

CHRISTIAN FRIEND VOLUME 4

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Christian Friend Volume 4, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

64 Chapters

Table of Contents

0. Christian Friend Volume 4
1. Introduction
2. Simple Papers on the Church of God: Hid in God
3. Law and Grace
4. Across the Jordan
5. The Everlasting Arms: a Word to the Feeble
6. Peace With God: Letters to Young Believers
7. Heaven's Joy
8. God's Inheritance in the Saints, Etc
9. Fragment: No Self in Him
10. Simple Papers on the Church of God: Its Present Relation to God
11. Enduring Temptation and Entering Into Temptation
12. The Peerless One
13. Our Place Before God: Letters to Young Believers
14. The Present Priesthood of Christ
15. His Name Shall Be in Their Foreheads
16. Characteristics of Remnant Times
17. Our Place on Earth: Letters to Young Believers
18. The Patience of God
19. His Servants Shall Serve Him
20. Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Assembly of Christ
21. The Love of Christ
22. Woman's Place in Service
23. The Body of Christ: Letters to Young Believers
24. In Heaven
25. Fragment: Marks of the World
26. The Glory of the Lord
27. The Advocacy of Christ
28. Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Assembly of Christ Continued
29. The Lord's Table: Letters to Young Believers
30. The Christian's Place
31. Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Body of Christ
32. Expository Paper on Romans 1-3
33. Fragment: Alone With God
34. Christ Our Food
35. The Lord's Supper: Letters to Young Believers
36. Christ the Way
37. Fragment: the Flesh Profiteth Nothing
38. Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Body of Christ Continued

39. Jesus in the Midst: Letters to Young Believers
40. The King in His Beauty
41. Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Bride of Christ
42. Fragment: the Future Bride
43. Zaphnath-Paaneah
44. Fragment: No End for Self but the Cross
45. The True Place of Worship: Letters to Young Believers
46. Fragment: The Efficacy of the Work of Christ
47. The Circle of the Church's Affections
48. Fitted for the Tent
49. Expository Papers on the Romans
50. Simple Papers on the Church of God: Its Relation to the Holy Ghost
51. The Lord's Table
52. Worship: Letters to Young Believers
53. Christ the Truth
54. Gideon's Sevenfold Qualification for Service
55. Simple Papers on the Church of God: of Whom Composed
56. Ministry: Letters to Young Believers
57. The House of Dates
58. Simple Papers on the Church of God: of Whom Composed Concluded
59. The Word of God: Letters to Young Believers
60. A Song of Praise
61. Rich in Mercy
62. Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Unity of the Spirit
63. Prayer: Letters to Young Believers

Christian Friend Volume 4

Introduction

The present number of the Christian's Friend forms, according to previous announcement, the first of a wholly new series. Instead of being mainly devoted, as before, to the reproduction of valuable articles from a periodical no longer published, it will now contain, if the Lord will, articles written by brethren well known to saints at large.

“The object proposed in the new series is chiefly the ministration of truth to young believers—to those who have newly been brought, by the grace of God, upon the ground of separation—to such as have few opportunities of profiting by the exercise of oral ministry—indeed, to all who need to be grounded and established in foundation truths. This will include, as the Lord may lead and enable, simple expositions, exhortations, formal statements and applications of elementary doctrines, indications of dangers, whether from within or from without, exposure of current errors, and, without being controversial, defense of the special testimony entrusted to those who are gathered out to the name of Christ. In a word, the aim will be to minister Christ according to the need of souls.”

The writer may be permitted very earnestly to crave the fellowship of the saints, in undertaking the superintendence of the work. He has been greatly encouraged by the generous readiness with which brethren have promised, in dependence upon the Lord, their help in the contribution of papers suited to the object proposed. But conscious as he is that their and his labor will be utterly in vain without the Lord's guidance and blessing, he ventures to ask the prayers of the saints, to the end that the needed wisdom may be given, so that the glory of God, in the edification of His children, “may be the end and aim of every paper that may henceforward appear in these pages;” and thus to Him, from whom alone the wisdom can proceed, shall be all the praise!

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Hid in God

There is a word with which Greeks, Jews, and Christians were well acquainted, though each attached to it a different meaning. That word, which in Greek is ecclesia, is rendered into English by church, or assembly.

The town-clerk of Ephesus made use of it when he attempted, and with success, to calm the excited crowd in the theater of the city, which prided itself on being the temple-keeper of Artemis the Great. "If Demetrius," he said, "and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open" (rather the law courts are being held), "and there are deputies (or proconsuls): let them implead (Me another. But if ye inquire anything concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly (ecclesia)." (Acts 19: 38, 39)

Had a Jew been interrogated about the ecclesia, the thought that would have been uppermost in his mind would have been the congregation of the Lord, a privileged body—called out from the rest of the nations, membership of which by birth belonged exclusively to the children of Israel. Of this assembly Stephen made mention in his memorable speech before the sanhedrin on the day of his martyrdom. (Acts 7:38) Into this assembly no Ammonite or Moabite could enter, even to their tenth generation forever; and the children of an Edomite, though descendants of Abraham, could only form part of it in the third generation. (Deut. 23:3-8) It was a privileged company indeed; for it was Jehovah's assembly, and is styled the congregation of the Lord. He had a right therefore to limit it nationally to Israel, and to determine under what circumstances, and at what time, any, who were not of the race of Israel after the flesh, should be numbered amongst it, as well as to declare who those were, not of the seed of Jacob, who must abandon all hopes of ever forming part of it. And how many in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah learned, surely to their sorrow, that the congregation of the Lord was limited in extent, and was composed of a privileged company, of which they did not, and could not, form part (Ezra 10; Neh. 13). In that assembly we too have not, nor ever will have, a part But Scripture teaches us about another assembly, called the assembly of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15), and which the Lord Jesus Christ has been graciously pleased to call His own. (Matt. 16:18) It is with this that Christians are familiar, and of which they form part. It is of this, too, that they speak, when the word church falls from their lips. Very frequently do we meet with ecclesia applied to the Christian assembly in the pages of the New Testament. All the apostolic writers but Jude make mention of it, and Mark is the only other New Testament penman who was not led of the Holy Ghost to take notice of it. But the first who applied the word ecclesia to that assembly, to which we in an ordinary way restrict it, was the Lord Jesus Christ, who spoke of it as something new, and not then even in existence. "I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell (or hacks) Shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:18) An assembly peculiar in its formation, and imperishable in its nature—such are the characteristics of it, as here set forth by the Lord; and as He is the first in the sacred volume who speaks of it, so is He the last. In Matthew He speaks of it viewed as a whole. In Revelation He sends His angel to testify to His saints in the churches, speaking that well-known word in the plural, because viewing the Church in its local aspect, each local company being called the

assembly. (Rev. 22:16)

There was a time, then, when the Church, in the sense in which the Lord used the term, did not exist. The assembly, or congregation of the Lord, had been on earth, and could point to its history of about fifteen centuries' duration, before the assembly to which Christians belong had been once mentioned, or called into being. Yet all that time, and for a far longer period than that, the Church of which the Lord first spoke had a definite place in God's thoughts, and, moreover, had always formed part, and a very important part, of that wonderful plan which God is working out to the display of His own glory, and that of His Son.

Of these facts we become cognizant through the writings of the apostle Paul, who alone of the sacred writers treats at length of the Church of God.

That the Church formed part of the wonderful plan of God we learn from the epistle to the Colossians, in which the apostle tells those saints, that it was given to him, as the minister by whom the mystery was revealed, to fulfill (or complete) the word of God. (Col. 1:25) Now, by this he did not mean that no further revelations on the part of God, beyond those already vouchsafed to him, were to be made. He makes provision indeed for giving a due place to fresh revelations in 1 Cor. 14:30. St. Paul was not writing of what we call the canon of Scripture. That was not complete when he died; for John did not lay aside his pen, if indeed he had commenced to use it, till after the departure of the apostle of the Gentiles to be with Christ. Many things were revealed to John in Patmos, for which we should search in vain in the epistles of Paul. In what sense then was it given to the latter to fulfill the word of God? He, the only apostle who had persecuted the Church of God, was the honored instrument selected to reveal the dispensation or economy of the mystery of the Christ. The mystery, when thus revealed, completed the range of subjects of which it has pleased the divine Being in His word to treat. Creation, the fall of man, the atonement, and the kingdom, had been declared by other instruments. By Paul was made known the mystery—Christ the Head, and His people the members of his body, the two making up the mystic man called the Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 3:4) Thenceforth God's counsels, as far as He has been pleased to disclose them, stood all revealed, and the word of God was fulfilled, or completed.

Further we are authorized in stating that the Church, which was not made known in other ages unto the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to God's holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, was never the less no afterthought of His; for from the beginning of the world it had been hid in God, who created all things. (Eph. 3:9) The One who had planned the whole work of creation, and by His divine power had carried out His purpose, had all along kept hidden in the recesses of His bosom that wonderful secret, so closely connected with His glory and His counsels about His Son. Of this Paul was singled out from all intelligent creatures to be the first exponent.

Revealed first to a man, it concerns men, and, as the apostle declared, it was a service given to him to enlighten all as to the dispensation of the mystery. To no Christian therefore should God's teaching about the Church be uninteresting. None can say that it does not concern them. But further, angelic beings are instructed by the disclosure of this secret; for not only are all to be enlightened as to the dispensation of the mystery, but the manifold wisdom of God is now by the Church made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies. (Eph. 3:9,10)

Formed, then, so late in the world's history as the Church was, is it destined, it may be asked, to possess a mere ephemeral existence? By no means. For the epistle, which tells us that the mystery had been hid in God from the beginning of the ages, states clearly that the Church will ever abide. "Unto God," writes the apostle, "be glory in the Church in (or, and in) Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Eph. 3:21) The first heaven and the first earth will pass away; national distinctions, it would seem, will cease; but the Church will throughout eternity exist as something marked and distinct from every one and everything, which does not form part of it.

The mystery therefore, we learn, was hidden in God from the beginning of the world, but was not spoken of till the Lord Jesus announced that He would build His assembly; yet we may well believe that it was ever present to the divine mind, though, as God has not stated that, we as creatures are not in a position dogmatically to affirm it. Remembering, however, in what terms it is described in the New Testament, we seem to have adequate grounds to conclude that it was so. For it is the Body of Christ, and will by-and-by be openly owned as His Bride. It is also the building which grows to an holy temple in the Lord.

Surely, then, when God acted in creative power, and brought man upon this scene, a creature so different from all the others which He created and made, we may well believe that He had in His mind that man, of which our frame, as we learn, is a figure. Again, when, He provided for Adam the helpmeet, formed her out of the man, and brought her to him, is it too much, to suppose that other thoughts than those simply of providing the man with a wife were in the divine mind, even thoughts about that Bride which His Son would die to possess, and would sanctify to present her to Himself for His own joy forever? And when Solomon's temple was erected, the pattern of which God had given to David (1 Chron. 28:19), and Jehovah graciously and openly took possession of it by the Cloud of glory which filled the house, we may well believe that He looked on to that temple which He would build, formed not of material stones, however large and costly, but of stones infinitely more precious to Him, even living stones, believers on the Lord Jesus. But if any think that by such remarks we are traveling beyond the bounds of sober thought, and entering the realms of airy speculation, such must certainly acknowledge that there was a moment in the life of the Lord Jesus on earth, when the beauty of His Church, His Bride, came within the scope of His vision. For in the house with His disciples He spake that parable of the kingdom, which tells of a merchantman, who, seeking goodly pearls, was satisfied, when he had found just one pearl of great price. None at that time could have understood of what He was speaking. Afterward they must have discerned the purport of His teaching. The one pearl of great price, its value and its beauty acknowledged by the merchantman, left him nothing to desire but to possess it. At what a cost was that done!

What then His disciples could not have understood at the first, some in these days have had opened up to them, and when reading that parable know who is intended by the merchantman, how he gave up all he possessed to acquire the pearl, and of what that one pearl is a figure.

In future papers we hope to enter more at length into this subject of the Church of God. C. E. S.

Law and Grace

IT is important to see that there were two distinct occasions in which we find tables of stone, according to God's command, committed, though in a different way, to man. On the first occasion, as we know, there was total ruin; and when God uttered His commands then, afterward written down, there was no shining of the face whatever; there was no Moses transfigured by the power of glory. Law, pure and simple, never made the face of man to shine; it is not the intention of law; nor is it the result of law. Law, simply as such, is characterized by darkness and tempest, by thunder and lightning, by the voice of God dealing with the guilty—more tremendous than all together. And so it was on the first occasion when the law was announced by God Himself, and the tables were broken (before ever they reached man) by the indignant lawgiver.

On the second occasion what a difference! The lawgiver was called into the presence of God, who thereon was pleased to give a mingling of mercy along with law. There was a covenant expressly made of this combined composite character. It was not law alone, and not grace alone, but rather the mingling of grace along with law. For it would have been perfectly impossible for God to have carried on dealings with Israel, or to have brought them even into the land, unless there had been this mingling of grace and mercy with law. Consequently on this occasion the law was still committed to man; but it was shut up in the ark, not displayed with all its terrors before the eyes of men; it was enclosed, as we know, in the testimony.

Now, there are many even of God's children who think that such is exactly the tenor of the dealings of God with us now; that is, law and grace mingled—grace hindering the action of law; the law bringing us in guilty, but grace interposing to screen the guilty according to the words we read in the early part of Ex. 34. There Jehovah proclaims Himself in the character of lawgiver, though He declares His longsuffering and mercy, as it is said, "The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin." But it is also added, "And that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation?!" Now, you will observe that while such is the principle of God's dealings—that it is not law alone, nor grace alone, but the two together—while this is the case, whenever the mediator comes forward to speak to the people he has to put a veil upon his face. When he goes into the presence of God, the veil was taken off; in glory, in the presence of glory, there is no veil. But as long as man had to do with the law, even though there was mercy and grace mingled with it, the veil must be put on when he spoke with the people.

Now, the remarkable thing that I would call your attention to is this, that our position is in contrast with both. Our position is neither having to do with law alone, nor with law mingled with grace; we are in presence of grace and glory without the law at all. This is precisely what the apostle shows in 2 Corinthians. Here he does not refer to the contrast of Ex. 19 or 20, but solely to the occasion of mingled law and grace in Ex. 34; and he lets us see that the ministration on that day was one of death and condemnation. The reason is this, that if the law enters at all, if I have to do with it as

that which governs me, and under which I am, the more mercy that is shown, the more guilty am I, and He will by no means clear the guilty.

Now, that all-condemning character did not come out while God was dealing with men before Christ; but when Christ came, God stood to His principles with the utmost nicety and all His authority. The reason is, that there was One come who could solve all difficulties, meet all need, and deliver from all distress and danger. It was because the Son of God was now become the Son of man, and the Son of man was willing to suffer on the cross, not yet about to administer the glory.

Hence it is that our position is put in distinct and positive contrast. The apostle says, "If the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory." He does not put us in the place of the children of Israel, but takes care to show that it is after the type of Moses drawing near into the presence of God, where he takes off the veil. This is the sign of our position now, and not the children of Israel. In short it is not the man veiled, and the children of Israel afraid of him because of the glory of his countenance, which they could not look upon; but the man unveiled in the presence of God, when he turns, not to the people with a veil upon his face, but to God in glory without the veil.

Such is our position now; such the position of all Christians, if they only knew it. This comes out fully in the last verse. He says, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." "We all" is in contrast with the one man Moses. The position of the Christian is typified by Moses in the presence of God, and not by the children of Israel in the presence of Moses veiled. "We all;" for God makes not the smallest difference in this respect: the weakest Christian has exactly the same position before God. Whenever it is a question of position, of the simple effect or result of what the Lord Jesus has accomplished and given to us by grace, there is no difference whatever. When it is a question of spiritual power, there is a difference, and all possible room for variety. Just as in the first Adam there is no difference in the general fact that all have sinned; yet, when you come to look at the extent to which people have gone in sin, there are degrees of difference.

Precisely so with the second man, the last Adam. He has brought all who belong to Him now into this common place of blessing. We all with open, or unveiled, face (for this is the true force of it) beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord. This was what Moses saw, and only Moses, and he merely for a moment; whereas it is our constant position. A Christian, all the time he is here below, is, as far as the work of Christ is concerned, one entitled to draw near to God, to look up into the glory, and to be there himself; the veil gone, Christ without a veil. There was a veil, but it is rent. Now there is none—none on the heart of the believer, none on the face of Christ or ours; it is completely gone. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

What the Holy Ghost now ministers to us is not merely a Savior who came down into our woe and misery to bear our iniquities and sins, but that same Savior after the work of grace is done, when He is gone up as the witness of its perfectness into the presence of God; and we are invited by the

Holy Ghost to keep our eye fixed upon Him there, glorified according to the excellency of redemption. That will not make His grace in coming down here to be less precious; nor will it make redemption to be less prized, but much more. It will also imprint a heavenly character upon all our ways; and this, and nothing less, is our place. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly;" and, "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly." Then it will be perfect; now it is only partial, and according to the measure in which self is judged.

What hinders the practical effect, the heavenly power being reflected from us, is the unjudged activity of our nature. Do we not know it? When is it we do wrong? when is it we form mistaken judgments, and become careless and worldly? Just in proportion as our eye is off Christ as He is now in glory. I grant you that Christ anywhere before the soul is a preserving means. Nevertheless, there is no such power for overcoming the seductions of the world, and that which looks fair and religious in the world; nothing will do it thoroughly but Christ in glory. As far as leading out our souls in love and devotedness is concerned, Christ here below will do it. But Christ in glory puts out the light of earth's best religion, and makes it appear pale and tawdry by the side of its surpassing brightness. We are invited, we are called upon as Christians, to behold Him in that glory continually now. The Lord give us so to walk, and we shall find the fruit of it, "changed into the same image from glory to glory."

One word more. There is nothing so dangerous as to trifle with the truth; nothing more ruinous than for men to use the brightest truth, and to be careless about the matters of every-day life. I beseech of you to remember this. There is something even of a disgusting character about it when we fail in ordinary duties, and yet are at the same time talking about resurrection and glory-life and all the special blessednesses of the Christian position. I beseech you, my brethren and sisters, especially those of you who are young (though indeed it is a snare for old as well as young), think seriously of this. It is the natural snare of those who are accustomed to an atmosphere of truth, where the words of God are, so to speak, the common household bread. None are in such danger; but it is a danger, because the eye and heart are not on Jesus. There will be power where there is simplicity with self-judgment; nowhere else. W. K.

Across the Jordan

Everything we find in Joshua is on the other side of Jordan. The different accounts the Spirit gives are connected with the other side. Numbers speaks of the wanderings of the children of Israel on this side, Joshua of the possessions God had given them, and of the conflict in connection with taking possession on the other side. Jordan represents not Christ dying for our sins, but Christ putting an end to us, as to our history connected with the flesh, and introducing its into another place. In the Red Sea we have a type of Christ dying for our sins. Jordan is our dying with Christ, having passed in spirit out of this world as quickened, raised, and seated in Him. In the truth of Jordan we get two different aspects of Christianity; first, the standing -of the believer in Christ: in this sense, every believer has passed over, in the other very few have; i.e. practically and consciously passed over. As to standing, if you are a Christian at all, you have passed Jordan, you have died with Christ. Of how many of us is it true as to our state? How can it be, when there is such self-seeking, worldliness, ease, slothfulness, such want of devotedness and affection towards Christ among us? If we have not taken possession of Canaan, Jordan is still rolling practically between us and the land of promise. It is terrible to boast of our standing if our state is low. There is not that conservative power among us, so that it should be said, "I cannot bring in the world there." I do not wish to depress any true heart. If we condemn ourselves, we have exercised consciences about it; the truth has reached us. There is so little divine energy to lay hold of what is ours! Joshua, tells us what God has given us; but our feet must tread it, or We have not practically got hold of it. The very fact that it is yours in Christ gives energy and power to take possession, otherwise you are taking something you have no right to. The moment you begin to tread it you will find conflict every step of the way, but the whole power of God is pledged in Order to maintain you in the place you have put your foot on. On every side of us Christians are settling down this side Jordan. Take care you do not lower the truth of God to suit yourself. Perhaps you say, "I shall never reach up to it;" then self is before you. If you have communion with God about heavenly things which are yours, you must give up things here. What are you going in for? If for this world and heaven, you will get neither. It is for us to take possession of what God has given us in Christ; then we must turn our back on things here, and seek—set our "mind on things above." Are these the things that command you? I am amazed when I observe how we allow our minds to be occupied with such trifles, and to be troubled about such worthless things as depress ninny of us, when such a wonderful place and portion is opened out before us. The two and a half tribes did not go over; and in 1 Kings 22 we see the very country they settled in was the very spot that first fell into the hands of the enemy, so they lost everything; and we see the same thing in the history of God's people when it is a question of heavenly things. God never forces any one into them. He, as it were, lets us take our choice. If we go in for them, we shall find they richly compensate for all we may have to abandon.

Observe verses 3 and 4. Knowledge of the boundary is not possession of the territory practically. We have it all in Christ; but it must be made good to us. Nothing is more terrible than trading on heavenly truth. God has given us—all on the other side; He has opened it all out to us. Have we

practically taken possession of it? There must be energy, dependence, obedience, purpose of heart; not slothfulness, indifference, self-seeking. We shall find we never enter into or enjoy these things except when we begin to practice them. Whatever my circumstances or position, I am to be the exposition of one who has everything in heaven in Christ. The reason why we do not realize it is, because the sole of our foot has not trodden it. If I think of myself when I was a sinner, I remember how I received everything without money and without price; all was free—no toil or labor or tears on my part. But as a saint, I get nothing as to realization or communion without trouble and practical possession, because heaven is in contrast to everything here; the Father is against the world, and the Holy Ghost against the flesh. If you are thrown that side, you will find all against you this side. Christ is here by the power of the Spirit to lead His people on to victory. This is our encouragement; for the moment you go in for heavenly things you will find opposition from every quarter, not a feeling of your nature but will oppose itself, as well as everything outside. It will be conflict every step. We often get weary of it. When a person sets out to be practically what is true of them in Christ, all are against them; like the blind man in John 9, Pharisees, parents, neighbors, &c., all were opposed to him.

People are more perverted from God through their friends and relations than almost anything. Relationships are God-given relationships; but when they take the place of Christ and Christ's things, nothing is a greater hindrance; the truth of God is often compromised to please them. We see it in Scripture. John Mark left Paul and went to Cyprus, his native place. Jacob's wife and mother were his snare. Those nearest and dearest in the flesh are those we suffer most from; if we are not on our watch, they well know, and best know, where our weak points are, and where to touch us. If the heart be simply set on pleasing Christ, His things and His interests will be before us—everything will be in reference to Christ, and everything will have the mark of Christ upon it. He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to His parents; but when it was a question of interference with the rights of His Father, it is, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" The enjoyment of heavenly things is hindered when our relationships are not taken up in a divine manner.

Verse 5. The assurance God gave to Moses, He renews to Joshua. Christ puts Himself at our head to lead us on. This is a great cheer; none ought to be disheartened with such a Captain and Guide, such an arm to lean on. Before the first conflict He appears as Captain of the Lord's host. What an honor to be following Him. What is wanted is a true heart and a single eye—the single eye which takes in only one object; if you have two objects before you, you have not a single eye. It is gazing only on our mighty, heavenly Joshua, who fills the vision of the soul that we are strong and courageous. In verses 7 and 8 we see what gives strength and courage—we are well commanded, so that we are entitled to have full confidence. What gives confidence to an army is knowing the ability of its general. His skill and power inspires courage and confidence. Obedience follows courage; the reason we do not obey is because we are cowardly; this is the secret of disobedience. Though all were against him, the sense of Who he was come out to, gave the blind man courage, and he says, "Will ye also be His disciples?" Will you throw your lot in with Him? He was not thinking of the relief there was to be got from Him, but will you give yourself to Him? This is one reason of so much weakness among us, the testimony that goes out is so much more on the side of relief, than the Person in whom it is found.

Verse 7. There is nothing so important as simple allegiance to the word of God. The tendency of the day is to judge the word of God, instead of letting it judge you. People have their own thoughts and are Opinionated; it is not what we think, but what God says. Has God been at pains to give a revelation, and am I not to be obedient to it? Every one is ready to give their opinion in the present day. What is wanted is the word of God. "Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." We need to have it more distinctly under our feet, to have divine sanction for everything we do, and put our hand to. Conscience is no guide, but if it is enlightened it is a good witness. Paul could say, "I have lived before God in all good conscience," &c.; if it is not informed by the word of God, it gives a false witness. If every man's conscience is his guide, it will be chaos over again; it is sure to mislead if it is not guided by the word of God. Conscience is the avenue through which God reaches the soul. The word of Christ rings on the woman's conscience in John 4, "Thou art a prophet;" a prophet is one who brings the soul into the presence of God, the effect of the word is to bring the conscience into the light of God's presence; it is the avenue through which God lets His light into the soul.

Verse 8. Implicit obedience leads to prosperity. (Psa. 1:1,2) How do you read Scripture? Do you meditate? It furnishes us with the mind of God; we need to get the habit of thinking of things as God thinks of them. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water," &c., No sign of autumn's tint, but ever fresh. Of course Psa. 1 speaks of Christ in His perfection as man down here; we are to follow Him. "Have not I commanded thee?" This imparts courage. If we are not certain that we are doing the will of God, we are like reeds shaken with the wind. It imparts a quiet, steady dignity. I am not to be moved by what people say. I have only to place my character in the right hand of God, and go on in endurance. We must hold the truth in communion with the Father and the Son. Christ is the truth. All radiates and flows out from Him.

Verse 9. I will be with you, you shall have my presence. Many seem not to know what the presence of God is. We have His word, and we have Himself, two things—we get in 2 Tim. 3 and 4.

The Lord lead our hearts into the full and conscious blessedness of our place in Christ in heaven at the other side of Jordan, in God's own land, on which His eyes continually rest. W. T. T.

The Everlasting Arms: a Word to the Feeble

“THE eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.” So spake Moses, “the man of God,” in the blessing wherewith he, blessed the children of Israel before his death. (Deut. 33:1) There is little need to affirm that the blessing here pronounced—in its truest significance—belongs to the children of God in this dispensation; for “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” (Eph 1:3) Indeed, there is scarcely a scripture in the Old Testament which has been more abundantly used for consolation. Feeble believers—weary ones on sick-beds—led, we doubt not, by the Spirit of God, have appropriated it in all ages; and they have been both sustained and comforted by the thought—the sweet assurance—that “the everlasting arms” are underneath them, folding them, as it were, in a divine trace.

What, then, are “these everlasting arms”? Have we any indications in the Word of what is signified by the term? For though we may be able to feel what is meant, it will enhance our sense of the blessedness of the assurance, if we are able to arrive at the thought the term was intended to convey. Let us turn then, first to Ex. 28 We read there, in the description of the garments of the high priest, “And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the ‘names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial.” (vss. 9-12) Further on we have, after the direction as to the precious stones composing the breastplate, “And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually.” (vss. 21, 29)

We thus see that Aaron, as the high priest, bore the names of the children of Israel, when he went in on their behalf before the Lord, on his shoulders, and on his heart. Now, the meaning of shoulder in Scripture is strength, as may be seen from the following: “The government shall be upon His shoulder” (Isa. 9:6); and again, “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder.” (Isa. 22:22) The heart, in like manner, always signifies love, as there is no need to show. What we have then is, that the high priest upheld the children of Israel before the Lord perpetually with strength and love. An allusion to this may be found in the Song of Solomon. “Set me,” cries the bride, “as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.” (8: 6) Here, it will be observed, we have the same combination of strength and love.

Applying this now to the term, “The everlasting arms,” there can be little doubt that we have the same thought; viz., the union of strength and love in support of the children of God. That is, the everlasting arms are everlasting strength and everlasting love, wherewith God upholds, sustains, comforts His own, and folds them to His own heart in perfect security and repose; or, if we prefer to carry on the thought of priesthood, it is the everlasting strength and the everlasting love wherewith Christ, as our Priest, upholds us before God. Both aspects are true, and may therefore be blended in our meditations; and surely we may find in either an abundant source of instruction and consolation. We may briefly indicate the channels, in either direction, in which our meditations will necessarily flow.

If, then, we take “the everlasting arms,” as explained, in connection with God—and this is in harmony with the context, as the preceding clause is, “The eternal God is thy refuge”—we may discover striking correspondencies in New Testament Scriptures. An example or two may be given. “None is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:29) Here the thought is presented to us of strength—the almighty power, indeed, with which we are held in the hand of God, so that none is able to pluck us away. Speaking before the Father—indeed bearing us on His heart before the Father—the Lord prays “that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and Thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved me.”

(John 17:22,23) Here we have revealed the everlasting love of God—or rather of the Father—calling attention now only to this one feature. Both things are seen in that familiar scripture in Rom. 8 “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (vss. 38, 39) We are thus entitled to the consolation that we are secured in the embrace of everlasting strength, and everlasting love. And surely when we are borne down by weakness, or tossing to and fro in pain on a sick-bed, or lying wearily through long and wakeful nights, it will calm our hearts, hush every rebellious thought, yea, shed a sweet and soothing peace upon our troubled spirits, to remember that these everlasting arms are underneath us. Our hearts—poor, cold, and sinful as we know them to be—yet, folded to His heart, will be quickened to a larger response, as we feel there the beatings of that heart of divine love, and hear the blissful assurance that nothing—no power in earth, or under the earth—can ever separate us from this divine and everlasting love! “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

If we look, moreover, at Christ as our Priest, we shall see the union of the same two things. Indeed, it springs from the character of His person. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” &c. (Heb. 4:14) He is Jesus—the Man, and He is the Son of God. As Man He was tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin, and therefore He is one who can sympathize with the feeling of our infirmities; one whose heart can enter into, and feel with us in all our needs, and present us accordingly before God. But He is also the Son of God—He whom God “hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.” (Heb. 1:2) Well then might it comfort us to remember that He who “upholdeth all things by the word of His power” is the One who is seated—having by Himself purged our sins—as our Priest, on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and that it is He who bears us up there on His shoulders before God. Again and again are we reminded of these two characteristics—His heart

and His shoulder (His strength) throughout this epistle. Take one more example. "But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost (all the way through) that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." (Heb. 7:24,25) He bears us on His heart in intercession, and He is able to save us from beginning to end.

Thus it is clear, also, that the heart and the shoulder of Christ sustain His people; and these are exactly the two things we need as pilgrims passing through the desert. It is true that our place is in the heavenlies; but it is also true that we are in the wilderness; and when we are made to feel that we are there, there is no consolation like that which the heart and shoulder of Christ can give us. His heart sheds brightness upon the gloomiest scene, and His shoulder will sustain us in the extremity of weakness in the presence of the mightiest foes. Thus He also folds us to His heart with the everlasting arms of strength and love. What courage, what endurance will the assurance not give us! And how blessed to give ourselves up to the sweet sense of security and of endearment which the embrace of Christ thus affords!

May the Lord give us to know ever more fully, and more practically, what it is to have underneath us the everlasting arms. - E. D.

Peace With God: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —,

You complain that you have not “settled peace,” and that thus you are making but little progress with the truth, or in the knowledge of the Lord. The complaint, I am sorry to know, is by no means uncommon; but it springs from an imperfect knowledge of the gospel, and from confounding two different things. I hope therefore, with the Lord’s blessing, to be able to help you, if you will carefully consider what I am about to write.

Your case reminds me exactly of another that recently came before me. “Have you peace with God?” I inquired. The answer returned was, “Not always.” In both cases the confusion is between the peace made and the enjoyment of the peace. That is, when you are happy in the Lord you say, “Now I have peace;” but when from failure or trial you are depressed and gloomy, you think that your peace is gone. To meet this state of mind, I shall ask you to consider attentively what are the foundations of peace with God. It is an immense gain to the soul when it is clearly perceived that these lie not within, but without; for then it will also be seen that our experiences have nothing whatever to do with the question. Turn then with me to Rom. 5:1. There we read, “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;” and if we examine the connection of this scripture, we shall at once learn the source of the peace of which it speaks. The connection is this. After the apostle has explained the way in which Abraham was justified before God, he proceeds: “Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God,” &c. (Rom. 4:23-25; 5:1)

It is very clear from this scripture that the sole foundation of peace with God lies in the work of Christ. In fact, the foundation having thus been laid, God declares that everyone who believes His testimony concerning it, believes that He in grace has come in, and made full provision for the sinner’s salvation, believes thus in God, is justified, and being justified has—enters upon the possession of—the peace which has been made by the death of Christ. But it will be observed that it is said that Christ was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. (Rom. 4:25) That is, the resurrection of Christ is the abiding proof of the completion of His work, the evidence that the sins for which He died, and under which He went down into death, are gone forever—the witness therefore that every claim that God had upon us has been fully met and satisfied. For if He were delivered for our offenses, and He has left the grave, been raised out of death, the “offenses” under which He went down into death must be gone, or He would still be a prisoner in the tomb. Hence the resurrection of Christ is the distinct and emphatic expression of God’s satisfaction with the atonement which was made on the cross.

It is thus abundantly evident, as before said, that the alone foundation of peace with God lies in the death of Christ. This is repeated again and again in Scripture. Thus we are said to be “justified by His blood” (Rom. 5:9); and again, “having made peace through the blood of His cross.” (Col. 1:20)

It is therefore Christ who makes peace with God, and He has made it by His sacrificial death—the death that vindicated every claim God had upon the sinner, met every one of His righteous requirements from man, glorified Him in every attribute of His character; so that God now can beseech the sinner to be reconciled to Him. (2 Cor. 5:20)

Having explained this much, it follows that the one important question for the soul is, Do I believe God's testimony concerning His Son, and concerning the work He has accomplished? If there is any difficulty in answering this question, then no further progress can at present be made. A very simple test, however, will help to elicit the truth. On what do you rest for acceptance before God? Is it on yourself, your own doings, or your own merits or deservings? If so, you cannot be resting on the work of Christ. But if you own that by nature you are hopelessly undone and lost; and confess that you have no hope apart from Christ and what He has done, then you can humbly say, By the grace of God I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Supposing now that you can adopt this language, then I can tell you that you have "settled" peace with God, that nothing can ever deprive you of it—no change, no variety of experience; for it is your immutable, inalienable possession. The Scripture says, "Therefore being justified by faith" (and you say you do believe), "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Every believer—and the moment he believes—is justified, acquitted of all charge of guilt, and made the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21); and being justified, he has peace—not peace in himself, be it observed, but peace through our Lord Jesus Christ; that is, the peace which now belongs to him is the peace with God which Christ has made by His atoning sacrifice. And since it is the peace which He has made, being thus outside of ourselves, it can never be altered, and can never fluctuate; it is as stable and as durable as the throne of God; for, as we have seen, it is a peace which Christ has made through the cross; and what He has thus done can never be undone, and therefore it is an everlasting peace. And this abiding, settled, everlasting peace is the portion of every believer.

What you mean, then, when you complain that you have not settled peace is simply that you do not enjoy settled peace, that your experience fluctuates. It may be, therefore, as well to inquire how the believer is to enjoy constant peace in his soul. The answer is very simple. It is by faith. If I believe God's testimony that peace is mine on faith in the Lord Jesus, I shall enter immediately on its enjoyment. This may be simplified by an illustration. Suppose that news is brought to you that by the will of a deceased relative you have become the owner of a large estate. The effect on your mind will depend entirely upon the fact whether or not you believe what you have heard. If you doubt the truth of the news, there will be no answering response to it; but if, on the other hand, it is duly attested, and you implicitly receive it, you will at once say, The property is mine. So is it also in regard to peace with God. If you believe God's testimony that peace has been made by the blood of Christ, no depression of feeling, no conviction of unworthiness, no circumstances whatever, will be able to disturb your security upon this point, because you will see that it depends entirely upon what another has done. What is thus needed for the enjoyment of settled peace is unwavering repose upon the word of God.

The cause of so much uncertainty on this subject springs mainly from looking within instead of looking without to Christ—looking within to discover something that will give confidence that there is a real work of grace begun in the soul, instead of looking without to perceive that the only

foundation on which a soul can rest before God is the precious blood of Christ. The consequence is that, perceiving the corruption, the evil of the flesh, the soul begins to doubt whether after all it has not been deceived. Satan thus entangling the soul, plies it with doubts and fears, in the hope of producing distrust of God, if not utter despair. The effectual means of foiling his assaults in this direction is to appeal to the written word. In answer to all his evil suggestions we should reply, as our blessed Lord did when He was tempted, "It is written," and then we should soon find that nothing could disturb our enjoyment of that peace with God which has been made by the precious blood of Christ, and which became ours as soon as we believed.

This foundation question settled, now freed from Self-occupation, you will have leisure of mind and soul for meditation upon the truth as revealed in the Scriptures. "As a new-born babe, you will desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2); and, moreover, if you study the word in the presence of the Lord, you will be guided by it into ever closer intimacy of communion with Himself, and as you trace out His infinite perfections and glories that are unfolded to us and apprehended by the Spirit of God, your affections will be drawn forth in ever increasing fervency, and your heart, now satisfied, will overflow in adoration at His feet, and thus your complaint will be changed into a song of praise.

Believe me, dear—,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

Heaven's Joy

WILL it be the glory bright
Of those realms of endless light
Streets all paved with crystal gold?
Gates of pearl of price untold?
Harps, and thrones, and diadems,
Palaces and costly gems?
No more sorrow, grief, or pain■
Meetings ne'er to part again■
Eyes undim'd by any tear■
Peace unruffled by a fear?
All and more than this is given,
But 'tis not the "joy of heaven."
One there is, and one alone,
Ev'ry ransomed saint will own
As the central fount of bliss;
Heaven were empty without this.
Jesus, Lamb of God, Thou art
Now the center of my heart;
While by faith Thy face I see,
While I live and feed on Thee,
E'en in this sad weary waste
Often heavenly joy I taste;
Thou the joy of joys shalt be
Of my heaven's eternity.

J. G. D.

God's Inheritance in the Saints, Etc

ALL the blessings are revealed. (vss. 3-14) The apostle is saying, "All this future is before you. I want you know to know the basis on which it all hangs." He then takes them up (vs. 15) on their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints. Whether in this epistle, where he is speaking of the heavenly status, or whether in the epistle to the Romans, where he is speaking of the old man, taken up as a creature down here, the point where they come together is in faith. and love, Where you see the heart really trusting in God through Christ, and caring for His saints, there you can accredit as one of God's people. (vs. 16) Thanksgiving for them. (vs. 17) The special form in which the blessings that were revealed were summed up before God as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. In the next prayer it is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We get things in the first persons.

Knowledge of certain blessings in chapter 1, and communion by faith chapter 3. You never get to the end of chapter 3. In chapter 1 he brings out blessing in connection with the Son of man sitting at the right hand of God. Life comes down to you, and then flows out. It is not philanthropy. We get the Lord Jesus Christ, or Son of the Father, the Father's delight resting on Him. There are children by adoption, and the same love that centers on the only-begotten flows out through Him to the children. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou halt loved me may be in. them, and I in them:" (John 17:26) It is an immensely strong thing practically. I find the children in trial, in darkness. I say, "Never mind; the Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. The Son is before me. I cannot ask too great things. I will ask Him to bring all that really say, Abba, Father." The same with the difficulties we have to meet; we find a power in proportion as we bring in the love of the Father to the Son.

Mark another thing about, faith. It is faith and hope in God. It comes through the knowledge of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; but when you come to God you will be able to say, "He is for me TO-DAY." You will not need to put any prayer between you and the blessing to-morrow. God is for me TO-DAY. The difference in prayer, when you 'are praying up to a certain point, and when you are praying from it, is immense. There is a great want of that repose in the Father's love in saints, counting on His being what He is for us. Because of all that He is, we take our place of seeking the things that are wanted for the people for whom He is; but if you seek the blessing because He is for you personally, you bring the law in underhandedly. If you got that, it would be testimony that He is for you? No; you must believe that He is for you, because of what He has done. He recognizes every groaning, every breathing after Himself; but that is not properly Christian prayer. There may be the groaning and the grasping for something, you do not know what, as in Rom. 8; but, for a Christian, it is in the full confidence that He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; for He maketh intercession for the saints according to God.

Several of these subjects of petition I feel are too much forgotten; for instance, that He might give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I suppose. it is not the Holy Ghost. As a believer, I cannot pray to receive the Spirit, because I am in the place where the Spirit

is; but if I am there, and know I am there, I must seek the spirit of wisdom from God.

“ For the acknowledgment of Him.” It is not proclaiming, but recognizing Him. It is remarkable in many places where he speaks of God, and when he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, the “Him” is common to both.

“What is the hope of His calling?” You get two things—the place where Christ is, and the character connected with Him. The Father’s house will be the place; but there is the having a character fit for Himself, and being irreproachable. It is that I, as an individual, am to be brought to Him so completely, that He can rest in perfect satisfaction on me.

“ Holy and without blame before Him in love.” In Christ we are it now; but when I get into communion with Him at the present time, I am perfectly conscious that being in the Beloved is one thing, and my soul being free in it is quite another. There are a quantity of elements which, while under restraint, are not brought out.

The Father’s house is connected with His coming to fetch us; but, when there, He will have subjected all that in any way produces a jar. If you get into close communion, you find in your communion how unfit you are for it. You cannot have the power of enjoyment that you will have when you are brought home. When we see Him we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. The external glory is one thing, and the glory of character is another. “His servants shall serve Him; and His name shall be in their foreheads;” two very different things from walking the golden streets. In Revelation you get external glory - manifestation; in the Father’s house you get the thought of repose. Then, besides its being the Father’s house (which by right and title belongs to the only-begotten Son), and my being brought there, I find that when with this one there I shall be thoroughly fit for His presence; I, individually.

He divides it into terms: “That ye may know what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ,” &c. (vss. 18, 19) This last is more connected with circumstances, circumstances which can only be occupied with blessing by a people of a certain character. “His inheritance in the saints” (vs. 18), not “the Lord’s portion is His people.” That is earth, not heaven. He meant to have a heavenly people with His Son, and there were two things in His mind—for God the Son to become a man, and He in heaven, then, according to God, to bring sons into adoption. God inherited the land through Israel. His glory will have to be in the house at Jerusalem.; but He would have heavenly people become the medium through which Christ is seen down here on earth—all the Father revealed in the Son, all the glory shining out through the New Jerusalem; so that, wonderful as the earthly glory is, men shall have to say, “What things there are in heaven.” The One rejected eighteen hundred years. His glory shines out there, to them. It will be the inheritance in heaven. The saints will not be the inheritance. It will be heaven according to God—God upon His throne, His Son in the majesty that He has won: saints with Him there. He comes out to associate His heavenly Bride with Himself. A relationship is so different from a question of property. A wife is not accounted property. It is not association merely, but relationship. When all the pageantry of the kingdom comes out, when it becomes the manifested thing, God will have the very humiliation of the Lamb in view. God manifest in flesh as the Lamb that had been slain. He was crucified through weakness. Power could not step in there. He liveth by the power of God. I shall worship the Lamb.

God claimed Palestine as His land, and He took possession of, or He put His people into it. He claims me not for a millennial city, but a city in the heavenly places. He will bring in the children by adoption. The heavenly places form the character of the children. It is love taking possession of life. When you get the glory you get the manifestation.' It is heaven, not earth, here. It is all that is connected with a certain man there who had been buffeted down here. He is shown there sitting quietly in the divine glory. Never a man on earth had had that place. "That man," God is saying, He "took the place of being my servant. He is my Son. As the Father of the glory, I will show you what my thoughts about Him are. Look up! See where He is! I have given Him glory surpassing everything. For you, saints, called through this rejected One."

In the New Jerusalem there will be manifestation. "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." Everything that is in the Father will be manifested, so that the people there will be able to say, "Well, there is no difference at all." The Father reveals Himself in the Son, the Son reveals Himself in the adopted children. God will shine out into this people, and will shine through them now. As far as I understand "the inheritance in the saints," it is God taking possession of heaven in His people. In Him the lot is fallen to us. It is not, as people have sometimes said, our inheriting Christ. The thought of inheriting Christ is not in Scripture. In Him we have a certain thing just as it is. A man of very large property marrying a person very poor—she may speak of obtaining an inheritance in him; I should understand she had acquired estates. I could not understand a man talking of his wife as an "inheritance."

The heavenly places are not taken possession of yet. The saints shall take possession of these places. Satan shall be cast out, and Christ come in. The title "heir" is dropped when a person comes into the inheritance. He is then possessor. Remark that Ephesians is in measure like Deuteronomy, strongly in contrast too. We get Israel brought into the land, and the church having it in glory. There is no sin at all in heaven; all evil is put out. If I bought a house, that would not be my "inheritance." I inherit from my father. If I had property entailed upon me, I should be heir until I came into possession. The power that wrought in Christ works towards us. (vs. 19) "If children, then heirs." I am a minor now. When you see me in possession, clothed upon with the glory, you will not think me a fool.

I have certain expectancies. Until I have seen the Lord, and been taken up by Him, I am not in actual possession. It is the difference between the earnest of the inheritance and the redemption of the purchased possession. All that glory of the millennial city. I shall be in it. The Holy Ghost will form it all, and He has taken up His abode in me, that I may know it all. If God has given me the spirit of the glory, it is no great thing for Him to give me the glory afterward. The Spirit will form the glory. He is the earnest now. You say to laborers working in the field, I will pay you so much in advance. It is understood that the compact is made. They have received part of the money; the master is pledged to fulfill the rest of the compact.

In this case He does not give me part of the glory, but He gives me the Former of the glory, the Holy Ghost. The time will be when He will come and appropriate to Himself the purchased possession—"the thing treated about," περιποισις. It is a very peculiar expression. The earnest is the first-fruit of the inheritance, until the redemption of the thing treated about to the praise of His glory. I should not think it here more than the place. I should define our inheritance "riches of the glory," distinctive to the mystery. The other might be quite true; but when I get Eve looked upon as

the help-meet to Adam, it is a peculiar light in which it is shown. Other things might be true, but she is the confidante. "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

We lose a great deal in Scripture, if we want to make parallelisms. There are no "parallel passages." There is something that illumines each passage, and brings out peculiarities of mind. Losing that, we lose the thread; we lose that in the passage which brings out the finer touches. "When He raised Him from the dead." (vs. 20) The Lord waited in the grave; He was raised to His place at God's right hand.. The same power that accomplished that resurrection works in us who believe. He unfolds it more in the next chapter. One power' it is that carries us through this scene, and that binds us up with Christ in heaven. One power. Do you believe that literally in God's mind you are inseparable from Christ at His right hand? nit one in a thousand says, "God says I am." The same power that wrought in Him works now in us. A person needs to know that for his own establishment. Old Bishop Hall and Goodwin say distinctly—that unquestionably a man that is a believer in Christ ought to know himself inseparable in life from the Man. at God's right hand. If there, they Must know the Man who is there. It is the Man who in Phil. 2 was down here, and did not care what He did, if God had His way with Him. The great peculiarity of the Lord Jesus Christ here is this: He brought all His Sonship into His servanthip. Every part of His life here was the unqualified force of His Sonship expressing itself in service. If we know Him, The Spirit of God says, "Well, the same power that put Him there, puts you."

Where are you with regard to the world, the flesh, and the devil? If the blessed Son, the only-begotten Son, when He came down here, expressed the whole of the Father—the whole of His Sonship in His servant ship—are you saying, "I am a son of God, and I am going to walk exactly as He did "? If you have everything in Him, are you living as He lived? He never made allowance for the flesh. He knew thoroughly all the weakness of humanity; what it was to be weary, no one to understand Him. The whole thing He was after was to express His Sonship in His servanthip. You must know that in God's mind you are so identified with Him that you walk in the spirit in which He walked.

What is wanted so much is the person brought to God. Eternal life always turns around the Father and the Son. What we have in Him is in assured grace, so that we are perfectly sheltered. Have you eternal life? Are you walking in it? There is exercise always. If it makes the wilderness very rough, it is the brighter for this. We find the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.

It is remarkable the contrast between the terms used. Speaking about us, it is "the exceeding greatness, the surpassingness of the greatness of His power;" "according to the energy of the strength of His might."

I always feel that after all it was no such wonderful thing that He should take Him up, or that He, having left the grave, should go up to God's right hand. When I look at where we were, I say, Well this is a marvelous thing, that He should find me out, and set me in Christ who created it all. It ought to be far more our habit to look at things as connected with Him up there. "Head over all things." (vs. 21) We have the category of what is in Him. Everything will be headed up in Him. All Adam's possessions were for the use of Eve.

It becomes practically so, even where it is not that in which the wife would interfere. "Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all." Plenty of thorns to be driven into you. Satan to buffet you. Everything is in His hand to use for your blessing. Amazing revelation of what is His portion as Man at God's right hand. A portion wonderfully little thought of. You will find very rarely, if you live with people, that they have the thought of there being a Man up there. It changes everything. You delight in God, in all the thought of God Himself. I am down here, and I see moaning, trouble, sorrow. There is one Man in heaven, and the eyes of that Man are always upon me, and the heart of that Man always with me. The river of refreshing flows into one's soul. He is like a cool place on a scorching day. Generally there is a curtain drawn in the mind between what is up there and down here. "That is in heaven," people say. Scripture takes it for granted that you are in heaven now. One Person is there; the Man who down here never would have His own will. There He is, with a heart looking down on us, gathering now to the place where He is; and all the heart I have is with Him and upon, Him there. G. V. W.

Fragment: No Self in Him

If I get hold of the path, the spirit, the mind of Jesus, nothing would be more hateful to me than anything of self. You never find an act of self in Christ. Not merely was there no selfishness, but there was no self in Him. He has given us the immense privilege of always going down to serve others as He did. J. N. D.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Its Present Relation to God

When God had brought Israel through the Red Sea as a people redeemed both by blood and by power, they celebrated His goodness in song, and declared their wish to prepare for Him a habitation.

(Ex. 15:2) The thought they expressed as the desire of their heart was a new one, but a right one; for their redemption having been accomplished, God could thus dwell, and, as we learn afterward (Ex. 25:8), He would thus dwell amongst them. And those who shared in that redemption were privileged to provide the materials, a willing offering from grateful hearts made glad by the exercise of delivering power on their behalf.

In the wilderness God dwelt in the tabernacle, in the land His abode was the House; both habitations erected after patterns expressly given to Moses and to David, and from materials offered by His people on the first occasion, and by David on the second. Of course, whatever they brought must have borne in one way or another the impress of the Creator's hand; for they could only bring of that with which their God had enriched them. Creation, both animate and inanimate, was laid under tribute to yield what was wanted for Jehovah's habitation. Things Useful, things costly, things precious, things beautiful, were provided in profusion for the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the willingness of the people to offer was only checked by the announcement, that nothing more was required. (Ex. 36:5-7)

The tabernacle gave place to the temple. God, who had dwelt in the former, dwelt in the latter, till the bright cloud of glory, the Shekinah, departed from the house, as seen in vision by Ezekiel (10), loth to go, yet unable to stay because of the iniquities of the children of Israel. From that time to the present God has never dwelt in His house at Jerusalem. It was His house when rebuilt; the Lord acknowledged it as such, and He graced it by His presence as God's house, His house, on the occasion of His triumphal entry into the doomed city and temple. By-and-by, as Ezekiel shows, the Lord Jehovah will return to it, never again to leave it, the place of His throne, and the place of the soles of His feet, where He will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever. (Ezek. 43:7)

In Jerusalem then He does not now dwell. Their house was left to the Jews desolate; that was its condition when God ceased to inhabit it. To outward eyes it looked grand and imposing. In His eyes, whose house it was, it was even then desolate; and that condition cannot alter till the Jews shall see Him, and welcome His return, saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. 23:38,39) Has God then now no habitation upon earth? A Jew would surely say that He has not. A Christian should answer that He has; a habitation however, different in character, and formed of materials unlike any that Israel, Solomon, or men could provide. For redemption having been accomplished, redemption by the blood of God's Lamb, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to heaven having been effected, God has formed for Himself, by the Holy Ghost a habitation upon earth. Of old men built for God His dwelling-place, now He has built one for Himself; a building to which His people cannot by their offerings contribute, yet without whom it could never have been made. And as the tabernacle and the temple were severally composed of materials

provided in their natural state by the Creator of the universe, so God's present habitation bears the marks of the Creator's handiwork; for in creative power in grace God has acted, and formed for Himself the stones, living stones (1 Peter 2:5), those who are a 'new creation in Christ Jesus, even believers on His name; and this habitation of God has several names, each one of course appropriate and expressive. It is the house of God, the temple of God, and the assembly of the living God. Of all these terms, when speaking of it, does the apostle Paul make use. Let 'us look a little into them.

A habitation of God. This teaches us that God can still dwell upon earth, though the tabernacle has been for ages non-existent, and the temple at Jerusalem has been for centuries laid low.

What a delight it evidently was to God to dwell amongst His people He gathered Israel around Himself in the wilderness in an order which He was pleased to appoint (Num. 2), and issued an injunction for the exclusion from the camp of every leper, every one that had an issue, and whosoever was defiled by the dead, "that they defile not their camps, in the midst whereof I dwell." (Num. 5:3) Again, at the close of their wilderness life, God reminded them, when speaking of the land of their inheritance, upon which innocent blood was not to lie unavenged, that He the Lord dwelt among the children of Israel.

(Num. 35:34)

And as He told Moses, so He told Solomon, of His dwelling among His people. Whilst the house was building God cheered the king with the promise, that, if he was obedient, the Lord would dwell among the children of Israel, and not forsake them. (1 Kings 6:12,13) After it was built God re-affirmed it, when He appeared to Solomon the second time, twenty years after the king had commenced to lay the foundations of the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 9:1-3) It is true the continuance of His presence was conditional on the king's obedience; yet surely God did delight to dwell among His people, and to tell them of it. But not less by deed, as well as by word, did the Lord proclaim this. When Moses had finished the erection of the tabernacle, the cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. (Ex. 40:34) Not a day elapsed, after His earthly dwelling-place was made ready for Him, before the Lord openly and formally took possession of His habitation, to which none had invited Him, but out of which He would not consent to remain. Again, when Solomon had dedicated the house at Jerusalem, the cloud, which had rested on the tent of the congregation at Sinai, appeared afresh on mount Moriah, and filled the house; and the glory, which had prevented Moses from entering the tabernacle, prevented the priests from standing to minister; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord. (1 Kings 8:11) If God took a delight in dwelling in the midst of His people then, not less does He surely now, since He has made them His habitation in the Spirit.

The ideas, then, of God's habitation, God's house, God's temple, God's assembly too, are not new. Israel, in a way, could speak of them all as terms with which they were familiar, and could have turned to the written word for divine authority as to the use of them. But what was new, and is peculiar to Christian teaching, is the application of the terms "habitation," "house," and "temple" to the company of God's people upon earth. God is present upon earth, though His Son has been cast out of the world. He dwells too upon earth. He possesses, He acknowledges, a habitation peculiarly, really His own. "In Christ Jesus," writes Paul, "ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit." (Eph. 2:22) To this same building Peter refers. (1 Peter 2:5) The

apostle of the circumcision thus bears testimony to it in common with the apostle of the Gentiles, the one and the other reminding those specially under their charge of the privilege which was theirs. Those who had been formerly Gentiles, and therefore could never have entered within the enclosure of the temple set apart for the race of Israel—those too who had been Jews, but had turned their backs on mount Zion as well as on mount Moriah, when they went forth to Christ without the camp—those both learned how richly God had dealt with them in grace, in making them part of that which He deigns to call His habitation. Such was a privilege of those formerly Gentiles, far surpassing anything which they could have enjoyed as proselytes at Jerusalem. This too was the privilege of the believing remnant of the Jews, to which their fellow-countrymen, unless converted before the rapture of the saints, must ever remain strangers. It is, it must be, a privilege of a very high order, to form part of the habitation of God upon earth by the Spirit. C. E. S.

Enduring Temptation and Entering Into Temptation

There is manifestly a vast difference between “falling into temptation,” or “enduring temptation,” on the one hand, and “entering into temptation” on the other. We do well therefore to have it clear and settled in our souls; for, as the one is blessed, the other is the utmost possible danger for the soul. „There is nothing more strengthening than to “endure temptation;” nothing more perilous than to “enter into” it. There seems little difference in the words, and people might easily slur over the difference in their thought. But the difference is complete; for in the one case it is an honor that God puts upon us, and in the other a snare that Satan presents to us.

Which of these two things do we know best? How far do our souls that are here round the table of the Lord Jesus know what it is to fall into divers temptations, or to endure temptation? For blessed are we if we do. Falling into temptation, or enduring it, is that which God delights in. In Gen. 22 we find that Abraham was in a condition in which God could try him; and He loves that we should be in such a condition that He can try us. But this is not so when we are not governed by the sense of the presence of God, as well as happy in Him. It is not so where flesh is not judged. Are we then brought to this point in the ways of God? For it is this that He looks for from every saint of His. Are we then brought into communion with the Father and His Son in our Lord Jesus (1 John 1)? Have we not the same Savior, and the same salvation of God?

Still in Christ salvation is not merely an incomparable favor such as God has shown to us in the depths of our need, but it is also assuredly inseparable from the dealing with self in the presence of God; so much so, that where this is not learned at the beginning, it must be more painfully taught in the course. And then what dishonor to God! how grieving to His Spirit! Such failure, to teach us what we are, is not enduring temptation, nor is it in the least the same as God’s trying us. In such a state the Lord has rather to buffet us for our faults, as those who bear the name of the Lord Jesus after an uncomely sort.

How grievous that those who have in the Savior such a salvation, based on the utter judgment of the flesh, should so little have used it to deal with the most hateful of all things to God; for so one need not hesitate to call it. I admit there is a greater daringness and pride and subtlety in Satan; but it seems to me that for that which is low and base and mean, there is nothing so bad as self; and yet this is the very thing that every one of us carries with us. The question now is, How far has grace acted upon our souls to lead us to judge it out and out in the presence of God? Where this is the case, the Lord can try us; that is, He can put us to the proof by what is not at all a question of evil of any kind, because God does not tempt by evil any more than He is tempted by evil things. When God then was pleased to ask Abraham to give up his only son, this was in no wise evil, but a most blessed trial. It was proving whether Abraham had such perfect confidence in God that he would give up the object that was dearest to him, in whom were centered all the promises of God. And by grace Abraham could. Of course he did it with the perfect certainty that, if Isaac were then to die, God would raise him up; for Abraham perfectly well knew, before the sacrifice was asked, that Isaac was to be the child of promise; and he knew that it was to be that Isaac and nobody

else-not another son, so that he was certain, if Isaac were offered up, God would raise him again from the dead. It was therefore really the good of God's own heart that was reflected in what He asked of Abraham's heart; and Abraham was brought into greater communion with God in that which was in its measure the counterpart of the gift of His own Son.

Just so is it with the trials that God is pleased to try us by, speaking now not of our bad trials, but of our good ones; not of such sorrows as Lot passed through, but of those like Abraham's. It is a proof of the greatest confidence on God's part if there is in us such a groundwork of walking before God, and in the consciousness of His presence, that He can try us with something that is like Himself—some prize to give up, some suffering to endure in grace—whatever it may be that is according to His own mind. It is in this sense that temptation is spoken of in James 1:2,12.

After this (vss. 13-15) we immediately turn to temptation spoken of in a bad sense, and this connects itself with the verse I read in Matt. 26 I shall not dwell long upon either, though both are words of most salutary character for our souls. The Lord had looked for His disciples to watch with Him. Alas! He had not found it. And the Lord had gone Himself alone, and had prayed to His Father in deepest suffering. Then He comes back to the disciples, and, finding them sleeping, He says to Peter, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" No, they could not watch with Him one hour. The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

Now it would be very unworthy for us to take this as an excuse for our own failure; this would be reading Scripture to the, positive injury of our souls and the dishonor of God; yet I am afraid there are many who do so. But we must remember there is this difference between our standing now, and that of the disciples. Flesh had not been thoroughly exposed and judged at that time; it was before the cross of Christ, and so before the Holy Ghost was given. There was divine life, but divine life, in itself, always goes in weakness.

It is the Holy Ghost that acts in power; and you never can have power without Him. But we are always responsible for the power of the Holy Ghost, because He is given to the believer, and forever abides in him. This time was not yet come; but the Lord does say in view of it, as well as of the state in which they then were, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." For remember this, it is not any power conferred by the Spirit of God that keeps, even though He be the Spirit of power—it is not energy in this or that which keeps, but dependence; it is the sense of weakness that watches and prays, and thus has the power of Christ resting on us. His strength made perfect in weakness.

There is nothing that so tends, where it is severed from Christ, to destroy dependence—as a large knowledge of the word of God. And that is where our danger lies. The greater our knowledge of the word of God, where it is separated from the sense of utter weakness, and consequently from the need of watching and praying, the greater the danger. This is a solemn warning for our souls. There is no doubt plenty of knowledge of Scripture, and of what is called intelligence of truth.; but do our souls keep up this sense of our need and weakness, and the expression of it to God? "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation."

What does our Lord mean by "entering into temptation?" The will that goes into a scene where nothing but a judged will in one who goes at the bidding of God and leaning on Him can be kept; that is, the will goes in where failure is inevitable, just because it is will at work. So Peter himself

soon proved. He went where Peter could not stand, unless the Lord had called and kept him by faith. He entered into temptation. He did not suffer. There was no such thing as enduring temptation; but he entered into it, and fell.

And let me just say that it' is all well in the midst of the saints of God to confess our Lord Jesus Christ; but it is not so easy to confess Him truly and humbly where, instead of saints sympathizing with us; shame and contempt, or death even, may be the consequence, as in Peter's case. He would have endured, had he gone in by grace, obedience, watching and praying, instead of trusting in his own willingness to go to prison or even to die for his Master. When our Lord says, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak," He is looking at nature in man; and nature is incapable of such a trial. None but God can sustain, and therefore it would require God's will expressed in His word to lead us rightly into such a scene of temptation, and His grace sustaining in faith to keep us in it; otherwise it would be but our own will, and we should fall. It would have been an abomination in Abraham to sacrifice his son, unless God had spoken the word. But faith, where self is judged, strengthens the soul to endure temptation. One enters not into temptation where one abides in dependence and self-judgment. Then when we fall into various temptations, we count it all joy; and as we did not enter of our own will, so we do not fall in them, but by grace endure.

The Lord give us to watch and pray, so much the more because He has blessed us with such a knowledge of His word and of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ. W. K.

The Peerless One

O Thou, Jehovah's fellow, Man!

Jesus, my Lord, God's Son:

Human perfection at its height

But found in Thee alone.

To Abba's love, to God's high claims,

Thou cam'st not short at all;

Perfect in everything art Thou

Alone since Adam's fall.

O matchless, peerless Man! shall we

Begrudge to Thee this praise?

Perfect, alone Thou cam'st in love

To glory us to raise.

Peerlessly, spotless One! 'twas Thou

The wrath did'st bear for me:

Peerlessly, righteous One! I'm made

God's righteousness in Thee.

Peerlessly, glorious One; how soon

Shall I be like to Thee?

Thy very glory then reflect,

Thy perfect beauty see.

G. V. W.

Our Place Before God: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —,

I am a little anxious lest, knowing now that you have peace with God, you should be content, and settle down, thinking that this is all the blessing that God has provided for you in Christ. Many fall into, this snare, and there by never understand the place into which they are brought.

Permit me, then, to remind you, that great as the blessing is, on the enjoyment of which you have entered, it falls infinitely short of God's thoughts and God's desires for you. I may be able to make this more simple, if I direct your attention again to the foundation. The foundation of all lies in the cross of Christ; for it was there that He both met, on our behalf, every claim of God's holiness, and fully glorified Him in every attribute of His character. It is to this He Himself referred when He said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." (John 17:4) And it is on this ground, as having thus established a claim upon God, that He prays, "And now, O Father, glorify thou Me with thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was." (vs. 5) You will therefore see that God's estimate of the work of Christ is seen in the place which He has accorded to Him at His own right hand. We may even say more: that nothing less than this would have been an adequate response to the claim which Christ had; through his finished work, established on God. And surely nothing less could have satisfied the heart of God; for who shall even imagine His joy in intervening to raise Christ from the dead, setting Him down at His own right hand, and in giving "Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2: 9-11) Observe, then, very carefully these three things first, that the place now occupied by Christ in glory is the fruit of His redemptive work; secondly, that He occupies it as Man; and hence, thirdly, that He is there on behalf of His own. The consequence is, that God must bring us into the same place; that God's glory is concerned in according to believers the same place of acceptance before Him; yea, that His heart delights also to acknowledge thus the work and worthiness of His beloved Son. Every believer therefore is before God according to the meaty of the work of Christ, and in all the acceptability of His Person, and thus enjoys a position of perfect nearness, and is the object of the perfect complacency of God; for he is brought, even now, home to God in Christ Jesus.

I may now lead you to a few scriptures which will abundantly substantiate the above statements. The very next verse to that which occupied our attention in the last letter will do much towards this. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;" and then the apostle proceeds: "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1,2) It is thus not only peace with God that we have on believing, but we have access also through Christ into this grace wherein we stand; i.e. we are brought into the full favor of God—into the unclouded sunlight of His presence, and there we can rejoice—everything being settled and secured-in hope of the glory of God. So perfect

and so inalienable is the place into which we are brought, on faith in Christ—on faith in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead—that, notwithstanding the trials, difficulties and dangers of the wilderness-path, we can rejoice in the hope—in the sure and certain prospect—of the glory of God. There may be, as the apostle goes on to tell us, tribulations; but if so, we can glory even in these, “knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us”—that love which God proved, commended toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Having too, while we were yet enemies, been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, we are entitled to conclude, we shall be saved—saved completely, including the redemption of the body (8:23) —by His life, the life of the risen Savior at the right hand of God. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation (see margin v. 3-11) Thus we have as our present portion, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts; we joy in Himself, we occupy before Him a place of perfect favor, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

But even this is not all. In this same epistle we are taught, not only that our guilt is gone forever as soon as we believe in Christ, that we are justified, etc., but we are also shown to be brought through the death and resurrection of Christ into a new place altogether—a place outside of the flesh, because we are “in Christ” before God. The next section of this epistle, commencing at verse 12 of this chapter, and ending with chap. 8, treats of this subject. You will thus see that, first of all, everything is traced up either to Adam or Christ, the two heads, the first man Adam, and the second man. Christ. (vss. 12-21) The consequence is, that every one is seen in Adam or in Christ, and, I need hardly say, whether we are in Adam or Christ, depends upon whether or not we are believers. If through grace we are believers, we are in Christ. This being so, there are certain blessed results which I will briefly indicate, leaving you at your own leisure to follow out the subject.

The first thing the apostle reminds us is, that the very ground on which we are—the ground taken at our baptism—shows that we profess to be dead with Christ; and this, as is seen in Col. 3:3, is true of all believers before God. If you carefully read Rom. 6 you will at once see that the apostle urges our responsibility on this foundation. Hence myself is gone from God’s sight as well as my sins, otherwise the apostle could not say, as he does, “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (6:11)

In the next chapter he teaches that we “also are become dead to the law through the body of Christ,” etc.; and this prepares the way, after a discussion of the effect of the application of the law to one who is renewed by the Spirit of God, bringing thereby to light the constant presence of sin in the nature, and the utter contrariety between the new nature and the old (7: 13-25) for a full statement of the truth as to the believer. “There is therefore,” he proceeds to say, “now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus,” (8: 1), so complete is the deliverance, as well as forgiveness, which we have in Christ. Nay, more; he tells us, “Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you.” (8: 9) He thus shows that the believer’s standing is not in the flesh, not in the first man Adam at all, but he is before God in a place which is characterized as being in the Spirit; that is, the Spirit, and not the flesh, characterizes his existence before God, because, in the death of Christ, the believer’s evil nature also was judged; for “God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin, in the flesh.” (8:3)

Then, after pointing out further blessed consequences of having the indwelling. Spirit, he declares that “all things must work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to God’s purpose,” since “whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren,” etc. He then asks the question, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” and he answers by reminding us that God, in delivering up His Son to death for us all, has given us the proof that He will freely give us all things. This leads him to the triumphant conclusion that nothing can be laid to the charge of God’s elect; that since God Himself has justified them, none can condemn them; that since Christ has died, and has risen again, and is even at the right hand of God to make intercession for us, nothing can ever separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (8:31-39)

Now it would be a fatal mistake for you to rest in the fifth chapter, if you would know the fullness of God’s grace, and the wondrous character of His salvation; for, unless We go on to the eighth chapter, we never know what is true for us and of us before God—the complete and perfect deliverance every believer has, though he may be ignorant of it, in Christ. And it is of the utmost importance that you should see that these blessings which have been indicated are in no way connected with attainment. All that I have pointed out is the portion (whether he knows it or not) of every one who cries “Abba, Father,” of every babe in Christ.

But even now there is much more beyond; and if you will turn with me to the Ephesians I will indicate in a few words—for I am unwilling to prolong this letter—the full character of the believer’s place before God. Look, first, at the wonderful expressions in the first chapter: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places 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: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.” (1:3-6) Look at each of the sentences I have underlined, and you will see how perfect is our place before God. For He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings, etc.; it is His purpose that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love; and He has made us accepted in the Beloved. In the next chapter we have the steps by which we have been brought into the heavenly places. “God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” etc. (2:4-6) Here we are regarded as having been dead in sins; Christ is looked upon in this epistle as having gone down into that condition—dead, as it were, in the place of the sinner; God, being rich in mercy, and acting from His own heart of love, came in, in grace, and quickened us together with Christ, and then He raised us up together and seated us together in Christ in the heavenlies; so that He has brought us into His own presence; and hence our present place—our place now, even while we are in the body—is in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. Nothing short of this expresses the fullness of His grace, or satisfies His own heart.

There is one more scripture. I desire to bring before you, and then I have done. “As He is, so are we in this world.” (1 John 4:17) As Christ is at the right hand of God—the delight and joy of God’s heart—there in all the perfectness of His person, and in all the sweet savor of His sacrifice, so are

we in this world; for we stand not in ourselves but in Christ, and are therefore invested with all His own acceptance and fragrance before God.

The Lord give us to have clearer apprehensions of the place into which, in His unspeakable grace, we are brought in Christ Jesus.

Believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

The Present Priesthood of Christ

BEFORE speaking of the present service of the Lord as our “Great High Priest,” let us see from the word of God for whom the priesthood and intercession of Christ is. Many think that Christ is interceding before God for the unconverted, for sinners, and therefore He will forgive their sins and save their souls. This thought is quite contrary to Scripture, and gives a wrong thought of God Himself and His blessed gospel, and thus the peace of many of His saints is damaged. It is as though God was against the sinner, instead of for him, and that it required a great deal of persuasion and entreaty to induce Him to save a soul, but that at last, through the intercession of Christ, He would consent to do it. If we turn to the Scripture in John 3:16, we read, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son.” It was God who first thought of the sinner, and so loved as to give His Son to die on the cross; thus proving that God is not against, but for the sinner, and needs no one to move His heart towards him. We also read, in that beautiful passage in 2 Cor. 5:20, “As though God did beseech by us.” God Himself condescends to beseech sinners to be reconciled to Him; thus it needs no one to intercede for them.

Let us look at Heb. 7:24,25, and there we shall see for whom the priesthood is. “But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” Who does He make intercession for? Not for the unconverted, but for those who “come unto God by Him.” And who are they? Saints of God, perfected forever by the “one offering.” The expression, “come unto God,” has given many the idea that it means a sinner coming to God for salvation; but that is not the thought in this passage. The word “come” is the same as “draw near” in Heb. 10:22, which speaks of saved ones; for a sinner could not “draw near” in his sins to a Holy God. Before we go further, let us see from the Scripture the ground upon which we can draw near to God, as many of the Lord’s people never grow in the knowledge of the things of God, because they have never got the question of their sins settled, and do not know what it is to be in His holy presence in perfect peace.

Reader, do you know what it is to be in God’s holy presence without fear? and can you say, “I know my sins are put away forever before Him”? Heb. 10:1-22 brings out how a soul can thus draw near to God with the knowledge of the forgiveness of his sins; and it is beautiful to see the mass of evidence which the Spirit of God brings together to assure our poor hearts that our sins are put away, and that we are “perfected forever” before God, and how He invites us to draw near into His holy presence. We find the whole Trinity, so-called, engaged with the question of our salvation. God the Father wills our salvation (vs. 10); God the Son came to accomplish it (vs. 9); and God the Holy Ghost is the witness to us that the work has been accepted, and that our sins are gone forever. (vss. 15-17) If you will read verse 12 you will see, “But this man, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins” (or one sin-offering), “forever sat down on the right hand of God.”

And now turn to Lev. 4:27-31, where you will see, if a Jew sinned, and it came to his knowledge, “then he shall bring his offering.” (vs. 28) The law said, “The soul that sinneth, it shall die;” and if

the man had sinned, death was the penalty. Was he slain then? No; God provided a substitute, and told him lie could bring a kid, and lay his hand on its head, which meant that his sin was transferred to the kid; and God, so to speak, said, "I will accept the death of that kid instead of your death for the sin you have committed;" and so, "he shall slay the sin-offering." (vs. 29) The animal died instead of the man, and he could go free.

But this sacrifice was only for one sin; and if he sinned again, he had to bring another sacrifice. How beautiful is the contrast in Heb. 10:12, "But this man (Christ), when He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down on the right hand of God." Do you, dear reader, believe that not only one sin, as in the case of the Jew, but all your sins, were laid upon Christ on the cross; that He bore the judgment of them before God, and put them all away once for all? Because if they were not put away then, they never can be, as there is only one sacrifice for sins, and Christ can never die again.

It is not a question of past, present, or future sins; for when Christ died they were all future; and by that "one offering" we read, "He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14); not for a month, or a year, but "forever." Sanctified here means those set apart by God for salvation. But now the question arises, If our sins are gone, and we are perfected forever by the "one offering," what need is there of a priest? Although we are saved, and the question of our sins settled forever, and we are "seated in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 2:6), we are not in the glory yet; and there is the wilderness journey, full of difficulties, and trials, and dangers in between, and the power of Satan on every hand; so He is there at God's right hand to represent those who are saved before God, and to uphold them in their path through this world, obtaining all necessary grace and help in time of need, and to save them through all the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness journey, till each believer enters that "rest that remains for the people of God." He undertakes (so to speak) for every saint of God till they are safely through the wilderness journey. But mark, it is not for sins, as He is only "Priest" for those whose sins are put away forever, which He did once for all when He offered up Himself. (Heb. 7:27) In Heb. 8:1,2, we see that He is now on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and at the same time "a minister" (servant) "of the sanctuary." It is wonderful how the Holy Ghost leads us up in the Hebrews to the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, and unfolds His varied glories to us! Chapter 1. brings out His divine glories; chapter 2 His glories as man, and then goes on to show how superior His priesthood is to that under law; and then in chapter 8. He sums it up with, "We have such a high priest." Reader, have you ever contemplated the glorious person of Christ as He is now, at God's right hand, a living glorified man (although God as well) crowned with glory and honor? Can you say, as in Heb. 2:9, I see Jesus? Where.? No longer on earth, not in the grave, not risen again on the earth, but "crowned with glory and honor" at God's right hand. There are many of the Lord's people who know about the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, but do not think of the glorious person who did the work, now "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;" and then, when a soul has grasped the glories of that person, how wonderful to find it written, in Heb. 8:2, "a minister" (servant) "of the sanctuary." What a thought, that that Blessed One loved us, and gave Himself for us, and now actually lives to serve us in the courts above In chapter 9: 24 He "appears in the presence of God for us; "that is, He in all the blessedness of His person represents us there, and is our abiding righteousness before God. We find a beautiful picture of this in Aaron. (Ex. 28:9-12) The names of the children of Israel were engraved upon the two onyx stones which

were placed on Aaron's shoulders, and also on the twelve stones which were on the breastplate, and could not be rubbed out. This breast-plate, with the engraved precious stones, was inseparably connected with the ephod, which was the priestly garment; so that Aaron could not exercise his office as priest without bearing the names of the children of Israel "before the Lord continually" (vs. 29); thus Aaron could not go into the holy place without God's continually remembering Israel. The Lord Jesus, "our great High Priest," bears the name of every believer "before the Lord continually," representing us before God. A plate of pure gold was on Aaron's forehead, on the miter, and on it was engravers the words, "Holiness to the Lord." (vs. 36) Gold, in Scripture, generally means divine righteousness. Pure, unsullied divine righteousness and holiness to the Lord was what typically met the eye of God when Aaron went into the tabernacle. And now we see Christ, in all the glory of His person, in perfect righteousness before God. With what complacency does God look at Him! God's light can search Him through and through, and not find a spot or stain upon Him—nothing but what answers perfectly to the divine glory. And every believer can look up and say, "That Blessed One represents me before God."

Many of the Lord's people are so occupied with their callings or work that they have not much time to read or study the word of God, and necessarily their thoughts have to be much in their everyday work. How blessed to know that, although we have to be occupied with things down here, yet the Lord is "continually" representing us before God. Some may be so weak in body, or racked with pain, that they cannot recall any comforting passage of God's word. The Lord is faithfully bearing the name of that suffering saint before God. God cannot look at Christ without thinking of you and me, because He bears our names continually before Him. If we get away from Him in our souls, or get Occupied with the things here, He does not forget us, but ever lives to make intercession for us; not an occasional thing, like the advocacy in 1 John 2, "If any man sin," but, "He ever lives," &c. He not only represents us before God, but He sympathizes with us, and through Him we "obtain mercy and grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:15,16); and He also "makes intercession for us" (chap. 7:25), not for our sins—that question was settled at the cross—but for our weaknesses and infirmities, continually upholding us; for "He is able to save to the uttermost" (i.e. all through the dangers and difficulties of the way) "all that come unto God by Him." As in Peter's case, the Lord prayed for him that his faith might not fail. The Lord has been a man here, has trod the path of faith, has been tried in every way. He knew what it was to be weary to suffer hunger and thirst, to groan in His spirit, and to weep; he was also tempted of Satan. We are drawn away by our own lusts, and enticed, because we have sin in us. He was tempted from without, never from within. It would be blasphemy to think it, as He was holy from his birth, and without sin. Thus the blessed Lord, having gone through the temptation of Satan, and the trials to which we are subject while walking through the wilderness, can sympathize with us now in them; "and in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Suppose, you are led by the Spirit of God into a certain path, and Satan tempts you to give up that path on account of difficulties, &c., the Lord can sympathize with you, as He has been tempted here as man, and will succor as well as sympathize with you in the temptation. We have also access to the throne of God Himself, because "we have such an High Priest." (Heb. 4:14-16) We do not go to the priest, but to the throne, and find it a throne of grace; and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. What a wondrous place to get help from, the very throne of God Himself.

There is another thing connected with the priesthood of the Lord, and that is the place He occupies in our worship. Will you compare Ex. 28:38 with Heb. 13:15? Aaron bears the iniquity of the holy things. The Christian sacrifice is praise and worship. When we come together to worship as Christians we truly are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Still we have sin in us; and how often are there imperfections and Sin mixed with our worship. But how blessed to know it all goes up to God by Him; i.e. He presents our praise to God in all the fragrance and acceptability of His own person. It is not as it goes out of our lips. It may be only a few stammering sentences, but said with a true heart, which Christ takes up and presents to God. Thus a simple soul, thanking God for what He has done in blessing Him, is a sacrifice of praise, and that goes up to God by Him. When we get home there will be no need of a priest, as the wilderness journey will be over, and every son brought to glory and to that eternal rest that remains for the people of God. May the Spirit of God, dear reader, lead you to consider the High Priest of our profession in all His glory, and to praise His grace that has loved us and given Himself for us, and is unceasingly occupied with us now in leading us through the wilderness, and ever faithfully representing us before God, and living to make intercession for us, till each one is brought to glory, and He will see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied.

F. K.

His Name Shall Be in Their Foreheads

Borne aloft on the brow, that which is one of the most striking parts of the human face, Himself, and Himself in the power of the display of that day, telling out its own tale of the success of all His sufferings, doings, care, patience, prayers, workings; for us the people given to Him from before the foundation of the world. His came, the name of God and of the Lamb, will stand out aloft on each fellow-citizen. Blest distinctive mark this!

G. V. W.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Its Present Relation to God

This habitation, however, is also called God's house. Now, though to some the distinction between habitation and house may seem a trivial one, it is none the less real. A house is a habitation, but a habitation need not be a house. And though the habitation of God is said to be built, and the assembly at Corinth is called God's building, (■ικοδομ■), it is nevertheless true, that where Scripture uses the term house (■ικος) with reference to the assembly of God, the context suggests distinctive teaching in connection with it. God's habitation is treated of by the apostle Paul, when dwelling on the privileges of those who formed part of it. Of God's house he writes, when reminding his readers of their 'responsibility in connection with it. Thus, addressing the Hebrews, he says to them, "Whose house" (God's house) "are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. 3:6) They would prove by steadfastness that they really were part of God's house. So Peter, reminding his readers that judgment must begin at the house of God (1 Peter 4:17), adds, "And if it first begin at us," &c.

Again, addressing Timothy, Paul writes to his child in the faith, to tell him how to behave himself in God's house, which is the assembly of the living God. (1 Tim. 3:15). The rules, the regulations, for a house are laid down by the Master, the owner of it. And since the assembly is God's house, not man's, Timothy was to learn how to conduct himself in it. Every one would reckon it a monstrous intrusion for another person to set about the regulating of a house, unless distinctly authorized by the master to do it. Men would naturally resent such an action on the part of their fellows, and no plea on the ground of taste or judgment would avail against their condemnation for arrogating to themselves a position and authority in a house which did not belong to. them. The master, the owner, all would agree, and not a stranger, nor even an inmate, is the fitting person to say how his house is to be conducted. Shall men then be allowed their right in such a matter, and God be denied His? Now has not this been practically the case in Christendom? Christians, and in some cases those not even converted, have taken upon themselves, with the sanction of the community at large, to make rules and regulations for a house, of which, if converted, they certainly form part, but which belongs to another, even to God. And such practices are openly justified, and commended as fitting and proper. Once however let the force of the term God's house sink into the heart, and the impropriety, as well as incongruity, of men drawing up rules for the guidance of that house will be fully apparent. Timothy even, apostolic delegate as he was, holding thereby a position, which, Titus excepted, no one else that we know of was ever called to occupy, could not

make any rules himself, but received them from the apostle. Timothy surely never dreamed, the apostle never countenanced the idea of any man, or any company of men, laying down rules formed in their wisdom for, the orderly government of God's house. Should not the very term God's house suggest to each one the propriety of learning from the Word, what are God's rules for its guidance and government?

But this house is also called God's temple, the shrine, as it were, of the Deity who dwells in it. Twice in the New Testament do we meet with this designation, and both times it is used by the apostle Paul when writing to the same company of Christians, those gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ at Corinth. The context helps us here also to determine the import of the term, and the reason of its selection. In the first epistle (3:16), when warning teachers to beware of what they were teaching, he writes to the whole assembly there gathered: "Know ye not that ye are God's temple, 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, such (οἱ ἱεῖς, not which) ye are." With the consciousness that the assembly was God's temple, could they be indifferent to the introduction of false doctrine? Should any too, remembering this character of the assembly, be careless as to the doctrines they taught? The temple would remind all of the holy character of the assembly, and therefore of the holiness which befitted it. Again, when speaking of the general company of God's saints on earth, and not of the local assembly merely at Corinth, the same apostle reminds them that Christians should be separate from evil, and from communion with unbelievers, on the ground that believers in the aggregate are the living God's temple, who will dwell in them, and walk in them. (2 Cor. 6:16) One sees at a glance, that there is a force, and a fitness in the term temple, used in this connection of thought, which no other word could so well set forth. Gentiles as well as Jews knew what the word temple would imply.

Here another thing should be pointed out. When the apostle writes of God's habitation, or of God's house, he knows of but one such upon earth. Where then can it be found? For it is no ideal thing, no phantom, since Timothy was to know how to behave himself in it. But where is it? Jerusalem cannot produce it; St. Peter's at Borne cannot lay claim to be it. No cathedral, no building of wood, brick, iron, or stone; is entitled to this appellation. God does not dwell in any such at present. He dwells in His own habitation, which in Christ Jesus He has made for Himself by the Spirit. Understanding this, we have to correct our thoughts, and to change perhaps our language, which is the index to our thoughts; for we cannot go now to God's house as those of old did, and as saints will by-and-by. (Psa. 122) We indeed who believe form part of it. If, however, we talk of going to God's house, when we mean that we are about to assemble ourselves with God's saints for worship or for prayer, do we not by our language show, that we have lost the right thought of what His house really is? We are attaching to a building, or a locality a term, which now belongs only to a peculiar company of people upon earth. Distinctive Christian teaching is virtually set aside, or ignored, as long as such language is accepted as correct. It was correct language for a Jew. It will be correct language for all who worship Jehovah by-and-by. (Mic. 4: 2) But scriptural language is not of necessity Christian language, though Christian language—understanding by that what the Bible authorizes—must ever be scriptural, if real. As regards the terms "temple" and "assembly," the usage of Scripture is different. They are applied to the local gathering, as well as to the general company of Christians upon earth. (See 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16, for the application of the term temple; and 1 Cor. 1:1,2; Acts 20:28, for the use of the term - church or assembly) Nor

are these the only senses in which these words are used; for both the one and the other are employed when the true Church universal is the subject in hand. (Eph. 1:22; 2:21) To a consideration of the word assembly let us now turn.

By God's assembly on earth is to be understood that company of people, which, professedly at least, has been gathered out from the rest of mankind unto Him. At first it was, as in glory it will really be, composed only of true Christians; for such alone at first professed to be believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. After a time the assembly of God included others besides real believers, but none who did not profess to be Christians. Now, wherever the truth has spread, members of the assembly are to be found. And in every place where a few souls professedly own the Lord Jesus Christ, there an assembly is regarded as existing. It may be like that in Laodicea, in which mere profession was the prevailing characteristic. It may be like that in Philadelphia, where faithfulness to Christ was a marked feature of it. But whatever may be the spiritual condition of the company locally gathered, if professedly called out to God, it is regarded in the Word as God's assembly in that locality, and has responsibilities of no mean order in consequence. How little is this understood by those who only outwardly bear the name of Christ! Profession, of course, should be true; but profession of itself entails responsibility; and all who bear the name of Christ by profession declare that they are members of the assembly of God.

Dismissing at present from our consideration of the subject the assembly as it will be perfect in glory, in which none but real Christians will be found, let us confine our attention to the assembly as viewed upon earth at any one time, whether in its local or general aspect. Of God's assembly we read in the Word, and by that we are reminded of a company of people as such, distinguished from every other assembly upon earth. In what varied lights God's assembly is seen. If those who composed it were before the apostle's mind, he could write of the assembly of the Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:1), or the assemblies of the nations. If the country in which such gatherings were to be expressed, he makes mention of the assemblies of Galatia; or of Asia. (1 Cor. 16: 1, 19) If Paul was thinking of the localities in which different companies met, he writes of the church, or assembly, in the house of Nymphas (Col. 4:15), Philemon (Phil. 2), or Aquila. (Rom. 16:5) When he thought of the spiritual condition of the members, he writes of the assemblies of the saints. (1 Cor. 14:33) Viewing the churches in relation to Christ, Paul describes them as assemblies of Christ. (Rom. 16:16) When remembering to whom the Church belonged, he styles it the assembly of God. And if its security is uppermost in his mind, he can write of it as in God the Father. (1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1) A glance, at these different ways of describing it shows this clearly, that men's thoughts about it are not all drawn from Scripture. They talk of a national church and of local churches. In Scripture we meet with assemblies of a country, and the assembly, or church in a town. The assembly of God What a thought it gives us God connecting Himself with a company of people on earth, who had need, and professedly at least acknowledged it, of the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And now we would ask, How does this term 'assembly of God' strike on the ear, or impress the mind of those who hear, or read about it? There was one once who evidently felt in no light way its force. Paul has left on record, in the first epistle to the Corinthians, what it was to him; for, writing of his grievous sin before his conversion, he states that he persecuted the assembly of God. Saints they were. Believers on the Lord Jesus such had proved themselves to be Yet he does not term 'them saints or believers, but writes of the assembly of God, thereby exposing his former

undisguised and 'unmitigated hostility to the company gathered unto God. (1 Cor. 15:9) Could he have expressed a stronger way what he did in mistaken zeal for God? How far wrong must he have been when he was a persecutor of the assembly of the living God! Again, writing to the Corinthians to expose the grossness of their conduct at the Lord's Supper, he pertinently asks them, Would they despise the assembly of God? (1 Cor. 11: 22) An answer to such a question should surely be prompt and unhesitating. Could any one who professed to serve God despise His assembly? To a question so pointed, so searching, surely but one answer could be given. How the need there was for such a question shows of what our wretched hearts are capable.

In conclusion, habitation of God, tells us of our privilege; house of God reminds us of responsibilities; temple of God warns us of its holy character; assembly of God proclaims to whom it has been, professedly at least, gathered out.

C. E. S.

(Continued from page 47)

Characteristics of Remnant Times

Before reading the passages in Malachi, to which, the Lord helping me, I would desire to direct your attention, it is important to notice the position of this book—where it comes. It is the last outpouring of God's heart to His people Israel, before the coming of the Lord; and not only to Israel as such, but it is addressed to the little remnant returned, under Ezra and Nehemiah, to a divine position in the land. Then all was bright—the temple of God re-built, His altar restored, sacrifices offered, and even the feast of tabernacles kept, which had not been kept since the days of Joshua, the son of Nun. But here we find the divine position sinks into formality and routine when man comes in. God expresses Himself dissatisfied. There were still the smoking altars, there were still the priests and sacrifices; outwardly God was recognized; but He looks for service and worship coming from the heart, and springing from the knowledge of His will, and He fails to find it. One thing He looks for—He looks for our love, and He cannot do without it. If this is lacking, it cannot be covered up from Him.

Look for a moment at Nehemiah. The two books are contemporary, or rather have to do with the same little remnant, only Nehemiah is in the bright, calm days, when they stood in complete separation from those around, and in obedience to the Word. I would simply direct your attention to the contrast in 2 Kings 22. Israel was still Israel; but they had lost the law which Moses gave them, which he had directed should be put into the ark. It was not the Ten Commandments, but the last words of Moses, the man of God. Each king who succeeded to the throne of Israel was to copy it out, and each one was to copy from the original. The reason for this is evident. If one had copied from another, one might have made a mistake, an alteration; either willfully or from carelessness; and when the next came, he would have copied it, and would not really have known what was the word of God. But God held each king responsible to go direct to the one Moses had given them, and copy it for himself. Not only so, but every seven years (seven is always a sign of grace to Israel, and a pledge of the rest which God would give them) the law was to be brought out and read to the people. When Israel failed, the first thing which indicated coldness and declension was, they gave up their Sabbatic year. So they did not have their law read to them, and when they lost it they did not miss it. Then Josiah came to the throne. He really wished to serve God, but he did not know the law. No doubt he went to the most hoary-headed elders and tried to get the most correct information; but, whether from ignorance or wickedness, they evidently did not tell him the truth, for the high places were not pulled down, and the people went on worshipping Baal and the host of heaven. The whole kingdom was in idolatry, while he wished to do what was right before God. Then the law is found, and as soon as he knows, it really is the law of God, he sets to work that it may be carried out.

There is a great contrast here to the action of Nehemiah. Josiah sets to work to reform Israel. God had an earthly people. Then it as with Israel God's name was associated. The nations round all knew Him as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, and Israel was marked as the people of Jehovah. Evil had come in, but not as it did when He had to scatter them, and send them into Babylon. In Josiah's time there was a revival, a terrible revival truly, a revival of destruction and

blood-shedding; but it was another opportunity for Israel as such. When Ezra and Nehemiah come, Israel had been scattered, Jerusalem leveled to the ground; not a trace upon earth, as a people, of the people among whom God had dwelt, or of Jerusalem, as a place where God's name was known.

Then we find the little remnant. They return to Jerusalem; they build again the temple; they set up the altar. They do not say they are Israel—they are but a handful—but they own God's name on earth, they own God's word as the basis of everything; they separate from the nations around, and they take the place of dependence upon Jehovah. They were but a handful, and they did not pretend to be what they were not; but they were brought back to a divine position. Malachi addresses his prophecy to these very people. Through him God pours out His heart to the people, and the burden upon his heart is, that after all He had, done for them—sheltered them under the blood-stained lintel, led them through the Red Sea, where the waters were a wall to them on either side, and where they had seen their enemies dead upon the sea shore; borne with them for forty years in the wilderness; fed them and cared for them in the land; each time that they went backsliding from Him, He had raised up a deliverer, a Sampson or a Gideon. God went on with this years and years; at last He scattered them. Again, in grace He deals with them, brings out this little remnant, and associates His name with them. And now, even they have sunk into form and routine, and their worship and service do not spring from fear of God at all.

We will look for a few moments at the first chapter. Malachi means, "My messenger." In verse 2 you get the whole question, on God's side and Israel's side, summed up in Very, very few words. I do not know any such summing up. If man had been trying to do it, he would have told us a great deal to be said on this side and on that; but here you get it all. "I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?" You find it is a question as to their hearts, not as to their vows, their worship, or their offerings. It is in their worship God's people always show what He is to them. You get indication of what God is to your heart in the quality of your service and or your worship.

In Deut. 7, you see how God speaks of having loved them. Now look at Jer. 31:3. I turn to these Scriptures, so distant from one another, to show how unchangeable that love was. God would have no excuse for question as to His love, nor doubt in the heart of Israel about it. Even the queen of Sheba, when she came to Solomon, read something of it. She saw his riches and his wisdom, and how blessing from him went out to every soul around him; she saw that there was sunshine from his very presence, and she said, Where does all this come from? She finds the source of it all, and owns, "Because the Lord loved Israel forever, therefore made He thee king." She has had nothing to do with God, but she reads not only His present love to Israel, she owns it is forever. I mention this because you see it was so evident, even to the queen of Sheba; yet Israel was saying, in their actions and in their words, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" There is nothing that tests God so much as refusing His love. What is so painful as to have real love to a person, and to know there is no appreciation of it? The deeper the love, the more it is hurt. But God could not go away from Israel. Man would have said, Well, if you do not care for me, if you do not believe my love, I cannot help it. The character of love is, it must speak out; but it looks for an answer. We should have said to Israel, All your love is not worth having. I would not wait ten minutes for it. Yet God waits, because His love is everlasting. And here is the pent-up heart of God closing up His appeals to Israel. "I have loved you. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us?"

Another thing that marks this little book is reality. God is saying, I will have reality. And what God means by reality is the heart heating true, in response to the revelation He has given them of Himself. When God tests the remnant He says, I look for the heart with one beat of love for Me, and He is disappointed.

He has spoken out His heart of love now as He had not then. He has sent His Son, and “herein is love.” So He makes known His love to us, and He looks for it to produce in our hearts the love He looks for. Do not think it is a matter of indifference. “We love Him because He first loved us.”

In verse 4 we get another thing—independence. God has pulled down. Well, we will build it up again. That is the character. Nothing marks more departure from God than independence. Yet how often we are found.. bringing in God in certain things in which we think we cannot do without Him, while there is lamentable independence in what we think we can manage ourselves! How often we are found taking up things and doing things apart from God!

Verse 6 shows their real state. It is remarkable how this gives the character of the book. Whatever God comes and charges them with they justify themselves. They say, Wherein have we despised thy name?” “Wherein have we polluted Thee?”

Verses 3-11. How close He comes! It was not that there were not offerings. There were offerings, arid there Were priests. But the quality of their sacrifices showed what God was to them. It might be a most beautiful offering; but if it had a blemish, it would not do for His eye. Look into Leviticus, and you will see how the knife cut into the most secret inward parts, that the perfection of all might be exposed to Him. Why this submitting every part to the knife and to the water?

Because to God it was being offered. (Heb. 4:12, 13)

The one thing which God had before Him in all His dealings with Israel was that He might have a people with whom His name could be associated. If there was a leper in their midst he must be put out at once, because it is “the camp in the midst of which I dwell.” The sense of what was due to God was to rule everything; and God maintains this principle to this very moment. He must be represented according to His true character. Moses represented God wrongly before Israel, and God is very jealous of being misrepresented. He said, “Speak to the rock.” He meant to reveal Himself as the God of grace. Instead of that, Moses gave the children of Israel a good scolding. They knew Moses was in the habit of being With God; and what they saw in Moses they believed was what God had told him to do. So God dealt with him accordingly. Ananias and Sapphira thought they would have a cheap Christianity. They make a profession. God deals with them according to the ground they profess to take. At every fresh revelation of God’s name in a fresh way He comes, in and deals accordingly. Look at 1 Cor. 13 and 14. Have you never been struck with the connection? In chap. 12 you get the body and members; in chap. 14, the power of the Holy Ghost acting through those members. In chap. 13 there is a picture of divine love. You Corinthians, you say you are using these gifts; but you are using them to exalt yourselves. You have the gifts, but with what end are you going to use them? It was the same with the sacrifices.

(Verses 7-10)

They were come in to show who God is, and He is most jealous of being rightly represented on earth. God comes to Israel, and He says, “If my name is connected with you, I will have it

maintained in its true character.” God did not want cattle, bulls, or goats. He says, “I am quite independent of bulls or goats, if they are not indicative of the love of your heart; but I am looking for the love that ought to be flowing.” In the measure in which He had made Himself known He looked for response; but the greatest proof of what God was was slighted.

In verse 10 He says, “It is not out of love to me you present offerings, and shut the doors.” The priests got the flesh. It was the portion of the Levites. And sometimes, when a priest saw a nice fat animal brought in, he saw it had a blemish—it might be a blind eye; but he knew it would be just as good for him and his family to eat if it were blind; so he passed over the blind eye, and offered the sacrifice; and God comes in and says, “You care for yourself; but what is clue to me you pass over, and so you have profaned my name before the Gentiles.” (vss. 11, 12)

In verse 14 there is definite judgment. What God looks for is the best that a man has. He sees the man as he goes in to fetch out his sacrifice. The man walks down his stall; his eye tests on this animal, and that, and another, and another. He may bring out a very fine one, but as long as the best bull in that stall is not brought out, He will not be satisfied. He will not have our leavings; He will have the best from us; He will be first in our affections. The Lord Himself lead us into this, and so disclose Himself to our hearts that He may attract, occupy, and control them altogether. J. B.

Our Place on Earth: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —,

my last letter I attempted to show you our place—as believers—before God; and now I desire to direct your attention to our place here upon the earth; and we shall see, I think, that this is also connected with Christ. Just, indeed, as we are identified with Christ before God as to standing, so also are we identified with Christ before the world. In other words, we are put in His place down here just as we are in Him before God; and I cannot but think that it would be very helpful to us all to have this truth continually before our souls. But there are two aspects of our place on the earth, both of which are important to be understood; the first in relation to the world, and the second in relation to the “camp;” i.e. organized professing Christianity, which has succeeded in this dispensation to the place of Judaism., as the professing witness for God. (See Rom. 11, and compare Matt. 13)

1. Our place in relation to the world. The Lord Jesus, speaking to the Jews, said, “Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world.” (John 8:23) Afterward, when presenting His own before the Father, He said, “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world” (John 17:16); and you will see that, in the section from the 14th to the 19th verses, He essentially His disciples in His own place in the world, just as in the previous paragraph (from the 6th to the 13th verses) He puts them into His own place before the Father. And they have His place in the world, be it remarked, because they are not of it, even as He was not of it; for having been born again they are no longer of the world. Hence He speaks continually of their having to encounter the same hatred, and the same persecution as befell Himself. Thus, to cite an example, He says, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.” (John 15:18-20) The apostle John in like manner indicates the utter contrast between believers and the world, when he says, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world hall in wickedness” or “the wicked one.” (1 John 5:19)

But there is more than even yet appears from these weighty scriptures. Every believer is regarded by God as having died and been raised together with Christ.

(Rom. 6; Col. 3:1-3) He has been thus, through the death and resurrection of Christ, brought as completely, in the view of God, out of the world, as Israel was brought out of Egypt through the Red Sea. Hence he is no longer of it, though he is sent back into it (John 17:18), to be for Christ in the midst of it. Paul therefore could say, while active in service for Christ in the world, “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom” (or whereby) “the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” (Gal. 6:14) By the cross of Christ he saw that the world was already judged (John 12:31); and by the application of the cross to himself he regarded himself as dead—crucified to the world—so that there was separation between the two as

complete as death could make it.

To sum up these teachings, then, we see that the Christian while in the world is not of it—he is not of it in the same sense as Christ was not of it, he belongs to another sphere; for if any man be in Christ a new creation, he has been, as already seen, brought clean out of it through the death and resurrection of Christ. Hence he is to be wholly separate from it; he is not to be conformed to this world (Gal. 1:3; Rom. 12:2) in spirit, habits, demeanor, walk; in everything he is to show that he is not of the world. Even more, by the application of the cross he is to hold himself as crucified to it; and there cannot be any attraction or assimilation between two judged things. But again, he is in the world in the place of Christ; i.e. he is in it for Christ, and as identified with Christ. Consequently he is to witness for Christ, to walk as Christ walked (Phil. 2:15; 1 John 2:6, etc), and he must expect the same treatment as Christ. Not that we look to be crucified as Christ was; but if we are faithful we shall encounter the same spirit in the world as He did; indeed, in proportion as we are like Christ will be the degree of our persecution; and the fact that believers now meet with so little hatred from the world can only be accounted for from their being so little separate from it.

Before I pass to the other branch of the subject, I cannot but urge upon you the importance of breaking with every link that connects you morally with the world. It needs but little penetration to perceive that the spirit of the world, worldliness, is creeping rapidly over God's assemblies, and vauntingly proclaiming itself even at the table of the Lord. What dishonor, yea, what grief, to Him whose death we are gathered to show forth! And what a call upon all the saints to humble themselves before God, and to seek anew for grace to be more devoted, and more separate, so that the world itself may see that we belong to Him whom it rejected, cast out, and crucified! How many of us have the spirit of Paul, who desired "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and to be made conformable to His death" in the view of a glorified Christ, the object of his heart, and the goal of all his hopes? May the Lord restore to us, and all His beloved saints, more of this devotedness to Himself in entire separation from the world.

2. Our place in relation to the "camp." In the epistle to the Hebrews we read, "The bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest' for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach." (Chapter 13:11-13) Two things are very evident in this passage—the blood of the sin-offering was carried into the sanctuary, and the bodies of the beasts which were sacrificed were burnt without the camp and the apostle points out that these two things have their correspondencies in the death of Christ, the antitype indeed of these offerings. Hence we have the double place of the believer—his place before God being in the sanctuary, where the blood was carried; and his place on earth being without the camp, where Christ suffered. In other words, as before explained, if we are in Christ before God, identified with Him there in all the savor of His own acceptance, we are also identified With Him on earth in His place of shame, reproach, and rejection. The place of the believer on earth, therefore, is without the camp; as the writer of this epistle says, "Let us go forth therefore unto Him Without the camp, bearing His reproach."

You will perhaps ask me, What is the camp? In the passage which I have just cited, it is clear, from the whole connection, that it is Judaism. What, then, answers to it now? Judaism was of God, and occupied the place of testimony for Him on the earth. Judaism failed; and after Pentecost, on the

final rejection of Christ in the preaching of the apostles, was set aside, and Christianity succeeded to its place, as is taught in Rom. 11. The camp, then, now is organized Christianity, the outward professing church—which includes all denominations, from corrupt Roman Catholicism to the smallest sects of Protestantism. On what ground, you may further ask, are we called upon to go outside of this camp? On the ground of its utter failure as a witness for God. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Rev. 2:11, etc.) This is our warrant for, and, indeed, our responsibility of, measuring all that claims to be of God by the written Word; and testing thus all these denominations, they are all convicted of disobedience and failure. For the believer, therefore, who would act according to the mind of God, there remains nothing but to take his place outside of all these, apart from the confusion and error of this evil day, with those who are gathered simply unto the name of Christ, in obedience to His Word.

Ex. 33 is very instructive in this connection. When Moses came down, from the mount (chap. 32), he found that the whole camp had fallen into idolatry, and, after returning to intercede for Israel, he came back with “evil tidings” for the people. And he “took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.

(vs. 7) Moses acted thus, because he had the mind of the Lord in the presence of the failure of the people; and hence it is that we find in this scene a moral picture of our own times. Let me commend it to your careful consideration.

Enough has now been said to enable you to understand the place of the believer on earth. On the one hand it is to be in separation from the world, and on the other it is without the camp. To occupy it will involve hatred from the former, and reproach from the latter. But if so, we are but more fully identified with our blessed Lord. In Hebrews it is thus called, “His reproach.” May we neither shun the one, nor be ashamed of the other; nay, may we be enabled to rejoice when we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts. 4: 41)

Believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ, E. D.

The Patience of God

Scripture speaks of the world in three different ways or characters. Three names found in connection with the history of God's people describe it. Egypt: The world in its natural state, out of which the people of God have been redeemed. Babylon: The corruption of power in its activity; corruption of power enslaves the conscience, the heart, the mind. Nineveh: The pride of the world, in its thoughtlessness and indifference to God; because of its pride throwing off God. We get the judgment of the world in this latter phase here. Nineveh was a place of large resources. It was lifted up by the greatness of itself, and it threw off God; and here we have the judgment of God upon it, the greatness of God's power which will be manifested when He judges the scene which has rejected Christ. Two things are connected with this. He will come to judge this world where the pride of man is running high against Him; and it will not only be the display of His power in judgment, but He is pleased to link with this display of power in the day when He will judge the pride of men, the emancipation of creation; it will be the day of its liberty. (Rom. 8:19-20) The sons of God have a creation waiting upon them! Have we the sense of this? If we are sons of God, creation waits upon us. Who hath "subjected it"? Adam. He was placed at the head of creation. He fell; consequently all under his headship must be subjected to vanity. "In hope," because the creature itself also shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. It is beautiful to see the connection between the display of power, and the liberty of that which is now under thralldom. God will come and put down evil with a high hand. Now it is the time of His grace and long-suffering. Patience is the great quality or attribute of God which is prominent at this present time—patience in the presence of impudent evil. Our poor hearts are impatient; nothing tests us as to this like the presence of sin, and self-will, and obstinacy. We get here (vss. 2, 3) a beautiful blending of attributes. We find the same characteristic in the New Testament: "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ." (2 Thess. 5) We are in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. This is the character God assumes at this present time, when evil is rife on every hand. He will soon judge unsparingly; it is the patience of One who is omnipotent. I believe the reason why the apostle places patience first in 2 Cor. 6, when he shows what is to signalize the ministers of God, is because it is the quality or character of God that is prominent at the present moment. (2 Cor. 12:12) There were certain characteristics which marked all the apostles, but in none was this divine quality so prominent as in Paul, and none had greater pressure on him. What must it have been to him to see the Corinthians, with all their light and truth, so fallen into evil! It is worthy of note, that whenever we see Paul's doctrine touched, his apostleship was questioned. In most instances when the truth was refused, the vessel through whom the truth was communicated was rejected. How did Paul prove his apostleship to them? By being patient in the presence of evil. (2 Cor. 12:12) When he looks on to the days now present (2 Tim.), patience and gentleness are to characterize the servant. (See chap. 2:24) Nothing tests us more than to be surrounded by evil. A sense of righteousness and truth of itself will not keep us. It is not that we are to be indifferent to evil, we ought to feel it; but feeling it is one thing, acting on our feelings is another. Acting on our feelings is little better than mere impulse. The character to be manifested by us when the world is growing hoary in crime is "gentleness, meekness, patience." In

Heb. 10 we find this quality is looked for in the saints generally, as in the apostle and the servant (2 Cor.; 2 Tim.): “Ye were made a gazing-stock ... ye became companions of them that were so used.” (vs. 33) It requires a greater energy of faith, and a greater exercise of patience, to be the companions of those so used.

If we are for God, we shall have all against us; yet it is our joy to be able to say, “He knoweth them that trust in Him;” and, “I know whom I have believed.” The blessed, perfect man Himself, the faithful witness, was left alone; and yet He was not alone, because His Father was with Him. If you are standing for God in these days, you will have the accumulated hatred of Christendom against you. Every religious body in it, however diverse and in other respects opposed in doctrine and practice, will shake hands over their united and common opposition to that which, Antipas-like, is a condemnation of all. There is nothing more blessed to behold than the patience of Christ, which in faith is contented to wait. Are you patient? have you a sense of superiority in the presence of evil? That is patience. If you are not patient, it is because you are not superior. How good it is to see one pressed, and tried, and harassed, yet going on quietly and peacefully! Of such we can say, “Superior to everything,” because they can endure. What a stay to have the truth on our side, and the God of peace with us! The apostle could say, “I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion [Nero], and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom.” Our hearts need to be fortified in order that we may stand, and thus be prepared for what is coming. If we have the sense that God is with us, we are prepared to stand, solitary and alone, on the blessed truth of the word of God; happy to have company with us on the road, but independent of it. It is enough for the heart to have the Lord’s presence; the sense of this works patience. How enduring we should be if we only knew that God was with us. We may be left alone, maligned, despised. “All men forsook me; but notwithstanding the Lord stood by me.” We have one blessed, mighty Friend, and He is unfailing and unchanging.

This chapter properly expresses the circumstances of the remnant; and though it may not apply directly to ourselves, yet the moral principles of it are true with us. It is very blessed to see how all comes out from God’s side. It was the stay of the heart then; it is equally so now. Every child of God is in circumstances of trial and pressure, because we are still in the wilderness. Our comfort is, “The Lord is good.” This is His nature. His power, omnipotence, omniscience, are His attributes; but He Himself is good. When we get the light of the New Testament shining upon it, what do we find? He gave His Son—He gave His Spirit. It is only as we know the heart of God that we know the purpose of His ways; judging of God by our feeble sense leads to infidelity. His ways are no interpretation of Him. “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” God manifest in the flesh, is God’s revelation of Himself.

“God so loved ... that He gave.” Here we have the expressed revelation of the love of His heart through the Son of His love. He came and revealed the secrets of that bosom. There is not a secret of His heart that is not manifested. Nothing but love marks Him. You must bring the nature of God to shine on His ways, otherwise we shall bring our own puny reason to account for them. “His way is in the sea,” etc. Is that all? “Thou leddest thy people like a flock.” Here we have His tender, watchful care and interest. We are led by the hand of our great Shepherd, not by the hand of Moses and Aaron: “He is a stronghold in the day of trouble.” It does not say He will take us out of the trouble, or that He will lighten it; but it is what He Himself is—a stronghold in the day of

trouble.” Have we learned what it is to have a resource, and not relief only? We are so often looking for relief, merely; we need as well a resource; it is what He Himself is— “a stronghold,” etc. What a blessed thing to have a resource before relief comes; and the relief is then no less sweet to us. A person who is looking only for relief is always impatient, because he desires to have the weight removed, the difficulty taken away; and the will of man is apt to clothe itself in the deceiving garment of seeming good; viz., how much more freely and happily I could serve and follow Him, if this weight were removed. “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me,” but when Paul heard the voice of Jesus announcing the sufficiency of His grace, and how His power worked, he accepts unmitigated the thorn, in order that the power of Christ may (επισκηνωση) pitch its tent over him.

Again, observe how those who count on God are described. He does not speak of what they have left, or what they have obtained, but they “trust in Him.” They make everything of Him. Observe too, it is not their knowledge, not that they are devoted, blessed as that is; it is they trust in Him, and He knows it. It is too blessed a thing to be satisfied with the knowledge of God about us. It is strikingly seen in restored Peter, when the Lord tested him as to the point he had boasted in. He says, “Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee.” He had confidence in himself before; he now retires on his Lord’s knowledge of him; he had found out what he was, and he has not a word to say for himself. His solace is, “Thou knowest.” In 2 Timothy, when the apostle describes the last days, it is the same blessed principle which is put forth to guide the faithful heart. To the one who departs from iniquity, what a comfort it is: “The Lord knoweth them that are His.”

May our hearts be so with Him as to find out the reality and sustainment of this word: “The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and He knoweth them that trust in Him.”

W. T. T.

Characteristics of Remnant Times

Chap. 2. is specially to the priests. You see why he refers to this. (vss. 4-8) Levi had earned his place. You remember that when the children of Israel had got the calf Moses stood in the gate, and said, “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me.” He left it to them; and the sons of Levi alone gathered themselves together to him, thereby saying they were for God; while the rest were identified with the calf. What you get in Exodus is confirmed in Deut. 33, “Who said unto his father,” &c. They had been faithful in the matter of the golden calf, but now solemnly He comes to the priests and says, “Why are you in this position? Why did I make a covenant with you? It was when God was more to them than father or mother that that covenant was made.” Now, instead of being far God, they were caring more for themselves, considering more their own gain, and allowing blemished sacrifices to be brought out for God. Self had come in; and we may be against everybody but self. They were in a place which was against all contrary to God in others. When it came to themselves, they were not prepared to give Him the place He looked for; they were considering self. “All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” Did you never think that every circumstance is an opportunity of showing what Christ is to us? The world reads what place Christ has in your heart by your actions, in what may appear to you but trivial circumstances, “whether ye eat or drink.” God does not shut out anything. He comes down to the lowest detail of your life. If you say it would not be quite convenient to bring Christ into this circumstance, to

introduce Him into this scene, to ask Him to be interested in what I am doing, it is because you well know He would be very likely to rebuke it.

You know it is a common practice with travelers to cut their initials in mountain passes or rocks, or to scrape their names on walls in favorite resorts; and these marks show they have been there. Their initials are there. It is just the same with everything we have in our pathway. We leave our marks upon them all, and the world forms its judgment by the way we have touched them. The moment we cannot bring Christ in, we know we are not in our right place. There is nothing we have to do which is not a matter of importance, and you will show by your touch what place Christ has in your heart. If God has His place you will rejoice for him to have His unblemished sacrifice, even if you would get a nice piece for yourself by lowering the standard.

Chapter 3:1-3. They were professing to be, waiting for this messenger, and so took the ground of being all right—it was all hollow, and it would not do for God. They heard the rebukes against it, but they refused to accept the sentence. Then Comes the message -He will come. Do you think He will accept this state of things. Do you think this messenger is such an one as yourselves? He will come time—the One you profess to delight in; but He will come in judgment. He will have a remnant, but it will not be the state of things He finds—which will be acceptable to Him. He will have to “sit as a refiner, and as a purifier of silver.” It will not be merely God coming in to deliver from the fiery furnace He will come in, showing the hollowness, before He descends in blessing. He must come in as He is, in His character of truth, and there must be room made for Him.

We hear a great deal at the present time about the coming of the Lord. Saints say they are waiting for Him. What is your life saying? For God will have reality. Is it inviting the return of the Lord, when you are tampering with things which you know He would disapprove of? God does not look only for an invitation for His Son in a hymn, in our lips; He looks at our desires. Go and be “like unto men that wait for their Lord.” If I am expecting friends, I go to the station to meet them. I am looking for them; so I am on the platform, and my presence there shows I am looking for them. Rev. 22:20 is a moral thing, “Come, Lord Jesus.” It is the answer when Christ says, I am coming. It is the attitude of the Church, saying, The sooner the better.

But now, can the world see in you what they saw in the Thessalonians? Paul went to them, preached to them; and when he has left them he says, I have no need to go and tell the world what I preached to them, anybody can see it; and people were saying, He has been preaching Christ to them, and he has told them that the Son of God is coming back to them, and they have given up all their idols, and they are waiting for Him. Everybody could see it. There was a different stamp about their walk; that is waiting for the Lord; it is the simplest thing possible, yet the most difficult. Our walk shows clearly the object before us. It stamps us. It is not merely separation from evil, but looking out for Christ. And it is the place Christ has got in your heart which gives the character to your walk. It was not that the Thessalonians were taken up with reproving those around, but others could see clearly what they were after.

It is a very solemn thing to be inviting Christ in such a careless way. If we are singing, “Lord Jesus, come,” we ought all to be in the attitude suitable for His coming. And what about the worldliness? what about the unjudged evil? It is right doctrine, but not what God looks for. He looks for a state of life in keeping with the doctrine.

What a rest to the heart as we come to verse 6! Amidst all the unfaithfulness God remains unchangeable. Heaven and earth may pass away, but God cannot change. His dealings may change, but through all the changes it is to bring about one end. You see it in John 13, "Having loved His own;" but His dealings change. Why? Because not only has He separated them from those around, but His thought has been that they might enjoy communion with Himself in His sphere. That is His heart's desire.

The remnant persist in self-justification, yet He comes in and blesses them. He does not leave them, though they persistently shut the door to His claims. (vss. 8-10) The heart of Jehovah yearns for blessing. He longs to pour out all His heart has in store for them, so that there may not be room enough to receive it. (4:11-13) Are you not struck with the patience, the unwearying love of God? Anybody else would have been repulsed and driven away long ago. There was but one heart which would have borne it all. Yet in verse 14 they say, God has not been true to His word.

Ver. 15. Another mark of their condition. They want to break down all distinctions. "Call the proud happy," class them all together, and make them all alike. That is the judgment of a heart not in communion with God. They "put darkness for light, and light for darkness."

Then we get the effect on the heart which has been reached.

Ver. 16-18. Now the result of it all. The end He has had before him in all His dealings. God will come in and have His love gratified, and this last message of God to Israel produces in the hearts of a few the knowledge of what they are, and they "feared the Lord," and they "thought upon His name." Then He blessed them above all they could have thought of. He was hearkening for the faintest beat of a heart that responded to His deep affection. His ear was listening for the first note. It is a wonderful picture at the end of God's dealing with them.

And do you know what He is hearkening for now? He is listening for a note, here and there, from a stray heart which owns God's love, which beats true to Him; and God does not lose a note of it. And by-and-by He will recall it all again. Ver. 17: "When I make up my jewels," you will return again to your land, "and I will spare you, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." You did not see that you needed succor; but my eye looked forward to "that day."

Another thing, in verse 18, instead of calling "the proud happy," you will "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." There will be no more writing pleasant names over those who are doing evil. If God be God, serve Him, and there will no longer be trying to paint up what is contrary to Him. The heart discerns what is true amidst a great deal that is unfaithful and untrue. True grace and true love discerns.

And now what a word this book is to us! What a place it occurs in! God has come in, has spoken to us as He never did to the house of Israel. He cannot say another word; He has not a deeper proof of love. He says, I have given the grandest proof of my love; I have given my only-begotten Son; if you are not convinced, I have nothing more I can give.

Turn to Luke 2 for a moment. There you get instances of those who were waiting for the Lord. First, in Simeon. Look at the character of the man. It was not a question of intelligence; he was a godly, sober, waiting man. You see Simeon waiting, and you get the proof of his waiting. When he has taken the babe in his arms, he says, Now I am ready to go; I have only been waiting.

Then there is Anna. In verse 37 you get a description of her. And in these two characters you get the picture of the faithful remnant who were really waiting for the first coming. Anna not only gives thanks, but she goes and speaks of Him “to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” God comes to our hearts, and He looks to see what Christ is to the Church. We have learned a great deal of truth in these last days, and we are gathered here because we have learned the place in which He would have us.

What now? “We thus judge, that if One died, then Were all dead, and that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.” There must be something definite in our path. We own that Christ is the one round whom our hearts and affections are gathered. Is that what we are telling out in our lives? or is it as in Ephesus? You get in the Thessalonians “work of faith and labor of love.” In Ephesus get “work” and “labor”—too. To outward observers, the same as in Thessalonica; but He comes and looks. When His eye rests upon them, He says, “I know thy works,” but “thou hast left thy first love.” The brightest church had dwindled clown to formality, and there was not a bit of power in it. The affection was gone.

Paul writes to the Corinthians: “I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband that I may present a chaste virgin to Christ.” His heart laid hold of what Christ would have the Church.

Peter could write: “Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice With joy unspeakable and full of glory.” Is that the character of our hearts? Not merely waiting for an ordinary person, but as He says, “I have loved thee.” Do our hearts so throb with affection that we “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory?”

The one thing which melts the heart of a Christian is the immutability of the heart which looks for the love, and treasures it up. There was plenty of activity in Martha. She may sweep the house, and prepare the dinner; but there are very few alabaster boxes broken for the Lord. So He says, “Open wide the windows, and let the perfume of that which has been a sweet savor to Me go out to the world.” It was what Christ was to that heart which broke the alabaster box. And it is that which is done to Christ, and for Christ, which makes a sweet savor to God.

God’s principles are unchanged: He was looking then for affection, though Israel did not know the love which is told out to us; His heart could not be satisfied with anything else. There is no use in handing out to God activity, service, anything else; yet if He sees a “cup of Scold water” given to one of His little ones, prompted by deep, real love to His name, He says, That is the thing for my heart; that is what I am looking for. And what are you each furnishing the heart of Christ with each day? Is it your desire to be satisfying His love? Can you say, It is the intense longing of my heart to know how to respond to and satisfy the yearning affection of that One who has told out such deep love to me? May the Lord grant it in every one of His beloved saints.

J. B.

His Servants Shall Serve Him

“And His servants shall serve Him.” We seek to do so now. We disallow in ourselves and other believers any and everything which we find either contrary to the walk which Christ walked in when He was here below, or which is superfluous to it. For the allowance of such a superfluity by us would be practically saying that His walk down here was not a perfect standard of what our walk should be. But how blessed amid all our known and confessed shortcomings is the firm and sure promise, “His servants SHALL serve Him.” I say it not as making any allowance for shortcoming now; but I surely judge that now I must glory in His being the only perfect servant of God, perfection’s height secured by Him every step of the way; and till I see Him and am made like Him, my conscience, my mind, my heart, will, can never be satisfied with my service. May He be able to say of each of you as He did of one, “She hath done what she could!”

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Assembly of Christ

Till Adam was formed we have no mention of Eve. Till the Second Man appeared we have no doctrinal teaching about the Church. God brought Eve to Adam. Christ came to get His bride. When all was in paradisiacal order upon earth Eve appeared upon the scene. Into a world which know not God the Son of God entered; and upon this globe, on which Adam and Eve first met, did Christ die to possess the object of His Choice. Adam had nothing to do but to welcome his helpmeet—God’s best gift to that creature whom He had placed as head over this creation. Christ had everything to do to get His bride, and to fashion her according to the requirements of His heart. Unless He died, He could never even possess her. Yet to die was not enough. Service, personal and continuous, was and is still needful, before presenting “the assembly to Himself glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph. 5:27) A state of perfection this is to which fallen man could never attain; yet short of which the Second Man will not rest satisfied.

What interest, then, must Christ take in the Church! What a place must it occupy in His affections, when, to acquire it for Himself, He would die! and to have it holy and without blemish, He would charge Himself with constant service on its behalf! And if such is His intention, and such His service to effect it, none surely of those who form part of the assembly, or church, should think it beneath them to learn from Scripture about it, or count it a matter of small moment whether they know anything of the Church of God or not. Any willingly remaining in ignorance of Scripture teaching about it, either manifest selfishness in only wishing to be assured of their own salvation, or indifference to the grace bestowed upon us in being allowed to share God’s thoughts respecting it, and to understand in some measure Christ’s interest in it.

What then are the Church’s relation to Christ? It is His assembly, His body, His bride. Something about each of these, as was natural; we learn from His own lips.

Of His assembly, as such, He alone speaks. Local assemblies indeed are characterized by the apostle Paul as belonging to Christ. (Rom. 16:16) This is true of all of them. Further, the same apostle describes the assemblies which were in Judaea as in Christ. (Gal. 1:22) This too was common to all of them; but it marked out the assemblies in Judea as distinct from any synagogue of the Jews. They were assemblies of Christ, and in Christ. Terms and truths these are of which no Jew could ever have made use, or have professed even to acknowledge. Christ, however, alone treats of the whole assembly as His.

Here it may be well to state that the Church is distinct from the kingdom. All who form part of the assembly are in the kingdom; but all in the kingdom do not form part of the assembly. Every saint who will have left the earth ere the Lord returns to it shall reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4); but every one of such will not be a member of His body, the Church. Saints before the cross were not members of His body; saints who will be on earth after the rapture of 1 Thess. 4:15-17 will likewise never become part of that wonderful company. Kingdom truth is common to both the Old and New Testaments. It pervades the volume of revelation. Church truth is only taught us in the latter. In

conformity with this, it is only subsequent to the introduction of the King upon the scene, and when the character of the kingdom, during the time of His rejection by the Jews and the world, has been sketched out by Himself in parabolic teaching (Matt. 13), that we have any mention of His assembly (Matt. 16). Just as Eve was the latest production of the Creator's handiwork, so the assembly, the body, the bride of Christ, is the last new subject of which the volume of inspiration treats. Eve, however, appeared when Adam's, authority was owned, and his place in this creation unquestioned. The Church is only revealed when the Lord has been openly rejected, and the cross, as the witness and expression of it, has to form a necessary part of His teaching.

Again, the introduction of the Church in its relation to Christ as His body and His bride necessarily reminds us of His manhood; for it is as man that He has both. Now His manhood is dwelt on in the Old as well as in the New Testament. But, since the assembly is only gathered out, whilst Israel has her bill of divorcement, and will be taken away ere Jehovah will comfort Jerusalem with the assurance that He is still her husband, (the whole Church epoch being, as it were, a parenthesis in the prophetic stream of time) one understands why the Church, which has to do with the Lord as man, is nevertheless, though found in the gospel history, not met with in the writings of the Old Testament prophets. They wrote of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glories which should follow. (1 Peter 1:11) Now the sufferings and glories of Christ concern all God's saints most intimately, and are closely connected with kingdom truth. Hence the earthly people require to be informed of them. But the Church is essentially a heavenly thing; so church truth is distinct from kingdom truth, and fitly finds its place in that volume of inspiration which deals with the work of God amongst men during the rejection by Israel of their King.

Further, since the Church is only gathered out from the nations of the earth during the rejection of Christ by the Jews, for Scripture regards it as distinct from the Jews and the Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:32), we may see likewise the fitness of its mention in Matthew's gospel, and of its absence from the histories of the other three evangelists. For since it is as man that the Son; of God stands in peculiar personal relation to the Church, it is plain that in the gospel of John, which sets Him forth as Jehovah, such a subject would not be in place. In Luke too, who is occupied with the kingdom and God's grace to man, the Lord Jesus is presented as the Son of man, a character which shows that He has to do with earth and man in the widest sense. One may understand, then, that the Church, which, though formed of believers from any and every nation to whom the word of grace has reached, yet is an election out of Jews and Gentiles, would not form part of the Holy Ghost's line of teaching, as given us by the beloved physician. In Mark's account too, who narrates events very much in historical order, and has presented the Lord in the servant character, as Prophet or Teacher, who is at the same time the Son of God, dispensational teaching is not the character of his gospel; so instruction about the Church lies beyond the limits within which that writer was to confine himself. It is the personal ministry of Christ in the gospel amongst men that he so graphically presents to his readers.

But in Matthew the Lord is presented as Immanuel, King of the Jews, though rejected by the people. To him then was it given to hand down the teaching of the Lord about the kingdom during the King's absence from the earth. In accordance with this, the character of the kingdom during His absence from the earth is dwelt upon at some length, in those parables which are similitudes of the kingdom of the heavens; whereas in Luke, the blessings to be enjoyed in the kingdom form a prominent part of his teaching about it. Now since that was the line specially appointed for

Matthew to take up, it is not difficult to see, that the instruction which he was commissioned to communicate, would not be complete without some notice of the Church. By the one who describes the active service of Christ in the gospel, not a word is said about the Church. By him, who was empowered to relate what would be seen on earth in consequence of the Lord's rejection, the Church is specially mentioned. So what John must have heard in common with Matthew, and what Peter must ever have treasured up in his remembrance, finds no place in the gospel of the son of Zebedee; nor, in that of Mark either, in which, if written, as tradition tells us, after intercourse with Peter, one might naturally have looked for a special mention of it. To the son of Alphaeus alone are we indebted, under God, for our knowledge both of the Lord's remarks about it, and of that service especially entrusted to Peter, the carrying out of which has been recorded by Luke in the Acts.

What a moment it must have been when that secret, hitherto kept concealed, was first touched upon by the Lord! The period of His ministry, the district in the land, as well as the occupation of the Lord at the time, all are noted. After His rejection had been made manifest, and a short time before that brief glimpse of His millennial glory, which Peter, James, and John were permitted to witness, in the extreme north-east quarter of the land, and when engaged in prayer, as Luke only has told us (9:18), with the twelve around Him, the Lord Jesus questioned them as to men's thoughts about Him. Men's thoughts were various, all wide of the mark, but all agreeing in this, that they did not discern in Him anything more than what they and their fathers had witnessed. John the Baptist, Jeremiah, Elijah, or as one of the prophets—such were the surmises of men, and with them the twelve were well acquainted. To the Lord's first question, then, there was a general response. To His second, "Whom say ye that I am?" addressed though it was to the twelve, one only replied. Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." A prophet the Lord truly was, though different in character and person from all who preceded Him. Had Peter more discernment than the rest, that he only answered? He was indebted, we learn, to divine revelation, and that from the Father, for his knowledge of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed was he to have received it; yet it was no glory to him that he knew it. Upon that, as Matthew states, the Lord proceeded to tell him that He would build His assembly; for the rock on which it is built is the truth, as Peter confessed it, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

Two things have we here about the Church of all-importance to notice. The one, that Christ would build His assembly. As yet then it had not existed. So none of the Old Testament saints, up to and including John the Baptist, formed part of it; for they had died before it began to be built. The other is, that the rock on which it is built is the truth of Christ's person, as revealed by the Father to Peter. Can then those who receive not that testimony form part of the assembly which is built upon it? How should they be reckoned as part of that building, the foundation of which they repudiate? Take away the foundation, and the Church has nothing to rest upon. Refuse to own that foundation, and such an one has no part or lot in the matter. What is built upon that rock death can never overcome. Against the Son of the living God, who shall, who can prevail? He died. Yes; but He rose, the witness that He could not be holden of death. Something enduring, something which death could not overthrow, something which no creature power should remove, the Lord was about to build, and that something was the Church.

C. E. S.

The Love of Christ

The great thing that God calls upon me for, is to admire and delight in and learn more and more of the love of Christ.

What is the effect? Love to Christ is produced in the very same ratio that I know His love to me. What is it that judges self, and keeps it down, and raises a person above all groveling ways and ends? Entrance into the blessedness of His love.

W. K.

Woman's Place in Service

The part that women take in all this history is very instructive, especially to them. The activity of public service, that which may be called "work," belongs naturally to men (all that appertains to what is generally termed ministry), although women share a very precious activity in private. But there is another side of Christian life which is particularly theirs, and that is personal and loving devotedness to Christ. It is a woman, who anointed the Lord while the disciples murmured; women, who were at the cross when all except John had forsaken Him; women, who came to the sepulcher, and who were sent to announce the truth to the apostles, who had gone after all to their own home; women, who ministered to the Lord's need. And indeed this goes farther. Devotedness in service is perhaps the part of man; but the instinct of affection, that which enters more intimately into Christ's position, and is thus more immediately in connection with His sentiments, in closer communion with the sufferings of His heart—this is the part of woman: assuredly a happy part. The activity of service for Christ puts man a little out of this position, at least if the Christian is not watchful. Everything has however its place. I speak of that which is characteristic; for there are women who have served much, and men who have felt much. Note also here, what I believe I have remarked, that this clinging of heart to Jesus is the position where the communications of true knowledge are received. The first full gospel is announced to the poor woman that was a sinner, who washed His feet; the embalming for His death to Mary; our highest position to Mary Magdalene; the communion Peter desired to John who was in His bosom. And here the women have a large share.

J. N. D.

The Body of Christ: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear ■■

There is another question, now demanding your attention, connected with the body of Christ. On the day of Pentecost, an entirely new thing—in the unfolding of the counsels of God—took place; viz., the coming of the Holy Ghost. Up to that period, He had wrought upon the earth; for in every past dispensation there had been quickened souls, and “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21); but until the Lord Jesus was glorified at the right hand of God, the Holy Ghost as a Person was not on the earth. This is no new theory, but is a matter of distinct statement in the Scriptures. Thus when Jesus stood and cried, on the great day of the feast of Tabernacles, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water,” it is explained that He spake this “of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet [given]; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37-39) The Lord Himself spake to the same effect: “It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you,” etc. (John 16:7. Compare John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26, etc) Passing now onward to Acts 2, we find there the historical record of the descent of the Spirit of God: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (vss. 1-4) Thus was fulfilled the words which the Lord spake to His disciples after His resurrection, “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.” And again, “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you.” (Acts 1: 5, 8)

Now it was by the descent of the Spirit that the Church—the Church of God as found in the New Testament—was formed; and it was formed in two aspects; viz, as the house of God, and as the body of Christ. (See 1 Tim. 3:15, and Eph. 1:22,23) It is the latter of these two aspects which I desire to bring before you in this letter. Two Scriptures will clear our way. In Col. 1:18 we read, “And He is the head of the body, the Church:” in 1 Cor. 12:13, “For by one Spirit, are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free,” etc. It thus appears that, on the day of Pentecost, by the descent of the Holy Spirit, believers were baptized into one body, and that thus the body of Christ was formed. Let me, then, now inquire of what or of whom the body of Christ is composed. “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.” (1 Cor. 12:12) The term Christ, as here used, includes Christ Himself and all the members of the body, looked at as a complete whole. Hence the body of Christ includes Himself as the Head, and all believers on earth who have received the indwelling Spirit; and consequently every child of God who can cry, “Abba, Father,” is a member of the body of Christ. The apostle thus says, “We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones.” (Eph. 5:30)

This is the point I would press upon your attention; for vast numbers of God's beloved children are in ignorance of this wonderful place and privilege. Thus, in a visit I made some time ago to a dying believer, said, "Do you know that you are a member of the body of Christ?" The answer was, "No; I never heard of that;" and I shall not soon forget the joy that overspread that dying countenance as I unfolded the Scriptures bearing upon this subject. Let me, then, ask you to consider what being a member of the body of Christ involves. First, and foremost, it teaches us that we are united to Christ-to Christ as a glorified man, at the right hand of God. For inasmuch as He is the Head of the body, every member is vitally and (may we not say) organically united to Him. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. (1 Cor. 6: 17) See then the vast extent of the grace of our God! It is not only that our sins are forgiven, that we are justified by faith, that we are brought into the perfect unclouded favor of God, that we are risen with Christ, that we are seated in Him in the heavenlies; but even, as down here upon the earth, encompassed by weakness and infirmity, it is given us to know that we are united to Christ in glory. We can look up to Him where He is, and say, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

How could there be discussions upon the question, whether we may know our safety now, if this truth were known in power? And what strength it would give us all, in the presence of trials or dangers, never so great, if we had this thought before our souls, We are united to Christ. And oh, what a revelation it gives us of the nearness and the intimacy into which we are brought with Him! for we are made to know that we are one with Himself, that whatever touches us touches Him (see Acts 9:4); and therefore that we are inseparably, indissolubly, connected With Himself forever.

Secondly, we are taught that being members of the body of Christ, we are also members one of another; and, it is essential for us to apprehend this truth if we would understand the character of our relationships with all the children of God. The same bond, then, that unites us to, Christ, unites us also to all believers; for the same Spirit that unites us to Christ has united us also one to another. This is what is meant by "the unity of the Spirit" (Eph. 4:3); i.e. the unity of all the members of Christ which has been formed on the earth by the Spirit of God.

If you will now turn with me to 1 Cor. 12, you will see the wonderful character of our mutual relationships, arising out of our being members one of another. You can read the passage from the 12th to the 27th verse, at your leisure; in the meantime I will point out several distinctive points in its teaching. First, it is carefully insisted upon that "the body is not one member, but many;" and that every member has its own place in the body. Hence the apostle asks, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" And he is careful to show that the peculiar place which each has in the body is the result of the sovereign act of God; and he is also careful to guard us from forgetting, that while there are many members, it is yet but one body. (vss. 14-20) If we had no further instruction, what a fruitful theme for amplification. But I will only call your attention here to two points; viz., our obligation or responsibility to maintain the diversity of the members (vs. 14), and secondly, the unity of the whole (vs. 29); and I venture to add that it is impossible to maintain either the one or the other, excepting you are gathered, apart from all denominations and human systems, to the name of Christ outside the camp. The second thing is, that every member of the body needs all the other members; for "the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you;" and he tells us that God hath thus "tempered the body together," etc., "that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one

for another.” (vss. 21-25). He then reminds us that the relationship between the members is so intimate that if “one member suffer, all the members suffer with it;” and that if “one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.” (vs. 26)

You will see from this scripture, that the term the body of Christ is no mere figure of speech, as is so often alleged; but that it expresses a reality—the reality indeed of our union with Christ, as also of our union with one another. And I am sure that you will see that our responsibilities to Christ as the Head of the body, and our responsibilities to our fellow-members, cannot even be understood, much less discharged, if this truth is overlooked or ignored. But, on the other hand, when it is known, not only have we the joy of conscious union with Christ; but we can also rejoice in our union, our indissoluble union, with all the members of His body in all parts of the world. It leads moreover to very practical, results. For example, if I am asked to connect Myself with any of the denominations around, I instantly reply that I cannot do that which denies, plainly denies, this blessed truth. “You ask me,” I should say, “to join a certain number of Christians who agree upon certain things; but I am united to all believers, and I need them all, and I cannot therefore accept a ground of union which excludes any.” Again, if it is proposed to me to unite with a number of Christians irrespective of denominations, I should answer, “I am a member of the body of Christ; and I cannot therefore make any ground of union apart from that of the body. I must be on God’s ground or upon none at all.” Until therefore I know the truth of the body of Christ, I cannot understand the place which the Lord would have me to occupy upon the earth.

But I will now leave the subject for your own consideration; for I am sure that if you search the Scriptures, in dependence on the Lord, He will guide you by His Spirit into His own mind respecting it. In my next letter, God willing, I shall bring before you another subject, closely related to this; viz., that of the Lord’s table.

Believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

In Heaven

There are only two men, mortal men, who have been in heaven since the day of Pentecost. Paul was caught up to the third heaven, and the other was John. There is much instruction and profit to be drawn from the two accounts. In Rev. 2, 3 we have the messages sent to the churches from the son of man, who appears in chap. 1. Then we find John invited up to heaven; and he saw the One who sat on the throne, the Lord God Almighty. He had a reserved book in His hand; and the challenge is sent out, "Who is worthy?" None was found; John weeps; the Lord takes the book, and worship immediately begins; this peculiar glory that is found in the Lord cannot be passed by, nothing is kept back from Him. He has a right and title to all the secrets of God. What is in the book when the seal is open? A certain governmental dealing is going on from the throne above, where the Lord is seen to be checking and overruling everything on earth; where Satan is acting in every varied form; where the flesh is rampant, and man in all his wickedness is developed. John is thus allowed to see what is going on on the earth. All sorts of horrid wickedness meet his eye; but he sees it all under the governmental power of God and the Lamb. The scene gives a lesson in connection with evil; we see the repose of the heart of the Christian amid it all; let everything else be shaken, such is the state of acceptance in which the believer now stands, that God can throw the gates of heaven open and bring us into His presence, even in our mortal bodies; as with John, our standing is in such complete acceptance in the Lord Jesus Christ. We may be weak, the weakness is allowed to come out. John weeps when he sees the great master of wickedness at work; but he sees too that all is kept in check by Him who is above it all: in the Midst of this ocean of wickedness he is in repose. Let the devil, let the flesh, do their worst, God is above it.

This is an important principle for the present time.

Everything seems to be loosening. There is not a single ecclesiastical body on the earth but admits the need of reform, whether it be the Pope himself, the Greek church, &c. They are like barrels without hoops, no strength. If we look around we see many crowned heads without kingdoms. Such are the principles at work that the manifestation of any character of wickedness should not astonish us; we should be prepared for anything. But it is not to be with us, "Lo here, or lo there;" like John, we are to look at it all in the counsel of God in connection with His government. All we have to do is to leave all alone, all with God; to say to one another, We are clean out of the world, we belong not to it. If you are not clean out of the world, you are in a wrong place: All you have to do is to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. John is thus privileged in seeing the glory of the Lamb; he is occupied with the Lamb, he is at home in His presence. All that Christians have to do is to take care they are in the place the Lord held when He was on earth the place of rejection. Do we know this place? An individual with whom I was speaking the other day said, "I have just discovered that the Lord Jesus Christ was rejected on earth, and that I have not held this place; do not let me hear anything but what would lead me to this place." Let us ask one another, Are we holding the place of the rejected One down here?

Paul was caught up to heaven. (2 Cor. 12) A different thing is taught here; it is more heart-searching. What is the principle by which Paul is to regulate himself in passing through the wilderness, and doing the work the Lord Jesus had given him to do? We get, too, here blessed instruction as to the intermediate state. Paul was perfectly conscious of the presence of the Lord; whether in or out of the body, he could not tell. When up there, he sees and hears most blessed things; but he is not allowed to speak of them. How often are passages which speak of peculiarity of communion passed by; and when this deep communion is spoken of, it seems some strange thing to them. If I were to give the character of my conversion, I should expect to see faces, the expression of which tells me they know what it is I am speaking of. When we speak about dealing with God, whether about ourselves or fetching out of heaven what others are needing for them, I should look for the faces of others to be saying, "I know what that is."

The things of God need to be tasted to be understood. When the Lord looked into the heart of Saul of Tarsus, he could not question that there was a Man in heaven who knew all about him, and who was occupied with him. (vs. 7) Paul saw the glory of the Lord, and he saw what belonged exclusively to the Lord. He came down; but was this bright light the portion that belonged to him? No; the portion was the love of the heart of the Lord acting in His perfect wisdom for him. He had been up in the third heaven. The thought of the Lord was about His servant; of the danger he was exposed to through these revelations; that he had a law of sin in his members which needed crippling; and the Lord showed out the love of His heart in crippling His servant. The Lord kept all in His control—all in His own hand. Satan could not touch a hair of his head without His permission, just as we see in the case of Job. All self-complacency was spoiled in Paul. It was not, I am the man who has been where no one else has been; have seen and heard unutterable things. Who are you, Paul? A poor cripple, with a thorn in my flesh. I am weakness itself.

The Lord thus gave Paul the sense that, while he remained down here, he could not go through anything without the everlasting arms underneath him. You must have such a sense of your weakness, Paul, that you cannot go forward in anything unless my arm is underneath you, my strength thus made perfect in weakness. This was a very blessed character of love towards His servant. We are never called to go to warfare at our own charges; but it is ours to know there is One close to us whose arm will support us. What a contrast: On the one hand, a man taken up to Paradise; on the other, the thorn in the flesh, drawn into the flesh, perfect weakness; Christ in heaven, Satan down here; glory up there, flesh put to torture down here.

There was another thing that was humbling to Paul; he puts himself boldly forward, and says, "Take away this thorn, take away this thorn, take away this thorn; I know thou art the giver; I know thou hast an ear, and a heart to care; take away this thorn." There was no answer save, "No; my grace is sufficient for thee." Who sent the thorn? The Lord Himself. Who limited too what Satan was to do with the thorn? The Lord Himself. Who wants to direct the Lord, to show God what He is to do? Paul. I can't hear thee; my grace is sufficient for thee. I can't take away something of yours, but I will give thee something of mine. I am never tired of caring for you, of giving out from myself all you need. I am always ready to give. I'll give, give, as much as you need; grace filling all your circumstances, whatever they are. I am left to you; I am sufficient for you; my strength shall be made perfect in weakness. Paul is not allowed his own way, walls are built up across his road. When Paul finds he cannot do as he will, when he becomes a prisoner, and is led whither he would not, before kings, and the great Emperor of the whole earth, we see the testimony he is

permitted to bear for his Lord; he went in as bound, but proved what strength made perfect in weakness is.

This principle is beautifully brought out in Jacob's history. Jacob walked for a number of years through the circumstances of his path, but he had never been crippled till this time. The peculiar feature of Jacob's walk was that he was always trying to carry out God's plan for Him. In the energy of his nature he always went forward to carry out God's purposes, as though God wanted help (this is the principle of the Roman Catholics); but we see everything fails. We come to chapter 38; there we see, from the time Jacob was made to halt, he can go forward and face anything. There is no difficulty; from this time he goes in the strength of the presence of the Lord, and finds His strength made perfect in weakness. Nathanael was "an Israelite indeed," etc.; he is a man who trusts to prayer, and not to his own wits. When God makes strength perfect in weakness, the question comes, Who is the doer of everything? This took place in Paul when he was first converted; this was the principle he was first put on: You are not to trust, Paul, to your own strength, or wisdom, or anything; but you are to trust me. Paul got locked up in prison, and despaired of life, but it was not God's thought that His apostle should be stopped. When he was quietly conning over it all, he says, "I had sentence of death in myself," etc. Paul had before him the God that raised up the Lord Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 1: 9)

Was it a great thing for the God who had raised the Lord Jesus, who had shone down into Paul's heart, to open his prison doors? Christ was crucified by weakness; He liveth by the power of God: strength made perfect in weakness. The expression at the close of verse 9 is "tabernacle upon me;" the thought conveyed to my soul is a reference to God dwelling in a pillar of fire, and the cloud keeping company with people all through their journey. Paul was to go forth as one who had no strength, but as one whose weakness is used of God for the display of His glory; and there we find Paul singing a song over Satan. I glory in my infirmities; he finds he can bear nothing of himself, perfect weakness; but now he has got the secret of victory from the Lord, and he can sing a song over his weakness and over Satan; and he finds Satan's work has been turned into his good. The Lord has allowed it, all for his blessing. Now the question is, Will Christ's arm be always underneath me? Will He ever tabernacle over me? Will He never fail me? Shall I be always able to sing this song? This is the principle of resurrection which quiets and gives peace. Paul was to wear it inside him all day long, through his whole course. Resurrection must be applied to our every circumstance. "Crucified together, quickened us together, raised us up together, seated us in," etc. Through all your life, Paul, you are to take this principle into your bosom: resurrection, strength, made perfect in weakness.

One word, and it is not a strained word: I have often thought of the wilderness through which God brought Israel. His eye was on the wilderness. He prepared it. "I have made the place for a particular purpose in Connection with my people. I have arranged it long ago." The wilderness was no accident, it was the very place He had prepared. No resources to nature; absolute dependence on God there. And God has made and marked out your circumstances, and has so made them that you cannot go through them without Himself. Some may say in reference to their path, "This thing came upon me through the sin of some one else." Never mind that, it came from, God. Neither divine wisdom nor power could have added anything to the wilderness to have made it more impassable to nature or more easy to God. He allows a quantity of things in our circumstances to make us feel we cannot go through them without Him. What an immense

difference in saying, "This thing comes from God; He has put it there;" and, "All this is against me." If it is I and God, there is no difficulty; if we leave out Him, the way is impassable. Which would you rather have, a life without difficulty, or a life so full of difficulty that the blessed Lord Jesus is obliged to show His face every day, yes, every minute, obliged to keep close to me all day long? God so ordered the course of the apostle that it was impossible to get on without the Lord Jesus who raiseth the dead; and this does not merely apply to moral difficulties, but to everything. There is someone sick in the house; who do you turn to first, God or the doctor? When the doctor thinks it a serious case you take it as a decision; but the question is not what the doctor says, but what is God's purpose? Means may be used but the Christian is not to use anything apart from God: the Lord first in everything. I don't think praise ever comes forth from us so purely as in connection with what is disagreeable. When we give thanks for mercies, it is not so pure as when able, to praise for what we do not like: we should be dropping the sweet into the disagreeable. When we think of the Lord's love in it, it sweetens what is bitter. A man is thus taken up into heaven to show him every step of his way down here, from first to last—weakness in himself, but Christ's strength perfected in weakness—death and resurrection. The life of Paul was a wonderful life. "To me to live is Christ." The way he did run his course brought out the fellowship of the life of Christ; he had in Cesar's court the very life the Lord Jesus had on the Father's throne. It is wonderful, and all on the principle, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

G. V. W.

Fragment: Marks of the World

Every mark of the world is a reproach to Him who is heavenly.

J. N. D.

The Glory of the Lord

The first principle of Christianity, whilst recognizing in the most solemn manner man's responsibility to answer for himself, puts the Christian on other and entirely different ground. This is the first principle and basis of all Christian truth, that there is a Mediator; a third person, between man and God. Another has implicated Himself; and because man could not come to God, has taken up the cause of man, and worked out an acceptance for him.

Two things are brought out here as the result of this. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," the liberty of grace, and we become the "epistles of Christ" (blotted ones no doubt in ourselves, but we are not epistles of ourselves), transcripts of Christ, "written with the Spirit of the living God." This we "are," not merely we ought to be. Though in ourselves most imperfect and failing, the definition given by the Spirit of God of a Christian is, that he is a transcript of Christ.

Now the natural thought of many a soul is this: "Well, if that be true, I do not know what to think of myself; I do not see this transcript in myself." No; and you ought not to see it. Moses did not see his own face shine. Moses saw God's face shine, and others saw Moses' face shine.

The glory of the Lord as seen in Moses' face alarmed the people; they could not bear that glory. But we see it now with "open" unveiled "face" in Christ (v.18), and yet are not in the least afraid; we find liberty, comfort, and joy in looking at it; we gaze on it, and instead of fearing, rejoice. How comes this immense difference? It is "the ministration of the Spirit" (vs. 8) and "of righteousness." (vs. 9) It is Christ alive in the glory that I see; not Christ down here (sweet as that was), but Christ at the right hand of God. Yet though that glory is in the heavens, I can steadfastly behold it. All that glory (and He is in the midst of the glory and majesty of the throne of God itself) does not affright me, because this wonderful truth comes in, that that glory of God is in the face of a man who has put away my sins, and who is there in proof of it. (Heb. 1:3) I should have been afraid to hear His voice, and have said with the children of Israel, "Let not God speak with me" (Ex. 20:19); or, like Adam with a guilty conscience, have sought to hide myself away. (Gen. 3:8) But I do not say so now. No; let me hear. His voice I cannot see the glory of Christ now without knowing that I am saved. How comes He there? He is a man who has been down here mixing with publicans and sinners—the as His companions; He is a man who has borne the wrath of God on account of sin; He is a man who has borne my sins in His own body on the tree (I speak the language of faith). He is there as having been down here amidst the circumstances and under the imputation of sin; and yet it is in His face I see the glory of God. I see Him there consequent upon the putting away of my sin, because He has accomplished my redemption. I could not see Christ in the glory if there were one spot or stain of sin not put away. The more I see of the glory, the more I see the perfectness of the work that Christ has wrought, and of the righteousness wherein I am accepted. Every ray of that glory is seen in the face of One who has confessed my sins as His own, and died for them on the cross of One who has glorified God on the earth, and finished the work that the Father had given Him to do. The glory that I see is the glory of redemption. Having glorified God about the sin—"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do"

(John 17:4) —God has glorified Him with Himself there.

When I see Him in that glory, instead of seeing my sins, I see that they are gone. I have seen my sins laid on the Mediator; I have seen my sins confessed on the head of the scapegoat, and they have been borne away. (Lev. 16) So much has God been glorified about my sins (that is, in respect of what Christ has done on account of my sins), that this is the title of Christ to be there at the right hand of God. I am not afraid to look at Christ there. Where are my sins now? Where are they to be found, in heaven or on earth? I see Christ in the glory. Once they were found upon the head of that blessed One; but they are gone, never more to be found. Were it a dead Christ, so to speak, that I saw, I might fear that my sins would be found again; but with Christ alive in the glory the search is in vain. He Who bore them all has been received up to the throne Of God, and, no sin can be there. As a practical consequence of this, I am changed into His likeness. “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” It is the Holy Ghost taking of the things of Christ, and revealing them to the soul, that is the power of present practical conformity to Christ. I delight in Christ, I feast upon Christ, I love Christ. It is the very model and forming of my soul according to Christ by the Holy Ghost, this His revelation of Christ. I not only get to love the glory, it is Christ Himself that I love; Christ that I admire; Christ that I care for; Christ whose flesh I eat, and whose blood I drink: what wonder if I alit like Christ? The Christian thus becomes the epistle of Christ; he speaks for Christ, owns Christ, acts for Christ. He does not want to be rich, he has riches in Christ; unsearchable riches. He does not want the pleasures of the world; he has pleasure at God’s right hand for evermore.

Does the heart still say, “Oh, but I do not, and cannot, see this transcript in myself”? No; but you see Christ; and is not that better? It is not my looking at myself, but it is my looking at Christ, that is God’s appointed means for my growing in the likeness of Christ. If I would copy the work of some great artist, is it by fixing my eyes on the imitation, and being taken up with regrets about my failing attempt, that I shall be likely to succeed? No; but by looking at my model, by fixing my eyes there, tracing the various points, and getting into the spirit of the thing. Mark the comfort of this. The Holy Ghost having revealed to my soul Christ in the glory as the assurance of my acceptance, I can look without fear, and therefore steadfastly, full at that glory, and rejoice at the measure of its brightness. Stephen (Acts 7), full of the Holy Ghost, could look up steadfastly into liven (doubtless in his case it was with More than ordinary power), and see the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God; and. His face shone as the face of an angel. And look at his death! Just like his Master, he prays for his very murderers. Stephen died, saying, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Christ had died, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” In him there was the expression of Christ’s love for His enemies. By the Holy Ghost he was changed, and that in a very blessed way too, into the same image.

The soul at perfect liberty with God looks peacefully and happily at the glory of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ; and because it sees that glory, and knows its expression, it walks before God in holy confidence. Instead of being happy and at liberty with Satan in Satan’s world, the Christian dreads Satan because he knows himself. At ease in the presence of God, he there drinks into the spirit of that which befits the presence of God, and becomes the “epistle of Christ” to the world, showing out to all that he has been there: Well, what a difference! May we more and more make our boast in Him, in whose face all this glory is displayed—the Lamb who has died for us, and

cleansed away our sins by His own most precious blood.

J. N. D.

The Advocacy of Christ

Time question often arises in the minds of the Lord's people, especially of those who are young in the faith, "What is to be done with the sins we commit after we have been saved?" Many a child of God has said, "I know that I have believed in Christ, and see that my sins were put away in His blood; but what troubles me is, the sins I commit now; and what am I to do with them?" The divine answer to this question is found in 1 John 2:1,2, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous;" and in chapter 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This is clearly written to believers; for the apostle addresses them as "my children;" that is, those who have been born of God. And again, "We have an advocate with the Father;" and it is only those who are born again who can truly call God their Father. In one sense every believer has the forgiveness of all his sins; as in chap. 2:12, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." It is very important to distinguish between our sins being once and for all put away by the "one sacrifice" on the cross, and the Father forgiving a child when he has sinned. There are two things we need in order to be happy in God's presence—the forgiveness of sins, and a new life and nature. You find these two in chapter 4:9, 10. In verse 9, "God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (eternal life); and in verse 10, "To be the propitiation for our sins" (forgiveness of sins). Every one is born into this world at a distance from God, ignorant of Him, and with a corrupt, fallen nature; which is enmity against Him; "dead in trespasses and sins," without a spark of life or desire Godward; as we find in Rom. 3:11, "There is none that seeketh after God." But God saw us in this dreadful condition, with nothing but death and eternal judgment before us, and loved us, "and sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." And we, through the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost, are born again, and get eternal life; as in John 1:12, "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man; but of God;" so that those who have received Christ, and have truly believed in Him, can say on the authority of Scripture that they are "sons of God," and born of Him. So now we have a life and nature that loves God, and delights in Him, and can have "fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3); whereas the old Adam life has no communion with God whatever. What a wondrous word that is, "Fellowship" (or communion) "with the Father, and with His Son!" What does fellowship or communion mean? Common thoughts, joys, and interests. Thus we now have a nature which can enjoy God, which will be our joy throughout eternity; and in proportion as we enjoy this communion now our joy is full. (vs. 4) The ground of our peace depends upon the death and resurrection of Christ, and, thank God; can never alter; but joy depends upon our walk, and how far we are living in communion with "the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ."

Fellowship with the Father. One might well say, "How could such poor feeble things as we are have fellowship (communion or common thoughts) with the Father and with His Son?" Suppose

you are enjoying Christ, and you get a glimpse of His glory and perfection, and you delight in Him; well, the Father delights in Him too, so that through grace you have common thoughts with the Father about the Son, only, of course, in far different measure. And again, “No one knows who the Father is save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.” (Matt. 11:27) If Christ reveals the Father in all His love to your soul, and then says, “My Father is now your Father” (as in John 20:17), you have common thoughts with the Son about the Father, as far as you are able to enter into it.

Oh, if all Christians knew more of this communion, which is our highest privilege, how blessed they would find it! Peace, which was made by the blood of His cross, cannot alter, or our standing in Christ, because it does not depend upon us, but upon the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus; but our communion and joy may be broken by the merest trifle, even a foolish thought; and if we sin, it is as though a cloud came between us and the Sun: the sun remains unchanged, but we do not feel its rays. The advocacy of Christ is to restore our souls when this communion has been interrupted by our sin—not to put the sin away: that was done on the cross. We read in chapter 2: 1, “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” The common thought is, that when we have confessed our sin, Christ goes to God and intercedes, and the sin is passed over. It does not however say, “If any man confess his sin,” but “If any man sin.” There is a child of God—born again, his sins once and for all put away, and he himself “made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light;” he has fallen into a sin, and that is not consistent with being a saint-of God, and by that sin, although he has not ceased to be a child of God, his communion has been interrupted, and he has lost his joy. Well, “we have an advocate with the Father.” Advocate means, one who undertakes the cause of another, one who manages our affairs. And who is “the advocate,” the one who manages our affairs with the Father? No less a person than “Jesus Christ the righteous;” not “the loving or merciful One,” as we might be inclined to think, but “the righteous.” This is very blessed; for if He is there in righteousness before God, that is the proof that our sins are all gone forever; for He took them on Him on the cross, and now He is before God without them, and He Himself is our unchanging righteousness there.

He is also “the propitiation for our sins” (chapter 2: 2); that is, God is satisfied about our sins when Christ “bore them in His own body on the tree.” Thus, when a child of God sins, and communion has been interrupted, He is there in the presence of God our Father, and prays. about us, and the consequence is, that the word of God is brought home to our conscience by the power of the Spirit, and we are made, to feel our sin and confess it to God our Father; and we have the word in chapter 1: 9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Mark the expression, “Faithful and just;” not “loving and merciful,” and why? Suppose a child of God has sinned, Christ is before the Father, and says, so to speak, “I bore that sin in my own body on the cross, and I am here in righteousness to represent that child of God.” So God is faithful and just to the work and person of Christ to forgive us our sins, because the work of Christ put them all away, and He Himself is our righteousness before God. But if when we sinned Christ had not been to the Father about us, we should never have confessed at all, but have got further and further away from the Lord. How blessed it is to think of the Lord’s unchanging love and service to us! “He loved us, and gave Himself for us,” and put away all our sins; and though now He is away, and we are left in this evil world, His love is still the same, and when we sin and get away from Him in our souls, He restores us to the communion we had lost.

“My soul He doth restore
Whene'er I go astray;
He makes my cup of joy run o'er
From day to day.”

So now the answer is simple as to what a child of God is to do with his sins: we are to confess them to God our Father. But how blessed to know that when we have sinned, and confess, that Christ has already been to the Father about us, and that we have the word, “He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” So that if we have truly confessed and judged the sin, we ought to believe on the authority of the word that we have forgiveness. Real confession is not merely a general confession of sins at the close of the day, that would be no real confession at all; but every time a sin is on our conscience it should be judged and confessed, and not only to judge ourselves for an act of sin, but for the state of soul we were in at the time, which is a far deeper thing; for if we had been in communion with the Lord, we should not have committed it at all; for depend upon it, a child of God does not fall into positive sin when in communion with the Lord; but there has been first a getting away from Him. But what a blessed privilege, when we have sinned, to be able to go to God our Father, and confess it all out to Him; not as a sinner to get salvation, or to get Converted again, but as a child to a Father who loves us perfectly, but at the same time is God who is “Light,” and cannot have fellowship with anything that is evil or inconsistent with that light.

May you and I, dear reader, know more what it is to have “fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ,” that our “joy may be full,” till we enter that blessed home “where there shall in no wise enter anything that defileth or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life,” where there will be no need of “an advocate with the Father,” because there will be no sin, and we shall be “holy and without blame before God in love.” The world, the flesh, and the devil, and everything that hindered our communion here, gone forever; and to know throughout eternity what uninterrupted communion means in everlasting glory F. K.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Assembly of Christ Continued

The foundation of the assembly thus declared, the rearing of it is written of, and described elsewhere. Peter, a stone in the building—for the Lord distinctly shows that he was not the rock itself (“Thou art Peter [πέτρος, i.e. a stone], and upon this rock (πέτρα) I will build my church,” are His words) —makes clear to us who the living stones are (1 Peter 2:5); and Paul acquaints us with the ultimate destination of that which is thus built. (Eph. 2:21)

Remembering the historical associations of the neighborhood in which the Lord Jesus was at that moment, not far certainly from the site of the city of Dan, the announcement of the stability of His Church has marked significance. Dan had been memorable for the attempt of Jeroboam, and that successfully, to turn the eyes of Israel from Jerusalem and Jehovah, who dwelt therein, to the golden calves which he erected in Bethel and in Dan, that most northern city of his kingdom. The idolatrous worship there established has passed away; the calves, the altars, the priests, all in connection with it have come to naught. What Christ would build, bound to no place upon earth, though existing amongst men, was never to pass away. Against it the gates of Hades should never prevail; for with it He connected Himself; and on the confession of His person as the Christ, the Son of the living God, this new, this everlasting building was to rest.

“My assembly,” He calls it, though not then built.

‘Tis true there were some of its stones in existence, and surrounding the Builder at that very moment; pillars too some of them were, as they are called in Gal. 2:9; but as yet not a stone had been laid in its place; the structure had not even been commenced. “I will build” most pointedly shows that. And that He builds that assembly, which is elsewhere called the Church of God, on the rock, the truth as to His person, is a plain proof that none but those who confess Him can form part of God’s assembly, as viewed in its universal character. (Eph. 1:22, 23) But further, since Christ is the Builder, and the assembly is His, what He builds must be solid, real, and substantial. That must ever abide. Imperfection can have no place there. So in this, the first mention of the assembly, it is brought before us as the company who are really what they profess, Christians, not in name only, but in truth. No hay, no wood, no stubble, can find a place there. Stones, living stones only, are the materials with which Christ builds; for it is the Church, according to God’s purpose, of which He here treats. Imperishable is the structure, firm the foundation; for it rests on the truth about His person, that He is the Christ, the Son of the living God.

With this assembly He connects Himself. He owns it as, nay, calls it, His. All that it would appear to outward eyes He well knew. Its great failings, which men, the world, would afterward chronicle, were before His mind. Its failure in corporate testimony before the world was all present to His vision; yet He calls it His assembly. His name was to be indissolubly connected with it. How precious then must it be to Him! How gracious that He is not ashamed to call it His!

From Himself too we learn something of the provision made for it. First, that evil within it may be dealt with; and secondly, that His presence may be counted upon. Of both of these the Lord teaches us in Matt. 18:18-20.

As the assembly is composed of those who had once been children of wrath, and in whom the flesh, sin, the old man, would yet remain, Christ well knew both how saints might fail, and the watchfulness of the enemy in order to introduce corruption into that which he cannot destroy. The Acts of the Apostles illustrates this in the history of Ananias and Sapphira. The epistles of Paul, of John, and of Jude attest it likewise. Christ therefore has invested the assembly with authority to deal with offenders in its midst in the most solemn way: "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." What an authority is this! Action taken upon earth—if rightly taken; of course—is ratified in heaven. God owns, and will firmly maintain, the judicial dealings of the assembly. If it binds on a person his sin, it is bound in heaven. If it looses a person from his sins, by receiving the individual amongst them as one fit to be at the Lord's table, that act is confirmed in heaven. At Corinth that power was exercised, and the offending brother felt it. To the world it might seem a small matter that the individual was put away from the midst of God's saints for grievous sin. Yet, since in heaven the sentence was ratified, what Christian could afford to despise it? No Miraculous power, it is true, accompanied that sentence to strike terror into the heart of the Corinthian community at large; no—vengeance from heaven visibly overtook the offender.

The power that was wielded was nevertheless very great, and the brother dealt with sorely felt it.

(2 Cor. 2:7) With what authority then is the assembly invested? That men upon earth should give heed to admonitions from heaven, all would admit; but that the action of the assembly on earth, whether in binding or loosing, should be ratified on high, was something new indeed. To the world, church censure may seem a most impotent act. If done, however, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, it is really most potent; for no creature power can annul it.

But not only has Christ declared that the assembly is invested with such solemn, such weighty authority; He has also openly assured His People of His presence, even if it be reduced to the greatest possible weakness as regard numbers. Observe with what solemnity this is also introduced: "Again I say unto you" [or if the reading of the Vatican and many other uncials be adopted, "Again, verily I say unto you"], "That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." So divided, so rent by factions the assembly might be, that only two or three would be gathered unto His name; but if so gathered, He would be in their midst. Again, the whole Christian community in a place might only number two or three. From that number, insignificant though it might appear, Christ would not be absent. The sole condition for His presence is, "Gathered unto (■ις) His name." And when in the attitude of dependence, that is, in prayer—for it is of those met for prayer that the Lord speaks in verse 19—He promised to be in their midst; and if agreeing on that which they asked, His Father would grant their request. With what authority, again we would say it, is the assembly invested. In what weakness too may it be found; but what a privilege may it enjoy—the presence of Christ in its midst.

At first believers were of one heart and one soul. (Acts 4:32) Would that always continue? It would not. And ere the apostles had left the earth, division had manifested itself amongst the saints. Paul felt this (2 Tim. 1:15); John experienced it (3 John 9); and we in our day witness it, and feel it. Believers are divided; the assembly is split up into many sects and denominations. What then are we to do? To meet all as one body seems at present impossible. Shall we acknowledge the evil, and acquiesce in it? Shall we fold our hands, and sit down appalled at the magnitude and hopelessness of the task of getting all to see eye to eye? Christ has set before us a different work; viz., to learn what it is to be gathered unto His name, and to act upon it. Then we know what we could not before-the joy and the blessing of His presence in our midst.

Centuries have rolled by since that promise was given; yet it still holds good. And saints there are in these days who have found it to be still true. How little, however, is it understood! How little is the presence of Christ amongst His people really known the condition necessary for its enjoyment He has clearly stated-gathered unto His name. He is faithful who has promised; for He cannot deny Himself. Why then should any Christian remain a stranger to the conscious fulfillment of such a promise? C. E. S.

The Lord's Table: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —

The question of the Lord's table is often a most perplexing one to the child of God. Not only are there many tables, set up on different grounds, around him on every hand, but also, when he begins to inquire into the subject, he finds almost as many theories as tables, concerning the significance of the supper of which he is invited to partake. His only remedy therefore, if he desires to avoid error and to be found in obedience to his Lord, is to turn away from the confused voices of theologians to the clear and distinct teaching of the word of God. It is to this teaching I desire to lead you in this letter.

As we might expect, there is nothing wanting on such a subject in the Scriptures. Thus 1 Cor. 10 explains the character of the table, and chap. 11 gives us the character of the supper, and the manner in which it should be eaten.

First we will consider the question of the table. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we [being] many are one bread, [and] one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

(1 Cor. 10:16,17) This scripture evidently teaches two things; first, that the loaf or "the bread" on the table is a symbol of the body of Christ; and secondly, that we partake of it as members of that body ("for we being many are one bread, one body" (1. Cor. 12: 13); "for we are all partakers of that one bread"). As therefore we have communion of the blood of Christ through the wine, so also of the body of Christ through the bread, when we partake according to the thoughts of God. The table is thus the expression of the unity of the body of Christ; and consequently it is only the members of that body who can be properly gathered around it. The "church" of England, strangely enough, agrees with this principle; for it admits no one to its table who has not been baptized; and it declares that every baptized one is made "a member of Christ," etc. The error, you will see, lies in attributing to baptism (as the means) what can only be wrought by the Spirit of God. I cite this case only to show you that the principle affirmed, so far from being peculiar, is widely accepted.

Now, it is by the application of this principle that you can decide which of all the tables around you is the Lord's. Test every denominational table by it, and what is the result? You will perceive at once that no sectarian system can have the Lord's table, because the ground on which it is spread, in every case, is narrower than that of the body of Christ. Admitting, or rather conceding for the moment, that all its followers may be members of the body of Christ, we should still have to say, Are there no other members of that body outside this denomination? If there are, then such a table, however sincerely; conscientiously, and piously spread, is not the table of the Lord. Should it be replied, "But we are quite willing to receive all other members of the body of Christ," I should have to answer, "This does not affect the question at all; for the ground taken determines the character of the table spread upon it; and the ground taken in each denomination is of such a

character that many godly Christians could not have fellowship with it." The dissenter, for example, is shut out, for conscience' sake, from the table of the Anglican "church;" and the Anglican is similarly excluded from the tables of dissent; and hence, neither in the one nor the other can the Lord's table be discovered, as the ground taken is other than that of the body of Christ.

Once more, test many of the unsectarian tables by this principle. You may perhaps tell me that you know of a place where all denominationalism is disavowed, and where it is taught that all Christians, and none but Christians, should be united. Very good; but I still should have a few questions to ask. I should inquire, Are the believers in such a place gathered simply unto the name of Christ? Is there liberty to the Spirit to minister by whom He wills? Is there the exercise of godly discipline etc. For the Lord cannot sanction anything which is not in accordance with the Scriptures—anything which is unsuited to the character of His own name. If these questions could be answered in the affirmative, then you might perhaps conclude that you had found the Lord's table; but if not, however fair and inviting it might seem at the first, you would have to reject it equally with those in the denominational systems around.

If we add a few characteristics of the Lord's table, it may serve to preserve you from mistake. 1. The table must be spread on ground outside of all denominational systems, otherwise, as we have shown, it could not comprehend all the members of the body of Christ. 2. The saints should be gathered on the first day of the week around the table. We thus read: "Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7), an undeniable proof that it was their custom. See too in John 20 how our blessed Lord, on two occasions after His resurrection, chose the first day of the week for presenting Himself in the midst of His gathered disciples (vss. 19, 26), thus consecrating (if such a word may be used) this day for their assembling to show forth His death. 3. The purpose of the gathering should be to break bread. I point this out, as in many places there is a weekly table, but altogether in subordination to other things, such as preaching, etc. 4. Everything in connection with the table—worship, ministry, and discipline, must be in accordance with and in subjection to the word of God. If there, is a single human regulation, on whatever ground adopted, the character of the table is destroyed. For it is the table of the Lord; and hence His authority alone can be recognized by His gathered saints.

Need I add more? But there is a danger or two which I would fain indicate. The first is indifference. It was only the other day that I asked a believer if she were at the Lord's table. Apprehending my meaning, she replied, "It is enough for me to know that Christ is my Savior, and I do not desire to trouble myself with such questions as these." Can anything be sadder? As if it was not of all-importance to ascertain the mind of the Lord; for surely if He has indicated His will upon this question, it should be our joy to discover it, and to be found in obedience to it. Another replied in a different way. He said, "I am not called upon to judge my fellow-believers, and I desire to have fellowship with all." "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (Rev. 2: 3) We are thus called upon to judge the ways of our fellow-believers—indeed of the "churches;" to measure everything by the Word; and to refuse all which it does not sanction, or which it condemns. Indifference is that spirit of Laodiceanism concerning which our Lord says, "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." (Rev. 3:16) The other danger is that of association. For example, how many a young believer is led unwittingly into that which is contrary the Lord's mind from friendly, relative, or even spiritual associations! He is guided by the opinions of his friends, etc., instead of the word of God; or it may

be that, having been converted or received blessing in a particular place, he naturally desires to continue where the blessing was received. But the question in every case should be, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) Otherwise he might, in the right desire, according to the Lord's own word, to remember Him in His death, be found doing it in a way which is really displeasing to Him.

Warning you against these dangers, let me remind you that it is far better to wait than to partake of the Lord's Supper in disobedience. Before therefore you seek admission to the table, search the Scriptures, looking to the Lord for guidance; "and if thine eye is single, thy whole body shall be full of light."

Reserving the question of the supper for another letter, Believe me, dear —, Yours affectionately in Christ, E. D.

The Christian's Place

There is a vast difference between an innocent creature and a purged conscience; and the distinction is important. The knowledge of good and evil came in when man departed from God. In connection with Christianity a believer has an uncondemning conscience, a conscience fit for the presence of God in the light where God dwells, a conscience which the light suits. I would ask you, reader, Have you a conscience fit for the presence of God, where God is? This lies at the root of all practical Christianity. If it is not a settled question with you, you are not free to serve God: you must be occupied about yourself. There is a great difference between the consciousness of indwelling sin, or an evil nature, and "no more conscience of sins." We could not speak of no more consciousness of sin, i.e. of sin not being in us; but with reference to the conscience before God, through the work, the death, the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus Christ, a believer is brought into the presence of God, in the light where God is, without a single stain or spot, though he has still the evil principle of sin in him. The carnal mind "is enmity" (not at enmity) "against God;" i.e. the nature of the flesh is in its essence "enmity against God;" but bow blessed the fact, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." The principle of Christianity consists in not only the fruits of the evil nature being gone, but that sin itself has been condemned in the cross of Christ. The believer knows that Christ has met every question, taken all condemnation and fear away, and that, as another has blessedly expressed it, "there is nothing between him and the bright throne of God, where Christ sits, but the love that put all his sins away." The wonderful traction took place between God and Christ. Our acceptance is according to the infinite efficacy of the blood of Christ as God sees it, and as God measures it, and the infinite perfection of the One who did the work. It is not a question of you, or of what you think or you feel, or anything in connection with you, or your apprehension of all rests on God's estimate of the infinite preciousness and value of Christ's work as He estimates it. Take an illustration. If an Israelite obeyed the word of Jehovah, and sprinkled the lintel and doorpost of his house, he went in with the sense of security, because the blood was there. God had said, "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Another Israelite also sprinkles the blood on the lintel and door-posts; goes in, and trembles and fears all night lest the destroying angel should not pass over. Which do you think is the most secure? Many would say the former, because they are mixing up God's value and estimate of the blood as He sees it with their own thought or feeling about it. Both are equally safe, because it is the blood which is the ground of the security of both. A sinner is convicted on the testimony of God; and the same God assures him that He has found in the death of His Son a full divine warrant to meet him in perfect blessing according to His own heart.

There are two great subjects treated of in Romans. In chap. 5:1-12 the Holy Ghost is taking up the question of our guilt, our sins, the fruit of the evil nature. There is no experience in this first part of the epistle. It is very helpful to see this. Is anyone not settled as to the question of the forgiveness of their sins?. The reason is because they are bringing into it what God never intended should be brought into it; i.e. experience. Many a soul has doubts and fears and misgivings as to the question of peace, because they have mixed up the experience they have, or they think they ought

to have, and put it in the place of simple recognition of and faith in the, testimony of the blessed God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God." Many a one who is quickened has not the peace of Rom. 5:1. What is peace? It is peace with God as God is, in all the unflinching holiness of His character, peace without one of His attributes being violated. That is peace, when there is not one single enemy left, not one solitary foe who could dispute our title to serenity in the presence of God. If a battle has been fought, and the victory gained, this is not peace; for after many a well-gained victory there is war again. A truce, however honorable or long, is not peace; it supposes impending hostilities. But if every enemy had been demolished, and there was not a foe left, there would be peace. "The Lord Jesus was delivered for our offenses, raised again for our justification." At His death every enemy, the whole array of Satan's power, was let loose, was met by Him and vanquished—sin, Satan, death, hell, the grave.

"His be the victor's name

Who fought the fight alone."

Through His death He has brought the believer on the same platform as He stands Himself; and faith connects us with it. What is faith? It is simply the hand stretched out for God to pat, all that is in His heart of love into. Faith is not feeling, or experience, or anything that goes on within. Faith gives God credit for being what He is, and accepts what He gives. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." The believer is not a pardoned criminal. He is pardoned; but he is more. We are in the very favor of God, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We have peace behind, favor under OUR feet, and glory before us. This is not experience, but possession.

Chapters 5: 7, 8. We find three things in each of these chapters; three distinct facts are stated in each.

In chap. 5 we get, first, justification on the principle of faith, and "peace with God" the consequence; second, introduction by faith into present favor with God, the very favor that rests on Christ; third, rejoicing in hope; and there is a fourth thing in the chapter (though this is not on my mind just now), we joy in God.

Chapter 7 describes the condition of a quickened soul under law, the searching power of the law. Three great facts are discovered experimentally, because now we get experience, realization, and feeling.

The soul learns first that in the flesh there is nothing that is good. "In me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." This is an humbling but real thing to learn. All are on the same platform here, all are in one plight, all are of one stock. Second, that we have another "I" in us, another principle, which is not the sinful flesh. Third, that this new "I" (if I may call it so), the new nature, has not power of itself over the old; that the old nature is too strong for it; therefore the soul must look for a deliverer "who shall deliver me?"

In chap. 8 we also find three things: First, the believer has life in the Spirit; second, the Holy Ghost is dwelling in him; third, God is for him. Different states of soul are touched by each of these truths.

I would before going on say again, I trust every one is clear as to the question of the forgiveness of sins; that Christ is the "propitiation" (3: 25) or mercy-seat, the spot where God and the sinner can

meet. God can righteously meet me there. Faith takes what God gives as though He said, "I will do all the giving, yours is the receiving." It is not believing that I do believe; this is a serious snare. If you go out to examine the sky and the stars, are you occupied with your eye? If you are, you will never see the stars. You simply look at what is above you. The simple acceptance of God's testimony carries the benefit to the soul. What is wanted is simplicity. It is marvelous how simple people are in everything but in the things of God. When God makes the most blessed communications to us, we begin to reason and to question about them. In chap. 4 we get another thing; viz., what answers to the scapegoat. When speaking of the way any poor sinner may come to God, it is unlimited, as wide as the world. Any one may come; the blood is on the mercy-seat. "God is just, and yet the justifier." There is a full, free, perfect forgiveness for every one who believes. But in chap. 4 it is a different thing; viz., "Who was delivered for our offenses." We find in the account of the scapegoat that the sins of a definite company were confessed over his head. When substitution is spoken of, it is in connection With those for whom He was a substitute. If we speak of propitiation, it has the widest sense. Christ has offered His blood to God, God has accepted it; there is a full, free forgiveness for all who will come. The testimony on God's side is in raising Him,, from the dead, and we, being justified by faith, "have peace with God" in the integrity of His being as a God of truth, holiness, and righteousness. The question of sin was Settled on the cross. Everything that could interfere with the holiness of God, has been there disposed of. The believer is brought into nearness to God, and Stands in divine favor. Again I would say, this is not experience. You may say you do not feel it; but do you believe it? Faith carries me into what is absolutely true of me, what I am before God and as seen by Him. Do we believe the testimony? How many are always occupied with their frames and feelings! and this is what they feed on, and hence so little divine power. It is a question of simple faith in the testimony of the living God. "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater" ("witness" and "testimony" are the same words all through)... "He that believeth not God hath made Him a liar." (1 John 5:9,10) This is more serious than our losing blessing.

We will now turn to the different states of soul have already touched on in chap. 7. Most of the difficulties people have is because they are not delivered, which is distinct from quickening. The first thing to learn is, "that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." The soul has to be passed through humiliating exercises to learn this. Could you say before God you know that? Why then are you trying to repair it? I may discover I have done wrong things, but that I have a nature in me which is incapable of doing anything BUT wrong things is very humiliating. I must submit to the humbling fact I cannot do the right thing. Many a one is ready to say, "I know I do wrong things every day," who shrink from the fact they have no power to do the right things. Many of us know this doctrinally, but do we know it experimentally? Chapter 7 is experience. A person may have listened to the truth taught for, years, and yet not know chap. 7 experimentally. We have to be subjected to the exercises the soul passes through in chap. 7. to find out what is in us; viz., that there is "no good thing." Do you believe it? Do you know it? Have you gone through these ploughings and testings? or are you going through them? If you know it, you will never try to reform man in any way. Are you trying to remedy or to keep down such a state? You must learn you cannot do it. Again I ask, Is it a settled matter in your own soul that there is nothing good in you? I often hear it said, "I was overtaken, and tripped up today; but I will keep this temper down; I will not allow it to act." Of course it is all right not to allow its exercise; but if you only seek to correct it, this is what Job did, who, after going through all the terrible discipline of God's hand,

comes to the point, "I am vile. I will lay my hand upon my mouth," I will not let out anything further. But in chap. 42. we get a step further, Job is brought to this, not only to acknowledge "I am vile," but "I abhor myself;" and then he finds the relief of turning away from himself altogether, "Mine eye seeth thee." It is now no longer trying to keep down or to correct the old nature, or to get anything good out of it. This is the first lesson a soul has to learn practically in the experience of this chapter: the utter, thorough, and complete ruin, that there is nothing good in us; yet not merely saying it, but what we have learned deep down in the heart. There is even danger in seeking to get a character out of the owning of our badness. When I hear a person talking much about their badness, I begin to fear they know but little about it. If we really know in the depths of our hearts that "in me dwelleth no good thing," we shall not be seeking to get a character out of our own badness, or out of self at all; we shall find out the relief of turning our back upon it altogether as that which is good for nothing. How do we make this discovery? The law comes in for this purpose; it never could bring anything good out of the flesh. What was it made that which in itself is "holy, just, and good" powerless? "It was weak through the flesh." It brought out and exposed what the flesh is before God. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died." We thus discover practically and experimentally there was nothing in US that answered to it. W. T. T.

(To be concluded in the next number, if the Lord will)

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Body of Christ

In the closest of earthly associations, connected too by the nearest and dearest of ties known to man, does the Church stand in relation to Christ. It is His body. Nothing can be closer than that. It is His bride, with the assured prospect of being manifested as the Lamb's wife. Nothing can be dearer and nearer than that. And first, as to His body, God has given "Him to be head over all things to the assembly, which is His body the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." (Eph. 1:23) Of assemblies, God acknowledges now but one called here the assembly, the same which is elsewhere termed the assembly of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15) and is claimed by the Lord Jesus Christ, as we have seen, as His own. (Matt. 16:18) But this assembly is also the body of Christ, which, viewed in this character, has Him for its head.

Now the headship of Christ is by no means an unimportant subject in the Scriptures, nor is it one in which but few have any concern. Far and wide through out the universe does the headship of Christ extent Further than the eye of man has yet penetrated is that headship to be acknowledged; for, to three distinct spheres does the headship of Christ appertain. He is the head of all principality and power, as we lean, from Col. 2:10. Headship in this character has of course to do with His place in creation; and the mystery of God's will, now disclosed to us in Eph. 10, but not yet carried out, has made known the divine purpose of heading up all things in the Christ. Again, as the Christ, He is the head of every man, the man being in his turn woman's head. (1 Cor. 11:3) There is however a third character of headship in which the Lord is presented. "He is the head of the body, the Church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence." (Col. 1:18) The headship aver the universe is His who died, and He receives it who created all things, being the firstborn of alt creation, and that by virtue of having called it all into being. (Col. 1:15) His headship over every male as distinct from the female flows from His incarnation, who as man is the Christ. His headship in relation to the assembly only dates from His resurrection; for until He had died the assembly had no existence; but since He has died and has risen, He stands as head in relation to it. He is head of the body, the Church (Eph. 1:22; 4:15; Col. 1:18; 2: 19); He is also head of the Church, as the husband is head of his wife. (Eph. 5:23) Of Christ's headship of the assembly the New Testament alone treats, and that only in the epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians. This is a much more circumscribed sphere of course than that of headship over the universe; but we are taught, that it is He, who is head over all things, whom God has given to the Church which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. His relation to it, and by consequence its relation to Him, as viewed in this character, was both new and peculiar. Nothing of the kind had Israel, God's earthly people, ever known; nothing of the kind will they ever enjoy.

To the Church, whether viewed as His body or His bride, He is head, not Lord. Lord of course He is; God made Him such. (Acts 2:36) Every knee in heaven, on earth, and under the earth (i.e. all intelligent creatures), must ever own Him as Lord. (Phil. 2:11) The Church too knows Him as the Lord; but He is head to, not Lord of, the Church. Headship and Lordship both belong to Him, but they are not convertible terms. As Lord, He stands out apart from all others; as head, He is in

close. association with that to which He is as such connected. Scripture then never speaks of Him. as Lord in relation to the Church; for that clause in Eph. 5:29, when rightly read, stands thus: "Even as the Christ the Church." Of this assembly He is the head, and it stands to Him in a relation altogether new, being His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Paul alone of the New Testament writers treats of this branch of the subject, and to him was the truth of it first made known. The foundation on which the assembly was to rest was announced, as we have seen, to Peter in the audience of the twelve. The existence of His body upon earth Christ first revealed to Paul (Eph. 3:3) when in the company of his fellow-travelers, though in words they did not understand.

The Lord Jesus was speaking to Saul, but He did not address them. How near were they to the speaker from heaven, and yet remained strangers to the communication, embodied in that single sentence, "Why persecutest thou me?" No question surely was ever asked more astounding to anyone than this; no interrogation was ever addressed to a prisoner more condemnatory than this. From One whom Saul had never seen, and from that One in heavenly glory, the light of which the whole company beheld, came that startling, penetrating question to the impetuous opponents; God's saints. All that Saul was doing was known to his interrogator. What Saul was doing was unknown to himself. To turn aside the question was impossible; so personal it was, so heart-searching it must have been. To answer it satisfactorily was equally impossible. It convicted him of ignorance of God's mind, and of hatred to God and to His Son. Paul evidently never forgot it, nor the truth which by it was revealed. As proof that he never forgot it, we find that question, recorded in all three accounts of his conversion, two of which are related by himself. Writing to the Corinthians, he tells them too of his sin. (1 Cor. 15:9) Exhorting the Philippians, he makes mention of it (3:6); and when unbosoming himself to his child in the faith, he again refers to it.

(1 Tim. 1:13) The truth too which was thus revealed took a firm hold of him. He taught it, he contended for it, he suffered for it. (Eph. 3:1) Further, by that question the Lord threw a shield over His persecuted ones, who were dear to Him, and arrested the arm of the self-constituted inquisitor of the saints. But He did more. By the form of His question He revealed the truth, that His saints were part of Himself. Of old Jehovah had declared of Israel that those who touched them touched the apple of His eye (Zech. 2:8); i.e. that which a man guards most carefully. Here the Lord announced that in persecuting His saints Saul was persecuting Him. Thus the mystery was disclosed of a body upon earth, which belonged to a head in heaven.

For teaching about this body we must turn, as we have said, to the epistles of Paul; not that he was the only one who knew about it, for to God's holy apostles and prophets was it revealed by the Spirit (Eph. 3:5); but to Paul was it first made known by revelation. (Eph. 3:3) A body on earth, its head in heaven, this constitutes the mystery of the Christ, the two making up the one mystic man—the Christ. And this body is His complement, or fullness, who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:23) Without it as the ascended Christ He was not complete; with it there is nothing left to be desired. The divine conception of the Christ thus stands forth in all its completeness. But what a conception! His fullness the body is, who fills all in all; thoughts, statements, a revelation, we have about the Christ which far surpass our small intelligence to grasp in their fullness. This however is simple, and within the power of our mental faculties to take in, that great as is His glory, who is God as well as man, when looked at as man, though He fills the whole universe with His divine glory, He, the Christ, is not complete without His body, the Church. What an interest He must take,

He does take, in that which stands in this relation to Him It is His body. How close to Him! how really a part of Himself! How full of meaning, then, was the question, "Why persecutest thou me?"

C. E. S.

Expository Paper on Romans 1-3

It is blessed to see in the Scriptures, how God first shows us what we are in all our badness, and then what He is in all His goodness towards us. "God is Light," and "God is Love." (1 John 1:5;4. 841. The "light" shows us all that we are by nature, as guilty, lost, and ruined sinners; and then we see the "love" of God that, when He knew how bad we were, gave His own Son to save us. We find this beautifully brought out in the first eight chapters of the epistle to the Romans.

In chapter 1 to verse 20 of chapter 3, we find the "light" showing us the sad history of what man is, and what we all are by nature in the sight of God; and in chapter 5:8, we see God commending His "love," and giving Christ to die for us, when we were yet sinners.

Let us look at it a little as the Lord may enable us; and I would ask you, dear reader, to get your Bible and look at the passages yourself, as it is so important for us to get the truth from the Word itself; and thus we get a knowledge of the Scriptures, and are able to help others. Let us turn to chapter 1. The apostle, after saluting the Christians at Rome in the usual way, in the 7th verse, &c., says, in verse 16, that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is God's power to salvation to every one that believeth; and in verse 17, we have in a few words the truth brought out in the epistle, that man, having been proved to have no righteousness of his own, God in the gospel reveals His righteousness; that is, a righteousness outside man altogether. How beautiful this is, that God should say to us, "I am not going to require righteousness from you, because you have none, but I can now justify the believer on the ground of the death of Christ!" and this is what is revealed in the gospel.

How do we have, part in God's righteousness? By works? No; by faith, or on the principle of faith. And who gets the benefit of it? Those who have faith; i.e. those who believe. That is what is meant by the expression "from faith to faith," or, as it might be explained, "on the principle of faith to faith;" that is to say, that God's righteousness is revealed, not on the principle of works, but on the principle of faith, or "from faith;" and it is revealed "to faith;" that is to say, to those who believe. But if the righteousness of God is revealed in the gospel, God's wrath is also revealed against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men (vs. 18), whether of Jews, or of Gentiles; and this unrighteousness and ungodliness is fully brought out by the Spirit of God from chapter 1: 19 to 3: 20. This is the part, as we have remarked, where God's "light" comes in and shows all that we are by nature; just as when you bring a light into a dark room, full of all manner of filth and corruption; when it is all dark you see nothing of what is inside, but when the light is brought in, it shows all the filth and dirt that are there. From verse 19 to the end of chapter 1 we find the dreadful state of the heathen described; showing that they ought to have known God's eternal power and Godhead by the things that He created. Thus if a savage saw the sun, he must know that the sun did not make itself, but that there must be a God who created it; and if he worshipped it instead of its Creator, he would be without excuse; for "the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." (Ps. 19: 1-3) Then again, verses 21-25, "when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God... and changed the

glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever.” Then God gives them up, and they become utterly reprobate. Verses 29 to 32 give us in a few words the terrible state of the heathen without God. They gave God up, and God gave them up, even to dishonor their own bodies; and they are left without excuse. (vs. 20) These verses answer the question so often put, On what ground does God deal with the heathen?

Chapter 2:1-16 takes up another class; some who, like the philosophers of old, condemned the evil practices of the heathen, but were as bad themselves. And would “they who judged them that did such things escape the judgment of God”? (vs. 3) No; for He “will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, honor, immortality” (incorruptibility is the right word, same as in 1 Cor. 15:42,54), He will give “eternal life;” but “indignation and wrath upon every soul of man that doeth evil,” and “glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good.” (vss. 8-10) These are general principles. It does not enter upon the question as to how a person can “work good,” or can “patiently continue in well doing;” but we know now by the Scriptures, that a man, in order to “work good,” must be born again; for “there is none that doeth good; no, not one.”

(Chapter 3:12)

Verses 17 to end, take up the question of the Jews. A Jew would say, “But I am not like these heathen Gentiles; I rest in the law which God has given to us only: I know His will; I am one of a privileged people.” Verse 21 answers him. “If you boast in your law, why do you do the very things that it forbids? You teach others that they should not steal, and you steal yourself. You teach a poor heathen that he should not worship idols, and it is the very thing that you have been guilty of.” For the chief sin of Israel was idolatry, and the name of God was blasphemed amongst the Gentiles through the Jews; so that, in spite of all their boasting of their superiority to the Gentiles, they were just as bad themselves. But still (chap. 3: 1, 2) they had advantages; for “to them were committed the oracles of God;” and now, in chapter 3: 9, the Spirit of God sums up the whole with, “We have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” —the heathen, the philosophers who judged them, and the Jews, in the sight of God, one was as bad as the other; and some passages are adduced from the Old Testament to prove it—which a Jew must own applied to him. (vss. 10-19) But the principle applies to all, and in these verses we have a clear and unmistakable account of what man is by nature in the sight of God; the day of judgment will not bring it out clearer than it is brought out here. In that day, when the great white throne is set up, and the wicked dead stand to be judged, everything will be brought out—man in all his badness judged in the light of God’s holy presence; but then there will be no grace, no blood, no salvation, to meet all the dreadful guilt that will then come out; and the wicked will have to suffer their fearful doom, an eternity in the lake of fire—eternal monuments of the holiness of God, and of His punishment of sin. But now, those whose eyes are opened to see from God’s word, that they are lost, for them there is salvation, and pardon, and peace, through the blood of Christ; and when we are at peace with God, we can afford to see all the hideousness of ourselves by nature, and it only magnifies the grace of God that could love us when we were in such a state. And mark, dear reader, these verses do not show what one man thinks of another, or what a man thinks of himself, but how God sees every child of Adam, as we read in Psa. 53:2, 3, from which verses 11 and 12 are quoted. “God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that

did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." A man may form a very good opinion of himself, and think he is no worse than his neighbors, perhaps a little better; but, dear reader, you and I have to do with God, and to meet Him, and it matters little what we think of ourselves, and of one another. The thing is, What does God think of us? And as we examine these verses, let us not only say, "That is how God sees unconverted man," but, "This is a true picture of what I am by nature in His sight." First of all we read, in verse 10, "There is none righteous, no, not one." I suppose nearly every one would own that. Well, even that is enough to shut us out from heaven; for in 1 Cor. 6: 9 the apostle says, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"

"There is none that understandeth." (vs. 11) The unconverted cannot understand the things of God, it seems all a mystery to them; and not only that, but "there is none that seeketh after God"—there is not the smallest desire after God, or the things of God.

How different the expression of a soul that is born again in Psa. 42:2, "My soul THIRSTETH FOR GOD!" So, if a soul is really seeking God, it is not death, but the first movement of life. "They are all gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." (vs. 12) What a sweeping statement, "None that doeth good!" How hard to be believed, and yet how solemn, that an unsaved person has never done a good thing in the sight of God! And if they have never done a good thing, it follows that all they have done must be sin in God's sight. Have you ever thought, dear fellow-believer, that, from the day of your birth till you were born again, you never did a single good action? And if any read these lines who are unsaved, I pray you think and Consider, that God says He not only sees you unrighteous, but that you have never done a single good thing in His sight, and that till you are born again you never can. Some might say, "But did not that man who gave £5 to an hospital do a good thing? It might be good in the sight of man; but this scripture is plain, "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." God looks at the heart. Was the motive for giving the £5 the glory of God, or from love to Him? In the case of the unsaved, the answer is simple. No; for he does not even seek God, much less love Him.

Then follows "their throat like an open sepulcher" (vs. 13); "mouth full of cursing and bitterness" (vs. 14); "feet swift to shed blood" (vs. 15); "destruction and misery in their ways" (vs. 16); "the way of peace they have not known" (vs. 17). Some may say, "I am sure I am not as bad as that; my mouth is not full of cursing and bitterness; I have never shed blood." Perhaps not; but your nature is the same as those who do. It is only a question of the difference of the fruit produced on the same tree. Suppose two men, one is brought up in the worst way among thieves from, his birth, in the midst of every form of open sin and corruption. He flies into a passion with another, and commits murder, sheds his blood, and he is condemned to death, and people say he richly deserved it. The other has been brought up in the greatest refinement and worldly advantage. He would not, perhaps, do the same gross outward acts of sin; but the angry thought that led the one to commit murder might lead the other to do some spiteful action, which sprung from the same evil root in both men. Verse 17 says, "The way of peace they have not known." And is not that true of the most refined and even outwardly religious person, as of the openly wicked and profane? "There is no fear of God before their eyes." (vs. 18) This is one of the most distinctive marks of the unconverted. There may be a fear of hell, or of death; but when there is true fear of God, the Scripture says it is "the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 1:7) I believe that when a soul is awakened for the first time to see that he has to meet God, and is responsible to Him for what He has done,

the fear of God begins. The thief on the cross said to his fellow, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation; and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds?"

(Luke 23:40, 41) as though he said, "Are you not afraid to meet God, you, who in a few hours must be in eternity, and are now receiving the just punishment for your crimes? are you not alive to the fact that you have to face a holy God, with all your sins upon you?" This showed a real fear of God before the eyes of the converted thief.

All these verses (10-18) have been quoted from the Old Testament, which a Jew would own; so that, whatever things the law said, it said to those who were under it. There was no question about the guilt of the Gentiles, and the very law the Jews boasted in condemned them. So what is the great result? What is the verdict formed by the Spirit of God upon every child of Adam? "Every mouth stopped, and all the world guilty before God;" or, as the margin reads, "become subject to the judgment of God." (vs. 19) That is what God says of every unconverted soul. Not a word to say, and under judgment; like a prisoner who has been accused, his case looked into, and proved guilty. "So that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified in His sight;" because the law only brought home the sin, and unveiled the sinner, and brought him in guilty before God.

F. K.

Fragment: Alone With God

IN the epistle to the Romans the sinner is alone with God. It is like Jesus taking the blind man, or the palsied man, aside from the multitude, and then in solitude speaking to him; touching him, healing him, ere He sends him back to his companions.

J. B. S.

Christ Our Food

Aaron and his sons were to eat what was not burned in the fire of the meat-offering. Christ was the true bread, come down from heaven to give light unto the world, that we, through faith priests and kings, may eat thereof and not die. It was holy for Aaron and his sons; for who indeed ever fed on Christ but those who; sanctified by the Holy Ghost, live the life of faith, and feed on the food of faith. And is not Christ the food of our souls, sanctifying us also ever God? Do not our souls recognize in the meek and humble Holy One—in Him who shines as the light of human perfectness and divine grace amongst sinful men—what feeds, nourishes, and sanctifies? Cannot our souls feel what is to be offered to God in tracing, by the sympathy of the spirit of Jesus in us, the life of Jesus toward God, and. before men in the world. An example to us, He presents the impress of a man living to God, and draws us after Him; and by the attraction—Himself the force which carries on in the way He trod, while our delight and joy are in it—are not our affections occupied and assimilated in dwelling with delight on what Jesus was here below? We admire, are humbled, and become conformed through grace. Head and source of this life in us, the display of its perfection in Him draws forth and developer its energies and lowliness in us. For who could be found in fellowship with Jesus? Humble, as one has said, He would teach us to take the lowest place, but that He is in it Himself. Blessed Master, may we at least be near to and hidden in Thee!

J. N. D.

The Lord's Supper: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —

It must never be forgotten that it is possible to be at the Lord's Table, and yet to fail altogether in participating in the Lord's Supper. Thus the Corinthians were gathered out to the name of Christ; they were assembled week after week at the Lord's table, and yet the Apostle Paul, writing to them, says, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." (1 Cor. 11:20) They had fallen into such disorder, through selfishness and forgetfulness of the import of the supper, that they had made this solemn occasion a time of feasting. What they were eating therefore was their own, and not the Lord's Supper; for they had dissociated the bread and wine from almost all connection with the body and blood of Christ. Hence the solemn admonition, "What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." (vs. 22) Thereon, the apostle proceeds to explain the true character of the supper, and tells us that he had received a special communication concerning it from the Lord. It is of importance to mark this, because, as the apostle received this in connection with his ministry of the body of Christ (Col. 1:24,25), and since this is the final communication on the subject, it is to this scripture rather than to the gospels (which, however, relate the institution of the supper on the passover night) that we turn for the exposition of its meaning.

And who can fail to be struck with the wondrous grace displayed in the opening words of this account, "That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread," etc.? (vs. 23) What a contrast between the heart of man, and the heart of Christ! About to be betrayed by one of His disciples, "He took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me." (vss. 23, 24)

The bread therefore is a symbol of the body of the Lord Jesus which was given for His own—given up to death for them, for us, for all believers—on the cross; and when we eat it, we are to remember Him. Attention to the word "remember" would save from many mistakes. We remember a thing that is past; i.e. we recall it to mind. So when we eat the bread at the Lord's Supper, we recall the fact that the Lord was once dead; we remember Him in that condition—the condition of death—down into which He went, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree—when He endured all the wrath that was due to us, and so glorified God even about our sin. It is therefore not Christ as He now is, but Christ as He then was, whom we remember in the breaking of bread.

The cup also sets forth the same thing. "After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament [covenant] in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." (vss. 25, 26) The wine, then, of which we partake is an emblem of the blood of Christ; and this in itself speaks also of death, for we cannot think of blood, as apart from the body, except in connection with death. Indeed, verse 26 emphasizes the truth that, both in eating the bread and drinking the cup, we show, announce, or proclaim, the death of the Lord.

We cannot too earnestly insist upon this, that in the Lord's Supper we look back to a dead Christ; that we take it in remembrance of the fact that He once was lying dead—dead on the cross, and dead in the sepulcher; because He not only bore our sins, but was made sin—He who knew no sin—that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Note well that it is not even a dying, but a dead Christ—not a dying Christ, a continual repetition of His sacrifice, as so many erroneously teach, but a dead Christ; “for by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14)

This, then, is the one thought which should be before our souls at the Lord's table. What simplicity; but how calculated to touch and bow our hearts in adoration before Him, as, seated around His table, we thus commemorate His death! For “the apostle shows us, if it is a dead Christ, who it is that died. Impossible to find two words, the bringing together of which has so important a meaning, the death of the Lord. How many things are comprised in that, He who is called the Lord had died! What love! what purposes! what efficacy! what results! The Lord gave Himself up for us. We celebrate His death.”

And observe, it is “until He come.” While therefore we look back to the cross, we are reminded of His coming in glory to receive us unto Himself, the fruit surely of His travail and death; and thus we can never forget that our complete redemption, being “conformed to the image of His Son,” is the result of the death of Christ. For the two things, the cross and the glory, are here bound indissolubly together.

Such then is the meaning of the supper; and, as you will perceive, the apostle gives us very solemn warnings against forgetfulness of its import. “Whosoever shall eat the bread, and drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [judgment] to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.” (vss. 27-29) There is no question here of being ourselves worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper; but what the apostle deprecates is “partaking in an unworthy manner. Every Christian, unless some sin had excluded him, was worthy to partake, because he was a Christian. But a Christian might come to it without judging himself, or appreciating as he ought, that which the supper brought to his mind, and which Christ had connected with it. He did not discern the Lord's body; and he did not discern, did not judge, the evil in himself.” And if he thus ate and drank, he would eat judgment to himself; i.e. he would bring down discipline upon himself; for the Lord judges His people, chastens them, that they should not be condemned with the world. (vs. 32) He had thus chastened the Corinthians for their careless ways—some with weakness, some with sickness, and some even with bodily death. (vs. 30) Hence the necessity of examining ourselves as to the manner in which we partake of the Lord's Supper, and of judging everything which is thus discovered that is unsuited to the presence of the Lord; “for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (vs. 31); i.e. exercising self-judgment, we should not then be chastened of the Lord.

From all that has been said, it is clear that we are not qualified for the Lord's table until the question of our relationship with God is settled—until, in a word, we have peace with God. For if I am occupied with self, with my own state of soul, with doubts, anxieties, or fears, I cannot be occupied with the death of Christ. Much injury is thus often done in bringing souls too soon to the

table; for, coming before they have peace with God, they look upon the table as a means of grace; and inasmuch as the death of Christ is brought before them, they are made, not knowing the value of that death for themselves, wretched and miserable. Until there is peace of conscience through the blood, to say the least, the soul is not free, not at leisure to contemplate the death of Christ.

Once more. When we are at the table, it is not to be occupied with the benefits which we have received through the death of Christ. It is rather to enter, by the power of the Spirit, into God's thoughts concerning the death of His beloved Son. For we are there as worshippers, and as such inside the rent veil, and there we are engrossed with the fact that God Himself was glorified in the death of Christ; and as in fellowship with Himself, we think of what Christ was to Him, how that He was never more precious to Him than in that awful moment when He was made sin, that it was for God's glory He endured all, was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, then it is with overflowing hearts we are enabled by the Spirit to pour forth our adoration and praise. Wondrous thought, that we should thus be admitted to behold with God His Christ brought down into the dust of death, with all God's waves and billows passing over Him! And as we behold we cannot but cry, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (Rev. 1:5,6)

We are thus at the table as givers, not as receivers; though surely we do receive when there according to God. But the object of our assembling is to worship, to render the homage of our hearts to God, because we have been redeemed through the death of His Son. And who could describe the blessedness of the privilege of showing in this way the Lord's death? Gathered around Himself, with the touching emblems of His body and blood before our eyes, thus claiming the affections of our hearts, His love, which the many waters could not drown, nor the floods quench, penetrates and possesses our souls, and constrains us to bow in willing adoration at His feet, and makes us long for the time when we shall see Him face to face, and, beholding His glory, be with Him and worship Him throughout the ages of eternity.

Praying that you may be taught more and more of the meaning of His death as set forth in the supper, Believe me, dear —, Yours affectionately in Christ, E. D.

Christ the Way

This was a momentous word for man—for every man, woman, and child. No words more encouraging were ever uttered, even by the Lord Jesus Himself, for such as felt the need of divine direction.

I have no doubt that there was more in them than the mere answer to the question...They meet the need not of one man only, but of all. Yet our Lord was not addressing a multitude of hearers, but the perplexed disciples; and this gives a definiteness of application. He is addressing a believer under Jewish prejudice, not an unconverted man. Not that I am going to confine myself to its strict bearing on the inquiring disciples; for there is in it the fullest answer to the darkest heart. There is divine help for those who know really but very partially. Their knowledge was scanty; they were not the wise and prudent of the earth; and Scripture takes pains to show this. They were not chosen for anything in themselves. It was manifest that they could add no luster to the gospel. "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the, things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor. 1:26-29)

Thus does God confound the pride of flesh, and show the utter folly of any pretension on man's part to worth in the things of God, seeing that he is really nothing but a lost sinner. When Thomas asks the question about the way, the thoughts of the disciples were still hampered by the earthly expectation of Israel. But how different was their condition in little more than a month afterward! We do not hear again of Thomas. May it not have been because he was going on well? In that case there is not much to talk about. It is people's intrigues and ambitious designs, their quarrels and fights, that make up the most of history, man's attempts to circumvent or repel evil, sometimes successful, more often failing. It is the constant conflict of evil with good; and evil but too often prosperous. The time will come when good will always triumph; but it is not come yet. A poor thing truly is man—the world. No wonder that God's thoughts find their center in one person; and He is the object of God here and everywhere.

One person was always before the mind of God; and this was expressed thousands of years before He became a man. He was not only perfection, but He was the Perfect Man, as well as God come down to deliver those who were most opposite to Him in every way. Here we see divine good in a man, and nowhere else. No man can be a Christian who refuses Him, or takes any other way. On the one hand, were He not God, it would take away from God's glory as well as destroy man's hopes. He could not else have been the perfect Savior and Deliverer. On the other hand, it would have taken away all the means of our blessedness if He had not deigned to become man. But He who was God became man, is so now, and ever will so abide, though infinitely more than man. It is just as true that He is always God, even on the cross; and this is the pledge of sure and stable blessing for every soul who would hide himself by faith in Him, spite of all his sins. Have you

fled for refuge? Have you thus come to Him? Or, are you thinking to try and make yourself a little better first? But remember, salvation is for sinners. He does not want people who are good (not that He could find them, if He did); He is come to seek and to save the lost. It is they who need Him. Are you willing to take this place? It is a solemn thing to tell out all our sins to God; it is as much as to confess that one deserves hell-fire. Do not draw back when I press this. Does it make any difference to God's thought of you? He knows it all before; but for you it is all-important to take the place of good-for-nothingness in His presence. Thomas was slow to believe; and so are very many. No man likes to tell out what he really is; but when he does, he finds out what God is; and He is love. Indeed grace, and grace alone and exactly, meets the need of him who finds out that he is nothing but a sinner. It will not do to say in a general way, "Ah, yes, we are all sinners." I must have to do with God about my own sins, and that in a particular way. It is neither faith nor conscience to deal with them all in a lump, as it were. Do not tell me that you have done so—that you have been to God about your sins, and come away empty. You deceive yourself as to this.

You have not been simple or truthful in telling out what you are: else you would have found all you want to meet your need in the Lord Jesus. His fullness meets all our wants. Could I say less when it is about Jesus? He did not come to limit Himself to any one people, or country, or age. His grace flows out freely to all. It is no longer only Israel, but any sinner at any time. When John said, "Behold the Lamb of God," what was the effect? He tells us, "which taketh away the sin of the world." Accordingly, this is what the work of the Lord Jesus will accomplish: no particle of sin or of its effects will be left in the world. But that day is not come yet. Before it can come, the wicked must be banished, that they may go to their own place. No man will be condemned merely because he is bad, but because he refuses the grace of God as shown in Christ. Wrath then comes on him for all his sins. The promise of salvation is to him who hears the word of God—the gospel; and man is condemned because he refuses God's remedy in it. Do not you then lose your time; and it may be your soul, in troubling yourself about God's dealings with the heathen. The Lord will judge them; and He will do His work perfectly. What you want yourself is mercy, forgiveness, salvation. Therefore, I pray you, banish all thoughts of your own on such a subject; you do not and cannot yet understand God's ways. Venture not to sit in judgment on Him.

There is nothing so presumptuous and inconsistent as unbelief, nothing so humble as faith. So those who would not scruple to discuss and condemn God's dealings with the heathen count it the height of presumption on a believer's part to say, "I know I am forgiven, washed perfectly white, and free from all stain." Yet this confidence is from nothing in themselves; it is founded 'simply on faith in the efficacy of Christ's blood. It is due to what Christ has done, not to what we are, A man who knows he is a sinner gladly owns the Savior. His first desire is that he may be brought to God. How is he to get to Him? Here is our Lord's answer: "I am the way." Let us consider then a little what "the way" means in Scripture.

When man was first made, he was not as he is now. God made man upright. He was the most wonderful being that God had made. An infidel may talk (and there is plenty of such talk in these days) of man having grown gradually to the state he is now in, that he came into existence of himself nobody knows how, out of nobody knows what. And this is science! Nothing is so utterly foolish as unbelief. But supposing the protoplasm was seaweed, we have still the difficulty, How did the seaweed come? and how did it so change? The very least object could not have come into being without the will and power of God.

But wonderful as the power of God in His works may be, and the more as we think truly of all He has made, much the most wonderful is man even now, though fallen; for he is still responsible as the image of God, if not His likeness. And this is why murder can only be wiped out by death; for man has destroyed the image of God in another. Yet there has never been a good man born into this world.

Man was originally made in the likeness of God; but Adam was fallen before his firstborn child appeared. Thus sin had come in; and so even Seth was born in Adam's likeness, though in God's image still. A brute has not a reasonable soul. Man is the only one of all God's creatures here who is thus endowed. We therefore see that God did not make the world or man as we see them now; for, when they came from His hand, there was not a single thing that He did not pronounce good, or very good. Then there was no need of a way; for whether man turned to the right or to the left, all was good; and there could be no need yet to say, "This is the way; walk ye in it."

The use and importance of a way would be when that which may have been good everywhere is so no longer. Evil has come in, and the world has become a wilderness. Such being the case, there is no way; and we need one. The world is nothing but a waste and howling wilderness, through which we cannot pass without a way. There is no rest here, nothing to satisfy the heart of man. He may seek to take his fill of the pleasures of the world; it is but a dram to render him insensible to the fact that he is miserable at the thought of facing God. Having a bad conscience through his sins, there is no one he would so like to get away from as God. He has perhaps some fear of Satan; but he is not so afraid of him as he is of God. What does this tell? That he is a sinner away from God. It is the sense of sin that makes him afraid. The same terrible being (Satan) first entraps a man into sin, and then whispers that he is done for; first entices, and then gives a sense of God's judgment against him. Man then tries to drown his fears in pleasure. He will go anywhere, do anything, to get rid of the pressure of sin; he will occupy himself with, it may be, his family, his business, even his duties, as he calls them—anything that will keep him away from God. Then, it may be, he is laid on a sick-bed, and he feels, "I must meet God in my sins;" and some especially come up to 'mind that had been long forgotten, but ah none forgiven. For you cannot be forgiven a little here and a little there. Sin is not to be got rid of in this fashion, one at a time, perhaps when you feel sorry about it. Whatever they may say who sell masses, it is not so with God. But when and how does He meet this ruined condition? Man is lost, and the world is as much of a wilderness as the sands of Arabia to a traveler who has missed his way. Man has absolutely no resources as regards his sins. What then is to meet him in his need? Trying to make amends will not avail. Your sins are upon you; and what can you do when they confront you in the light of God's throne?

But how does God meet your need? Jesus says, "I am the way." Jesus is the way, the only way to God the Father. Jesus is the way in this world of utter alienation and departure from God. Man is the head of all the ruin as he is the head of the creation. Adam was the head of all before Eve was given to him; he had called all the creatures by their names. Eve's place was in association with him. So the church has no claim but by association with Christ. He is the way; and can this way fail? Christ fail! What folly! He is the way. I have nothing to do but to take the way. Crowds of different cases come, and no wonder; for no one that came ever went away as he came. Nor did Christ ever send a soul away unblessed; none that came as sinners and lost.

This is what man really is, a sinner ruined and lost. He has no resources towards God; he cannot diminish one of his sins. What is to become of him? Jesus says, "I am the way," and it is sure, unfailling. The Son of God became a man in order that He might be the way. He came to be a Savior, but a Savior only to those who believe. He will be judge of those who reject Him. He has other offices too, but they are mostly connected with salvation. A man who will be-Saved is not brought into judgment. Men who have life and are saved have no sins upon them. How then and for what are they to be judged? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." (John 5:24) The word really is judgment, not "condemnation," as it is translated in the A.V. I do not wish to find fault with our translation; but let me prove that the word ought to be judgment. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment." Here the very same word that is translated "condemnation" is used. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." Here it is another word; and there is just as much difference in the words used in the Greek as in the English. What God declares is, that he that hears His word has everlasting life. It is a present thing. The believer again is passed from death unto life. What would be the sense of judging life, of judging what God has wrought? But all men will give account of their deeds. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. This is a very different thing from being brought into judgment by God. To be judged, a man must be a criminal. It is not always the case where there is an earthly judge; for if the grand jury bring in a true bill, the man, even if innocent, must be brought before the judge, and might even be condemned; but this would be caused by man's infirmity. There could be no such thought in connection with divine judgment. No believer ever comes into judgment, speaking now of the judgment of the great white throne; and this because he has eternal life, and his sins are forgiven now. Are you rejecting this salvation?

God is now in Christ beseeching, entreating you to be reconciled on the ground of His, acceptance of Him who was made sin. Your rejecting Him proves that you are not willing to be saved. He is ready to save you, to pardon here and now. But you have some secret reserve; something you are keeping back from Him. You either wish to serve sin a little longer, or you do not believe that God is as good as He is. You prove that you judge yourself unworthy of eternal life.

No man is saved because he deserves it. I implore you, put it not off, wait not for anything. Christ will not be more of a Savior to-morrow, and are you sure that you will hear His voice tomorrow? Is it not to be feared that you will be less and less inclined to receive Him? He is the way and the only way. When we get to heaven, we shall not need a way, any more than it was necessary in Eden. All is right there, and no way will be required above. When in heaven, there will no longer be responsibility. Here it brings 'danger, failure, ruin; for now, on the ground of responsibility as a man, you are lost altogether.

Henceforth it is really a question of faith. Do I rest on Christ, believing in Him? I learn that He has undertaken for me; that God has given me a Savior, and that He commands me to repent and take the place of one that is lost. When a man tries to become religious, he is denying that he is lost; he sets himself to read and pray, to work out righteousness for himself. He says, David prayed three times a day, and I will pray four times; but will it help him? Do I think lightly of prayer? By no means; but when a man acts like this, he shows that he does not know his sinfulness and lost estate.

Suppose the case of one guilty of high treason and condemned to die. The king might say, I know the man is guilty, but in my sovereign mercy I grant him a free pardon if he will only come and avail himself of it. But the man obstinately refuses to come out; he will not credit such goodness; and the king orders the sentence to be carried out. So it is with man, he refuses to believe that God is willing to save, and why? Because he judges of God by himself.

Faith is sure of God as He reveals Himself; and He is not only willing, but He can afford righteously, to save. God saves on the ground of Christ's redemption. It is not mere mercy. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life; for Christ was judged for our sins by God Himself on the cross. Hence He is righteous, to forgive; for Christ has paid the penalty. God is not merely justified in forgiving, but glorified also. It brought far more glory to God than if He merely punished all as sinners; for every attribute of His is satisfied—His majesty, His love, His truth, His holiness. All the grace of His character shines out for every soul that comes, bringing out more of the infinite worthiness of His Son.

Be afraid then to stay away from the Savior, of sinners, lest to-morrow find you in a More hardened state than today. All delays are dangerous; but what is so dangerous as to put off bowing to the Son and accepting God's free salvation? W. K.

The Christian's Place

The second thing is, there is another principle in me, another "I" which is not the flesh, but which longs after God, which "delights in the law of God." What a bitter disappointment it is to discover, thirdly, that this new nature, the new "I," has no power of itself. And this is the point where people get disheartened. Many a one who may have given up hope of correcting the old nature, or of getting any good out of it, is utterly discouraged when they find the new nature of itself has not power over the old. The common idea is, that the cross of Christ has some kind of charm on man; that conversion consists in the re-adjustment of what was there before. This is deeper down in minds than we think. Scripture says, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." You cannot make anything out of the flesh but flesh, however you may cultivate it. All the culture and care and diligence you may bestow on a crop of nettles will only produce a crop of nettles, because the nature of nettles is to produce nettles, though they may be stronger nettles from cultivation. A little ray of comfort breaks into the soul when it knows there is another "I" which wills right, which longs after God; but a terrible thing it is to discover that this new "I" has not power. Take an illustration: a child who is born today has got life, but no power; it has all the constituent elements that go to make the man, but there is strength wanting. It has been said, "All we have to do is to put our will over on the side of God;" but it is said, "to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (vs. 13) Here the will is on the side of God; but there is no power to act. Are you saying, "I expect in the power of the new man to get power over the old man; I will keep it down; I will put a curb on this and that evil tendency; I will check it"? This is Rom. 7. You will find it so. "How to perform that which is good I find not." Every soul must go through this in some way or other, and, as has been truly said, "no one can get out of it until they get into it." In order to walk happily with God we must learn this lesson. It is like a person in a deep ditch; the more he struggles to get out, the deeper he gets into it; the more he tries to get free, the deeper he sinks in the mire. Then he turns from all expectation in himself, and says, "Who shall deliver Me?" Often there remains in souls (it may be undiscovered by themselves) some latent hope that they can

gain the mastery, and God allows the exercise to go on till we are broken to pieces, and we look outside ourselves to another. The reason why people struggle on in this experience of Rom. 7 is because they have not practically found out the condition God says they are in. As long as there is a lurking suspicion in your mind that you can help yourself, God, as it were, says, "Go on, try." I could not call the experience of Rom. 7 conflict. If a giant were in this room on the neck of an infant, this would not be conflict.

Verse 24. "Who shall deliver me," not from my sins, but from that which produced them; who will take me out of the terrible condition in which I am involved? Then at once follows, "I thank God through Jesus Christ!" This is the breathing of the man delivered out of the pit, and whose feet are on the bank. He falls down and worships at the feet of his Deliverer, whereas before he was trying to get out of his helpless condition. To know deliverance the eye must be turned altogether from self to another. We learn we have died with Christ—our old man was crucified with Him; and we have passed out of the condition in which we were involved in connection with the first Adam, and now we are in Christ.

In the history of Jonah we get an illustration of this exercise which souls go through. Jonah is cast out of the ship, and would have been lost, but God prepared a fish, and Jonah was saved in the life of another. Look at all the exercises he went through; he was in a safe state, but not a delivered state...We get three things in Jonah 2 which correspond to the three points of Rom. 7 "I will sacrifice unto thee," He is not delivered for that, "I will pay that I have vowed," He is not delivered yet, "Salvation is of the Lord," and at once the fish vomited out Jonah on the dry land. Directly he looks outside himself, or anything he could do, or say, or render to God, he gets his feet on the dry ground, and hears the word of the Lord the second time, saying, "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." The Lord give us to understand the difference between the forgiveness we get, through the death of Christ, of all Our transgressions and sins, and the deliverance out of the condition we were in by nature. All our sins are forgiven; but beside, we have died with Him, and are delivered through death from the terrible state of thralldom we were in, to be now in everything for Him who died for us. Deliverance gives power over self. Turned entirely away from self, a new song is put into my mouth, even praise to our God. We need Christ to deliver us as much as to cleanse away our sins. How blessed to know Him as our deliverer, our friend, our stay, our all; to learn "salvation is of the Lord." The Holy Ghost is the only power by which we can do anything. If we could have power apart from the Holy Ghost, we could use it when going on badly. All must be practically consistent with His presence, or there can be no power. When we see persons without power, one of two things must be true of them; either they do not know deliverance, or they have been inconsistent with the deliverance which is theirs, and with the fact of the presence of the Holy Ghost, and thus the Spirit is grieved. If I grieve Him, He has to witness to me of my sins till I judge them, instead of witnessing to me of Christ. Proper Christian conflict comes in after deliverance is known.

The force of Gal. 5:16,17, is "in order that you may not do what you otherwise would do." There is One dwelling in you who conducts the conflict against the flesh; but the victory is on the side of the Holy Ghost. Rom. 7 is the experience of a quickened soul under law, and consequently bondage. Gal. 5, is the Holy Ghost, the strength and power of the new nature, and there is victory. In Rom. 8 we get the true and proper standing of a Christian "in Christ Jesus, and what the Spirit of God says of such is "no condemnation," which is much stronger than merely saying they are not condemned.

We stand in One who in grace went down under the judgment and condemnation which was due to us, and who appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. He has risen out of it. Can there be condemnation for Christ? neither for those who are in Him.

The first great fact is, "Christ died for our sins;" the second is, we died with Him. Nothing will give the soul deliverance but knowing I died with Christ. The sentence of death has been passed on me in the cross of Christ; then that which I am to reckon dead has been crucified with Christ. A Christian is entitled to know he has died with Christ, that therefore he is no longer on the ground on which he once stood as a child of Adam; but he has been brought into another position and condition, "in Christ" risen from the dead. Do you say, "If only I could feel this"? You never will till you believe it. If you begin at the realization side you will never realize. Begin at the side of the testimony of God; viz., that His Son has died, settled the question of condemnation due to you through His death, taken you out of the position you once stood in, and given you a new position, a new place; given you deliverance in the power of life in Christ risen from the dead. But you say, "I feel the workings of the old man in me." But observe, it is one thing to say it is still in me, another that I am standing in it before God. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God;" but "ye are not in the flesh." Oh the blessedness of knowing we are "in Christ Jesus" "before God, all condemnation gone forever, "sin in the flesh condemned" (not forgiven) in the cross of Christ. The effect of being in this new position is seen in verse 4. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in those who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. If we do not walk in the Spirit the evil principle within us will assert its existence; but we are brought into a place of power as well as security. We have to keep the sentence of death on ourselves. If I allow self any place, or allow it to work, the Holy Ghost must occupy me with the judgment of it, instead of being free to occupy me with Christ, and to fill my heart with Him. When the evil nature acts, and the soul does not know deliverance, we find the question arising in hearts, "Can I be a Christian? have I the root of the matter in me?" In the power of life and of the Spirit I am entitled to reckon myself dead in the cross of Christ. The second great truth in chap. 8. is, that the Holy Ghost dwells in the believer, and is the power of the new man; the Spirit of God energizes the new man. We get two things in connection with this. First, He is in us, the witness to the fact that we are children (vss. 16, 17); and second, He takes part in sympathy with us, because of the link we have through our bodies with a groaning creation around. (vss. 22, 23)

In verses 19, 20 we see creation waiting on us, waiting for the day when the sons of God will be manifested. Then it will be brought into its blessing.

Verse 20 ought to be read, "By reason of Him who hath subjected it." Creation was subjected to vanity by Adam; i.e. under Adam, its head, the whole race partook of the consequences of his fall. Man, brought in the ruin; the whole creation groans.

Verse 21. "In hope that the creature itself shall be set free from the bondage of corruption unto the liberty of the glory of the children of God." We have a link through our bodies with the groaning creation; but these very bodies will ere long be fashioned like unto His body of glory.

The Spirit of God is spoken of in three ways in this chapter: "The Spirit of God," as contrasted with the flesh—with what man is in his nature; the "Spirit of Christ," as formative of our practical state; and the "Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead," in connection with the raising up of our mortal bodies.

From verse 29 to end we have God pews. Observe sanctification is left out in verse 30, because it is not a question here of the work of the Holy. Ghost in us, but God for us, no matter who or what may be against us. A Christian is a man in Christ; God is in him, and God is for him. We are brought into a wealthy place. Alas! how little we know the wealth of it. Eternity will not be too long to praise Him for it all. Oh the blessedness of standing outside all that we were, and to raise the song of triumph to Him who has so blessedly accomplished it all, and at such a price!

“By weakness and defeat

He won the meed and crown;

Trod all our foes beneath His feet

By being trodden down.

“Bless, bless the Conqueror slain,

Slain in His victory;

Who lived, who died, who lives again

For thee, His Church, for thee!”

W. T. T.

Fragment: the Flesh Profiteth Nothing

Do you ask, What shall I study? Study well these four words, "The flesh profiteth nothing." J. N. D.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Body of Christ Continued

Now this body, in common in this respect with the assembly of God, is presented in the Word in three different lights. All the saints, from Pentecost to the rapture of 1 Thess. 4:16,17, form part of it, and together compose it, according to Eph. 1:23, Col. 1:18. And although as saints they will reign with Christ, and as the assembly, the Lamb's wife in glory, will be the metropolis of the kingdom, the new Jerusalem, it would nevertheless appear, from the revelation of the body being His complement, who fills all in all, that this relation of the Church to Him, its head, will forever abide; for viewed as the risen man, He is not complete without it. The body then will not, like a dissolving view, merge into the bride, the former disappearing when the latter is publicly displayed. These two characters of the Church are quite distinct now, and will be forever.

Again, all the saints upon earth at any one time between Pentecost and the rapture are viewed as the body of Christ. Of this we learn from Eph. 4:16, Col. 2:19. Hence, at no time of its existence upon earth does it ever lack a limb. It is never as respects its members defective. A maimed body, a defective body, forms no part of Scripture teaching about the assembly or Church of God; and it should be noticed, that only when Scripture treats of the body as wholly in existence upon earth, do we read of its members, or of its joints and bands. Without all its members it could not of course rightly grow, nor properly discharge its functions. But we are plainly taught that it should grow, and as occasion requires should act, and it is to do both upon earth. Hence it is regarded as at all times fully furnished with its Members whilst here below. Had we simply man's thoughts about the body of Christ, we should probably have had it depicted as fully furnished with its members, only when viewed in its most comprehensive character, embracing all the saints who do or will form part of it. This however is the only light in which, when viewed in the Word, the existence of its members is unnoticed. The wisdom of God in speaking of the members, when the body is looked at as on earth, all may discern. The absence of all mention of the members, when the body is viewed as complete in glory, we may surely account for satisfactorily.

Further, each local assembly, meaning thereby all the saints in any given locality, has the characteristic in Scripture of Christ's body, $\sigma\mu\alpha\ \chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$. (1 Cor. 12:27) We must say it has this characteristic; for the language of the passage, by the omission of the definite article before the noun "body," whilst defining the character of the local assembly, excludes most carefully the thought of independency. The local assembly is charged with the responsibility which belongs to Christ's body. Yet it is not the body of Christ to the exclusion of any of the saints elsewhere; for the saints in any given place are really only part of the body of Christ, though viewed in their local character they are responsible to act for Christ as His body in that place. And whether they understand it or not, whether they act accordingly or not, Scripture regards all saints in any one place as together Christ's body, however many and diverse may be the names which they give to themselves. For there is but one body, as of course the head can have but one. Now this truth, when apprehended, deals a death blow to any denominational position or association. "There is one body, and one Spirit." (Eph. 4:4)

Of this body Christ is the head (Eph. 4:15; Col. 1:18; 2: 19); and from Him as such, "all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." One learns from the Word of a double work constantly going on. By the gifts from the ascended Christ, laborers in the Word and doctrine (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers), souls are reached, and the body edified. But beside this we are taught of another work, the increase of the body. For this the service of all the members is requisite, but in connection with, and in subordination to the head. "From whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:16) Thus does the head care for His body, and provide for its edification and growth. The body is to increase, and that according to the effectual working in the measure of each one part. Are all Christians alive to this? By the gifts of Christ souls are converted, the body is edified, the saints can be perfected. (Eph. 4:11,12) The increase of the body, however, is only mentioned in connection with the proper working of each one part. Surely there is something here which is too much forgotten. Edification by gifts of ministry is generally understood. Is the increase of the body by the effectual working of each one part as generally acknowledged? Is it generally remembered, that to "every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ"? (Eph. 4:7)

Now, were this the case, would there not be a marked difference in the outward aspect of the Church of God? Instead of casting all responsibility of the assembly on those who labor in the Word, which has too generally been done, being content just to receive from such what they may have to give, would there not be more real fellowship and a more general care for the increase of the body? Now where this is forgotten can it be said that Christians have entered in a broad Catholic way into that which interests Christ upon earth? Are any contented with seeking their own profit merely? Are any satisfied with, in addition to that, helping on the spread of the gospel of God's grace? A happy, blessed service that surely is. But is that all that is put before us in the New Testament? Are we desirous of, and helping forward as far as we can, the increase of the body of Christ? Has the truth of the increase of the body, by the effectual working of each one part, dawned upon the reader, if a Christian, as that which very closely concerns him?

There is a circle of interest very dear to God, within the limits of which the whole race of man upon earth is included. This the Lord Jesus set forth on the day He rose from the dead, when He commissioned His disciples to preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. Nothing less extensive than this for evangelistic work should bound the sympathies and desires of God's saints. There is, however, another circle of interest, less extensive in its limits, yet not less important, and very dear to Christ. Within its range none but true Christians are numbered. It is the body of Christ, the increase of which He desires, and in the work of which each part of the body should take its part. Again we would ask, Has the reader acknowledged his responsibility in connection with it?

The lack of apprehension as regards this is however of no recent date. Denominational differences have but fostered it and strengthened it. The language too of men, accepted as perfectly proper, bears witness to it, as they talk of "this cause," "that cause," or "our cause." Yet however widely extended may be the cause for which they plead, or which they support, it is far less comprehensive than that of the body of Christ. But to a much older date than that of Luther and Calvin must we trace back this evil. For we see it in those communities in which the clergy are

looked upon as the church, and in which they arrogate to themselves all church action and authority. Herein they are wrong. Those who minister the Word are not the church, though part of it. The distinction, on the other hand, between those who do minister and those who do not is perfectly Scriptural, and all should maintain it. But the delegating to the clergy all church power and action, resulting very probably from the decline of spirituality in early days, this it is which has deadened the sense of general responsibility in reference to the increase of the body, till what Scripture teaches upon it has been wholly and for centuries forgotten.

The question then may be asked, What am I to do? How can I contribute to the increase of the body? The head, we would reply, will surely teach each member what is its place in the body. To Him we should look for direction; for it is His body, and He knows the part which each can take for the increase of the whole.

How often have Christians looked to men for guidance as to their line of service. How often have godly men set others to work, instead of leaving that to the wisdom of the head, thus practically ignoring the head. Brotherly counsel is one thing, human direction is another. Apollos, as the servant of Christ, would not be directed even by Paul. Paul acknowledged the freedom of the workman from human control.

But if we have to own failure in so little apprehending Scripture teaching about the body of Christ, if from the natural selfishness of the human heart we have hitherto restricted our interest to a range less, extensive than that of Christ's body, the head, we have to thank God, has never ceased to care for anything less than all His members. And His unwearied devotedness is seen afresh in recalling the attention, of His people to important and practical truths so long forgotten. How small, how narrow, how contracted, are men's thoughts compared with the revelation of the body on earth united to the head in heaven! What it is to have such a head, and who is the head, the apostle Paul dwells upon in the epistle to the Colossians. What becomes those who are members of the body is specially set forth in that to the Ephesians. To a study of these epistles under the teaching of the Holy Ghost we recommend any who desire full instructions on the subject.

Nothing can be closer to Christ than the being a member of His body. A privilege indeed; but a privilege connected with great responsibilities. As thus connected with Him, sectional distinctions should drop, and denominational position be surrendered. As members one of another, there are responsibilities likewise. On these we hope to touch in a future article. Meanwhile we here close for the present, hoping in our next to look at the church as the bride of Christ. C. E. S.

Jesus in the Midst: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —

It is very important for you to have a clear conception of the presence of the Lord in the midst of the assembly; but the condition on which His presence is promised ought never to be forgotten. He has never said that He is wherever saints are assembled; that all alike who professedly meet for worship can reckon upon His promise. His words are: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Thus the essential condition is that saints should be "gathered together in His name;" and unless this is fulfilled the promise clearly is not binding.

Our first aim then must be to explain what this condition means.. I may say that the more correct translation would be "unto my name;" for the preposition which is rendered "in," is one that invariably has the significance of "into" or "unto." Here therefore "unto" will be its sense. Again, it may be needful to point out that "name" is not used merely as an appellation, but, as is usual in Scripture, is expressive of all that Christ is in. this connection. Thus when the Lord, speaking before. the Father of His disciples, says, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it" (John 17:26), He does not mean that He had merely revealed to them that God also bore the name of Father; but that He had been teaching them all that God was to them in that relationship. Hence He adds, that He had done and would do this, "that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." What He desired therefore was that they should both know what God was to them as the Father, and that they should be brought into the enjoyment of all the love which He had for them as such. In like manner,," name" in the passage before us expresses all that Christ is as the glorified man and Lord in the relationship which He now sustains towards His people. I say "which He now sustains;" for it is very evident that these words look on to the time when He should be absent. Thus in chap. 16. He says, "I will build my church" (vs. 18), pointing on to a future time; and the passage in which the word "name" occurs is in connection with church action. (vs. 17) Indeed, while He was upon the earth the disciples could not be gathered to His name; for they were with Him as their Master and Lord.

We may then take the "name" to be expressive of the person of Christ-Himself, indeed, in all the truth of His person, as the risen and glorified One at the right hand of God. It is clear therefore that Christ is the only object that draws us together, and our center when gathered; for the Holy Ghost will never gather believers to anything but Christ. If anything is added—whether it be a particular doctrine, or a particular form of church government—it is not simply the name of Christ, and the gathering is not according to His mind. If for example, I agreed to meet with certain other believers of like views, we could not be gathered alone to the name of Christ, for something has been added or excluded; but if I am gathered with those Who acknowledge that Christ Himself is the only attraction, with those who own His authority as Lord, who bow to His word, and regulate everything by it when assembled, then the gathering would be to His name. And only then; for where man's authority, man's traditions, or man's regulations are recognized, whatever the individual piety of those who recognize them, the meeting cannot be of this character.

Now it is in the midst of His people so gathered that the Lord has promised to be. "There am I in the midst of them." This very fact shows the extreme importance of being gathered unto His name; for, as we have said, if the condition be disregarded, we have no ground for reckoning upon His presence. Nor is it enough to say that we fulfill the condition. The essential point is, Does the Lord recognize it as fulfilled?. He is the Judge; and therefore it were presumption indeed to expect Him in our midst if assembled according to our own thoughts—without respect to His word. But "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

We know therefore that He is in the midst of such on the authority of His own word. Not only so; but, as if to meet us in our weakness, He has given us a sample of the manner in which He comes into the midst of His own. Thus on the evening of that first day of the week, when He arose from the dead, the disciples were found assembled together. (John 20:19) He had sent Mary to His "brethren" with this message: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (vs. 17) According to Psa. 22, He thus declared God's name unto His brethren, and in so doing revealed that He brought them through His death and resurrection into His own place before God. Henceforward His God and Father was their God and Father. They were thus associated with Him on resurrection ground in these relationships. This message gathers them together unto His name; and when thus assembled, "He came and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you." Thereby He has given us an example of the manner in which He comes into the midst of His people, so that we might have the certainty of His word verified to our souls.

Should any one therefore be tempted to say, Is it possible that the Lord should be in the midst of His people when gathered now unto His name? the doubt is anticipated by this striking record of His presence in the midst of His disciples on this first day of the week. It meets, indeed, a greater difficulty and a more subtle danger. One might be inclined in unbelief to object, If now we could see Him with our eyes as they did, then we could receive it. The Lord knew the weakness and the subtlety of our poor feeble hearts, and thus in tender love has provided for this snare. One of the disciples, Thomas, "was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe." (vs. 25) Eight days after, all, including Thomas, were once more assembled, and, as on the former occasion, "came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas" (for He had heard every word which Thomas had uttered),"Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing." Thomas, overwhelmed by His tender grace, and the sense of his own sinfulness, could only exclaim, "My Lord and my God." Thereupon "Jesus saith to him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and [yet] have believed." (vss. 24-29) Thus the Lord had those in view (without entering now into the application of this scene to the conversion of the Jewish remnant, when they shall by and by look on Him whom they have pierced) who should believe through the word of His disciples, and pronounces their greater blessedness. And this blessedness is ours; for though we see Him not, we believe that, according to His own word, He is in our midst when gathered unto His name.

It should be remembered, moreover, that it is He Himself who is in the midst—not "in spirit," as is often said, but He Himself; for the words are, "There am I," and the term "I" expresses all that He

is. Christ then—not the Holy Ghost, but Christ—is in the midst of His gathered saints. The Holy Ghost acts through the individual members of the body of Christ, ministering for the edification of the saints by whom He will, and dwells in the house of God; but it is Christ, I repeat, who comes into our midst. His presence is only apprehended by the Spirit; that is another thing. But He is in the midst, whether apprehended or not, where two or three are gathered unto His name. How wondrous His condescension and grace!

Never forget therefore that it is around the Lord Himself that we are gathered. If there be only two—for His words are, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name”—there He is in the midst of them. As soon as two are thus met, they can rejoice in the knowledge that the Lord is there. Our faith may be weak, and our apprehension feeble, but the fact of His presence remains; for it is not dependent upon our feelings or experiences, but solely upon our being gathered in His name. How could we forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is (Heb. 10:25), if we remembered that the Lord is the center of the assembly; that He is as truly in our midst as with the disciples on the first resurrection day? For why was Thomas absent on that first occasion? Because he did not believe—in the resurrection of his Lord, and therefore did not expect His presence. So now, if any absent themselves (I do not speak of those whom the Lord detains by affliction, duty, or other circumstances) from the assembly, it can only be because they do not really believe in the fact of the Lord’s presence in the midst. And when assembled, what reverence, what affection; what worship would be begotten in our hearts, if through the power of the Spirit of God we more fully apprehended that He who went down into death under our sins, and has thereby redeemed us to God by His blood, has come back out of death, and now, as the risen and glorified One, delights to come and to lead the praise of His people in the midst of the congregation. (Psa. 22:22)

Praying that the Lord may lead you into the power of this truth, believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

The King in His Beauty

It is a great point for us to seek to cultivate that in our souls which comes out in this psalm. What the King is Himself is that with which the queen is occupied. We should be occupied, in like manner, with what Christ is. We are very apt to drop down into occupation with the blessings which His gracious hand bestows upon us; but in this psalm it is not what the King does, but what He is, that is dwelt upon. What the Lord values is a heart that delights in Himself.

“My heart is inditing a good matter.” The margin shows the meaning of inditing to be boiling, or bubbling up. I fear we are not often in this state. It is a great thing to have the heart boiling up with love to Christ. Instead of this, we are often at the freezing point—very far from the boiling-point in the measure of our devotedness to Christ. What the “good matter” is, the verse explains: “I speak of the things which I have made touching the King;” that is, what I know of Him; not what I have received from Him, but what He is to me. It is the place His blessed person has in my soul. Mary chose to be with Himself. She sat at His feet, and listened to His words. To be near and with Him was what her soul desired. Affection for the Lord marked her condition, and her place was at His feet. She was absorbed with the person of Christ. And did she lack intelligence? No; but it was not her object. She brake her box of precious ointment over Him, and Jesus said, Against the day of My burying hath she kept this.” She feared she might not again have the opportunity of doing it. Others made a feast for Jesus; but surely you would not feast one you knew was about to die. Mary’s act was in keeping with the circumstances of her Lord. The feast was not so; she was at the feast, yet it did not occupy her. The One for whom the feast was made did. Her heart boiled with love to Him. She was the only one there really in the current of His thoughts. The Lord by His Spirit make our hearts to boil with real, true love to Christ! Love can only be satisfied with love. He loved us unto death, and He seeks in return the true affection of our hearts for Himself. He is worthy of it, beloved brethren.

“My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” It is easy to speak of Christ, and to praise Him, when the heart is boiling with love to Him. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” If we are silent in worship and praise, it shows the heart must be empty. Christ as an object does not fill the affections. You say, The Spirit must move us to worship. Yes; but if there is not worship, it is evident you are not moved. It is quite true we are to be subject in the worship of the assembly to the leading of the Holy Ghost. So we are taught in the first Epistle to the Corinthians; but in this psalm there is subjection to the Spirit of God, and withal a heart overflowing with that which it knows concerning the King. I envy the state of soul here manifested. Listen to the language: “Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into Thy lips.” The address is to Himself. She is so near she can speak to Him. This is farther than the bride in Canticles ever goes. She says much about her Beloved, but nothing to Him. He is to her the chief amongst ten thousand, and the altogether lovely One; but the one here is so near she can speak to the King; and all slips out so easily: “Therefore hath God blessed Thee forever.” In such intimate nearness there is acquaintance with the mind of God as to His purpose concerning the One He delights to honor.

“Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness.” There is a right sense of the majesty of His person. He was outraged by man, and the puny but guilty arm of man had been raised against Him in the hour of betrayal and falsehood; but the day would come when He should ride prosperously because of truth. He was the meek and lowly One; but “he that humbleth himself shall be exalted;” and the result of His lowly grace would be His exaltation. “Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest iniquity: therefore, O God, [marg. reading] thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Here He is saluted as God; and in Psalm 2 by God as His Son. He is anointed above His fellows; He is pre-eminent amongst the fellows. Who are these fellows? Hebrews 2 shows that we are His fellows: “He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” He leads praise in their midst (Heb. 2:11,13). And again we read “We are made partakers (or fellows) of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Heb. 3:14). He is anointed with the oil of gladness, and the precious ointment drops from the head to the skirts of His garments. In the day of Christ’s glory, when He will ride prosperously, we shall be with Him, and shall share that glory; the oil of His gladness will drop on us.

“All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.” There is fragrance in Christ, and that should come out in us. “We are unto God a sweet savor of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15).

“Kings’ daughters were among thy honorable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.” When the King is spoken of, the bride is Jerusalem; so this psalm has a millennial bearing. Israel will look on Him whom she rejected and pierced, and will mourn. The Lord will save His people from their sins, and in divine righteousness give them a place in His presence. “Upon Thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.” Then will she consider, and incline her ear to Him. She is to forget her own people, and her father’s house. But what does this teach us? That there must be the bringing in of Christ between the soul and everything here. Nature must be distanced by Him; I must forget it. Christ must be my first object. Is He the first consideration with us? or is it self and our houses, and the care of them—the family, the friend, or the father’s house? The Spirit of God here says: “Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house;” and Jesus said: “He that loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt. 10:37).

“So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.” He will then see beauty in thee. You will then be for Christ what Eve was to Adam; and there is the other side: “He is thy Lord; and worship thou Him.” The claims of the Lord weigh with those who have Christ as their object. What joy when our souls in any measure enter into this! Christ eclipsing everything, and worship freely flowing out to Him. And we read of the beauty of the king’s daughter that she is “all glorious within.” Here are her moral adornings, graced in the virtues of Christ. His beauty is that in which she shines, and because of it He gets praise: “Therefore shall the people praise Thee.”

What is God now doing? Is He occupied with our blessing, our comfort? or is it not rather with the glory of the One He delights to honor—with Christ, whom He will set as the center of all things and Head over all? God seeks praise for Him; and this because of what we now are morally, as in spirit and behavior, like Christ, adorned with His virtues; and in another day, because of what we shall

be when like Him, and with Him in bodies of glory like unto His own glorious body, then we shall be manifested as “the eons of God,” as the fellows of Christ, and endless glory will be our happy portion. The Lord by His Spirit keep His dear Son before each of our hearts, that we may have the sense that He is ever near and with us, and that we walk with Him. “He is thy Lord, and worship thou Him.”

“My heart is full of Christ, and longs
Its glorious matter to declare.
Of Him I make my loftier songs;
I cannot from His praise forbear.
My ready tongue makes haste to sing
The glories of the heavenly King.
Fairer than all the earth-born race;
Perfect in comeliness Thou art;
Replenished are Thy lips with grace,
And full of love Thy tender heart.
God ever blest, we bow the knee,
And own all fullness dwells in Thee.”
W. T. P. W.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Bride of Christ

As the assembly of Christ, the church is told of its everlasting security; as His body, it is reminded of its responsibility; as His bride, it even now enjoys in a special manner His love; “for Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). To her present position of bride the attention of the reader is requested.

The appellation of bride, used of the church, is only met with in the Apocalypse (21:9; 22:17), in which book she is also called the Lamb’s wife (19:7; 21:9). She is the bride of the Lamb, and to Him only of course does she stand in this position, to be openly manifested as such, after that which professes to be the church shall have been publicly judged as the great whore (Rev. 19:2), the Babylon of the Apocalypse. Now from three of the New Testament penmen do we learn about the church in this special connection with Christ. Of her beauty in the Lamb’s eyes Matthew tells us; of Christ’s care and service, to make her answer to the desire of His heart, Paul informs us. To John was it permitted to behold in vision something of her personal glory, when she shall be displayed to the world as the Bride, the Lamb’s wife. Now such teaching is peculiar to the New Testament. No Old Testament prophet ever touched upon this theme. No old Testament poet ever descanted upon such a union; yet David was inspired to sing of the King’s consort (Psa. 45); Solomon composed the “Song of songs;” Isaiah described the future glory and greatness of her to whom Jehovah will be an husband (54). These inspired men, however, were occupied with something very different from the church of God. A little attention will make this clear.

Isaiah tells us plainly that it is of Jerusalem he writes (54), to which Jehovah formerly acted as husband (Ezek. 16:8-14), till forced to cast her off fire a time for her whoredom with the nations, her lovers. Having learned to her sorrow what widowhood and shame are, she will by-and-by enjoy restoration to divine favor, and be publicly reinstated in her proper relation to Him who is Israel’s King and her husband. It was of this bright future that David sung when he penned that “song of loves” (Psa. 45), in which the queen is introduced, and described as accompanied by her virginal train, when she has received from the king the place of honor, and her favor is to be sought after by the rich among the people: But is not the church, it may be asked, made mention of in this psalm? Heavenly saints, who form it, are expressly noticed therein, though as quite distinct from the queen. They are just touched upon under the term “His fellows” (vs. 7), among whom, as Hebrews 3:14 in the original makes plain, we must include all those who are now saints upon earth, believers on the Lord Jesus Christ. The “fellows” of the King must be very different from the queen. Both indeed have to do with Him who is the King, though clearly distinct the one from the other.

Of Jerusalem’s past and future the prophetic word instructs us. Her, restoration to favor, and to her proper position before all the earth, the prophet Isaiah predicts, and the psalmist graphically depicts. But for this to be righteously effected there must be the moral restoration of the remnant of the people. Now it is of this Solomon writes in the Canticles, the purport of which, briefly expressed, is to show the pains taken by the Beloved to get hold afresh of the full affection of His

loved, one; for the two are not described therein as meeting for the first time.

Song of Solomon then does not set forth the intercourse of the church with Christ. The church is not mentioned in the Song of Songs, though Christ is prominent in the book and the affection of His heart toward His earthly people is beautifully set forth. Yet there is much instruction for the individual Christian in that unique composition of the son of David; and many a believer, tasting of the unwearied love of Christ, after he has wandered in heart from Him, has found, therein language just suited to him as a saint. The church's position however, in reference to Christ, and His dealings with her, are very different from both the one and the other as set forth in that book.

For all teaching then about the church, as the bride of Christ, we must turn to the New Testament. To that let us now direct our attention.

On the shore of the lake of Galilee, in the audience of the multitude, the Lord spake the parables of the sower, the tares, the mustard tree, and the leaven.

Inside the house, when alone with His disciples, He expounded the parable of the tares, and gave to them in addition those of the treasure, the pearl, and the net (Matt. 13:1-52). The outward character of the kingdom of the heavens, as men would see it, the Lord spake in parables to the multitude. Its aspect from God's point of view He reserved for the special information of His disciples. They, and they only, were then permitted to learn what a treasure His saints were to Him, what a beautiful thing the church would be in His eyes, and how He would care for His own people—symbolized by the good fish—through the instrumentality of His ministering servants. For the reader will remark, that in the parable of the net the good fish only are cared for, in the supplementary remarks the bad fish only are dealt with. On that occasion, in the house, it was disclosed for the first time, that there should be an object of surpassing beauty in the eyes of Christ, which He would die to possess. He would buy the field for the sake of the treasure concealed in it; but He would purchase the pearl for its own preciousness.

Seeking goodly pearls, the merchantman is arrested in his search by the sight of one pearl of great price. His search is stopped; he goes no further; he desires nothing more. Pearls he was seeking for; one pearl when found has satisfied his heart's desire. To possess it now is all his aim. He has valued it, and valued it aright. What is that value? Who shall determine it? Who shall give the price? One alone does that; the merchantman himself. He went, we read, and sold all that he had, and bought it. Its value to him is attested by that which he gives to possess it; for he must possess it. In plain language, Christ would die to possess that one pearl. It is of His death, then, that He here makes mention; and it is in these two parables that the Lord in, this chapter speaks of His death. Other scriptures acquaint us with the atoning character of His death. These parables acquaint us with another reason why He died. He wanted to acquire the treasure; He desired to possess the pearl. How precious, then, to Him, how satisfying to His eye and heart, is the one pearl of great price, for which, in order to purchase it, He has given up all that He had, speaking of Himself here of course as a man. The language of Scripture we must remember is definite; no waste of words do we find in that book. Whenever then we meet with epithets, we may be sure that there is force in them. So here let the reader note the language of Christ Himself: one pearl of great price (ππλ■τιμον). No mere man surely would ever have dared thus to characterize the church. Many and many a saint has heartily, truly declared, that Christ is to them the chiefest among ten thousand; but Christ by this epithet tells us what His church is in His eyes. Of the

church's affection for Christ we read elsewhere; but in the parable, and in Ephesians 5, it is His estimate of her, and His love to her that is dwelt upon. What her joy will be might be conceived; what His delight in her would be had need to be revealed, and that He Himself first touched upon.

Passing from the parable to the doctrinal teaching of Ephesians 5, where Paul writes of the church in its spousal relation to Christ, we are taught of His love to her, the way in which He has shown it, does prove it, and will yet manifest it. But, as is often the case in Scripture, the Spirit of God, whilst touching upon what has already been revealed, adds to its fullness. The parable described Christ giving up all He had to possess the pearl. The Holy Ghost, in the Ephesians, speaks in language, if possible, yet more full. For the apostle wrote: "Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it." (Eph. 5:25) All that He could give for it, all that He can be to it, she is assured of in these words.

A pearl of great price! But who would have discovered that? who, looking around on the church of God, remembering the sadly-blotted history it possesses, surveying what it is at present, who indeed would ever have discovered that it was a pearl, that it had any beauty, and that it was an object of great price? To bring this out, to make manifest its beauty and preciousness, Christ has and does minister to it.

We should mark the progressive stages of His service which the apostle traces out for us. First, Christ gave Himself for the assembly. He died to possess the church, and that because He loved it. The motive, the reason for thus dying, was simply the love of His heart. The parable tells us He desired to purchase it. The teaching of Ephesians acquaints us with the secret motive—love for it. His service for the assembly did not however end there. Man's devotedness can proceed no further than to die instead of his object; but in dying, man loses any earthly object. Christ, on the contrary, died to possess the assembly, and His service for the object of His heart begins, where that of a mere man's must end. So, secondly, He sanctifies it and cleanses it with the washing of water by the Word. As first possessed then by Him, it does not answer to that which He desires. A pearl it is in His eyes, but He must bring out its beauty. This He does by the application of the Word. Once it was not His, but He bought it. It was not clean, so He would cleanse it. It was not set apart, but He would sanctify it. These are tokens of His love to His assembly. By-and-by He will present the assembly to Himself glorious; not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. Such is the end He has in view. What a service has He undertaken! What an end has He proposed to Himself! What delight will He have when He presents the assembly to Himself glorious, without any blemish. Throughout this passage the reader should remark, we have nothing told us of the church's joy. Christ's love, Christ's present service, the end He has in view, on these points the Holy Ghost delights to dwell.

What a condition must the assembly be in when He has to sanctify and cleanse it (or, as some would translate, "having cleansed it,") by the washing of water by the Word, a plain declaration that it is not what He wants; yet He will not rest till He has made it all He desires. But more, He "nourisheth and cherisheth it" (vs. 29). All that it needs in its spousal relation to Him He supplies. To make it conformable to His desire He applies to it the Word. Besides this, He ministers to it all that it wants. Nourishing and cherishing! What grace is there in that! Giving himself for it, sanctifying it, cleansing it. What grace, too, in all this!

Viewed as man views the assembly, could we say that it has requited such care and love? How little have those who form part of it had intelligence as to that which Christ is doing. There was

surely a time in the history of every believer whose eye may light on this page, when salvation from wrath was desired, and perhaps known, but church relationship to Christ unknown; or ignored. Can all the readers of this paper say that such is no longer true of them?

Unchanged however is Christ's estimate of the assembly's worth. What the parable sets forth, His constant service on its behalf confirms. Yet how soon had He to tell one assembly that it had left its first love, and to charge another with having in its midst that doctrine which He hated. (Rev. 2:15, compared with 5:6). How early in the history of the church had Jezebel been allowed a footing in that which bore His name, and He Himself had to stand without, knocking to learn, as it were, whether there was in the assembly at Laodicea one heart faithful to Him. This personal ministration of Christ testified to the unchanging affection of His heart (Rev. 3:19), and evidenced that He well knew the condition and position of His people, and most truly desired their welfare.

But this was in the past. Is He still unchanged? Those surely who have learned in these days truth about the church so long neglected, and even forgotten, can testify that His love and service are as unwearied as ever. Blessed for them that it is so. For what must those who form part of it be by nature, when, to enforce the observance by the husband of his duty and bearing towards his wife, the love of Christ and His service to the church is set forth as a fitting illustration. What creatures to need such an exhortation! How richly blest to be objects of Christ's love!

By-and-by His object will be accomplished. His present service to the assembly will cease, only because it will not be required; and He will present it to Himself glorious, answering to His wish about it. At this point, however, we must pass from the writings of Paul to those of John. Paul has set forth Christ's love to the church, and told even an assembly of its relation to Christ, as representing locally the Bride

(2 Cor. 11:2). John writes of the time when the marriage of the Lamb shall have come (Rev. 19:7); but the actual marriage he never describes. For, like the inside of the Father's house, it is essentially a scene fit only for heaven, and never therefore disclosed to the view of men on earth. We hear of the marriage of the Lamb. We are shown the Bride, the Lamb's wife, after the marriage, when displayed to earth; but her presentation to Him is carefully hidden from us. Heaven rejoices at it, we learn. Blessed too, we are told, will those be who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7-9). Here again all is looked at from the Lamb's point of view, not from that of the Bride. It is the fulfillment of His long-cherished desire that the great multitude unanimously announce. What her feelings will be John was not directed here to declare.

We do, however, gather from his writings something of her feelings towards Christ; for when He announces Himself at the end of the Revelation as the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star, an immediate response is made to Him by the Spirit and the bride, who, both addressing Him, say, "Come." Her desire is to see Him. She wishes for His return. She asks Him to come. That is the voice of the church as a whole. When it was in its pristine condition one could have fancied the whole assembly, with one heart and voice, uttering that word, Come. In the present condition of the assembly that cannot be done. Some there are, really part of the body of Christ, who understand not the truth of the Lord's return. Some too have taken the place of being Christians—are such in name, but in name only. How could they join in that cry? Are souls then to be deprived of the opportunity and joy of echoing that cry to Him, the Morning Star, by reason of the present condition of the assembly of God upon the earth? By no means; for the Word

immediately adds, "Let him that heareth say, Come." God thus provides, that even in the disorderly condition of the church souls should be allowed to welcome the coming of Christ.

Not only does the bride, however, desire His return; for we read in Revelation 19:7 of the bride, when the marriage day has come, having made herself ready, being adorned for her husband. And her bridal attire, how simple it is, yet how comely! "To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of the saints" (Rev. 19:8). What a contrast to that of the great whore, who is described as clothed in purple and scarlet, with ornaments of gold, precious stones, and pearls! (Rev. 17:4) On the person of the whore was seen that which attracts and pleases the natural eye. On the bride was just that which would please the Bridegroom's eyes—the righteousnesses (δικαι■ματα) of the saints—what they have done, it is true, but all the fruit of divine grace, and of the energizing power of the Holy Ghost. The whore delights in meretricious splendor; the bride is arrayed in that which witnesses of grace bestowed on her. The bride too is the pearl of great price in Christ's eyes. No need then could she have to deck out her person with pearls. Such an attire, such ornaments, would only dim instead of enhancing her beauty in His eyes. Gold, pearls, precious stones—these speak of God as Creator. He made them. Righteousnesses of saints—these are the fruits of that new creation, of which Christ is the beginning, and in which all form the bride have their part. The significance of her clothing we can all therefore understand.

But observe the Marriage is not described as taking place immediately on the rapture of the saints. In Revelation 5 they are seen in heaven already. It is not till chapter 19 that the marriage day is spoken of as having come. Then she will be found ready. Till the rapture she can say to Him, "Come." But throughout all this time she proves His love and care. Her beauty He discerned at the outset. His love and service to her make it manifest; and when the time arrives for the marriage, He who has nourished her, cleansed her, and sanctified her, will find her prepared for Him. His service to her, it will then be seen, has not been in vain.

C. E. S.

Fragment: the Future Bride

One set of things around us is going on to a city that suits man—Babylon; the other to a city that suits Christ—the new Jerusalem. Which are you going to? It is a great question. We get the picture of the future bride—how she will be adorned for her husband; and this is put before us when everything has failed in the church. The nuptial garments are brought out before the wedding-day in order that we may try them on. The bridal costume is shown us in order that we may acquire the characteristics of the bride. We are presented in Revelation 21 with all the beautiful features in which the Lord will have us stand before Him on the wedding day.

J. B. S.

Zaphnath-Paaneah

To the Editor of the “Christian’s Friend.”

Dear Brother,

In Jacob’s blessing of his sons (Gen. 49) we find those familiar and lovely words about Joseph used by the aged patriarch: “Joseph is a fruitful bough, (even) a fruitful bough by a well, (whose) branches run over the wall.” We know now that a “greater than Joseph” was before the prophetic mind of the Spirit in the patriarch. Often he spoke those words, of which I now only cite a part. The whole of the blessing may be seen in reading the chapter. The portion I have quoted will answer my present purpose in calling your attention to it.

If we turn back in the book of Genesis, and glance at the lovely narrative of Joseph—(Gen. 49) evidently that of one of the most blameless of men whose histories are recorded in Scripture—we find, in chapter 41, the moment of his full exaltation over all the land of Egypt before us. At this time he was thirty years of age; he had been shamelessly and heartlessly rejected by his brethren; and sold to his captors, oppressed and afflicted, taken from prison and from judgments, the iron had entered into his soul. In all this, as in the many other details of his life, type of Him who was to come. He had just interpreted the dreams of Pharaoh, and had counseled Pharaoh to be warned of God in preparing for the years of the famine that was to come. “And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find (such a one) as this (is), a man in whom the Spirit of God (is)?” (vs. 38). And Pharaoh raises him to be head over all the land. There was none so discreet and Wise as he. He would be over his house, and according to his word should all his people be ruled; only in the throne would Pharaoh be greater than he. Power over all flesh is his, and all is given into his hands. (vss. 43, 44).

He names him “Zaphnath-paaneah,” or the “Revealer of secrets,” as the Coptic, it is said, indicates; and “Savior of the world,” as says another authority, Of course I do not go further here than to notice the double significance of this title which Pharaoh gave to Joseph.

In the seven plenteous years—those years of grace—the earth brought forth by handfuls from the ripened fields. The reaper received his wage, and gathered fruit for the life to come, when famine would stalk through the land. Joseph too married a wife in the land of his rejection, and to him were born his two sons—Manasseh, his firstborn, signifying “forgetting;” and Ephraim, the second, bearing the name which means “fruitful.” He forgot his toil, and his father’s house; and he was fruitful of God in the land of his affliction.

When we turn to the Gospel of John (chap. 4), and read of the opening of the public ministry of the Lord, we find the One in whom the Spirit of God is, the One to whom God gave not “His Spirit by measure” (John 3), going forth, when thirty years of age to Samaria, on His mission of grace. “He left Judaea;” He left His own to whom He had come, morally rejected by them. He had come to His own, and His own received Him not. He passes out in the fullness of grace to defiled Samaria, morally now, as actually again, with “power over all flesh,” and all things given into His hand by the

Father. There He proves Himself to be the true “Revealer of secrets”—One who told the sinful woman all that ever she did. He forgets His toil, and the long weary journey of that day through the burning heat, till He sat at noon on the side of the well—the most fruitful bough that ever shadowed it. He forgets His thirst; His hunger too—refreshed by the meat to eat of which the disciples as yet knew nothing. He forgets too His father’s house, and in the land of His affliction He is fruitful. The woman of Samaria is found by Him who came to seek and to save the lost. His word to the disciples in those years of plenty which now were dawning, was: “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” Many of the Samaritans too believed on Him; they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Savior of the world.”

He is the true “Zapnath-paaneah,” now as then. Surely we can say, as in 1 John 4:14, “We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son, the Savior of the world.” We have learned how surely He is the “Revealer of secrets,” as did the woman of Samaria, through the window of our souls. The conscience of each can vouch for this. We need no proof or evidence that we have had to do with Christ, and He with us. I only touch upon those few features of this lovely type. Perhaps it may encourage others to look for the more minute details for themselves. But, clear brother, when we know Christ, is it not a happy task to find some lines of Him portrayed on those who went before, and in whom His grace and Spirit was working? Shall we deem it a less happy task now to trace in those who are Christ’s, the lines of His life and ways, as the Spirit of God has done so blessedly in those who had gone before?

Yours affectionately in His love,

F. G. P.

Fragment: No End for Self but the Cross

If I have not reached my moral end in the cross of Christ, I have never got rid of self. You may try, try, try to get rid of it, but you never will, and Satan will only laugh at you. There is no end for self but in the cross. There God is before me—God manifest in flesh—God revealed in a man down here that I may look at Him. If He had not been a man, He could not have been manifested that we might see Him; and if He had not been God, He could not have spanned the distance that lay between us and God. But having become man without ceasing to be God, in order to do both, He who once measured our distance on the cross, now measures our nearness in the glory. Thus self is gone. It does not cease to exist, but it is gone as to occupation with itself. If it intrude, it can but detach you from the One who, having won your affections, is the alone object that can fully satisfy the tastes and desires of your new affections.

H. H. M.

The True Place of Worship: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear

In this letter I propose to inquire, Where is the Christian's place of worship? I need scarcely remind you that the term "place of worship" abounds on every hand; and while I fully admit that what is meant thereby is simply the place where believers and others congregate on Lord's days, yet it is of the first importance in divine things that words should not be used which convey a wrong impression, or which falsify the truth of God. Our only resource, therefore, is to obtain the answer to our question from the Scriptures.

Let me, then, direct your attention to the following passage: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and [having] an High Priest over the house of God.; let us draw near," (Heb. 10:19-22). Now, we have in this scripture, to speak generally, three things—the blood of Jesus, the rent veil, and the High Priest (literally, the great priest) over the house of God; and it is on the foundation of these three things that we have the exhortation to draw near for worship. If we examine a little the significance of each, the answer to our question will be unfolded.

First, then, we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. It is evident, if you trace down the argument of the apostle, that the blood of Jesus is brought in as a contrast with "the blood of bulls and goats" (vs. 4). Indeed, the whole point of the first part of the chapter is the efficacy of the former in contrast with the impotency of the latter. The fact that the sacrifices under the old dispensation were offered year by year continually is adduced to prove that the worshippers were never really purged, so as to have no more conscience of sins; for in the repetition of the sacrifices there was a remembrance again, in made of sins every year (vss. 1-3). And the reason of this was that "it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin" (vs. 4). Thus the multitude of sacrifices of all kinds did but demonstrate their utter powerlessness, though appointed by God in view of the One Sacrifice which was thereby foreshadowed.

Having then shown this, the apostle now brings out in sharpest contrast the value of the sacrifice of Christ (read carefully from the 5th to, the 14th verses); and he sums it up, and states it, in one sentence: "By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." The offerings under the law never made the worshippers perfect. By one offering Christ has perfected us forever. This truth is so vast and comprehensive that it needs to be meditated upon again and again, in order in any measure to be apprehended. For it implies, not only that I have now no more conscience of sins—if I am under the value of the sacrifice of Christ—but also that I never need have any more conscience of sins in the aspect here presented; that through the efficacy of that precious blood I have a title now, and ever shall have a title, to the presence of God; that nothing, in short, can ever deprive me of the place which it gives me in His own immediate presence; for by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified. Through that sacrifice therefore I have received a

perpetual qualification, for access to God.

The second thing is the rent veil. The blood of Christ has given us the title to approach; and in the next place we have “a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” Here again we have a contrast with the old dispensation. Thus in chapter 9 we read: “Into the second” (that is, into the holy of holies, behind the veil) “went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing,” (vss. 7-9). The people were therefore entirely excluded; and this was because, as we have seen, it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. It would consequently have been certain death, by the judgment of God, had any one beside the high priest ventured inside that awful veil (Lev. 16:1,2; Num. 15:16). But no sooner was the sacrifice of Christ consummated than the veil was rent from top to bottom (Matt. 27:51); for by His death He glorified God in every attribute of His character concerning the question of sin, and by that one offering perfected forever them that are sanctified, and the veil was therefore rent to signify that the way was now made open into the holiest of all. “For that which rent the veil in order to admit us has likewise put away the sin which shut us out.” It is thus now the privilege of every believer, on the ground of the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, to enter at all times into the holiest of all—he has boldness to do so by the blood of Jesus.

But there is a third thing indicated, which may be briefly noticed before calling your attention to the full consequence of these blessed truths; namely, “an high priest over the house of God.” And where is our high priest? “Every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices which can never take away sins: but 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. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (vss. 11-14). We thus learn that our High Priest is seated at the right hand of God, and that this attitude is owing to the fact that His sacrificial work has been accomplished; and hence His presence in heaven is a witness and a proof of the abiding efficacy of His work, and consequently a perpetual encouragement to His people to enter boldly into the holiest of all—inside the rent veil.

Such are the three immense facts—the blood of Jesus, the rent veil, and the high priest over the house of God, to which the Holy Spirit directs our attention before exhorting us to draw near (vs. 22). And the place to which we are invited to approach, or into which we are urged to enter, is the holiest—the holy of holies. That is, the place which was typified by the holy of holies in the tabernacle in the wilderness, the place into which Christ, as our Representative and Forerunner, has already entered (Heb. 4:14; 6:19, 20). Our place of worship therefore is in the immediate presence of God; the scene of the ministry on our behalf of Christ, as the High Priest. True that we are down here on the earth as strangers and pilgrims when we think of priesthood. But this earth can never be the scene of our worship; for we have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” and there alone can worship be rendered or accepted. Nay; if I would do homage even to the Queen, I must go to the place where she sits in state to receive it. Much more, if I would worship God I must do so in the place where He sits on His throne, and into which, for this very purpose, He has, in His ineffable grace, given me a title to enter at all times through the precious blood of Christ. There above, therefore, inside the rent veil, in His own immediate presence, and in no other place, must His people worship. And what a marvelous privilege it is, what inexpressible

grace, which He has bestowed upon us, that we should enjoy constant liberty of access before Him to bow there in adoration and praise!

“Within the holiest of all,

Cleansed by His precious blood,

Before the throne we prostrate fall,

And worship Thee, O God!”

Having this truth clearly before us, you will see, I am sure, that to speak of a place of worship on earth would tend to obscure the teaching of Scripture and to undermine our privileges. I do not forget that in many cases, as I have said, very little is meant by the phrase; but, on the other hand, in many others it means a great deal, and begets the idea of sacred and consecrated buildings. The Jews had a “worldly sanctuary” (Heb. 9: 1), one that was erected by divine direction, and according to a divine commandment. But to erect a “sanctuary,” or a “holy” building, now is to take Jewish ground, and to ignore the fact that “we have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man.” There cannot therefore be a place of worship on earth; and to call a building by such a name is, unconsciously as it may be done, to overlook, to use no stronger word, the believer’s place and privilege, and to misrepresent the truth of Christianity.

It may be necessary to allude to one more point; namely, that all believers alike have the same privilege of access into the holiest. The Scriptures, or rather the Scriptures that deal with church truth, know nothing of a sacred order of men, as distinct from their fellow believers, who enjoy special privileges, with a title to approach God on behalf of others. All believers are alike priests, and all therefore have the same qualification for access to God as worshippers. The passage we have alluded to in the Hebrews (10:19-22) is decisive upon this question. Mark its terms: “Having therefore, brethren.” All alike are addressed, and all are reminded that they have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Again, the apostle says: “Let us draw near”—associating himself with all whom he addresses; because, in truth, he and they alike were on the same footing before God as to worship. It is especially necessary to hold fast this truth in this day of revival of sacerdotalism and its superstitious claims. The two things are connected. If you have an earthly place of worship, you must also have an order of priests; and these two things combined constitute a denial of Christianity. Hence it is incumbent upon us to contend earnestly for the truth once delivered to the saints.

But we must not be content with the doctrine on the subject. The question for our souls is, Do we know what it is to draw near, to worship in, the holiest? I would press this point very solemnly; for nothing short of this will satisfy the heart of Him by whose precious blood it is we have received such an unspeakable privilege. Let us then be satisfied with nothing less than the enjoyment of it. If we had seen Aaron, on the day of atonement, lifting the sacred veil to enter into the awful presence of a holy God, we should have been impressed not only with the solemnity of the act, but also with the wonderful position of favor and nearness to God which he occupied by virtue of his priesthood. All believers now are in that position. May we then know increasingly what it is to be found inside the rent veil, that we may apprehend more fully the efficacy of that one offering which

has brought us into God's presence without a spot upon us, and without a veil between.

Believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

Fragment: The Efficacy of the Work of Christ

The measure of the efficacy of the work of Christ is the glory of His Person.

W. K.

The Circle of the Church's Affections

“The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” We get the whole circle of the church’s affections. When the Spirit of God is working in the saints, what will be the first affection? Christ. The Spirit and the bride turn to Him and say, Come. What is the next affection? It is the saints. Therefore it turns, and bids him that heareth say, Come. If you have heard Christ, you come and join the cry. Even if you have not the consciousness of relationship, would you not be happier if you saw Him as He is? Therefore say, Come. The first affection is towards Christ Himself; but the bride would have every saint to join in these affections, and in the desire to have the Bridegroom. But does it stop with those who have heard the voice of the Lord Jesus? No; the first effect of the Spirit’s turning our eye to Christ is the desire that Christ should come; and next, that the saint who hears His voice should have the same affection. And what next? We turn round to those who may be athirst, bidding them come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. The saint who has the sense of the blessedness of having drunk of the living water which Christ gives, wants others to have it also.

J. N. D.

Fitted for the Tent

In the day of the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14), when the living bird, the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, were dipped in the blood of the slain bird, we read that the priest “shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field.” Any, of the sons of Israel looking on might say, “We understand something about this. We sprinkled blood ere leaving Egypt, and Moses sprinkled blood on us at the foot of Sinai” (Ex. 24). Not that the latter act was of similar import; for the sprinkling of the leper was pure grace, whereas the action of the lawgiver was the figure of death, as the penalty of disobedience under a covenant of works. However, there was an analogy. An ordinary Israelite in the wilderness could understand something of its import.

Again, when the priest pronounced the leper clean after this blood-sprinkling, we read: “And he that is to be cleansed shall wash his clothes, and shave off all his hair, and wash himself in water, that he may be clean” (vs. 8). On the seventh day a similar action takes place. Here a Levite, as he beheld, might say, “I understand something of this: I was sprinkled with water on the day of my cleansing, shaved all my flesh, and washed my clothes; so was I made clean” (Num. 8). Thus there was an analogy between this part of the leper’s cleansing and that of the separating of the ministers who were to “go in to wait upon the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.”

And again, though it was said on the seventh day “He shall be clean,” yet we find a further action on the eighth day. We read, “On the eighth day he shall take two he lambs without blemish, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish, and three tenth deals of fine flour for a meat-offering, mingled with oil, and one log of oil” (vs. 10). Then, after the trespass-offering is slain, being waved with the log of oil, we find the blood put “upon the tip of the right ear of him that is to be cleansed, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot” (vs. 14). Then the oil is put on the same parts; “upon the blood of the trespass-offering” (vs. 17). Here the sons of the high priest would be struck with the analogy of this part of the work with what took place at their own consecration (Chapter 8).

Once more we read: “And the priest shall dip his right finger in the oil that is in his left hand, and shall sprinkle of the oil with his finger seven times before the LORD” (vs. 16). Then, after he put the oil on the blood, we read: “And the remnant of the oil that in in the priest’s hand he shall pour upon the head of him that is to be cleansed” (vs. 18). Here the high priest himself could say: “After Moses sprinkled the anointing oil seven times upon the altar and his vessels, he poured it upon my head.” (Chapter 8) How remarkable the analogy here: the leper outcast and the high priest had oil poured on their heads at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. These two persons only, under the ceremonial law, had the oil poured on the head. I do not assert that the cleansed leper, when seeking his tent on the eighth day, entered the ranks of the Levites, or priestly sons, not to speak of becoming identified with the high priest himself. But I do say that this wondrous ordeal through which the healed leper passed certainly shadowed the amazing place the believer now is introduced into, through and in Christ. After the failure of the priesthood after the flesh (Lev. 10),

how blessed to trace the suggestive histories on to Leviticus 16 (For chap. 15 see Matt. 9:14-22).

It is evident, from reading chapter 14, that the leper could not enter into and order “his tent” until the oil was poured upon his head. He must come before Jehovah to the door of the tabernacle (see Ex. 29:42,43), behold all the offerings offered, ere he began his walk normally in the wilderness. The order of things through which he went—the washings, and then the seeing the various offerings slain—typify our seeing, and intelligently entering into the work of Christ, and the fullness of his person. There must be exercise in order to see this. Nature is exposed on the way, the cross valued, and “the altar” comes before “the tent.” It is not “the tent and the altar,” but “the altar and the tent.” Jacob took the tent first. Alas! he actually builds a house (Gen. 33) at last, and only erects an altar, calling the latter “El-elohe-Israel.” It is not added, “unto Jehovah.” Abraham and Isaac built their altars to the LORD; but he builds (or makes stable) a dwelling-place for himself, and only “sets” a something to ease the conscience and express a “thanksgiving” to Jehovah for mercies received (Lev. 22:29,30). He began as a plain (perfect) man—, dwelling in tents —very properly took the Abel line—but he omitted to accept the full place he received in grace as born of Isaac, whose seed was to be “as the stars of heaven.” He would fain be earthly in a heavenly standing. Thus he was unable to keep the Cain line out.

How many whom the Lord is graciously exercising now (Rev. 3:19) are finding the true line shadowed in Leviticus 14, yes, and in chapter 8 also? They find all must be yielded up, even the very ties of nature, ere they receive them back, having the death of Christ stamped upon everything. The order is, All, absolutely all, goes in the cross; then I take up everything in my tent in the Lord’s name, “the hope of glory” my power (Acts 2:33; Col. 1:11).

As “circumcised in the circumcision of the Christ,” I pass away out of the whole scene, and follow the living bird let loose. Thus I bring “the power of His resurrection” into the old scene, my former home. Having an identification with the great Priest in the holiest, with the unction on my head, I come down here to show forth His praise in whatsoever I do, “in word or deed.” I bring “the oil of gladness” and power of glory with me there.

Have we, my fellow-pilgrim, duly owned this love, which would have us anointed ones at the door where God speaks to us, and the glory appears, before we begin our walk below? We see the outcast and the High Priest together without the camp in John 4. The priest’s son (chap. 3:29) could only speak of being “the friend of the Bridegroom,” rejoicing greatly because he hears His voice. But “the living water” and the High Priest Himself are at the well in chapter 4, and the antitype of the bird that was “killed in an earthen vessel over living water.” Our Lord is passing, as it were, on His way from Leviticus 10 to 16. He leaves Judaea, and must needs go through, Samaria. He speaks of the heights of glory’s “gift,” and the depths of graces Messenger there. The truths as to the blood-shedding and the washings, are over, as it were—Matthew, Mark, and Luke having unfolded these things. He would fain begin with the eighth-day anointing, and send the outcast to “his tent” with such a crown on his head, that he would have a power to rise above the trials of the desert, having known a superior place ere he trod that way. An Israelite under law, that had never been a leper, had no such crown put upon his head. The rebellious Miriam may have had this. The high priest was just the one in Israel who typified one above and beyond law. The healed and cleansed leper had also that upon his head which proved him to be, in his own sphere, as singular and separate as the Nazarite with “the consecration” (or crown) “of his God” upon him.

How many believers are like a person who enters the hall of a palace. He is invited in in pure grace. He goes in, and sits on a bench just within the door. He owns the grace, since he entered in as a beggar. Why does he seek at once to go out again, and even tell to others of the kindness which allowed him to sit in the hall? The pressure is too great; the light began to act there while you still said, "Come into the reception-room, the presence-chamber itself." Many would rather be publishers and preachers (I do not say evangelists) of what they saw in the hall, than endure the exercise which must come, as they own the wondrous grace which would have them in the Father's house. Such persons talk of, that place, not from it. We cannot possess Christ in glory without the cross; and We cannot occupy our place there, and know Himself there, without the realization of what it cost God to give us all so freely. It would dishonor the work of Christ, were I to enjoy Him in glory without seeing and owning the weakness of God was—the cross. How else can I lift up my head, and own the riches I have received in Christ? I am by nature an outcast leper. The leper and all his belongings must go in the cross, and nowhere else.

Thus the light lets me see this; and hence many prefer publishing what they got in the hall—a certainty of a future heaven—rather than receive the abundance of grace and the gift in the grace. They seek the "tent" before the fullness of Christ is consciously realized, Legality may keep a tent in order many a day, and a better show made than those present who insist on a full blessing "at the door of the tent of the congregation."

Psalm 73 may even be the language of some who gaze longingly at the Man of the Psalms in Luke; but joy and power come at last. They see He is in glory now; the eighth day has come. And not only do they behold the antitype of Leviticus 14 in fullness; as in the Christ of God, "they are out from under THE DAM." (Ex. 22:30; Lev. 22:27).

The Lord grant His people to know this in power in these days when good consciences are preserved in a low walk, because the light of the glory is avoided. Or perhaps lawlessness supervenes—God's mercies below and natural relationships, being in the way (Luke 14:18-20; 1 Sam. 2:15; 2 Chron. 35:14).

S. O. M. C.

Expository Papers on the Romans

Up to this point we have had the dark, sad picture of what man is, unfolded to us. As we saw at the beginning, the “light” has shown us all that we are, as sinners, in God’s sight: nothing hidden, nothing undetected; but it is only to pave the way, so to speak, to bring out God’s wonderful remedy, and His glorious salvation. He shuts us up in unbelief and sin, and shows us that if He were to deal with us—in righteousness, we should be forever banished from His presence in the “lake of fire;” and then He acts in pure sovereign grace towards us, not only pardoning us, but giving us a portion in the Son of His love. “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!” (Rom. 11:33). Up to verse 20, we have seen man’s ruin, and now verse 21 begins God’s wonderful remedy. Man has been fully proved to have no righteousness of his own; “but now the righteousness of God without (or apart from) the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets” (Chapter 3:21). One might have expected that, after bringing out what man is, the love of God towards him would be “manifested;” but no, “God’s righteousness is manifested.” “Righteousness” before love is a principle we find all through Scripture; for righteousness must be satisfied before love can flow out. But one might say, “God’s righteousness manifested! Why then I must be lost! If God deals with me in righteousness, I have no hope!” Quite true; and this would be the experience of every soul born of God: “If I received what I deserved, I should be in hell forever.” “Enter not into judgment with Thy servant: for Thy sight shall no man living be justified” (Psa. 143:2).

What then does the expression in verse 21 mean “But now the righteousness of God apart from law is manifested”? It is most important to be clear on this point, and most establishing to the soul. One would think at first sight that “the righteousness of God” was always “manifested” from the beginning. It does not mean simply that God is righteous, that was known in Old Testament times, but that God is now righteous in reckoning the believer righteous on the ground of the death of Christ; or, as it is expressed in verse 26, “that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” (Just and righteous are the same word) This glorious truth was not revealed till after Christ had died. The way we have part in this righteousness is not by law-keeping, not by Christ keeping the law for us, but “by faith of Jesus Christ” (vs. 22). It is “witnessed by the law and the prophets” (vs. 21). Here I understand the “law” not to mean the Ten Commandments, but the five books of Moses; and the whole expression, “the law and the prophets,” simply to mean what we call the Old Testament, as in Luke 24:27: “And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” “The law and the prophets” did not reveal this righteousness, but “bore witness” to it. All through the Old Testament we see it. Even as early as Genesis 3:21, directly after sin had come in, and Adam and his wife were naked sinners in God’s presence, we read, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.” A beautiful picture of how God was going to clothe us with Christ on the ground of His death; for there must have been death in order to procure the skins. Again, in Abel’s offering (Gen. 4:4), we must see that the only ground of acceptance before God

was the death of another; and the Holy Ghost's comment upon it in Hebrews 11:4 brings out distinctly the very truth we are considering: "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which (sacrifice) he obtained witness that he was righteous." He was reckoned righteous, not on the ground of anything he was, but on the ground of the value of the sacrifice in God's sight; and it was "by faith," and had nothing to do with law-keeping whatever. Then there are all the offerings under the law—all looked forward to that blessed One who was "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor" (Eph. 5:2) —and were the witness that God had another way of reckoning righteous than by the law. The prophets were more definite still, and we read direct promises of the One who was coming; also of His sufferings and death (Isa. 53 and other passages; compare also Acts 26:22,23). In Habakkuk 2:4 we see it openly and boldly stated, "The just shall live by his faith." Examples might be multiplied; but these will suffice to show how the "law and the prophets" bore witness to a righteousness of God which was apart from law, or works, and could not be revealed till the Christ had come and died, and redemption was accomplished.

We have seen what the expression means, "The righteousness of God is revealed;" and now in verse 22 we read it is "by faith of Jesus Christ;" that is to say, that the way we have part in this righteousness is not by works, but by believing. Is this righteousness of God only for the Jew, or is it only for a limited number? No; "it is unto all," Jew and Gentile indiscriminately; but it is only "upon, all them that believe;" "for there is no difference." How blessed this is! It does not say it is upon those that have this or that experience, or who feel saved; but if you can say, dear reader, that you are one of those who believe, you have God's word to say that His "righteousness" is upon you; and if "God's righteousness" is upon you, you are fit to dwell in His presence without a spot. "For there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (vss. 22, 23). How wonderfully this comes in here: "God's righteousness is unto all because "all have sinned," "and there is no difference."

It does not, I think, mean here that there is no difference in degrees of wickedness, or that God makes no distinction between men; for we read in Revelation 20:12, "The dead were judged according to their works," and in Luke 12:47,43 we have the same thing; but that there is no difference in the sight of God between the Jew and the Gentile for the simple reason that "all have sinned," and "all" do "come short of the glory of God." See how this sentence cuts at the root of all human pride and self-righteousness. First of all God says "all have sinned." How easily, and with what indifference, do people use the language of Scripture! How common to hear people say, "Yes, of course we are all sinners," as if it was a matter of course, and it did not make much difference whether we were or not. But have you ever thought, dear reader, what God says is the consequence of being a sinner? He says, in Romans 6:23, "The wages of sin is death." And what then? "After this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). And after the judgment? "The lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15). And then? Eternity. But not only have all sinned; but notice the expression, "all do come short of the glory of God;" not "have come short," but "do come short," is the correct way of reading it. What a standard God gives! God does not say, "You have come short of what you ought to be." Most would own that; but He says, "You have come short of My glory."

How many have said, when asked about their soul's salvation, "I do the best I can; I have always been moral, and have never done anybody any harm, I say my prayers, and read my Bible." But that is not the question. God's glory is put as the standard, and it is not a question of whether we

are better than our neighbors; but, Are we fit to stand in that bright glory of God, where nothing inconsistent with that glory can be, and where there is nothing but unsullied holiness? It was a sight of the glory, and the seraphim crying "Holy, holy, holy," that brought the cry to the lips of the prophet Isaiah: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips" (Isa. 6:3,5). What a solemn thought, that a soul is either fit to be in the glory of God, or, if not, the only other portion is the lake of fire forever! Which is yours, dear reader? for there is nothing between the two.

How beautifully do verses 24 to 26 come in! at the same time opening up more fully this righteousness of God which is now revealed. All had sinned, and come short of the glory of God, and were unable to save themselves; but now God acts in pure sovereign grace, and justifies freely, as we read in verse 24: "Being justified" (reckoned righteous) "freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." How full every word of this verse is! There is a poor sinner who has come short of the glory of God; he has no righteousness of his own; he has never done any good; his "throat is like an open sepulcher." "The way of peace" he has not known, his "mouth is stopped;" and he has the solemn verdict pronounced upon him, "Guilty before God;" and then the just sentence passed, Death—judgment—hell! Can the sentence be avoided? No; God is holy, and God is just. But, blessed be His name, He has found a way by which He can be just, and yet save the sinner! He can say to such an one, if he believes in Jesus, "You are justified;" that is, cleared from every charge that could be laid against him "freely," for nothing, without money, without works. On what ground then? "By His grace;" that is, undeserved favor and love. How wonderful, that when we deserved nothing but hell, God acts in love towards us And that is grace. But how can God thus justify a sinner if He is so holy? "Through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Ah that is the secret, "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (vs. 24): "whom God has set forth to be a propitiation" (or mercy-seat is the right word) "through faith in His blood" (vs. 25). That wonderful work of Christ on the cross laid the foundation for all this blessing; there all God's righteous claims were fully met and satisfied.

F. K.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Its Relation to the Holy Ghost

In treating of the assembly of God, we must remember the work of the Holy Ghost in connection with it. But how different are the relations of the Holy Ghost to the assembly from those of God, and of Christ! It is God's assembly, it is Christ's body, but in no sense does it bear the Holy Ghost's name; yet without the Spirit's work, and that not only in converting power, the assembly, or church, would have no existence. To understand, then, Scripture teaching about the church, we must acknowledge the Scripture doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; three persons, yet but one God. For the assembly, which is the church of the living God, is in God the Father (1 Thess. 1:1); has for its foundation the truth of the person of Christ as the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:18); and is indwelt by the Holy Ghost, thereby becoming the habitation of God (Eph. 2:22). God in the person of the Holy Ghost has by His indwelling presence made it His temple (1 Cor. 3:16).

Further, the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly is constant and unconditional. Till the Lord Jesus Christ went on high to the Father, the Holy Ghost could not come thus to abide on earth. (John 16:7) After Christ had ascended, the Holy Ghost came on the day of Pentecost, and has ever since dwelt in the assembly of God here below. Ananias and Sapphira learned the reality of His presence when Peter, charging home on them their sin, told the man that he had lied to the Holy Ghost, and asked the woman why they had agreed to tempt the Spirit of the Lord (Acts 5:3,9). The assembly at Antioch proved the truth of His presence, when He told them to separate unto Him Barnabas and Saul for the work to which He had called them (Acts 13:2). The Lord too had announced beforehand that, when the Holy Ghost came, He would abide with the disciples forever (John 14:16); and the Spirit's response, with that of the bride, to the Lord's announcement that He is the Morning Star, demonstrates that the divine prediction has indeed come to pass. The Spirit is with the assembly forever; so that it will never, whilst on earth, be deprived of His presence. He dwells, it is true, in each believer; but he dwells in the whole assembly as well.

These truths are quite distinct. They must not be confounded; nor should the one be held without the other. The difference too between them is very marked; for the Holy Ghost, as dwelling in each believer, makes that saint's body His temple. But as dwelling in the assembly, the assembly becomes the temple of God. A temple of the Holy Ghost is the body of each believer; a temple of God is the assembly of God upon earth. Whilst stating all this, it should, however, be clearly understood that the Spirit of God had been, throughout all ages since man was created, working upon earth. From the commencement of the book of Genesis to the close of that of Revelation, the Holy Ghost is seen having to do with earth and with men. Yet never, till the last time that the feast of Pentecost was observed according to God's mind, did the Spirit take up His abode on earth as the third person of the Godhead, forming a habitation, a temple in which He dwells. This is Christian truth, and distinctive Christian truth; for as He did not dwell on earth before the cross, so He will not dwell on it after the rapture. Constantly working before the cross, He will as certainly work on earth after the rapture of the saints; but will not dwell here as He does now. To be poured upon all flesh is one thing; to dwell on earth is another.

Till after the exodus of Israel from Egypt, God never dwelt upon earth. He first dwelt in the tabernacle. He dwelt too in the temple, until Nebuchadnezzar came to destroy it. From that time God did not dwell on earth till the Lord Jesus Christ entered this world as a babe, at the hour when men for the most part were wrapt in slumber. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Created things, animate and inanimate, acknowledged His presence and power by obeying His word. The fishes in the sea, the wind and the waves, were subservient to His will. But His presence here was but for a time, and that a very limited one. He died, and left earth, no longer to be found dwelling upon it.

For a very brief period it was again true, that God was not dwelling on this globe. But when the day of Pentecost had fully come, this earth became once more a dwelling-place for God in the person of the Holy Ghost, who has never been absent from it for a single moment since that sound as of a rushing mighty wind was heard, which filled all the house in which the disciples of Christ were sitting in Jerusalem (Acts 2:2). God had come to earth to dwell on it for the third time in the world's history. How favored is this earth! globe so small, yet God's habitation is found on it!

For the fact noticed about the Spirit's coming is instructive and significant. He filled all the house, but He did not fill all Jerusalem. He was upon earth, but He did not then dwell in every part of it. In that house He was that morning, but He was not in the temple on mount Moriah. The building, which the Lord entered as God's house at Jerusalem, was never part of God's habitation in the Spirit. The majestic structure of the temple never received as its occupant God the Holy Ghost; and though He came that morning to dwell on earth, He did not fill the world with His presence. In like manner the habitation of God, as it at present exists, though reaching far beyond the bounds of the nation of Israel, has nevertheless limits which fall considerably short of the boundaries of this terrestrial globe. It had limits on that day, when the Holy Ghost filled the house, but did not fill Jerusalem. It had limits in apostolic times; it has limits still. It is true that no individual upon earth need remain outside of them, on either natural or moral grounds, if the grace of God reaches the heart, and the conscience is dealt with. Souls from amongst the Hottentots and the Esquimaux, the South Sea Islanders and the Red Indians, as well as from amongst the most refined and intellectual members of civilized society, can each and all form part of God's habitation in the Spirit; for God now commands all men everywhere to repent; and if any man enters in by Christ (the door) he is saved (John 10:9), and finds himself a member of the assembly of God. Yet it is a fact that the assembly does not embrace within its limits every soul dwelling upon earth, and indeed it was never intended so to do; for God was visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name (Acts 15:14). He is saving also now a remnant according to the election of grace, in contradistinction to the saving of all Israel by-and-by (Rom. 11:5,26). The conversion of all the world never was the divine purpose to be effected during the absence of Christ from earth. The gospel of the kingdom will indeed be preached in all the world before the end comes (Matt. 24:14); but that is a very different message from the gospel or glad tidings of God's grace. The limits of the assembly therefore, within which the Holy Ghost dwells, are really very far from being coterminous with the bounds of earth, or even coincident with the habitable parts of it. There is a within and a without, as expressed in God's Word, which, when using such language, has reference to the confines of the assembly of God. "Walk in wisdom," we are told, "toward them that are without." (Col. 4:5) "That ye may walk honestly toward them that are without." (1 Thess. 4:12) Again, writes the apostle, "What have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge

them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth" (1 Cor. 5:12,13). Within, the Holy Ghost dwells; without, Satan, who is the god and prince of this world, exercises sway.

But besides dwelling in the assembly, which thus becomes God's habitation, God's temple, the Holy Ghost has also formed the body of Christ. "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" (1 Cor. 12:13). It is by the baptism of the Holy Ghost that the body of Christ is formed, to which we have already directed the attention of our readers. This was effected at Pentecost for those who had been Jews; and Gentiles were first brought into the body by sharing in this baptism in the house of Cornelius. And Paul, as we here read, though he was not converted on the day of Pentecost, neither was present at Cesarea when Peter visited the Roman centurion, yet shared in that baptism, as did all the Corinthian saints to whom he wrote; for saints only can share in it. Saints only can be members of the body of Christ, united to Him by the Holy Ghost, though the Spirit dwells in the assembly in which there may be some who are only professors (1 Cor. 3:17). He is not said however to dwell in the body, though He does dwell in every individual member of the body.

In the body of Christ so formed neither national nor social distinctions exist. Baptized tip one Spirit, the unity of the Spirit of Ephesians 4:3 is called into existence. Having all been made, to drink into one Spirit, the unity should be acknowledged and manifested; and the Scriptural way of manifesting it is by breaking bread as the Lord has appointed it (1 Cor. 10:17). Whatever would practically deny the oneness of the body of Christ we are clearly to turn from; and it should be remembered, that the only divinely appointed way of showing it is by our presence at the Lord's table. In Christ, we have said, all distinctions cease. We must however remember that this is not true of the church. There are distinctions in the assembly. In Christ we are all one. Further, Christians should remember who have known it, or be taught if they have not hitherto understood it, what the apostle in 1 Corinthians 12:14-26 writes about the body, for it is most important. Taking as his illustration the natural body, he sets forth four points of great practical value.

First, we can never, if part of the body, get out of it. "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" The foot or the ear cannot help themselves; they are part of the body. They may deny it, they may repudiate all connection with it, but they cannot get free from it unless by amputation, which, if a loss to the body, would be death to them. The members then have no choice about it. They are in the body, they are part of the body. Just so is it with Christians and the body of Christ. They may be ignorant of it, they may refuse to learn about it, they may repudiate all connection with it; but they cannot yet out of the body. For as none but true Christians are members of the body of Christ, none such can be finally lost; nor can excision of a member of the body of Christ ever take place. In the body they are, and to it they must ever belong. But the body is but one: two bodies united to one head is contrary to all order in creation. So with the body of Christ; there is one body, as there is one head. But here the common thoughts and language of Christians are at variance with God's truth. Bodies of Christians men speak of, and approve of: one body is all that God owns, and Scripture teaches. If Scripture is to teach us, we must own only one body, and so be on true church ground, on which all Christians, if simply in subjection to the Word, could meet; and once there, we must stay there. Thus the foot cannot get free from the body, whatever it may say about it; no more can Christians

shake themselves free of their responsibility to acknowledge and maintain practically the truth of the oneness of the body of Christ.

Secondly, we must ever remember that one member does not constitute the body. "If they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body." For one member then in the body of Christ to arrogate to itself the functions of the body must be clearly wrong. Wherever that is done, the individual so acting, if in self-will, is wrong; if with the cordial agreement of others, is both wrong himself, and those who allow it are abetting and fostering the evil. But is this understood? Thirdly, we cannot do without every member. "The eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary." It may be, and it surely is the case, that from the disorder in the assembly of God we cannot avail ourselves of the help of every member of the body of Christ; but for our part, though deprived in a great measure of their assistance and service, we cannot without suffering loss be independent of one of them; so closely are the members of the body bound up one with another. But all this denominationalism ignores, and thereby robs, the whole church of that which has been provided for the benefit of all. How little is this seen! The Corinthians, when split up into parties, were robbing themselves of the gifts given for them all (1 Cor. 3:21-23). How suicidal to the church's best interest is her advocacy of denominational ground!

Lastly, God sets the members in the body as it hath pleased Him. None, therefore, can choose their place, though each may have to learn what it is. But, reminded of this, all envying of another's place, all imitation of another's service, should be carefully guarded against. Each has his own place, each his own service, which if rightly carried out will conduce to the healthy increase of the whole body. What a busy hive the assembly at Rome must have been, judging from the remarks on individuals made by the apostle in the last chapter of his epistle to that assembly! All the service there enumerated might not be what men call great, but it was true, and accepted of God.

Most practical is the truth of the oneness of the body of Christ. Formed by the baptism of the Holy Ghost, that oneness exists now on earth. May each one who forms part of it, discovering his place, and the character of his service in the body and in the assembly, keep the one, and perform the other.

C. E. S.

The Lord's Table

My Dear Brother,

There are two quite distinct truths or objects of thought brought before us in the Lord's Supper—the death of the blessed Lord, and His remembrance now He is gone, and the unity of the body as partaking of one loaf. We have to avoid at the same time any breaking away from scriptural truth on the one side, and harshness and narrowness of feeling on the other. If love to all the saints is not present in my spirit, I break the unity of the Spirit while keeping it up in form rightly according to Scripture in outward practice. On the other hand, I cannot deny in practice what Scripture teaches, and especially in that which is given as a sign of the scriptural truth. The words, Table of the Lord, are used to signify that identification with Him in confession which was found in the priests partaking of the altar, and the heathens eating of what had been offered to idols. I do not therefore object to use the Lord's Table as an expression significant of this. Hence it necessarily embraces in principle all that are His, if not excluded by just discipline. Now, as the various denominations either let in anybody, or meet professedly as such denomination, though they may allow, being such, a stranger to partake of it, the unity of the body and Christ's presence in the assembly is lost to faith, and they are still the church.

But pious persons going to the communion at one of these places can enjoy, according to their piety, the remembrance of Christ, and of His dying love. I believe they lose by it, and certainly do, the present sense of the unity of Christ's body as a present thing on earth; for their faith does not embrace it, and in a measure the sense of Christ's presence—that is, as there in the assembly—though they may realize it by the Holy Ghost for their own souls. I do not attach importance to words; but I could not own, with the light I have as to the unity of the body, that these denominational ordinances are the Lord's Table; but I am quite ready to believe that souls may go there with a deeper sense than myself of the Lord's love personally. I do exceedingly enjoy the sense of His love there; but more than that, I own, as associated in heart with Him, the unity of the body, of those He gave Himself to gather together into one, and own it scripturally according to His will, in practice in that in which He has given expression to it, and denominationalism by being such does the contrary.

But if I walk with my feet in the narrow path, from which I dare not stray, at find blessing in it, I desire to have my heart large enough to embrace all God's children walking before Him; and I lose in spirit the very blessing I am speaking of if I do not. "Your love," says the apostle, "to all the saints," "to comprehend with all saints." We cannot properly realize the love of Christ in communion without taking in its place all He loves as His. Fellowship one with another is one of the three elements of the Christian state, its import far larger than we are apt to think; and if hindered in its manifestation by others, it ought only to be stronger within in our hearts in grace, and thinking of them with the Lord Himself. "He that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him." But then, if it is love for His sake, this will be in obedience. Hereby we know that we love the children of God, if we love God, and keep His commandments. I cannot go out of the

path He has marked out, to be with those I yet love. It would not be true love to them, not the love of God, to be disobedient, and set them at ease in what was wrong, treating it as no matter.

Your affectionate brother in Christ,

J. N. D.

Worship: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —,

Having considered the question, Where is our place of Worship? we may now proceed to that of worship itself. The Scriptures are very full of instruction upon this subject; and yet, I venture to say, there is scarcely one concerning which there is so much indifference, and even ignorance, amongst professing Christians. I might even go further, and affirm, that its real character is scarcely understood by believers outside of those who are gathered out to the name of Christ. I do not mean, of course, that there are not individuals in all denominations whose joy it is to be found in adoration before God; such have ever existed throughout the history of the church. But what I contend is, that the collective worship of the saints—or what it is to worship in the assembly—is almost utterly unknown in any of the many denominations of Christendom. For example, in a book, which has obtained a very wide circulation, written by one of the most popular preachers of the day, it is said, in the discussion of this very subject, that listening to sermons is one of the highest forms of worship. The writer supports this extraordinary statement by the allegation that preaching tends to beget the exercise of the holiest desires and aspirations of the soul. That the presentation of truth may lead to worship no one could deny; but a child would easily perceive the difference between the act of worship and listening to the truth. In preaching—if indeed it be God’s truth that is being delivered—the servant comes with a message from God to those who listen; in worship, saints are led into the presence of God to present their adoration and praise. The two things are therefore of an entirely and essentially different character.

Nor is prayer worship. This will at once be seen if I say that a suppliant is not a worshipper. Thus if I go to the Queen with a petition, I am presented before her in that character; but if I am admitted into her presence to render homage, I am no longer a petitioner. So when I unite with other believers in prayer and intercession, we are before God as those who are seeking special blessings; but when we bow before Him in worship, we give rather than receive: we are before Him wanting nothing, but with full hearts overflowing in adoration at His feet.

Thanksgiving is very intimately connected with, if not of the essence of, worship. For thanksgiving is the consequence of blessings received, whether in providence or in redemption. The sense of God’s goodness and grace in thus ministering to us, in blessing us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, constrains us to pour out our thanksgivings in His presence; and then, necessarily, we are led to reflect upon the character and attributes of the God who thus delights to surround us with the tokens of His love and care; and consequently thanksgiving passes over into worship.

But in worship—considered in and by itself, in the proper significance of the act—we lose sight of ourselves and our blessings, and are occupied with what God is in Himself, and what He is for us as revealed in Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, we rise above ourselves, and contemplate God in all His varied attributes and glories (for while “no man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him,” John 1:18); and, overwhelmed by

the display of His holiness, majesty, love, mercy, and grace, we cannot but bow at His feet, as we render, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, the homage of our hearts.

This will be seen more clearly if we turn to the teaching of the Scriptures. The woman of Samaria questioned our Lord concerning this subject, or rather as to the place of worship; and in His reply, He vouchsafed to go far beyond the limits of her question. "Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe Me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (John 4:21-24) In the first place, our Lord here plainly teaches that there would be henceforward no special place of worship on earth. Jerusalem had been the sacred place where the temple of God had stood—the place to which His people wended year by year from all parts of the land. (See Psa. 122) But together with the rejection of Christ, their house, hitherto the house of God, was left unto them desolate (Matt. 23:37-39); and never since that time has there been a material house of God upon earth. The church is now the habitation of God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:22); and our place of worship (as seen in the last letter) is now inside the rent veil, in the immediate presence of God.

Secondly, He tells us who can be worshippers—those who shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; and such the Father was seeking. That is, only believers, only those whom God in His grace was seeking, such as this woman of Samaria, whom He sought and found in the person of the Son, and whom He would bring into relationship with Himself as His children; such, and such alone, could worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The apostle affirms the same thing when he says, "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit" (or, as many read, who worship by the Spirit of God), "and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," all evident characteristics of believers. Indeed, as the Epistle to the Hebrews teaches (see chap. 10), it is impossible for any to approach God until their sins are gone from His sight; and again, without faith (chap. 11:6); and once more, inasmuch as none but believers have the Spirit of God (see Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:6), none other can worship in spirit, or by the Spirit of God.

But evident as is this truth, and accepted widely as it is in theory, it needs to be enforced again and again; for, as a matter of fact, in the current "public worship" which obtains on every side, all distinction between believers and unbelievers is either ignored or obliterated. All alike, whether saved or unsaved, are invited to unite in the same prayers, and in the same songs of praise, in utter forgetfulness of these plain words, that it is only the "true worshippers" who can worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Thirdly, the Lord defines the character of worship. It must be "in spirit and in truth." Now to worship "in spirit" is to worship according to the true nature of God, and in the power of that communion which the Spirit of God gives. Spiritual worship is thus in contrast with the forms and ceremonies, and all the religiousness of which the flesh is capable. To worship God "in truth" is to worship Him according to the revelation which He has given of Himself. The Samaritans worshipped God neither in spirit nor in truth. The Jews worshipped God in truth, so far as this can be said of a revelation which was imperfect; but they worshipped Him in no respect in spirit. Now to worship God, both are needful. He is to be worshipped according to the true revelation of Himself (that is,

'in truth'), and according to His nature. (that is, in spirit).

But the revelation of God to us is in the Person, and connected with the work of Christ; for all that God is has been manifested in and through the cross. The death of Christ is therefore the foundation of all Christian worship; for it is by the efficacy of His precious blood that we are qualified to enter into the presence of God, and inasmuch as that death is the revelation to us of all that God is, of His majesty, His holiness, His truth, His grace, and His love, it is through the contemplation of that wondrous sacrifice that our hearts, wrought upon by the Spirit of God, are led out in adoration and praise. Thus worship is connected in a very special way with the Lord's table, because it is when we are gathered around it, as members of the body of Christ, that we show forth His death. To quote once more the words of another, "It is impossible to separate true spiritual worship and communion from the perfect offering of Christ to God. The moment our worship separates itself from this its efficacy, and the consciousness of that infinite acceptance of Jesus before the Father, it becomes carnal, and either a form or delight of the flesh."

This is the secret of the degeneration of worship in Christendom; for wherever the Lord's table has lost its true character or place, the spring and motive of worship are obscured. For what are we specially reminded of at the table of the Lord? It is His death; and it is in that death we are enabled to see what God is for us, and what Christ is to God, as well as the infinite efficacy of His sacrifice in bringing us without a spot into God's immediate presence—in the light as He is in the light. The grace, the eternal love of God, and the grace and the unquenchable love of Christ, are alike displayed to our souls, as we remember the One who glorified God in His death on the cross, where He bore our sins; and having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus, we bow and worship before God, as we sing—

"O God! Thou now hast glorified

Thy holy, blest, eternal Son;

The Nazarene, the Crucified,

Now it exalted on Thy throne!

To Him in faith we cry aloud,

Worthy art Thou, O Lamb of God."

Leaving you to trace out the subject from the hints we have given, Believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

P.S. For a full treatment of the subject in all its bearings, I commend to your notice a tractate "On Worship" by J. N. D. (Broom) Price 3d.

Christ the Truth

I have already endeavored to show the meaning of the Way; that Christ and Christ only is the Way. But there is another thing. Christ is not only the Way to the Father, but He is also the Truth. Where is truth to be found? In Him alone. He Himself is the Truth. Thus the man who has taken the way possesses the truth. He who has bowed to Christ does not want some new resource. Truly God is wise, and as good as He is wise.

Let me now try to unfold what truth is. Man in his natural state may ask, but eludes the answer. How is this? Because he is gone away from God, serves Satan in whom is no truth, and likes Christ less, the more he knows about Him. When He came into the world, people seemed to value Him at first; for they did not then know that He was the Truth, and were not yet proved by Him.

They were all looking for and, expecting the promised Messiah. The time spoken of by Daniel was fulfilled, and men were in a state of expectation. The famous Prophecy of the Weeks pointed to those days, and the Jews all knew, or might have known, that the time was quite near when the Messiah, the Prince, was to appear, though none understood that He was to be cut off. The very heathen were moved by the rumors of a coming Deliverer; they heard that the time was at hand that a mighty King should reign, and most remarkable changes happen for the world. Wise men came from the east to see the born King of the Jews. More than one hundred and fifty years before Christ the Old Testament had been translated into the Greek tongue, which was at that time the usual means of communication, as French has been in modern times.

This translation of the Bible was a sort of preparatory testimony. Thus the Jews were not the only people who were looking for the Messiah.

But He is much more. He is the Word, He is God, He is the light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. And men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Hence the early attraction soon faded, and gave way to fear and hatred; and as they desired not to know God or themselves, they sought to get rid of what convicted them by killing Him. They might kill, but they could not get rid of the Son of God; and as we have seen Him the Way, so He is the Truth. What is meant by it? Let us compare the law with Him. The law is holy, just, and good; but still it is nowhere called the truth. The law is the standard of divine requirement from man; it declares what God demands from him who takes the ground of his own obedience as his standing before Him. The truth is the revelation of God, the manifestation of everything else, in Christ. It is therefore not requirement, but revelation. In fact, God Himself contrasts them; as it is written, "The law was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Was it not God's law? Yes; but it was given by Moses, who was the channel of communication. But Christ was and is the Way; and this not only for God to come down to man, but for man to go to God, nay, to the Father. Besides, He is the Truth, He makes every one and everything known as they really are; and when we weigh what the truth is, we can see that Christ only could be the full presentation of it. God is thus revealed, and Christ, being the revealer of God, is Himself said to be the Truth. As Son, He brings out what the Father is. But He, the Holy One of God, shows me what sin is, what I am. In

short, He manifests every one and everything exactly as each is.

God is never said to be the Truth, but Christ, being the image of the invisible God. Man is not capable of fathoming God; no man hath seen God at any time. Who is competent to know God? No man, nor even angel. The creature does not know God; but God can make Himself known to the creature. How? In Christ by the Holy Ghost. This is the reason why the Holy Spirit is also called the Truth in 1 John 5 Christ, the Truth, is the object presented in whom I can learn everything as it is; the Spirit of God is the inward power that makes the truth enter into my soul that I may have and enjoy it. Hence the necessity for the Holy Ghost to be the Truth as well as Christ. The spirit of man in itself is no more capable of knowing God than a beast of understanding the mind of man. The beast has its own creature instincts; but no beast, no creature of that order, can pass its own limits. No lower creature is capable of understanding man, and no man, as such, can rise to what is above his nature.

Yet! without the truth, how wretched one must ever be! I have sinned. How do I stand, and in what relation, to God? Are we doomed to be in utter uncertainty of the only thing that is of supreme importance? There are things that a man can come to, left to himself—dread and horror, hardness or indifference. But these fears are only the premonition of what, far more terrible and unending, will befall him if he lives and dies as he is. What is to become of his soul? My answer is: Christ is the truth; and Christ was here expressly on an errand of love, to glorify God, to save sinners by faith, to meet this dark and awful void, and give life and peace, with certainty, to the believer.

Do not take the ground of an unbeliever, and say that it is impossible to have certainty in this life. Perhaps it might be impossible for a Jew, no doubt it was for the heathen; but if God tells me anything, and I believe, is it certain or not? If God tells me His mind, does this give no certainty? Christ is God's revelation of Himself to me. Do you say, I am a sinner? It is true, as far as it goes; but even so you do not know what a sinner you are, else you could not take it so quietly. You go to God about your sins then: will He leave you in a state of uncertainty? No; Christ has come, the sent One of God, to do His will in the offering of His body; and by Him came grace and truth, not merely truth. And what grace it was! The Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, becoming a man; and not only so, but born of a woman! Adam even was not, never having been born, but made. He was not a son of man therefore, though son of God in a certain sense (Luke 3). He came into the world mature and formed to be its head: he had attained his full proportion when he came from God's hand. Jesus was not merely a man, but the Seed of the woman, as no one ever was save He. He became a servant—all that man is—except sin. It is not only that He did not sin, but He never in His life knew what sin was: He could always say that His meat was to do God's will. "Lo, I come to do Thy will." But He was made sin on the cross; He suffered the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God.

Do I learn what sin is by prayer, or by looking into my own heart? No; but I see it in His cross. What did my sin cost Him? It brought upon Him, the Holy One, the horrors of divine judgment; and now He is become captain of salvation, having obtained eternal redemption. The same Jesus who gives me the truth of a sinner in myself gives me the truth of a Savior in Him. Where shall I find what a holy man is? Can it be Adam? The man who could not keep his hands off the fruit of the tree that God had told him not to eat—he a holy man? Why did he not listen to God? He disobeyed, and became unholy. Not that he was made so; for God made him innocent, and

innocence supposes absence of evil, with liability to fall into it. But when Jesus was made flesh He was not only sinless, but holy—holy not in ways only, but in nature. “That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.” There also do we read, “A body hast Thou prepared Me;” and this is never said of anyone else. Why was this body so specially prepared? Because there could not be the least relic that defiles in the Holy One. The smallest taint of evil would spoil the sacrifice: the lamb for the burnt-offering was to be without blemish and without spot. When Jesus was born, although He was the Seed of the woman, there was no taint of sin in His nature; He is called that holy thing, for He was born by the power of the Holy Ghost. Thus He could take upon Him not merely all our sins, but sin itself. This is the truth.

If I want to see sin, I can see it by contrast with the Lord Jesus. He came and showed out all its darkness. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin.” Christ is the Truth; so all is brought out in its own character.

But there is just the same result about God; Christ as the Truth clearly shows what God is. It is never said that Christ is the likeness of God, though with the greatest emphasis said to be His image. It would not be true to say of any man that like a man, although you might say so of an angel. Just in the same way Jesus is not said to be like: God, because He is God. Here was One who was perfectly able to show what God is. It is the Absolute deigning to become relative. As long as God is only God, He is unapproachable by man; man cannot understand Him. But I must know God, or I cannot have eternal life; and this cannot be apart from Him whom He has sent, even Jesus Christ the Lord. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, and He has brought me exactly what I want. God is the One who loves me, who comes down in the person of Jesus, Son of God and Son of Man, to meet the need of a poor sinner—if, again, I want to know what the devil is, it is the same Jesus that brings it out. He, a murderer from the beginning, and a liar, is the one being who stands always opposed to the Lord Jesus. Jesus therefore brought out what the devil was as it had never been manifested before; but the Son of God came that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Now, have you got the Truth? You have heard the truth in Him: What is the effect on your soul? “Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of His creatures.” The law makes me feel my shortcomings, but the truth makes them even better known. But if I am willing to know how bad I am, I want to be delivered. Will the law do this? When the law was given, it put man at a distance. Moses was to set bounds to the mountain; and if a beast so much as touched it, it was to be slain. This, no doubt, was a wholesome righteous warning; but the truth is, that the Lord Jesus came down from heaven to seek and to save the lost. And how are you to be saved? By submitting to the Truth; by coming as a sinner to the Savior of sinners. I cannot be saved except by the Truth. It is the Lord Jesus Himself who brings it all out to the soul, and in confessing Him Lord, I believe God, and set to my seal that He is true. By the grace of God my soul bows to the truth, and I can say in my heart, this is just the truth for me. I abjure my unbelief; I bow to what God says of His Son. It is God proclaiming what is true; and I believe He is as good as He says. I believe that He is forgiving my sins and making me His child on the spot. I have no desert; but Christ is my plea. I am willing to be nothing, that Christ and His cross may be everything for and to me.

But we must remember that the Holy Spirit is the Truth just as truly as Christ is. May He bring the truth home to your souls. Were you to live ever so long, and learn ever so much, it is only knowing better the Truth you receive at the start. Confess Jesus Lord, the only Savior, the Son of God. Confess all that grace has given you to know, and look well to it that your ways be a living confession of that Blessed One who is the Truth.

W. K.

Gideon's Sevenfold Qualification for Service

The book of Judges has an especial claim upon our attention; for it is the record of Israel's failure in the land. God had brought them out of Egypt with a high hand and an outstretched arm, had brought them through the Red Sea, while He smote Pharaoh and his host, and caused them to sink "as lead in the mighty waters." And He led them onward still, through the waste howling wilderness, accomplishing the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and set them in possession, under the leadership of Joshua, of the promised inheritance. They were now across the Jordan-river of death and judgment; God had rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off them at Gilgal (Josh. 5:9); and as long as they walked in obedience and dependence, no foe could stand before their face. But man invariably fails when entrusted with blessing under responsibility, even under the most favorable circumstances; and Israel was no exception to—nay, was the most striking exemplification of the rule. No sooner was their blessing at the flood-tide mark than it began to ebb. It is true that they are said to have "served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua" (Judg. 2:7); but it is immediately added that "there arose another generation after them which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim," (vss. 10, 11). The consequence was that "the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel," but "nevertheless He raised up judges which delivered them out of the hand of them that spoiled them" (vss. 14-16). Here indeed we have the two aspects of the whole book, Israel's failure, and the Lord's faithfulness. And out of God's faithfulness sprang His intervening grace, giving His people a little restoration and reviving in the midst of their departure, corruption, and bondage. The correspondency between this state of things and the present state of the church will be apparent to all; and hence I propose to call attention to one of the most signal instances of God's intervention—I mean in His raising up of Gideon to be a judge and deliverer to His people. The object before my mind in taking this instance is, that we may learn, as the Lord may enable us, what are the qualifications which God seeks for (and surely also they are of His own providing) in those whom He can use for service and testimony amongst His people.

The sixth chapter commences: "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years." (Read vss. 1-6) Midian was near of kin to Israel, having descended from Abraham through Keturah his second wife; and again and again they are brought into contact with the chosen people. In the wilderness "the Lord spoke unto Moses" (and Moses had married Zipporah, daughter of the priest of Midian), "saying, Vex the Midianites, and smite them, for they vex you with their wives" (Num. 25:16-18; 31:1-12). But now they are in the land itself, though they had never followed the ark across the Jordan; "and Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites." How solemn the warning! But "Israel cried unto the Lord, and it came to pass when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord because of the Midianites, that the Lord sent a prophet" (vss. 6-8). First, the Lord sent a prophet to bring their sin home to their conscience, and then He sent an angel to raise up a deliverer; and He ends Gideon threshing wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. (vs. 11)

1. We may name this first qualification—Feeding on Christ in secret. For wheat is surely a figure of Christ. (See John 12:24;6. 35) It was a time of great difficulty: idols had usurped the place of Jehovah, so that those who remained faithful in the midst of the general ruin could only worship the Lord alone and in private. So was it with Gideon; Baal had an altar in his father's house; but this "mighty man of valor" threshed wheat alone that he might find sustenance, notwithstanding the watchful eye of the Midianites. Alone in his family, and alone in threshing wheat, he gathered strength from communion with the Lord.

And, beloved friends, may we not say that feeding on Christ in secret is the fountain-head of all qualification for the Lord's service? Thus it was that Joseph was sent into exile and a prison; that Moses was sent for forty years into the desert; Paul into Arabia. For it is when we are alone with Christ that we learn both what we ourselves are (that in our flesh there dwelleth no good thing), and, blessed be His name, what He Himself is, in the infinite fullness of His grace and sufficiency; and the Lord can never use us as standard bearers, until both of these lessons have been learned. More than this; not only do we thus apprehend (after we have come to the end of ourselves) the all-sufficiency of Christ for every need; but we learn also something of His unspeakable preciousness and beauty, so that we can go out afterward in His service with satisfied hearts, as well as with confidence in His infinite resources. To feed on Christ in secret is indeed the present and abiding need of all our souls.

2. The next qualification is evidently an exercised heart. "And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us oft, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites" (vss. 12, 13). These words show that Gideon identified himself with the condition of his people; for he says, "Why is all this befallen us?"; and that, entering into their state, he bore it on his heart before the Lord. And this he had not been qualified to be their helper. It was so with Nehemiah (see chap. 1); with Daniel (see especially chap. 9); and pre-eminently was it the case with our blessed Lord. Take an instance or two. They brought unto Him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and we are told that before He healed him, looking up to heaven, He sighed, and saith unto him, Ephphatha; that is, Be opened (Mark 7:32-35). Again too, before He raised Lazarus from the dead, we have the marvelous record that He wept; and that "groaning in Himself" He came to the grave—signs surely of His entering into and taking (if we may so speak) upon His spirit the condition of those to whose succor He had come—that in sympathy and grace He so identified Himself with them that He became the voice of their sorrow and grief; for "Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:17). The cross is of course the highest expression of His entering into our state; for on it "He bare our sins in His own body" (1 Peter 2:24). The principle remains; for our power to succor others will be (not forgetting our entire dependence on the Lord) just in proportion as we have been able to enter into, and to make their sorrows or difficulties our own. It might be well to remember this in our desire to bring saints into their true place. The Lord will use us if we are qualified for it; but to be qualified for it we must have felt deeply the character of the evil in which they are entangled, and have mourned over it before the Lord. Hence, in the case before us, no sooner does Gideon unburden his exercised heart than "the Lord looked upon him, and said, "Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites:

have not I sent thee?" (vs. 14).

3. We get now another very important qualification—a sense of his own nothingness. He replies, "Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house" (vs. 15). His exercises had thus not been without blessing, for he was now in the place where God's power could come upon and use him. It was so with the Apostle Paul after the exercises of heart produced by the thorn in the flesh; he was then brought face to face with his own utter impotence, and want of natural adaptation for the Lord's service, and then the Lord could say to him, "My grace is sufficient for thee" (2 Cor. 12). And all the Lord's servants must learn this lesson sooner or later—that there is nothing in themselves, in their position, or in their circumstances, which can be used for God; that, in a word, the whole of our resources and strength lie outside of ourselves, in Himself; that our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5). It is then no longer a question of what the Midianites are, but what God is; for we go to meet them in His strength. Accordingly, the Lord now said unto Gideon, "Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man" (vs. 16).

4. Thereupon Gideon becomes bolder, and asks a sign that the Lord talked with him—prepares a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour, and bringing them, placed his offering, at the direction of the angel, upon the rock. "Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight." By this Gideon is made to know that he had seen an angel of the Lord face to face, and he is filled with fear. But "the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee: fear not: thou shalt not die;" and thus he obtains from the Lord a further qualification for service; namely, a soul at liberty—in peace before God. God had revealed Himself to His servant, and the effect was terror; but the terror passed away before the peace-speaking word of Jehovah. We need not enlarge upon this feature, as it is the history of every soul that is brought into the presence of God (see Isa. 6; Job 42; Luke 5), and every one will understand that there cannot be any true or effectual service for the Lord while the soul is occupied with its own condition, until indeed it is set free, and is at home in God's presence. Thus, when the Lord Jesus came into the midst of His disciples, after the resurrection, He said, "Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you" (John 20:19-21). Here we have a direct connection between peace and service.

5. The immediate consequence in Gideon's case was—and this gives us a further qualification—that he became a worshipper. "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom." (vs. 24) That is, he worships God in the character in which He had revealed Himself—as Jehovah who had spoken peace to his soul. The sequence is very instructive. First peace, then worship; and the lesson is, that only those who have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ can worship. What a commentary upon the "public worship" of our land: But now we direct attention to this—that the true servant must first be a worshipper; for, indeed, to go out in service before we are worshippers, is to go out in ignorance of the character of Him we profess to serve; to misrepresent our Lord, and to expose ourselves to certain defeat. Let us then be careful to maintain the divine order.

6. Now the Lord calls upon Gideon to act; but he must first begin at home. "And it came to pass the same night that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old, and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it; and build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down. Then Gideon took ten men," (vss. 25-27). Here we get obedience. Gideon was associated with evil in his father's house; and, as another has said, "faithfulness within precedes outward strength: evil must be put away from Israel before the enemy can be driven out. Obedience first, and then strength: this is God's order." We have an illustration of this truth in the gospels. After the Lord Jesus had cast out the demon from the lad, the "disciples asked Him privately; Why could not we cast him out? And He said unto them; This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting." (Mark 9:28,29) So with Gideon: until he had dethroned the idol in his father's house, he could not be sent to smite the Midianites. There is ample ground in this direction, beloved friends, for heart-searchings with us all. How often, when we have mourned over want of power in the Lord's service, might we have traced the cause to some lack of obedience, of self-judgment, of separation, of faithfulness! We were weak because we had not first dealt with some idol of our hearts or households. Satan is helpless in the presence of an obedient man; he cannot touch such an one, for he is armed with a coat of mail which not one of his fiery darts can ever penetrate. It was thus that the Lord Jesus vanquished him in the desert. The reply, "It is written," foiled him in every attack. And here, too, was Gideon's strength, for no sooner had he received the command than he "took ten men," "and did as the Lord had said unto him" (vs. 27), and in obedience he overcame, and purged his father's house—and the subsequent anger of Baal's followers did but expose their own weakness, and the impotence of their god. The devil resisted in obedience is the devil vanquished.

7. Gideon is now a vessel sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and we get accordingly the crowning qualification of power. It is very instructive to note the course of the record. The vessel is now prepared for service; and immediately we are told, "Then all the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet; and Abi-ezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him: and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them." (vss. 34, 35). Satan can never forestall God. While Gideon is being prepared, the Midianites, are still; when Gideon is ready, God gathers them together for destruction. They marshal their forces to destroy Israel; but the Spirit of the Lord comes upon Gideon, and now it is God Himself against the Midianites. Ah, beloved friends, let us see to it that we never move forward against the foe excepting in the power of the Spirit of God.

Note another instruction. The Spirit of the Lord comes upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet. This Gideon, who was threshing wheat to hide it from the Midianites, now puts a trumpet to his lips, and sounds forth defiance in the face of the foe. In like manner, the Peter who trembled before a servant-maid, being clothed with power by the Spirit, charges home upon the rulers the sin of crucifying Christ. The apostles also, being filled with the Holy Ghost, spake the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:31).

But we cannot pursue the subject; as we have now traced the qualifications of this “mighty man of valor” for testimony and service. He is now equipped, ready for the conflict. There will be weaknesses and failures, doubtless; but still he is one whom the Lord can now employ. If the Lord will, we may trace his history farther another day. In the meantime, May He grant that the sevenfold qualification of Gideon may be found in all who are engaged in His service and testimony in these closing days!

E. D.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: of Whom Composed

When the Lord Jesus Christ was upon earth He spake of His assembly as then nonexistent. He had not yet built it (Matt. 16:18). Till the Holy Ghost came, consequent on His ascension, it was not, and could not be formed. The Spirit's presence, however, inaugurated a new era; for by the baptism of the Holy Ghost the body of Christ was called into being (1 Cor. 12:13). No Old Testament saint then could have been a member of the church, or assembly of God, which is the body of Christ. In the kingdom of God every one of them will be found, when the Lord Jesus Christ comes in power and great glory. But part of the church of God they never were, nor, we can add, ever will be; for in heaven, as well as upon earth, the church is viewed as distinct from the worthies of old.

This we are taught in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the point is an important one to keep before the mind; for unless the great landmarks of Scripture are known, and dispensational teaching is apprehended, we cannot rightly divide the word of truth. (2 Tim: 2:15) How such a thought should make one careful in the putting forth of truth, as well as diligent in acquiring an understanding of it: The word of truth should be rightly divided. The Apostle gently intimates by this remark to his child in the faith, that unless the workman was careful he might fail to do it: With Paul, then, the unfolding of Scripture was not the giving out of man's opinion upon it. It could be rightly divided; yet, unless Timothy was careful, that might not always be the case.

Now, important as it is for us to be taught correctly about the church of God, it was of all importance for those in apostolic times, who, formerly Jews, were such no longer, in order that they should clearly see how distinct was, their proper Christian position from that which they had previously prized, and with which they had been associated. To such Paul wrote in Hebrews 12:22-24. Going forth to Christ without the camp, they would surrender much which they had previously valued, and valued very highly. Would they be losers thereby? To answer such a question he introduces his readers to a millennial scene, and lays open to their gaze the court of heaven, arranged, so to speak, in the order of precedence, and shows the connection between the earthly seat of the kingdom and the real metropolis of the universe: "Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, a general assembly, and to the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (rather, better than Abel). To all this had they then come, though in spirit only as yet. Thus, that to which the Jews in millennial days never will attain, what the earthly people never can have, was theirs, who from amongst them had confessed the Lord Jesus, theirs really, though not then enjoyed. All that they had come to the apostle enumerates, but marks off each thing distinctly from the rest by the conjunction "and." The position therefore of the church in heaven this passage points out: The assembly of the first-born ones (πρωτογενῶν), as the Holy Ghost here designates them, is seen next to God on His one hand, and the Old Testament saints—the spirits of just men made perfect—are seen as equally near to Him on the other; but two distinct companies never

amalgamated. Both are equally near to God (that we must ever remember); but the church of the first-born ones and the Old Testament saints are described as separated companies in heaven, each having their own proper position on high.

Who then, it may be asked, form the church of the first-born ones? Some formerly Jews, and some formerly Gentiles; for the Scripture recognizes three classes as at present existing upon earth—the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God. (1 Cor. 10:32) Before the cross there were but two classes—the Jews and the Gentiles. By-and-by there will again be but two upon earth, when the word by Moses shall have its accomplishment: “Rejoice, O ye nations, with His people” (Deut. 32:43). At present there exists also the third—the church of God.

To this company the Lord made reference in John 10:16, when He announced the formation of the one flock under the care and the guardianship of the one Shepherd; for the reader should mark the Lord’s language. One flock He speaks of, (πο■μνη), to be composed of the sheep in Israel, whom He was about to lead out of the fold, (α■λα■), and of the sheep from amongst the Gentiles, who were never in it. This flock then was something quite new, and unthought of, till the Lord taught men about it. Observe, that to make the one flock, He first leads out of the fold those which had been in it. It was not the bringing those formerly Gentiles on to Jewish ground that He had here in view. That in its full sense never was done, and never will be done. It was not making proselytes to Judaism of Gentiles who hearkened to His teaching. That the Lord never did. The time too for that, in accordance with God’s thoughts, was then passing away. What the Lord treats of is the getting the two companies, who were to form the one flock, on to new ground altogether. The flock therefore of which He speaks could not be formed, till God dealt with Gentiles in grace equally with Jews. From the days of Abraham to the cross God was acting in a different manner. None therefore, who died before the cross, could form part of the one flock, the assembly, or church of God.

Years after we get this truth of the component parts of the flock affirmed by different apostles James, in the council at Jerusalem, endorsed Peter’s statement, that God had visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. (Acts. 15:14) Later on, Paul, writing to the Romans, bore witness that there was, from amongst Israel, “a remnant according to the election of grace” (Rom. 11:5). The Apostle of the circumcision spoke of believers from amongst the Gentiles. The Apostle of the Gentiles acknowledged the presence in the assembly of some who, had once been Jews. But, both Peter and Paul distinctly pointed out, that it was only an election from the one and from the other. Those from the Gentiles did not become Jews; those from amongst the Jews did not become part of the one flock by virtue of their descent according to the flesh. Yet there is but one flock, one assembly— “God’s flock,” as Peter calls it (1 Peter 5:2,3), “God’s church,” as Paul designates it (Acts 20:28). Both terms, it will be seen, are instructive, attesting to whom those comprising the flock and the assembly belong, even God, but without referring to their former condition, whether moral or dispensational.

The truth, therefore, was owned by Peter as well as by Paul, though it is only in the writings of the latter that we find it dwelt on, and treated of doctrinally.

At the end of the first chapter of the Ephesians, Paul introduces the subject of the church of God, when writing of the present place on high of Him who is its Head. In the second chapter he develops the subject, and shows us who those are that compose it; first setting forth what they had

been morally (vss. 1-10), and then what had been their condition dispensationally (vss. 11-22). Morally, nothing could have been more hopeless; spiritually dead, they had required quickening power to be put forth on their behalf by God for them to live. How wholly were they, one and all, dependent on the love, and mercy, and favor of God! For if they needed quickening power to be put forth by God that they should live, the putting forth of that power depended solely on the activity of God in grace. But what a comfort to remember the class of persons morally on whose behalf He thus acts. Dispensationally, the Jews had been nigh, and the Gentiles had been far off. The former had thus occupied a vantage-ground, which the latter had not. For the church that vantage-ground has disappeared; for those, once far off, are in Christ made nigh by His blood, and those, once Jews, with those once Gentiles are created one new man in Christ. A new kind of man (καὶνός), such as had never existed before, the twain made one in Christ. Learning this, we should not, it is clear, look to the Old Testament for instruction as to the formation of the church, nor for guidance as to its worship. It did not exist in those days, nor was there anything like it ever called into being. Nothing analogous to it can be traced in the pages of the Hebrew writers. Any incorporation then of Jewish practices with Christian worship should have been sedulously guarded against, and that which the New Testament teaches about the church, the new man, the body of Christ, should have been sought out and conformed to. Has this been generally done?

C. E. S.

Ministry: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —,

It is a most remarkable fact, that the ministry which obtains among the “churches” of Christendom has not even a show of justification from the Word of God. Search as closely as you may, from the time the church of God was constituted until the close of the inspired record, you will not find a trace of the “one-man” ministry. Apostles, elders or bishops, deacons, pastors and teachers, and evangelists are mentioned; but there is no indication of anything to correspond with the ministers and preachers of the present day. For all the denominations of Christendom—with one or two unimportant exceptions—agree in their theory of the ministry. One man is, as a rule, appointed to take the charge or oversight of a “church” and congregation; and he is expected to teach, to preach the gospel, and to be a pastor. In short, he is expected to unite in himself the office of an elder, and the gifts of a pastor and teacher, and of an evangelist. It will this often happen that one man will have the sole and continued charge of the same congregation for twenty, thirty, or forty years; and it cannot be denied that professing Christians love to have it so.

But the question is, Is this practice Scriptural? Bear with me a little while I seek to answer this question from the Word of God. I need scarcely remind you that our blessed Lord appointed apostles during His earthly sojourn; and that, after His resurrection and ascension, He appeared to Saul, and also chose and made him in an especial way the Apostle of the Gentiles (See Acts 9:22, 26; 1 Cor. 15).

Now the apostles, as all confess, had a peculiar and an unique place—having been endowed with extraordinary gifts and authority—and they never had successors. I shall not detain you long upon this point, as apart from the Romish and Anglican Churches (at least in the west) this statement would be generally accepted. Two Scriptures will therefore suffice. Peter, Writing to the believers of his own nation—“the strangers scattered throughout Pontus” says, “I will endeavor” (that is, by writing the epistle) “that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance” (2 Peter 1:15). He thus commits them in the future to the guidance (not of apostolic successors, but) of the written word. Paul, in like manner, addressing the elders of the church in Ephesus, and warning them of their coming difficulties and dangers, says, “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace.” (Acts 20:32). The two great apostles therefore—one of the circumcision, and the other of the uncircumcision, agree in this—that they alike declare that the resource of the church, after they should have passed away, would be in the Word of God. It is thus clear that they could not have contemplated successors to their office.

The next office in order will be that of bishops or elders. I say bishops or elders, because in fact they are but two names for the same office. This is proved beyond dispute from Acts 20. We there read that Paul sent for “the elders of the Church” (vs. 17). In speaking to them, he terms them “overseers” (vs. 28)—that is, bishops (ἐπισκοποι). Well, these are never found alone. The church at Ephesus, in the passage before us, had more than one. Paul called the “elders” of the church. So too in Acts 14:23, Paul and Barnabas “ordained them elders in every city.” In the

Epistle to the Philippians also we read of “the bishops and deacons” (1:1; see also Acts 15:23; Titus 1:5).

Passing now to the gifts, as distinguished from office, we come to “pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). I have put the two together because, in fact, they are so linked in the Scriptures, and linked in so close a way in the passage just cited, as to indicate that they may be united in the same person. Are these, then, ever found alone, having the charge of a congregation? So far from this being the case, we are told that “there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers,” and the names of no less than five are given (Acts 13:1).

Should it, however, be thought that the cases of Timothy and Titus are evidence on the other side, a moment’s consideration will dispel the illusion. Titus is told plainly that he was left in Crete to “set in order the things that were wanting, and to ordain elders in every city” (Titus 1:5); and Timothy is directed as to the qualifications of such (1 Tim. 3), and expressly told “to lay hands suddenly on no man” (vs. 22); that is, to appoint them to office. Nothing therefore can be plainer than that these two, Timothy and Titus, were acting as delegates of the apostle, and as such exercised a general supervision, and had authority to appoint suited men to the office of bishops and deacons; an authority employed, be it remarked, by individuals, not by churches, and which was never exercised but by the apostles, or, as in the case before us, by their delegates, and which was never transmitted to any successors, and consequently lapsed with the death of the apostles.

One other gift remains to be noticed—that of the evangelist (Eph. 4:11). It comes after “prophets,” but we have reserved it because of its character. As the name imports, the work of an evangelist is to preach the gospel; and hence the object of his ministry is not the church, but the world. Our Lord Himself describes the responsibility of the evangelist when He commands His apostles, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). To confine him therefore in his service to a single congregation, or even a single town or city, would he to ignore the object of the gift. Hence Paul, speaking of himself in this character, says, “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (Rom. 1:14,15).

The question then recurs, What is the true character of ministry according to the Word of God? In the first place, it flows from Christ at the right hand of God, as the Head of the church. He is its source. “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,” etc. (Eph. 4:7-13). This affords us a most important principle. The gifts were not bestowed upon the church, but upon men for the benefit of the church. Hence those who have received them are responsible for their exercise, not to the church, but to the Lord. It is impossible therefore for the church to appoint pastors and teachers, or any of the gifts named, seeing indeed that the responsibility of the church is to receive the ministry of every one who has been qualified by the Lord for its edification. Even as the apostolic office of Paul, so a gift is “not of men, neither by men” (Gal. 1:1), but it is from the risen Christ.

There is another truth of equal moment; namely, that the gifts can only be properly exercised in the power of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Holy Ghost is the distinctive characteristic of this dispensation. He dwells in the house of God—the church, and He dwells in believers (John 7:39; 14:16, 17; Acts 2; Rom. 8:15, 16; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 1:13; 2:22; etc.). Hence when believers are gathered together, as 1 Corinthians 12-14 teaches, He acts sovereignly in and through the members of the body of Christ according to their gift: “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will” (1 Cor. 12:8-11). Any human arrangement for ministry therefore in the assembly is not only inconsistent with this truth, but it utterly ignores the prerogative of the Spirit of God to minister by whom He will. Surely a most solemn thing, and not to be lightly thought of; and yet, alas, how common! Nay more, so entirely is the presence of the Holy Ghost forgotten, that man’s authority, and by claims, are substituted, justified, and accepted by the mass of professing Christians.

You will be careful to observe that what the Scripture teaches is not that all have liberty to minister, but that there should be liberty to the Holy Ghost to minister by whom He may please. There is a wide difference between the two things. The first would be democracy, than which there is nothing more alien from the mind of God; the second involves the maintenance of the Lordship of Christ in the power of the Spirit, the subjection of all the members of the body to the Head, and complete dependence upon the guidance and wisdom of the Spirit of God. In the first, man is prominent; in the second, Christ is owned as supreme.

While asserting these cardinal principles of ministry, we must be careful to recollect that all true ministry must be in subjection to, and in accordance with, the Word of God. This clearly follows from the instructions in 1 Corinthians 14. The apostle indeed gives directions concerning the exercise of the gifts, and afterward says, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” (vs. 37) The assembly is thus entitled, nay, responsible, to judge whether the thing ministered is according to truth (1 Cor. 14:29), and to reject everything that does not answer to the test. It is not left therefore at the mercy of willful men, but is furnished with a safeguard sufficient to hold in check and to rebuke all that savors of the flesh, and not of the Spirit.

Another thing may be added. After dealing with the question of gifts, and pointing out that even their exercise are utterly valueless without charity (love) (1 Cor. 12, 13), the apostle teaches that the object of their exercise is the edification of the assembly (14:3-5). How beautiful are the ways of God! Gathered by the Spirit around the person of our Lord at His table, to show forth His death, He leads our hearts out in adoration and praise, and then He ministers to us from God through various members of the body of Christ. There is thus a double action of the Spirit. He enables us to offer the sacrifices of praise to God; and mindful of our need, He gives the word of wisdom, or knowledge, or exhortation, as our state may require.

But I have reached the limits of my letter. You will, however, be able to trace out the subject for yourself, and thus discover whether what has been advanced is according to the Word of God. “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21).

Believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

P.S. In addition to the Scriptures cited, read Romans 12:4-8; 1 Peter 4:10,11.

The House of Dares

I desire to trace a little some striking incidents connected with this place, and some blessed practical realities which flow out of them.

Bethany was a spot which had a peculiar place in the heart of the blessed Lord, while journeying through this earth. He is presented in Scripture as the perfect stranger in this world, particularly in John, where is set forth the fact of His rejection from the outset. He was Light in the midst of darkness, Life in the midst of death; a stranger out of sight and out of mind. At Bethany only did He find that which met His heart. There He was understood and appreciated, at least by one, and there He often loved to retire. Truly it was a spot where alone He found that which was congenial to His spirit. There are three distinct millings of it in the New Testament, for I cannot connect the scene of Luke 7 with it. I do not see any warrant for saying the woman in the seventh of Luke was Mary, or that it was at Bethany. Scripture lays stress on the fact that Martha received Him into her house, in all the love of her heart. Every service to Him found its full value in His eyes, who never overlooked anything; yet it was nothing compared to the ministry of Mary. The treasures of Martha's house were at His feet; but Mary gives Him her heart, her affections, and this is what the Lord looks for. And may I not say, as He looks around now on every side, He sees no lack of service—service abundant on every hand? and His heart fully values all that is done for Him. It surely has its place, and far be it from me to lessen it; but with all the activity, and energy, and zeal which have “the poor” for their object, what the Lord is looking for is—those who will minister to His pleasure. The Lord appreciated the care of Martha; but when she sought to make a depreciating contrast between herself and Mary, His judgment and thoughts express themselves. And solemn it is to think, that though many may be serving after their own, way and thoughts, there are but few who really enter into His mind and mission. Mary turned her ear to Him as she sat at His feet, in order that He might relate to her waiting heart what He delights to tell. This is what He looks for now, as then; but, oh, how few of His beloved people understand the mind and ways of their Lord. There is nothing He so values as the listening ear turned to Him—nothing that meets Him like one that waits on His fullness. Mary is thus the vessel into which His own fullness is emptying its treasures. Do we know this blessed attitude? Oh for that abstractedness of heart that has leisure from all around, and as well from all within, so as to sit and listen! “She sat at His feet.” The Christ, His prison and moral glory, so attracted her that it brought her into restfulness. We never can hear aright till we are restful, and we must be restful ere we can profit by what we hear. The Word is the voice of God to me. Till the heart is brought into a position of complete abstraction from things around, to wait in the presence of Christ and give Him the ear, there is no profit. Would to God our hearts had a deeper sense of it! The Word is the communication. He makes from Himself to us today; but in order to receive it, the heart must be at leisure, and the soul at rest, and the ear pre-occupied by Christ.

“Martha was cumbered about much serving.” There is a tendency to distraction in all service, blessed though it be in its place. All of us have some service given us to do for Christ—it would be sad—indeed if we were in a position that we had nothing to do for Him—the great point is the way

it is done. What is needed is the quietness of communion so as to go out from Himself, and then to return to Himself. There are those who work, thinking thereby to get into communion. They can never know or enjoy it this way. All real service must flow from communion: then it is Christ and Christ's thoughts. It is a wonderfully blessed thing to get outside the influences of the world, as well as our own hearts, into His thoughts. Nothing is so terribly soul-devastating as the influence of "the age of this world;" we must be abstracted from the atmosphere through which we are passing, in order to have rest and power. Mary ministered to the heart of Christ, because she was in His secret. It is a blessed thing to be in the secret of Christ's heart, the secret of His love, and thus to be in communion with Him. Mary was as much in His secret when she sat and heard His word, as when she anointed Him with the ointment. When she sat and listened, He was molding her into His own mind and thoughts. Do we know how to be exercised as to whether we are in the secrets of Christ or not? Do we know what His desires, His longings are? What His heart is set on? We have a beautiful illustration of this in 2 Samuel 23:15. There was no command or direction here, no expressed desire; but there was a longing utterance of David's heart. "Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem!" David knew Bethlehem well; his heart pined for drafts from the waters of its well; he knew what was to be found there. Are we near enough to Christ, so abstracted from all around, as to wait at His feet with the attentive ear, and upturned eye, and outstretched neck, to catch the desires of His heart? Are we studying His pleasure, so as to do His will—not taking our own thoughts, but His thoughts, as to what would suit Him? In Mary we find one in the world who was in His secret as to His mission in it. She opened as it were a sanctuary for Him. She was but a poor thing in herself, but her ear was opened to catch the sounds of His voice, so as to receive what He was so ready to communicate. The Lord give us to know what it is to be drawn aside by the excellency and beauty of this blessed One, thus to sit before Him and study the secret of His heart and pleasure. Now turn to John 11. We get here the same town of Bethany, but devastated by death: it is a scene of everyday life in this world's history. The sisters are the same Martha and Mary, and their brother Lazarus, but death has come in: Blessed spot though it was, Bethany was no exception to the tale of sorrow that marks this world. As soon as death had come, we have Mary in the presence of Jesus uttering her need. There is the greatest difference between complaint and need. The need that waits upon His tailless is precious to Him. We find complaint in Martha, need in Mary, and she expresses it. In verse 32 we find her at the spot that was familiar to her heart—"she fell down at His feet." It was a well-known spot to Mary. Is it so with us? It is these little incidents that make the place where He meets with us, and we with Him, such familiar and blessed places to our souls. If you have got burdens, or difficulties, or anxieties resting on your heart, Do you know a spot so familiar to you, where you can come and leave them? She does not come complaining, but casts herself at His feet, and spreads her sorrow in the presence of divine fullness—a broken heart in the presence of the Healer of hearts. What a scene! If we look at it on His part, we see how He enters into everything as to what had caused the sorrow as well as the sorrow itself. He bore it in His spirit before God. Human sympathy is only the expression of our helplessness and weakness; it is all we can do; but we find Christ meeting everything, groaning, weeping, carrying all in His spirit before God. Thus bearing it before Him in a way none other could do. Do you know how to study the groans and the tears of Jesus? He weeps at the grave; bears in His spirit the death that sin had brought in, though He was about to remove it by His power as Son of God, the quickener of the dead; yet this did not in any wise hinder His going underneath it all in spirit. His tears and His

groans were not His sorrow for the family, not like human sympathy for the loss of a common loved friend; He was there as the Lord of life and glory, the quickener of the dead, to raise Him up; but He first, as I have said, carries all in His own spirit before God. Am I speaking to some who are no strangers to need and sorrow? What do you do with those sorrows? What do you do with your cares? Blessed are the sorrows and cares that become opportunities of bringing us into the presence of the only One who is able to meet our every need. In this scene of John 11 we get not only the power of Christ, but Mary expressing her need in His blessed presence, and finding the expression of it enough.

Chapter 12. Here we have Mary again in the secret of Christ: She takes that which is most costly to her, and anoints the feet of Jesus. Two things are very striking here. First, she felt the enmity of man towards Christ; secondly, the expression of how she appreciated Him, when all hated Him, and when He was about to die. She felt the enmity and hatred of both Israel and the Gentiles towards Christ. We are all naturally selfish, engrossed with our own things. Oh, how little are we at leisure from self to be of like mind with Him! Her heart was free enough to think of the enmity of man towards Him, and she as well expresses her own love and appreciation of Him, and therefore she takes what is costly and valuable to her, and anoints His body for the burying, and by this action she as it were declares that if He dies everything in this world has lost its charm for her. She is in His secret; she knows He is about to die; consequently everything she has is as nothing to her; she buries her world with Him, all must go into His tomb. How much have our hearts laid hold of the glory of His person, of the blessedness of that Christ, the eternal Son, ever in the Father's bosom? Has He such a place in our hearts, that everything is esteemed and valued in relation to Him? Is He the simple measure of the value we set on all, even the best below? Here is a poor weak woman, ready to face the enmity of the people, because she enters into God's thoughts about His Son, when the thoughts of nearly all were very distant from His mind. There are hardly any who are independent enough to act simply, in reference to Christ; if you do, you must stand alone. If you are a benefactor of man, your labors will be noted.

If Christ is simply before you, filling the vision of your soul, if all you do is in reference to Him, if you are ministering to the pleasure of Christ, all the world will consider it "waste;" and, alas many of God's own children. What was it when she was blamed kept her heart? Three things. First, the blessed Lord understood her. How comforting to know that Christ understands me! It is wonderful comfort. Secondly, He vindicated her. Thirdly, He appreciated her. This kept her in the midst of the non-recognition of those who were half-hearted. There was no heart there to enter into what she was doing but Himself; no tongue to vindicate her but His. But He was enough! We want more of that holy boldness that is satisfied with Christ's vindication, more of that holy satisfaction which Christ's pleasure imparts, to take our stand on that platform of holy elevation—the Lord knows. His smile is enough, His vindication sufficient for me. Thus we find Him communicating to Mary in Luke 10; His fullness waiting on her need in John 11; and in chapter 12 she was in sympathy with Him as to what was then before His soul. We find in Luke 24. He ascends out of this world from Bethany, the spot with which He was most linked in all its varied memories; it was to Him, as it were, the brightest spot on earth, an oasis in a howling wilderness; there and there alone this blessed perfect Man had turned and found solace; but this is the spot from whence He departed when He left the earth. Think of the character this fixes upon the earth; if He left it from the place that was to Him the brightest spot upon it, if any place could be called bright, it marks this earth at

once. Its best had become but the platform of His departure out of it. What a sight this, the risen, glorious Man, who has triumphed over everything, going down under the ocean of judgment, forsaken of His God on the cross, now risen out of those depths into which His undying love had led Him. What a sight for faith Himself leading His disciples to the place that was familiar to His heart, the only spot where He had ever found refreshment as the weary stranger on earth, and to gaze at Him as He ascends from thence and is carried up into heaven. But first, how blessed to hear Himself pronounce their peace, thus quieting their fears, answering their troubled hearts (vss. 36-40); then the very hands that were pierced and nailed to the cross were lifted up in blessing, and from those uplifted hands what showers dropped upon them. Blessed it is to think that His very last act was blessing. The last they saw of Him was commanding the shower to flow from Himself. Have we hearts free enough to follow the departing One through such scenes? And as we follow, do we find ourselves carried up and away to heaven with Him who has gone from this earth? Thank God, though He is not here, we know Him, in heaven. Are our hearts familiar with Him there? Can we say, "I have gained Him in heaven if I have lost Him on earth, I am one with Him there?" Thus it is you miss Him here, thus alone His absence makes the earth a desert to you. There are two ways of looking at this poor earth. First, because of what is in it—sorrow, difficulty, and trouble of every kind; but secondly, and mostly, because of His absence. This makes it a far more real desert scene to the heart that knows and loves Him. If He is our object, we must miss Him as we move on through time; but if we know Him in heaven, the world is a dreary, desolate spot to us, because He is gone out of it. If He has left it from the very place where He alone found any response to His heart and affections, what sort of a world must it be with this appraising of it? May the Lord by His Spirit give us to hear Him speaking "peace" through His risen lips, and likewise to know the blessing that drops from His outstretched hands, so that we may know what it is to be in the secret of His heart, by having every affection of ours centered in Him.

W. T. T.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: of Whom Composed Concluded

But is there not, some may ask, anything in the Old Testament which refers to the church? Surely there is. For, although its then future existence was not made known, we can trace in the pages of the Hebrew Scriptures typical teaching about it, both as the bride of Christ, and as formed of believers from Jews and from Gentiles: There are personages in the Old Testament history who shadow forth in some way or other the Lord Jesus Christ. Of these we would here mention but two, Isaac and Solomon; the former, the type of the Lord as the risen one, and the heir of all things that belong to His Father; the latter as King of peace, and the King's Son who sits upon the throne of David. To Isaac Rebekah was brought as his bride, but not till Abraham had received him back, as it were, from the dead. Solomon had a bride—Pharaoh's daughter—connected in the closest way with the king, yet distinct from Israel, and who lived in a house prepared for her biller husband. She had part with him, yet was apart from Israel. Isaac with his wife, and Solomon with his, are both typical of Christ and the church. The former shadows out that it is, as risen, Christ has His Bride. The latter delineates the King's Son in His royal state in connection with Israel, yet in the closest possible way connected also with one, who has no part with the earthly people of God.

Besides this, we can trace out in Leviticus 23 something of the peculiar composition of the church which we have been considering. The feasts of the Lord therein described were important elements of Judaism; and Moses, in three out of the five books which bear his name, dwells at some length on them. In Deuteronomy 16 he describes the character of each of the three great feasts, as he sets forth the spirit in which they were severally to be observed. In Numbers 28:29 the special offerings for each Jewish festival, with their number, and accompanying meat-offerings and drink-offerings, are detailed at length. From this we learn, which of the feasts had reference only to Israel, and in which of them, that which they prefigured, concerned Gentiles as well. In Leviticus 23 Moses gives to Israel what may be called their ecclesiastical calendar, specifying the order in which the different festivals were to be kept, and the months and days appointed for their observance. So if we wished to understand the spirit in which any of the three great festivals were to be observed, we should turn to Deuteronomy 16 to find out. If any inquired about the number and character of the different offerings, Numbers 28:29 would supply the answer; and Leviticus 23 would be consulted as the sacred calendar, informing all of the time, and duration of each feast throughout the year. But to this arrangement there is one remarkable exception. Certain rites and sacrifices, connected both with the morrow after the paschal sabbath, and with the feast of first-fruits, are mentioned in Leviticus, but are passed over in Numbers. Now why is this? Is the omission intentional, or is it accidental? It cannot be regarded as accidental, because, though some offerings specially appointed for the feast of first-fruits are enumerated in Numbers, where we should have looked for them, the new meat-offering, only described at length in Leviticus, is just mentioned in Numbers, though without a word being added in explanation of it. Evidently the sacred writer supposed his readers were acquainted with what had been written in Leviticus about it. He had not forgotten it, nor, from the way he introduces it, can we suppose that he was

reminding his readers of it. He mentions that with which he and they were perfectly acquainted; but does not enter at length on the subject. The omission therefore, of special instruction about it from that, the forty-first section of the law according to the Jewish divisions of the Pentateuch, must have been intentional. Naturally we should have expected an account of it in Numbers, whereas we only learn about it in Leviticus. Had the Pentateuch been a mere human composition, would this arrangement have been met with? Had it been written by Moses simply with an eye to Israel, and what then concerned them, would he have thus arranged it? Surely not. But, as God's book, written under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the subjects are treated of in God's order, and the wisdom of the divine plan becomes apparent. A glance at Leviticus 23 will make this plain.

And first, as to the new meat-offering presented to God at the feast of first-fruits. It was composed of two wave-loaves, as they are called, baked with leaven; these two loaves typifying those from Jews and those from Gentiles, who as Christians are together presented to God, a kind of first-fruits of His creatures (James 1:18). It was not the oneness of the body of Christ that they portrayed, but that of which the body is composed, the two companies which together make up the one flock of John 10. Baked with leaven, We learn that they represent saints still in their bodies on earth, and in whom the flesh exists. Made from the produce of the new harvest, we understand that they typify those, who are before God as risen with Christ; for the close connection of Christians with Christ is set forth in the fact, that the instruction about these two loaves is included in the same divine communication to Moses (Lev. 23:9-22), which contains the ordinance concerning the wave-sheaf, the type of the Lord Jesus Himself as risen from the dead. Waved before the Lord, we see that the saints are claimed for God. Thus these loaves typify what a Jew, as long as he remained a Jew, never was—a man on earth, yet risen with Christ. Typifying therefore those once Jews and those once Gentiles, brought to God on common ground, they speak of something really distinct from the earthly people, even the presentation to God of souls from Jews and Gentiles whom He can receive in connection with, and by virtue of, His acceptance of the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that whilst the Lo-ammi condition of Israel as a nation (Hosea is 9) has not terminated.

But further. The feast of first-fruits was typical of the whole Christian era, which, commencing with the day of Pentecost, goes on to the rapture of which 1 Thessalonians 4, has apprised us. It prefigured therefore the time between the rejection of the Lord by the Jews and their being gathered again to their land, to await His return previous to the commencement of millennial rest, of which the feast of Tabernacles is the type. As a feast of the Lord, it had its place in the sacred calendar; that is clear. But this chapter in Leviticus, besides serving as a sacred calendar for Israel, gives us an outline God's dealings with souls from. Exodus to the eternal state; hence God's ways on earth, when Israel nationally are disowned, but the godly remnant saved, are fitly traced out in this portion of the Word. And had they been here omitted, there would have been, we can see, a gap in the prophetic outline of God's ways. But who, at the time when Moses wrote the book, could have discovered that? God alone, we may surely say, then knew it.

The church then, we again see, was in the mind of God before it was presented to the eye of man; and as He divided to the nations their lot on earth with reference to His future dealings with Israel, so He guided Moses in the writing of His Word with reference to that subject of revelation, kept secret till revealed to Paul—the church of the living God (Eph. 3:3; Col. 1:25). And when the

wave-loaves were brought to Him and waved before Him, God looked on to that of which the Jews could never bear to hear—the presentation to Him of some, once Gentiles, on common and new ground with some formerly Jews. We may glory in this grace; yet let us remember that the thing waved was thereby publicly acknowledged as belonging to God. There is grace in being brought to God; there is responsibility in belonging to God.

C. E. S.

Expository Papers on the Romans

In the three first chapters of this epistle we find all the dreadful guilt and condition of man brought out. He has no righteousness of his own; his mouth is stopped, and he has become subject to the judgment of God. But now, in Romans 3:25, God sets forth Christ Jesus as a propitiation (mercy-seat, same word as in Heb. 9:5), the ground upon which He can meet the vilest sinner, and at the same time declare His perfect righteousness in justifying the believer. The word mercy-seat here is an evident allusion to “the great day of atonement” in Leviticus 16, when Aaron went into the holiest once a year, and sprinkled the blood on the golden mercy seat. In that chapter we have distinct things; the blood on the mercy-seat in verse 14, and the sins confessed over and borne by the goat in verses 21, 22, showing forth the double aspect of the death of Christ—propitiation, and substitution; or, as we get it in verses 8 and 15, “the Lord’s lot” and “the people’s lot.” It is most important for the soul to be clear upon this point; and the consequence of not seeing the difference between these two aspects of the death of Christ has been great confusion in the minds of many of the Lord’s people; therefore I do not think it would be out of place here to dwell a little upon the distinction between the two. Propitiation is Godward, “the Lord’s lot” —all the holy requirements of God’s nature perfectly met and satisfied by the work of Christ on the cross; and Leviticus 16:14 is a beautiful type of this.

The mercy seat was of pure gold (Ex. 25:17) and Aaron on that solemn occasion was to enter the holiest once a year, in a cloud of incense, which typifies the acceptableness and sweet savor of the person of Christ to God, and sprinkle the blood upon the mercy-seat. Gold in Scripture generally typifies divine righteousness; so how beautiful is the figure! the blood and the gold meeting. That is, divine righteousness fully met and satisfied by the blood. How true that was when the Lord Jesus offered Himself “without spot to God,” and His precious blood was shed at the cross. There all God’s holiness, His righteousness, the holy claims of His throne, were fully satisfied; and on the ground of this work the gospel can be proclaimed to every creature. The blood is shed, God is satisfied, and you may come; nothing could be freer or fuller. But now there is another side—substitution; that is, Christ bearing the sins of those who believe, and answering to God for them. We find this prefigured by the live goat in Leviticus 16:20-22. Aaron was to bring the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel and all their transgressions, and all their sins, putting them (the sins) upon the head of the goat, and the goat was to “bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited” (vs. 22).

Do you believe, dear fellow-believer, that Christ answered to God for all your sins upon the cross 1800 years ago? Do not speak of past, present, or future sins; for when Christ bore them they were all future, and Scripture never speaks in that way. No, if one of your sins was borne, they were all borne; not up to your conversion, as some would say, for in that case what about the sins committed after conversion? Christ would have to die again. “For then must He often have

suffered since the foundation of the world” (Heb. 9:26).

This truth seems to me to be so blessedly brought out in verse 21. We find the word all mentioned three times: “all the iniquities,” “all their transgressions,” “all their sins,” putting them (that is, all the sins) upon the head of the live goat. How wonderful! to think that if you are a true believer in Christ, you can say on the authority of Scripture, “God laid all my sins upon Christ 1800 years ago, and Christ bore the judgment of them in His own body on the tree.” This truth realized gives it a wonderful power for walk; for could you think of this, and then go and commit sin? God forbid.

Thus we have seen these two sides of the work of Christ—propitiation, and substitution. There might be propitiation, and not a sinner saved, for it is all God-ward; God’s holy nature satisfied. This we get in verse 25 of our chapter (Rom. 3); in chapter 4: 25 we get more substitution, which we may look at again, if the Lord will. In verses 25 and 26 we have unfolded in the fullest way this “righteousness of God,” which is the subject of this part of the epistle. First, God sets forth Christ Jesus as the mercy seat; then to declare His righteousness—that is, what God is in Himself, His perfect consistency with Himself. This righteousness is declared in a double way. First, for the remission (“passing over,” see margin) of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. This does not mean past sins of believers, as some have taken it; but that God passed by (or pretermitted) the sins that were committed before Christ had died; for instance, the sins of Abraham, David, Daniel; and the cross of Christ showed that He was righteous in so doing. The sins of Old Testament saints were passed by, on the ground that Christ was going to suffer.

Secondly (vs. 26), God’s righteousness is declared at this time (that is, since the cross), not in forbearing with sins, but “that God might be just, and the justifier of Him that believeth in Jesus;” a thing unknown in Old Testament times. What a wonderful truth this is to lay hold of; and yet one not generally understood. It is not said that God might be merciful and loving, and thus save the sinner; that is the human thought. Truly, God is merciful, and He is love; but here it is “that He might be just” (or righteous), and yet justify the one who believes in Jesus. Many a one has the thought, though they may not have expressed it, that God is a merciful God, and hence that since they have prayed earnestly for forgiveness, and rest upon what are called “the promises,” such as, “Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,” they may entertain a humble hope that they are forgiven; but at the same time they have a sort of fear that if they do not walk well, God will: again bring their sins to remembrance.

If that is your experience, dear reader, I would ask you to weigh prayerfully the wondrous truth contained in verse 26, that God is now “just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” God is truly love, and He so loved the world that He gave His Son to die; and on the cross, during those hours of darkness, the cry came to His lips, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Why indeed? What was the meaning of it? A righteous man at His life, forsaken: of God in His death? Ah! He was bearing the wrath and judgment of God against sin, and that to the very uttermost. God was satisfied, yea, glorified, by His atoning death; and now, on the ground of that death, God is just (just to the person and work of Christ), and yet justifies Him that believeth in Jesus.

How full this is. Suppose Christ had not died? God’s justice (or righteousness) would have been our utter condemnation; for who could stand and be judged by such a standard as the perfect righteousness of God? But now that Christ has died, God’s justice instead of being against us is in our favor; for God’s holy, righteous, claims have been so fully met at the cross, that God can say to

the one who believes in Jesus, "I have nothing to lay to your charge, I have nothing against you, you are righteous."

Suppose you owed a large sum of money, and had nothing to pay it with, and a kind friend paid it all for you, would it be just if your creditor was to come to you for the money again? Certainly not. So, if Christ has paid that mighty debt of sin on the cross, and you are a believer in Jesus, will God come and require it at your hand again? Impossible. His justice would be at stake; and what is more; He not only justifies the believer, but He delights to do it. Why it was the love of His own heart that provided the Lamb for the sacrifice, so that there might be a way by which He could justify the believer in Jesus. But there is no glory due to us; for it is all on the ground of the death of Christ; and God does not justify Him who does this or that, or tries to keep the law, but one who comes as a poor, worthless, hell-deserving sinner, having no righteousness of His own, but believing in Jesus.

It is beautiful to see that this is the ground the Apostle Paul takes in Philippians 3:8,9. After speaking of his counting all things loss, and suffering the loss of all things, he counts them but dung that he may win Christ, and be found in Him. On what ground? Because his was such a good walk? or because he was such a good servant? No. "Not having mine own righteousness, which is by the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." He takes the ground of Romans 3, no righteousness of His own, but found in Christ, on the ground of having God's righteousness; the same ground upon which the thief on the cross, the woman of Samaria, and the vilest sinner that ever lived, and you and I, will be in glory. "Where is boasting then? It is excluded." (Rom. 3:27) Of course it is; for who could boast upon such a ground as this? "By what law (or on what principle)? Of works? Nay: but by the law (that is, principle) of faith."

In verse 28 we have one of those magnificent conclusions drawn by the Apostle (or rather by the Holy Ghost) from what he has before been proving: "Therefore we conclude"—what? —a most important, weighty truth— "that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." How astonishing it is, in the face of such a plain Scripture as this, that there are to be found some who say that the way to be saved is to keep the law. It is equally true of the Gentile as of the Jew, that both are justified by faith before God. The great distinguishing feature of the Jews was, that they had the law. But this justification was "without the deeds of the law," and it was by faith; therefore it would admit the Gentile as well as the Jew. "Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also;" for both Jews and Gentiles are justified before Him on one common ground, that is, on the principle of faith: "Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law" (vss. 30, 31).

It might appear that the principle of justifying by faith would set aside the law and make it void; but, on the contrary, it "established the law:" its claims are fully recognized, and it is upheld in all its holiness, justness, and goodness; for the principle of justification by faith supposes what has been brought out in this epistle; namely, taking the place of being condemned under law, proved guilty, the mouth stopped, and owning the just sentence which the law pronounced on the sinner. Surely that would be establishing the law in all its force, and so much so, that, before we could be freed from its condemnation, the Son of God must die, and this is what faith owns.

F. K.

The Word of God: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear—

It is impossible to lay too much stress upon the importance and value of the Word of God. Love for it, indeed, should be a characteristic of every believer; and it were not too much to say that our growth in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is largely connected with it. Take for example Psalm 119, and you will see how it is bound up with every phase of the spiritual life of the psalmist. Some of his expressions might well humble us, as they reveal to us the place the Word occupied in his affections. He says, “I will delight myself in Thy statutes: I will not forget Thy Word;” again, “Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counselors;” and again, “I will delight myself in Thy commandments, which I have loved” (vss. 16, 24, 47). In still stronger language he exclaims, “O how love I Thy law it is my meditation all the day;” and once more, “love Thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” (vss. 97, 127). Job in like manner says, “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (23:12). And from that time to this the same characteristic has ever been found in all earnest, devout, and spiritual minds. I propose then to bring before you in this letter some of the many aspects in which the Word of God is presented, in relation to the believer.

1. It is the instrumentality of the new birth. “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth” (James 1:18). “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Peter 1:23). Our Lord teaches the same truth when He says that “a man must be born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5); for water is a well-known symbol of the Word.

2. As it is the instrumentality of the new birth, so is it also the proper aliment for the new nature. Peter thus says: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby,” (many copies add, “up to salvation”); “if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:2,3). Again we are told that “man doth not live by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live” (Deut. 8:3; Matt. 4:4). The Word therefore is the suited food and sustenance for the spiritual life, the means of our nourishment and strength in Christ, as we journey on through the wilderness, waiting for the Lord’s return, or to depart and be with Himself, which is far better. I say in Christ, because, as you know, Christ Himself is our food, both as the manna and the old corn of the land, and indeed, to go further back, as the lamb roast with fire (Ex. 12); but then it is only in the Word of God that He is unfolded to us thus in these several characters. If we would collect the manna for our daily use, we have to roam through the gospels and epistles, where we find Him especially presented to us in this aspect—as a humbled Christ in incarnation; and then, if I could feed upon Him as the old corn of the land, upon a glorified Christ, I am led to the epistles (for example, Col. 3; Phil. 3) which present Him as such to our souls. The Scriptures therefore are the green pastures into which the Good Shepherd would lead His flock.

It is our only guide. “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). So, when Joshua was about to lead Israel into Canaan, the Lord said unto him, “Only be thou strong and very courageous that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt Meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:7,8). So in the New Testament, as well as in the Old, the Word of God is everywhere indicated as our only guide as we pass through this tangled scene.

“Pillar of fire, through watches dark,
And radiant cloud by day;
When waves would wham our tossing hark,
Our anchor and our stay.”

(See Acts 20: 32; 2 Thess. 3:14; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:15; 1 John 2:27; Jude 3).

It is our means of defense against the temptations and wiles of Satan; hence it is called the sword of the Spirit (Eph. 6:17). We thus see in the temptation of our blessed Lord that it was His only weapon. To all the allurements which Satan presented to His soul—and he assailed Him through every avenue of approach, and in every character—He replied, “It is written.” From first to last, He never expressed a thought of His own, but rested for His defense entirely and alone upon the Word of God. Satan consequently was utterly powerless; he could not advance a single step; but, defeated at every point, he had to retire baffled and overcome. And he is as powerless today as then, when encountered in the same way. He cannot touch an obedient, dependent man. Would that every young believer, indeed all, whether young or old, might always bear it in mind!

It is the only standard of doctrine or practice. We have therefore to test everything presented to us by the Word. Thus in the letters to the seven churches we find in every case, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” They and their practices were alike to be measured by this infallible standard. In like manner, the Apostle Paul continually reminds those to whom he writes of their responsibility, of gauging everything by what he had taught. (See, for example, Gal. 1:8, 9; 1 Cor. 15:1-11; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:14).

6. It is the means of our practical holiness. Our Lord thus prays, when He presented His own before the Father: “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth.” (John 17:17) It is only indeed by constant application of the Word to ourselves, our walk, and our ways, that we are increasingly separated from evil; just as it is by the application of the Word through the Spirit that the Lord, as our Advocate with the Father, washes the feet of His own. This is the work which He in His grace has undertaken for us; but we must never forget the responsibility on our side of continually judging ourselves by the Word in the presence of God. How many a trial and chastening would be spared us if we were more faithful in this particular! “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). Thus the psalmist asks, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?” And the answer is, “By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Ps. 119:9). Again he says, “By the word of Thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the

destroyer" (Psa. 17:4). For it is only from the Scripture that we learn the will of God; and by the application of the Word in the power of the Spirit we are separated, on the one side, from that which is contrary to His mind, and we are brought, on the other, into conformity with it; and this being a constant process, we are ever attaining increasing holiness, the perfection of which is only found in the glorified Christ at God's right hand.

Last of all, I would remind you of the value which the Lord sets upon obedience to the Word. Take, for instance, the familiar scripture, "If any man love Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). See how large a blessing is made dependent upon our keeping His word; for it should never be overlooked that the love of the Father in this passage, and the Father and the Son coming to make their abode with us, are entirely conditional. Again, in the next chapter, He says, "If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love" (15:10). Once more, not to multiply citations, at the very close of the inspired record He says, "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 22:7). Thus He not only expects us to prize and treasure up the communications which He has deigned to make to us; but He also counts upon our hearts to delight in obedience to every word that has proceeded out of His mouth; yea, He has made obedience to be the highest expression of our love. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15).

From this rapid outline of some of the uses and some of our responsibilities in respect of the Word of God, you will at least recognize its supreme importance to the believer. Allow me, then, to make one or two practical observations which may be helpful to you and other young Christians. First of all, you will see the necessity of being familiar with the Scriptures. For instance, I could not repel a temptation, as the Savior did, unless I were acquainted with the scripture wherewith to meet it. In like manner, there might be many cases in which I should be led astray simply from not knowing that the Lord had revealed His mind in His Word. One of the first obligations, therefore, of the believer is to study the Word of God. "My son; if thou wilt receive MY words, and hide My commandments with thee; so that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of His mouth cometh knowledge and understanding" (Prov. 2:1-6). In this spirit you must search and systematically study the Scriptures, if you would be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3:17) I do not say, Read no other book; but I do say, Make the Bible your chief companion, and confine yourself as much as possible to those books which help you to understand it; for it should be the chief aim of every believer to be thoroughly conversant with the mind and will of God. Secondly, let me counsel you, if you read much, to meditate more. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." (Prov. 12: 27) He finds his pleasure in the chase, and once finding, obtaining, he is satisfied. It is thus with many in reading the Word. Their delight is in the acquisition of truth; and in this they rest, and thereby lose the blessing. In the scripture already cited, the Lord said to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night." (See also Psa. 1:2; 119:97; Prov. 22:17,18; 1 Tim. 4:15). For it is in meditation in the presence of the Lord that the sweetness, beauty, and power of the Word are unfolded to us. Never, therefore, lose an opportunity for meditation on the scripture you may

read. And, lastly, always remember your entire dependence upon the Spirit of God for the understanding of the Word. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God" (1 Cor. 2:11,12).

If you thus read the Scriptures, you will be led daily into increasing acquaintance with the truth, and thereby be drawn into closer fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ.

Believe me, dear —,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

A Song of Praise

“I will praise the name of God with a song.” - Psalm 69:30

“It came 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:... for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.” - 2 Chronicles 5:13, 14.

“The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” - John 4:23.

“Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” - 1 Peter 2:5.

“And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God.” - Revelation 19:1.

FATHER and God! to Thee

Our songs of praise ascend;

E'er long their eternal harmonies

The very skies shall rend;

But now 'tis minor tones we raise,

Thy children lisping forth Thy praise.

Father! we worship Thee,

Our very souls we bow;

Earth is forgotten while we gaze

Within the holiest now;

And in the radiance of this place,

With rapture look upon Thy face.

All thought of sin is gone,

It cannot enter here

Redemption's work is done,

It dissipates our fear.

Now in the worth of Christ we stand,
Offering the first-fruits of the land.
His blood has washed us white,
His beauty clothes us now;
And fit for Thine unsullied light
We stand before Thee now;
Blest in the liberty thus given,
To praise within an opened heaven.
Praise for the gift of Christ,
Thy well-beloved Son!
Praise for the Spirit who reveals
The Gift and Giver One!
All joy we have, or hope to see,
Is centered, blessed God, in Thee.
A. S. O.

Rich in Mercy

“GOD, who is rich in mercy”—rich in mercy. We have in the latter part of chapter 1 and beginning of chapter 2 God’s expression of His grace and mercy. The former contains the expression of His grace, and goes on to show, as the result of it, the expression which is in measure in contrast with it. The close of chapter 1 presents to us the person of the Son of Man sitting in heaven—the glorified Man. Wonderful to think there are those who are connected with Him; that there should be a people given to Him! In verse 18, the wealth of God’s inheritance in the saints is spoken of; almighty power is displayed in separating a people who believe in Himself in a marvelous way. In verse 20 to end, we have the man Christ Jesus sitting in heaven. He is looked at in chapter 1 as the servant of God, who can say, “my God.” The term Christ, or the Anointed, always applied to Him as man. God finds His infinite delight in this perfect servant, and in His service rendered. No other resting place could be found in which God could express His delight; and He brings Him up into His own eternal glory, places Him at His right hand, and draws the comparison between Him and every other, power, marking His superiority. He is the only perfect servant God ever had. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. God has set Him in a place by Himself. Both there and hereafter, no power is like His. All is put under Him.

God has assigned to Him a place of peculiar dignity and power; has made Him the Head of the church. One thought in my mind has been, that as children of God, as followers of Christ, we are not exercised about Him, occupied with Him, as we should be, about the glories of His person. If we could read each, we should. We have not adequate thoughts of the glories, belonging to the Lord Jesus. I believe the thoughts saints have of Him in this day are very limited. They are not brought up to the mark in the present day. What is wanted is a fuller apprehension of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is truly Man in the midst of all the eternal and divine glory of God; and there is everything in Him proper to the place that is given to Him as the just recompense of the reward for the service He has rendered. When God acted as Creator, and finished the work of creation, He rested, and man was called to rest with Him. Satan came in, death came in, and the counsel of God came forth, “the seed of the woman”. God’s Champion against Satan took the place of a servant; went thoroughly through the whole work; measured everything; was Himself the test of all. He went to the cross, and gave up the ghost, and God raised Him, and placed Him at His right hand as the object of His delight. God found His rest in Him. He has triumphed gloriously over every enemy. He has won the victory—He who had a right to judge the quick and the dead—by His humiliation and service. We ought to be familiar with that Lord who has thus brought us to and with Himself in divine glory. We have in Him that which holds our souls, and draws our hearts. Amazing subject—Man in divine glory! He who was the object of heaven’s worship became the perfect servant, and having accomplished the work, all is put into His hands.

In connection with His being Head of the church we get mercy introduced; we are called to turn from Him in His solitariness, to look from where those who form the assembly are brought; we have to turn from heaven and its brightness to earth and hell’s darkness (Chapter 2). You cannot draw a single characteristic of what you were save from these verses (1-3); all the good there is in

yourselves as descendants of the first Adam is recorded there: dead in Condition, and the walk according to the road that the world is traveling. The world is a system made up for man to be happy in, out of God's presence. (Gen. 4). Man sought, when sin and death came in, to amuse himself and wile away his time. This system has gone on ever since (world means a system) in different forms and phases. Look at this world, or system; you never find God or Christ in it; it is not for Him. If you put Christ on it, you cannot say it all looks of a piece. Nothing can be built on this earth and not get tainted by the root on which it is built. Do any doubt if this is true of themselves? that each of us is born belonging to a system that has nothing to do with God? I look at the Lord Jesus Christ as in Philippians 2. I see two marks: He was the free Son of God, and He never had a will. If I look at myself, was I free? No; I was the slave of lusts and passions. Was I will-less, like Him? No. What would you think even of a babe without a will? I remember my own babe when only three hours I said to the nurse, "Ah! that child has a will;" and before a week passed she could but own it too; even the movement of its little hand bespoke it. Christ had no will. Can anyone question for a moment whether you have a will? Don't you say, I like and I dislike? Did Christ say so? He said, "As My Father will, or will not." "Lo, I come to do Thy will." Even if it led Him to the cross, to bear the curse, only one will ruled Him—His Father's. Have you got a will that is so thoroughly curbed that you never have your own will? Are you never hasty with a servant? quick with your child? or impertinent to your father or mother?

Verse 3 takes up the Jews. If anyone wants a good these things I heard a great from verses 1-3; every stone there that looks bright you may take for yourself. Saul of Tarsus had nothing in himself to deserve any blessing. God's thought was to deal with the Son of His love. Will my Son go down and meet Satan, and take the curse upon Him die on the cross? Yes; He is the perfect, obedient one. Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honor. Then in these verses we get the contrast in, man; all the evil of nature, the world, and Satan is brought out. What can God do? He acts in His free grace towards the Son of His love, and mercy comes out, which is a different principle from grace. Grace is free gift. God took notice of the merits of His Son; mercy rather takes notice of demerit. Man deserves what? I can only say of myself, I deserve to be left alone. But there is an antagonistical principle in God to that; He is rich in mercy. He does not look for any good in the creature; He bestows His love freely. The Lord Jesus had watched Saul of Tarsus, and could see not a single good thing in him; but God is rich in mercy. It is very wonderful how slow the heart is to give God the whole glory that He set His love on us. Whenever any creature has to do with God, God must begin. People get occupied with their efforts, striving and doing; all right in its place, but it is only as the result of what God has been doing. How can a dead man begin in life? We must take care not to confound quiet, silent, workings of the conscience with being part of the old nature; it is a part of the new nature. It is not God letting men off, but He makes him who believes, one in life with the Lord Jesus Christ. If I have tasted God's mercy, what then? I am in life with the Lord Jesus Christ, quickened, raised, and seated with Him at God's right hand; I am a member in particular of His body. He has stooped low to where man was, and lifted him up into fellowship of life with the risen, glorified man, Christ Jesus.

It was the subject of mercy I wished to speak of. To my own soul it is very simple, when we see whence it comes from. It is an attribute of God Himself. There are two things about Satan in direct contrast to God. God cannot lie; Satan has been a liar from the beginning. God delights in creating; Satan in pulling everything to pieces: he has pleasure in destroying. If we take the

question of mercy, whence came it? Who but God can look in upon the universe, and pick up things He finds in a state that He hates and abhors? What is the measure of His delight? He has raised Him, and set Him at His own right hand, and you in Him— “you,” He says, “who have identified yourself with my arch-enemy, Satan; you who have everything about you I hate and abhor.” Who could speak thus but He? Could Satan? No. Man? No; none but God Himself, and He only. It is a proposal that is utterly impossible to any but Himself; but He made the Perfect One sin, who knew no sin. Mercy is an attribute of God Himself, part of the character of God which showed out when sin came into the world. In Romans 9:14 we find it clearly and guardedly stated; verse 16 guards it: blessing is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth.” Man says, “I will, I run, and so I get blessing.” No; that is not the way; mercy is the root, after mercy follows will, then the running, then the doing His commandments.

In Exodus 33 two things are brought out. We get first the occasion on which mercy is shown, and then the root—mercy. God takes Israel out of Egypt, God comes down to deliver them, their troubles increase, and what are they occupied with? Not with God’s purpose of delivering, but with the increase of their toil. God brings them out of Egypt, the people turn their back on God while Moses is in the mount. The jewels, the earrings of the women, are put into a furnace, and out comes a calf. Could they more distinctly renounce Jehovah? It was only a few days after they came out of Egypt, and had seen God’s delivering power for them. We cannot conceive anything worse than this, to say to God, “We have done with you.” (vss. 2-9) “The ground of my dealings with Israel shall be a thorough known ground.” I own this word is to me one of the strongest expressions of God’s prerogative, to do as He pleases. “They may dance before their calf, and put Me aside; but I am God, who have a right to do as I please. I will.” People may call it His sovereignty. Its absoluteness, people say, does not put me on this ground with God. But stop a bit! Do you know God when you say you don’t like to be put on His character? If Satan could say will, there is an end to everything—he a liar and a destroyer. What an awful thing to have to depend on the absoluteness of a being who likes destruction! If, instead of a liar and murderer, it is God who says I will, it is enough. Do you know Him? Then you are not afraid to trust Him. The angels themselves thoroughly understand there is no fountain of goodness, mercy, or compassion save in God Himself. Would you like to direct God as to your daily path? to direct Him how to bless you? Would any created intelligence have proposed to God the way whereby He can bless? Would you desire to direct Him as to the ordering the circumstances of your path? or do you doubt the perfection of His goodness? that He is the only one who has a right to say, I will? “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” “Though Israel My people danced before the calf they made, and set Me aside, I will bring them back, because I have a heart for them. I will stoop down to them.” The motive was from inside His own bosom. Is God to be the only being who is never to please Himself? He has a right to do as He will.

People often speak as though God had no character. He chooses to take the lead, and it is for us to be dropping into the wake of God’s thoughts and plans, and to leave everything with Him, to Him, and to Him alone; this is the path of blessing. Moses got hold of it. It is not only a declaration made to Moses, but a principle laid down on which He acts, and a principle on which Israel, as a nation, will be brought back another day. In chapter 34 we find a yearning, pitifulness, patience in looking at that which He means to accomplish; chapter 33 brings out the condition they were in; chapter 34, the character of God. “In Me is their help.” Our character as Christians will not get its

proper development unless this character of God, as God of mercy, is before us. What is the proof I am not deceived? I can look right up into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, and say, "Thou dost not look as if Thou hadst a will to curse me—the Father has put Thee there as the Savior of the lost." I say, "I am ruined in myself. I cannot look at the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne, and let a shadow of question remain on my mind as to my safety." He is my safety, if I am a lost one. The God of mercy and compassion will never reject me; but God cannot allow the soul to rest on anything but God Himself. The Lord Jesus is on the throne, picking up poor sinners. His character is the same today; it is nothing altered! If we knew each other intimately, and had been in company with Paul or these Ephesian Christians, what a contrast should we find between ourselves and them! They were clean out of the world. Christ who had gone up to heaven had carried their hearts away. What a difference between them and Christians now! People will say the world is altered. Is Christ altered? Is the Holy Ghost altered? If faith were simple in the soul that is brought to him, we should be truer Nazarites. There would be a savor of God, of Christ, of heaven, of eternity, as we walked through the world, not talking about it, but as those whose hearts Christ had carried away with Him. If you set me beside those Ephesian Christians you would be constrained to say, "Bound up in the same bundle of life with them; but where is the power, the heavenly-mindedness?" They thought of nothing from morning to night but the Father's pleasure in heaven. Nothing will work it in us like grasping this principle in which God took us up at first. All of our Own washed out, all that is connected with us. When I go to glory I shall leave all my circumstances behind. We want to be Nazarites, as those who know His love. May we each say, "Let us be out and out for Him." If we would be living for God and for Christ, we must let this truth into our souls. God is the only source, the Lord Jesus Christ the only channel, and the Holy Ghost the only power. Let us seek more subjection to this blessed truth, to the joy of our hearts, and the praise of His grace.

G. V. W.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Unity of the Spirit

“Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Such is the word of exhortation addressed by the Apostle Paul to Christians in the Epistle to the Ephesians (Eph. 4:3). Then this of which he writes concerns Christians. As an exhortation, it acquaints us with God’s desire for His children; but at the same time it indicates, that we are in danger of not keeping the unity here mentioned.

Now the wisdom of this exhortation, and the positive need of it, has been abundantly manifested from that day to this. If we look at the state of Christendom, notably since the Reformation, but also before it, do we not learn from the pages of ecclesiastical history, how this not merely apostolic, but divine injunction has been sadly and systematically forgotten? Had it been remembered, and acted upon, one local assembly would never have been permitted to arrogate to itself control, by means of a local officer, over the actions and government of other assemblies, as the assembly at Rome has done, claiming for its bishop (a mere local officer, according to Scripture) jurisdiction over all the assemblies in Christendom. Had the apostolic injunction been practiced, the question of precedence among what are called patriarchal sees would never have arisen. In the place of striving for pre-eminence, they would all have been jealous for the maintenance of the unity of the Spirit. Again, had the unity of the Spirit been understood, the rise of denominations in this country and elsewhere would have been checked, and the oneness of the body of Christ asserted, and upheld.

Unmindful of the existing unity of the Spirit, those in earlier days who had power and influence exerted it to organize the church of God somewhat after the manner of the political administration of the Roman empire. Their acts prove how completely men had lost sight of the unity of the Spirit, and were substituting human organization for the authority of the divine Word, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. What a monstrous assumption this was on the part of professing Christians! The sovereign action of the Holy Ghost was superseded, and His real presence ignored; and God’s house, God’s temple, received at the hands of His servants a constitution of man’s devising! The Reformation afterward took place. Many abuses were corrected, false doctrine on some important points was rejected truth was disseminated in a way it had not been for ages; but the Scripture teaching about the church was not discerned, or if by any discerned, it was not acted upon. It did not apparently dawn on men’s minds that God should direct as to the government of His house; for, whilst differing among themselves as to the form of church government, they all assumed that to man was left the power, and authority of organizing the church of God.

Brought up in one or other of those forms of man’s devising, as most readers of this paper have been, and with the different schemes of church government in active operation around us, it becomes none of us, who through grace have been led to take a place outside of them, to point the finger at those who still adhere to, and uphold them. Rather be it our part, whilst keeping aloof from denominational ground, and helping others to see the solemn mistake of countenancing it, to be humbled at the recollection that we, however well intentioned, once helped on that which must

in God's eyes savor of the grossest presumption; for it is presumption to suppose that God has left His house without any directions for its government. It is presumption for the servants of God practically to depose the Holy Ghost from His place in the assembly, who has formed the unity which they are admonished to keep. What then is here contended for is not the liberty of any number of Christians to act as they will in the church of God, a principle to which Scripture is wholly opposed; nor is it the liberty of private judgment which is insisted on, though we are individually responsible for our actions, and will be judged as individuals, but the positive duty of every Christian to submit in matters of church organization to the teaching of God's Word, and to acknowledge the presence in the assembly of the Holy Ghost, who divides to every man severally as He will (1 Cor. 12:11).

Now what is it which Christians in general desiderate? Is it the manifestation of a oneness, the fruit of brotherhood? Is it the oneness of communion? Or is it the oneness of the Spirit? All these are to be valued, and short of them all we should not any of us rest content. Would any settle down satisfied with manifesting the first? Then surely such have not entered into the mind of the Lord, as expressed to His Father on the night before His crucifixion. Would any remain unconcerned about the last? Then they would fall far short of God's desires for them.

Now the unity arising from brotherhood is nothing new. A Jew could speak of it, and Israel under David and Solomon must in measure have enjoyed it. The psalmist writes of it: "Behold, how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psa. 133:1). All will echo this. The fruit of a tie formed by birth (for "brethren" the psalmist writes of) reminds us that those here contemplated are members of one family, bound together by that bond which nothing can sever, and which no circumstances can really alter. One's brother must remain in that relation whatever may be the vicissitude of his affairs, or the character of his ways. The elder son in the parable was reminded that the prodigal was his brother (Luke 15:32). The Thessalonian Christians were exhorted to count the saint their brother, even though he were walking disorderly, and not subject to the Word. Admonition under such circumstances would be needed. That was not to be spared; but the spiritual birth-tie existed, and was to be remembered. Of this they were reminded for their guidance in circumstances, when there was the greatest danger of forgetting the link that God had formed between them. (2 Thess. 3:11-15).

Of course the birth-tie of which the psalmist wrote was one after the order of nature. By-and-by Israel will fully enjoy what the writer describes, when the brotherhood between Israel and Judah, so long broken, shall be again owned, as Ezekiel (37:15-22) has predicted. On the other hand, the tie of which Christians can speak is after a different order altogether (John 1:13). Still the statement of the psalmist will always hold good. It is good, it is pleasant, for brethren to dwell together in unity; yet this oneness, it is clear, may not always be manifested or enjoyed. It depends on the condition of those who, being brethren, ought to dwell together as such. As brethren, children of the same Father, Christians ought to dwell together in unity. Viewing their unity in this aspect, it is the family relationship, and what should flow from it, that rises up before the mind. Have we to speak of nothing else? The New Testament furnishes us with a decisive answer to the contrary. To that let us now turn.

The Lord Jesus Christ on the night before His crucifixion addressed His Father in the audience of His disciples. About to leave those whom He had drawn around Him during His ministry upon

earth, He allowed the disciples to hear what was the nature of His desires on their behalf; and looking forward to the spread of the work which He had commenced, He embraced in the range of His petition every saint who should believe on Him through their word. "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." (John 17:21) His prayer for oneness supposes both their need of it, and the danger there might be of their not enjoying it.

He does not ask that the oneness of brotherhood should be formed; that takes place by birth. He asks that the oneness of communion should exist and be seen, explaining what He means by the illustration He adduces: "As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee." The Father in the Son, and the Son in the Father, there must be between these two perfect communion. No thoughts, no desires, has the Son which are opposed to the Father; no thoughts has the Father which are not in full accord with the wishes of the Son. This oneness of communion He desired for His people. They would in this manner be one, and the world would believe that the Father had sent the Son. Of this character of oneness Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1:10), and presses earnestly on the Philippians (Phil. 2:2; 4:2).

Now the continuance of this oneness depends on the condition of the saints. Communion one with another, as we but too well know, may be easily interrupted and broken. The nature capable of enjoying it Christians possess; but they have also a nature strongly opposed to it. Hence the oneness the Lord prayed for depends on the state of the saints. His wish about it is plain; the result of it as regards the world He also declares. The world could take cognizance of it, and be affected by it. One in the Father and in the Son, there would be amongst God's people real and perfect communion. There is, however, a third oneness of which the Word treats, and treats in a different way. It did not form the subject of the Lord's petitions on the night before His cross. It did not then exist; for it had not been formed, and could not be formed, till the Lord had gone on high. It does, however, exist now; because the Holy Ghost has made it, by baptizing all believers into one body. It is of this Paul wrote, when he exhorted believers to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

In the gospel, where the Lord explains His meaning, He speaks of the Father and of Himself. In the epistle, where the unity of which the Apostle writes is to be defined, it is called the unity of the Spirit. Of course it is only by the Holy Ghost acting in us that we can manifest oneness of communion. To illustrate it, however, we are reminded of the Father and the Son, between whom there was, there is, perfect, uninterrupted communion; for the Father is in the Son, and the Son is in the Father. By being one in the Father and in the Son, the saints would manifest a oneness of the same character. In Ephesians, on the other hand, there is nothing of all this. There is a unity mentioned as existing, which they are exhorted to keep. For oneness and maintained, prayer was made by the Lord on our behalf. When the keeping the unity of the Spirit is the subject in hand, exhortation, not prayer, is immediately called forth.

Now this of which Paul writes is not oneness of spirit. Often it may have been mistaken for that. To view the exhortation in that light is really to confound what the Lord prayed for with that of which the Apostle here writes. How could oneness of spirit be maintained except in the bond of peace? The words of the Apostle, however, suppose there may be a difficulty in this keeping it; for he writes, "Endeavoring to keep it in the bond of peace." One body formed by one Spirit existed, and

all true believers belonged to it. They did not themselves originate the unity, nor could they break it; but they were to keep it in the bond of peace. Its formation, its continuance, are both independent of the spiritual condition of God's saints, though none but real saints can form part of it. It concerns them then very closely, for they are the body of Christ, and God's habitation in the Spirit.

Into the closest of associations believers are therefore now brought. One new man in Christ, the body of Christ, God's habitation now in the Spirit, stones too of the temple of God which is in process of erection—these are the terms used by the Holy Ghost of those, once dead in trespasses and sins, who have been quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. As new creatures in Christ, they are brought into this unity; whilst the old man, the flesh, is still within them. Hence exhortations are added that they should “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” For a position of such close relationship calls for much consideration and activity of love one towards another. The fact that we are exhorted, proves we may fail in acting aright. The burden of the exhortation indicates what should characterize each one of us. Care, thoughtfulness, forbearance, love, should, be manifested; but at the same time the saints are never to forget that unity which the Holy Ghost has formed; nor is the keeping of it to be sacrificed to the maintenance of friendliness, or what is miscalled love; for the love of God will not be manifested unless we keep His commandments (1 John 5:3). In this way, then, are we to endeavor to keep it.

Now the term, the unity of the Spirit, points to that with which He is in a special manner connected, even the body, which He has formed, according to 1 Corinthians 12:13. If, then, we are to keep it, the common idea of agreeing to differ on matters of church organization must evidently be abandoned. Nor that only; for the exhortation leaves us no choice, no alternative, but to own, and, as far as in us lies, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. For since the component parts of that unity are those in whom the flesh still exists, the reminder of the uniting bond of peace is not without significance and use. And since this unity exists, Christians should learn about it; for how can we endeavor to keep that which we do not know exists?

But is this what all are desirous of? It is no secret that there is the unconsciousness in many a heart that Christians are not practically united as they might be, and should be. One they are before God, members of the one body, being united by the Holy Ghost to the one Head, baptized by Him into one body. All ideas, then, of merely acknowledging that we are one, without seeking practically to own it in God's appointed way, are clearly not in harmony with God's will or God's Word. How, then, shall we correct what is wrong? By forming some new union? By maintaining denominational ground? Clearly neither of these expedients is right. We are to keep what the Holy Ghost has formed, and to endeavor to do it in the bond of peace. To form a church, or to organize a union, is virtually to fly in the face of God's injunctions for His people. To attempt to make something for the uniting together of God's saints is virtually to disown what the Spirit has already done. To continue on denominational ground, when once we see it to be wrong, is openly to ignore what has been formed, and to hinder ourselves and others from keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

C. E. S.

Prayer: Letters to Young Believers

My Dear —,

There remains only one other subject to bring before you in this present series of letters. In the last I directed you to the importance of the Word of God, and now I desire to speak of prayer and its connection with the spiritual life. These two—the Word of God and prayer—are ever conjoined. It was so in the blessed activities of the life of our Lord. After a long day of ministry we find such a record as this, “And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed;” and again, “It came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” (Luke 5:16; 6:12). So, too, when the difficulty arose in the Pentecostal church concerning the distribution of the offerings of the saints, the Apostle said, “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables... We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.” (Acts 6:2-4). Paul likewise unites the two things in his description of the whole armor of God; for no sooner has he said, “And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,” than he adds, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” (Eph. 6:17, 18).

We have, moreover, direct exhortations to prayer; as for example, “Continuing instant in prayer;” “Pray without ceasing.” (Rom. 12:12; 1 Thess. 5:17. See also Luke 18). And if you read the introductory parts of Paul’s epistles you will see how he embodied his own exhortations. As you trace his path, as recorded for us in the Acts, you would think that he never did anything else than preach; but if you read these parts of the epistles you would almost think that he never did anything else than pray. Approximating to the example of our blessed Lord in his unwearied labors, he found, yea, he learned, the need of constant waiting upon God. In like manner, prayer is a necessity for every child of God. For we are in ourselves weak and helpless, entirely dependent; and prayer is but the expression of our dependence on Him to whom we pray. Dependent upon God for everything, our very needs urge us into His presence; and having liberty of access through Christ, because of the place we occupy, and because of the relationship we enjoy, we “come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16).

1. Our Lord teaches what should be, so to speak, the manner of our prayers. Speaking to His disciples of the time when He should be absent from them, He says, “Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do;” and again, “If ye shall ask anything in My name I will do it (John 14: 13, 14). Two things are here involved. The name of Christ is our warrant to come before God, before the Father, reminding us that our title of approach is in Christ alone. And surely this gives us confidence. If we were to think only of ourselves, our failures and unworthiness, we should never venture into God’s presence; but when our eyes are directed to Christ, what He is in Himself, what He is to God, and what He is to us, and remembering that we appear before God in all His infinite acceptability, we are made to understand that God delights in us—in our approach, in our cries and prayers. We thus are encouraged to draw near to God, and to pour out our hearts before Him

in every time of trial or need.

But asking in the name of Christ is more than having a title through His name; it is, indeed, to appear before God with all the value and authority of that name. If, for example, I go to a bank and present a check, I ask for the value of the check in the name of him by whom it is drawn. So when I appear before God in the name of Christ, I present my supplications in all the value of that name to God. Hence it is that our Lord says, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it," because, indeed, it is the joy of the heart of God to grant every request that is so preferred. The promise is absolute, without any limitation; for the simple reason that nothing could be asked in the name of Christ which was not in accordance with the will of God. For we could not use His name for any request which was not begotten in our hearts by His own Spirit.

2. In the next chapter our Lord gives us further teaching on the same subject. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (John 15:7). We may connect with this another scripture: "And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." (1 John 5:14). Here it is according to the will of God, thereby excluding everything which is not of this character.

But our Lord says, "What ye will;" and this brings before us a very important aspect of prayer. In this case it is conditional: "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you;" that is, abiding in Christ, ever remembering our dependence upon Him for everything, that without Him we can do nothing; and His words abiding in us, molding us after His own mind, forming Himself in us, we of necessity express His own thoughts and His own desires, and consequently "what we will" must, in such a case, be "according to His will" It will be seen, at the same time, that the power of our prayers depends upon our spiritual condition. This is an unfailing principle. It is stated by John: "If our heart condemn us not, [then] have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:21, 22). James also tells us, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16). This is of all importance; for neglecting our spiritual state, and thereby losing present communion with God, our prayers become cold and lifeless, degenerate into a repetition of known truths or old phrases, and thus, losing all significance, pass over into dead forms. The words are uttered to satisfy conscience; but expressing no heartfelt needs, and no outgoings of soul after God, they find no response, and bring down no blessing. Beware of such a state, which is often the commencement of the backslider's path, and which, unless checked by the grace of God, will land the soul in open shame and dishonor to the name of Christ.

3. The uses of prayer are manifold. In the first place, the Lord has associated us with Himself in all His own desires. Yea, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3) God therefore counts upon our love to have fellowship with all that is dear to His own heart. He has made His interests ours; and consequently He would have us enter into and make these the object of our prayers. What a privilege! To be permitted to range through all His purposes as revealed to us in the Word; to watch with delight their unfoldings; to behold them all centering in, and radiating from; the person of His Christ, as well as bringing back a revenue of glory to His name! Truly if we are enabled to enter at all into this wondrous position, by the power of the Spirit, we shall lack neither subject for; nor motive to, prayer.

Then, too, we may express in prayer all the manifold needs of our own souls. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6,7). This word is the more remarkable from the fact that it is found in the very chapter in which the Apostle assures us, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (vs. 19). Still, notwithstanding this blessed confidence, God would have us, with all the freedom of children, to make known to Him our requests; and though He does not promise to grant them in every case, He yet assures us that His peace shall guard our hearts. It is in this way, indeed, that confidence is established in our intercourse with God, that the priceless habit is formed of having no reserves with Him, and that intimacy of communion is cultivated. It is in accordance with this that the psalmist cries, "Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him" (Psa. 62:8); and that Peter says, "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." (1 Peter 5:7).

4. It should be added that the Word of God lays great stress upon the connection of faith with prayer. Our Lord says, "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." (Mark 11:24) James also, after his exhortation to ask wisdom of God, says, "Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (1:6) and again, he tells us that "the prayer of faith shall save the sick." (vs. 15) So too in the Hebrews we read, that "without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh" (that is, draws near) "to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." (11:6) This is easy to understand; for surely God has a right to count upon our confidence in His love, our trust in His character, and our belief in His word, since He has so fully revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son. To doubt, therefore, as we approach Him, would be to dishonor His name. And just as He counts upon our confidence and faith, He would have us count upon His faithfulness and love. As our blessed Lord reminds His disciples, "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him." (Matt. 6:8). And as Paul teaches us, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). Thus the gift of His own Son, inasmuch as it was His greatest gift, and the most perfect pledge of His love, is the foundation on which we may rest in the full assurance that He not only will not withhold any good thing from us, but that He will delight to bless us according to His own heart, and according to His own knowledge of our need.

5. Once more, all true prayer must be in and by the Holy Spirit. (See Rom. 8: 26, 27; Phil. 3:3; Jude 20). Indeed, He is the power for prayer, as He is for every activity of the spiritual life. We are thus utterly dependent upon the Lord Jesus for access to God, upon the Holy Spirit for power to pray, and upon God for the blessings we seek. To His name be all the praise!

But I will not pursue the subject further. You will, however, permit me to urge upon you perseverance in prayer. Rules on such a subject—as to times and frequency—we have no right to make or impose. Still of one thing be very sure—you, cannot be too much in prayer. And if you dwell in the presence of God, you will find both the heart and occasion for prayer. Our responsibility is to pray without ceasing, maintaining uninterruptedly the consciousness of dependence, and our need of divine grace. Thus we shall be always cast upon God, always enjoy liberty of heart in His presence, and consequently be always finding, in the constant reception of mercies, grace and blessing in answer to our cries, new themes for thanksgiving and praise.

Believe me, dear—,

Yours affectionately in Christ,

E. D.

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