of death, and under the judgment which God has here assigned to it. “The Spirit of the Lord bloweth upon it.” “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.” And the New Testament in many, many places fully unfolds God’s judgment of it.

Believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, are YOU profiting by this ministry of the Spirit? You are confided to the care of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, until the return of your Lord and Saviour. Are you enjoying the comfort of His ministrations to you? He testifies to the eternal settlement and blotting out of your sins in the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. He testifies to the speedy second coming of the Lord, the Accomplisher of that blessed work. He testifies to you of the utter worthlessness and corruption of the flesh, the evil nature for which you are exhorted to “make no provision.” His testimony therefore as to the past, as to the present, and as to the future, is all for your comfort. And if you are comforted by the knowledge of these things as you travel along, then go and comfort others with “the same comfort wherewith you yourself are comforted of God,” as the blessed apostle did of old. Thus will you be found in fellowship with our God, who is not only “the Father of mercies,” but “the God of all comfort” and consolation, and who will thus use you as the minister, of blessing to God’s people in the power of the Holy Ghost, “the Comforter.” May many now thus be found for present blessing to His eternal praise. Amen. H. C. A.

The failures of a godly man are the most dangerous of all failures.

## New Creation as Distinguished from Justification

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This is a distinction which it is impossible to ignore without doing violence to dispensational truth, and losing the blessing to our own souls of the knowledge of what our wonderfully elevated portion is “in Christ” —a portion unique and incomparable.

In the epistle to the Romans (3 to 5:11), we have the doctrine of justification elaborately worked out and established; but it starts with Abraham as the pattern of a justified person. And let us remember that justification is no question of degree. I am justified before God, accounted righteous that is, or I am not. Consequently no saint of God can surpass Abraham in this, to whatever dispensational period he may belong. Abraham was accounted righteous before God, and more than that can none in that respect be. It is absolute and final, as unmeasured as it is unchangeable. It will be readily seen that it is an entirely judicial thing. I was “guilty before God” (Romans 3:19); but now through His grace I am not merely forgiven (blessed as that is in respect to my sins with which forgiveness has alone to do), but I, who “before God” had no other ground than that of guilty—a guilty, condemned person—am now justified; for righteousness is reckoned to me, or, in other words, I am accounted to be an absolutely righteous person by and before God. This is justification.

But where does Scripture connect this with being in See note at the end of this article. —ED.

Christ? Did it do so, either Abraham could not have been thus justified or he must have been in Christ equally with the saints of this day, either of which conclusions would be contrary to the truth. As to this I only add that justification is entirely of the grace of God through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus—the mercy-seat; as Romans 3:24,25 clearly teaches.

We say then of the believer that he has not only the forgiveness of his sins, but that he is a justified person, henceforth and forever accounted before God as righteous; for as in courts of law a person is proved guilty or accounted innocent, so “before God” we are absolutely guilty, and thus “under judgment to God” or accounted righteous—to express which the Holy Ghost has used this forensic term justification. But it cannot too much be insisted upon, that the force and value of the doctrine is missed unless we clearly distinguish between forgiveness and justification. It is evident that our sins called for forgiveness, not justification, the very thought of which would be horrible. This forgiveness we have because they have been righteously disposed of and put away from God’s sight, the Lord Jesus having borne them in His own body on the tree. Moreover we, once standing as sinners guilty before God, having believed on Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, have been justified by His blood; in other words, have had righteousness imputed to us. This, we say, is our justification, the doctrine of which would be vitiated did we add “in Christ;” for all can see the impossibility of righteousness being imputed to Him.

What then is it to be in Christ? Scripture itself answers, “A new creation.” It is the doctrine of 2 Corinthians (vs. 17), of Galatians (6:15), and of Ephesians (2:10). In each of these Scriptures the doctrine of new creation is introduced, and in each case it is either “in Christ” or “in Christ Jesus.”

But, be it observed, for a new creation you must have a new Head—the One indeed who is “the beginning of the creation of God.” (Revelation 3:14.) Accordingly from Romans 5:12 the apostle begins a new subject—that of the two headships. It is now no longer a question of sins, but of sin, the root question. To answer which the apostle introduces the one man who sinned and his race, and then the one man Jesus Christ, the last Adam, Him that was to come. Further, he speaks of sin abounding and grace super-abounding in order that grace might reign on the principle of righteousness as sin had reigned in the power of death. But as these contrary things are going on in the one scene of operations, the question is asked, Should we continue in sin that grace may abound? Far be the thought. We have died to sin. How can we live in it? Our old man has been crucified with Christ that sin as a whole might be annulled and we emancipated; for he that has died is forever cleared or discharged from sin. Christ has once for all died to sin, and lives unto God. We once for all died with Christ, and are alive unto God in Him. We have eternal life in Him (6:23), are clear of all condemnation, and are free from the law of sin and death, because of the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus having given us liberty. (8:1, 2.) Thus it is in connection with the Holy Ghost. “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” Nor is this ever enjoyed but where the Holy Ghost has been received; for while the work of Christ is the foundation of this and every other blessing, it is only by the Holy Ghost dwelling in us that we can say we are in Christ and Christ is in us.

Thus far the epistle to the Romans and the two headships. In 2 Corinthians, in Galatians, and in Ephesians this truth, as we have seen, is connected with new creation, where its full character comes out. In one respect this and justification exhibit an analogy; namely, they are alike unqualified, absolute, and eternal. He that is in Christ a new creation is absolutely so, and is this for eternity. The blessing is looked at as constituting a new order of being, expressed in that remarkable word “alive unto God.” And whereas “justification,” as we have seen, is a judicial term, “in Christ” is more properly a generic term. Instead of belonging to the house or race or seed of the first man, I now belong to that of the second man, sari generis. I am in Him a new creation, dead unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus.

Thus argues the apostle: “Old things have passed away,” “All things have become new,” “All things are of God.” And again, in Galatians, circumcision goes for no more than uncircumcision; for it is a new creation that avails before God. And so also in Ephesians, we are God’s workmanship—no marring of the image and likeness of God by Satan’s craft and man’s sin, but God’s unsullied workmanship, a creation in Christ Jesus for good works, and these too prepared of God for us to walk in—all blessedly of God.

Guilty Now accounted righteous Justification Under judgment to God|Justified before Him||

In Adam|In Christ|New Creation|

In the flesh|In the Spirit||

In Ephesians we read that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ, and that we are seated there in Him. All this is unquestionably of grace, and is made good to us by the Holy Ghost, our holding and enjoying it, as against the antagonism of wicked spirits, being by spiritual conflict as strong in the Lord and the power of His might. In Colossians we read that we are “complete in Him;” but more correctly it is we are “filled full.” In Him dwelleth all the fullness

bodily, and we are filled full in Him.

Let us recall then what we have considered.

The Lord Jesus, having borne our sins on the cross, has forever put them away, and therefore as soon as we have exercised faith we can say we are forgiven, or, in other words, have the remission of all our sins; for no longer have they any place between us and God. This is our cleansing, and is especially connected with the Lord's death and blood-shedding.

I have been brought unto God, and set righteously before Him. Once I was "guilty before God," now I am cleared of all guilt, and justified in His presence to walk "in the light, as He is in the light." He has imputed righteousness unto me because I have believed on Him; in other words, I am accounted righteous, having justification before God. This is a purely judicial thing, and is specially connected with the Lord's resurrection.

I have died with Him, and am now alive unto God in Him. I am in Christ and Christ in me, effected by the Holy Ghost dwelling in me. Having died, I am freed from sin as a principle, have got my discharge from its dominion. I am under a new headship; the law of sin and death is for me annulled, and the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has taken its place and is liberty. This is a generic thing. There is a new creation, of which I am part, and Christ is Himself the Head and Beginning thereof. I am taken out of my condition in Adam as guilty, and "under judgment to God," and set in Christ in new creation and under new headship. This being made ours in the unction and energy of the Holy Ghost, dwelling in and working with us, is the fruit of Christ's being glorified; for it is as set at God's right hand He is made unto us Lord and Christ, and has shed forth the Holy Ghost. It is our new order of life and blessing—the new creation.

We have title to the heavenlies in Him—there blessed with all spiritual blessings, and there seated too in Him. But we can only occupy and enjoy our portion there as we wage conflict with wicked spirits, who seek to hinder and to disturb. This is an experimental thing, for which the whole armor of God and the sword of the Spirit and faith and prayer are needed. It is our new place of blessing.

5. We are filled full in Him. This is not what we are judicially before God, nor what we are generically as in Christ, nor where we are as to the scene of our blessing, but, as distinguished from what we are and where we are, indicates what we have in Him in whom we are blest; filled full in Him in whom all the fullness is, the glorified Man, in whom all our resources are found in divine fullness. W. R.

NOTE. —In reading the above article it will be necessary for the reader to bear in mind the especial character of the epistle to the Romans. We quote, as to this, the words of another: "We have two distinct statements in this epistle of the blessedness of believers—the passage which occupies us, chapter 5:1-11, and chapter 8. The former gives us what God Himself is for us in grace, with its blessed consequences; the latter the believer's place in Christ before God, and what God is for him there." Again, "To connect the second part of the Romans with the first as a continuous process is a mistake. Guilt by our acts is a different thing from our state as children of Adam. In one we are guilty and (unless justified) come into judgment; in the other we are lost. The effect of the work of Christ is to clear forever all our sins away. They are remembered no more, and as when He had by Himself purged our sins He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, we are, besides being purged, risen in Him in the new standing which is the effect of

His redemption for man.” Further as to Romans 5:12-21: “We have now another subject, one man the head as to sin, one as to obedience. The many connected with the former constituted sinners by his offense, and the many connected with the latter constituted righteous (by his obedience).” Then in chapter vi. the same writer remarks: “Our resurrection with Christ is not spoken of here; that involves union with Him.” In another place he says, speaking of the exaltation of Christ, “We are united to Him in His new and glorious state as Head. (Ephesians 1, 2.) But this is a new creation.”

These remarks have been cited to show the importance of rightly dividing this epistle; and the reader, comparing them with its teaching, will undoubtedly see that “in Christ” in Romans does not imply union with Him, and is consequently not of itself connected with the new creation. It expresses the new place or standing into which the believer is brought “as the effect of redemption.” Connected with being in Christ there are two additional things—sealing with the Holy Spirit, and Christ in us; and thus we have also our new condition—in the Spirit, as contrasted with being in the flesh. (Romans 8:9.) Moreover, inasmuch as “in Christ” in Romans does not imply union with Him, neither is the Headship of Christ in, chapter 5 connected with the new creation. “It is a state dependent on the conduct of the head. This is the great point here. The Lord and Adam by their act and conduct bring those connected with them into a certain condition.”

As a general remark it may be added, that it is essential to the understanding of the truth of God always to bear in mind the distinctive teaching of the several epistles. —End “BECAUSE I LIVE, YE SHALL LIVE ALSO.”

Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also

The evangelists in their ministry preached “the kingdom of heaven as at hand,” when Jesus as the prophet and teacher of Israel was in their midst, and presented it to them as the promised Messiah. By its rejection through their testimony, He made Peter and James and John acquainted with the further mysteries of the King of glory, and of His millennial kingdom at the Mount of transfiguration, but postponed till “His people should be willing in the day of His power.” More remarkably too, when He joined them on the other side of His death, and after His resurrection, He reproved them for their slowness of heart, adding, “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and” (by the pathway of His sufferings and rejection) “to enter into His glory”. It is upon these foundations of eternal wisdom and power, and upon such a basis as the death and resurrection of Christ, that a revelation from God came forth which declares the only begotten Son to be “the Yea and Amen” of His promises and counsels from everlasting to everlasting; and that the times and seasons for their fulfillment are held in His hands. Paul’s commission was distinctly from this risen Son of man, “whom God had made strong for Himself”—the Son of man in the glory of God; and these are the glad tidings which He preached to every creature under heaven, and which He opened out “for the obedience of faith.” What wonder was it in a sinful world, and by declaring “one Jesus” as the central object before God for every purpose, present and future, that He should be accused of turning the world upside down? Nor is it any marvel that by setting aside “man in the flesh” in all his pretensions, and thus exposing the world, and Satan in his rebellion, he became “the prisoner of the Lord” in it, and in chains. Christianity was thus established in Christ above, and upon this earth beneath, through this very Christ of God raised from the dead by “the glory of the Father,” and seated in His place on high as Head over all things to the Church which is His body—

“the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, as minister and witness, is correspondingly in his proper place below to perfect the testimony as a suffering prisoner in a world that had broken loose from God, and avowed its enmity by rejecting and crucifying His Son. “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God,” lay outside and beyond all mere human responsibility, and brought the Son from the Father’s bosom, to act according to the power which was given Him over all flesh; namely, “that He should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given Him.” In the power of this life eternal, and as united to Christ, and under the anointing of the Spirit, Paul came forth with “the mind of Christ” in chapter 3, to throw off the things which distinguished him as a Hebrew of the Hebrews, and which made him of reputation among men, “that he might win Christ, and be found in Him.” His new consistency “as a minister and witness” was consistency with Christ, and therefore he says, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ;” and in carrying out this rule of transfiguration, he adds, “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss: for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” In the power of the Holy Ghost, Christ is thus become the pattern to whom this apostle is conformed, “by the will of God,” as a servant in the energy of his new life and nature. Not only does this man of previous renown and attainments in the Jew’s religion (who, touching the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless) make himself of no reputation, and count the things that were gain to him loss for Christ, but he refuses to trust in the flesh, and boast any longer of his pedigree, or even to know himself as of the stock of Israel. He goes ahead of all that he was by birth and natural descent from this favored race, in order to ennoble himself “by grace and calling,” and to boast of another genealogy through “power from on high.” He even writes of himself according to this new style, “When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by His grace to reveal His Son in me that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

The “power of the Highest” shall overshadow thee, were the words of the archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary at the annunciation; “therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” The twelve apostles began and continued their testimony to the Messiah, in a world scarcely woke up as yet out of the fall; but primarily to the Israel of the living God, till another messenger, and a witness from the risen Lord in glory, was sent forth to preach Christ among the Gentiles likewise. Guided in his course by the Spirit to Philippi, Paul made known this power in grace to Lydia, “whose heart the Lord opened,” and to the women who were gathered together by the riverside, where prayer was wont to be made. The great text for Paul’s life in the Son of God was, “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death.” The power which wrought in Christ was ever before his soul, and having this life in Christ (by the energy of the Spirit), he neither could nor would tread any other path. It was as having “the mind of Christ,” he writes to the Philippians, “this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Adversities only favored him in this course; for once and again in the region about Lycaonia he had become a witness and a sufferer with Christ, and literally conformed to His death; for “the people having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.” The power of resurrection wrought in measure for Paul (and the other apostles of Jesus Christ), and displayed itself the more by these unlikely means— “Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he

rose up and came into the city.” J. E. B.

As spirituality becomes feeble, the exercise of mind, and the play of mere natural feelings, becomes a necessary aliment. But to the soul fresh in its spirituality, the word of God has more sweetness in its least statements (for they come from God) than any indulgence whatever of the mental powers.

#### Different Uses of the Word “Man”

Man as a creature of God is a tripartite being, composed of body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23); but these two last are often spoken of under the one term—the soul: “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna.” (Matthew 10:28.) The soul is immortal, so it never dies, and it never sleeps. Hence all the dead live unto God (Luke 20:38), a solemn thought for the unsaved. But man as such is said to live only when in his body; for he is not complete as a man without it. As for the body it can die; but, if it dies, it will be raised to die no more (Revelation 20); that the person as a whole—body, soul, and spirit, may live forever, whether in weal or in woe. The death of the body is but temporal. The second death, which is the lake of fire, is not in any sense a ceasing to exist; the person as a whole, who is cast into it, and as alive, will be tormented there forever and ever. (Revelation 20:10.) Resurrection then of the body is a consequence of death, because man is a responsible creature, and so must render an account of his deeds to God in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, before whose judgment-seat we must all be manifested, whether converted or unconverted (2 Corinthians 5:10), to receive the things done in the body, according to what we have done, whether it be good or bad. Hence the sleeping saints; i.e. those whose bodies are in the dust, will share in the resurrection from the dead; whilst the ungodly will only share in the resurrection of the dead. For, alas! man is now a fallen creature; and since all are not saved, there will be a resurrection of the just and also of the unjust; a resurrection unto life, and a resurrection unto judgment. (Acts 24:15; John 5:29.)

Such is the creature man. But as there are different senses in which the word man is used, it may be helpful to some to distinguish them. We read of the outer man and the inner man; of the old man and of the new man; of the first man and of the second man. To this we may add the natural man, the fleshly man, and the spiritual man.

Now, first, of the outward man and the inner man. These are the two parts of every man, whether converted or unconverted; the outward man referring to the body which can die (2 Corinthians 4:16); the inner man (Romans 7:22; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 3:16) referring to the heart, mind, etc.; all that is within the body, but is distinct from it, and which can never die. Ephesians 3:16 may help to make this clear, as we read, “That ye may be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” And again (Romans 7:22), “I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind,” etc. Here the heart and the mind are the inward man. These terms then, outward and inward, contrast the material and the spiritual parts of man as a child of Adam.

The old man and the new man speak of two natures, both of which are only found together in one really born of God. The old man, *πάλαιος* (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9) is a term used of that sinful nature which governs the unconverted, and which we all inherit from

Adam. It is also called the flesh, and sin. (Galatians 5:19; Romans 7:20.) The new man (καίνοϛ in Ephesians 4:24, and νεϛ, in Colossians 3:10) tells us that this nature, derived from the new birth, is to man one wholly new in kind, and so called καινϛ; and new as to time, seeing he did not formerly possess it, so it is called also νεϛ. That which formerly characterized him ere his conversion, the walking after the dictates of the old or former man, is to characterize him no longer. For that old man has been crucified with Christ; i.e. judicially dealt with by God at and on the cross; and now the nature that the Christian has received, as born of God, is to be seen working in him. For the new man is created, according to God, in truthful righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:24); but though new as to time—νεϛ it is a nature only, and not power, so is to be renewed, ■νακαινϛομενον, unto full knowledge, ■π■γνωσιν, according to the image of Him that has created him. (Colossians 3:10.) As new then, καιωϛ, it is wholly different from the old, παλαϛος man; and as new, νεϛ, or recent, there was a time when the person did not possess it. The man then, the Christian, is a person composed of parts—body, soul, and spirit; with two natures diametrically opposite the one to the other; the one, the old man, only and wholly evil; the other, the new man, which is impeccable. At times the person may be viewed as identified with the one, and at times as identified with the other. An instance in Galatians 2:20 will make this plain: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Him: self for me.” The new man is not crucified with Christ. The old man was. So “I am crucified with Christ” views the person as identified with the old man, for whose actions he is and will be held responsible. “I live,” etc., views the same person as identified with the new man.

Further, the distinction between the two natures in the Christian’s inner man can be seen in Ephesians 4:22-24: “Your having put off according to the former conversation the old man, corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and being renewed in the spirit of your mind; and having put on the new man,” etc. Here the old man and the new man designate of course the two natures, and the mind refers to the inward man; one part of every child of Adam, whether converted or not.

3. We come now to the terms, the first man and the second man. These are two persons, Adam and the Lord Jesus Christ; the two heads of races, the natural and the spiritual. All of us by nature are ranged under the headship of Adam; and every Christian is ranged under the headship of Christ. So we speak of being in Adam, or in Christ. The condition of the first man, consequent on his act of disobedience, characterizes, and the results which flow from his act involve, all ranged under his headship. The condition consequent on the act of obedience to death of the second man characterizes, and the results of His obedience concern, all who are ranged under His headship. All mankind are involved in the one. All saints share in the other. That we learn from Romans 5:12-18. But this truth of headship has not only a moral application, it concerns the person of the saint in his body as well. So we read, “The first man out of the earth, earthy (χοκϛ); i.e. made of dust; the second man, out of heaven. Such as he made of dust, such also those made of dust; and such as the heavenly One, such also the heavenly ones. And as we have borne the image of the one made of dust, we shall bear also the image of the heavenly One.” (1 Corinthians 15:47-49.) The reader will be helped in the understanding of the passage, if he remembers that the apostle is treating of the resurrection of the body. We bear in our bodies the image of the earthy one; i.e. the one made of dust. We shall in our bodies bear, when we see the Lord Jesus, the image of Him, the heavenly One. The contrast here is not a moral one, as the term earthy, not earthly, will show.

Lastly (4) we read of the natural (ψυχικῆς) man, the fleshly (σαρκίως), and the spiritual man (πνευματικῆς). All three are mentioned in 1 Corinthians 2:14; 3:1. These are different states or conditions, in one of which every person on earth must be classed. The natural man (ψυχικῆς) describes a person without spiritual life, animated only by his created soul. The fleshly one (σάρκιως) is one born of God, but without the indwelling presence of the Holy Ghost. So in Romans 7, in delighting in the law of God after the inward man, he finds he has no power to do what is right. So he says, "I am fleshly" (not carnal, which would be σαρκικῆς) "sold under sin." Again the apostle, addressing the Corinthians, who, though really richly endowed with all spiritual gifts, were not walking in the energy of the Holy Ghost, tells them he writes to them as unto fleshly (not carnal); i.e. as to those who were quickened, yet were without the energizing power of the Spirit, for they were not using it. They were not really fleshly, but he addresses them as such. But the spiritual man is one in whom the Spirit is, and who is guided and energized by Him. Every true Christian then is spiritual as to his condition, though he may be walking like a fleshly person, and be even carnal in his ways.

Briefly then, to sum up, we have first (1) the different parts of man, which will always characterize him as the creature man. Those parts which he has by his birth as a man will exist in eternity. He will, as raised or changed, always have a body, a soul, and a spirit. (1 Thessalonians 5:2,3.) But from the saint all taint and presence of sin will be removed, and his body will be fashioned like to Christ's body of glory.

Next (2) we have glanced at the two natures now in the saint. But, thank God, he will by-and-by be freed forever from the old man, the fruit of the fall, and only have throughout eternity the new man.

Thirdly (3) we have two persons, two heads of races, under the term first man and second man. Saints are now by the Holy Ghost in Christ ranged under His headship, though still bearing the image of the first man, looking forward when the change comes to bearing instead, and then forever, the image of the second, the heavenly One.

Lastly (4) we learn there are three conditions, in one of which every person on earth must be classed, either natural, fleshly, or spiritual, this last condition not being reached by attainment or walk, but consequent on being sealed with the Spirit. It is plain then we must not confound the inner man with the new man, nor the first man with the old man, if we would speak or think correctly. C. E. S.

## The House of God – Part 6

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The final aspect of the Church as the house of God on earth is that presented in this scripture that of the temple. From 1 Corinthians 6 we learn that the body of the believer is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and from 2 Corinthians 6 that believers collectively are the temple of the living God; but the temple in Ephesians 2 differs from these in that it is not yet completed. The apostle says that the saints “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.” Thus they were built together as God’s habitation, but the temple was in the process of building—it was growing.

This shows very clearly that the temple, in this aspect, includes all the saints of God of this dispensation, from the day of Pentecost until the Lord’s return; whereas, the house or the habitation of God, as has been before explained, is regarded as complete at any given time. So indeed with respect to the Church as the body of Christ. In Ephesians 1:22,23, we read that God “hath put all things under the feet of the risen Christ, and hath given Him to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.” In other scriptures, where the body of Christ is mentioned, it is composed of all the sealed believers existing at the time; but in this place it is viewed as comprising all the saints of the dispensation—the Church in its totality and completion. The temple “growing” therefore reminds us that Christ is still building His Church, and that He will continue to build until the time of His patience ends in His rising from His seat, when He, having now ended His work as builder, will fetch His Bride, and will present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

If we now turn once again to Revelation 21 we shall find the same two aspects—the Church as the bride of Christ, and as the tabernacle (not here the temple) of God. “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God.” (vss. 2, 3,) The first heaven and the first earth had now passed away, and a new heaven and a new earth had come into existence at the word of God; a scene in which righteousness could eternally dwell. The new creation, in a word, both within and without, had been consummated. The Church, the Bride, the Lamb’s wife, which had been associated with [Him in the heavens, in the perfect enjoyment of the intimacy of His love, now descends upon the new earth, and in connection with this it is that the proclamation is made, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.” On earth it had been His habitation through the Spirit, and now, completed as the temple, it has become His tabernacle for eternity, a special privilege, which the saints of other dispensations— “the men” of this Scripture, blessed to the full and perfectly as they will be—are not permitted to share. They surround the tabernacle, and God will thus dwell with them, and bring them into the enjoyment of relationship with Himself as His people, and He will manifestly be with

them, and be their God.

The question may be raised as to the significance of the different appellations on which we have touched—house, temple, and tabernacle. The term “house,” as will be apparent to the simplest reader, always carries with it the idea of a dwelling-place. The Church as the house of God is thus His habitation—His habitation on earth, as cannot be too frequently recalled. The thought connected with “temple” in the three places in which it is found (1 Corinthians 3:6, 2 Corinthians 6) is that of holiness; as for example, the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. But what constitutes the holiness of the temple is the fact of the divine presence, and then, together with that, there may be perhaps associated the further thought of what is due to the One whose temple it is. God, who inhabits the temple, is holy, and those who form it must be holy, as indeed we read in the Psalms, “Holiness becometh thine house, O Lord, forever.” And again, “Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Then there is doubtless a very special reason for the use of the word tabernacle in Revelation 21. The language used supplies the key. Turning back to Leviticus we read, “I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people.” (26:11, 12.) This was the desire of God’s heart—a desire which for the time was frustrated by the sin and iniquity of His people. Thus He “forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh” (see Joshua 18:1), “the tent which He placed among men, and delivered his strength into captivity, and his glory into the enemy’s hand.” (Psalms 78:60,61.) And after that Solomon’s temple had been built, the Lord spake by Jeremiah concerning it, “Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.” (Chapter 26:6.) The Lord was faithful to His word, for His people “mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy. Therefore He brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary... And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all these he brought to Babylon. And they burnt the house of God,” and so forth. (2 Chronicles 36:16-19.) After seventy years the remnant that returned from Babylon built again the house of the Lord; but when He suddenly came to His temple (Malachi 3:1), His people refused and crucified Him, and finally this temple, together with Jerusalem, was destroyed by the Romans.

God could not therefore dwell in the midst of His people as He desired. Accordingly we find the prophet Ezekiel, speaking of a future time when Israel shall have been restored to their own land, and when the true David shall be king over them, delivering this message “My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Ezekiel 37:27); and this promise, as we shall see, was not fulfilled. It is evident therefore that the term tabernacle in Revelation 21 has reference to these scriptures; that, in fact, the first outward expression of God’s purpose to have His eternal habitation in the midst of His people is seen in Israel’s encampment; that His tabernacle in the wilderness, surrounded by the twelve tribes, was both a type and a prophecy, and that once again the more perfect habitation of the millennium became also a figure of His perfected tabernacle in eternity.

The scene therefore in Revelation 21 is the consummation of God’s eternal purposes of grace, and hence the full results of the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. John the Baptist had announced our Lord as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and here we find

that the work is done. Hence we read, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Sin having been put away, death, its bitter fruit, with all its sorrows, has also disappeared; and thus God has forever wiped away the tears of His people. A further consequence, moreover, is that He can now dwell in this perfect way in the midst of the redeemed. He is now all in all; He Himself in all that He is, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, fills the scene, the eternal source of the eternal happiness of His glorified saints.

Such is the final revelation of the Church as God's dwelling-place. But during the thousand years, after the Church has been caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, God will once more dwell upon the earth. The temple will first be rebuilt in unbelief, and not be owned by the Lord (see Isaiah 66:1-6); but this will be superseded by one built by divine directions, and according to divine measurements. (See Ezekiel 40-42) To this God returns, as seen in vision by the prophet: "And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and His voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east. So the Spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house." (Compare Exodus 40:35; 2 Chronicles 5:14; Acts 2:2.) "And I heard him speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. And He said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile," and so forth. (Ezekiel 43:2-7; see also chaps. 44. 45.)

We thus see that God has had, and will have, His habitation on earth in every age or dispensation on the ground of redemption. Having brought His people out of Egypt, He spake to Moses, saying, "Let them build me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them." (Exodus 25:8.) Thence onward, as we have traced from the Scriptures, He continued to dwell on the earth. The temple took the place of the tabernacle, the Church superseded the temple, the temple will once more be rebuilt in the millennium; and last of all, when the former things have passed away, and all the purposes of God in grace and redemption have been accomplished, the Church is seen on the new earth as the tabernacle of God. The same thought, in one aspect, is expressed by the house in every dispensation; namely, God's joy in surrounding Himself with His redeemed people, and God's delight in being the source of their joy and the object of their adoration and praise. His habitations on earth, however, are but the anticipations of His perfected house in the eternal state—of that temple which is even now silently growing, as stone after stone is laid in their appointed place upon the living Foundation, and which, when completed, will, after the close of all earthly dispensations, become His tabernacle throughout eternity. E. D.

#### Fragment

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins." I take this as the very starting—point—the forgiveness of sins. We get the blessed truth, this first truth if you please, of grace, and joy, and peace; complete forgiveness through the blood of Christ. He has come down to us and redeemed us out of the condition we were in. I am sure the more we go on from

day to day, the more important it is to get hold of this, though it be an elementary truth, especially now that there is so much seeking for an unfinished forgiveness. J. N. D.

#### Because I Live, Ye Shall Live Also

A similar opportunity waited him at Philippi; indeed, the path was one and the same to him who trod it with the Lord, whatever the variations were. This “demonstration of the Spirit” had also its deeper voice of instruction, by its divine mode of conquest over men and women, to Paul and Silas. He adopts these principles which he learned from the obedience unto death of his Lord, and writes, “For I know that this” (his own imprisonment) “shall turn to my salvation through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” The sights of all others in the wide world were its palace, and Paul therein in bonds; and this prison in Macedonia, into which had been brought the salvation of God, and in which He had so marvelously wrought as to turn it into a habitation and temple for His worship and praise. Not a sigh nor a groan are recorded, as being heard within its walls; but, on the contrary, when they had laid many stripes upon them, and thrust them into the inner prison, “at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them.” The seaside, where prayer was wont to be made, or the jailer of the prison, where the apostle’s feet were fast in the stocks, are both alike to God, or even a Saul of Tarsus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter when on his way to Damascus. God must, by supreme power, finally put down every adversary who won’t give way, as surely as He has highly exalted the Son of man, who humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The Lord was Himself the door into this secret highway of heavenly fellowship, by means of this world’s enmity and reproach. But we are slow of heart still, to observe and walk with Him along this divine path, though it be written again, “If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” Paul knew no other path, and how could there be another to any who were, like himself, following the rule of chapter 2. — “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus?” To him the way of obedience in such a world, was but the sure high road of a continuous salvation, which lies between the point of present suffering and the future glory, even as resurrection to the right hand by the power of God’s might, was the actual deliverance to Christ Himself. In this way, and after this manner, He encourages these Philippians “to be in nothing terrified by their adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.”

The object in these various quotations is to mark the contrast. (which God, having sent forth His Son, makes) between this economy and the former, between Christianity and Judaism, between the first Man and the last Adam, and between Solomon the wonder of the world, and Christ the rejected from this earth—contrasts which must be drawn by any who rightly divide the word of God. To any others, may be pointed out the vast difference, morally and circumstantially, which existed between a land flowing with milk and honey; and, dispensationally, when the Word made flesh dwelt among us, and took this world as Adam had subjected it to sin and Satan, not having in it where to lay His head. It is not now a mighty interposing power, making the earth bring forth of itself, as in Immanuel’s land, when the people enjoyed its Sabbaths, and their seventh year of release, and their fiftieth year of jubilee, and when silver was of no account. Nor has it been in these nineteen centuries like it was under the leadership of Moses, when he bade Israel to rise up

and take their journey; for Jehovah would “begin to put the dread of them and the fear of them upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, which shall hear the report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee.”

Nor is the believer’s manner of conflict and battle after the old style and order— “Five of you shall chase a hundred, and a hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight,” and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword—but quite otherwise, and wherefore? Because they rejected Christ, and said, “This is the heir, let us kill him, and seize upon his inheritance,” and they cast him out. But the Son of man, in the glory of God, who appeared to Saul on the way, is raised from the dead, and sitting on the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, and it is this triumphant fact which changes the entire nature and character of true Christian position, and service, and warfare; for “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against wicked spirits in the heavenly places.” Conflict takes its character from where God has set Christ, and where we are seated in Him. Satan is not yet cast out of heaven, therefore the word to us is, “Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might, and put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.” The glorious power and might which Paul knew and bore witness to was that by which God had wrought in Christ, and which is to usward who believe, whether for communion, or service, or conflict in the Spirit, or devotedness in daily life, and so he writes in all his epistles.

If we turn to that of the Colossians, his prayer for them is, “That ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord,” and so forth. This glorious power of God goes in company with the life of Christ, to “strengthen with might the inner man,” so that the difficulties and dangers become bread for us, like they were to Caleb and Joshua in their day. Any such will realize in the Spirit no other fruit than “joyfulness,” through patience and long-suffering; for these fruits were but the normal product of the life of Christ in those who are His; for example, Paul writes, “Ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in the heavens a better and an enduring substance.” Another apostle writes of the same joyfulness at the day of Jesus Christ, “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

The application of this mighty power (which first wrought in Christ) made Paul what he was, so that he could say to these Philippians, “Yea, and if I be poured forth upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me,” “losing their life in this world, that they might keep it unto life eternal.” God had begun the good work in them, and every circumstance was as right for this as could be, whether in the prison, where he was; and equally right for them in the midst of their adversaries, where they were. Interpreting these trials for them according to this new version, he says, “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Jealous over them, lest their trials and difficulties should press upon their hearts, and be only viewed in a natural way, so as to produce fear and terror (instead of as tokens of salvation, and that of God), he brings the consolation of Christ, the comfort of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit (this unfailling well, to which Jehovah led His people in former days), and bade them drink. As “Israel did at Beer,” when under Moses, so these witnesses do under the ministry of the chiefest of the apostles, and in a world that has grown old in its iniquity, having cast out Christ, and cast Him off too. In the face of their last enemy Israel sang this song, “Spring up, O well!” Sing ye unto it. “Fulfill ye my joy,” is the

word now spoken by this apostle of the Gentiles, and the princes again dig the well under his direction— “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have already obeyed, not as in my presence only, but how much more in my absence, work out,” and so forth.

Patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness, flow together now out of this perennial spring unto eternal salvation. Obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, was the Lord’s pathway to the throne, where He now is seated; nor did the afflictions of Christ separate Paul from this course and the joy set before him. He would judge nothing before the time, and that time was “the day of Christ;” for furtherances and hindrances, or loss and gain, stood in their new connections with Christ and the coming of the Lord; nor was there any intermediate standard, or test of valuation, between now and then. “It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of His good pleasure,” was the divine energy, and the only but effectual way by which to profit through all afflictions and trials, in order that these might turn to their salvation outside the prison, as Paul was doing for himself inside its walls. The princes digged the well, the nobles of the people digged it, “by the direction of the lawgiver, with their staves;” therefore Paul says to us in this day, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings, that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.” The present moment took its character with him from the coming of Christ, which is in fact the only proper birthplace for faith and Christian hope, and he adds to the foregoing scripture, “That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.” Dispensationally, the previous ministry of life and peace from Christ on the earth, as announced by the angel’s song, has given place to the springs’ which take their rise, and flow out from the unfathomable love of God, and the Son at His right hand, in whom it hath pleased the Father that all the fullness should dwell.

This epistle further declares that this mighty power of God, which was working in them then to will and to do of His good pleasure, waited to perfect itself in the day of Christ, by changing them into His own likeness, and fitting them to be forever with the Lord in His kingdom and glory. “For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the power wherewith He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.” The power of life, that works its way in us while in the body below, has yet to perform its own work with these bodies of ours, and perfect us “for the day of Christ’s glory.” Nor is the good work of our salvation (according to God and to Christ) completed and concluded till we are like Him, and with Him, and see Him as He is. “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

The last chapter brings the sufficiency of God and the grace of Christ, into these adverse and difficult circumstances, to turn them round for our profit, morally, while we are in the school of God, even as they will have suited and served for “working out their salvation.” Therefore Paul says to them, as scholars in this divine philosophy, “Those things, Which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” Further, as to his own tuition and advancement in this school of God, he adds, “Not that I speak in respect of want; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Mark another step in this heavenly learning and attainment, “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.” What are he and they doing and gaining by all these exercises of soul, unless it be

this secret science, that it is God who worketh in them to will and to do of His good pleasure? What is this practice but a “getting meat out of the eater, and honey’ out of the strong?” Yea, and Paul waxing much more confident by his bonds in the palace, and triumphantly affirming, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

Our degrees and advancements in this school of God! can only be by keeping the sentence of death on ourselves—that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raiseth the dead. Our password is, “Stand fast in the Lord;” for surely, if any person or thing of moment be more present to us than the Lord is, He has not got His place, nor are we in ours, and we shall quail, because circumstances are found to be much nearer to our hearts than Himself. “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.” These watchwords are echoed and re-echoed for our faith and confidence, when the wind is high and the sea rough. Alas! we are often so close to both, as to rise and fall as they do, though the Lord is seen to be walking upon them; or perhaps so at home with us in the ship as to be asleep in the hinder part. We are practically out of this school if we have any will or choice of our own, and especially if we think of making any change of circumstances to suit ourselves, when the Master is bent on changing us to suit Himself, and lead us forward in the cultivation “of the mind” that was in Christ. If we are afraid of the consequences of obedience and its attendant circumstances, we shall not merely be grieving the Spirit, but prove in the end false to Christ, and lose the present opportunity which obedience gives of working out the salvation of God through the world as it is, with everything against us. “Because I live, ye shall live also.”

What is the new lesson in this school for such a state of deviation as this? It is threefold— “Be careful for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.” It is His fullness of grace and power supplied, that will carry such a one beyond himself and his own fearful experiences, and will work even by means of these adverse circumstances, to lead into the very position where Jesus lay His head. And, oh, what a pillow it is, where flesh and blood and sense rule no more, but “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps the heart and mind through Christ Jesus.”

This antagonism only led one and all onward in the ways of God, to learn Christ in the power of His resurrection, and “to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” This great and glorious position was reached, not by Jesus escaping the cross, nor would it be by Paul saved out of prison; but by prayer, and the supply of the Spirit. And so he writes to others, “In nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.”

This last chapter gives a final proof of the power of God, and the assurance Paul experienced by his dependence thereon “unto the day of Jesus Christ. “Like the great prophet Elijah who, in the time of Ahab’s wickedness and the dearth upon the land of Israel, was miraculously fed’ by the ravens, so Paul accepts and magnifies the ways and means of his supply. I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” This ministry, from the Son of God in the glory, must far exceed Elijah’s, who could only open and shut the heavens, or carry the secret of a plentiful supply of rain in the midst of dearth, by the cloud no bigger than a man’s hand, wonderful as it was 1 Paul stands forth by faith and confidence in the mighty power of God and its resources

where He dwells on high, and proclaims this sufficiency for all the exigencies and difficulties and disasters of “this present evil age,” and says, “My God shall supply all your need, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.”

He who was with others set apart as “a steward of the mysteries of God” when they were in mystery, has fulfilled that ministry by declaring them to the Church of the living God; and now as the treasurer of “the unsearchable riches of Christ” to the Gentiles, he leads them by means of their need to this new order of supply, “according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.” What a source has thus been opened up to us, and what a resource have we in “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all!” This is the well of which the Lord still speaks, and this is the eternal spring from which He gives them to drink. And in company with Paul we will sing to Him, and utter forth His praises— “Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”

“Lord, ‘tis enough, we ask no more;

Thy grace around us pours

Its rich and unexhausted store,

And all this grace is ours.”

J. E. B.

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