

CHRISTIAN FRIEND VOLUME 5

by Unknown

A collection of articles and writings from Christian Friend Volume 5, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

69 Chapters

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Christian Friend Volume 5

Accepted in the Beloved

What words of sweetness, and of grace and love,
To such as we, once full of enmity;
Our Father speaks them from His home above;
Accepted in the One Beloved are we.
“Accepted,” Lord; not now far off, but near,
Near to Thyself, and grace and love are poured
On us, and so we have no thought of fear;
Accepted thus, how could we fear, O Lord?
But that is not enough for Thy deep, heart;
Accepted are we, but Thou addest still;
“In the Beloved” is our wondrous part,
That is the word our cup of joy to fill.
“Accepted in Thy Christ” would have been much;
“In Jesus,” what a portion that would be!
But no! Thy heart of love to us is such,
“In the Beloved” alone has suited Thee.
Our Father, let us occupy this place
In living power, that Thou be glorified;
Walk here as being there, brought there by grace,
So happy there we here need naught beside.
A.

The Approbation of the Lord

It should be joy to anyone who loves the Lord Jesus to think of having His individual peculiar approbation and love; to find that He has approved of our conduct in such and such circumstances, though none know this but ourselves who receive the approval. But, beloved, are we really content to have an approval which Christ only knows? Let us try ourselves a little. Are we not too desirous of man's commendation of our conduct? or, at least, that he should know and give us credit for the motives which actuate it? Are we content, so long as good is done, that nobody should know anything about us — even in the church to be thought nothing of? that Christ alone should give us the "white stone" of His approval, and the "new name which no man knoweth save only he that receiveth it"? Are we content, I say, to seek nothing else? Oh, think what the terrible evil and treachery of that heart must be that is not satisfied with Christ's special favor, but seeks honor (as we do) of one another instead! I ask you, beloved, which would be most precious to you, which would you prefer, the Lord's public owning of you as a good and faithful servant, or the private individual love of Christ resting upon you, the secret knowledge of His love and approval? He whose heart is specially attached to Christ will respond, "The latter." Both will be ours, if faithful; but we shall value this most; and there is nothing that will carry us so straight on our course as the anticipation of it.

J. N. D.

A Bunch of Grapes

May we so trust the love of God, the faithfulness of God, that we may have courage to say, “Show me Thy way;” faith in the full delight of God to bless us, so that we may do His will, even if it be the loss of everything; our souls so intimate with God that we may seek His way, and nothing else.

If you have only got faith to walk in the path of God, you will find He has a plan and counsel through it all. If our hearts have courage to do God’s will, all will turn out for blessing; we do not know how, but the secret thing is going on that faith has to get hold of. If I am walking in a straight path, the power of God is pushing me on; but if I am walking in a cross path, the power of God tumbles me over—it finds out that I am not going straight. It is a great thing to be in the path of God’s will, for I have all the power of God at my disposal. If you walk in the path of God’s will, absolutely God makes everything work together for your good. You cannot get a thing that is out of the power of God, though it may be He chastens us if crossing His path.

The soul that has got Christ for His own sake has Him when it wants Him only grace can accept what puts down self, and accept it unqualifiedly. The things that ruffle me show that my heart has got self in it.

We never lose if God puts us into trial, and we need never be afraid if there is faithfulness.

Are we really giving up self? The chain breaks in the link nearest our own hearts. Christ gave up everything for us: may He give us a sense of that love which makes us dear to Himself; abiding in it; making Him everything and self nothing.

We do not think there is harm in a thing we like: the front of it is pleasure, but the back of it is sin.

The Christian’s rule of life is to be like Christ — the only rule he has, and we find the details of it in Scripture. We have to seek such power of Christ over the affections, that we are longing and striving to be like Him; and there is joy in that kind of activity—the heart growing naturally like Him in real spiritual diligence—occupied with Him. Not satisfied with merely avoiding evil, you must be occupied with it to avoid it; but when the heart is full of Christ, evil looks like evil—you see it in its true character; if not, it looks like a bauble.

When Satan is resisted, he knows flesh will not resist him; he has met Christ. Certain things have power over my heart and mind, things I cannot free myself from: Satan has his claw in my flesh, then I have to cry to the Lord.

J. N. D.

The Calmness of Christ in the Presence of Evil

What is so profoundly interesting to us in this chapter is, that we get what was in the mind of Christ. His Spirit gives this wonderful moral picture of immense value to us — perfect calmness, and real power. His soul is going through that which is coming upon Him, so that when He had to deal with other persons He is never disturbed. We see in Him what it is so hard for us to have—not indifference, not the least stiffening of His mind against it; but so with His Father about it, that there is not the smallest trace of disturbance in His spirit, no indifference or stiffness of heart, but the soul reached by the sense of what is upon Him. We have to trace in ourselves a certain hardness or indifference, unable to be free from the effects of it; and so turn from it, “sleeping for sorrow,” or take a sword, or take to flight.

It is beautiful for us to see Him feeling everything perfectly as a Divine Person. He learned obedience by the things that He suffered. The world never in that sense possessed Him. Two things marked Christ — obedience and dependence, prayer and doing the Father’s will. In Peter we see no obedience and no dependence, but confidence in nature. Two characteristics marked him; he does his own will, and there is no dependence on the Lord. With the Lord Jesus there was the going through the difficulties with God; and when they came, quietness and such perfect self-command; for all had been really gone through. There is nothing so firm as obedience, and nothing so humble. Perfect firmness, because I know I am obeying; perfect lowliness, because I know I am dependent. If I am in sorrow, like Christ, in the presence of God I am awake; but if I am asleep then, when I come before man, I take the sword and begin to fight. Asleep, when we should be with God about the trial; violent, when with man. Christ, when man came, was unmoved by his wickedness, because He had gone through the reality with God—betrayed by the nearest to Him; and as for the priests, all they would do was to plead against Him. Christ being there shows out man. Here was One always perfect, fully conscious of all that was coming upon Him, in perfect submission going as man to God about it; and when the judgment comes, He goes as a Lamb to the slaughter. He was not actually on the cross, but was looking at it. (vs. 39) He drank plenty of bitter cups as man, but He never asked that any might pass from Him but this; and here was a cup that His piety desired might pass. He ought to have felt it—His very perfectness made Him shrink from drinking that cup of wrath for man’s sins. But He did drink it all with perfect meekness; and looking forward to it (the forsaking of God), He prays, in Psalm 22, “Be not Thou far from Me.” He rehearses it all, and turns to God. As to any comfort for His spirit, He had only sleeping disciples. It is terrible, when we think of it, how man showed himself. But it is good for our souls to have Christ before us “there in the Psalms we see Him turning round and looking for one to take pity; but He found none; none could go through that—death coming with wrath; and if there, was only a shadow of that, man could not go through it. He felt all that, and we see His perfectness in it—see what His spirit and mind were in passing through it. Has it got hold of your hearts? have your souls been with Him thus? As regards us, nothing stopped Him in His devotedness to save us. If you want to see perfectness of love, if you want to see devotedness of love, go and see the Lord suffering in our stead—feed on it. If you want to know the love of Christ, it passes knowledge; by

divine teaching we may apprehend it. It is blessed to see His grace in the midst of evil. Being with God perfectly, He had the right word for everyone. It humbles us; yet to see that He was perfect, is joy to the heart.

I see the Lord deeply felt it all. Having loved His disciples, He says, "One of you shall betray Me" "thorough sensibility to all that is going on. Dull as they were in understanding, the word of Christ had power with them—not a doubt. Where the Word of God has power, there is no thought of self, nor trust in self. "Lord, is it I?" they ask. You see in them such complete bowing of heart to the word of Christ, that they could believe anything of themselves if Christ said it. Christ's word had complete authority over their hearts; as we get Mary thinking it everything to be with Him to spend herself upon Him; loving His word. Do we get Christ having that kind of authority upon us? But the boldness of unbelief grows in proportion to belief. Judas had so lost the sense of what Christ was, of His knowledge of the heart of man, that the very consciousness of what Christ is had gone from his heart. (vs. 7) The world is conscious it cannot go along with that; if Mary spends her money upon Christ, Judas will betray Him for money—the opposite comes out. I do expect, if Christians are more faithful, the world will be more wicked; I see it in Scripture. Judas received the sop—the very thing that was blessing to the others—the very expression of Christ's intimacy. The Lord is perfectly calm in the midst of all the distress, just doing peacefully all He had to do.

Christ Dying for the Ungodly

After the apostle has spoken of peace, patience, experience, rejoicing in hope of glory, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given us, he leads us back to the simple, yet comprehensive truth, “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). This verse is very full.

First, we were ungodly. That is the first thing we find out; but many know they are ungodly who have not yet found out that they are without strength. How many have been going on in the ways of sin, careless and indifferent as to their eternal welfare and the salvation of their precious souls, and have been convicted of sin and seen their danger, perhaps through hearing the gospel preached, or a tract, or in conversation, or, it may be, without any human instrumentality at all; and what is often the thought of such an one? “I am determined to alter my ways, or I shall be lost; I will turn over a new leaf.” The new leaf is turned, and all may go on well for a time; but soon temptations come; one resolution after another is broken, and he thinks: “It is no use my trying to be a Christian; I have tried, and tried again, and the more I try to give up my sins the more I seem to fail;” and Satan then tempts him to give all up in despair. Have I been describing the state of any one who may be reading these lines? Have you tried turning over the new leaf? Ah, you knew you were “ungodly,” but you had yet to learn that you were “without strength.” Does not that word “without strength” suit your case? Have you not tried to keep the law, tried to live without sin, tried to be a Christian? Ah, your desires were right, and we can thank God for them; but you were going the wrong way to work. You were trying to fit yourself for God’s presence, and the consequence was that you found you were utterly unable to do it. Now look at the verse: “When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” Ungodly is that you? Yes; without strength, unable to keep the law, to live without sin; unable to fit yourself for the presence of God. Does that suit your case? Yes. Now comes the blessed truth—it was for such Christ died; so that if you have been led to see that you are “ungodly” and “without strength,” here is God’s word to say that it was for such as you that Christ died. Now, instead of trying to do something you may take your stand before God as an ungodly sinner, with no pretense to righteousness, utterly without strength. You now find that what you never could do, Christ has done for you by His atoning death on the cross— “Christ died for the ungodly.”

But there is more in the verse: “In due time Christ died for the ungodly.” What is this “due time”? For four thousand years, from the time that Adam sinned, God was proving man—seeing if any good could be found in the race of the first Adam. Man was weighed in God’s balances, and found completely wanting. He was tried without law, and under law. And lastly, God’s Son was presented to the world, to see if they would receive Him. But no; they rejected Him! And what did they do? “Crucified the Lord of glory!” What a dreadful crime! How the cross brings out what man is! This was God’s due time; and then it was that Christ died for the ungodly. It is important therefore to see that now God is not looking for improvement from man; but that the way of salvation is, to take the place of a guilty sinner before Him, and own His grace in giving Christ to die for sinners.

In Romans 5:7, the Holy Ghost goes on to show the wonders and reality of God's love in giving His Son, and the love of Christ in dying for us. "For scarcely for a righteous man would one die." If there were a righteous man, who was perfectly just and unblameable in his ways, yet there would be nothing in that to draw out the affections, and it would be difficult to find one who would love him enough to die for him; but possibly there might be a good man, be loved by all, and someone might possibly be found to lay down his life for him. But if such a thing really happened, what a stir and talk it would make! The life of this good man, beloved by all, is in jeopardy; can anyone be found who will risk their lives to save his? Yes; one has actually been found to do it! But what a wonder of love. This would be the greatest proof of love in man. But God's love far eclipses it, as we read in verse 8: "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that," while we were neither good nor righteous, but "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." That is why it is called His love, because it is a love peculiar to God Himself. With us, there must always be something in another to draw out our love; in other words, there must be something to love. But God loved us when there was nothing in us to love, but our hearts at enmity to Him, and nothing but a mass of sin; for it was "while we were yet sinners" that God's love went out toward us; and the perfect expression of that love was, He gave His Son to die for us, so that now (verse 9) we are "justified by His blood." His precious blood meets every charge that the enemy could bring against us; and now, being already justified, we shall be saved from the wrath that is about to be revealed upon a guilty world. If we believe in the love now, we shall be saved from the wrath that is coming; but if the love is rejected, wrath must be the consequence.

Romans 5:10. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." The death of Christ was the way by which we were reconciled to God; but we are not yet in glory, and we have to walk through the wilderness, and we still have these bodies of humiliation; but the One who died for us now lives for us, and because He lives we shall be saved through all the difficulties and dangers of the way; and finally we shall get the body of glory like His, "according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil. 3:21). But not only so, but even now we "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement" (reconciliation, margin). Having peace with God, standing in His perfect favor, and rejoicing in hope of the glory, we are at leisure to forget ourselves, and joy in God Himself—in what He is; and this draws out the worship which He delights to have from these poor hearts of ours.

These verses, Romans 5:1-11, as we have seen, give us in a very full and blessed way the whole Christian portion; at any rate it is implied, if not brought out.

Peace, standing in favor, the glory to come, the wilderness walk, the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; with the sense of God's perfect love toward us, reconciliation, saved by His life, Christ's present and future service to us; and ending with worship, joying in God.

Many have wondered why the experience in these verses is so far beyond that of chapter 7: "O wretched man that I am." The reason, I believe, is this: there are two distinct subjects treated of in this epistle; the first ending at verse 11 of chapter 5, which treats of sins, the fruits of our evil nature, showing how they are put away; the second part, commencing with verse 12 of chapter 5, treats not of sins but of sin, the evil nature itself, and how we are delivered from it. The end of the first, as said above, is at verse 11 of chapter 5, and anyone can see that there is a distinct break in

the subject, verse 12 commencing a new theme.

F. K.

Christ the Life

He that spoke these words was the lowliest of men. How then did He come to utter them? Did ever a man since the world began take such a place? "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me;" even as just before He had said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." There was not a word of boasting; it was never the way of Jesus to boast. Transparency was the thing that especially marked Him, and Him alone; and His love was as real as His lowliness. His was a self-sacrificing life continually. As a child it was the same; in the then single fact recorded of Him we have His own words, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" And who was He that so spoke? and what entitled Him so to speak? It was not only that in Him was perfect wisdom and perfect goodness, and that He was the truth, but if He were not God (and I use the word in all its strength), how presumptuous His words!

But He was Son as no one else is son. The Word of God speaks of many sons, but Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father. He became Captain of salvation. Was He a sinful man? He was the Savior of sinners. How could this be if He were not a divine person? Every one else is a sinful man, every man born into the world; for Adam never had a child till he was fallen. Even Enoch was a sinful man, although in due time translated. Elijah was caught up; but of Jesus it is said that He ascended up. Now, He that ascended first descended; and He that descended is the same also that ascended up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Of whom else could this be true? Of none but the Lord Jesus Himself.

In Christ the full truth broke in. He came not to display the glory that He had with God; this would not at all have met the need of sinners. He who had the glory gave it up; He first emptied Himself, and then humbled Himself. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, to make good the glory of God and the salvation of man. He showed in the world what it was to be here, in the face of all opposition and suffering, only to do God's will; and thus God's will was fully done by a man on the earth, and this not by power, but by obedience in suffering. Adam in Eden was not called to staffer. Jesus was the only holy man that suffered for sin. If you leave out that, you leave out the other grand pillar of the truth, that Jesus is He who was manifest in the flesh. He might have come in divine or in angelic glory, and need not have taken upon Himself the form of a man, by being born of a woman; but then how should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be? And, further, if He had not, how could there have been salvation for us? It is of all importance to weigh and hold fast this truth, simple as it is. Man is a sinner, away from God, and knows it in his conscience, and owns it when he is brought face to face with God.

It is not the Bible that makes man a guilty sinner; but the Bible is the only key to all, and explains it fully and worthily. This book alone carries conviction for every heart that is willing to bow to God and be saved; but the truth is that people do not want to be saved in God's way. They prefer the full activity of life to be their own, and to enjoy the world as long as they can. They may wish to be saved at the end, but there are many things that they feel unprepared and unwilling to give up yet. They will turn to God on their deathbed. But they feel that if saved, they must be saved to do the

will of God, and not their own will; and, if saved, they are the servants of Christ. But do you want to be Satan's servants? Remember, you cannot be your own master. You must either be the servants of God or the slaves of Satan; for a man who does his own will is the slave of Satan. You may not believe this, but it is true; and a time will come when your own conscience will make you feel the truth of it, and that too when it will be the distressing harbinger of still worse distress; perhaps, in the moment of dying. What a terrible reality to wake up then with the awful words ringing in your ears! Too late, too late, too late! But I bless God that I have the happier task of pressing on you now the way that God has opened in Jesus for you, and the truth that God proclaims to the simplest soul.

Into the midst of this, world's activities, when the fourth empire was in its power, came Jesus. How did He treat this book, the Bible? As none other; it was the book of books to Him. Scripture was His food and His weapon always. It was not the New Testament yet, for this was not written then. It was the very part that high and low most try to get rid of. Men say it is the writing first of one man, and then of another, sometimes put together by a third one or more. What folly! How then has it such astonishing unity of purpose and mind? It is madness and impiety for men to speak against the book that Jesus treats as the Word of God.

He who raises the dead and quickens, does not (as some think, without love) let men slip unwarned into all superstitions. The true God is a God of active love. Scripture allows no such thing as God not caring for what is going on. But you say, "Does He not allow evil?" Certainly; He let angels and men fall; but this in both was the fault of the creature only. Have you not all known, at some time or other of your life, a season when you resolved to repent and to do good? How has it turned out? Did you succeed? or have you not proved that you are bad, and can do no good thing? How comes this? Did God make man so? God made the earth and the race without one evil in either; God pronounced everything to be very good; and evil would have been kept out if man had looked to God. But man fell; and since "the world by wisdom knew not God." The wisdom of the world does not want God. Man wants his own way and will; whereas the glory of one that knows God is to do His will. But how is God's will to be known or done? I am a sinner, know nothing, can do nothing pleasing in His eyes. The Bible read in faith explains, not merely how evil spoiled all, but how Jesus came as the way, the truth, and the life, and how He justifies God in receiving poor sinners. Grace alone can meet the need; and as He came in love to win us, so He died in the fullness of love, to give us a purged conscience, that, so reconciled to God, we might worship and serve Him. If He had left man in rebellion, it would have been a strange proof of love. Where would be grace in giving man food and all things necessary for this life, and then to let him perish forever at last? But no; He gave His Son that the believer should not perish.

The very least thing that God made bears the stamp of His hand; and not only so, but of His mind, of His beneficent goodness. From the first God looked into man's condition, and graciously met it all, unsought and unexpected, in His grace. He sent His Son, His well-beloved, His only-begotten, the One who thought it not robbery to be equal with God. This is the One God gave for your salvation. No effort of your own avails. You have neither power nor fitness to get rid of your guilt. Have you not tried? and have you not found out that you cannot? If you have what they call an elastic conscience, you may think that God is not going to be too nice about sin. But such a thought is really a most fatal blow at His holiness and His truth, for He has declared the contrary. But God has done what is far better than slurring over your sins; He spared not His own Son.

And mark the manner of it. The Son became man, the obedient One, the only man who never sought to do his own will. Where was there ever such a sight, such a reality, before? He could say, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." The very idea of such obedience was as far from every heart till Jesus came, as was God's love to lost sinners. Nor this only. Jesus, when asked, "Who art Thou?" could answer, "Absolutely what also I say to you." Who could ever say this but One? Jesus always was just what He also said. Blessed truth, and how suited for God and for man! He Himself was the truth, the perfect truth, sent down to poor sin-blinded man; so that he has the truth, not only detailed in a book, but embodied in a Person, and this a man in the world tried as nobody ever was. It is everywhere the same truth, and all is perfect harmony with the utmost variety. No doubt there are shades of distinction in many different books of the Bible, but it is surely our ignorance when we find them irreconcilable.

The mere handiwork of God is beyond the wisest of men, and the wisest are precisely those who are most ready to acknowledge their ignorance. The more men really know, the more deeply they feel and own how little they know. Just so with the Word of God. What are difficulties to me may not be so to some one more spiritual; and when by faith I see more clearly, the difficulties not only vanish but turn into the strongest confirmation of revealed truth. One person puts everything into its proper place—Christ. If He were not God, He could not bring into relation with God; if not a man, He would have no point of contact with me. Both are necessary for His work. It is He who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Man feels his weakness, his unworthiness, his unfaithfulness, when he judges himself before God. What life is this that Jesus is? what life did He manifest? Was it the life of Adam? Adam, we read, was made a living soul; but who and what is Christ? A quickening Spirit. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men." Was it of angels? No; of men. It was not merely for Israel; the pride of the Jew did not like such grace.

But let us go back to a Sabbath-day at Nazareth, when our Lord went into the synagogue, and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, and He read those blessed words of chapter 61, "The Spirit of the Lord Jehovah is upon Me, because Jehovah hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor," and so forth. He declared that this prophecy was that day fulfilled in their ears, stopping short in the middle of our verse 2, the point then accomplishing, as distinct from the future "day of vengeance of our God;" for when He had read so far, He shut the book and sat down, with words of grace to all. Did He speak the truth? A great deal turns on this for your souls. Was He really the One foretold by the Spirit of Jehovah, the One that God the Father had sealed? If so, your salvation turns on Him. Do not say that words of grace are hard. What? hard to be saved by God, according to the fullness of His mercy in Christ! The same Lord that saves now will be the judge by-and-by. God "hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained," the same Jesus whom God hath raised from the dead. It is proof to all. Either you are in Him now, or you must stand before Him then as your judge.

Remember that, when you stand before Him as your judge, there will then be no salvation. He went down into death to bear the judgment of every one that believes on Him. Was not this infinite love? Yes; but it was more, it was righteousness. It was not by power that He met the judgment due to sinners; it was by suffering. He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. This explains the way, certainty, and fullness of salvation, which would be all a myth if He were not God as well as man. There is nothing that binds all the truth together if He be not Emmanuel, God with us. The Jews will by-and-by be gathered in a different way, but it will be faith

in the same person. There is no gospel that is not grounded on Him as the sacrifice, yet a divine person; for if He were not also a man, he could not reach me. Jesus, then, came and lived a man that He might do the will of God. What was that life? He lived on account of the Father (John 6:57). It showed itself in unwavering subjection and constant obedience. No man ever has capacity for obedience until he becomes a partaker of that life. Without this life no man can please God in the walk of faith now, or stand in the presence of God; therefore it is of the deepest necessity.

“In this was manifested the love of God.” Is it because He gave the law? No; for this brought in nothing but condemnation on guilty man. Although the law was in itself righteous, at best it made men feel their state. Love was “because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him,” and this brings out the glory of His person. He was the Son of God, above, outside, and beyond all else, both the incarnate and the Creator, the eternal Word of God; and the Father would have it known. It was necessary that the testimony should go forth, if man was to live God-ward and be blessed.

And what was the purpose for which this only begotten Son was sent? “That we might live through Him” We were hateful, and hating, serving divers lusts and pleasures, disobedient, living to ourselves. It was nothing but sin; whenever we do our own will, we sin. Being born thus, we go on accordingly; and what will be the end of it? God’s glory, or exclusion from Him, eternal punishment? Ah! we want a new life. Where shall we find it? Not in Adam, but in Christ.

Adam only transmitted his own fallen nature; but in Christ we have One who only did His Father’s will, and He is a life-giving Spirit—the Head of a new family. Look thus to Him and live. God declares, that whosoever believes in Him hath everlasting life, and shall be saved. What grace! And this is the sure but the only way, “No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”

The question, then, resolves itself into this, Do I prefer my own thoughts, or the Word of God? Are you now trusting in yourself, or confiding in Him? You ought. to know; for if depending on your efforts, you are trusting a most miserable and broken reed. God bids me believe in Him, the only begotten Son. Is Christ not worthy? Is God not true? He sent His Son into the world for the express purpose that we who believe might have life. Even supposing I show a desire to read His word, to pray to Him, and to do His will, what is to become of all the evil I have done, and the evil which alas! even as a believer I still feel within, and I may still fall into? For I have within me, that is, in the flesh or old nature, the tendency to pride, vanity, selfishness, self-will, temper, and so forth. How is a soul to be kept from yielding to these? Have you the power because you are converted? Conversion means the turning to God in your heart, mind, and ways, instead of to yourself. But what is to be done with these evil things, not only before, but after conversion, if we fall at times into them? The new life shows itself in dependence on God; and is there anything more suited to man than to look up to God? But with a bad conscience, how can one do so? In the misery of such a state, one is glad of anything that shuts out God, that keeps one from thinking of oneself and of Him.

But the grace of God has provided a remedy in the blood of Christ. The atoning work is done; but the truth is that naturally people do not want to be saved all at once. They would like to go on with the world a little longer. How deeply we need the life of Christ, in order that we may live to God, just as much as His death that our sins may be blotted out! If it were your death for your sins, you were lost forever; if His, and you believe in Him, how blessed! He, the Eternal Life, came to die

atoningly! He became a man in order that He might die for our sins. "I am the way, the truth, and the life." He became a man, not only that I might partake of this life, eternal life in Him, but that He might die to take away my sins. It is God's testimony about His Son; it is His declaration of Himself, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Life is given me now in this world that I may live the life of Christ, and not according to my own old life.

The moment we have life in Christ, we have a divine sense of our sins as hateful and intolerable. You know that all you have been doing has its spring in self, in nature. But if you receive the new life, you have also in Him the efficacy of His death to meet your sins; and this is salvation. It is sad shortcoming to preach only the death and not also the life of Christ, to be satisfied with merely showing how sins may be forgiven by the blood, without a word about life in Him. It looks like man taking only what man wants; the negative relief of what clears conscience, not the positive devotedness to God. But this is not enough for the saint, still less for the glory of God. We cannot have part of the blessing, but a whole Christ. God's will is, that every believer should live in and of this new life; that is, the life of every soul who is born again God is better to Him than his own thoughts. The truth is that it is Christ, and not his own notions, or even conscience, that he must rest on by faith. Endued with natural life as a son of Adam, the believer has just as truly a new divine life in Christ. Is it possible to lose this new life? It is eternal life. What does "eternal" mean? But it is possible and easy to lose the joy of this life.

It is of all moment for a believer to distrust himself but it is a wrong to God and His Word, as well as weakness to self, to doubt His faithfulness, or that Christ's life does not stand forever. If the new life in any way depended on himself, he must soon fall away into irreparable ruin. People talk of "the perseverance of the saints," as if it were they who held last whereas it is really they who are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation." It is not then my perseverance, but divine power, that keeps me through faith.

Do you think that God does not look in compassion on the guilty sinner? Come then in the name of Jesus to Him, and confess your sins without extenuation or palliation as you could to none other. Already does He know the very worst of us. I can tell it all out to God, and even this is no small blessing to my soul, for then, for the first time, one becomes really honest, "without guile," as says Psalm 32. I need have no reserve, I can or would not keep back anything from God. Why should I wish it when there is this precious blood and water from the Savior's side, a Savior for all that come, who "suffered once the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"? This is the word that I would leave with you. How plain it is that the whole practical walk of believers flows from life in Christ, and is based for their peace on the blessed fact that they have been brought to God. The death of Christ takes away my guilt and bonds; but what is to be the spring of new life? How am I to mortify my old life? You may tell the old man to die, but it does not wish to die. God declares that He has given me, if a believer, another nature, new life in Christ. Nicodemus had to learn that he needed to be born afresh, not only to hear what Jesus had to teach. You may be sure that, when a soul really goes to God for its wants, He always receives through the Lord Jesus; whenever a soul asks in faith, God fails not to give. Grace never sends empty away.

Where is the man who looked to Christ and did not find Him? Does He not say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life"? He is the only way of deliverance from all danger, evil, and sin; His blood, if you believe, brings you now to God without a stain upon you. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son

cleanseth us from all sin.” If you have Him you have life in Him. Mere nature is incapable of pleasing God. Faith is the means of life, pardon, peace, strength, everything for the needy; and faith lays hold of what God says and does and gives in Christ, and it is the Spirit of truth which produces faith by our hearing the Word. Thus we see the importance of the Spirit applying the Word to our souls. But all-important as both the Word and the Spirit are, neither could avail for the soul without Christ for life, and Christ’s death to take away our sins.

W. Kelly

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Discipline

As children of God we have to do with the Father of spirits, who trains us in His wisdom and grace. This Hebrews 12 describes. As part of the church of God we are subject to the chastening of the Lord if, having done what is wrong, we fail to judge ourselves about it. Of this 1 Corinthians 11:30-32 treats. In addition to this, the Word teaches us how we should behave towards those who, reckoned amongst God's saints, are not walking as becomes such; and how, under certain conditions specified in the New Testament, the discipline of the house of God must be maintained, and exercised by the assembly. Indifference to the walk of saints we should seek to be watchful against. Indifference to the maintaining the purity of God's house we should zealously avoid. And whilst Hebrews 12 and 1 Corinthians 11 show us how the Father, and the Lord, may deal with each of us as saints, other scriptures, to which we will presently turn, teach us how we should deal individually with, and how the assembly should act towards, those whose walk and conversation call for notice and discountenance.

Very solemn, then, is the subject on which we are entering. By it we are reminded of the holiness of the place—the house of God—of which all Christians form part. By it, too, we are constrained to remember what we all are by nature, who form part of God's habitation in the Spirit; and if called to act towards any walking wrongly, to express disapproval of their ways, it surely becomes us, when doing it, to remember that the same evil nature is in us which has been manifesting itself in them. A spirit of self-judgment—considering ourselves (Gal. 6:1)—will befit us in such circumstances.

Now there are different ways of dealing with offending Christians. Under certain circumstances their brethren are to withdraw from them. Or the assembly may have to take the matter up and rebuke them. Or it may be called upon to resort to the severest measure, and put out the wicked person. Hence at the outset we can see, that excommunication is not the only means of discipline sanctioned by the Word. In truth, it is the last step that can be resorted to, and indicates that nothing else can be done with the offender.

At Thessalonica an evil habit had already manifested itself of what the apostle called walking disorderly — brethren working not at all, yet seeking temporal support from others in the assembly. Against such a habit the apostle writes very strongly, charging the saints to discountenance it, charging those guilty of it to discontinue it: "We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). Such were his words to the saints. "Now them that are such [that is, disorderly] we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread" (vs. 12). Such were his words to the offenders. Both parties were to see that the question was a serious one; and as they owned Jesus as Lord, they were to obey the injunction given by His apostle. Eating the bread of others in idleness was no part of Christian teaching; nay, the contrary was enjoined. Exhortations to be liberal and brotherly to those really in need abound in the Word (Gal. 6:6; Eph. 4:28; 1 John 3:17; 3 John 8); but eating the bread of others in idleness the Word distinctly forbids. To eat their own bread was to be the

aim and desire of such as had been doing the contrary—learning of the apostle, who could labor night and day at his trade, that he should not burden the saints. From all offenders after this sort Christians were to withdraw; and should there be one who did not obey the apostolic injunction communicated in writing, they were to note him, and not to keep company with him, that he might be ashamed (vs. 14).

Again, writing to the Romans (16:17), he tells them to mark those that caused divisions and offenses, or stumbling-blocks, contrary to the doctrine they had learned; and to avoid them. Divisions (διχοῦσαί) might arise amongst the saints—they were of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20)—but such as caused them were to be marked and turned from, the doctrine the saints had learned being the measure or standard by which they were to judge of and discern such. To avoid them (ἐκκλίνω) is the apostolic injunction; the same word used by Peter when exhorting us to eschew evil—ἐκκλίνετε (1 Peter 3:11). Now in neither of these cases does the apostle Paul direct the saints to resort to the severe measure of excommunication. Withdrawing from them is not putting them out. Their place at the table they would still have, but the saints were to mark their disapproval of such ways by withdrawing in ordinary Christian intercourse from them, in the hope, as in the case of the disorderly walker, that such might be ashamed, and learning the evil of their course, forsake it.

Again, Titus is taught how to deal with an heretical man. First he must admonish him; then after a second admonition, if that failed, he was to reject or have done with him—παραιτοῦ, the same word as is used in 1 Timothy when enjoining him to turn from profane and old wives' fables (1 Tim. 4:7), and to decline the younger widows (vs. 11); for an heretical man does not of necessity mean one who denies the faith, but it is literally one who chooses his creed. Thus Paul, speaking of the Pharisees, to which party he had once belonged, called it the most straitest sect—ἡρесь (lit. heresy)—of our religion (Acts 26:5). The sect of the Pharisees was regarded as orthodox in their creed; but Paul uses of them that word which has been engrafted into our tongue, and with which most Englishmen are familiar, heresy. An heretical man, then, need not be one who denies any article of the Christian faith. He is an heretic who allows his mind or will to work in connection with doctrine, thereby producing or countenancing a sect; as we see from 1 Corinthians 11:19, where the apostle, writing of sects, uses the word ἡρесь. Such a man was to be avoided, if admonition failed to have its due effect upon him. Patience in dealing with him there was to be; but if a second admonition failed to lead him to reject his error, he was to be avoided; for such an one "is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself" (Titus 3:11).

What care then there was to be on the part of all as to the walk and doctrine of each one! And how could it be otherwise, seeing that they were members of one body? Were they members of a denomination only, such questions might have been left to the leaders of the sect. Had the tie been simply a congregational one, the members might have cast all responsibility on the rulers amongst them; but since they were members of one body, the ways of each one concerned all, and none could afford to be indifferent to such questions, nor to overlook such disorders and sins. Brotherly love too would be shown, not in keeping company with such, but in withdrawing from them; for true love seeks the welfare of its object.

Graver matters, however, might occur, where the tacit though marked disapproval of the saints, manifested by withdrawing from a brother or sister, would not meet the case. For such the Word

also provides, and points out that, under certain conditions, the assembly itself must act, either in rebuking or excommunicating.

Rebuking, or convicting (ἐλγίζω) we read of in 1 Timothy 5:20. This is called for in the case of such as sin, but where excommunication is not enjoined as the only way of dealing with the person. For there are cases where nothing but putting away from amongst Christians will be a sufficient dealing with the offender. There are other cases in which that extreme step is not enjoined. "Them that sin," writes the apostle "rebuke [or convict; that is, demonstrate their guilt] before all, that the rest may fear." "Them that sin" (τοὺς ἁμαρτάνοντας). It does not say, "Them that have sinned," nor each time they have sinned. We all have sinned. We all do sin. But we are not all, each time we have failed, to be dealt with according to the directions here given to Timothy. A man might be overtaken in a fault as Galatians 6:1 describes. Such a one was to be restored by the spiritual in a spirit of meekness, they considering themselves lest they also be tempted. Rebuking before all would, in such a case, be more than the Word warranted. Them that sin, we are told, are to be thus dealt with. Spiritual judgment may be needed to discern correctly about the case, and attention to the directions of Scripture will throw great light on the right treatment of cases as they come up. But where the assembly, judging the matter before God, sees that the individual who has failed comes under this category, being clearly not one who has been overtaken in a fault, rebuking before all is the injunction of God, that the rest may fear.

What a solemn duty this is which is cast upon the saints, that they who, if unwatchful, may be liable to rebuke themselves, are nevertheless to mark, as the Word directs, their distinct judgment and disapproval of a brother's ways, and that before all! The shame of a public conviction may tell upon the person; but the special object set before us in 1 Timothy 5:20 is the profit of all, "that the rest also may fear." With this before us, whilst carrying out the scriptural directions, there will be no disposition to point the finger of scorn at the failing one, but to deepen in our hearts the sense of what we are by nature, and the need of true watchfulness, lest rebuke be righteously meted out to us. But more severe measures still are set before us; for sin must not be trifled with, and the assembly has only to deal with offenders, but to clear itself. Hence, if the offense calls for it, excommunication must take place; not simply because a brother has sinned — for who would then be at the table at all? — but because the person has sinned in such a way, that nothing short of it will meet the gravity of the case. What holy ground we are on! We are in the house of God; so we can make no compromise with evil, nor treat it with indifference.

When then must this severe step be taken? 1 Corinthians 5:11-13 gives clear indications: "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For 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. Put away from among yourselves the wicked person" (τὸν πονηρὸν).

"A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (vss. 6-8). A reference to Exodus 12:15-19 will help us to understand the allusion. On the first day of the feast they were to put out all leaven from their houses, and

throughout the feast no leaven was to be found there. The old leaven was to be put out at the commencement of the feast, and no fresh leaven was to be allowed within their doors whilst it lasted. Now this whole dispensation is to us the feast of unleavened bread; hence no leaven is to be allowed among us in God's house. If it comes in it must be put out. Certain kinds then of evil, if manifested, called for the excommunication of the offender. But should this course be restricted only to such as have sinned in the manner specified in 1 Corinthians 5:11? Surely not. The last verse will help us in this matter: "Put out from among yourselves the wicked person." Now a man might be a wicked person who had sinned in other ways than in the specific manner above described. For instance, if a teacher brought not the doctrine of Christ—not confessing Jesus Christ coming in flesh (not of course the mere fact, but the person who is so characterized), such an one was not to be received amongst Christians. Even a woman was to shut her door against him, and not to bid him God-speed; that is, hail or greet him with the ordinary friendly salutations; for any who did that would be partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 7-11). Would such an one have a place at the Lord's table? John calls such the deceiver. Who would give the right hand of fellowship at the table to one so termed in the Word of God? The Lord's table could be no place for one who brought not the doctrine of Christ.

Again, if one brother had committed a trespass against another, and manifested a hardened spirit, which neither brotherly dealing nor the assembly's admonition could subdue, he was to be unto the one against whom he had sinned as a heathen man and a publican (Matt. 18:17). Now a heathen man no Jew would admit to any ecclesiastical privileges (Acts 21:28-29); with a publican, or tax-gatherer, no Pharisee or scribe would associate. Hence the offender's position is clear, and what 1 Corinthians 5:13 sets forth would be the only course open for the assembly. From how small a beginning such grave results might flow. The wicked person then would also be such an one as 2 John describes, and such an one too as Matthew 18:17 treats of; and at times it might help an assembly in deciding on a case if they asked themselves the question, "Has the one whose case is before us shown that he is a wicked person?" A Christian may have done wrong, and yet not be a wicked person. So also, if it be a question of rebuking, "Does the person whose case is in question come under the category of one who sins?"

Excommunication then, as the word implies, affects the person's rights, which as a Christian he has in common with others. By it he is put away from the company of the saints at the table till such time as he repents; and the assembly, judging that he has repented, restores him to his privileges in common with them. What then is to be the character of the carriage of the saints toward such an one? 1 Corinthians 5:11 is explicit, and 2 John 10 agrees with it. It is not only that the offender cannot be received at the table, but those who have had social intercourse with him on Christian grounds must abstain from it. Are there not instances where, from ignorance of Scripture rules, and perhaps a mistaken desire to manifest brotherly love towards the guilty one, the discipline of the assembly, so far as it relates to ordinary friendly intercourse, has been entirely set aside, to the detriment of the offender, and to the loss really of all? The action of the assembly becomes thereby enfeebled, and a party feeling is in danger of being encouraged. If saints looked at the question in this light, "Can I have ordinary Christian friendly communion with one whose presence at His table my Lord refuses to sanction?" would not the right way of conducting themselves towards such be seen at a glance?

With what power then is the assembly invested? “Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 18:18). What care surely should be taken in the exercise of such discipline, lest we do on earth what heaven cannot ratify. How careful was Paul in the exercise of apostolic power, wielding it when necessary (1 Tim. 1:20), but only when necessary (2 Cor. 13:10). As careful, yet as firm, should the assembly be in the exercise of Scriptural discipline if called to act against an offending person.

C. E.S.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Its Future

In Ephesians 5:27 we learn the purpose of Christ respecting the church. He will present to Himself that pearl of great price (Matt. 13:46), the church glorious, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. In that same epistle we are informed of the church's everlasting continuance (Eph. 3:21). From Hebrews 12:23 we have been taught how distinct will be its position in heaven from that of the Old Testament saints, there termed "the spirits of just men made perfect." In Revelation 19:8 we read of the marriage of the Lamb, and of His wife having made herself ready. Her bridal attire is there also stated to be fine linen, white and clean, which is the righteousnesses era (τὰ δικαιώματα) of the saints.

So far, then, we read of the bride as fully answering to the desires of Christ, with whom she will be forever and ever. But in none of these Scriptures to which we have turned is she described as visible to the eyes of people on earth yet she will be seen by them. And John, who in vision beheld her as the world will see her, has described her appearance and special characteristics (Rev. 21:9-22: 5), when she was shown to him by an angel. It was one of the seven angels, who had the seven last plagues, who took him in the spirit into the wilderness to see the great whore (Rev. 17). It was one of the same angelic company which carried him in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed him the holy city Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God in her millennial character and glory, when for the first time the whole assembly of God, and of Christ, composed only of those who are members of His body, will be displayed to a wondering universe.

But that cannot take place till the Lamb appears in His millennial glory. The woman, the whore, Babylon, is content to reign without Him. The Bride is satisfied to wait for Him. Then the parody of Satan, revealed in the Apocalypse, and so known to God's saints, will be apparent to all. The true bride is a city, a metropolis, the metropolis of the universe. The great whore is a city, which in John's day was reigning over the kings of the earth, the metropolis of the then so-called habitable earth, (Ἰερουσαλήμ) (Luke 2:1). With gold, and precious stones, and pearls is the woman of Revelation 17 described as decked out. Gold, and precious stones, and pearls will be seen to form part of the splendor of the heavenly city. To Babylon flowed the commerce and wealth of the world (Rev. 18). Unto the heavenly city (not into it) will the glory and honor of the nations flow, and to it will the kings of the earth bring their glory. So far is the parallel; now for the contrast.

The whore is decked in all her meretricious splendor to captivate the kings of the earth. The bride, when prepared to meet the Lamb, is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white. For Him we read not that she puts on any ornaments; but when she is to be publicly displayed as the Lamb's wife, gold, precious stones, and pearls, are marked features in her appearance (Rev. 21:18-21). It was in the wilderness, and seated on the dragon, that John saw the whore. It is as descending from heaven, and having the glory of God, that he beheld the bride. And further there was seen in the holy Jerusalem that which Satan could not imitate—the presence of God, and the throne of God. No temple (vans) was there; for the Lord God Almighty was the temple (vans) thereof, and the Lamb. No need had the city of the light of the sun, nor of the moon; for the glory of God enlightened it,

and the Lamb was the lamp (λαμπς) thereof. There also was the throne of God and of the Lamb; and in undimmed and unceasing brightness shall the Lord God shine upon His servants, who shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 21: 22, 23; 22: 3-5).

The bride then, as John here sees her, has been already presented to the Bridegroom. The holy temple, so long in building, has now been completed; and God, who by the Holy Ghost now inhabits His dwelling-place on earth (κατοικητριον) is here seen at length enshrined in His temple. The desires of Christ about His church have been fulfilled; the plans of God about His temple have been completed; and those on earth can see what the church is to Christ and to God. It is a holy city indeed, into which nothing that defileth can enter. It is a select place too, into which none have the right of entry but such as are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev. 21:27).

Here then those two lines of truth, which run throughout the New Testament (kingdom truth and church truth), at last converge. The Lamb's wife is the metropolis of the universe. Both characters are hers. The one is not merged into the other. She does not cease to be the Lamb's wife, because she is displayed as the holy city Jerusalem. Presented then in this double character, the nations on earth, during millennial times, will have to own her. As the bride now, the wife then, of course she stands in a peculiar and special relation to the Lamb. As the seat of God's throne, and enlightened by His glory, the glory and honor of the nations will be brought unto her. Light too, and healing, will proceed from her—light in which the nations will walk; healing from the leaves of the tree of life in her midst, of which they will stand in need. The world may not care for the saints of God now; men will find that they cannot do without the church of God then.

On earth will be seen the city of the Lord, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel, unto which the world's wealth will flow, and which the kingdoms and nations upon earth must likewise serve. Within her walls will be found God's earthly house, the house of prayer for all the nations (Isa. 56); and year by year must those left of the nations which came against Jerusalem repair thither to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). Features too corresponding to those of the heavenly city will be seen, Ezekiel 47 tells us, in the earthly one. Waters imparting life will proceed from her midst, corresponding to the river of the water of life in the city on high. And all trees for meat will grow on the banks of that stream, their fruit for meat, their leaves for medicine. But the tree of life will be on high, and the light of the earthly city will, be derived from that which shines down through the holy Jerusalem (Isa. 60:19-20); and God's tabernacle will in the fullest way be over His people Israel then (Ezek. 37:27); for the heavenly city will be above and over the earthly one. The holy Jerusalem is the Lamb's wife. To the earthly one Jehovah will show Himself as her husband (Isa. 54:5).

Such is the divine arrangement for millennial times. The kingdom of God will be established in power; but that cannot take place apart from the display of the Lamb's wife as the holy city Jerusalem on high. Then all will see how fully indeed is the revelation of the church the filling up of the Word of God; for without it, apart from it, God's purposes in connection with the kingdom cannot be completed.

With the description of the earthly city's glory, and the last attempt to subvert God's order upon earth by the hosts of Gog encompassing the camp of the saints and the beloved city (Rev. 20:9), the history of Zion ends. Not so that of the holy Jerusalem. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the church will abide. And when out of the melted elements and burnt earth God will make new

heavens and a new earth, in both which will dwell righteousness, the holy city, new Jerusalem, will come down out of heaven from God a second time. Time will have made no change in her appearance; for John saw her, in the eternal state, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And then in a new character will she have to do with earth and with men; for a voice out of heaven (or, as the two oldest uncial MSS. read, "the throne") was heard, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle (σκηνη) of God is with men, and He will tabernacle (σκηνησει) with them" (chap. 21:3). During the millennium He who sits upon the throne will tabernacle over His saints (chap. 7:15). In the eternal state He will tabernacle with men, and grief, and sin, and death will exist no more upon earth. The whore will long have passed away from earth (chap. 17:16). The earthly Jerusalem, as far as we know, will also be found no longer; but the new Jerusalem will abide forever and ever.

Here ends the revelation about the church, or assembly of God, telling us that she will never cease to exist in her distinctive character and relation both to the Lord Jesus Christ and to God. She comes forth in the eternal state prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. She is seen in the eternal state as the tabernacle of God. The object of Christ's love in the past, in the present; and in the future; a subject of divine revelation, and forming an integral part of the counsels of God, precious to Christ and to Him; such is the church, the body and the bride of Christ; the house, the habitation; the holy temple, and the tabernacle of God.

C. E. S.

NOTE. This paper concludes the series, which will appear shortly in a separate form, if the Lord will.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Practical Teaching in Connection With the Breaking of Bread

Of the five apostles who wrote epistles three refer to the breaking of bread; namely, Peter, Jude, and Paul. Four of them were present at its institution. Paul was not; but he alone of the five gives us teaching in connection with it. Thus we learn that there is more instruction which flows from it than at first sight might appear, and that it is in part closely connected with the special revelation made known to Paul concerning the church of God. As sitting at the Lord's table the question of communion and association is necessarily raised: eating of the supper the spirit in which we should partake of it is not by the Lord overlooked. The first of these questions is taken up in 1 Corinthians 10; the other is dealt with in the chapter that follows.

Having just emerged from idolatry, as was the case with the Corinthian Christians, some had seen the inanity of the idol, but had not apprehended the character of their new associations. In this they were not singular. There is often an interval of time, from whatever cause we need not here inquire, between the discovery of the evil from which we may have separated, and the clear apprehension of the position, and its attendant responsibilities, into which we have been brought. As long as such a state continues, it is clear that steadiness of walk need not be expected. Hence the mistake of simply occupying souls with protesting against that which is evil. More is wanted than this, without however in the least undervaluing it; for there is the ceasing to do evil, and the learning to do well, with both of which a Christian, to be "thoroughly furnished unto all good works," must become acquainted.

Now some of the Corinthians knew that an idol was nothing in the world, and that there was none other God but one (1 Cor. 8:4); yet they thought, if they discerned that, they might sit at meat in an idol's temple. In this they were wrong; and the apostle corrects their mistake. Care for their weaker brethren should have made them keep aloof from all participation, even only externally, in idolatrous rites (1 Cor. 8:10-12). But more than this, they had no business to be there at all. The liberty for which some might plead, on the ground that they had discernment about the idol, should have been held in check by consideration for the weak brother's conscience. The question of being there at all was, however, settled forever by their having a place at the Lord's table, and participating in the Lord's Supper. Granted that the idol was nothing, yet behind it were demons, and by sitting at meat at the idol's festival they would be having communion with demons. Was that a fitting thing for those who bore the name of Christ? "I would not," said the apostle, "that ye should have fellowship with demons" (1 Cor. 10:20). To drink of the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons was impossible. To be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of demons was equally impossible. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord," wrote Paul, "and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and the table of demons" (1 Cor. 10:21). The question put in that way was obviously clear. The Lord and demons were antagonistic. A man could not have fellowship with both. Those in danger of outward conformity to heathen rites had never viewed the question in this light. How much light a word may cast upon a point The Lord and demons!

Between these there was no communion. Between them no man could form a connecting-link; yet a Christian, if unwatchful, might have fellowship with demons (1 Cor. 10:20). Solemn thought! How has it been in Christendom sadly exemplified!

But he sets other considerations before them. "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?" What could the cup of demons give them? Nothing good. Of what did the cup of the Lord witness? Blessing purchased by His blood for those who had sinned against God, but who now believed on His name. With what had they communion at the Lord's Supper but with the body and blood of Christ? Speaking as to wise men, this should have been enough to open their eyes to the incongruity and the sinfulness of sitting at meat in an idol's temple. Observe, he here mentions the blood before the body of Christ, an inversion of the natural and the historical order in which they were first mentioned. Now since those to whom he wrote had once been worshipping idols, and had been mixed up with all the vileness and the debasing habits that idolatry encouraged, from all which they had been set free, and all their sins had been blotted out by the blood of Christ, how could they, remembering whose blood had been shed for them, and at what a cost they had been redeemed — how could they turn back to that from which they had been delivered? We can see then in the circumstances of the case a reason for giving precedence on this occasion to the mention of the blood.

Besides this, he reminds them of that which the partaking of the one loaf really set forth; namely, that all Christians are one body. We become members of this one body by the baptism of the Holy Ghost. We give practical expression to it by partaking of the one loaf. Independent action therefore must be judged. If they belonged to one body, as they declared they did, how could they be identified with that which certainly was alien to it?

Several important principles are set forth then in these few verses. First, that one who has a place at the table must keep aloof from participation in that which God abhors. It is not a question, "What am I free to do?" but "What are the associations in which I have part?" Communion of the blood and body of Christ; is this what we profess, and, if Christians in truth, can really enjoy? Then association with that which is opposed to God must not be an open question, nor a matter of indifference. From all idolatrous associations we must keep aloof; and keeping before us the principle thus illustrated, we must surely abstain from having communion with such evils as the Lord's word declares disqualifies those having part in them from being in the company of His people.

Secondly, breaking bread together we confess, however little we may be aware of the character of our action, that we are part of one body with all other Christians; "for we being many are one body and one bread (or loaf), for we are all partakers of that one bread (or loaf)." Not that a body is thereby formed, but its existence is acknowledged, and its oneness practically confessed; for there is but one Lord's table, however many places there be in which saints are gathered unto Christ's name. The apostle at Ephesus and the saints at Corinth were members of one body. They owned it in doctrine, and confessed it week after week, as they broke bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. From this body we cannot get free, nor by any declaration of independence discharge ourselves from responsibility in connection with it. Denominational ground is thereby condemned, for there is but one body, and in breaking bread together we declare it. But there is

another side to this question. If we are all one body, we cannot be indifferent to the walk and the doctrine of those with whom we thus declare our oneness; for are we, as Christians having communion with His body and His blood, to be identified with acts and tenets which the Lord abhors? Care, and if need be discipline, becomes imperative when this truth of the one body is understood; for no choice is left us as to whether we will have this doctrine as an article of our creed or not. We cannot break bread together without confessing it.

Thirdly, as those at the Lord's table professedly participate in the result of the atoning work of Christ, none but Christians in truth have a place at it; for the Lord's supper does not give life, but it is for all who have everlasting life, unless for the time being under the exercise of church discipline. Eating Christ's flesh and drinking Christ's blood (John 6:53, 54) gives life; eating of the supper does not. As the Bread from heaven, the Lord presents Himself to the world (John 6:33, 51); but the supper was instituted only for disciples. If the supper could give life, those of whom Peter (2 Peter 2:13) and Jude (12) wrote would have had it. None however should eat of the supper, who have not first eaten of His flesh, and drunk of His blood; for who have part now in the blessed results of His death, but those who believe on Him? To the Lord's table then baptism by water can give no admittance, though none unbaptized ought to be seated thereat. For an unconverted person to sit there and partake of the bread and of the wine is a solemn thing, since he professes by his act that which is not true of his condition.

Further, as the table is the Lord's, all those at it are responsible to own and to serve Him. Hence too the assembly should be watchful that it admits not, through inadvertence or carelessness, those who, as far as discernment can be exercised, are not Christians in truth; for admission to the table is the act of the assembly, and not that of an individual or individuals. On the other hand, to put away is also the act of the assembly, and for that proof should be adduced about the person dealt with, that he ought not to sit down with the saints. Surmise or suspicion will not be sufficient. Judas was reckoned with the twelve, till his own act showed what he was.

Lastly, all class distinction for the administering of the elements is seen to be foreign to the Word of God. "The cup of blessing which we bless," writes the apostle. "The bread which we break." The blessing and the breaking are acts in common, though done by one as the mouthpiece and agent of the rest. Clericalism has no place at this table. To the Lord it belongs, and He is present where two or three are gathered unto His name. Who of men would dream of presiding where the Lord Himself is present? At His table we are all guests. (To be continued)

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Now nothing like this table had ever been known before. It is true that a Jew could speak of Jehovah's table (Ezek. 41:22; 44:16; Mal. 1:7,12), for both the golden altar, and the altar of burnt-offering are thus designated by the prophets, since on the altar Jehovah's portion was placed. But in the New Testament, the Lord's table is the place at which He dispenses to all believers the memorials of His death. At the table of the Lord, of which the prophets write, no man sat. At the Lord's table, of which the Apostle Paul writes, Christians have their place. Hence examination, or proving oneself, δοκιμαζειν, becomes every Christian, not to stay away, but to judge himself, διακριθειν, and so to eat of the bread and to drink of the cup. Now in this the Corinthians had failed. For meeting professedly to partake of the Lord's supper, either at a meal or

after it, the custom appears to have been for the richer ones to provide the food, of which all together were to eat. But, alas! self had come in, and the richer brethren consumed the provisions themselves. Gluttony and drunkenness prevailed where solemnity should have characterized the meeting. The poorer brethren were hungry, and wanting; whilst the richer were full, and were drunken. The assembly of God was despised, and those who had no houses to eat in were put to shame. The disorder was grievous; it was scandalous (1 Cor. 11:21-22), and the Lord had already strongly marked His disapproval of it (1 Cor. 11:30). How did the apostle deal with it? He reminded them that “the Lord Jesus on the night in which He was delivered up took bread; and having given thanks, brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of Me. In like manner also the cup, after having supped, saying, This cup is the new testament (or covenant) in My blood: this do, as oft as ye shall drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye announce the death of the Lord until He come” (1 Cor. 11: 23-26). Simple, but surely heart-searching, must this statement have been; a quiet, but how great a rebuke to their ways at the table. The Lord, their Lord, on the night of His betrayal, fully conscious of all that was before Him, thought of His people, and instituted this supper for them. Should then disciples of that Lord be thinking of themselves, and allowing flesh to work unchecked, when they met to show His death? How could they after that! The professed purpose of their meeting should have rebuked all the disorders they had permitted and indulged in.

The Lord had died. But why? They well knew. We know. He was delivered for our offenses. Then at His table, at His supper, was the last place where self should have been unrestrained, unjudged; and we should observe how the apostle endeavors to impress this on them, and to keep it before them. Recapitulating that which he had received of the Lord about the supper, Paul omits certain words with which we are made familiar by the evangelists. “Take, eat” are, according to the best authorities, to be left out. “Drink ye all of it,” it will be seen, has no place in Paul’s account of what the Lord said about the cup. The word “broken,” too, in verse 24 — not found in any evangelist in this connection — we may be pretty sure is an addition for which there is no Scripture warranty.

Now there is a significance in the omission of “Take, eat” in this recital of the institution of the supper; for the apostle evidently was divinely-directed, not to fix their thoughts so much on the privilege which was theirs, as to impress on them the solemnity of what they were engaged in. Hence he simply writes, “This is My body, which is for you,” fixing their attention and ours likewise on that of which the bread is the emblem; and the same with the cup. Surely as they read these words, and understood their import, a sense of shame must have come over them—remembering the scenes they had witnessed, and in which some perhaps had openly had part. And what must still further, one would think, have impressed them were the words peculiar to Paul “For as often as ye shall eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye announce the death of the Lord until He come.” How little soever they had been conscious of it, that was professed by the breaking of bread. He who is the Lord, the highest in dignity in creation, had died; and yet in the presence of the memorials of His death they had been unimpressed, unsolemnized. What brought Him to die? Sin, and their sins. On no other occasion then could they have been better or more forcibly reminded of what sin is in God’s sight; yet what had been the scenes witnessed at such times? Of what a nature were they partakers! But were they worse than others? Alas! we have all the same evil nature; and though from circumstances drunkenness or gluttony could not be indulged in at the

table in these days, self may be just as active in many other ways. What grace to provide atonement for such wretched creatures as we by nature are!

“The Lord’s death.” Such words invite meditation; they take us back to the past. “Till He come.” This carries us on in thought to the future. Partaking of the supper they announced the Lord’s death, and that in view of His return. The Lord had died, but the Lord will return; and He has lost none of His rights by death. In this He stands out alone from all that have entered into death. All that was His in this world before the cross is His now, and will be claimed by Him by-and-by. What was His by birth (Psa. 2) is His still, and He will possess it, though He has died. But is this all that we have to think of as we announce the Lord’s death? Oh, no! for by it all our blessings for eternity have been purchased, and are put beyond the reach of uncertainty. The mercies of David are made sure, because He is risen. (Acts 13:34) Atonement, too, has been made by His blood shed on the cross; and the whole question of sin will by-and-by be openly proved to have been dealt with by His death. (Heb. 9:27; John 1:29) He has tasted death for everything; He has annulled by His death him that had the power of death; delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage; and has made propitiation for the sins of the people (Heb. 2). Earth is concerned in His death, and far more than earth. How much results from the Lord’s death which His people are privileged to announce!

The supper, then, was no common meal. To partake of it unworthily was no light matter. He that did so was guilty of the body and blood of the Lord; that is, liable to judgment because of the slight thus put upon Him. Such an one ate and drank judgment to himself (κρ■μα, not damnation, κατ■κριμα) from not discerning the Lord’s body; that is, what the bread signified. The Lord’s body here has no reference to the church; and Paul never called the church by such a name. The church is the body of Christ, not the body of the Lord. The Lord’s body in our chapter is that of which the bread was the emblem, as He Himself had said, “This is My body.” Hence the man’s guilt consisted in treating the supper as an ordinary meal, not discerning in it that of which the elements were but figures. Now such conduct the Lord would not allow to go on unchecked. Self-judgment would indeed avert His judicial interference; but where that remained lacking, He Himself, the Lord, would, and had interposed. Weakness, sickness, and death had visited many of the Corinthian assembly for these grave scandals; but perhaps, till pointed out by the apostle, they were scarcely aware of the reason for these divine visitations upon them. Yet there was grace in them. Because they were really Christians the Lord dealt thus with them, that they should not be condemned with the world.

They had eaten unworthily. How many souls have been troubled about this, and have kept away from the table from not understanding the language and meaning of the apostle. No question was intended about their worthiness to be at the supper. As Christians they were worthy, though of course viewing the matter in another light since their place there was of grace, they might be, and as we must ever own they were, unworthy of it. But the sin dealt with was the partaking of the supper in an unworthy manner. Their ways at the table were what the apostle was writing of, and what the Lord had rebuked. They partook in an unworthy manner, not discerning the Lord’s body. Such are guilty as respects His body and blood.

How then shall we provide against this? The Lord has told us, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.” What care does this evince that we should not render ourselves liable to judgment?

What desire does it manifest on the Lord's part that all His people, unless disqualified by church discipline, should come and eat?

C. E. S.

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Simple Papers on the Church of God: Prayer and Prayer Meetings

By the ministry of the Word souls receive life, light, and understanding. As recipients of life there are desires formed within them which need an outgate, either by prayer or by worship. By the former, dependence upon God is confessed and expressed; by the latter, relief is afforded to the heart, in the enjoyment of God's love, through the pouring itself out before Him. If the sense of need is uppermost within us, whether for ourselves, for others, or for the work of God upon earth, prayer in one or more of its forms is the suited way in which to express it. If it be the exceeding riches of God's grace upon which the soul is dwelling, worship will be found to give it proper and satisfying relief. Thus graciously does God afford His people an outlet for their hearts, His ear being open to hear whatever they have to say to Him. To a consideration of prayer let us now address ourselves.

Man's proper place is one of dependence upon God, and this the Lord, though God as well as man, frequently manifested in His own life on earth. He prayed; He spent a whole night in prayer; He prayed earnestly; He prayed in secret; He prayed openly. In the wilderness, on the mount, on Jordan's brink, and in the garden of Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus Christ poured out His soul in prayer to God.

Prayer too, public and private, characterized the early Christians. Of the first converts we read: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Their enjoyment of the grace of God did not lead to forgetfulness of their dependence upon God; nor in the hour of God's interposition on their behalf did they fail to remember how all their resources were in Him. For when Peter and John, who had been taken before the council, were restored to their own company, the hostility of the ecclesiastical rulers to the spread of the truth having now become manifest, the whole company, to whom the two apostles reported all that the chief priests and rulers had said to them, lifted up their voice with one accord to God for the continued successful prosecution of the work (Acts 4:24). Again, when Peter was in prison, arrested by the political power which at that time had sway at Jerusalem, and his martyrdom was determined upon for the morrow, fervent prayer was made on his behalf, and a prayer meeting was held for that purpose in the house of Mary the mother of John, surnamed Mark (Acts 12). And that meeting had not broken up, though it was past the hour of midnight, when Peter in person announced to them how their prayer had been heard, and his release had been effected. Nor was it only in Jerusalem that meetings for prayer were held; for when the Holy Ghost had marked out Barnabas and Paul at Antioch for the work to which. He had called them, many prophets and teachers there assembled laid their hands on them, after fasting and prayer, recommending them to the grace of God for the work they had been called on to undertake (Acts 13:3; 14. 26). On another occasion, at Tere, when Paul was on his way to Jerusalem for his last visit there of which we have any record, the whole assembly, including the wives and children, knelt down in prayer outside the city, on the seashore, with those of Paul's company (Acts 21:5). A refreshment, doubtless, this must have been to the apostle's heart—a service, too, well-pleasing to God.

Besides these instances of common prayer, in which the whole company took part, we learn from Scripture how repeatedly saints were wont to resort to it. The twelve, when exercising their apostolic powers in appointing the seven deacons, engaged in prayer before they laid their hands upon them (Acts 6:6). Similarly, Paul and Barnabas, when appointing elders in every city, prayed with fasting, and commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed (Acts 14:23). And Peter and John, in Samaria, prayed that the converts might receive the Holy Ghost previous to the laying on of their hands to bestow it (Acts 8:15). Peter, too, when raising up Dorcas from the dead (Acts 9:40), and Paul, when about to heal the father of Publius (Acts 28:8), alike confessed their entire dependence upon God for the exercise of such powers on man's behalf. Of Stephen we read that his latest utterance was one of intercession for his murderers (Acts 7:60). Of Paul we learn that, though the character of his future work was told him at his conversion, ere he rose up from the ground (Acts 26:17-18), yet it was when engaged in prayer in the temple at Jerusalem, that he received his directions to depart to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-18). In the house which was left desolate to the Jews, for the presence of the Lord was not there, the divine command to depart to the Gentiles was communicated directly to the vessel fitted for the service. On another occasion, in a place and under circumstances very different from the last, Paul and Silas, in the prison at Philippi, with their feet made fast in the stocks, at midnight prayed, and sang praises to God. Their bodies were subjected to the power and malice of man. Their spirits were free, and unfettered. They prayed, and they sang praises to God (Acts 16:25), and an answer came. God acted in power and in grace. An earthquake shook the prison, opened its doors, and set the prisoners free; and the Word of God, by Paul and Silas, converted the jailer and his household. Again, at Miletus, the apostle did not bring to a close his farewell interview with the Ephesian elders, until he had prayed with them (Acts 20).. How prayer characterized him his epistles demonstrate (Rom. 1:9-10; Eph. 1:16; 3:14; Phil. 1:4; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Phil. 4). How he valued the prayers of others, and counted on them, his epistles also teach us (Rom. 15:30; Eph. 6:19; Phil. 1:7; Col. 4:3; 1 Thess. 5:25; 2 Thess. 3:1; Phil. 22; Heb. 13:18). But he seems not to have asked the prayers of any who were walking in ways that he had to reprove. To the Galatians he made no request for their fellowship with him in prayer, though we cannot doubt from the tone of his letter that he prayed for them (Gal. 4:19). Nor did he solicit the prayers of the Corinthians till Titus had assured him of their godly sorrow. A silence of this kind on the part of the apostle has surely a voice for us. To ask for the prayers of others should never be a matter of form on our part.

Prayer for one's self (James 5:13); prayer for others, for saints (Eph. 6:18), and for all men (1 Tim. 2:1); prayer too for the work of God upon earth (Col. 4:3-4)—with such requests are we permitted to approach God. Nor is this anything new; for saints in Old Testament times addressed Him, and in accordance with the revelation of their day drew nigh to God as the Almighty (Job 8:5), or as Jehovah God of Israel (1 Kings 8:23), who dwelleth between the cherubim (2 Kings 19:15). As seated on His earthly throne, Israel addressed to Him their supplications. Christians, however, are privileged to call on God as their Father who is in the heavens, and, to pray likewise to the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 12:8); but nowhere are they authorized in Scripture to pray to the Holy Ghost. Praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude 20; Eph. 6:18) is what Christians are exhorted to do; but never are they told to pray to Him. Praying in the Holy Ghost we shall express the desires which the Spirit of God has formed in our hearts, and as the Spirit would lead us to present them; and, as having access to the heavenly sanctuary, we pray to Him who is in the heavens. Prayer then should ever

be in accordance with the revelation vouchsafed to God's saints. What was suited to Solomon and Hezekiah would not be fitting for us. We should not address God as the God of Israel, nor speak to Him as dwelling between the cherubim. Similarly, since the Holy Ghost is with us, making intercession too for us according to God (Rom. 8:27), and with the bride asks the Lord Jesus to come (Rev. 22:17), addresses to Him, whether invoking His presence on earth, or asking Him to help us, receive no countenance from the divine word, and indicate a lack of spiritual understanding in those who resort to them.

Prayer to God as the Father was first taught by the Son, who reveals Him (Matt. 11:27). Taught by Him about the Father, the disciples asked the Lord how they were to pray; for clearly the old forms of prayer did not meet the position into which they were brought by this revelation on the part of the Son. To their desire He responded, and gave them what is commonly called the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9-13), but without the doxology, which did not really form part of it. Now this act on the Lord's part is full of instruction for us. John the Baptist, who had ministered truth for his day, taught his disciples how to pray. The Lord Jesus, who revealed the Father, taught also His disciples, some of whom certainly had been disciples of John, how they were to pray. The old Jewish forms of prayer clearly no longer suited the disciples of Christ. The prayer, or prayers, John taught his disciples ceased to be the proper expression of their heart, when they had learned from the Son about the Father. It is plain, then, that prayer should always be in harmony with, and based upon, the revelation of God which has been vouchsafed us. Souls in those days felt that. The Lord then endorsed the thought as correct, and afterward abundantly confirmed it; for just before His departure, on the night previous to His crucifixion, unasked by the eleven, He discoursed in a marked way on this important subject. Of the power of prayer, when offered up in faith, He had taught them only a few days before (Matt. 21:21-22; Mark 11:22-24). Now, in the immediate prospect of His departure, He teaches them a good deal more. He was about to leave them to go to the Father, henceforth to be hidden from their sight. They should, however, have a clear proof that He was, where He had told them that He was going; for they should do greater works than He had done, and whatsoever they should ask in His name, that He would do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son, adding, "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:12-14). The world, the Jews, might taunt them with trusting to a crucified man; but as answers came to prayers offered up in His name, they would have abundant proof, both that He was with the Father, accepted on high, though rejected on earth, and also that He was caring for His own.

Now here for the first time do we read of prayer to be offered up in His name. When He gave the disciples the prayer of Matthew 6 He did not tell them to present their petitions in His name; and in John 16:24 we distinctly learn from His own lips that this was something quite new. "Hitherto," He said, "Have ye asked nothing in My name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." The prayer of Matthew 6 was prayer to the Father, the pouring out of the heart to God from one that knew himself to be His child; but, till the atonement by the blood of Christ was accomplished, prayer in His name was unknown. As soon as that was effected, and known by those who believed on Him, prayer was to be offered up in His name. His name would henceforth have a meaning for them as well as for God; for it expresses all that He is in the eyes of God the Father. The answer would come from God; but the Son it would be who would fulfill the desires of their hearts. "I will do it" assured them of this, and of His unabated interest in all that concerned them.

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But further, since unlimited power was at His command to do whatsoever they asked, He proceeded to tell them on what conditions, all their requests would be granted. “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). Conforming to these conditions—for they are conditions—they could reckon on asking the right things, and could be sure of receiving an answer. For, if abiding in Christ, and His words abiding in them, they would be in the full current of God’s thoughts, and hence their desires would be quite in conformity with His mind. Further, He added, “Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain; that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you” (John 15:16). Here He again lays down conditions, and mentions the name of the One to whom they were to address themselves, which as yet in this discourse He had not stated. And now one more point had to be noticed, ere His instructions on the subject of prayer were completed; namely, the time from whence they might begin thus to pray. “At that day,” that is, after His resurrection, “ye shall ask in My name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you, because ye have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16:26-27). Familiar personal intercourse with the Lord as man upon the earth would cease; for He would be no longer present with them in the manner that He had been. They would therefore in that day ask nothing of Him; but whatsoever they should ask the Father in His name, the Father would give them (John 16:23). So direct was to be their intercourse with the Father, and such a valid plea would they be able always to urge before Him.

Four distinct points then are taken up by the Lord in these three chapters of John’s gospel. 1st, In whose name we are to pray (John 14); 2nd, conditions on which, if fulfilled, we can be sure of answers to our requests; 3rd, the but further, since unlimited (John 15); and, 4th, the time when the Lord’s instructions were first to be acted on (John 16). Whilst then we can always present our requests to God the Father, who is never weary of hearkening to the cry of His children, and whilst we have a plea on which to base our petitions—a plea the full value of which is known, not to us, but to Him to whom we pray—there are, we must ever remember, conditions laid down, conforming to which we can reckon upon an answer to our prayers; namely, faith, as set forth in Matthew 21, and the conditions stated in the gospel by John. A remembrance of these will surely check rash and inconsiderate petitions. Can I link the name of Christ with the prayer I am presenting to the Father? Have I the mind of God as to that which I am solicitous to get? Can I prefer my requests in faith?

These remarks apply to prayer in general, both private and public. Liberty to resort to the former is freely given us in the epistles (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 4:6; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17; 1 Peter 4:7). Instructions about the latter are set forth in 1 Timothy. Of common prayer the Lord also has made mention in Matthew 18:19-20, assuring His disciples that if only two should agree touching anything they might ask, it should be done for them of His Father who is in the heavens; for where two or three are gathered together unto His name, there is He in the midst of them. On His presence then we can reckon, if the condition laid down is complied with—gathered unto His name; for of that His people need never be deprived, however small their number, though they are upon earth and He is in heaven.

Now this supposes a meeting for prayer, directions for which Timothy received from Paul. For, what the order of such a meeting should be, it is not left to man to devise. How various in that case the arrangements would surely be! God, however, has given us by the apostle His regulations in connection with it. And such were needed; for since Christianity restores woman to her proper place in connection with man, which amongst the heathen was lost, and Judaism did not teach (Matt. 19:8), though she is still subject to God's governmental dealings, the consequence of the fall; and since too the saints were taught that in Christ there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28), there was a danger—and the state of matters shows it had already arisen—lest they should confound the condition in Christ with the relative position of the sexes in the assembly. In Christ we are all one; in the assembly we are not. The grace shown to us in Christ does not override God's order in creation. This the Corinthians had to be taught (1 Cor. 11:1-9), and of this Timothy is reminded.

Looking at that chapter, we can form a very good idea of what a prayer meeting must have been in apostolic times, if all gathered together were in subjection to the teaching of the Word. Composed of persons of both sexes, the men only opened their mouths in prayer, any one of whom, however, was free, if guided by the Spirit, to lead the whole company in their devotions. "For I will," wrote the apostle, "that the men pray everywhere." Both the men and the women were indwelt by the Holy Ghost; for He then dwelt, and does now dwell, in every true believer. The fact then of having received the Holy Ghost did not make such an one fit to lead others in prayer. All were one in Christ; but God's order in the assembly was to be observed, although, as it would seem, the separation of the sexes, carried out in the synagogue, was not maintained in the Christian assembly. Might then any man, because of his sex, make himself the mouthpiece of the company in their devotions? Assuming that he was otherwise able to do it, he would nevertheless, on any occasion, have been disqualified, if he could not lift up holy (or pious) hands without wrath and reasoning. What creatures then they were in themselves in the assembly at Ephesus, since such a caution was required! "Just like me," however, anyone, and everyone, who knows something of his evil nature, must surely acknowledge. What grace then to allow such to approach the throne of grace on behalf of themselves, and as the mouthpieces of the assembly of God!

If we had been present at such a meeting, we should have found the women, who were obedient to the apostolic injunctions, adorned in seemly guise, with modesty and discretion; and instead of setting off their persons by jewels or costly array, had we watched their general behavior, followed them to their homes, and spent a day in their company, we should have seen them adorned with ornaments of great value indeed, such as become women professing godliness, even with good works. Further, whilst in the assembly they would all have been silent (1 Cor. 14:34), elsewhere we should have found them surely learning in quietness (■συχ■α), not teaching nor usurping authority over the men; but being in quietness, remembering both woman's place in creation, as evidenced by the fact that Adam was first formed, then Eve, and the fatal consequences of her intercourse in the garden with the serpent. The woman was deceived, the man was not. Adam hearkened to the voice of his wife. She proved her unfitness to take the lead. "Nevertheless," adds the apostle, "she shall be preserved in child-bearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety." Thus, whilst the head of the woman is the man, her preservation in child-bearing is connected governmentally as much with the husband's behavior as with her own.

Having glanced at the orderly arrangement of a prayer meeting, we may in conclusion inquire, what would have been the character of their prayers. Very comprehensive they might be, and very free. Bound by no written or pre-arranged form, they could freely make use of all the different kinds of prayer with which we are acquainted. Supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, they were free to present before the throne of grace. Addressing the High and the Holy One with all the reverence and solemnity that befits a creature addressing its God, they could nevertheless speak to Him in all the confidence of children, being free to express every desire, and to lay before Him all the wants and wishes of the assembly. The grace this speaks of is great. God would be entreated of them. He would hearken to their prayers. He would let them hold free, personal intercourse with Him; for such $\nu\tau\epsilon\zeta\iota\varsigma$, translated intercession, seems to imply. And to thanksgivings too they were also free to give utterance on such occasions. For if mindful of the grace which gives free access to God, and the freedom permitted of speaking on behalf of all saints and all men, remembering too past answers to prayer, surely in the consciousness of all this thanksgivings might well mingle with supplications, prayers, and intercessions. How comprehensive then can prayers be, since we may pray for all saints and for all men! In Ephesians 6:18 we are exhorted to pray for all saints; in 1 Timothy 2:1 we are taught to pray for all men. Each of these statements is in character with the epistle in which it occurs. In Ephesians we are taught especially about the body of Christ; in Timothy we have God presented as the Savior. Prayer for all saints is in keeping with the teaching of the one; prayer for all men is in full accord with the line of truth in the other.

Living as the early Christians did under rulers who knew not God, prayer, they were taught, was to be offered for those in authority, as well as for the wellbeing and necessities of individuals. Thus grace, of which they were partakers, was to be manifested in them; and a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, they might lead, the result of God upholding and restraining the constituted authorities placed over them. Thank God, we in our land are little familiar with the troubles, and the insecurity to life and property, which are liable to attend the absence of a stable government. Still, prayer for the powers that be we should not on that account forget; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Of God's willingness to save all we are here reminded, that we may pray for all; but of His counsels the apostle is not in this passage treating. How willing is God to save! He declares it, and He has given proofs of it: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men." Here national distinctions and dispensational position drop out of sight. And the Mediator, the man Christ Jesus, gave Himself a ransom for all, and appointed Paul to be a herald, an apostle, and a teacher of nations, in faith and truth to testify of it. He gave Himself! What words for us to read! He has provided too the channel by which this should be made known. What desire on His part for men's salvation does this manifest! What freedom must this have given them when presenting petitions to God!

C. E. S.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Institution of the Supper

“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). Such is the sacred historian’s brief account of the ways of the first converts to Christianity after the day of Pentecost. The company in which they were found, and the teaching to which they were subject, these are classed together. Then, as a consequence, we learn of the religious exercises which characterized them; namely, the breaking of bread, and prayers; for by the omission of the conjunction and before “breaking of bread” in accordance with the reading of the best MSS., that and prayer are stated as characteristic actions of the Christian community. Here then, for the first time after the institution of the supper, do we read of the Christians meeting to break bread together in remembrance of the Lord’s death; and from henceforth this peculiar Christian service is called the breaking of bread (Acts 20:7,11) as well as the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:20). By the latter term we are reminded by whom it was instituted, by the former is expressed the action of those who partake of it.

Yet the action in itself was nothing new. With the simple meaning of the term the Jews were certainly familiar (Matt. 14:19; 15:36; Mark 8:6,19; Lam. 4:4); nor were they strangers to the custom of breaking bread and drinking wine with mourners to comfort them. Of this Jeremiah writes (Jer. 16:7); but, it is the marginal reading of the authorized version that conveys, what the Hebrew original expresses. What, however, was new, and peculiar too, was the interpretation the Lord gave to His act of breaking bread.

To comfort mourners for the dead, their friends, we learn, would break bread for them, and give them the cup of consolation for their father or their mother. It was all that friendship could do when death had entered the family, and bereavement pressed heavily on the sorrowing ones. Sweet, doubtless, such sympathy had often proved itself to be, as the loving care of friends thus displayed itself in the house, and on the day of sorrow; but sweet as it might be, the heart’s ache could not thereby be removed, nor the void which death had caused be thereby filled. But who could comfort the disciples for the death of their Master and Lord? No friends could be found to do it; and worse than that, the world’s enmity they were about to experience in a way they had never felt it before. Yet a comfort, but far more than a comfort, would they find in breaking bread together in remembrance of the Lord’s death; for whilst friends might give to bereaved ones the cup of consolation, the disciples received from the hands of Christ Himself the cup of blessing. And yet more; for His death was their gain, how great soever was their sorrow in losing Him. Now indeed the thought was new, that the death of one could be productive of real, everlasting gain to others; yet so it was in the case of the Lord’s death, though in His only. This the disciples were to remember, and in the presence of the memorials of it to give thanks as they acknowledged it.

Of the institution of the Lord’s Supper we have four inspired accounts. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us about it; and the Apostle Paul, addressing the Corinthians, acquaints them with that which he had received direct from the Lord in glory concerning it (1 Cor. 11:23). When, and where the apostle of the Gentiles received it we are not told; but the fact that he did receive it direct from the

Lord, years after He had ascended to the right hand of the Majesty on high, testifies of the desire that all His people, whether gathered out from Jews or from Gentiles, should equally, and in the same manner, announce His death till He come. Of these four accounts, one only is from the pen of an eyewitness, and a recipient of the elements from the Lord in person. As, however, we examine the four accounts, we have to confess that we should have lost something had any one of them been missing.

Had Matthew's account been lost, we should not have known that the Lord, in giving the cup, said, "Drink ye all of it;" had that of Mark not survived to our day, we should not have known that they did all drink of it (Mark 14:23). Communion in one kind was not practiced in the Lord's presence, nor sustained by anything that fell from His lips. Again, Matthew, the eyewitness, has also recorded other words not met with elsewhere. "For the remission of sins," is an addition only found in this connection in his gospel. Now, comparing Jeremiah 31:31-34 with the four accounts of the Supper, we trace an important connection. Of all the Old Testament writers, Jeremiah is the only one who mentions the new covenant, though other prophets describe blessings to be enjoyed under it. The Lord is the first person in the New Testament who speaks of it, and He supplies an important link with reference to it. Jeremiah predicted the new covenant, and the blessings to be enjoyed under it; namely, the knowledge of God, and the forgiveness of sins; but he did not state on what sacrifice this covenant would be based. This the Lord did when He uttered the words, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Thus His words, when giving the cup to His disciples, naturally recall to our mind the passage in Jeremiah, and show us that He revealed what the prophet could not; and when we remember the dispensational character of Matthew's gospel, presenting as it does the Lord as Son of David, and Son of Abraham, is there not a propriety in the fullest reference to that covenant which concerns directly God's earthly people, being found in the gospel, which more than any of the others presents the Lord in His special relation to them? Forgiveness of sins we enjoy now, and they will by-and-by; but they will only know it as part of the blessings of the new covenant, and when that covenant shall have been made with them. We who believe know it now, because the blood on which it will rest has been shed; so the blessing, based on the atoning work of the Lord, can be shared in by us whilst the Lord is in heaven.

Turning to Luke's account, we learn what the other two evangelists do not make plain—how distinct was the Lord's Supper from the paschal feast, though both were partaken of by the disciples at the same table, and on the same night. His account of the paschal feast is given us in chap. 22:15-18; his account of the institution of the supper follows in verses 19, 20. At the paschal feast the Lord had His place as one with them; at the supper He was, as it were, the host, dispensing that which He had provided to those who were the guests. How much surely we should have lost had Luke's account not seen the light, or had it perished by the carelessness or hostility of man to the truth for the beloved Physician it is, who has given us to understand that the Lord prized the opportunity of observing the passover—"With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." Matthew, who must have heard these words, has not repeated them. Luke, who certainly was not present, alone records them; and fitly does he do it, since the manhood of the Lord Jesus Christ comes out especially in his gospel. How the Lord Jesus then, as one of Israel, viewed the Passover these words show us, and surely afford us instruction as to the light in which we should view the privilege, and the opportunity of now commemorating His death,

which, when Israel shall enjoy the fruits of it, will cause them to relegate to a second place God's memorable intervention in the past (Jer. 23:7,8). God's intervention was in the Lord's eyes no light thing. How we who sit at His table view redemption by His blood may well be a question, when His words above quoted come before us.

Further, we learn from Luke's account of what passed in that upper room, that though the Lord partook of the Passover, He did not drink of the paschal cup, which it would seem had been handed to Him; for the historian wrote, "Having received a cup," not "having taken it," as our English translation would intimate. Now, in the original regulations about the passover there is no mention of a cup, and, as Deuteronomy 16:3-8 shows us, there was originally no room for it; for the character of the feast in the month of Abib, as that chapter teaches us, was not one of joy; and no joy is mentioned as characteristic of a Jewish festival till the time arrived for keeping the feast of weeks, when, in the possession of the fruits of resurrection in the land, they were to rejoice (Deut. 16:11). What then God had instituted, to that the Lord conformed. Of that which man had added the Lord did not partake. He did not, however, condemn the introduction of the cup as wrong; but the time for joy in connection with full redemption not having come, He did not drink of it himself, though, when He had given thanks, He handed it to His disciples to divide amongst themselves, saying, "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come." Thus far we have Luke's account of the paschal feast. What follows is that of the supper.

This is an entirely new service, quite distinct from any of which Israel as such had been allowed to partake; but one in which all the children of God, of whatever nationality, are privileged to have part. What then is the character of this service? and what the meaning of it? Both these questions are answered by the Lord Himself. His action tells us of the one, His words teach us about the other. "He gave thanks." Then the service is eucharistic indeed; for that was all that we are told that He did before He brake the bread, and gave it to the disciples. And a second time He gave thanks before He handed to them the cup of which they were to drink. That He gave thanks before handing the cup Luke and Paul imply; but Matthew and Mark expressly state it. Agreeing in this, they agree also in stating that He blessed before He broke the bread, whereas Luke and Paul affirm He gave thanks. The difference is not great, and admits probably of this explanation, that whilst the two latter give the character of His utterance, the others express the form in which it came forth. A eucharistic service then is that of the breaking of bread. He gave thanks, but in what terms we know not. Matthew, who must have heard it, is silent upon it; neither Mark, nor Luke, nor Paul have supplied the omission. It must have been a wonderful thanksgiving when the Lord gave thanks to God for the results of His atoning death, so soon to be an accomplished fact. Who on earth could enter into them as He could? Who knew like Him what the judgment of God was? Who could then understand but Himself what are the joys of the Father's love, and the Father's house? Full and perfect then must that thanksgiving have been, yet not a syllable of it has been preserved in God's book. And rightly so; for since the Spirit of God is to direct us in our worship, the words of the Lord on that occasion have been carefully kept from us; and nowhere have we even the thanksgiving utterances of an apostle when breaking bread at the Lord's table. Had it been otherwise, would not such have been used as a form? and no service at the Lord's table would have been thought complete without them. But then dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance would have been really surrendered. Wisely, therefore, have the terms of the Lord's thanksgiving been omitted from the account of His institution of the supper.

Are we on this account placed at a disadvantage? No; for we know what the character of the service is to be, and we know too, from the Lord's action, how perfect in His eyes is His atoning work; for as He gave thanks, and that only, at the institution of the supper, we are taught that nothing needed to be, nothing could be, added to the value of His sacrificial work, and that nothing more would be wanted, than what He was about to do, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. No word have we here of prayer. What room could there be to ask for anything in the contemplation of accomplished atonement? Prayer may come in after the breaking of bread has taken place, as those gathered together think of saints unable to be present, or of souls still unsaved, or of anything else in connection with the Lord's work or God's purposes; but prayer in the place of thanksgiving, when met to break bread, is assuredly not in harmony with the Lord's ways at His table; for the work is a perfect work, a finished work, as Scripture affirms (Heb. 10:14-18), and the Lord's own action of giving thanks abundantly confirms.

The character of the service thus expressed, its meaning too was explained by Him, when He handed to His disciples first the bread, and then the wine — "This is My body, which is given for you;" "this cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."

What grace is expressed in these words, "My body given for you!" None could have lawfully demanded His death. "He made Himself," said the Jews when delivering Him to Pilate, "the Son of God, and by our law He ought to die." But He was, and is, the Son of God. None then could lawfully have demanded His death, though the Jews condemned Him as guilty of blasphemy, and accused Him of high treason to Pilate the governor. His statement about His person was true, and Pilate acquitted Him of any charge of which he could take cognizance. Yet He died. His body was given for us. He surrendered Himself. His blood was shed for us. Did God keep back anything that was for man's good? The devil had persuaded Adam and Eve that He did. Now what an answer has God given to that! an answer such as no man could have expected, and one of which the devil then could have had no foreknowledge. For the death of His Son on the cross, not for man merely, but for sinners, was to be the overwhelming, the touching proof that God would withhold nothing of which we had need. "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," writes Paul to believers at Rome (Rom. 8:32). "He sent His Son," writes John, "to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Nor this only. The Son gave Himself, as Paul has taught us (Gal. 1:4; 2. 20; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14); but the apostle was not the first who declared that. The Son Himself announced it (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45; John 6:51). The joy was His of declaring in plain words that He would surrender Himself to die, to glorify God and to save sinners.

C. E. S.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Institution of the Supper Conclusion

In Matthew and Mark we read of His blood shed “for many.” In Luke it is “for you.” This makes the announcement more personal and pointed; and he is the only one of the four who tells us that the Lord spake thus, both at the giving of the bread and at the giving of the cup. Were the eleven then distressed at the prospect of His death? How fully would He comfort them by the institution of the supper. They were never to forget His death, yet their remembrance of it would have no tinge of sadness in it. It would give joy to their hearts; for atonement and redemption were effected by it, and forgiveness and justification flowed from it, all of which they would learn after that the Holy Ghost should have come to set forth the blessed results of His death, and to teach them, and us of what the Lord’s presence on high is the witness.

Learning then, as they must have done from the Lord’s lips, what He thought of atonement by His blood, they also were taught how He would have them remember Him. “This do in remembrance of Me.” Here again we are reminded that God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts. Men love to dwell on great and noble deeds of others done in their life. The Lord’s people were specially to remember Him in His death, and as dead; for the bread and the wine recall Him as actually dead, the former being the symbol of His body, and the latter of His blood, which in the supper is viewed as distinct from His body. Hence communion in one kind is a denial of the Lord’s death, for it regards the blood as not shed. It virtually presents Him to us as alive before death, in which case atonement has not been wrought: there is no forgiveness for our sins (Heb. 9:22), and the Lord abides alone (John 12:24).

But not only were those who had been with Him on earth thus to remember Him. All His people, from that day till the church shall be taken, are in the same manner to remember Him. His enemies in the world would rejoice that He was dead (John 16:20), hoping thereby to have got rid forever of Him whom they contemptuously called “that deceiver,” ■ πλ■νός (Matt. 27:63), little knowing that they had, by their rejection of the Christ, paved the way for the appearance by-and-by of “the deceiver” indeed, ■ πλ■νός, the antichrist (2 John 7). All the Lord’s people too would rejoice that He had died after He had risen again, reaping as they would the abiding fruits of His atoning death—sanctification, forgiveness, justification, and entrance into the holiest by His blood.

But when, and how often they were thus to remember Him the Lord does not specify in His Word. We gather however from it when they met for that purpose; namely, on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). At first it may have been that each day they broke bread together. Afterward it certainly was done on the first day of the week, and for that special purpose did they at Troas assemble together. Prayer, preaching, teaching, are all useful and needful, but they do not supersede the necessity of meeting to break bread. When thus met there may be room for teaching. The Lord, after the breaking of bread, spoke what we have in John 14, if not also what is stated in chapters 15-16. And the Apostle Paul at Troas discoursed for a long time when the company were assembled for the breaking of bread. Yet the purpose for which they came together

was not to hear Paul, but to show the Lord's death. Bearing this in mind, we shall not go to the Lord's table to hear some gifted teacher, but to break bread in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gift or no gift will make no difference as to the motive which will take us to that meeting. We shall go to remember Him who once entered into death to save us. Edification by gift all should be thankful for, but the absence of it will keep none away from the table who know for what reason we are to assemble.

And how often can we thus meet? No limit is placed to this; and a word of the Lord, only preserved by Paul, makes this clear: "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me."

At what period of the day should we break bread? some may ask. This too is left an open question. The supper was instituted in the evening. They met on that occasion at Troas at night. Probably the Corinthians too came together when the day had declined (1 Cor. 11:21); for the term δεῖπνον, translated there supper, is not used in the New Testament of a morning meal. In Luke 14:12 it is clearly used of the meal which succeeded dinner. But no rule is laid down as to the hour when we are to break bread, though the first day of the week is marked out as the one specially suited for that, on grounds which all can readily understand. But, how often besides Christians may break bread, is left to the Lord's people to decide as they may be guided.

And now, ere concluding this article, a little verse, found only in Matthew (26:30) and Mark (14:26), but word for word the same in both, must receive a moment's attention: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out to the mount of Olives." If ever there was an occasion on which common sorrow might have outweighed common joy at the remembrance of the shelter from divine judgment by blood, it would have been on that evening when the Lord ate the last Passover with His disciples. But instead of that, ere they left the upper room they sung together to God; a hint for us, that no sorrow of whatever character is to override the heart's joy, which flows from the remembrance of redemption. Their sorrow on losing the Lord was great (John 16:6), and He knew it; but their joy, as they recalled God's interposition on behalf of Israel, was nevertheless to be expressed. So surely should it be with us. Troubles and sorrows, whether individual or otherwise, are not to be allowed to outweigh the common joy, when we meet to show the Lord's death.

Thus far we have been considering Scriptures which tell us why we should break bread, and how, we should do it. Other Scriptures give us practical teaching in connection with it. A consideration of these must be reserved for the following paper.

C. E. S.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: the Ministry of the Word

Having viewed the church in its relation to God, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Ghost, and having also seen how the body is formed, we would next direct the reader's attention to the way in which the work of God is carried on during this dispensation.

The assembly of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15). Outside of it God's truth has no resting place on earth. In it only can be found the truth of which that passage speaks. And it is only by the ministry of the Word, in some form or other, that the work of God upon earth can make progress, and the number of His children be increased. Now when God was dealing with His chosen people Israel, He raised up prophets to speak to their consciences, and to acquaint them with the purposes of His heart. To the nation of Israel they for the most part exclusively addressed themselves, having for their audience those who were of the seed of Jacob. In so far as their ministry took effect on souls, its then present purpose was accomplished. But all the labors of the prophets, however successful they might have been, could not have increased by one single soul the number of God's earthly people. Their service was to act upon God's people already in existence upon earth by the process of natural generation.

With the rejection by the Jews of the testimony of the Lord a new work commenced; namely, the forming of a company upon earth whom God could regard as His children, and as His people. Into this family none could find an entrance on the ground of earthly ties, or by the effort of human will. In it relationship by birth was acknowledged, but blood-relationship was unknown. To become children of God souls must be born of God (John 1:12-13). Hence this mighty change could only be effected by the will of God, and through the instrumentality of the Word of God. Of God's will in the matter James writes (1:18); of the instrumentality of the Word that same apostle, in common with Peter, makes distinct mention (1 Peter 1:23). And it seems fitting that these two of the apostolic college, whose work lay especially amongst God's ancient people, should insist on the truth of a new birth, when writing to those who had been regarded as children of the kingdom on the ground of their Abrahamic descent.

In the synagogue service, after the reading of the law and of the prophets, there was room for exhortation (Acts 13:15) to press home on the hearts of those present the lessons to be deduced from the Scriptures. But more than this, it became evident, was required, if the number of God's children could only be increased by the action of the divine Word upon the soul, and if some from amongst Gentiles were to become children in common with some from amongst Jews. A ministry therefore which could first convert, and then build up the converts, was called for. How well did Paul at Antioch understand this, who when invited to exhort the congregation, preached the gospel of the grace of God instead (Acts 13:15-32).

Now this God provided, and the Lord in the parable of the sower indicated. For God was not about any longer to seek fruit from those who were His people on the ground of their descent from Abraham; He was henceforth going to beget children by water and the Spirit, who should be able to be fruitful for Him. Not that the exercise of quickening power by the Word was anything new in

itself in the ways of God; for every saint, from Abel downward, had been born of God; but those whom He would now own as really His people, would only be such as were in truth His children. Hence God commenced to work afresh, and the Lord appeared in the character of the sower. Now a field till sown can manifestly produce no good crop. The ground may have been all prepared for the seed, but unless the seed is sown no good results can be expected. To sow then indicates the commencement of a work, and the place of the parable of the sower in the three synoptic gospels agrees with this.

In Matthew, who gives us dispensational teaching, the parable only comes in when the ground has been cleared by the Lord's judgment of the cities where He had worked (11), and of the nation amongst whom He was laboring (12). Then, declaring the character of the relationship to Himself which He would henceforth acknowledge, even that of the new birth, evidenced by the individual doing the will of His Father who is in the heavens, He left the house, and sat by the seaside, and there, with multitudes collected from various parts of the land (Luke 8:4), He gave utterance to the parable of the sower, His very action, and place of teaching, both harmonizing with the work which God was commencing. In Mark the parable is given us in the fourth chapter of his gospel, as forming part, and the commencing part, of the Lord's instruction to His disciples ere He sent them forth to preach. For the reader may observe that, though chosen in chapter 3:14-19, they are not sent forth to preach till chapter 6:7; the intervening part of the gospel being occupied with instructing them in what God was doing, in order to fit them to do their work for God, and for the Lord. In Luke the same parable appears (chapter 8), in common with several things which are characteristic features of the kingdom.

With this ministry of the Lord then a fresh beginning was made. He sowed the word of the kingdom, the Word of God, and thus taught us how the kingdom, during His rejection, can be really advanced. Going about from town to town, and from village to village, He preached and showed the glad tidings of the kingdom of God (Luke 8:1). In this He was followed by the twelve, when sent forth by Him on their special mission to Israel (Luke 9:2,6). After He rose, the field of labor became enlarged, reaching even to the utmost bounds of the earth; so that wherever there should be a soul to hear, and a messenger to carry the Word, there was a sphere in which God's servant could work in accordance with the divine mind.

The effects of the sower's labors the parable describes. The seed was pure; it was the Word of God. Of its germinating power there could be no doubt; for that Word liveth and abideth (1 Peter 1:23); so the only hindrance to a full crop, wherever it fell, would arise from the condition of the ground, in other words, the man's heart to whom it might come. Men might think of blaming the Word for the apparent failure of the work. Against such thoughts the Lord would warn us, and the continued going on of God's work should guard us. For as the seed is the Word of God (Luke 8:11), the word of the kingdom, as Matthew (13:19) describes it, the lack of full results must evidently arise from other causes than the character of the Word, and to these the parable directs us. In saying this, however, it must be borne in mind that we are only treating of the seed, and not of any instrument by whom in these days the seed may be scattered. Through admixture of rubbish with the seed, from a want of a right apprehension as to what the seed is, much labor may be in vain, and efforts be found to be fruitless. But where the real seed is sown, the want of a crop will not arise from lack of its germinating power. It is the living Word of God. We do well to remember this, that all who preach or teach may make sure that it is the Word of God they are

using, and count on its sufficiency, as applied by the Holy Ghost, to effect a divine work in the hearts and consciences of men.

The causes which hinder a fruitful crop are three. First, some men do not desire the Word, in which case the devil takes it away. Secondly, the conscience has not been reached by the Word, so the apparent work is but ephemeral, and dies away. Thirdly, the attraction of, or occupation with surrounding things, choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful. For those only are fruitful who hear the Word, understand it (Matt. 13:23), receive it (Mark 4:20), and keep it (Luke 8:15). Two important things then are manifested by this way of working: the first is the condition of man's heart by nature, and the second is the positive need for God to work in it, if fruit, which He can acknowledge as such, is to be produced at all. The wisdom too of this way of working becomes apparent. For what penal restrictions could not accomplish (Gen. 8:21), nor law effect, God does by His Word, winning souls to Himself, and making them willing servants of Christ. And Satan, by taking away the seed sown where he can, or by imitating God's method of working, and becoming a sower himself, as the parable of the tares and the wheat teaches us, attests the wisdom of God in thus working by His word. For he, who imitates the work of another, confesses that he has nothing better to suggest, and knows no plan more effectual to work by. But here a distinction should be noted. In the parable of the sower it is the commencement of a fresh work to which attention is directed, and God's word is the seed which acts on men, and alone can make them fruitful. It is the sowing that we there read of. In the parable of the tares, on the other hand, a parable of the kingdom of the heavens, which the former parable is not, we have presented the results evident to the outward eyes of the sower's labors. So persons are mentioned as being in the field. It is the growing crop to which attention is directed, and the efforts of the enemy to counteract God's work. For the explanation given us of the parable tells us, that the children of the kingdom are the fruit of the good seed, and the children of the wicked one are the fruit of the enemy's work. Till the Lord came, the Jews looked on themselves as the sons of the kingdom (Matt. 8:12). In this parable we are taught who such really are (13:38); for publicans and harlots justified God by entering into the kingdom through really receiving the seed, the Word of God, whilst Pharisees, scribes, the self-righteous, and the indifferent shut themselves out of it.

After the Lord rose, the full extent of the field, in which His people were to work by the instrumentality of the Word, was clearly defined. Repentance and remission of sins was to be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47), and unto the uttermost part of the earth were the disciples to be witnesses to Christ (Acts 1:8); but first they must be endued with power from on high by the coming on them of the Holy Ghost. But could the preaching of the Word of God really deal in power with hearts? Peter's address on the day of Pentecost proved what it could do, as three thousand of his hearers were pricked to the heart by his words, and, implicitly obeying his directions, were numbered henceforth as disciples in truth of the despised and crucified Nazarene.

In the very town, then, where the Lord had been so lately crucified, the work commenced of adding together such as should be saved (Acts 2:47); and this was effected by the instrumentality of the Word. The movement did not originate in some obscure village of Galilee, and, when it could boast of numbers, display itself to the world; but, just six weeks after the crucifixion of the Lord, and in the very center of Judaism, in the metropolitan city Jerusalem, under the shadow, as it were, of the temple, the words of life were spoken, which bowed hearts to confess the crucified One as their

Savior and their Lord. The work thus commenced nothing could stop. Peter and John were arrested, and put in ward; but many who heard their word believed, and the number of the men now swelled to about five thousand souls (Acts 4:4). At a little later date, when the opposition of the Sanhedrin became more marked, the sacred historian acquaints us with the onward march of the work. "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Act. 6:7). Like the waters of Ezekiel 47, each time the stream is, as it were, measured, it is only to tell of its expansion in breadth, as well as of its ceaseless flow. And resembling that river in another character, the movement, as it spread over the land of Israel, and reached even to Gentiles, disseminated life to all who profited by it.

In Samaria, by the preaching of Philip, souls were evangelized, and Simon Magus found himself eclipsed (Acts 8). The preaching of Christ had more effect he saw than his sorceries and bewitchments Amongst the Gentiles the effects were the same. The sorcerer Bar-jesus was unable to turn away Sergius Paulus from the faith (Acts 13: 7-12). Idolaters turned from idols to God (1 Thess. 1:9), and from such sounded out the word of the Lord; for the gospel had come to them "in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." Men saw, and acknowledged a force at work to which Gentiles had hitherto been strangers. God was working by His Word in the power of the Holy Ghost. Ignorant heathen (Acts 14:20; 16:34) and educated heathen alike were reached by the Word. In Corinth, the seat of licentiousness; in Ephesus, a great center of idolatry; in Rome, the metropolis of the empire, the gospel made its way. Magical books were burnt by their owners at Ephesus, and in the very household of the emperor Nero the Lord Jesus had some of His sheep (Phil. 4:22). Thus, from high and low, rich and poor, masters and slaves, souls were numbered amongst the disciples of Christ. For the Word of God had reached them, and they had received it as His word, which effectually works in those that believe. Nor was it that one like Paul by the force of his ardor drew men along with him, for where he had not labored the work spread, and the Word ministered wrought with like power. Of this the Colossians are an example (Col. 1:6-8). For as at Rome, so at Colosse, the assembly there existing was not formed by the labors of the apostle.

If such were some of the results of the ministry of the Word, what was the subject of it? It was Christ. Philip preached Christ (Acts 8:5). His death, His resurrection, His ascension, were freely proclaimed (Acts 2:23-34; 4:33; 1 Cor. 15:3-8), and forgiveness and justification from all things formed part of the glad tidings (Acts 10:43; 13:38, 39). Truth too about His person was set forth, that He is the Son of God (Acts 9:20; Rom. 1:1-4). As the message from God to men, it was called the gospel, or glad tidings of God (Rom. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:2). As the truth about the Lord Jesus was its subject, it was called the gospel of the Christ (Rom. 15:19; Phil. 1:27). And as it set forth God's ways with men in grace, it was called the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24). Of the power of this message Paul, who had often carried it about, bears testimony. He was not ashamed of the gospel, "for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16); and from Jerusalem, round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the gospel of the Christ (15:19). In doing this he had moved among men of different minds, and nations characterized by different habits. Orientals had heard from his lips the glad tidings of salvation. Europeans too had listened to it, and received it. Led about by God in triumph in Christ, he carried from place to place the testimony with which he had been entrusted. He did

not alter the message to suit the temper of his hearers; for Christ crucified, whom he preached, was both the wisdom of God, and the power of God to those who were called, whether from Jews or Greeks (1 Cor. 1:24). What confidence he manifested in the power and suitability of the divine Word to meet all classes and conditions of men! But besides the preaching of the gospel of the grace of God, the kingdom also was preached, and everywhere there was insisted on “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:20-25).

But not only did ministering brethren preach, they also taught. Of Philip the evangelist we only read that he preached (Acts 8:5,12,35,40). Of Barnabas we learn that he could exhort (Acts 11:23); and when he brought Saul to Antioch, teaching went on in that assembly (vs. 26), gathered out by the preaching of those who went there upon the persecution that arose about Stephen (vss. 19-21). Thus by the exercise of different gifts the work was carried on. Some, as Philip, it would seem, may have been only evangelists; others, as Judas and Silas, may have been well known for their abilities as prophets to exhort (Acts 15:32); others again, as Barnabas, and pre-eminently Paul, were gifted to teach, and to preach, and to press home on the conscience the Word of God. But each in their measure, and as gifted by the Spirit, and being themselves gifts from the ascended Christ, helped on God’s work on earth. And the Word was the weapon relied on, and used. They wanted no other; they turned to no other to deal with the conscience, and bow the heart. Moreover, they knew the character of that weapon, and its temper too; for what they relied on to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ was “the sword of the Spirit” –God’s own word (Eph. 6:17).

The different gifts of ministry, and the distinct lines of ministry, are marked in the Word. There was preaching and teaching, as there were evangelists, pastors, and teachers. At Jerusalem they ceased not to teach and to preach that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 5:42). At Antioch Paul and Barnabas continued teaching and preaching the word of the Lord (Acts 15:35). At Ephesus (Acts 20:), at Corinth (Acts 18:11; 1 Cor. 1), at Rome (Acts 28:31), and elsewhere (Col. 1:23-28), Paul continued to do both; for whilst by evangelizing the assembly is increased, there are things which form the subject of teaching, and not of preaching. Hence, if the work of God is to progress healthily, both teaching and preaching are requisite. Where simple evangelizing is all that is sought after, the saints will not be fully instructed in the truth; where that is depreciated or neglected, interest in the spread of God’s work is in danger of flagging.

C. E. S.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Worship

To worship God is the duty of every intelligent creature. The angels worship Him His saints too worship Him. By-and-by all on earth will worship Him (Zeph. 2:11; Isa. 66:23). As God, He is the proper object of adoration for all His intelligent creatures, and men will be expected, in the terms of the everlasting gospel, to worship Him (Rev. 14:7). But whilst angels render Him homage in truth for what He is, unrenewed men will by-and-by worship Him, though only from having learned His power in judgment, or from a desire to enjoy life on earth under the sway of the Lord Jesus Christ. Such outward homage, however, is not all that God would receive from men, for He accepts the adoration of the heart; and hence worship of a different character, and springing from very different motives, God is willing to receive from His people on earth. Now about this He has instructed us, telling us in His word of the character, the power, and the true place of worship, as well as furnishing us therein with regulations for His saints when met in assembly for such a purpose.

But first, what is worship? It is the homage of the creature rendered to God. Hence the terms commonly used, both in Hebrew and Greek, to express it, have reference primarily to the action of the body as that by which worship is outwardly indicated; so that, although it may at times be but an external act of homage without the heart being really engaged in it (Zeph. 2:11), the idea conveyed by the terms in frequent use indicates the occupation for the time being of the worshipper with an object outside of himself. Where the homage of the heart is rendered to God, the worshipper is of course rightly occupied with Him. Worship, then, differs from prayer in this. In prayer we are occupied with the wants which we thereby present to God. In worship we are occupied with God. Hence true worship of God may take the form of praise, or thanksgiving, or both. If we praise Him, we tell out what He has discovered to us of Himself. If we thank Him, we speak of what He has done for us, or of what we have received from Him. In a certain sense His works praise Him, for they set forth something of what He is. But His saints bless Him, or speak well of Him; for they have received from Him (Psa. 145:10). For fallen creatures then to worship Him in truth they must be partakers of His grace. For one conscious of his sinfulness and sins, and what such deserve from God, cannot really worship Him till saved by faith in Christ. Till then such an one would be occupied with his condition and deserts, and not with God.

Now it was at the well side in Samaria that this subject was first opened up, and that by the Lord Himself, to a poor sinner, whose ways indicated that she had been far indeed in heart from God. And here we see how perfect in wisdom are God's ways. To Nicodemus, a man of reputation amongst the Jews, the Lord insisted on the necessity of the new birth. To the woman who had lost all character among men, He spoke of worship. The woman needed to be born again, and Nicodemus was to become a worshipper; but the teacher of Israel was taught his need, and the instrumentality by which it could be met, by water and the Spirit; the woman was instructed in the pouring out of the heart in adoration to God, even the Father. This surely would not have been man's way with these two; but it was God's, and it was as perfect as it was fitting. For man to become a true worshipper he must be taught his need of grace, and his condition by nature. The convicted sinner is to understand, that the band of true worshippers is only recruited and enlarged

from those who are indebted to the saving mercy of God. On this subject let us now enter, taking it up in the order indicated above.

First, then, as to the character of true worship. Having discovered from the Lord's knowledge of her life that she was in the presence of a prophet, the woman thereupon brought up the question which had been raised by the Samaritans with the Jews, whether at Jerusalem or at Gerizim men ought to worship. With her, as with many in this day, it was the opinion of men that she thought of. "Ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." Not a word, be it observed, does she speak of God's will in the matter. Not a thought does she indicate of any choice Jehovah might have made, or any preference that He had shown for one place over another. Yet He had distinctly made choice of Jerusalem, He had clearly marked out Mount Moriah as the mount of the Lord. David learned that when God accepted the offering on Araunah's threshing floor, by which the plague was effectually stopped in Israel (1 Chron. 22:1). Solomon was aware of God's choice when he began to build the temple (2 Chron. 3:1), and God assured him, after its dedication, of the selection He had made of the place, having sanctified the house, that His name should be there forever (2 Chron. 7:16). From this purpose God never receded. In the songs of degrees we read of it (Psa. 132:14). In Ezekiel 43:7 we meet with Jehovah's settled purpose about it. In God's word, then, there was no uncertainty about it, though very likely the woman was in entire ignorance of the scriptures which speak of it. But whose fault was that? The position she was in, and that from her birth, and because of her birth, may have kept her from acquaintance with those portions of the divine revelation. This might and would explain how it was that she was ignorant; but it was no real excuse for that ignorance. She claimed to have relation with the God of Jacob, yet knew not, nor sought to learn, whether on this question He had revealed His mind in His Word. And this is clear from her way of introducing the subject; for, prophet though the Jewish stranger was in her eyes, she neither attempted to appeal to Scripture in support of the selection of Gerizim, nor did she ask Him what scriptural authority the Jews had for going up to Jerusalem. "Ye say," was her language. How many since her day have taken up similar language, when the question of worship has been brought before them! Yet at no time has that been in God's eyes an open question, since He was first pleased to instruct people about it.

"Our fathers worshipped in this mountain." That was true. For centuries the rival temple at Gerizim had been the center of Samaritan worship. But that fact could add nothing in support of its claims to be the house of God. Granted that she was following in the footsteps of her fathers, worshipping as they had done before her, still the question remained, was that place selected by God in which to rear up His sanctuary, and acceptable worship to be offered therein? One word from Scripture would outweigh all the claims of Gerizim, even if they had been enveloped in the prescriptive right of hoar antiquity. A "thus saith the Lord" would demolish, for subject minds, all arguments and reasoning of men.

Again. Assuming that she was in ignorance of the revelation about Jerusalem, was the worship offered at Gerizim, if done in ignorance, to be accepted of God? Granted too that many a Samaritan conscientiously resorted to that mountain, would worshipping God according to their conscience make it thereby acceptable in His eyes? Was man's conscience to override the plain direction of the Word? By no means. So the Lord distinctly repudiated the claims of Gerizim, and the worship there carried on. "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." The Samaritans were self-condemned, for out of Zion the Deliverer was

to come (Psa. 14:7); from the stem of Jesse the King would spring (Isa. 11:1). Their position apart from the Jews practically denied this. But more, they worshipped what they knew not. The Jewish prophet, as she thought Him, had now spoken, and demolished in a moment all the supposed claims of Gerizim. Those words too had surely a deep meaning, "Ye worship ye know not what." But was He authorized to speak in such a manner? She little thought that the stranger was the prophet indeed (Deut. 18: 18), and the only-begotten Son of God as well. How God then viewed the Samaritan position, politically and ecclesiastically, that woman learned from Him whose house was the temple at Jerusalem. Now this interview distinctly settles three things for us. It is dangerous, as well as wrong, to make that a matter of man's opinion on which God has expressed His mind. Worshipping God as our fathers have done before us is no guarantee that we are worshipping aright. And granting that what we do is done with a good conscience, that is no ground for God to accept it. What God has said about worship, is the one important question when that subject comes up. To conform to His mind in the matter is the simple duty of His people.

On the positive teaching on this subject the Lord at once enters. On the divine choice of Jerusalem He does not dilate, for the question in connection with worship was assuming a new aspect. It would not be a question merely of locality, but of the person worshipped, and of the character of worship. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." Jerusalem would indeed be overthrown; the house there erected, at the cost of great labor and wealth, would be thrown down. Yet the Samaritans would not be able to triumph over the Jews; for in neither place in the time coming were men to worship the Father. "The Father!" Surely this must have struck her as new language. Israel was God's son, His firstborn (Ex. 4:22), the children of the Lord their God (Deut. 14:1). Jehovah was a Father to Israel, and Ephraim was His firstborn (Jer. 31:9). Yet they never had worshipped Him as the Father; for none can know the Father, except those to whom the Son will reveal Him (Matt. 11:27). Now this is one essential feature of Christian worship. God known, in His relation to His people as their Father, and they worshipping Him as such; but this revelation is a matter for individuals— "he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him." Each one, then, who knows the Father, is indebted for it to the Son of God; and only those who know Him, it is manifest, can worship Him. National worship, as such, then at once disappears; for if all in the nation could really worship God, it would be as His children, and not on the ground of nationality, since He stands in the relation of Father to all who on earth are now privileged to approach Him. How many a company of professing worshippers would be thinned at once, did all real Christians understand and maintain this simple truth.

But the Lord stopped not there. He proceeded to tell the woman the character of worship that would be acceptable to the Father. It must be in spirit and in truth. The nature of God, and the relation in which He stands to each true worshipper, must be understood, if we would worship Him aright. He is a Spirit, so we must worship Him in spirit and in truth; for it is in the consciousness that He is our Father, and as the Father, that we are permitted to pour out the heart to Him. "In spirit." Then it must be spiritual in its character, and from that time no formal worship would God be willing to receive. The true worshippers must worship Him in spirit. What God is should teach us that. "In truth," too, must it be. Hence the revelation He has vouchsafed, whatever it be, the worshipper must be acquainted with, and conform to. No going back then to the revelation of a former time, and trying to worship Him on that ground, will be worship in truth. So now that the

atoning work is accomplished, and that by one offering the Lord Jesus has perfected forever them that are sanctified, we cannot worship God aright, if we seek to draw nigh without forgiveness enjoyed, and acceptance in Christ known. For entrance into the heavenly sanctuary is only enjoined after we have been taught that believers are sanctified by the will of God, are perfected by the one offering of Christ, and their sins and iniquities are remembered by God no more (Heb. 10:10,14-22). Such then are the ones the Father seeks to worship Him. Who would have thought this? The Father is seeking worshippers, not men the Father. Men with hearts filled, free to empty themselves in His presence in the enjoyment of His grace, it is these the Father is seeking, and the Son assures us of it. It is joy to worship. What joy must it be to the Father to receive the worship of His children What joy to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, as well as to God's children, when froth the fullness of the heart they worship the Father! What misery resulted from the fall! What abounding joy springs from the atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ!

C. E. S.

Simple Papers on the Church of God: Worship Concluded

With the mention of the Person to be worshipped, and the character of true worship (these both taught directly), and the class of people who can be worshippers (this taught indirectly from the Lord thus conversing with the woman), His instructions on this important question ended. Scripture, however, gives us more about it, and makes it very plain that true Christian worship is different from anything ever before known. Paul, once zealous for the law, brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, knew well what Judaism was, and the evil of Judaizing teaching in the church of God. So warning his beloved Philippians against such, he sets forth, in a simple way, the true Christian position in contrast with all such teaching. "We are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God" (so we should probably read the clause), "and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). The Holy Ghost then is the power of true Christian worship. Now this was both new and distinctive. It characterized Christian worship then. It must characterize it still. We are to worship by the Spirit of God. Forms and ceremonies God gave to Israel, in conformity with which they worshipped Jehovah. Forms and ceremonies have not been given to us. We know not even the words in which the Lord gave thanks at the institution of the Supper. We have no description of an apostle breaking bread. We have not a single hymn, that we know of, which was in use in any Christian assembly in apostolic days. Nothing of this has been handed down to us in the Word. We have no book of Christian psalms; for we are to worship by the Spirit of God. Now if we go back to Old Testament forms, and mold Christian worship in conformity with them, we lose this distinctive feature of Christianity, worshipping by the Spirit of God.

And herein lies a danger arising from ignorance of dispensational teaching. It may seem very plausible to say we use Scripture language, and can point to precedents in the Word for our ways in worship. But if Scripture is used unintelligently, and dispensational teaching is not known, the soul may be beguiled, by using words of Scripture, to surrender distinctive teaching of Christianity. This is a very serious matter, and one which concerns all Christians; for have not most of us had part in such confusion? But have all seen the evil of it? Do all understand what it is to worship by the Spirit of God, allowing Him, who is in the assembly, to guide in worship, when Christians meet together for that purpose?

Now the Word of God takes such pains to point out the distinction between the two dispensations; whereas Christians, through ignorance of New Testament teaching, have practically sought to mingle them—attempting to put the wine of Christian truth into bottles of Jewish forms. The mistake of this, to say nothing more, is further apparent when we consider, thirdly, what the place is in which we now worship God. It is the sanctuary on high, into which the great Priest has entered by His own blood, a sanctuary, into which Israel never had access, and never will. Now into the holiest are we permitted to enter "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" (Heb. 10:19,20). But for us to be there, three things are requisite. The Lord Jesus must have died, else the veil could not have been rent; atonement by His blood must have been made, otherwise we should not have boldness to

enter in, nor have known of a living way into the presence-chamber of God; and thirdly, those only can enter in, without judgment overtaking them, who acknowledge the death of Christ to be their ground and way of entry into the holiest. It is, then, both a new and a living way, and the only one that God has ever sanctioned for those who have sinned against Him. "Through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." None, then, are entitled to draw nigh, who do not own the atoning death of Christ to be their way of entrance there.

Now this is an important point; for thus carefully does God guard the way into His presence. The veil was rent, and through it, as rent, we pass into the holiest, Had God removed it because the Lord had died, anybody might get into His presence, whether owning the Lord's death or not; for what barred the way into the holiest would have barred it no longer. But we go through it, as it were, because rent by the Lord's death upon the cross. None, then, who refuse to acknowledge His death as their way of entry, can ever get in there. To all who do there is no barrier now; to those who do not, there is no way into the divine presence, by which they can enter, and be sheltered from judgment.

But all this is in direct contrast with Judaism. Atonement by blood not really made, the way into the holiest not yet manifested, the veil intact; these were characteristic features of Jewish worship. Atonement made, the veil rent, through which, by the blood of Jesus, we approach God; these are features of true Christian worship. And the mention of them is enough to make any see at a glance, that acceptable worship now must be very different in its characteristics from acceptable worship of old. An earthly sanctuary, too, they had. Into the heavenly one we enter; hence the language of saints in heaven (Rev. 5) is the language we can take up now. And further, as there is no altar of burnt-offering in heaven, nor are sacrificial victims there offered up, so we approach not now to an altar, nor do we present any sacrificial victims to God. We worship in person on earth as we shall worship in heaven by-and-by, except that now in these bodies, with sin within us, and the world around us, we are often distracted in thought, when we should have the mind wholly concentrated on Him we are worshipping. But Israel will again approach the altar of burnt-offering, and bring their victims with them, because they will worship in the earthly sanctuary, with which such a service is inseparably connected. We do neither, because we worship in the holiest in heaven, and according to the tabernacle order have left the altar behind us.

Thus it was, that the Christian assembly met for worship was to conduct itself in a manner very different from that of the congregation of Israel. The latter had priests and Levites to do the service at the altar and in the tabernacle, or temple; but all believers now are priests. There are no true worshippers who are not priests; for though sacrificial service at the altar has for us ceased, sacrifices we do offer up, even praise and thanksgivings to God. Had we then visited the service in the temple, and looked in on an assembly gathered together for worship in accordance with the direction given us by Paul, how great would have been the difference! Both would have called themselves the people of the Lord; but the latter would have let us know that they were individually children of God. In the temple we should have seen a marked difference between the sexes. The men had a place to which no woman had access; and the notice warning a Gentile of death, if he obtruded himself into the court of the males, would have met us probably full in the face. In the Christian assembly there would have been seen no such separation of sexes, nor any distinction of races; those once Jews, with those once Gentiles, would have been seen together worshipping God. And whereas in the temple we might have witnessed sacrificial rites to deal with sins

committed, in the assembly we should have heard sacrifices of praise and thanksgivings for their sins forgiven, atonement accomplished, and redemption known and enjoyed. Had we asked a Jew for the house of God, he would have directed us to the temple on mount Moriah; but on visiting it we should not have found God there present, for He did not dwell in it after the Babylonish captivity. Had we asked a Christian for the house of God, he would have told us of the assembly of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15); and going to it, we might have learned, through the instrumentality of any prophet exercising his gift at the moment, that God was among them (1 Cor. 14:25). The temple, we should have found, was desolate; but God was present in the assembly.

Surveying the company gathered together no president would have been discernible; yet, if all were subject to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, no disorder would have been perceived. Order would have reigned, not because they had drawn up a set of human rules, or had instituted a hierarchy of human appointment—for neither the one nor the other had a place in the assembly at the beginning—but gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, His presence would have been owned, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost in every act of worship distinctly recognized. As the meeting went on, hearts, full of grace enjoyed, would have poured themselves out in worship, either by one voice expressing the common feelings of the assembly, or by a hymn raised and sung with heartiness by all. The notes of praise having died away, silence would perhaps have reigned till broken by the voice of a prophet speaking to edification, exhortation, or comfort. Not a word uttered for show, not a thing done but what the Spirit of God directed; no haste in taking part in the guidance of the assembly in worship, nor interruption of any speaker, would have been noticed, save when a revelation from God demanded the immediate attention of all. For the Spirit of God never acts out of season; and if He vouchsafed a revelation, it was because the saints had need of it at the moment. Nothing else, however, but a direct revelation from God would have been allowed to check a prophet in his service at that moment. And though all the males might prophesy, not too many would have done it, lest the profit of some or all might have been marred. Further, no prophet would have been observed to speak, as if impelled by a divine afflatus which he could not resist; for the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, and no one would have opened his mouth in a tongue unless there was someone to interpret. The women would have been silent, save when the strain of a hymn permitted them to join in concert, or the responsive Amen could fittingly come from the heart and lips. And, what would surely have struck one accustomed to the synagogue or temple, whilst the women had their heads covered, the men would have been seen with theirs uniformly uncovered (1 Cor. 11).

Now is this an ideal picture? Let the reader study 1 Corinthians 14, and see if the mark has been overstepped; for in it we have the Spirit of God correcting by the apostle disorders which had appeared in the Corinthian assembly, and telling them likewise what was admissible, as well as what was forbidden, in the assemblies of God's saints. Shall Scripture in this, as in other things, be our guide, or the rules and regulations devised by the wit of men? "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge [or recognize] that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). Thus wrote the apostle Paul. Have these injunctions and directions been superseded by a more recent divine revelation? Can they lose their force by the lapse of time, or the change of locality? (1 Cor. 1:2;14:33) Are they not for our guidance, whenever and wherever Christians are gathered in assembly for worship, in this the nineteenth century, as much as they were in the first? "The hour now is," said the Lord, "when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23)

C. E. S.

Detached Thoughts

Then shall the Lord be glorified in His saints—not as now, in their obedience and service, their holiness and fruitfulness, but in their personal beauty. Arrayed in white, and shining in our glories, we shall be the wondrous witness of what He has done for the sinner that trusted in Him. And as one much loved and honored in the Lord has just written to me, so I write to you, beloved: “No lark ever sprang up on a dewy morning to sing its sweet song with such alacrity as you and I shall spring up to meet our Lord in the air.” And his exhortation to me I would make mine to you (though feebly echoed from my heart): “Oh, my brother, set it before your mind’s eye as a living reality, and then let hope patiently wait for the fulfillment.” “Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

What must we say, when we look on the boasted advance of everything in that world, the constant skill that is exercised in sweeping and garnishing that house, which is stained with the blood of Jesus? The beds of ivory, the sound of the viols, the wine, and the chief ointments, were never so abundant as in these days; and if we can take up with life in such a world, are we true, as we ought to be, to the cross of Christ?...We are not “grieved for the affliction of Joseph;” we are not true to the rejection of Christ. Worldliness is heartlessness to Him.

The church is called “the Lamb’s wife;” but this title has its meaning. “The Lamb” is a figure or description of the Son of God which tells us of the sorrows He endured for us. The soul well understands this; and therefore this title, “the Lamb’s wife,” tells us that it is by His sufferings the Lord has made her His own; that He valued her so as to give up all for her; and from the beginning He has been publishing this precious gospel truth.

J. G. B.

Fragment: Being Disentangled From Egypt

It is only the heavenly man who has died with Christ that disentangles himself from all that is of Egypt.

J. N. D.

Fragment: Being in Subjection

God would have you absolutely without a will. The moment you are in subjection, you have the consciousness of being just where God would have you.

G. V. W.

Fragment: Channels of the Life of Christ

It ennobles a Christian immensely to know and to feel that he is a channel through which the life of Christ is to flow out.

G. V. W.

It has been clearly proved that both Jews and Gentiles were justified before God upon one common ground; that is, justification by faith, and apart from law altogether. But there is another question which would be of great importance, especially to a Jew; namely, What about Abraham, to whom all the promises were made, and of whom the Jews were the natural descendants? for they gloried in being children of Abraham. These verses (4:2-3) show, and that from the Old Testament, that Abraham was only another example of the very truth which has already been brought out in the epistle, that is, justification by faith: "For what saith the Scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (vs. 3).

It is beautiful to see how the apostle, through the Spirit of God, brings the Old Testament Scriptures to prove what he is saying; not that we require—the Old Testament to prove that the New is inspired, but it shows how that He who wrote the book of Genesis is the One who, hundreds of years afterward, wrote the epistle to the Romans.

Fragment: Christ Content to Be Nothing

Christ was content to be nothing, in a world where man was everything and God was shut out.

Fragment: Christ the Center

Christ is the center of everything for the heart.

Fragment: Fellowship

Believers are bound to have fellowship with everything which is according to God; but they are equally bound to refuse fellowship with all that is not according to God. True fellowship with one another can only be in the light (1 John 1:7).

Fragment: God Revealed in Scripture

The secret of all blessing and progress, after a soul has been brought to taste of blessing in Christ, is the being led into intercourse with God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture, knowing Him as the living and true God in action in Scripture. Standing then face to face with Him, we see what poor things we are, and what the blessing for us in this book — called truly God's library.

G. V. W.

Fragment: God's Care for Us

Whatever produces a care in us, produces God's care for us; therefore "be careful for nothing" (Phil. 4:6).

Fragment: He First Loved Us

We love Christ because He first loved us. We find that love expressed in John 14 He took us up at the hand of God, and loved us on that ground. "The men which thou gavest Me;" "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." He puts forth His love to us as a divine thing in Himself, entirely irrespective of what we are. He might have to say to Peter, "You have faith in your own love to Me, yet before the cock crow thou wilt deny me thrice;" nevertheless He could say to him, as to them all, "Let not your heart be troubled, I shall go away" [and 1800 years would pass]; "but I shall come and fetch you, that you may be with me forever." See when He says three times to Peter, "Lovest thou Me?" how He is bringing off Peter from resting on his own love, to rest with implicit confidence in the love of Him who knew all things.

G. V. W.

Fragment: in Christ and Christ in Me

I am in Christ above, and this Christ is in me below; and there I find the principle of all my walk, and the power of it too.

Fragment: Living to God

Living to God inwardly is the only possible means of living to Him outwardly.

Fragment: Looking at the Person of the Lord

One sees not only beautiful light and glory for the comfort of one's heart under all sorrows and difficulties, but looking at the person of that blessed Lord, I find in Him everything I want as a poor sinner passing through the wilderness.

G. V. W.

Fragment: Natural Things

The more springs of natural happiness there are the more things you have for death to cut the cords of. God maintains all natural relationships that He has created, but death has come in upon them all. How little we dwell in things unseen, because so occupied with things seen. We might test ourselves by the question, How many thoughts today have come from Christ, and how many from my own natural mind?

Fragment: Redemption

Redemption was a work worthy of the depths of the Father's heart, and was accomplished at the infinite cost of the sacrifice of the Son of God; and is so perfect in its results that God, by the Spirit, can come and dwell in me, and I dwell in God.

J. N. D.

Fragment: Separation From Evil

What is separation from evil? The refusal of everything, whether in association, life, habit, or practice, which is unsuited to Christ.

Fragment: the Example and Standard of Righteousness

We should never be content when we fail to display Christ before men: as Christ is righteousness for me before God, so is He the example and standard of righteousness before men: as Christ is for me before God, so ought I to be for Christ before men. This is the way for the Christian to judge of right or wrong. We may be humbled because of failure, but we must not lower the standard.

Fragment: The Life Within

There is nothing more dangerous than to have the outward manifestation of power going beyond the inward association and communion of soul with God; the life within must be equal to the outward display of power.

Fragments: Tasting Death

If death is our deliverance from all sin, we must taste it for our deliverance practically. The bitter water of Marah must be tasted, when the salt waters of the Red Sea have delivered us from Egypt forever and ever. Put the wood of the tree, the cross of Christ into our cross, and all will be sweet.

J. N. D.

Gilgal

The power of resurrection life takes all strength from Satan: “He who is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” In our earthly life, the flesh being in us, we are exposed to the power of the enemy, and the creature has no strength against him, even though it should not be drawn into actual sin. But if death is become our shelter, causing us to die unto all that would give Satan an advantage over us, what can he do? Can he tempt one who is dead, or overcome one who, having died, is alive again? But, if this be true, it is also necessary to realize it practically. “Ye are dead... therefore mortify.” This is what Gilgal means.

J. N. D.

The Glory of That Light

Nothing but the apprehension of Christ Himself—Christ in glory—can detach us from this present scene, or blind us to its beauty and fascination. This is strikingly illustrated in the apostle’s account of his conversion. On his way to Damascus, armed with worldly authority against the saints of God, and filled with bitter enmity against the name of Jesus, “suddenly,” he says, “there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And He said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of Him that spake to me. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus” (Acts 22:6-11). A complete revolution has been effected. The one who had been animated by the most deadly hatred, both against Christ and His people, is now transformed into a willing slave. “What shall I do, Lord?” expresses his changed condition, as well as the after attitude of his whole life. Besides this, we learn that he could not see for the glory of the light that had flashed upon him; and while this is to be understood as a matter of fact physically, it yet symbolizes the spiritual effect upon the apostle of the revelation to him of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Trace out his pathway from this moment, and it will be seen that thenceforward he has no eye for anything but Christ; that the vision of his soul is filled with this one blessed, glorious object. Everything that had hitherto engaged and occupied him, everything to which he had clung, and everything which he had cherished, now lost their attractions, faded into dimness and nothingness before the surpassing beauty and glory of the One who appeared to him when on his way to Damascus. All his precious things were seen to be but wretched tinsel by the side of the fine gold—divine righteousness—which he beheld in a glorified Christ. As he himself tells us, “What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ” [have Christ as my gain] (Phil. 3:7-8). The estimate he formed at first was the abiding estimate of his life. Christ was all to him, and he wanted nothing beside.

The history of the apostle therefore teaches most important lessons. First, as has been said, that nothing but Christ Himself can emancipate us from the power of present things. Many a soul is held in helpless bondage from ignorance of this truth. They desire to be freed from the influence and power of this scene, and they groan and struggle in their captivity, sighing for a deliverance that never comes. The reason is, that they, begin the wrong way. Instead of looking to Christ, and being occupied with Him, they look to themselves, and are occupied with their circumstances. The consequence is, they become more enfeebled and powerless every day; whereas, if they but accepted the truth of their own utter helplessness, and directed their gaze to Christ, instead of crying, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?” they would soon shout, in the joyous

notes of victory, "I thank God that I am delivered through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is said of the Thessalonians, for example, that they turned to God from idols (1 Thess. 1:9). If they had sought to turn themselves from idols to God, they would have remained idolaters until the day of their death. But looking first to God, who was presented to them in the gospel of His grace in Christ, they were drawn by His mighty power out from under the thralldom of Satan in the worship of false gods. Levi is another example of the same thing. Sitting at the receipt of custom, the Lord Jesus presents Himself to him, with the word, "Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him" (Luke 5:27, 28). The attractions of Christ drew him away from all his associations, from all that might naturally have detained him, and constrained him to be, from that day forward, His devoted disciple. This is the secret of all deliverance for the soul. If the eye be but directed to, and fastened upon Christ, nothing can keep us. There is power in Him to emancipate the most abject and helpless; but the condition of its reception is to be occupied with Him. Whoever would therefore be lifted above his circumstances, and follow Christ in the joyous sense of liberty, must ever maintain the attitude of beholding the glory that is displayed in His unveiled face.

Together with deliverance from the power of this scene, in the way described, there will come another thing; namely, insensibility to its attraction. Saul could not see for the glory of that light. He was blind to all but the beauty of Christ. The light of day extinguishes all lesser lights; and the light of the glory, by the very outshining of its splendors, eclipses and extinguishes the brightest glories of earth. And just as when we have been gazing at the sun, we cannot for a time see clearly the objects of earth, so when we have been beholding the glory of the Lord, our eyes are dimmed for the things of this world. If therefore we are sensible of its fascinations, it is a sure sign that Christ has not been the constant object of our souls; and, at the same time, it is a warning to us of the danger of allowing anything to come into competition with Himself. When Peter, in his forgetfulness on the mount of transfiguration, said to the Lord, "Let us make here three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias," "a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." God will have no competitors with His beloved Son; and thus "when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only" (Matt. 17:5-9). Christ therefore is our only object, and in gazing at Him we not only have fellowship with the Father, but we also find deliverance from the scene, and the attractions of the scene, through which we are passing.

"Oh, fix our earnest gaze,
So wholly, Lord, on Thee,
That with Thy beauty occupied
We elsewhere none may see!"

The Gospel of the Glory

The apostle's statement is this, that there is now no veil over the glory of God. If there be any veil now, it is on our hearts. This is a solemn truth. All the glory, all that God is, shines in the face of Jesus; and there is no veil over it. The veil is all on us. This we find in the next chapter: "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (for so it really is, not "glorious gospel"), "who is the image of God, should shine unto them." This veil is on your hearts if the glory of Christ be hidden; for the apostle says, "We all, with open" (or unveiled) "face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." This is the glory of God displayed in Christ.

Now we will see what the Christian is, what his place is in this world, and how he gets there. The apostle shows us all this in contrast with the law. The Corinthians had called the apostleship of Paul in question; they had said he was not one of the chosen twelve. He had spoken a little about himself in the previous chapter; they had forced him to do so. Now the Corinthians had been going on badly, but afterward they were going on better; and Paul could say that his mouth was open to them, and his heart enlarged towards them. He gave them many signs of his apostleship; but after all it was not needed. He needed not letters of commendation to or from them as others did, and as we do now; for they themselves were his epistle, known and read of all men. They were the witnesses of the truth of his ministry; and that, because they were manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by him—written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart. Such then is the Christian—a person in whom the world can read Christ, because Christ has been engraved upon his heart by the Holy Ghost. Let us remember that it does not say this ought to be, but that it is so, whether he walks so as to manifest it or not. A child is a child, whether he act up to the relationship or not. The Christian is the epistle of Christ, to be read of all men; it is his place just as truly as the law was written upon tables of stone. He has to realize it. And more, beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image; he grows in it also. It is from glory to glory, and by the Spirit; and this is the Christian in contrast with the law. Law shows what a child of Adam ought to be. The Christian is the living epistle of Christ. The Holy Ghost engraves Christ upon our hearts, and then it comes out in our lives.

There is the greatest possible contrast between law and gospel. Paul calls the one the ministration of death and of condemnation, and, the other the ministration of the spirit and of righteousness. This is what I propose we should now look into. When Moses received the tables of stone the first time and came down from the mount, we hear nothing about the glory of his face. He never brought those first tables into the camp at all. He hears how the people are behaving, pleads with God for the sake of His great name, when God offers to destroy them, and make of him a great nation; but when he came down, and saw the calf and the dancing, he cast down the tables, and brake them beneath the mount. How could he bring God's law into the midst of the people who were breaking the very first command contained in it? When Moses entreats the Lord, as to His present government, the Lord forgave the people's sin. Moses could not make atonement, and

they were put back under law—the soul that sinneth it should die. Then he took with him two other tables like the first, and emboldened by God’s graciousness to him, he asks that he may see His glory. But this may not be; but He makes His goodness pass before him, and proclaims before him His gracious name in government, and then He puts them under law again. Moses had proposed to make atonement for them, but could not; and God proclaimed Himself as the One who would by no means clear the guilty. After this, when Moses came down, all this intercourse with God caused his face to shine, and the people could not bear to see even the reflection of the glory of the Lord, so he put a veil over his face. Here we learn that God deals in mercy with His people, but we do not get a perfect atonement made. The promise of a deliverer came in from the beginning, even in the garden of Eden; bid there was only One who could make this atonement. In all the revelation of goodness one fundamental point was wanting, and that was the clearing the guilty. Then guilty Israel asked that a veil might be over his face, and to this day the veil is over their hearts; but when they shall turn to the Lord the veil shall be taken away. The law could but point in many sacrifices to the one perfect Lamb, and Israel could not see through the figures to the thing figured; but the veil is done away in Christ. There is no longer any veil over God’s thoughts towards us, although the God of this world may still keep it on men’s hearts. It is because this veil is done away with that it is called the gospel of the glory.

We find God acting according to two great principles — law and grace. Law is God requiring from man what man ought to be. It takes up all the relationships formed of God towards God and man. The duties were all there before the law was given, but it gave the rule of them, and attached God’s express sanction to them. The law came and claimed from man obedience. Our Lord sums up the whole law in two sentences: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart”; and, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” The law came and claimed from man what he ought to be. It gave no life, no power, deliverance, or object to be a motive; it could not clear the guilty, nor was it any help or strength, although God does help His people at all times. But the law itself could do nothing but demand obedience; and as man was a sinner, and incapable of obedience to a holy law, it was a ministration of death and condemnation. There is no grace in law (the two are opposed to each other), but, God’s grace dealt with individuals. The law was a ministration of death and condemnation because it gave from God what man ought to be, and what man is not. If a man’s heart is not exercised towards God, the law does not trouble him much. He thinks he has not done anything very bad; he is no worse than his neighbors; he has not committed any very gross sins. Besides, he says, “God is merciful;” for he is sure to bring in the thought of a little mercy to meet his need; for deep down in the heart of every man is the sense that he has sinned. He is pretty comfortable, and it is all very well as long as it is a question of natural conscience; not of God’s eye reaching the heart and thoughts. When the law says, “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,” we are at once convinced of sin; we know that we do not. Who is as troubled at a loss to his neighbor as he would be at a loss to himself? But if we get a revelation of God ever so small along with the law, we are utterly condemned at once; for no flesh can stand His eye. Now one of two things will happen. You will either seek to hide from God, as Adam did in the garden of Eden, or you will seek to hide God from you, as Israel did when they entreated that Moses should put a veil upon his face; for if a man once gets but a sight of God, he can say with Job, “If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.” Whatever I may have thought of myself before, I see that in God’s eyes I am only like a man that is just dragged out of a ditch—utterly unclean. Under the law

the soul may feel all right when it is not exercised towards God; but in His presence no man can stand it. Lust is there in the heart.

The principle of the law is, that what God is for me depends upon what I am for Him. But God has brought out that I am a sinner, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. It is a manifestation of death and condemnation, and nothing else. Law will never give peace. It is not grace; it is looking not at what the Lord does for me, but at what I find in myself for Him; and I may be under law in looking at the cross itself.

I see a display of perfect love towards me on the cross, and I look into my heart and see there such a feeble response to His love that I begin to doubt whether I really love Him at all. It is quite true and right that I should desire to love Him; but it is not the gospel, and you can never get peace in this way. It is putting a question as to your relationship, founded on your conduct; and what confusion would it cause in a family if the children began to question whether they were their father's children or not. I may ask, "Am I walking according to my relationship?" but I must not question whether I am a child or not. This is all law, though in a more subtle form. I am still looking to get peace in what I am for God, and not in what He is for me. This is the state of a Christian who has not found peace. Like the prodigal, who, far off from his father, asks to be made as one of his hired servants. When he comes into his father's presence no such word: he knew his relationship. Before he was only thinking of what he was to his father, and not of what his father was to him. In the first two parables in Luke 15 we get the grace that goes out to seek what was lost, and then reception on the return; and then the Lord shows how the work goes on in the heart, how the soul is often still upon the principle of law, saying they are not what they would like to be. This is looking inside to see if they love God, and when they see no signs of love in their own hearts they then begin to doubt whether He loves them. This is a more subtle form of law; but it is still the same principle—looking at what I am for God, and not at what He is for me.

Now I turn to the gospel of the glory. Into the midst of a law-breaking world God came in grace.

Before Jesus came God had not come out to man, and man could not go in to God. He gave man law and promises, but He did not Himself come to man. But the great fact that we have now before us is, that God has come. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us;" and man is gone right in—into the presence of God. When I say man, I mean Christ Himself; but who as the Forerunner has entered in for us within the veil. I find that God has come in perfect goodness, and not in manifestation of His glory. He came when we were sinners and law-breakers, when we were far off. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." We get the manifestation of the purest love in our Lord's life down here; His miracles were not only power, but power in love to meet every want in every man. He removed every effect of sin; He was the manifestation of God in perfect goodness; and the result was that man spit in His face and rejected Him. May the Lord give us all always to remember that we are in a world that has rejected God when He was in it in grace. The world now is as bad as it was then; it is no more in relationship with God; souls are not nearer God by nature than they were. In fact, as we look around we can see things are in a worse condition than they were. Sin has reached its climax. And not only that God has turned man out of the garden of Eden, but that when God came into this world man turned Him out. As Jesus Himself says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father." He passed through this world in

goodness, healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him. The Son of God has been in the world, and been rejected by the world. God revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son while we were sinners. He shows His perfect holiness in His life; this is brought out in a striking and touching manner when the poor leper comes to Him. He was with sinners unsullied by them; but there in perfect love. Here was one who came acknowledging His power, but doubting His love. And what is His answer? does He reproach him? No; His answer is, "I will: be thou clean;" and He put forth His hand and touched him. One who touched a leper was unclean like the leper; but Christ acquires no defilement by His conduct with men, but cleanses them in grace. It was divine power touching and driving sin away; it was a most beautiful expression of what His grace is. But such as He was, they rejected Him; and in this act sin was completely manifested, for it was the rejection of God in goodness. But God uses this crowning act of man's sin for his salvation; Christ was the Lamb of God, who puts away the sin of the world; and here we come to the cross. The work was done which was the expression and accomplishment of the height of wickedness on the part of man; but it did but manifest the supremacy of grace on God's side. I get God's righteousness against sin manifested, but more than that, God perfectly glorified. All Satan's power is put forth, and it but serves to bring out God's perfect love to the poor sinner. There where sin abounded, grace did much more abound; as it says, "If one died for all, then were all dead." If you will not come to Christ, you are still preferring other things to Him; but there is a very solemn thought for you, and a solemn question for you to answer. Where are you going to spend your eternity?

The question must be settled now in this life. Men shrink from the thought of eternity; and where there are infidel thoughts about God, they deny it altogether, or at least hope there will be none.

If I come to the cross, knowing that my sins brought Christ there, shall I find Him? No; when I get to the cross I find He is not there, and where does my faith know that He is? I know that my sins brought Him there, but my faith sees Him at the right hand of God, and that is why it is called the gospel of the glory; for He is entered into it for me. He is there now sitting at the right hand of God; but He has not got my sins upon Him now. No, He is sitting there because all my sins are clean gone forever. By one sacrifice for sins He has perfected forever them that are sanctified. When I come to give account of myself, who do I find as judge? The very One who by Himself has put away my sins. For a soul perfectly established in grace there is no thought more happy than that of the judgment-seat of Christ; for when I am manifested before it, it will be in my glorified body made like the Lord Himself. He said the work was finished, and the person who judges me is the One who bore all my sin away. The gospel of the glory is, that the One who died for my sins is there in the glory with all my sins put away forever, and that is where the gospel in its fullness begins. It was not till Christ sat down at the right hand of God that the Holy Ghost came down, and that the disciples could go out in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is righteousness that has set the One who bore my sins at the right hand of God, and He is there without my sins upon Him; and having so borne them and glorified God as to them, is the ministration of the Spirit—the Holy Ghost bearing witness in the gospel that the One who did it all is the One who is now exalted at the right hand of God. I see a Man in the glory, the Forerunner entered in for me. We had no part in this wonderful work that was done, except our sins and the hatred that put Him to death. He died, and God set Him in the glory because He had done a work which perfectly satisfied God. As we get in John, speaking of the Holy Ghost, He will convince the world of righteousness "because I go to My

Father.” He sits there in the glory because the work is perfectly done—their sins put away forever for all who believe. It also convinces of sin, because it was my sin which brought Him there on the cross, where He bore all, and perfectly satisfied the righteousness of God.

The law cannot give life; it can only convince of sin. The work was done between God and Christ; the whole question of sin was settled and done with, and He is my righteousness before God. God’s righteousness has been displayed in putting the Man who bore my sins at God’s right hand in glory. The Holy Ghost comes and says to me, “You have no righteousness for God.” Then I try to grow more holy. Quite right in itself that I should long after holiness; but as a means to peace it will not do. But here in Christ I have a divine righteousness that is fit to put me into the glory. They that are led of the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. In the cross of Christ it is not merely that my debt is paid, for that might be, and yet I might have nothing as it were to live on upon; but God has made me a joint-heir with Christ; and now down here I live looking for Him to come to take me to Himself, to be forever with Him in the glory where He is.

J. N. D.

Hearing and Following

If there be one lack in souls at the present time more marked than another, it is feebleness of apprehension as to these two great points.

The quietness of communion is but little known, not to say enjoyed, in this busy active day. How truly the moment speaks loudly of unrest and unreality; and how little is known even among the saints of that deep, personal, unexpressed joy in Christ.

The satisfaction of the heart in the personal nearness of the Lord, the being in His company for the simple joy of it, is true communion; thus it is we have common mind with Him, which is the meaning of communion. When this is the case, we know the mind of our Lord and Master, and this it is which qualifies us for every service as Christ's confidential servants: it is well to bear in mind that the amount of our service or the laboriousness of our work do not of themselves constitute us confidential servants.

There is a very close alliance, a very intimate connection, between the two attitudes of soul we are considering; in fact, they wait the one on the other. It is very blessed to see the producing and maintaining power, of hearing and following Christ. In a word, it is Christ. He and He alone is the blessed source and spring of all that has its rise and satisfaction in Himself. To be a good listener, one must be both free and at rest. My reader, are you? The blessed Son, ever the Father's delight, ever in the bosom of the Father, came into a world of slavery and sorrow, to bring both liberty to the captives and opening of the prison to those that were bound, as well as relief of conscience and rest of heart to every weary soul: His work and person alone can give freedom and rest. It is mournful to see how little of either exists around us; the disquietude of the age infects the saints, not only in the things that relate to this life, but even in their relationships with God they have not the fixed, settled peace which cannot be moved.

With many at the present time it is as it were but the dawn of union, the full day in soul consciousness not having yet come; with them it is like "the morning spread upon the mountains," and hence there is but little if any repose; unsatisfied longings, ardent desires as yet unmet, abound in many a heart, but oh, how one longs to see His own people possessing conscious knowledge of union with Christ glorified in the place where He is; this alone can impart rest of heart, and detach from earth and its things! Thus alone it is that the soul listens, absorbed with Him who is its rest. The ear once engaged with other sounds now does homage at His feet, and waits upon His words, knowing how to interpret all the tones of His voice, and to treasure them up in the soul. What could be more blessed than an ear at leisure from self and its surroundings to wait on the word of Jesus? Then it is that we sit down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit is sweet to our taste. Is not this the house of wine where He delights to entertain His own, during the weary hours of this far-spent night? It is wonderful how little any of us know what real solitude with God is. And may I not ask, How is it possible to grow in personal acquaintance with Christ, if the solitude of His company is not sought after and cultivated by His saints? I hope I may not be understood by any as undervaluing the outward means of instruction and soul refreshment

which abound on every hand; nothing could be more distant from my thoughts; but I do say that none of these by themselves, nor all of them together, can repair the loss of meditative solitude with God. Another has said, "Never less alone than when alone;" but, alas! how little impress of this is left on any of us.

It is interesting to see this illustrated in the history of Elijah; remarkable servant of God though he was, it is clear that his life inwardly was not sustained in proportion to his outward testimony. With him the fire, wind, and earthquake were everything; and when outward testimony excited the malignity of the enemy, as is usual, his faith was not equal to the pressure. But mark the blessed tender way of Jehovah with His poor servant.

1st. He is called to go and stand before the Lord, thus proving that solitude is useless unless it be with God. We may be even as he was, under a juniper tree, or in a cave (1 Kings 19:4,9), but that is only the solitude of disappointed nature; there is neither liberty, nor rest, nor listening in that. Oh, no, it must be with God. "Go forth and stand upon the mount before the Lord."

2nd. The demands of nature must not be yielded to. This is typified by the prophet's fasting forty days and forty nights; that which had been supplied to him was the providing of Jehovah's hand—even a "cake baken" and "a cruse of water," supplies outside nature, in the strength of which all its claims could be set aside.

3rd. The consequence of the two former, the prophet listens—he hears "a still small voice;" and thus receives communications and commissions which previously would have been unintelligible to him.

Following seems to come in as a consequence of what we have had before us: "My sheep hear My voice... and they follow Me." As it is the Shepherd's voice that is heard and known by the sheep, so it is the Shepherd Himself they follow; He it is who has gone before. In the passage quoted from John 10 we find the blessed Lord, scorned and reproached, leaving the ancient fold of Judaism, and thus going before His sheep, the security to all His own that it was the true way, as well as the authority for the sheep following Him come what might, their hiding-place from danger, and their safe conduct for the way.

It is very blessed to see how it is the knowing His voice here (vss. 4-5), not that they know all the false voices of strangers, but their security is in knowing His voice, and they likewise follow as they know it.

My reader, has your heart found one whom you are now following? Is this your one object day by day? It is very blessed to be allowed to serve, but many a one serves in this day who is not following. Oh for more distinct going forth from all around to follow a rejected Lord and Master, and to esteem it our holiest joy to tread the path He has walked in, rough it may be, but trodden by Himself, who has left His own mark upon every rose and every thorn.

"A little while, He'll come again!

Let us the precious hours redeem;

Our only grief to give Him pain,

Our joy to serve and follow Him”

W. T. T.

His Joy Greater Than Ours

The church will have her joy in Christ; but Christ will have His greater joy in the church. The strongest pulse of gladness that is to beat for eternity will be in the bosom of the Lord over His ransomed bride. In all things He is to have the pre-eminence; and, as in all things, so in this, that His joy in her will be greater than hers in Him.

J. G. B.

His Love, Not Ours

The Lord Jesus, amid all the glory of God, has a heart large enough to think of coming to meet even me. “There is a poor thing, stumbling through his duties, often going wrong. I shall go and fetch him, and make him partaker of all I have.” It is His love, not mine. Having loved us before the foundation of the world, His love changes not because of what we are. He, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

G. V. W.

The Homeward Journey

From the French.

Though 'tis a desert dreary

Through which my footsteps haste,

E'en though 'tis sad and weary,

Yet Christ has trod the waste.

It leads me to the Father;

And, as I pass along,

None other but my Savior

Can fill my soul with song.

On Him I am reclining,

I follow not in vain!

And loss brings no repining,

Since Christ Himself I gain.

Earth's lesser joys soon ending,

My steps would only stay;

But on His power depending,

From these I turn away.

His love my fetters breaking,

I press towards the goal;

Eternal songs are waking

Already in my soul.

And as the road grows rougher,

Faith only looks above;

The trials that I suffer,

But teach me, "God is love."

And though while here abiding,

My spirit oft may groan,
Yet in His presence hiding,
I cannot be alone.
His grace for all availing,
Attends me night and day;
His rod and staff unfailing,
My comfort and my stay.
Oh, grace beyond expression,
To know Him here below!
Such is their blest possession,
Who in His footsteps go.
And soon in brightest glory,
Lord, I shall see Thy face,
And sing the matchless story
Of victory through Thy grace!
A. S. A., Jun.

A Hymn of Praise

Lord of glory, we adore Thee!
Christ of God ascended high!
Heart and soul we bow before Thee,
Glorious now beyond the sky:
Thee we worship,
Thee we praise—
Excellent in all Thy ways.
King anointed, though uncrowned,
Rightful Heir and Lord of all!
Once rejected, scorned, and wounded
Even by those Thou tamest to call:
Thee we honor,
Thee adore
Glorious now and evermore.
Lord of Life! to death once subject;
Blessed, yet a curse once made;
Of Thy Father's heart the object,
Yet in depths of anguish laid:
Thee we hallow,
Thee admire—
Drinking thus our cup of ire.
Royal robes shall soon invest Thee,
Regal splendors crown Thy brow;
Christ of God, our souls confess Thee
King and Sovereign even now!
Thee we reverence,

Thee obey—

Own Thee Lord and Christ alway.

When Thy glory forth is streaming,

King of glory, life, and light,

Majesty divine revealing,

All who see the wondrous sight

Thee will worship,

Thee adore—

God and man for evermore!

R. H.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: The Apostasy and the Antichrist

In the interval between the rapture of the saints and the appearing of Christ, the earth will be the scene of some of the most awful events which the world has ever witnessed. Among these will be the apostasy—the open abandonment of all profession of Christianity, yea, the denial both of the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22), and the appearance of the man of sin, the son of perdition, or the antichrist. Paul has given us most distinct and precise instruction upon these subjects. False teachers had sought to disturb the minds of the Thessalonian believers by alleging that the day of the Lord was already come. It was to meet this error that he wrote, “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto Him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand—the day of the Lord is present. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he himself (the words “as God” should be omitted) sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (2 Thess. 2:1-4). We are therefore plainly warned that “the falling away” (the apostasy), and the man of sin, will be seen in the interval between the rapture of the saints and the day of the Lord. For the apostle grounds his exhortation to these believers on the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto Him. As another has explained this scripture: “Their gathering together unto Christ in the air was a demonstration of the impossibility of the day of the Lord being already come. Moreover with regard to this last he presents two considerations: first, the day could not be already come, since Christians were not yet gathered to the Lord, and they were to come with Him; second, the wicked one who was then to be judged had not yet appeared, so that the judgment could not be executed.”

Thereon the apostle proceeds to show that until the church is caught away this consummation and embodiment of wickedness cannot be reached. “And now ye know what withholdeth” (that which restrains) “that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed” (vss. 6-8). In the light, then, of this and other scriptures, we may trace a little both the “falling away” and the man of sin.

1. The Apostasy. This was foreseen and predicted from the earliest days of Christianity. Nay, our Lord Himself plainly points to it in some of His parables, and never speaks of the gradual diffusion of the truth until the whole world should be brought to confess Him as Lord. On the other hand He compares the kingdom of heaven, as seen in the world, “unto leaven” (and leaven in the Scriptures has the uniform significance of corruption) “which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” (Matt. 13:33; see also the parable of the tares, and of the mustard seed, in the same chapter) Paul, moreover, tells the elders of the church at Ephesus, “I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29,30). And passing by his allusions to the subject, we find in his two epistles to

Timothy (1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 3) express descriptions of the evils of the “latter times,” and of “the perilous times” of “the last days.” What can be, indeed, more direct and emphatic than the scripture cited from 2 Thessalonians? For he there warns us that the mystery of iniquity was already working, and though for the time restrained, would at last, when the restraint was removed, rise so rapidly and mightily that, passing over all bounds, it would finally reach its consummation in that fearful being who would oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God, and demand and receive the homage which is due to God alone. Peter also speaks of the evil of the last days, and Jude too, and especially in its form of apostasy; and in the Revelation we are permitted to behold its final form in “Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.” (Rev. 17:5)

To understand this aright it must be borne in mind that when the saints are caught away the church in its outward form, that is, the profession of Christianity, will still remain. Only real Christians will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. There will therefore be thousands (not to say millions) of mere nominal believers left behind. And doubtless this profession will at the outset be maintained; and the churches and chapels, and other places where professing Christians meet, will carry on as before their religious services. The bells will ring, and the congregations, though thinned by the absence of those who were the children of God, will assemble; and hymns will be sung, prayers repeated or made, and sermons delivered. But now that He that restrained the development of the mystery of iniquity—the Spirit of God in the church—now that He is gone, evil will be unbridled, and hearts that shrunk before from receiving teachings, infidel in their character, which undermined the authority of the Word of God, and the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, will soon fall completely under their sway. Yea, in the solemn and awful language of Scripture, “God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thess. 2:10,11). Thus they will be gradually prepared to fall under the influence and power of antichrist, and therewith utterly to abandon ever the form of Christianity. And it is not a little remarkable, as one has said, “that the apostasy will develop itself under the three forms in which man has been in relationship with God: Nature—it is the man of sin unrestrained, who exalts himself; Judaism—he sits as God in the temple of God; Christianity—it is to this that the term apostasy is directly applied in the passage before us” (2 Thess. 2). How fearful the prospect! And how sad it is to notice this mystery of iniquity go plainly working in the present day, boldly rearing its head in the pulpits of Christendom, and proclaiming, without let or hindrance, doctrines which subvert the very foundations of revealed truth, and thereby preparing the way, as soon as the church is gone, for the advent of the man of sin.

2. The Antichrist. If we now consider a little more closely the character of this personage we shall have a clearer understanding of the whole subject. He is mentioned as the man of sin, as we have already seen in connection with the apostasy; but we may find traces of him both in the Old and New Testaments. He is termed “the king” in Daniel (11:36), the “idol shepherd” in Zechariah (11:17); but it is in the epistles of John that he is specified as the antichrist (1 John 2:18-22; 2 John 7). In Revelation he is termed a “beast.”

Now it must be distinctly understood that antichrist is not a figurative term for some evil principle or system, but that it indicates an actual person. Whoever will take the trouble to read the various scriptures in which he is mentioned will at once perceive this. There is reason, moreover, to

conclude that he will be not a Gentile, but a Jew. Thus our Lord, doubtless in allusion to this incarnation of evil, says, "If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43); and this is inconceivable, excepting he were of their own nation. Indeed he will present himself as the Messiah in his antagonism to Christ, and thus he is termed "the king" in Daniel, who, speaking of him, says that he will not "regard the God of his fathers," plainly pointing out his Jewish lineage as well as his apostate character. Indeed he tells us that he will "exalt himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done" (Dan. 11:36). If we now turn to the book of Revelation, we shall find both his rise and the character of his actings described. Before however entering upon this it will be necessary to recall the reader's attention to the Gentile monarchies (to which a brief allusion was made in the last paper); three of which will precede, and the last be contemporaneous with the antichrist. As revealed to Daniel, and by him announced to Nebuchadnezzar, four monarchies were to reach down to the end. Those of Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece have appeared, and passed away. The fourth, symbolized by the legs of iron, and the "feet part of iron and of clay," is the last; for in the vision which Nebuchadnezzar saw "a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces... and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth" (Dan. 2:34-35).

This last is the Roman empire—first in its pristine energy and resistless strength, as set forth under the emblem of iron, and then in its final form of ten kingdoms, foreshadowed by the ten toes, welded together in one confederation under a supreme head. Now in Revelation 13 we have described first of all the rise of the imperial power, of the Roman empire in its final form. John says, "And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up from the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his beads the name of blasphemy" (Rev. 13:1). To cite the words of another, "The sea sets forth the unformed mass of the people under a troubled state of the world-people in great agitation, like the restless waves of the deep. And it is out of that mass of anarchy and confusion that an imperial power rises." The "beast" that thus appears is characterized by having seven heads and ten horns, which prepares us for the statement that "the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority" (vs. 2), inasmuch as we find the dragon himself so distinguished in the previous chapter (Rev. 12:3); and this transfer of characteristics, as marking the source of the "beast's" power, is subsequent, it should be remarked, to Satan's expulsion from heaven (Rev. 12:9). This is indicated moreover in another way. "The crowns were upon the heads of the dragon, but upon the horns of the beast; that is, in the Roman empire you have the exercise of the power represented as a matter of fact, but in Satan's case merely as a matter of principle, or the root of the thing. It is a question of source and character, not history."

We have, then, here set before us the final form of the Gentile power, animated and energized by Satan, and possessing in itself all the features that marked each of its predecessors (Rev. 12:2; see Dan. 7:4-6). The seven heads signify the successive forms of power that have existed, but now concentrated in the "beast;" the ten horns are kings, and these ten will finally unite under one supreme head. "The ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (Rev. 17:9-13). There will be such a display of power as

the world has never seen; and since both its source and energy are alike Satanic, it will all be directed against God and His people. "And he (the beast) opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given unto him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:6-8). It will be a time of open antagonism against God, and therefore of fearful tribulation for the saints.

In connection with all this there arises another "beast;" not out of the sea, as was the case with his predecessor, but out of the earth, at a time therefore when there is settled government, under the order and sway indeed of the first beast. This is the antichrist. He has "two horns like a lamb, and spake like a dragon" (vs. 11). He is thus an imitator of, while in direct antagonism to, Christ; but his voice reveals his true character. He acts, as will be seen, as a kind of deputy of the first "beast;" exercising his power, and causing "the earth and them that dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed" (vs. 12). He, moreover, works miracles, or seeming miracles, and thereby deceiving the dwellers upon the earth, he causes that they should make an image to the first beast, and worship it. And the more effectually to accomplish his purposes he has "power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (vss. 15-17).

There will be thus a kind of mock trinity, composed of Satan, the first beast, and the false prophet (Rev. 19:20); and the object of all their strivings will be to exclude God from the earth, and indeed to usurp His place in the minds of men. The first beast, it will be seen, is the supreme secular power; the second, or the antichrist, acting under the first, has his domain in the religious sphere; while Satan is the inspirer and energy of both. We cannot here go into further details, as we shall see something more of the actings of antichrist in connection with the great tribulation. But it is well to remind ourselves that all the workings of error, and all the activities of men's minds, apart from Christ, have but one goal; for they all look towards, and will finally be embodied in this hateful antagonist of God and His Christ. John warns the believers of his day that the spirit of antichrist was already abroad (1 John 4:3); and it is necessary therefore, especially at a time when infidelity is ever waxing bolder, to be on the watch, and to ponder well these delineations of the coming man of sin, so that we may be preserved, in the grace of our God, from all association with that which, as it is the offspring of Satan, is also the mark of hostility to Christ.

E. D.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: The Appearing of Christ

The difference between the Lord's coming and His appearing is, that in the former case He comes for His saints, and in the latter with His saints. The kingdom therefore is always connected with His appearing, as it is then that He will assume His power, and "have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth" (Psa. 72:8). This event will be totally unexpected. Buried in profound slumber, and deaf to all warning, the world, under the strong delusion which has been sent upon it, will have believed a lie, Satan's falsehood, and trusted his masterpiece, the antichrist. Men will have at length found their happiness in forgetting God; and hence "as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away: so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. 24:38-39). Yea, so sudden will it be, bursting with horror upon an astonished and careless world, that "as the lightning, that lightened out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in His day" (Luke 17:24).

But for the more intelligent conception of this wonderful event, it is advisable to obtain a general idea of the state of things then existing. Towards the close of the tribulation, described in the last paper, there will be a coalition of hostile powers against the Jews. It is thus spoken of in one of the Psalms, "They have taken crafty counsel against Thy people, and consulted against Thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation; that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance" (Psa. 83:3-4). The chief actors in this confederacy would seem to be the Assyrian, so often spoken of by Isaiah (see Isa. 10:24;14:25), otherwise the king of the north, or the little horn of Daniel 8, the first "beast," that is, the head of the revived Roman empire, and the false prophet — the antichrist (Rev. 13:19). Zechariah refers to this when he cries in the name of the Lord, "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah, and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it" (Zech. 12:2-3). It is Satan, as ever, who inspires the hearts of these enemies of Israel, but the Lord uses them to chastise the apostate nation, and hence Zechariah also says, "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (14:1-2). In Revelation we find other chief actors in the scene, though their hostility is there described as against the Lamb and against His saints, and presumably, therefore, we have there a later development of their schemes, occasioned by the appearing of Christ. John says, "And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army" (Rev. 19:19).

Combining these accounts, together with the additional details to be found in Zechariah, the order of events may be indicated. All nations are gathered to battle against Jerusalem, and "the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city" (Zech. 14:2). But at this

juncture, when they are wreaking their vengeance upon this unhappy people, when the malignant purposes of Satan are near their accomplishment, “then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle” (Zech. 14:3). But Satan’s instruments are not to be balked of their prey, and goaded on to the crowning act of their impious course, led by the “beast” and the false prophet, who have long been seeking to wipe out the name of God and His Christ from the earth, and to erase their memory from the hearts of men, they dare now “to make war against Him that sat on the horse, and against His army.” They thus rush to their doom; for “the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of Him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of His mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Rev. 19:20,21). Isaiah speaks of this when he says, “He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked” (one) (Isa. 11:4); and Paul, “And then shall that wicked (one) be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thess. 2:8). Thus God arises, and His enemies are scattered.

If we turn now to another scripture, we shall find other details connected with the appearing. After describing the tribulation, our Lord proceeds, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken, and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:29-30). The prophet Joel spoke in like manner: “And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come” (Joel 2:30,31). There will be thus signs above and below to herald the appearing of Christ, when He comes with ten thousands of His saints, “when every eye shall see Him, and they [also] which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him” (Rev. 1:7).

It will, therefore, be a scene of awful and impressive grandeur; for it will be the “appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13) — God’s public display in His own glory of the One who was once rejected and crucified, but who now returns as the Son of Man to take up the sovereignty of the whole world. And them that sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him (1 Thess. 4:14), associated in glory with their Lord, as they were once associated with Him in His rejection; for He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed (2 Thess. 1:10).

Having touched upon the fact and manner of His appearing, we may indicate some of its accompanying events. One of these has already been noted—the destruction of His foes. Thereon follows the conversion of Israel: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications, and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And

the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart.... In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 12:9-14;13:1). As soon as the church is removed, God will begin to act by His Spirit in the hearts of some of His ancient people—the remnant so constantly mentioned in the Psalms and the prophets; and these, as may be gathered from the Psalms and portions of Isaiah, will be bowed to the dust, under the sense of God's holy indignation against His people Israel, on account of their apostasy; and it is this feeling, combined with their fearful trouble, that gives character to their cries as there recorded. It is at this moment, when the furnace into which they have been cast burns most fiercely, and when they are hanging as it were over the abyss of utter destruction, that the Lord appears for them, and they instantly recognize and look upon Him whom they have pierced. The true Joseph discovers Himself to His brethren, and they are at once plunged into bitter sorrow and humiliation on account of their, and their nation's, sin. But provision is made for this also in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, and they can now cry, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord: we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation" (Isa. 25:9).

It is not only the remnant in Jerusalem that will be affected; for we find that in connection with His appearing "He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31). Wherever they are found not one will escape the notice of His eye, but all will be brought to share in the blessings of the kingdom which He comes to establish. As we read in Isaiah, "He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Isa. 11:12). It may be that this will not be completely accomplished until after the commencement of His reign; for after the display of His power and glory, after the Lord has come "with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire," some of the saved are sent forth to declare His glory among the Gentiles; And it is said that "they (the Gentiles) shall bring all your brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon swift beasts, to My holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel into the house of the Lord" (Isa. 66:15-20).

There is another event of great importance to be noted in connection with, and probably preparatory to, the establishment of the kingdom. After describing the destruction of the "beast" and the false prophet, and the slaughter of their followers, John says: "And I saw an angel...come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (Rev. 20:1-41). Thus the Lord asserts His power in judgment upon the whole trinity of Satan, the "beast," and the false prophet—which had impiously risen up against Him, and blasphemously usurped His authority; and at the same time He delivers His people—the elect of Israel—and thereby clears the way, and lays the foundations for His millennial sway.

Leaving, however, the consideration of the kingdom itself to a future paper, we shall now ask the reader's attention to those whom Christ will associate with Himself in His reign. There are several

distinct classes that will have this honor. Everyone understands that believers of this dispensation will reign with Christ. This is too plainly asserted to admit of a single doubt. "If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12). But it is not so generally apprehended that there are others to be singled out for this special exaltation; and yet this is as distinctly stated in the Scriptures. John says: "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and which [those who] had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:4-6). The class sitting on thrones to whom judgment is given is composed of the armies that followed Christ out of heaven (Rev. 19:14). The saints who had been caught up previously to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4); in a word, the church. But there are other two classes; first, those who were martyred during the power of the antichrist—those who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God; and secondly, those who stood aloof from his seductions, and, unmoved by his threats, refused to receive his distinguishing sign. As a special mark of the Lord's favor and approbation, in recompense for their fidelity amid the general unfaithfulness, they are made partakers of the first resurrection, and consequently of association with Christ in His kingdom. They share both in the priestly and kingly dignity—the wondrous honor they inherit through the grace of Him who had marked their sufferings, and rejoiced in their constancy to His name and testimony. It is not forgotten that the force of this passage is often explained away by the contention that the resurrection here spoken of is figurative. If so, the resurrection and judgment described in the latter part of the chapter will also be figurative, and thus the whole truth of a final judgment will be frittered away. No; words so plain cannot be robbed of their significance, to say nothing of their perfect agreement with other portions of the word' of God. Blessed prospect for the saints of God! And how will they rejoice, not so much in their association with Christ in the splendors of His kingdom, unspeakable as will be the honor, but in the fact of His receiving the place belonging to Him both by title and purchase? There are even great voices in heaven to celebrate the event, saying, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats (thrones), fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned" (Rev. 11:15-18). But with what terror will this poor world be filled, when they behold the One whom they refused and rejected coming in power and great glory, to judge everything now according to the standard of His immutable righteousness? And He will come "as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:2-3).

E. D.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: The Great Tribulation

There will be also, in connection with the sway of the antichrist, another event of transcendent importance. Notices of it are found scattered throughout the prophets, as well as parts of the New Testament scriptures. It is generally designated as the great tribulation; but if the subject is closely examined it will be seen that this is but one feature of this fearful time of trial through which those upon the earth at that period will have to pass. In fact there will be a time of unexampled trouble, both for the Jews and the Gentiles; and we propose in this paper to collect some of the information which Scripture affords upon this subject, as well as to show who are the saints that will have to pass through this burning fiery furnace.

1. The time of trouble for the Jews. Jeremiah distinctly speaks of this, and to understand it clearly we will cite the passage with its context: "Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. For, lo, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it. And these are the words that the Lord spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah. For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and I will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him: but they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them" (Jer. 30:2-9). Three things are evident from this scripture. First, that Israel and Judah (as we have seen in a former paper) will yet be restored to their own land; that after this—or after the restoration of many—there will be a time of unparalleled trouble; and thirdly, that then will be their final deliverance and blessing. The connection of these three things fixes the period of their tribulation, and shows that it will be after their return to their own land, and before the appearing of the Lord.

If we now turn to the prophet Daniel we shall find similar testimony. After speaking of the actings of the antichrist (Dan. 11:36-45), he says: "At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1). Again we find that, when in their own land, and in connection with the doings of the antichrist, and hence after the Lord has returned for His people, and before His appearing, the Jews will pass through a time of trouble such as there never was before.

Our Lord speaks of the same thing. Forewarning His disciples, in answer to their question, "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" He says, "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the

prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house." "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened" (Matt. 24:15-22; also Mark 13:14-20). This scripture is extremely important on many accounts. It connects the tribulation spoken of with an event foretold by Daniel, and hence with the antichrist, and also reveals the cause as well as the period of this unexampled trouble (See Dan. 12:11 with 9:27).

Now connecting the several scriptures given, we learn that after the restoration of the Jews, exposed again, as in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes (see Dan. 11:21-31), to the hostility of the king of the north (Syria), the Jews for protection enter into a covenant with the first "beast"—the head of the revived Roman empire. It is to this Daniel refers when he says, "And he" (that is, the Roman prince) "shall confirm a" (not the, but a) "covenant with many" (or rather the many) "for one week;" that is, for a week of years—seven years. But we are further told that "in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease" (Dan. 9:27). By the covenant which this prince had entered into with the Jews, it is evident that he had engaged to protect them in their religious observances; but now, in association with the antichrist, he is false to his treaty—orders the daily sacrifice to be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate to be set up (Dan. 12:11) in the holy place. That is, an idol is set up in the temple (Read 2 Thess. 2:4; and compare Rev. 13:11-17). It is to this our Lord refers in the passage we have cited; and He gives the setting up of this "abomination of desolation" as the signal of flight for the godly remnant who will be found at that time in Jerusalem. Thereon a decree will be issued to the effect that all are to worship the image that has thus usurped the place of God, and together with this the time of tribulation will commence—raging with unheard-of fury against all who refuse to obey this decree, and indeed against the Jews as such, and extending, as we may see further on, throughout the whole world.

In the mercy of God this fiery trial is limited to the half week, and will therefore only last three years and a half. This is the forty and two months, or the twelve hundred and sixty days, so constantly mentioned in the book of Revelation. This coincides with the testimony of the two witnesses (Rev. 11) and the divine judgments—the woes—therewith connected; and during this period also the devil, cast down to earth, vomits out his great wrath against the remnant of the woman's seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 12:9-17). And it is he, the dragon, that gives power unto the "beast," that inspires all the actings of the head of the Roman empire, and of the antichrist against the people of God. Combining these things together some idea may be formed of the unequalled character of this tribulation. It is satanic both in its source and energy, containing every element of suffering which Satan's malignant hate can invent and compound; but it is used by God to chasten the Jewish nation for their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah. If we add, that even the godly subjects of it will have no sense of God's favor, though His Spirit is working in their hearts, we shall in some degree understand the words of our Lord: "Then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

This tribulation, as already said, specially affects the Jews. The passages cited from Jeremiah and Daniel confessedly apply to them, and the express reference of our Lord to the latter prophet,

besides other indications in His discourse, leaves no room for doubt that He also had the same people in view. The past history of the nation, and the awful guilt they incurred in crucifying their Messiah, will help us to understand both its reason and object, while at the same time it is a consolation to remember that in every case where it is spoken of, it is speedily followed by the deliverance and blessing of God's elect remnant.

2. Besides "Jacob's trouble," we read also of the great tribulation. This is mentioned in Revelation 7. In the first part of the chapter four angels are seen "standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads" (vss. 1-3). Accordingly one hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed out of the twelve tribes, God's spared remnant of Israel. Thereon we read, "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (vss. 9-10). It is concerning this innumerable multitude that one of the twenty-four elders asked John, "Who are these arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vss. 13-14). Now we are only stating what every one acquainted with the original readily admits, when we say that it should be read, "out of the great tribulation." This immense multitude therefore have been brought through it, and are in the scene before us a saved and rejoicing host. We have consequently a plain proof that there will be not only unparalleled trouble for the Jewish nation, but also, and probably about the same time (it may be a little before) a similar period of tribulation for the Gentiles "all nations, kindreds, and people, and tongues." This would seem to be the same event as that of which our Lord speaks as "the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth" (Rev. 3:10). As to its source and character, little if anything is revealed; but it is sufficiently accounted for by the fearful state into which the world will be plunged after the removal of the church, and by the fact that the "beast," who will open "his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme His name, and His tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven," will have power "over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:5-8).

3. The question now occurs, Whether the church will be found in the tribulation? If not, who are the saints that are seen in it? Those who have read the earlier papers of this series will be already furnished with the answer; but as the subject is important, and there may be some who will only see the present paper, it may be advisable to recall the Scripture teaching on this point. In the first place it is abundantly clear, if our interpretation of the Scripture is correct, that the church will be caught away before this period. Thus we find in Revelation 19 that the beast and the false prophet (the antichrist) are taken and destroyed at the Lord's appearing (vss. 11-21). In 2 Thessalonians we also learn that the Lord will consume that wicked one (the antichrist) "with the brightness of His coming." But we are taught in Colossians that "when Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye

also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). In the Scripture already referred to (Rev. 19) it is also said that “the armies which were in heaven followed Him” (the Word of God) “upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean” (vs. 14). From verse 8 we gather that the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. The saints (the church) in both of these Scriptures are represented as coming with Christ, and hence it is undeniable that they must have been caught up to be with Him previously. The structure of the book of Revelation shows the same thing. “Write,” said the Lord to John, “the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter” — after these (Rev. 1:19). The first chapter contains what he saw; the second and third, “the things which are” — the church dispensation; and the rest of the book deals with the things after the church period has closed. Hence, immediately after the third chapter, the twenty-four elders are seen in heaven sitting upon thrones, clothed in white raiment, and with crowns of gold on their head. (Rev. 4:4) Who are these? Their crowns bespeak their kingly, as their dress reveals their priestly, character, and hence points back plainly to Revelation 1:6. They are therefore the saints, and thus are found translated to heaven before the commencement of the tribulation.

But it may be inquired, Who then are the great multitude which no man could number of Revelation 7, who are distinctly said to come out of the great tribulation? Now if the elders symbolize the church—not excluding the saints of past dispensations—it is clear that this multitude cannot point to the same class. The elders are in heaven, and this redeemed multitude are upon the earth; and this distinction helps us to understand who they are. They are, as described, a vast number of Gentiles brought through the tribulation into blessing, and will therefore enter with Christ upon the glories and blessings of His millennial kingdom; nay, they are to have a special place under His sway. “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light upon them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (vss. 15-17).

The other branch of the question remains, Who are the saints seen in the tribulation? They are God’s elect remnant from among the Jews. This may be seen from Matthew 24. It is of those in Judea our Lord speaks (vs. 16). They are to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath (the seventh) day (vs. 20)—a direction that would have no significance except for a godly Jew under law; they are warned against false Christs (vss. 23-24) — a warning which would scarcely be understood by Christians who know that Christ is at the right hand of God; and finally, the elect are not gathered until after the tribulation, and the appearing, whereas, as we have seen, the church will appear with Christ. Indications of the same character could be collected if needful from the Revelation; but we have already shown that the elders in heaven prove that the church could not be on the earth during the tribulation. There is therefore abundant evidence to show that they are godly Jews, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who will be cast into this burning fiery furnace, which is to be heated “seven times more than it was wont to be heated.” Their sorrows and cries during this time of unequalled anguish are traced and expressed in many of the Psalms. Believers of this dispensation are “turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.” (1 Thess. 1: 9, 10) For it is to them that our Lord addresses these words, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation,

which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth” (Rev. 3:10).

E. D.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: The Judgment-Seat of Christ

"We all," says the apostle, "must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10). He includes in this statement, undoubtedly, both believers and unbelievers, though, as will be seen in the course of these papers, there is a long intervening period between the judgment of the two classes; for there is not the least foundation in the Word of God for the common idea that saints and sinners will appear at the same time before the judgment-seat. But it is with believers that we are now concerned, and their appearance before the tribunal of Christ will take place between His coming and His appearing. Caught up, as we saw in our last paper, to meet the Lord in the air, they are then like Christ, will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2), and will be with Him forever (1 Thess. 4:17). The place to which they are translated, and in which they will be with the Lord, is the Father's house. This we know from the Lord's own words, "In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3). There the blessed Lord will conduct all His own, and, if we may adapt the words, will present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24); and with what overflowing joy will He and the children God has given Him appear before His Father and their Father, and His God and their God! And with what joy will God Himself behold the fruit and perfection of His own counsels, the redeemed all conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren! (Rom. 8:29).

The saints, then, will dwell in the Father's house during the interval that will elapse between the coming of Christ for and His return with His saints; and, as before remarked, it is during this time that they will be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ. The proof of this is found in Revelation 19. Just on the eve of returning with Christ (Rev. 19:11-14), John tells us, "I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness (δικαιοσύνη) of saints" (vss. 6-8). Here then we find the saints robed in their (not God's) righteousness, the fruit of their practical ways, produced and wrought out surely by the Holy Spirit, but nevertheless counted as theirs in the wonderful grace of God; and hence, since the judgment-seat of Christ for believers is concerning the things done in their body, this can only be the results of declared judgment. The arraying the Lamb's wife in the fine linen, clean and white, will therefore follow upon the manifestation of the saints before Christ's tribunal; and both take place, as it would seem from this chapter, preparatory to, and immediately before, the appearing of the Lord with His saints. Had we not this instruction, we might have thought that the judgment-seat at least would have followed close upon the rapture. But there is grace in its postponement. The saints are caught up, and are with the Lord in the Father's house, and they are permitted to become familiar with, and, if we may use the word, at home in, the glory into which they have been introduced before the question of the deeds done in the body is brought up for settlement.

The character of the judgment must be distinctly observed, and one or two preliminary remarks will greatly conduce both to prevent mistake and to the understanding of the subject.

1. The believer will never be judged for sins. It is in the passage before us not sins but deeds done in the body; and indeed to suppose that the question of our guilt, our sins, could be again raised is to overlook, not to say falsify, the character of grace and the work of redemption. “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 judgment (κρ■σιν); but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24) Again we are told, “By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.” (Heb. 10:14) The question of sin was settled, and closed forever, at the cross; and every believer is before God in all the abiding efficacy of the sacrifice there offered, yea, accepted in the Beloved. Even now therefore we are without spot before God, and our sins and iniquities will be remembered no more (Heb. 10:17).

2. This will be at once seen when it is remembered that we shall have our glorified bodies — be like Christ before we are manifested before His judgment-seat; for, as already pointed out, the resurrection of the saints who have fallen asleep in Christ, and the change of the living, and the rapture of both into the presence of the Lord, will precede our judgment. This is unspeakable consolation; for being already like Christ, we shall have full fellowship with Him in every judgment He passes upon our works; and we shall therefore rejoice at the exposure and rejection of all that flowed, in our lives down here, from the flesh, and not from the Holy Spirit. This answers the question sometimes put, Whether we shall not tremble and be ashamed as all the deeds of our Christian life are brought up and shown out in their real character? Indeed, as another has said, “We are in the light by faith when the conscience is in the presence of God. We shall be according to the perfection of that light when we appear before the tribunal of Christ. I have said that it is a solemn thing, and so it is; for everything is judged according to that light; but it is that which the heart loves, because, thanks to our God, we are light in Christ!

“But there is more than this. When the Christian is thus manifested, he is already glorified, and, perfectly like Christ, has no remains of the evil nature in which he sinned; and he can now look back at all the way God has led him in grace—helped, lifted up, kept from falling, not withdrawn His eyes from the righteous. He knows as he is known. What a tale of grace and mercy! If I look back now, my sins do not rest on my conscience, though I have horror of them; they are put away behind God’s back. I am the righteousness of God in Christ; but what a sense of love and patience, and goodness and grace! How much more perfect then, when all is before me. Surely there is great gain as to light and love in giving an account of ourselves to God, and not a trace remains of the evil in us. We are like Christ. If a person fears to have all out thus before God, I do not believe he is free in soul as to righteousness, being the righteousness of God in Christ, not fully in the light. And we have not to be judged for anything; Christ has put it all away.”

Bearing these things in mind, we may consider more closely the nature of the judgment itself. It is not we ourselves who have to be judged, nor, as has been abundantly explained, will our sins reappear against us, but, as the Scripture itself says, “we must all appear” (be manifested, φανερωθ■ναι) “before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether good or bad.” The body of the believer is the Lord’s, a member of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:15-19), and is therefore to

be used in His service for the display of Christ Himself (Rom. 12:1; 2 Cor. 4:10). Hence the apostle's earnest expectation and hope was that Christ should be magnified in his body, whether by life or by death (Phil. 1:20). It is on this account that we are responsible for the deeds done in our body, so that while we are perfected forever through the one offering of Christ, and there cannot be therefore any further imputation of sin to us, every act of our lives, not only as service, but every deed which we have done, will be manifested, tested, and judged when before the judgment-seat of Christ. The good will be seen, and declared to be such; and while these were surely produced, wrought out in, and by us through the grace of God, and the power of His Spirit, they will be reckoned, in His infinite compassion, as ours, and as such we shall receive the recompense. The bad, however fair they appeared here, will also be seen and recognized in their true character, and belonging to none but ourselves, the product of the flesh, will receive their just condemnation, we ourselves rejoicing to behold everything that had dishonored our blessed Lord, though done by ourselves, receiving its righteous recompense and doom. The time for concealments will then be gone; for that which maketh everything manifest is light, and then everything will be searched and tested by the full blaze of the light of the holiness of that judgment-seat.

It is a question worthy of consideration whether this truth occupies its due place in our souls. Knowing grace and the fullness of redemption, there is a danger of overlooking or forgetting our responsibility. But this should never be the case; and the prospect of the judgment-seat of Christ, while it has not a shade of apprehension for the believer, is yet intended to exert a most practical influence on our souls. The very connection in which it is found shows this to be the case. "We are confident," says the apostle, "and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him [rather, acceptable to Him, εὐαρεστοὶ αὐτῷ]. For we must all appear..." (2 Cor. 5:8-10). The prospect therefore braced up the soul of the apostle, stimulating him with unwearied zeal in all that he did to seek only the approbation of Christ. In fact this is precisely what it does for us, enabling us to bring all our actions into the light of His presence now, and helping us to do them for and unto Himself. Herein indeed lies our strength. Satan is very subtle, and often tempts us to be men-pleasers; but when we remember that all will be manifested before the judgment-seat, we are impervious to his snares, knowing that if we commend ourselves to others, it may be at the cost of displeasing Christ. And what the profit of practicing deception, whether upon ourselves or upon others, when the nature of all that we do is so soon to be exposed? To be acceptable to Christ will be our aim just in proportion as we have His tribunal before our souls.

It will likewise help us to be patient under misconception, and in the presence of wrongdoing or evil. During the days of the Reformation in Italy, a monk, who had received the truth of the gospel, was subjected to close confinement under the custody of a brother monk. Through a long period of years he bore without a murmur the harsh and rigorous treatment of his jailor. Finally he was ordered forth to be executed. As he left the cell which had been his prison-house, he turned to his custodian, and meekly said, "Brother, we shall soon know which of us has been pleasing to the Lord." We also, in like manner, can calmly leave every disputed question, whether concerning ourselves or our brethren, to be settled before the judgment-seat of Christ. We shall thus be able to adopt the language of the apostle, "With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment (man's day — ἡνθρωπίνης μέρους): yea, I judge not mine own self.

For I know nothing of myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but He that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every man have praise of God" (1 Cor. 4:3-5).

The Lord give us to live more continually under the power of this truth, that all our words and acts may be spoken and done in the light of that day.

E. D.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

Another event takes place in heaven, after the judgment-seat of Christ, before His return with His saints; namely, the marriage supper of the Lamb. The scripture that refers to it may again be cited: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. And He saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:7-9). In this heavenly scene we behold the consummation of redemption, in respect of the church, in her presentation to, and everlasting union with, the Object of all her hopes and affections.

A few preliminary words, however, may be necessary for the apprehension of the true character of this scene. From many passages of Scripture we gather that the church is not only the body (Eph. 1:23;5:30; Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:27), but also the bride of Christ. Paul thus tells the Corinthians, "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Again, when expounding the duties of husbands to their wives, he enforces them on the distinct ground of marriage being a type of the union of Christ with the church. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:25-27). Once more: "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31-32). Here the Spirit of God carries us back to the formation of Eve out of Adam, and her presentation to and union with him as his wife, as a type of the presentation of the church to Christ, the last Adam. As long as He was down here as a man, He abode alone; but a deep sleep, even the sleep of death, fell also upon Him, according to the purpose of God; and as the fruit of His work, through the descent of the Holy Ghost, the church was formed—formed and united to Him; so that, as Adam said of Eve, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh" (Gen. 2:23), we (believers) can say, "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30).

But another thing is brought before us in the Ephesians. It is said that Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it. His love therefore was the source of all—His motive, in this aspect, for the gift of Himself. Finding the one pearl of great price, valuing it according to the estimate of His own affections, He went and sold all that He had, and bought it (Matt. 13:46); He gave Himself (and giving Himself, He gave "all that love could give") for it. And He gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; thus making the church morally suitable to Himself, "that He might present it to Himself a glorious church." We have thus three steps—past, present, and future. He gave Himself for it in His death upon the cross; He cleanses it (the process He is carrying on now through His intercession at the right hand of God, in answer to

which there is the washing of water by the word); and He presents it to Himself, which takes place at the marriage supper of the Lamb And all, every step, be it remarked, is the fruit of His love. If He still waits at the right hand of God, it is only that every one who is to be a part of His bride shall be brought in. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (John 6:37); and He has purchased, redeemed, all by the gift of Himself. He will therefore keep His seat until the last of these is brought out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Then He will delay no longer; for the same love that moved Him to give Himself will impel Him to fetch His bride. Hence He presents Himself to the church, saying, "Behold, I come quickly," reminding her that His love never wearies, that He is eagerly waiting for the moment when He can come to receive her unto Himself. Having fetched His own, in the manner described in a former paper, and brought them into the Father's house, and having manifested all before His judgment-seat, the time for the marriage has come, and it is this event which is celebrated in the passage cited from the Revelation.

It is the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. 19:7); and, as another has said, "the Lamb" is a figure or description of the Son of God, which tells us of the sorrows He endured for us. The soul understands this, and therefore this title, "the Lamb's wife," tells that it is by His sufferings the Lord has made her His own; that He so valued her as to give up all for her." Even now believers are united to Christ; but the marriage speaks of another thing. It is the time when all the believers of this dispensation—embracing all from Pentecost until the Lord's return—already glorified, and looked at corporately, are fully and finally associated with the risen and glorified Man, with the One who, in His own matchless grace and peerless love, has chosen the church to be His companion forever. He is, in the scene before us, on the eve of His appearing; but ere He returns to the place of His rejection He will formally take into union with Himself her who has shared in measure His sorrows and sufferings, that He may display her to the world as sharing the same glory as Himself. "And the glory which thou gavest Me I have given them; 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). This refers to the time when He returns to take His power and reign, "And earth His royal bride shall see Beside Him on the throne."

The marriage is preparatory to this public display, and is the expression of His own heart in thus bringing the church into participation with Himself of His own glory and His own joy.

Combining the Scripture in Ephesians with that before us, it may be seen that the wife will be robed in a twofold beauty. Here we are told that "His wife hath made herself ready, and to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white." There it is said that He will "present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27). This last beauty is the result of what Christ has done for her. "He gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." Thereby, as already seen, He has made her morally a suitable companion to Himself; and as He has now brought her before Himself, she shines resplendent with His own beauty, reflecting His own glory. It is His own likeness He sees before Him, reproduced in His wife; and He has thus made her the meet companion of His exaltation and glory.

But the fine linen indicates another kind of beauty. It is the righteousnesses of saints (vs. 8)—the result, as before pointed out, of the manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ. This fact

wonderfully enhances our conceptions of the grace of our God. If we do a single thing which meets His approval, it can only be through the power which He Himself has given us; “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). And yet He will adorn us with all the fruit and beauty of that which has been wrought out in and by us through His own grace and power. Every kind of beauty therefore—both divine and human—will characterize the Lamb’s wife, according to the perfection of God’s thoughts and counsels, and according also to the mind and heart of the Lamb.

Several distinct things mark the celebration of the marriage. First, there is the outburst of joy and praise, as the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, “Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth” (v, 6). The marriage, indeed, as the chapter shows, is immediately before the coming forth in judgment of the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, and hence is on the eve of the world—sovereignty of “our Lord and His Christ” (Rev. 11:15). Then they cry, “Let us be glad, and give honor to Him for the marriage of the Lamb is come,” (vs. 7). The nuptials of the Lamb therefore excite the wondering adoration of heaven, of all the servants of God, and of them that fear Him, both small and great (vs. 5). Last of all, John is commanded to write, “Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” The portion of the wife is as unique as it is incomparable; but even those who are invited to have fellowship with the joy of that day are pronounced blessed. And no wonder; for they are admitted to view the consummation of the desires of Christ, His joy in presenting to Himself her for whom He had died, and who, made meet for her association with Himself, was now robed in the glory of God (John 17:22; Rev. 21:10,11). It is therefore a day of unbroken joy—joy to the heart of God, joy to the Lamb and His wife, and joy to all who are permitted to behold this wondrous scene. But it is the Lamb Himself who attracts our gaze as the prominent figure of that day; and it is called, as one has said, “the marriage of the Lamb, not the marriage of the church or of the Lamb’s wife, but of the Lamb, as though the Lamb was the one chiefly interested in that joy. The church will have her joy in Christ, but Christ will have His greater joy in the church. The strongest pulse of gladness that is to beat for eternity will be in the bosom of the Lord over His ransomed bride. In all things He is to have the pre-eminence; and as in all things, so in this—that His joy in her will be greater than hers in Him.”

E. D.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: The Rapture of the Saints

When the Lord returns for His people two things will take place — the resurrection of the dead in Christ, and the change of living believers; and then both alike will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord. This is distinctly taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. Our blessed Lord Himself foreshadowed this truth, indeed stated it, though His meaning could scarcely be apprehended without the further light of the epistles. On His way to Bethany, after the death of Lazarus, He said to Martha, “Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto Him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die” (John 11:23-26). Here then we have the same two classes — those who believed in Christ, but who should have died ere His return, these should live; and secondly, those who should be then alive, and believed in Him, these should never die—corresponding exactly with the two classes found in 1 Thessalonians 4.

In order however to make the subject clear and simple, it must first be shown that only believers will be raised from the dead at the second coming of our Lord. There is no doctrine more plainly taught in the Scripture, or so completely overlooked or ignored by the mass of professing Christians. The common thought is, that at the end of the world, at the close of the millennium, there will be a resurrection alike of believers and unbelievers; that all together will be arraigned before the judgment-seat, and that then the eternal destiny of each will be declared. But this theological conception, albeit so widely taught and accepted, not only has no foundation in, but is also directly opposed to, the teaching of the Word of God. This will be confessed if attention is given to the proofs about to be adduced, that none but believers will be raised at the Lord's coming.

First of all a few Scriptures may be cited from the gospels, in addition to that from John 11. On coming down from the mount of transfiguration, the Lord charged His disciples that they should not tell what they had seen, “till the Son of Man were risen from among the dead” (■κ νεκρ■ν). “And they kept that saying with themselves, questioning one with another what the rising from among” (■κ νεκρ■ν) “the dead should mean” (Mark 9:9-10). They believed, as Martha did, that there would be a resurrection at the last day (John 11:24); but hitherto they had never heard of a resurrection from among the dead, and this it was that caused their astonishment. Here, of course, it was the resurrection of Christ Himself that was in question; but inasmuch as He was the first-fruits of His own, His resurrection was both the pledge and type of theirs. In Luke 14:14 we find the expression, “the resurrection of the just;” and in another chapter (20:35) the Lord speaks of those “who shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world” (α■νος), “and the resurrection from among the dead” (κα■ τ■ς ■ναστ■σεως τ■ς ■κ νεκρ■ν). The phrase which the Lord uses is unmistakable in its signification that it is a partial resurrection, that those who obtain this resurrection will leave others behind them in their graves. The teaching of John 5:28,29, supports the same conclusion. Going back to the 25th verse, it will be noted that the term “hour” includes a whole dispensation. “The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the

Son of God; and they that hear shall live.” That hour has lasted from that moment until the present time, in accordance with the preceding verse, “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;” and it will last until the Lord’s return. It marks the whole day of grace. In like manner the term “hour” in the 28th verse includes a whole dispensation. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation”—judgment (κρ■σεως). Two resurrections are thus clearly distinguished: that of life, which will take place, as we shall see, at the coming of the Lord; and that of judgment, which will take place after the close of the millennium (Rev. 20:11-15).

If we turn now to the epistles we shall find even more exact statements. The Subject of 1 Corinthians 15 is the resurrection of the body; and yet not the resurrection of the bodies of all, but only that of believers. This may be seen at a glance. After then showing the consequences of the false doctrine — that there was no resurrection — the apostle states the truth: “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Cor. 15:20-23). Language could not be more exact or explicit. So also in the scripture already cited (1 Thess. 4) it is said, “The dead in Christ shall rise first” (no others are within the apostle’s view): “then we which are alive and remain.” There is not a thought of unbelievers being included. It is this fact which explains this same apostle’s expression in another epistle: “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (rather from among the dead, τ■ν ■ξαν■στασιν υ■ν ■κνεκρ■ν) (Phil. 3:11).

One more scripture may be permitted. In Revelation 20 we read of some who “lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” The application of this scripture will be examined, if the Lord will, in a future paper; but attention now is called to the following statement: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection” (vss. 4, 5). It is remembered that interpreters have sought to prove that this is a spiritual resurrection (whatever that may mean); but if so, then the resurrection at the close of the chapter is not a literal one, and hence they would prove, like the false teachers at Corinth, that there is no resurrection of the dead! No; language so clear and unmistakable, especially when taken in connection with the other scriptures adduced, places beyond all doubt that God in His grace has purposed that believers should rise from among the dead at the coming of the Lord; and this is called the first resurrection. Hence it is that the term first-fruits is applied to the resurrection of our blessed Lord (1 Cor. 15:20), being the first-fruits of the harvest of His own to be gathered in at His coming. (See Lev. 23:10-11.)

There is one scripture, however, which may seem, in the minds of those who have not examined the subject, to contradict the above statements. This is the well-known passage in Matthew 25, in which we find the sheep and the goats gathered before Christ at the same time. This scene, popularly conceived to be a description of the final judgment, is often adduced in opposition to the truth of the first resurrection of believers. But the slightest examination of the words used by our blessed Lord will show that He does not allude to the subject of the resurrection: “When the Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations,” (vss. 31-32). The reference is therefore to

His appearing and kingdom, and to His judgment of the living, and not of the dead. We do not speak of “the nations” in respect of the dead: this term describes the living. And observe, too, that there are three classes—the sheep, the goats, and the brethren of the King; and this fact itself fixes the interpretation of the whole scene, showing conclusively that it is the judgment of the living nations consequent upon the appearing of the Son of Man in His glory, and His assumption of His throne. The “brethren” therefore are Jews, who had been sent out as the King’s messengers with the annunciation of His kingdom; and those who received them and their message are the sheep, and those who rejected them are the goats. Their relationship to the King is made dependent upon their treatment of His messengers (See for this principle Matt. 10:40-42).

Having then established that when the Lord returns it is to fetch His own, whether they have previously died, or are living still upon the earth, according to His word — “If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself” (John 14:3) — we may now consider the manner of His coming, as well as the rapture of the saints. The most precise instruction is given to us upon the subject in a scripture already referred to, but which may now be quoted at large. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (go before, or anticipate) them which are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:13-17). The bearing of this important passage is sometimes overlooked from inattention to its exact statements. The Thessalonian saints did not doubt concerning their portion in Christ on His return; but, somehow or other, they had fallen into the error of supposing that those who had fallen asleep before that event would suffer loss. It is to correct this mistake that the apostle gives some special instruction “by the word of the Lord,” that is, by a revelation upon this particular subject. He shows, then, that all who sleep in (or through, $\delta\iota$) Jesus, God will bring back with Him, that this indeed is connected with our faith in, and is a consequence of, the death and resurrection of Christ. Thereon he explains how this is possible, and this explanation it is which formed the subject of the special revelation to which we have alluded. The Lord will come, and then the dead in Christ will be raised, the living changed, and thus will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air.

This may take place, as we saw in the last paper, at any moment. Let us therefore familiarize our minds with the scene. Suddenly, then, the Lord Himself will descend from heaven in the manner here described. First, with a shout. This has occasioned a difficulty in many minds. If, they have thought, the Lord returns only for His people, and He descends with a shout, must it not then be in a public manner? By no means necessarily. The word itself is one of relationship, indicating, for example, the order of a commander to his soldiers; and thus it is a shout intended only for those to whom it is addressed, and the import of which would not be understood by others. When our blessed Lord was upon the earth, a voice came to Him from heaven, and some of the bystanders thought that it thundered, while others said “an angel spake to Him” (John 12:28,29). So also at the conversion of Saul, his companions heard a voice, that is, the sound of a voice (Acts 9:7); “but

they did not hear the voice of Him that spake to me,” that is, the significance of the voice (Acts 22: 9; compare Dan. 10:7). So will it be when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven. All His own will hear and understand the import of the shout; but if heard by others it will only seem as the roll of distant thunder, or, taken in combination with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, should these be likewise heard, as a strange phenomenon, to be discussed and explained by scientific men. It is probable that the three—the shout, the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God (see Num. 10)—have but one object, the summoning, the assembling together of the dead and living saints for their translation into the presence of their Lord.

Two effects follow, and follow instantaneously; for the apostle says in another epistle, “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15:51,52). “The dead in Christ shall rise first.” What a stupendous scene! All that are Christ’s, including, therefore, saints of the past, as well as of the present dispensation, shall rise at His coming (1 Cor. 15:23). Tracing down the line of the ages from Adam till the last saint to be gathered in, all this countless multitude will, “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” spring up from their graves—raised incorruptible. And not only so, but all the saints then living will be changed, so that all alike will be clothed upon with their resurrection bodies, in fashion like unto Christ’s body of glory (Phil. 3:21). It is, then, when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, that the saying that is written will be brought to pass, “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor. 15:54; see also 2 Cor. 5:1-4). But no sooner has this marvelous change been wrought, than all its subjects will be caught up “in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” Then the Lord Himself enters for the first time, as far as His people are concerned, upon the full fruit of His redemption-work, of the travail of His soul. And what tongue could tell, or pen describe, His joy when He thus redeems from the grave the very bodies of His people, and when He brings by the word of His power all His chosen ones into His presence, and all conformed to His own image! Nor is it possible to express even our own joy, the joy on which we then shall enter, when the longing desires of our hearts are all realized, and, like Him, we shall behold His face, see Him as He is, and be with Him forever.

“Knowing as I am known!”

How shall I love that word,

How oft repeat before the throne,

“Forever with the Lord!”

It is for this we wait, and the time is not far distant when all will be accomplished; for we rest on the sure word of our faithful Lord, who has said, “Surely I come quickly.”

E. D.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: The Restoration of the Jews

There is nothing more certain from the Word of God than that the Jews, who are now dispersed throughout the world, will be restored to their own land; for "He that scattered Israel will gather him" (Jer. 31:10). The time of their restoration is not revealed; but inasmuch as they are found in the land soon after the rapture of the saints, it is evident that it will take place about that time, whether before or after it would be impossible to say, but probably afterward, because otherwise there would be a visible sign of the Lord's being at hand.

A brief reference to God's ways in government on the earth will very much simplify and facilitate our understanding of this subject. We learn from the prophet Daniel that, on the utter failure of Israel as the depositary of God's power in the earth, the dominion was transferred to the Gentiles. Thus, in the interpretation of the great image which Nebuchadnezzar had seen in his dream, Daniel says: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath He given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold" (Dan. 2:37,38). Three empires would follow—the Medo-Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman; and the last of these, disappearing for a time, would finally revive, but be divided into ten kingdoms, as symbolized by the ten toes of the image, all of which however would be united in a common federation under one supreme head (Dan. 2:31-43; 7; Rev. 13 and 17). These empires reach down to the end, but the last is superseded, and indeed destroyed, by the kingdom of Christ; for "in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44; see also Rev. 19:11-21, and 20). Now the period which embraces the whole of these monarchies is termed "the times of the Gentiles," during which, according to the words of our Lord, Jerusalem is to be "trodden down of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). The absence of the Jews therefore from their own land will coincide, or nearly so, with this period. But God's purposes concerning His ancient people will yet be accomplished, "for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). And hence, together with the completion and rapture of the church, God will commence to deal again with that nation.

It is true that a small remnant was permitted to return to Jerusalem during the reign of Cyrus, the account of which we have in Ezra and Nehemiah; but this was in no way a national restoration, nor the full accomplishment of God's purposes, for Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi all prophesied after this period, and speak of the time of the national blessing as yet future (Hag. 2:7-9; Zech. 9-14; Mal. 3-4). Indeed from the time of this return until the birth of our Lord, so far from being an independent nation, they were always in subjection to the Gentile power. In such a condition there was nothing to answer to the glowing prediction of the prophet: "And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in My wrath I smote thee, but in My favor have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings

may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those kingdoms shall be utterly wasted” (Isa. 60:10-12). The object indeed of this partial return would seem to have been that Christ might be born among them, according to the predictions of the prophets, and be presented to them as the Messiah. This took place; and the gospel of Matthew, which especially deals with this subject, gives us in full the results. He was utterly rejected. They chose Barabbas that they might compass the destruction of Christ. “The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified” (Matt. 27:21-23). In the gospel of John their iniquity is, if possible, still more strikingly displayed. “Pilate saith, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15). They thus deliberately renounced the hope and glory of their nation, rejected their Messiah in their wicked desire to secure the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth; and from that day to this they have been suffering the consequences of their fearful crime as outcasts, and a bye-word, among the nations of the earth.

But God, whatever the sin of His people, cannot deny Himself; and in the death of Him whom His ancient people rejected (for He died for that nation—John 11:52), He laid the foundation for their future restoration and blessing. The evidence of this is so abundant that it is difficult to know where to begin or end; but a few scriptures may be selected, leaving our readers to trace out the details at their own leisure. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” (Isa. 11:11-12). Again we read, that “the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives, whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors” (Isa. 14:1-3. Read also Isaiah 25:6-12; 26; 27:6; 30:18-26; 35:10; 49:7-26; 54; 60; 61). The language of Jeremiah is no less distinct: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land” (Jer. 23:5-8. Read especially Jer. 30, 31, and 33). There is scarcely a prophet, indeed, that does not touch upon the subject; and in such plain words that, had not Zion been confounded with the church, no one could have doubted of God’s intentions towards His ancient people. If, moreover, the testimony of the prophets had been less precise, the argument of Paul in Romans 11 should have sufficed to teach us that He will never forego His purposes of grace and blessing towards the seed of Abraham; for, after showing that God hath not cast away His people (Israel), he says: “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest

ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is My covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom. 11:25-27). Two things, indeed, are clear from this scripture; that blessing is reserved for Israel, and that their Deliverer shall come out of Zion; showing that they must be in their own land previously to the blessing here described. There are, however, several stages in their restoration before this full result spoken of by Paul is reached. A portion will return to Palestine in unbelief. This is certain from the fact that Zechariah describes their conversion in the land by the appearing of the Lord (Zech. 12:9-14; 13:1. See also Isa. 17:10,11; 28:14, 15). While in their unbelief they will build a temple, and seek to restore their sacrificial services; and thus will pave the way for the setting up by the Antichrist of the abomination of desolation in the holy place, of which our Lord forewarned His disciples (Matt. 24:15; see also Rev. 11:1,2; Isa. 66:1-6). There will be however a remnant in the midst of their unbelieving brethren who will stay themselves upon God, who, not yet knowing their Messiah, will cry to the Lord in their distress, and will be preserved from the abominations into which the mass of the nation will fall. These are the elect remnant whose experiences are so largely developed in the Psalms, and in some of the prophets.

The restoration of the ten tribes will be effected after the Lord has taken His kingdom. Inasmuch as they had no part in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, although they will be judged for their own sins, they will be spared the fearful and peculiar trials through of which their brethren will have to pass in consequence their acceptance of, and connection with, the Antichrist. It is therefore not until after the return of Christ that He will bring to light and restore this long-lost portion of His people. Ezekiel describes the method of their restoration: “As I live, saith the Lord God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you; and I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord.” The rest are brought, and the prophet proceeds: “And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall bring you into the land of Israel, into the country for the which I lifted up Mine hand to give it to your fathers” (Ezek. 20:33;44 also 34). Jeremiah goes farther, and describes their coming into the land in language of singular beauty and pathos: “For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God. For thus saith the Lord, Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O Lord, save Thy people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is My firstborn.” Then he proceeds to declare still further the purpose of the Lord concerning His people, and their

consequent heritage of joy: "Hear the word of the Lord, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd cloth his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord" (Jer. 31:6-14).

The ten tribes thus brought back, we are told, moreover, that they will be united together with Judah under the happy and glorious sway of their Messiah; that "they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more," and that God's servant "David [the true David, Christ] shall be their Prince forever" (Ezek. 37:21-28).

We thus see that God has not forgotten His covenant with Abraham (Gen. 17:4-8); for while Israel failed in responsibility, and forfeited all claim upon God, He yet in faithfulness to His own word, in the wonders of His grace, will perform all that He has spoken. And the time draws near when Israel, once again restored to their own land, "shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit" (Isa. 27:6).

E. D.

Plain Papers Upon the Lord's Coming: Is It a Present or a Deferred Hope?

The question now arises whether the coming of the Lord is an immediate hope, or whether we are to look for the occurrence of preceding events. This is a vital point; and hence it is necessary to be very careful in the consideration of the teaching of Scripture upon the subject.

Speaking generally, then, it may be said that there are three words found in connection with the Second Advent. The first is **παρουσια**—which means simply “coming;” and hence is applied to the personal coming of any one, as well as to that of Christ (See 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6; 10:10; Phil. 1:26; 2:12; as examples of its use in the coming of persons). It is used some sixteen times in relation to the coming of Christ (Matt. 24:3,27,37,39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1,8,9; James 5:7,8; 2 Peter 1:16; 3:4). The use of the word—from its very significance—is general; and does not therefore of itself indicate the precise character of the event with which it may be associated. It is found alike, as will be seen from the above passages, in Matthew 24 and 1 Thessalonians 4. Another word is **αποκλυψις**, and signifies “revelation,” and this is used four times (1 Cor. 1:7; 2 Thess. 1:7; 1 Peter 1:7,13; and we might add, perhaps, 1 Peter 4:13). This word is fixed in its application—always referring to the revelation of our Lord from heaven; that is, to His coming with His saints, and in judgment to the earth—as for example in 2 Thessalonians 1:7. The last word is **αποκλυψις**, and means “appearing” or “manifestation,” and is rendered in the English Bible “appearing.” This word is used once of the first coming of our Lord (2 Tim. 1:10); and five times (if we include 2 Thess. 2:8, where it is used in conjunction with **πικνεια** of His future appearing). In addition to this, it may be added that when the Lord announces His own coming (as, for example in Rev. 22:7,12,20), He employs the common word **ρχομαι** — “I come.”

Now the difficulty is this. If we have to wait for the appearing or the revelation of Christ, it is very evident that we cannot entertain any immediate expectation of the Lord. For we learn from Scripture that many events are to precede that time. Thus, to take 2 Thessalonians 2, the man of sin—in other words, the antichrist, is first to appear upon the scene; and this, as we are also taught, necessitates the previous restoration of the Jews to their own land, the rebuilding of their temple, and the reestablishment of their sacrificial services (Matt. 24:15; Dan. 9:26,27; Rev. 12-13). Moreover the great tribulation, with all its sorrows, must, in that case, be passed through before the coming of the Lord.

Is this, then, the teaching of Scripture? In the first place, it cannot be denied that believers are spoken of as waiting for the appearing or revelation, as well as the coming of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 1:7 the apostle says, “Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming (**αποκλυψιν**) of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again, writing to Timothy, he says, “That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing (**πικνεια**) of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:14).

Once more, in his epistle to Titus, he says, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing (■πιψανε■α) of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Will believers, then—believers of this dispensation, that is, the church—remain upon the earth until the appearing of Christ? A close examination of Scripture shows that there are two distinct events defined: the coming of the Lord Jesus for His saints, and the coming of Christ with His saints. In 1 Thessalonians 3:13, as well as in many other passages, we find the latter; and in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 the former; and the Apostle Paul teaches us most distinctly in Colossians that the coming of Christ with His saints will take place at His appearing. He says, “When Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). If this be so, the saints must have been caught up to be with Christ ere His return to the earth in public manifestation.

Leaving for the moment the difficulty already stated, but only to be able to solve it the more completely, we may inquire, Is there anything between the saint, as far as the Scriptures teach, and the return of the Lord? May the Christian, in other words, momentarily expect, be constantly waiting for, Christ? The teaching of our blessed Lord has been alluded to in the last paper; but we may once more recall the fact that, both in the parable of the virgins, and in that of the talents, no other conclusion could have been drawn from His words; for the virgins who fall asleep are the same who are awakened by the cry, “Behold, the Bridegroom;” and the servants who receive the talents are the same who are reckoned with on His return. Collect, indeed, all the Scriptures in which He speaks of His coming, and it cannot be doubted for a moment that He intended His auditors to infer the possibility of His coming back at any, even the most unexpected, moment (See Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:35-37; John 21:20,21). Paul uses language of like import. In writing to the Corinthians concerning the resurrection of the bodies of believers, he is careful — led of the Spirit of God — to say, “Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Cor. 15:51); and in the epistle to the Thessalonians, he says, “We who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:15). It is clear, therefore, by the use of the word “we,” that he included himself as among the possible number who might be found alive on the Lord’s return; and hence that, as far as he knew, there was nothing to hinder the Lord’s coming for His saints during his own lifetime. That Peter thought it not improbable is likewise seen from the fact that he received a special revelation to inform him that he would have to die (2 Peter 1:15). And surely the fact that the last announcement of the inspired record is, “Surely I come quickly” (Rev. 22:20), would foster and strengthen the same conclusion.

But notwithstanding all this presumptive evidence, everything depends upon the question whether Christians (the church) will remain on the earth until the Lord’s appearing. If then we turn to Matthew 24, and contrast it with a scripture in Colossians, we shall find this question distinctly and plainly answered. In Matthew 24 we read, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He shall send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (vss. 29, 30). Here we have the order of events at the appearing of the Son of Man; and the reader will mark that (1) there is the tribulation, (2) the disturbance of the heavenly luminaries, (3) the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, (4) the mourning of the tribes of the earth, (5)

their seeing the Son of Man coming, while as yet the elect are upon the earth still ungathered. But what have we read in Colossians? That “when Christ, [who is] our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4). So also in the Revelation, we find that when Christ comes out of heaven for judgment (His appearing), “the armies which were in heaven followed Him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, clean and white” (Rev. 19:11-14). Who are these? Their dress is characteristic, and supplies the answer; for in the eighth verse we read, “the fine linen is the righteousness” (righteousnesses—δικαι■ματ■) “of saints.”

Evidently, therefore, “the elect” in Matthew 24 cannot be the church, since the saints who compose the church appear with Christ; and in fact, as the chapter itself abundantly shows, they are the elect of Israel, the Jewish remnant whom God by His Spirit has prepared for the time when the Lord, whom they seek, shall come suddenly to His temple (Mal. 3:1). It thus follows that the Lord Jesus will return for His people prior to His appearing; and, inasmuch as He destroys antichrist with the brightness of His appearing (2 Thess. 2:8), it must also be prior to his rise and sway, and hence also before the great tribulation, since (as will be seen in a future paper) this is connected with the time of the antichrist.

But thereon follows a further thing. All the predicted events which are looked for before the Lord’s appearing, are connected with the restoration of God’s ancient people, and the actings of the man of sin, the son of perdition (the antichrist); and consequently, as far as the Scriptures reveal, there is nothing whatever between the present moment and the possibility of the Lord’s return.

How, then, is the fact to be explained that we are said in Scripture to wait for the appearing, as well as for the coming, seeing that when Christ appears we appear with Him? Whenever the question of responsibility is brought in, the appearing, and not the coming, is the goal; and this is because that, since the earth has been the scene of the responsibility, the earth also will be the scene of the displayed recompense. This in no way interferes with the fact that the coming of Christ for His saints at any moment, is the proper hope of the believer. On the other hand, it throws additional light on the ways of God in the government of His people, brings out a new feature of the perfection of the Lord’s dealings with His servants. When departing, He entrusted to them gifts for His service, saying, “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19:13). The responsibility of the servants in the use of that which has been committed to their charge is confined to, limited by their sojourn upon, the earth. Hence it is when the Lord returns to the earth, that the result of their responsibility is declared. But it is not only in the use of gifts that this principle is seen; it is found in every sort of responsibility of the saint. The Corinthians came behind in no gift, waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Thessalonians are directed to look forward for the blessed issue of their persecutions to the time when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels (2 Thess. 1:7); and Timothy was to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 6:14). For it is then that He comes to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that have believed (2 Thess. 1:10); and then, therefore, that there will be the public manifestation of the result and issue of the pathway of the saint through this world. This is the consummation and the fruition of the service of the believer, as well as the time when the rights of the Lord Jesus Himself shall be declared and vindicated, and consequently, in this aspect, we are said to love His appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

But, as we have shown from the Scriptures, the Lord returns for His saints before His appearing; and it is to His coming, therefore, for them that their eye is directed. This is the proper object of our hope. Our hearts occupied with Himself, we wait longingly for the moment when, according to His word, He will come to receive us to Himself, that where He is we may be also (John 14:3). Such, then, is our attitude. As Israel on the Passover night, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, waited for the signal to depart, so we should ever be found, with our loins girt and our lamps burning, expecting the Lord to descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, to fetch us out of this scene, to be forever with Himself. Are we constantly maintaining this attitude? Do we begin the day with the thought that, ere the darkness returns, we may be caught up into the unclouded light of His presence? When we lie down at night, do we remember that ere the morning dawns we may be caught away from our beds? Are all our matters kept so constantly arranged that we should desire to alter nothing, if the next moment we should be with the Lord? Are all our purposes, all our occupations, undertaken and carried on with this wondrous prospect before our eyes? Surely nothing short of this should satisfy those who are living in the expectation of the Lord. May He Himself lead us into all the power of this blessed truth, using it to separate us increasingly from everything not suitable to Himself; and, by the presentation of Himself to us in all His beauty as the bright and morning Star, may He occupy and absorb our hearts!

E. D.

Plain Papers Upon the Lord's Coming: the Hope of the church

We propose, if the Lord will, to treat in successive papers upon the subject of the Lord's coming, with its accompanying and subsequent events. As it is becoming every day more manifest that we are in the midst of the perilous times (2 Tim. 3), it behooves the Lord's people to be increasingly occupied with the expectation of His return. It is now nearly fifty years since the cry was raised, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him" (Matt. 25:6). Up till that time the church had fallen into profound slumber, drugged by the opiate influences of the world, so that the doctrine of the Lord's return for His saints was forgotten, ignored, or denied. But when, through the action of the Spirit of God, this cry went forth, thousands were startled from their sleep, and, trimming their lamps, went forth once again to meet the Bridegroom. For a season they lived daily in the hope of His return; and so mightily did this hope act upon their hearts and lives that it detached them from everything—every association, habit, and practice—unsuitable to Him for whom they waited, and kept them with their loins girt, and their lights burning, as those who were waiting for their Lord (Luke 12:35,36). But time went on; and while the doctrine of the Second Advent has been apprehended and taught by increasing numbers, and while the truth has been undoubtedly the support and consolation of many godly souls, it is yet a question if large numbers of the saints of God have not lost its freshness and power. For is it not patent to all observers, that the standard of separation is becoming lower and lower? that worldliness is on the increase? that saints are permitting themselves associations out of which they have professedly come? that many of us therefore are in danger of once more falling asleep, even with the doctrine of the hope upon our lips?

If this be so—and it is the subject of common remark—the time has come when the truth on this subject needs to be pressed home again upon the hearts and consciences of believers. For the Lord is at hand, and He desires that His people should be on the watchtower, longing and eagerly waiting for His return. Surely therefore it is high time to awake out of sleep, knowing that our salvation is nearer than when we believed, "For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:37). And He Himself has said, "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

We have in these remarks assumed, and now we proceed to prove from the Scriptures, THAT THE COMING OF THE LORD JESUS IS THE DISTINCTIVE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. This might be done from almost every book of the New Testament. We shall cite enough to place the subject beyond a doubt.

First, our Lord Himself prepared His disciples to maintain, after His departure, the expectation of His return. "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over His household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That He shall make him ruler over all His goods" (Matt. 24:45-47). He then proceeds to characterize the evil servant as one who should say, "My

Lord delayeth His coming,” (vs. 48), and indicates the punishment into which such an one should fall. The next two parables—that of the virgins, to which reference has been made, and that of the talents—teach distinctly the same lesson, and the more forcibly from the fact that the virgins who fell asleep, and the servants who received the talents, are the same who are dealt with respectively on the Lord’s return.

The same instruction is found in Mark. “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. [For the Son of Man is] as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore; for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning; lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:33-37).

In the gospel of Luke the same truth is repeated again and again. We have quoted one striking passage. (Luke 12:35-37). Another may be added: “He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, “Occupy till I come” (Luke 19: 12, 13). Then, as in Matthew, we find him coming and examining the servants as to their use of the money entrusted to them (vs. 15).

One scripture from John’s gospel will suffice. The disciples were plunged into sorrow at the prospect of their Lord’s departure from them. How does He meet the state of their souls? He says, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1-3).

The four gospels therefore unite in distinct testimony to the return of the Lord for His people, and in the proclamation that this event constitutes their hope during His absence. We pass now to the Acts and the epistles.

Turning first of all to the Acts, what do we find? After His resurrection, the Lord had appeared to His disciples, “being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (1:3). The time having come for His ascension, He led them out as far as Bethany (Luke 24:50); and when He had ended His instructions, “while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11). Could any language be more precise? or, construed by the circumstances, be more significant? or, we may add, less likely to be misunderstood? They had seen their Lord depart from them. He was taken up, and they watched His receding form until a cloud intercepted Him from their gaze; and while they behold with mute astonishment, they receive the message that the One they had seen depart should return in like manner (and therefore in Person) as they had seen Him go into heaven. The wonder is that with these distinct words the church could have ever lost the hope of the Lord’s return.

The evidence of the epistles is no less clear and decided. "So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming" (revelation, margin) "of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:7). "Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20). "How ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven," (1 Thess. 1:9,10; see also 2:19; 3:13; 4:15-18; 2 Thess. 1:7; 2:1; 3:5). "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28. Also James 5:7,8; 1 Peter 1:7, 13; 2 Peter 3; 1 John 3:2; Rev. 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20).

Although these are only some of the scriptures which might be adduced, it will at once be seen how largely the subject is dealt with in the Word of God; and on examination it will be discovered that this is because it is bound up, interwoven, with the very essence of Christianity. Take away the hope of the Lord's return, and you at once rob Christianity of its true character. It cannot be too strongly asserted, that it is not a doctrine to be accepted or rejected at pleasure, but that it is a part and parcel of the truth itself, connected with the calling and place of the believer, his relationship to Christ, and his future blessedness. Hence indeed Paul reminds the Thessalonians that they were converted to wait for God's Son from heaven; and every believer now is converted for the same thing. To be without this hope and expectation, therefore, is to be ignorant of the believer's portion in Christ.

It follows from this that the normal attitude of every believer is that of waiting for Christ. Nay, more, every one brought upon Christian ground has this characteristic, though he may be all unconscious of it; for the Word says that the ten virgins, five of whom were foolish, took their lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Their profession therefore—even though they had no oil—was that they were waiting for Christ.

Is this then the attitude of the reader? Are you waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus? Is this the one blessed hope that cheers your soul along your lonely pilgrim path? Are your eyes ever fixed upon the Bright and Morning Star? Or are you so absorbed in present things that, like the five foolish virgins, you have grown heavy, and fallen asleep? If, alas! it be so, let the words, "Behold, I come quickly," "Behold the Bridegroom," rouse you from your slumbers, even while there is delay, lest coming suddenly He find you sleeping. Or perhaps you know the truth of His coming. But the question, beloved reader, is, Are you waiting for Christ? To know the doctrine is one thing; but it is quite another to be living hourly and daily in the hope of the Lord's return. If you are waiting, your affections are all centered on Him whom you expect; you are apart from everything which is not according to His mind and will; you are sitting loose to all that nature holds dear; and with a full heart you can respond to His announcement of His speedy coming, "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

E. D.

The Lord's Supper

We should, on divine authority, and in spiritual, scriptural intelligence, hold to it, that the Lord's supper is the due characteristic expression of the Lord's day that which should then be made principal.

If we read Luke 22:7-20, we shall learn that the Passover of the Jews and the supper of the Lord being then exhibited successively—the one after the other—the latter thenceforth was to displace the that forever. The former, with other meanings attached to it, was the foreshadowing of the Great Sacrifice which was in due time to put away sin. The latter is now the celebration of the great fact that that sacrifice has been offered, and that, for faith, sin is put away.

After the Lord's supper therefore is instituted, it is impossible to return to the passover. It would be apostasy—a giving up of God's lamb and of the atonement.

But if the supper has thus displaced the passover, we may then inquire, Is anything to displace it? We may read our answer in 1 Corinthians 11:26, and there learn that the Lord's supper is set as a standing institution in the house of God till the Lord's return. The Holy Ghost, through the apostle, gives it an abiding-place all through this age of the Lord's absence.

I conclude accordingly that we are not to allow anything to displace the supper. It is of our faithfulness to our stewardship of the mysteries of God, to assert the right of that supper to be principal in the assembly of the saints. It has displaced the Passover by the authority of the Lord Himself; but we, on the authority of the Holy Ghost, are not to allow anything to displace it. It is the proper service of the house of God. The Lord's supper is the principal thing for the Lord's day.

This comes out naturally in the progress of the story of Christianity in the New Testament. We read in Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." And again, in 1 Corinthians 11:33, "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another."

If we abandon the supper for a sermon, or for a large congregation, or for any other religious scene or service, we have given up the house of God in its due characteristic and divinely appointed business and worship. So far we are guilty of apostasy. We have not returned, it is true, to the displaced or superseded passover; but we have allowed something or another to displace or supersede what the Holy Ghost has set as principal in the house of God. And were we right-hearted, we would say, "What sermon would be more profitable to us? What singing of a full congregation more sweet in our ears than the voice of that ordinance which tells us so clearly and with such rich harmony of all kinds of music, of the forgiveness of our sins, of the acceptance of our persons, and of our waiting for the Lord from heaven, and all this in blessed and wondrous fellowship with the brightest display of the name and glory of God?"

Yea, the table at which we sit is a family table. In spirit we are in the Father's house. We are made by the table to know ourselves in relationship, and that lies just outside the realm of glory; for "if

children, then heirs.” If we be in the kingdom of God’s dear Son, we are next door to the inheritance (Col. 1). And there the table is maintained until Christ comes again.

J. G. B.

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A Man in Christ

I wish in these papers not so much to dwell on the doctrine of the epistle to the Ephesians, as on the conduct to which this doctrine leads. If the teaching of the epistle unfolds the highest character of Christian standing, its exhortations enforce the highest character of Christian walk. But in the Spirit's teaching these subjects are always combined. The rules laid down for the believer's conduct are drawn from the exposition of the place in which he is set. While therefore we shall look more at the practical than at the doctrinal parts of the epistle, we must ascertain the believer's standing as here revealed, in order to comprehend the nature and motives of the conduct afterward enjoined.

The epistle to the Ephesians, though of course owning Jesus as the eternal Son, looks at Him generally in another character. We read in Philippians 2:6-11 that He, though "in the form of God, thought it not an object of rapine [a thing to be grasped at] to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given 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." Now here we have glory conferred upon Jesus, not in consequence of His being equal with God, but in consequence of His humbling Himself, being found in fashion as a man, and becoming obedient unto death. As God, all dominion and glory were His own; nor could anything be given Him. But as man, He had voluntarily emptied Himself, taking the lowest place, and bowing even to the power of death, in order to carry out God's purposes of grace. God's righteous response, then, to this obedience and devotedness was to exalt Him in the same character in which He had humbled Himself, giving to the man "Jesus" a name at which every knee should bow, and making every tongue to confess that He is Lord.

Now it is in this character that Jesus is generally presented in the epistle to the Ephesians. And this gives occasion to the unfolding of two great mysteries, till then hidden in the counsels of God from before the foundation of the world. The first of these is, that God will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (Chapter 1:10). This is a vast expansion of the Messiah's glories predicted in the Old Testament, and is the dignity which Jesus has acquired by His humiliation—the exalted "name" given Him because of His obedience "unto death, even the death of the cross." The other mystery is, "that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the gospel" (Chapter 3:6). This shows the complete suspension of God's earthly purposes while He is bringing in a new people. In this new people the distinction between Jew and Gentile entirely disappears, and the two are classed together on the same ground. The new people are not an earthly people; for though still in the world, they are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places"—nay, are even made to "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Their distinguishing feature is, that they are seen and accepted "in Christ."

The two mysteries are, then, the counsels of God, first concerning the full glory of the Lord Jesus, and next concerning the blessedness of the people who are thus closely associated with Him. The development of these two mysteries is the great object of the first half of the epistle. Hence it is not the sinner's side of salvation, as in the epistle to the Romans, but God's side, that is brought into prominence. In Romans the sinner is seen in his evil nature, and the cross is brought in for his deliverance. In Ephesians God's eternal purposes are disclosed, and the object of redemption and the blessedness of the redeemed in connection with Christ set forth. The epistle to the Romans starts from man's need to God's grace; the epistle to the Ephesians starts from God's grace to man's need. The one shows how God can be righteous while He justifies and delivers the sinner; the other how the sinner's need gives occasion to the display of God's wisdom and grace. Hence in the Romans the sinner is regarded as alive in the flesh, and death is brought in as the means of his deliverance; while in the Ephesians the sinner is regarded as spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins, and the quickening power of God is shown in raising him out of this state, and setting him in the heavenly places in Christ.

The epistle begins therefore with thanksgivings for the standing which the believer now has in Christ. The question is not how far he comprehends or enjoys the privileges and blessings into which he is brought. In this there may be wide differences; in the privileges and blessings themselves there are none. The babe in Christ is in this respect on an equality with the young man and the father, for both are "in Christ," and have the full blessedness of this standing. All believers are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ;" have been "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before God in love;" have been "predestinated unto the adoption of children by Christ Jesus" unto God, "according to the good pleasure of His will;" and are, therefore, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved" (Chapter 1:3-6). These are the privileges, though the very unequally-enjoyed privileges, of all believers as seen in Christ, just as the foundation on which everything rests, "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God's grace" (vs. 7), is the common portion of all saints. They are not future, but present privileges, and our possession of them arises from our having an acceptance in Him who has perfectly glorified God, and is now—not as the eternal Son of the Father, but in virtue of His work and obedience unto death—the object of God's special delight and love. To speak of our being accepted, or of our being "in Christ," when He is looked at in His divine nature, would be a grave error. But we are accepted, and are, as to our standing, "in Christ," the risen glorified man at God's right hand. In Romans believers are not spoken of as being "in Christ" until the eighth chapter, because there only do we arrive at the true Christian standing. In Ephesians this remarkable expression occurs at the very threshold, because all is here seen according to the counsels of God, and the full standing of the believer is therefore at once set forth.

And now the apostle, having put us in possession of our present privileges "in Christ," goes on to show how God in His grace "hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (vs. 8), disclosing to us His own marvelous purposes concerning Christ. These purposes are not only concerning the earthly glories foretold by the Old Testament prophets, but also concerning the heavenly glories now first made known. Hence they are called a mystery; and we are told that God hath "made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself; that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in

one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth" (vss. 9, 10). The Christ, God's anointed, was always predicted as the One who was to exercise sovereign authority on earth; but that the man Jesus should, by virtue of His obedience and humiliation, have this supreme dignity conferred upon Him in heaven as well as on earth, was a mystery now first revealed. Of course it is not Christ's glory as God that is here spoken of, for that He had always and inalienably; but it is as the risen man, the One in whom we are accepted, that He is thus exalted and glorified. Hence believers have a share in this dominion; for in Him "also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the pure pose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will; that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ" (vss. 11, 12). And not only had the believing Jews, "who first trusted in Christ," this inheritance, but the believing Gentiles had the same; for they also had trusted when they heard the gospel, and after they believed, "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession" (vss. 13, 14).

The possession has been purchased by the cross, but has not yet been fully redeemed, has not yet passed into the hands of the purchaser. Hence Christ is waiting, seated at the Father's right hand, until "the dispensation of the fullness of times," when this gathering together of all things in Himself will take place. We, too, are waiting, often indeed with very feeble faith and hope, but still with no uncertainty as to the result; for God has sealed us with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the pledge or earnest of our title till the time of redemption, when the possession will be entered upon and fully enjoyed.

The subject here is not the believer's blessedness when he goes at death to be with Christ, nor even the richer blessedness he will know when the Lord comes to complete the work of redemption as to him, by giving him a body like His own, and taking him to the Father's house. The redemption spoken of is not the redemption of the believer, but the redemption of the inheritance which the believer will receive together with Christ. The possession spoken of is not the possession of the joys and blessedness of the Father's house, but the possession of that dominion which Christ will take, together with us as His joint-heirs, when all things are gathered together in Him.

Thus we have brought before us, in the opening of the epistle, our present privileges and our future possession "in Christ." The apostle then prays that we may understand these things, and also "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, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come" (vss. 15-21). If our acceptance in the Beloved involves our receiving the same privileges and possessions that He receives, it is brought about through our being quickened by the same power by which He was quickened. We are not only one with Him in our blessings and prospects, but also in our life. The same power was exercised in the same way in quickening us as in quickening Him. God has wrought toward us "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead;" for He "hath quickened us together with Christ" (Chapter 2:4, 5). He has also wrought according to the power which has set Christ "at His own right hand in the heavenly places;" for He "hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (vs. 6).

All this is most beautiful. We, poor helpless sinners, had no spiritual life whatever; “were dead in trespasses and sins.” Jesus in grace put Himself in our stead under God’s judgment, and died “the just for the unjust.” Thus we are fully delivered—not only freed from the righteous judgment of God, but, as shown in the Romans, “dead with Christ,” “crucified with Him,” our old sinful nature regarded as dead and buried with Him. The epistle to the Ephesians begins at this point of our history. It takes Christ up in death, and shows how God’s power “raised Him from the dead;” it takes us up as “dead in trespasses and sins,” and shows how the same power which raised Christ has quickened us. Thus in Romans we are delivered from the old nature by the cross of Christ; in Ephesians we are quickened in the new nature together with Christ. And this is something much more than new birth. It is a new birth, or a new life, of a peculiar character, conferred by the same power which raised Christ from the dead, so that we are not only quickened with Him, but are identified with Him—the risen and glorified One at God’s right hand. And so close is this identification, that, though still on earth, we are even now spoken of as seated together “in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”

The closing words of the first chapter show the character of this identification in a very striking way. There we are told, concerning Christ, that God “hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (vss. 22, 23). This is the first time the church is named in the epistle, and a most marvelous revelation it is as to its character. From it we learn that when Christ takes the dominion over all things, according to God’s purpose, He will take it, not alone, but in conjunction with the church. It is not Christ that will reign merely, but Christ and the church; the church being so inseparably united with Him that it is said to be His “fullness” or completion—as much one with Himself as the body is one with the head. Hence Christ is not complete, in the character in which He will take the headship over all things, until the church, His body, is complete also. Until the last member has been added, Christ waits; for until then His body has not received its “fullness,” and the Head cannot take the dominion apart from the whole body.

It is perhaps unnecessary to repeat, though most important to remember, that this union, with all its blessed consequences, is not with Christ as the eternal Son, the Word who “was God,” but with Christ as the risen glorified Man. As God, there could be no union with Him. Nor again, as born into this world, could we be united with Him, or He with us. Until the corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and died, it must abide alone; but having died, it could bring forth much fruit. In His sinless life He was the spotless and obedient One, the revealer of the Father, but alone. In the death in which “He was made sin,” He was our Substitute and Savior; but there too He was all alone. In resurrection He became the head of a new creation, and it is by new creation that we are now “in Him;” for “if any man be in Christ, it is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). Union with Christ is always spoken of in this connection: “He is the Head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead” (Col. 1:18). It is after He has been on the “horns of the unicorns” that He says, “I will declare thy name unto My brethren” (Psa. 22:21,22; Heb. 2:9-12). Not till after His resurrection does He use the words, “Go to My brethren,” or associate the disciples with Himself by speaking of “My Father, and your Father; My God, and your God” (John 20:17). So, too, it is by our being conformed to the image of the risen One that He becomes “the first-born among many brethren” (Rom. 8:29).

Such then is God's grace towards us, who were once walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air.... fulfilling the desires of the flesh.... children of wrath" (Eph. 2:2,3). Grace has delivered us from this lost state, quickened us together with Christ, made us members of His body, given us His own acceptance before God, and associated us as fellow-heirs in His universal dominion. Surely this is worthy of God! He has thus wrought for His own glory, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (vs. 7). All is of grace. Works can have no place here, nor the boastings of man. But is God indifferent to good works? Nay; "for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (vss. 8-10). As to our standing, good works have no place; for we are God's workmanship. But this very fact demands that good works should follow as a result. We are not created by good works, but we are created unto them.

T. B. B.

A Man in Christ

In our last paper we saw the privileges of the believer as associated with the risen Christ in new life, in present blessing, and in future dominion and glory. This is the portion of the individual Christian; and in the scriptures then before us only a brief, though very blessed, reference was made to the character of the church. The part we now come to is, however, more concerned with the church than with the individual Christian. In the passage already looked at, the church was shown as the body of Christ— "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." But the passage we are now to examine regards it in another aspect, bringing out its exceptional nature, its wide departure from all God's previously pursued or previously announced plans. In former times God had called a people into special relationship with Himself. This people was "the commonwealth of Israel," and to it belonged the knowledge of God, the birth of the Messiah, the covenants of promise, and the outward mark of circumcision. In Old Testament history, they had been His favored, though rebellious, people. In Old Testament prophecies, they were the center of all His dealings. The glories of the Messiah were to be displayed in their midst, and no promise of blessing was made to the Gentiles save through them.

But God was now performing a work entirely distinct from anything recorded in Old Testament narrative, or predicted in Old Testament prophecies. The apostle therefore calls upon the Ephesian believers, who were of Gentile origin, to remember that they had no title such as the Jews might claim, not having one of those marks, which the Jews possessed, of relationship with God. They had been "in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands." Moreover, they were at that time "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Chapter 2:11,12). But though the Gentiles had no title founded on covenant, promise, or national connection, God was now bringing them in by His own sovereign grace. The Jews, who had a direct interest in the Messiah, had rejected Him and shed His blood. This had caused them, as a nation, to be set aside, and had ended, until their restoration, all those purposes to which the covenants and promises referred. God had therefore turned, as it were, to another object. "The blood of Christ," which caused the national rejection of the Jews, was made the means of bringing people nigh. But in this sovereign

and wonderful action of grace, God was no longer confined within the channels traced out by prophecy. All the prophetic blessings were postponed, because the nation in whom they centered was rejected. A new class of blessings, richer, higher, and with no restriction of nation or class, was thus brought in.

Hence the apostle says, "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (vs. 13). Thus Gentile believers were brought nigh by that very blood, the shedding of which caused the rejection of the Jews and the postponement of their national blessings. And not only was the blessing entirely different from what they as Gentiles could have enjoyed, if the covenants of promise to Israel had then been fulfilled. It was of a far higher order than even the Jew Himself could have enjoyed under those covenants. For these Gentiles were now brought nigh "in Christ Jesus," which is a standing never spoken of in Old Testament prophecy. In this wondrous place the believing Jew and the believing Gentile were blended together, all earthly distinctions disappearing in the new character of blessing, into which both were now introduced. Christ not only had made peace for them, but was their peace, and had "made both one," having "broken down the middle wall of partition," and "having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in Himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (vss. 14, 15).

This passage conclusively shows that Christianity is not the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, but something brought in while this awaits its fulfillment. In the fulfillment of the prophecies, the Jew will receive the place of pre-eminence which the covenants of promise assign him, and his blessings will be of a national character. The blessings here named are not national, but individual, and require the setting aside of all national distinctions for their accomplishment. Moreover, the passage speaks of both Jew and Gentile being made in Christ into "one new man." Understood literally, this could have no meaning; but understood figuratively, its sense is at once clear and beautiful. The church is the body of Christ; and the church and Christ are the "one new man" here spoken of. Language such as this is wholly foreign to the old prophets. It implies a nearness of relationship which the Old Testament never contemplates, and which indeed would be entirely inconsistent with the character in which the Messiah will be known by His earthly people.

But this nearness of relationship is the blessed portion of the believer, without distinction of Jew or Gentile; for Christ's object was, "that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (vs. 16). The cross has not only obtained for us forgiveness of sins. It has ended up our standing in the flesh. As "dead with Christ," earthly and fleshly distinctions cease; and in the new creation, that is, in Christ Himself, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, circumcision nor uncircumcision. By the cross we are dead, and the enmities of the flesh are slain with us. Thus both Jew and Gentile are reconciled "unto God in one body." This body is, of course, the body of Christ, the church, which stands therefore entirely outside all earthly distinctions or covenant relationships. Hence peace can now be preached alike, says the apostle, "to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (vs. 17); for those that were nigh having forfeited their claim, and those that were afar off never having had any claim, both are now dealt with on the same footing of sovereign grace. They are brought, not into the position which as a nation the Jews had lost by their rejection of the Christ, but into an entirely new position; "for through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (vs. 18). Jehovah is the name and character in which Israel will yet know God. But under the new order of things introduced by grace,

the believer, whether Jew or Gentile, knows God as Father.

(To be continued)

T. B. B.

A Man in Christ

The result is that old distinctions altogether vanish. "Now therefore ye" (the Gentile believers) "are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints" (that is, believers generally, whether Jewish or Gentile) "and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone" (vss. 19, 20). Both Jewish and Gentile believers are transplanted from their old ground and placed in entirely different soil. They are "fellow-citizens," but not of an earthly country; for "our citizenship is in heaven." They are of the "household of God"—a closer relationship than the Jew will enjoy when his national blessings reach their highest point. They are built into a new and wonderful structure, of which "Jesus Christ Himself" is the chief corner-stone, and "the apostles and prophets" the foundation course.

In the next chapter we read that the mystery of the church was in other ages "not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit" (Chapter 3:5). This shows that the prophets here spoken of in connection with the apostles were not the Old Testament prophets. In the times of the Old Testament prophets the mystery was not made known. To the prophets here named, as well as to the apostles, the mystery was made known. In this epistle "prophets" are only named three times, and each time in connection with apostles." Both apostles and prophets are spoken of as gifts of an ascended Christ. The prophets therefore here mentioned as forming part of the foundation on which we are built are not the Old Testament prophets, but the prophets to whom this mystery was now first imparted.

But the figure of our oneness with Christ is still strikingly continued; for after speaking of Him as "the chief corner-stone," the Spirit adds, "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (vss. 21-22). Strictly speaking, it is not correct to say that a building grows, or that the various materials added are built together, in the cornerstone. But this very departure from strict accuracy only shows with greater vividness the prominence in which the Spirit seeks to set the thought of our standing "in Christ." In another epistle Paul writes, that "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. 41:12). Here the church is the body, and Christ is the head; but the two are looked upon as so identified that the body itself, as well as the head, is spoken of as "Christ." It is the same blending together of Christ and the church that we find in the passage before us. Christ is the corner-stone, and believers are the rest of the building; but so bound up are they with each other that the whole is spoken of as in Him, and is said to be builded together in Him "for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

This is God's building, consisting only of real believers, who are built together in Christ, and form, as thus constructed, a suitable dwelling-place for Himself. It must be carefully distinguished from the building raised by man on the same foundation—a building in which all sorts of worthless material are brought in, and which will therefore be tried by fire. A confusion between these two

buildings has been the source of very much and very lamentable error.

Thus we have two remarkable figures of the church, in both of which its oneness with Christ is very strikingly set forth. Considered as a body, it is the body of Christ—a thing necessary, as it were, to His own completeness. Considered as a temple, a dwelling-place for God, it is “builded together” in Christ, He Himself being the chief cornerstone, all believers being reared upon this foundation, and the whole growing up to completeness in Him.

To Paul was specially entrusted this truth concerning the new thing which God was bringing in. For this cause he was a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles, having had given to him “a dispensation of the grace of God” towards them. He had received “by revelation” a mystery—or secret purpose of God—not disclosed in past times, “that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel” (Chapter 3:1-6). That the Gentiles should be “fellow-heirs” with the Jews was a new thing, not only in fact, but in the revealed purposes of God. Still more marvelous was it that they should be “of the same body;” for this was something which neither Jew nor Gentile had ever heard of. They were made “fellow-heirs” with each other by being made fellow-heirs with Christ; they were made “of the same body” with each other by being made members of the body of Christ. It was thus that the Gentiles became “partakers of God’s promise in Christ by the gospel.” According to covenants and prophecy, Christ was the special hope of Israel. But the promises of blessing in Christ went far beyond Israel, and were wide enough to embrace God’s present work, in which Jew and Gentile are blended together, as well as that work to which the covenants and prophecies of the Old Testament look forward.

Paul therefore had before him two objects. As a servant of the gospel he had “this grace given,” to “preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (vss. 7, 8). And as the one to whom the mystery was revealed, he was “to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (vss. 9-11). This is a wonderful passage. God, as creator of all things, had shown His wisdom. But there was a still more marvelous display which this wisdom was to receive, a display contemplated in God’s counsels from all eternity, but now first brought to light. When all His earthly purposes seemed to be frustrated, when Satan seemed to have succeeded, God’s manifold wisdom displays itself by turning this very apparent defeat into the crowning victory of His grace. The great seeming triumph which Satan achieved at the cross, the temporary setting aside of all the revealed purposes of blessing and glory through Christ, only gave occasion for God to put a higher glory on Christ, and to introduce a richer and more unrestricted blessing than any before revealed. Thus the manifold character of God’s wisdom shows itself, and not only to men, but to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. “The morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy” when they beheld His wisdom in creating the world; but they see its manifold nature and its brightest display in His ways concerning the church.

This leads the apostle to a very remarkable prayer, which closes the third chapter. In the prayer which concludes the first chapter, Christ is looked upon as man, as the One who was raised from the dead. The prayer is, therefore, addressed to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ.” In the prayer

of the third chapter, the subject is not our standing in Christ, but Christ dwelling in our hearts. Christ is looked upon, not as the man raised from the dead, but as the One who accomplishes the purposes of God, and manifests His love. It is more as the Son revealing the Father, than as the man glorifying God and glorified by Him, that He is here presented before us. The prayer is therefore addressed, not to “the God,” but to “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (vs. 14). While the earlier prayer, moreover, is, that we may understand God’s purposes and power, this carries us into a still higher region. The apostle prays that we may, according to the riches of God’s glory, “be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled to all the fullness of God” (vss. 16-19).

Here we have the indwelling of the Holy Ghost as the source of strength, and that “according to the riches of God’s glory;” Christ taking His abode in our hearts by faith; the soul, “rooted and grounded in love,” able to enter into the vastness of God’s ways; “the breadth, and length, and depth, and height” of those purposes which His grace has formed for His own glory, as well as for our blessing; and, finally, ourselves taught to know, not indeed in its extent—for in this it passes knowledge—but in its nature, the wondrous love of Christ Himself, that we may “be filled to all the fullness of God.” This last expression is beautiful in its very indefiniteness. That we can be filled to God’s fullness is, of course, impossible; but this is, as it were, the measure in which God is willing to supply, and the only limit of the Holy Ghost’s desire for us. Full as we may be, there is still infinitely more beyond; so that there is no limit to what is placed at our command.

And then, after bringing out all God’s wonderful purposes, His power and His grace; after showing His manifold wisdom, as displayed in the church, the apostle concludes by an outburst of praise to Him. “Now,” he says, “unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (vss. 20, 21). It is surely meet that He who has displayed His wisdom and grace in calling the church should throughout eternity derive glory from it. Such is the apostle’s desire, and such should be the desire of every believer brought into this marvelous place. It will be fulfilled in the ages to come; but just in proportion as our hearts enter into the spirit of this prayer will it be their desire that, as far as may be, it should be fulfilled now.

(Continued from page 153)

T. B. B.

A Man in Christ

We have seen in the first three chapters of the epistle the believer’s standing in Christ, and God’s thoughts about the church. The practical teaching which follows is divided into four classes, according to the believer’s relationship with the church (ch. 4:1-16), the world (4:17-5: 21), the family (5:21-6:9), and the powers of darkness (6:10-17). We shall see how, in each of these positions, the rule of conduct given him corresponds with his standing as shown in the earlier part of the epistle.

The apostle describes himself as a “prisoner in the Lord.” This is an interesting circumstance, and throws much light on the Lord’s present ways. Although, as Peter told the Jews, “God hath made

that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," yet His lordship is so far from being recognized by the world that His most faithful servant and ambassador is now a prisoner in the hands of the world's ruling power. This could not have been if the kingdom in its proper or prophetic form had been established. In that day Christ will cast out His enemies, and exalt His faithful followers. Now, however, tribulation and rejection are the portion which God's people are told to expect. This does not at all interfere with the lordship of Christ. David was as much God's anointed king when he hid in the cave of Adullam as when he reigned on the throne in Zion; but in the one case his dignity was discerned only by faith, in the other by sight. So with the great Antitype. Christ's lordship exists now as much as it will when He comes to reign over the earth. But it is now only seen by the eye of faith; and the world may go on despising Him and rejecting His people without calling down immediate judgment. Jesus has taken in grace the position of a dependent and obedient man; and He retains His position as man, though glorified at the right hand of God. He waits till the world shall be given Him by His Father. Till then, vengeance belongeth unto God, and Jesus, like David, leaves His case in God's hands. His followers are called upon to share His patience and rejection; and hence the foremost apostle is now nothing in the eyes of the world but an obscure prisoner in a Roman jail.

He begins his exhortation in the fourth chapter with the word "therefore." This word really resumes the sentence commenced in the first verse of the third chapter, and interrupted by the long and wonderful parenthesis of which that chapter consists. It refers, therefore, to what has been said before in chapter 2, that is, to the calling of the Gentiles and Jews into one "new man," the breaking down of the middle wall of partition between them, and the building of them both into "an holy temple in the Lord," of which Jesus Christ Himself was the chief corner-stone, the apostles and prophets the foundation course, and believers the materials, "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." And this call was from a condition of deadness in trespasses and sins, a state of distance and alienation from God, to which no promises and no covenant relationships attached; so that all was of simple grace, the believer having no claim to any portion of the blessing he receives in Christ.

Such, then, being the character of the saints' standing, the apostle beseeches them "that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Chapter 4:1). But what walk is worthy of a vocation in which all is of simple grace? The most humbling thing in the world is the reception of boundless and undeserved favor; and the first point therefore which the Spirit urges on believers as worthy of their calling is that they should walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." (vs. 2) Nothing is more becoming in a believer than "lowliness and meekness," but perhaps there is nothing more misunderstood. In too many instances these beautiful Christian graces are transformed, through the craft of Satan, into doubts dishonoring to God and destructive of the believer's peace. Now God never calls it lowliness and meekness to doubt the truth of His word, or the efficacy of Christ's work. On the contrary, He counts it pride and presumption. The simple childlike faith which bows to the word He has spoken, which says, "Let God be true, but every man a liar," alone pleases and honors Him. Abraham was commended, not because he questioned God's truth, but because he trusted it, and even "against hope believed in hope;" not because he doubted whether God would fulfill His word, but because he was "fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." And what was the effect? Did it puff him up? Just the contrary. Because he was "strong in faith" he gave "glory to

God.” The very fact that there was no power in himself only magnified God’s grace. And so it must be with the believer. The more fully we lay hold of what grace has done for us, the more completely are we abased in God’s presence. That we, sinners and enemies, should be chosen by God to be fellow-heirs with Christ, should be predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, can, if really apprehended by faith, only fill us with wonder and praise. Where is the room for boasting when all is so clearly of God? None are so meek and lowly as the crowned elders who fall down and worship in heaven; and the larger our grasp of God’s purposes towards us, the deeper our lowliness and meekness will be. So far, then, from being founded on doubts as to the blessings we have received, these graces are the proper fruits of faith, and are always proportioned to the degree in which the blessings are apprehended by the soul.

There is, however, another mistake on which we would touch while speaking of lowliness and meekness. If it is not true lowliness, but Satan’s counterfeit of lowliness, to doubt our standing in Christ, neither is it true lowliness for one to shrink from taking the place, or exercising the gift, which God has bestowed upon him in the church. There is a time to speak as well as a time to be silent; and while nothing is more unbecoming than that forwardness and ostentation of gift which seems to have brought disorder into the meetings of the assembly at Corinth; yet, on the other hand, it is quite possible to quench the Spirit, and thus hinder blessing, under the false impression that silence is a display of lowliness and meekness. If God has bestowed a gift, He means it to be used; and to plead lowliness and meekness as a reason for not using it is merely to cloak our unfaithfulness under a pretentious name. So as to prayer, or the giving out of a hymn, if anyone has it laid on his heart by the Spirit thus to take part in an assembly, is it lowliness and meekness to remain silent? Is it not rather the vanity that shrinks from the criticism of others, or seeks their applause by a feigned modesty? No doubt there is need of spiritual discernment as to when and how to take part; but this will be given where it is sought. It was becoming in Barnabas, when traveling with a more gifted brother, to let Paul be the chief speaker. But would it have been becoming in Paul to decline exercising the gift which he had received, on the plea of showing “all lowliness and meekness” in the presence of Barnabas, who was his elder? It was becoming in Elihu to stand aside in the colloquy between Job and his old friends; but would it have been becoming in him, when they had failed to convince Job, and when the truth was taught him by the Spirit, to remain silent and refuse to utter it? These, no doubt, are very far from ordinary examples, but they serve to show the difference between true lowliness and meekness, and that which, though so easily mistaken for it, is in fact nothing more than the indulgence of the sloth or timidity of the natural heart in opposition to the leadings of the Spirit of God.

“Lowliness and meekness,” then, are the first things pressed upon us by the Spirit of God as worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. But closely associated with these, and indeed necessarily flowing out of them, are other graces mentioned in the same verse “long-suffering, forbearing one another in love.” The man who is prompt to resent injuries and assert rights is the man who has a high opinion of himself. If he sees himself in the nothingness to which grace reduces him, patience under injury, and forbearance towards those who have wronged him, will be the result. But still more will this be the case with those with whom he is made one in Christ. How can the man who is conscious of the grace that has remitted the ten thousand talents seize his brother by the throat and claim the hundred pence due to himself? If there is any sense of the love with which we are loved, and loved in spite of our coldness and deadness, our ingratitude and

provocations—if there is any apprehension of the grace which bought us, and which still bears with us in all our perverseness and folly—long-suffering will be a comparatively easy thing, and forbearance in love will commend itself as suited to the state of one whose own failures and sins are continually calling for the forbearing love of our blessed Lord.

The key to the whole verse is “love.” This is the nature of God Himself, and grace, which is the form love takes when directed towards sinners, is just the very thing which the Son manifested when He came to reveal the Father. For “the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). The long-suffering and forbearance here spoken of are not the results of a naturally placable and generous disposition, nor of the training which reason and philosophy may give. They have a higher source. They are the outflow of divine love, dwelling in the heart, and shaping the ways in conformity with the mind and walk of the blessed Lord. In Him alone we see all these graces perfectly displayed. Unwearied in devotion, whether to God or to man, “having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” How beautifully, too, does the same appear in the ways of His servant who, in writing to the Corinthians, could say, “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.”

Yet here again, Satan has been busy in setting up an imitation of Christian love which is too easily accepted for the original. To talk of Christian love while there is allowance of evil is to suppose Christian love in which Christ is dishonored. Forbearance and forgiveness towards those who commit evil is surely a very different thing from connivance at the evil itself. Where did love manifest itself in forgiveness so marvelously as at the cross? and where was God’s intolerance of evil so fearfully displayed? The blessed Lord’s present dealings with us are expressly for the purpose of cleansing us from defilement by the washing of water; for He cannot endure that the least stain should rest upon His beloved people. So, too, the Father’s chastening is directed just to this point, “that we might be partakers of His holiness.” Under the Levitical economy an Israelite was told, “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him” (Lev. 19:17). So, too, if one believer has been injured by another, he is to go to him and “tell him his fault,” not with a view of getting redress for himself, but because “if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” In extreme cases, the discipline of the church must be called into action, and the offender put out as a “wicked person;” but even here the motive is love, and the object to be sought is, “that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5).

Nothing therefore can be less in accordance with the love here spoken of than that sort of good fellowship with believers which refuses to disturb their conscience when they are acting in a way to dishonor the Lord. True Christian love must give Christ the first place, and where the fellowship of believers is preferred to the honor of Christ, the “love in the Spirit” spoken of by the apostle has really been surrendered to the instincts of natural affection. On the other hand, if we are called to show the Lord’s faithfulness in dealing with evil, we are called to show His gentleness too. How many a rebuke has missed its point altogether, because the manner in which it was delivered savored rather of the natural legality of the human heart than of the tenderness of Christ. May we be much in His own presence, that His ways may be more perfectly reflected in our walk. This is the only transforming power. Just so far as we are “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are” we “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit

of the Lord.”

T. B. B.

A Man in Christ: Endeavoring to Keep the Unity of the Spirit

The believer is, as we have seen, entreated to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called.” Owing everything to grace, and nothing to self, “lowliness and meekness” are obviously becoming, and these are therefore the first qualities he is exhorted to display. Long-suffering and forbearance in love, as the close, and indeed inseparable companions of lowliness and meekness, are also enjoined along with them. These characteristics should under all circumstances distinguish one who is saved by grace, and we shall see how their manifestation is urged in each of the various positions in which the believer is looked upon in this epistle. In none, however, are they more important than in that relationship which takes the first place in the practical exhortations here given; for nowhere does the working of self-will and self-assertion produce such disastrous consequences as in the assembly of God.

We are called through grace into oneness with Christ, as members of His body; and into oneness with each other, as united in Him. If, then, we would walk worthy of our vocation, we must, in accordance with the next practical exhortation, be “endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (vs. 3). How closely this is connected with lowliness and meekness, how constantly it calls for the exercise of long-suffering and forbearance, is too evident to need further remark. If self is made much of, the unity of the Spirit cannot be preserved. It is only as self is dropped out of sight, and Christ becomes the prominent object before the eye, that this exhortation can be followed. But as the church-relationship is the first here taken up in the practical portion of the epistle, and as this exhortation is the first given with reference to the church, it is clear that it demands an especially close and careful examination.

The preservation of unity is obviously the point which the Holy Ghost is here pressing, and the importance attached to it is somewhat intensified by the word which is translated “bond,” but which should rather be rendered “the uniting bond.” The believer is not told to keep the unity of the body, or even the unity of the Spirit, but to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. The word “keep,” however, is here used in the sense of watching over or caring for, rather than in the absolute sense of maintaining. This latter is clearly beyond man’s power, and can be done by God only. Thanks be to His name, it is safe in His keeping; and however grievously man may have failed in His responsibility, the unity of the body and of the Spirit cannot really be broken. What, then, is the meaning of the exhortation here addressed to the believer? It is manifestly not to maintain that which can be maintained by God only; and yet it is manifestly something after which the believer is to strive. The unity of the Spirit exists, and can never cease to exist; but it may cease to be held, guarded, and watched over by us. It is to this, then, that the exhortation of the apostle is directed.

But how is this to be accomplished? Most Protestants say that the unity here spoken of is an invisible unity in Christ, and that it is quite consistent with sectarian divisions; though believers thus outwardly separated, being really one, should cultivate peace towards each other. This interpretation, however, makes peace the object, and leaves oneness, as a thing which we are to strive after, entirely out of account. Now we are not told to endeavor to keep the bond of peace,

but to endeavor to keep “the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The unity of the Spirit is what we are to endeavor to keep, and the bond of peace is the means to be employed. The Holy Ghost does not press that peace should be kept amidst divisions, but that oneness should be kept by peace. How, then, can this oneness be the invisible oneness which exists in Christ? How could believers be told to endeavor to keep that which is solely in God’s keeping? They might as well be told to endeavor to keep the earth revolving on its axis. If they are exhorted to do something, it is because there is something for them to do. And what there is for them to do here is quite plain. Being called into the unity of the Spirit, they are to watch and guard it, to endeavor to keep it in the bond of peace. It is not an invisible unity which they can neither keep nor lose, but something which can be kept or lost according to their watchfulness or negligence. The preservation of this outward unity is to be the object of striving and effort.

If this be so, it is clear that the present divided condition of the church is not according to the mind of the Spirit. It may be well, however, to look at some other scriptures bearing on this subject. In John 17 we find that, whether our Lord was praying for the disciples then with Him, or whether He enlarges the sphere to the whole of those who should believe on Him through their word, in both cases the first petition that He presents concerning them is for their oneness. In verse 21 He prays, “That they all,” that is all believers, “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.” Here, then, the special object for which the Lord desires this oneness is that it may be a testimony to the world. No invisible unity can be this. The world can receive no evidence but that presented to it, and unless the oneness of believers is a thing discernible by the world, the testimony here spoken of is not given. The church indeed was not formed when these words were uttered, but they were uttered in full view of the fact that the church was soon to be formed; and the formation of the church could not dissolve, but rather cement and define the oneness here spoken of. In 1 Corinthians 12:12,13, we read that “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. For 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.” This is clearly the same unity spoken of in Ephesians (church unity), the whole being one with and in Christ. It cannot be said that the unity here named is merely spiritual, and that nothing is said about its practical manifestation to the world; for the very same chapter declares that “God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked, that there should be no schism, [or division] in the body” (vss. 24, 25).

Other parts of the same epistle bring out the same truth with even greater clearness. Thus in chapter 10:17, which speaks of the Lord’s Supper, we find that the reason for our all partaking of one loaf is that our oneness in Christ may be signified. “For we being many are one bread [that is one loaf], one body: for we are all partakers of that one loaf.”

In the first chapter we find divisions denounced in the most solemn and energetic way. The apostle beseeches the believers to “speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions [or schisms] among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or

were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (vss. 10-13) Now what do we find here? Just the same thing as in modern Christendom. Different sects had already begun to exist in principle, different human teachers or schools of theology to be regarded as rallying-points. True, they had not yet gone the length of separating from one another, and they still, as to outward form, recognized no center of gathering but Christ. But what does the apostle say about it? He asks, "Is Christ divided?" These words can have but one meaning. They show that the division of Christians into different schools or sects, even in the mild form which it had then assumed, was a contradiction of the oneness of the church as the body of Christ. To set up Paul as a rallying-point was like saying that Paul, rather than Christ, had been crucified for them.

If they used Paul's name as a party cry, they should, in consistency, be baptized in Paul's name too. Every Christian must be shocked at the thought of Christ being divided, of Paul being crucified for him, or of being baptized in the name of Paul. But the Holy Ghost declares that the divisions of the Corinthians are just as shocking as these suggestions; nay, that nothing but the truth of these suggestions could justify their divisions. Surely a more emphatic condemnation of sects, even in the mildest and least offensive form, it would be difficult to conceive.

But the powers of the human mind are illimitable in escaping unpleasant conclusions. Thus it has been urged that though the divisions of the Corinthians were doubtless wrong, what the apostle condemns was not the divisions themselves, but the spirit in which they were carried out; that the rival schools were probably very bitter, and that it was this bitterness which the apostle censures; whereas modern sects are so loving and amiable, that had he lived in our days he would have commended their spirit, and sanctioned their separate organizations. Now, nothing is more dangerous than seeking to blunt the edge of Scripture so as to escape the wound to our own consciences. The apostle does not say, "I beseech you that ye all speak different things in a friendly way;" but he does say, "I beseech you that ye all speak the same thing." He does not say, "Let the divisions among you be amiably conducted;" but he does say, "Let there be no divisions among you." He does not say, "Let there be peace among those of different minds and of different judgments;" but he does say, "Be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

"Oh, but," it is objected, "these persons were all in one assembly, and of course their divisions were wrong! But this is quite different from the state of things now." No doubt it is different; but when the apostle blames them for saying, "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos," does he mean that the followers of Paul ought to form one sect, and have one sort of meeting, and the followers of Apollos to form another sect, and have another sort of meeting? When he says, "Is Christ divided?" does he mean that the evil ought to be cured by believers widening their divisions, and splitting into different denominations? Surely such reasoning is trifling with Scripture! And is it not a solemn thing to see believers willing to trifle with God's Word for the sake of hiding from their gaze the evidence of the ruin which stares them in the face. The Pharisees boasted while they were groaning under the Roman yoke: "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33). But would they not have been wiser if they had owned their ruined condition, and searched into its cause? Is it not the same with modern believers? Surely it would be better to bow to God's Word instead of seeking to torture it into sanctioning the church's failure!

Who can, without stifling his own conscience, maintain that the state of things reproved by Paul at Corinth was wrong, and that the state of things now prevailing around us is right? If the apostle says to the Corinthians, "Ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" if he asks, "While one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" is it not self-evident that he would have regarded those who are now divided into all sorts of sectarian combinations as carnal too? No doubt this is deeply humbling. It is far pleasanter to be flattering ourselves that we are "rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," than to be owning that we are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." But if this is our real condition, what do we gain by concealing it? We gain nothing, and we lose everything. In the things of God, to judge ourselves is the sure precursor of blessing. If once the conscience is brought into exercise about our state, whether individually or collectively, we are on the way to discover God's mode of deliverance. Among the Jews of old, as among ourselves now, the most fatal thing is that slothful acquiescence in the confusion and ruin around us; that readiness to accept present ease, and to drift on with the current of the day, which at once closes the heart against the entrance of God's truth, and shuts out self-judgment on account of our own failure. We are quick enough in detecting the folly and fatal results of this conduct among the Jews. How little we often suspect the same blindness among ourselves!

T. B. B.

A Man in Christ: Endeavoring to Keep the Unity of the Spirit

The apostle goes on to enlarge on this subject of "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He gives as a reason for this effort the various unities into which we are brought. These may be divided into three classes, comprising, as it were, three concentric, but not co-extensive, circles. "There is," he says, "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Here we have the innermost circle, consisting only of true believers, those who are really members of the body of Christ, really sealed by the Spirit, and really possessed of the hope of God's calling as unfolded in the first chapter. Besides this, however, the believer is brought into another circle, including, but far overlapping, the first, the circle of outward profession and privilege, the circle which owns the "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." All Christendom owns, however little it may submit to, the lordship of Christ, and the authority and truth of, "the faith," while by far the greater part of Christendom is baptized. There is yet another circle, with wider circumference still, presented to us in the words, "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all." Here we have the whole race included, God being the common Father, in the same sense in which Paul elsewhere quotes the Greek poet as saying, "We are also His offspring" (Acts 17:28). As such He is "above all," and His providence ranges "through all," but it can only be said of believers that He is "us all;" hence in this case only do we find in some of the best texts that the word "us" is introduced.

But why is this sevenfold oneness here urged? As a reason for "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." "There is one body;" what more unseemly, then, than the divisions by which the unity established by God is obscured and practically denied? There is "one Spirit;" why, then, the endless diversities of judgment, of practice, of order, of doctrine, indicating the multiform action of man's thoughts rather than the operation of the one Spirit here spoken of? There is "one hope of our calling;" whence, then, the conflicting ways and purposes of men who

should all be marching to the same goal? There is “one Lord;” how shocking; then, the setting up of every species of human rule, dividing those who own His lordship into different camps, each under a government of man’s invention. There is “one faith;” alas! what a multitude of faiths and creeds, confessions and professions, have sprung up to hide and choke that one “faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” There is “one baptism;” how sad, then, that those who profess to be “buried with Christ” should be splitting into sects and divisions which show that they are “carnal, and walk as men.” Lastly, there is “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all;” how bitter a satire, then, on the faithfulness of the church, that even believers, who know this Father, should exhibit, not the reflection of divine order and oneness, but the picture of confusion and division which we see around us in Christendom.

But if sects are thus a denial of God’s teaching concerning the church, what are believers to do? The only organization which claims catholicity is so evidently corrupt that its pretensions to be the one church need scarcely be discussed. Evangelical believers, admitting the practical evils, though denying the unscriptural character, of the divisions in the church, have sought to mitigate them by various devices for friendly co-operation among the sects. Of the kindly feeling thus evinced, and the sincere expressions of brotherly love thus called forth, we would certainly not speak in slighting terms. But a false diagnosis necessarily leads to false treatment. The disease is not the ill-feeling existing among the sects, but the sects themselves; and this disease is neither removed nor altered in character by the occasional “exchange of pulpits,” united prayer-meetings or communions, joint committees and societies for common objects, by which modern evangelical Christians so earnestly seek to promote religious fellowship and good feeling. We have seen that sects are condemned altogether, and no mere rubbing off of their angles will therefore restore the order enjoined in God’s word: “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” A mortified limb may exhibit certain superficial wounds; but the most careful dressing of these will not obviate the necessity for amputation. Excision of sects, not removal of a few of their worst features, is what is needed to revert to God’s order.

But here the question necessarily arises, Is this possible? Granted that the unity ought never to have been broken, surely it cannot now be regained? This is quite true; and the Holy Ghost does not therefore exhort believers to keep it, but to endeavor to keep it. Each person is responsible to do all in his power; and though, when ruin has come in, he cannot reconstruct, he can at all events revert to the principle on which the unity was founded. The passage already quoted from 1 Corinthians 1 shows us how the departure took place, and therefore gives some indication of the way of return. What, then, was the manner in which the ruin commenced? By the believers in Corinth setting up party names and rallying-points. It is clear, therefore, that the first step back towards the original ground is the abandonment of all party names and rallying-points. We are told to gather to “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;” and are assured by Himself that those thus gathered have His presence in their midst.

It is possible however, as this passage proves, to use the name of Christ as a party name; and no distinction in guilt is made between those who thus used the name of Christ, and those who thus used the name of Paul and Apollos. It is not enough, therefore, merely to renounce all other names, and to meet in the name of Christ only. What, then, is required besides? The apostle exhorts the Corinthians not only to have no party names, but all to “speak the same thing,” and to “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” Man cries at once that

this is impossible; and if man's mind and man's judgment are allowed, undoubtedly it is. But surely it is a solemn position to take, thus to challenge God's Word, and to charge the Holy Ghost with urging impossibilities. Where, then, is the solution of the apparent contradiction? Clearly in the fact that man's will and man's judgment are not here allowed, but that God's will and God's judgment are put in their place. The same chapter which tells us to be joined together in mind and judgment pours contempt on all human wisdom, and especially declares the incompetence of that wisdom to deal with the things of God. It asserts that God hath "made foolish the wisdom of this world," and that "the world by wisdom knew not God." What, then, has God substituted for it? "The foolishness of preaching;" "Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Thus He has "chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise." How clear, then, that in the things of God man's wisdom can have no place! His mind and judgment are set aside, and the Word of God is given as the only rule.

This brings out the second thing which is needed, if we would escape the evil of sectarian division. The name of the Lord Jesus Christ must be the only center around which we gather, and the Word of God the only guide by which we are led. It is these two things, and these two things alone, that amidst much weakness, and in the absence of any special works, draw forth the Lord's commendation of the church in Philadelphia, and cause Him momentarily to drop the judicial character elsewhere maintained throughout these addresses, and to declare, concerning this assembly only, "that I have loved thee."

Are these two things sufficient, then, to remove us from a false sectarian position, and to put us on a true scriptural foundation? Amply sufficient. They are all that the Lord finds in the church in Philadelphia; they are all that can be expected or attained in an age of failure and ruin. They are the two things that lend such a beauty to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, who, amidst all the failure and weakness of the day in which their lot was cast, were kept in the path of obedience and blessing by no other means than their faithfulness to the name of Jehovah and their subjection to the written Word. All the errors that Christendom has fallen into have begun by altering, adding to, or taking from, the Scriptures.

Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were all honored servants of God; but God had given to each his own special line of truth. What, then, was the first error? Believers, instead of taking the truth from all, took only that portion of the truth ministered by one. Instead of recognizing that all things were theirs, "whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas," their narrowness would only receive one; and in receiving one, rejected and opposed the others. Here we have the root of nearly all doctrinal error. It is almost invariably, at least in its origin, a partial, one-sided application of truth. Instead of the many-sidedness of Scripture, man has generally preferred to build upon some special doctrine; and all the rest he has either wholly neglected, or worked into the shape most suited to harmonize with his peculiar and partial theological system. His faith has not been sufficient to persuade him that all the different lines of Scripture truth are really harmonious; that their reconciliation depends on their origin in God's wisdom, not on the powers of his own intellect.

The same want of faith has operated, though in a different way, in matters of church order. Instead of believing that God cares for His church, and has left ample rules for its government, man has sought to form a code of his own; and as human wisdom has been the source of this code, each

man has had his own judgment; so that in proportion to the freedom with which man could act, different codes and different sects have multiplied. Every departure in this way has been by the addition of something to the Word of God—the assumption of powers which the Word of God does not give, or the adoption of rules which the Word of God does not enjoin. The simple faith which could receive what God has said, leaving difficulties to Him, would have prevented the schisms caused by various theological schools. The simple faith which could accept the teaching of God's Word as sufficient guidance on all matters of church order would have prevented the schisms caused by various denominational schools. There would still, of course, have been different measures of intelligence; but even the most unintelligent, if subject to Scripture, would have seen that these furnished no excuse for sectarian separation.

Admitting, then, most fully that any attempt to reconstruct or to imitate the original unity is out of the question, the exhortation to “endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” is still perfectly practicable, and indeed binding. To say that because the church of God has become broken up into sects, there is no possibility of taking an unsectarian position, is, in fact, to say that God has shut us up to the path which He has expressly stigmatized, and that He exhorts us to a course which He foresaw to be impossible. Anything more dishonoring to Him can scarcely be imagined. There must be some way of walking in obedience to God's Word, and the way is clearly pointed out to us. The refusal of every name as a center of gathering, save the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and an entire subjection to the Word of God, will place us, not in the original church unity, but on the divine principle on which that unity was founded, and by the observance of which it could alone have been preserved.

It is objected, however, that in dividing from fellow-believers those who thus gather only form another sect. To this however it is sufficient to answer, that they do not divide from other believers. They find believers divided, each sect meeting round a center of its own, and they say, “This division is wrong; we cannot sanction it or become responsible for it by going on with any of the sects, but we come out from them to the common ground on which all believers are told to gather.” This is not separating from fellow-believers, but separating from that which divides believers, and going on to the ground which condemns such divisions as unscriptural, and a denial of the oneness of Christ. The sectarian position in which other believers still remain may make a separation, but that separation is not caused by those who refuse such a position, but by those who retain it. If only two or three persons are gathered on true scriptural ground, they are met on the principle of the church, and not of a sect. There is a center round which all believers ought to be gathered; and if the majority are absent, preferring to meet round other centers, the charge of sectarianism and division lies against them, not against the few persons assembled in the Lord's name.

T. B. B.

The Personal Interest of Christ in His Saints

It is a happy and an encouraging thing for the soul to be habitually impressed with the everyday interest which our beloved Lord takes in His own while here in the world. Probably nothing is more conducive to the deepening and unfolding of our affection to Himself, and to consistency in our walk, and to diligence in His service, than the discovery of what an object we are to Him all along the road to the Father's house, and how He loves to disclose to us the sweetness, the reality, and the constancy of His personal interest, notwithstanding that He is the glorified One at the right hand of God!

In the days of His flesh "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." This we find at the very opening of John's gospel, which starts with His rejection by those whose privileges are significantly indicated in those two little words, "His own," henceforth no longer thus used because inapplicable to the reprobate nation. But in chapter 13:1, this affecting term is transferred to His beloved disciples— "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end;" that is, not merely to the end of His sojourn below, nor as to time in any sense, but right through to the uttermost. Thus we have present title to this endearing expression from the lips of our blessed Lord, and not only so, but, as the chapter delineates, to the unmeasured love and faithfulness, and the unwearied service, which He connects with it for the gratification of His devoted affection for His object. For we rejoice in the thought that not only has He graciously so wrought in us by the Holy Ghost as to win our confidence forever, and make Himself an object of eternal rest and joy to the hearts of His own, but He has, on the other hand, permitted us to regard Him as the eternal Lover of His saints, whose interest in us never needs to be re-awakened, but continues unflagging, if not ever deepening, as the consummation in glory draws nigh!

We are then, each in his own measure, no less truly an object to Him than He is an absorbing and satisfying one to us. And even as when a poor sinner it was my first duty to let Him have His own way according to all the service He had rendered me on the cross, so now as a believer is it equally my first and my abiding obligation (oh, what a privilege too!) to allow Him to fulfill His cherished service from the glory, after a fashion suited to the delight of His heart in enriching and adorning me with His own graces, as well as in removing hindrances to that moral transformation He is effecting. Every child of God being a distinct individual object to Him, has his personal history disclosed, in its outworking every day, to the eyes of that blessed Man in the glory. And whether we be regarded as pupils under tuition, or as patients under treatment (alas! the more frequent case), it is He alone who can discern, and discerning can by the Holy Ghost supply, what is needed for each saint's daily path and progress. Thus, apart from those so frequent occasions, alas! in which our failures bring His blessed advocacy into active exercise, if it have not indeed anticipated them, each day has the weft of its own distinctive coloring interwoven with the warp of our lives; and well will it be if, weaving deftly and dexterously, we produce so beautiful and so durable a texture that, like the fabled fabric of fibrous asbestos, the action of the fire so far from consuming will only whiten it into a thing of lustrous purity and beauty forever (1 Cor. 3:13); for indeed of such a character, surely, are those practical righteousnesses which constitute the fine

linen of the saints! (Rev. 19:8).

Can He whose glory we shall then be the medium of displaying, and towards which all is so rapidly and definitely tending, be otherwise than intensely interested both in that which is now being woven in the loom by His saints, and in the work of His Spirit in them, to make them, as it were, His garments of glory and beauty for that day of manifestation? For if we survey the interests of Christ, we have to remember their present two-fold character; first, the evangelizing in the world which has to be completed that the rapture may be effected; and second, the transformation going on in the saints in view of the "revelation of the sons of God" with the Lord Jesus in glory; the latter being that which is due to Himself, and which will be effectively displayed then, according to what has been our spiritual grasp and growth in these days of our pupilage. The two lines on which the Spirit of God is thus working run side by side according to their distinctiveness of character, and terminate synchronously at the word of the Father to the Son. If every soul that is saved hastens the rapture, equally so does every little bit more of Christ wrought in a saint as fruit of the Spirit add a further ray of beauty to the glories of Christ in the day of His manifestation! Thus the quantitative and the qualitative work of the Spirit of God—the one in the world, and the other in the church—synchronize in their course, and close simultaneously at the coming of the Lord. Whether then we look at the world as to evangelization, or the saints as to transformation, what a field is presented for the tender and assiduous interest of Christ in the service of His saints, and of the Holy Ghost in His saints! Nor can we too closely connect either the one or the other with Himself, with the person of that glorified Man upon the throne of the Father; for to deny or to doubt the intensity of His present personal interest in His saints would be seriously to impair the comprehensiveness and continuity of His service to His own, and to cast a slur upon the deep perfections of His character and of His ways of love!

The current period of His session at the right hand of God is as clearly marked by the activity of His tender affection and devoted service, though made good in another way, as ever were the days of His self-denying ministry on earth. If we glance through the gospel of Mark, where He is before us as emphatically the girded servant of Him who sent Him, how beautiful are the touches with which the Spirit of God has adorned the record of His lowly, lovely service among men. The assiduousness with which He engaged in it meets us at the outset. On the morrow following a long day of varied and arduous toil, protracted into night, we find Him rising up a great while before dawn, for prayer in the solitude of some secluded spot, only to have his privacy speedily invaded, eliciting, however, His readiness to resume at once in other towns His gent labors (Mark 1:35-38). Yet when His apostles returned from their little "two and two" mission, His prompt and tender solicitude for them finds expression in words which bespeak His interest, in the clearest way, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile" (Mark 6:31), indicating to the Lord's laborers that rest and retirement in the secret of the Lord's presence is as essential after, as His own example shows that prayer is before, any public testimony for God. And how His heart went along with all His service is in like manner, and just as clearly, indicated by many a delicate touch in the cases of the "leper" (Mark 1:41), the "much people" of Mark 6:34, and the rich young man of Mark 10:21. And if, further, we bring home His service to ourselves, has He not, as it were, taken us by the hand and lifted us up? (Mark 1:31; 9:27) Has He not nestled us in His arms (Mark 9:36; 10:16)? Does not His eye survey the whole scene in which we are moving? Is anything lost upon Him (Mark 3:4; 8:33; 10:21-23)? Is not His ear open to the harrowing tidings which

sometimes wring a human heart, and does He not delight to speak an instant word of succor and of cheer, that our faith may be in Him? (Mark 5: 36) And if He open His mouth, as it were, to minister in word and doctrine, is it not as we are “able to hear it” (Mark 4:33)? And if He send a message to His disciples, His words “and Peter” shall tenderly indicate how peculiarly interested He is in His poor heart-broken servant (Mark 16:7). Is there one whit of this loving, devoted service, taking account of everything, and adapting itself in its exquisitely tender human way to every human circumstance and feeling, which is not equally, yea, in a heightened way, made good to us now by the Holy Ghost, and which shall not be even more perfectly, because unhinderedly, displayed and enjoyed in the glory?

These are some of the special features of the Lord’s ministry, found only in that gospel which has His service as the subject of the Holy Ghost’s peculiar testimony, His spending and being spent for His own. It is our privilege to read between the lines, that “this same Jesus,” though made “Lord and Christ,” is as approachable, as attentive, as unwearied, as considerate, as loving, as compassionate, as observant, as tender, as in the days of His flesh, being in a word, “the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 8:8).

And if He be thus interested in the progress and result of His own work by and in His saints, is there not even a deeper joy to Him in recognizing every little stirring of love to Himself which He delights to inspire in our hearts by the Holy Ghost’s presenting to us the attractiveness of His blessed and adorable person? For this see Canticles. How beautifully does Song of Solomon 4:9 to 5:1 illustrate and unfold the interest which He takes in the affection of His saints to Himself! and how calculated is the disclosure there of His appreciation of that love (“poor and feeble, Lord, we own it”) to produce and to deepen it more and more, as He ever longs and loves to do. “How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse! how much better is thy love than wine! and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!” (Song of Sol. 4:10) “Neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon” (2 Chron. 9:9).

W. R. D.

A Practical Question

Now let me ask you a practical question. How much today have you prayed for the church of God? How much have you prayed for the saints of God? and how much do you pray every day of your life? How much is it upon your heart as a burden, because it relates to the interests of Christ and the glory of Christ? How much do you seek solitude with God, and retirement with Him, and long to be at home with God, to shut the world out and yourself in, that you may be there with God about those wonderful interests of Christ, because you have got communion with His mind about that which is so dear, to Him on this earth? I tell you, the lack of all this is simply the result of the want of separation; and it is not merely a person being separated outwardly. It is possible for saints to satisfy themselves if they have outwardly escaped from the wreck and the corruption that is all around. They say, "Oh well, I have escaped from the corruption that is outside; my body is not in it." But the question is, Is your heart outside the world, and is your spirit separated from it as much as your body? Do you think, if I may speak strongly (though I do not apologize, for I speak before God I trust), do you think that what the blessed God wants is a number of individuals brought together into a place before Him, but whose hearts are far away elsewhere? Do you think it is a mere question of what is outside and seen? Beloved friends, what He is looking for is the affection of a heart and the earnestness of a soul that has found His own Son in heaven. If it is merely a question of your bodily presence, while your heart and affections are outside, what I say is, and I say it with all gentleness tonight, "My son, give me thine heart."

This is where the feebleness is; it is this want of separation. Inward separateness would lead to outward separateness; but outward separateness will never produce inward separateness. If your heart and affections, your intelligence, your inner man, are separated to God, then your body, as a vessel, will soon follow that which controls it.

W. T. T.

The Prayers of Saints

“And when He had taken the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints” (Rev. 5:8). That latter clause is very peculiar, as connected with the grace of God in His own proper eternity. There are things His people suffer from, and that He never forgets. All their prayers are treasured up before God—their tears are put in His bottle, and treasured up. What! the sorrow I have forgotten, has God put that down? Is that one of the things that will shine? He can use all for His glory; but can the prayers and groans of a saint be kept and have a special place, be an odor of a sweet savor to God? The sinner does not know this; but a poor broken one can say, “Not only does God remember my prayer, but He puts it by on His own throne, like the pot of manna which He liked to be laid up, to be remembered as a trophy of the way He carried His people through the wilderness.” And so will their prayers tell there what their special need of His presence was here. “Golden vials.” Gold marks the divine character of that by which they are kept; the odor, a fragrant incense going up; the fragrance ever the same. Is that said of the prayers of saints? Yes; not one of them lost. The Lord Jesus knew them all; they were ever before God.

G. V. W.

The Present Portion of the Believer

There could be no more practical inquiry entered upon by our souls than the endeavor to discern the present character of our blessing as distinguished from what is future. Every child of God delights to dwell on the bright prospect before him; and in the measure of the certainty his soul possesses concerning it will be found the degree of comfort it affords him as he anticipates it. But after all we live in the present, and it is of the deepest moment we should turn it to account for Christ, in which way alone do we make the best of it; and to this end we must learn the character God gives it.

Many live their soul's past history over and over again; not even the future charms them out of this form of self-occupation. But they can scarcely be said to have a present who live in a perpetual occupation with the past; and they may be said to be ensnared by the future who are so occupied with it as to be heedless of the present. The past and the future are alike beyond our direct control; each has however contributed, prospectively or retrospectively, to form the present. The past is my Adamic history, now irrevocably closed up in the cross; my future is the glory I am predestinated to share, in the image of God's Son, together with Him; my present, the wonderful paradox compounded of such a past and such a future. We cannot re-travel the one, or pre-travel the other; but we have more than enough for faith's brightest efforts in the wonderful issues for every soul of the path we are now treading. How little do saints understand this! Starting from the same point, the full knowledge of eternal salvation, and all equally certain, it may be, of the same consummation in glory, how differently is the space between viewed, how mistakenly is it apprehended, how poorly is it filled up! Does the past enter into it? It does. Does the future enter into it? It does. But how different it is to both, how unique in itself! And as the past anticipated the present, and has undeniably toned it, so does the present anticipate the future, and will indelibly color it. In the government of God it must be so; "the child is father of the man." Happily my past cannot haunt me, for between it and me is the cross; my future admits of no concern, for it begins with glory in the presence of Christ. Not that portion or element of my present which has been formed by the past, but that which is unprejudiced by it, contributes to my future. In other words, the governmental dealings of God with me are through grace completed here; and I have also in the same scene committed to me means for attaining and acquiring honors and rewards of an eternal character, in the use of which means my soul is moreover educated in His ways, and I glorify Him. It is a sorrowful feature of the saint's course when he seeks how much he can evade in his ordinary avocations, or in his domestic circle, instead of how much he can incorporate, of the feelings and ways of Christ. Surely whatsoever we do, in word or in deed, should be done in His name; and the saint who sets Him before him, and wins glory to Christ by his earnestness of purpose, uprightness of principle, and diligent discharge in practical righteousness of every duty, is the one who will habitually prove that He is at his right hand, that he should not be moved.

We are not sufficiently impressed with the gravity of these issues, which add so deep an interest to the path of faith, which prefer so wondrous a claim upon every child of God, and which lead to redeeming the time by a suited saintly life, because the days are evil. And if we speak of "issues,"

they are issues inseparable from the glory of Christ; if of “claim,” it is none other claim than His; if of “a suited saintly life,” it is only found in living to Him who died for us, and rose again. If I revert to the past, I see His cross, and the word is, “Dead with Him;” if the present occupy me, I see Him crowned with glory and with honor, and the word is, “To live is Christ;” if I anticipate the future, I see the bright and morning Star, and His word is, “Surely I come quickly”—the past His cross, the present His crown, the future His throne! Thus our wonderful identification with Christ, which began in His death, has no interruption and no end. Shall we admit the identification as to the cross and as to the glory, and practically eliminate it as to the interval of His absence? The sober conviction of every thoughtful believer will surely be, that the change in the past from his sins to faith in Christ, and from a standing in Adam to a standing in Him, and the change awaiting him in the future from a sinful body here to a glorified one there, are neither one nor the other more wonderful than that poor, feeble, failing vessels such as we should, by viewing Him, be changed into His image from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit, and made capable of representing Him in the scene of His refusal. How little have we seized the divine favor shown us in the present implied in the words of Romans 5:9-10. We have been saved from our sins by His death; much more, shall be saved from wrath at His coming. Meanwhile much more are we saved, while passing through this world, by His life. Justified in the power of His blood, we are now being saved by the power of His life. These two things—saved by the power of His life at the right hand of God, and transformed by His Spirit into the same image—mark a wondrous character of divine blessing flowing from divine activities limited to the present period, and carrying with it, as in every case, an answering and weighty responsibility. The past blessing of my soul is indissolubly connected with the finished work of Christ, and I know nothing of results in blessing to myself apart from Him, for even the eternal life I got was Himself! The future blessedness I am equally incapable of disconnecting from Him. It begins the moment He is in this atmosphere again. If I awake, it is in His likeness; if I am changed, it is to be like Him when I see Him as He is. At His coming I go to be with Him, having no heaven but His presence. All I hold and all I get—be it the crown of life, the hidden manna, the white stone, the new name, power over the nations, the morning Star, or a seat in His throne—He Himself gives me. If we reign, we reign with Him; if we be glorified, we are glorified together. The Bride is His Bride; God is His God; the Father is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God’s Son giving us the joy of His own relationship. The saints are His saints; serving, they serve Him; worshipping, they worship Him. They never lose His likeness, nor leave His presence; He who fills all heaven with His peerless personal glory covers the whole field of vision to every eye, and enraptures every heart with His own ineffable blessedness! This all will fully acknowledge, that our past and our future blessing are alike definitely and divinely bound up with the work and person and place of Christ.

Is it any less true of our present blessing? May it not be safely predicated that we can learn our present portion as believers only from the place He has taken for us, the service He is rendering us there, and what His heart is occupied with during His session on the Father’s throne? In other words, I learn my own portion this side the glory, simply by observing the present place and service and interests of Him who is made Lord and Christ. No research in any other field will shed light on this subject; every inquiry must be referred to Him, every problem find solution in Himself. What He is must govern what I am; His relation to this scene must determine mine; the scope and character of His interests and claims here define my aim and object and service in the same field. I am suited to my vocation only as I am a vessel sanctified and meet for His use; only as I am a

mirror held up before His unveiled face, reflecting Himself in all the marvelous and manifold colors and shades which the Holy Ghost, as the light of the glory, brings into play, as upon the Urim and Thummim, on the heart of the true Aaron. The service of that blessed Man in glory, and of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, here, suggest the nature and character of the believer's portion now. "By the grace of God I am what I am," and in it I am practically maintained by the presence and priesthood of Christ within the holiest; and all that I am as connected with Christ here, and all my present blessing in association with the risen and glorified One there, the Holy Ghost makes good to me in divine effulgence, and He is the practical power for my apprehension, enjoyment, and expression of it in this scene. But no greater dignity surely could be conferred upon us than that we should represent Christ, be His chosen representatives where He has been rejected—impersonations, through grace, of Himself; feeble ones truly, but yet similitudes of Himself. It is the fact that we have this singular place and portion according to His sovereign favor, which it is so important for us to seize. As one has said, "We shall never be the people that we ought to be until we see what a people we are." I must know what, in the sovereignty of God and in the grace of Christ, is accorded to me here before I can adequately occupy it for Him, or enjoy it in my own soul. And what a magnificent thing it is, surpassing human thought, that we should be thus set here for Him according to the revelation of a grace superior to all our failure, and more patient than the persistency of our crookedness, rising in its richness and supremacy above all our poverty and feebleness, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Whatever be the special character of one's line of service, or the mission one has to fulfill, the generic thing which covers every case is, that I am here for Christ, I represent Him, and thus have to "adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Who could say he is exempt from this, and who would wish to be? It should be the glory and the joy of every heart—the heart and the life alike expended upon Him in worship and in service, and above all, in presenting, according to all the capacities of the divine life, a true expression of the grace of Christ and the power that worketh in us for His glory. It is of moment that we should remember that we are not here as King's sons incognito, but as representatives, standing for Himself in the virtue and power of His life, and in union with His person, whose interests we are here to further and defend, and whose grace it is our privilege and our province to express. In the which wondrous commission and character, as seen in John 17—men given unto Him out of the world, and of Him sent into it—we are divinely ministered unto and sustained, and are made so eminently superior to everything of the world around us, that in the most absolute sense we refuse to draw from its resources, or to accept its patronage in whatever form presented. Just as all the expenses and charges of an embassy are defrayed by the court from which it is accredited, so is every supply for us at the charge of Him whom we represent, and we thus repudiate as a reflection upon the resources of our liege, or upon our own allegiance and loyalty, any suggestion of countenance or help from the world, our high dignity being that we represent the court of heaven, and are here on a wondrous mission to men, freighted, as it were, with the unsearchable riches of Christ—the One who became here so poor, that we through His poverty might be in the same scene so rich, both for ourselves and for others; not only never thirsting ourselves, but out of our belly the flowing forth of living waters for others. As we read in 2 Corinthians 4, God "has shined in our hearts for the shining forth of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." That wondrous revelation which shines in the face of the Man in the glory of God has shone in our hearts, that it may shine forth from us now in the luster and purity of its own essence like the brilliant light which emanates from a diamond of the

finest water. It is thus that we are to set forth the excellencies of Him who has called us “out of darkness to His wonderful light,” as a coruscation of brightness, exhibiting, amid the ever-varying play of light and shade here, all the exquisite coloring of every tint and tone concentrated and conserved in Christ on high, like a moral rainbow dipping at either end to the earth, carrying the unsullied purity of its glory and beauty to man, but having the crown of its arch in the heavens, from whence all its lustrous hues are derived. And as the diamond which sparkles with the light of heaven is of the substance of the earth, and as the rainbow, deriving every ray of its beauty from the sun, discloses its loveliness only by means of the reeking atmosphere in which it is displayed, so also is it that only in men, and only upon the earth, is the moral glory of Christ new manifested, and by the very means which such conditions alone afford! It is an invigorating and a cheering thought, that every effort of ours in singleness of eye to glorify Christ here reacts upon us for eternal as well as present blessing to our own souls, so that in glorifying Him we are graduating for heaven, and imparting a halo to the life of a saint below, the heart elated “with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.” What a privilege it is just to go along through this scene with an open hand towards Himself, and towards none else! to take whatever He gives me to do or to suffer for His name’s sake! And it is indeed a signal honor and a peculiar privilege to serve Him in however limited a way; for even the gift of a cup of cold water must meet its reward. But may we not venture to affirm, that what is highest of all in character is that which is the common heritage of every believer; namely, that we are through grace fitted to represent Him by adorning His doctrine in every walk of life, from the highest to the lowest? “This honor have all His saints.” Can anything be more amazing, and more magnificent, than that we should have been extricated out of our state and condition “here,” judicially and morally lifted out of all the ruin and the wreck of the first man, and then reestablished in the power and plenitude of divine life in the second man as a new creation, in the virtue and grace of the last Adam, its glorious Head, in the very place from whence He had been relegated in His own person, to be maintained there by a power that makes good that characteristic word of promise— “Greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father”? (John 14:12).

The magnitude of such issues is beyond expression for every saint who understands his calling. What a superiority to creature exigencies does faith’s discovery of this impart! What a singular elevation does it put us upon! What a moral pre-eminence to everything under the sun is mine when I have accepted the fact in all its deep and far-reaching import, that I have no interests nor resources but Christ’s, and all my aim and all my desire is to represent Him to the joy of His own heart, in the beauty and grace of His character and ways, whether to the world’s eye, or to the saints in whom is His delight; as He says, “I am glorified in them!” (John 17:10).

Surely even heaven itself cannot supply conditions surpassing in moral grandeur the transcendent beauty and dignity of those which go to make up the present portion of the believer! “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 For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counselor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen.”

W. R. D.

The Race

These are the ways and dealings of God with us, and encouragement to run the race set before us—the race on which we enter. Then we have the consequences of divine favor. We want encouragement. Who are they that want encouragement? Christians.

We are associated with God on the ground of grace. “We are come to mount Zion.” It is not now, “If they obey My voice, they shall be My own peculiar people.” After unconditional promises to the fathers, God founded them at Sinai on the people’s obedience. Then failure came in worse and worse, until the ark was carried away, and Ichabod pronounced. Then David came and brought it back, and placed it on mount Zion. Zion had been nothing till then, when it was put in contrast with Sinai. Then grace came in, God giving in grace the place lost in responsibility. It is the triumph of grace over the whole failure of man. You are not come to Sinai, but to mount Zion; and if this is not seen, the starting-point is wrong, and there will be an effort to get through obedience what must be the gift of grace. We could not run as hoping to attain, if it were a question of righteousness. Why have I to run this race to get to God? Adam had no race to run; but when we have sinned, and got away from God, it is then a delusion to think it can be run in man’s own strength.

In chapter 11 there is shown out the great principle of faith in the witnesses who, waiting for the fulfillment of the promises, had in the energy of faith run the race. Each had gone a little bit of the road; and here the apostle turns to Christ, who had run it all, with everything—the world and Satan himself—against Him. He had perfectly run His course; and His place on the throne of God is the result of victory, as well as that of having glorified God in redemption; and He sets us in that same position. We see Christ, having overcome, actually set down there. Mark how simply the apostle speaks of it, as if it were easy. Can you “lay aside every weight” so easily? That is what you are called to do. Why cannot you? The moment I feel it is a weight, it is very easy to drop it; but if it is a pleasure, it is very hard to get rid of it. The moment I have Christ as my object, all these weights become a burden, and I am very glad to throw them off. The secret of it is, the heart looking to Jesus who has run the path; the new nature finding its food in Him has no taste for the things of the world. We find the deep personal interest of Christ in us, in that if we have to go the path, He must go before; when He puts forth His sheep, He goes before them.

“Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.” When in the path, remember you have never met with the difficulties He did; you have not been killed as He was. How sweet to have to “consider” Christ! Do you think you can have a more trying path than He had? He says, “Is My arm shortened, that it cannot save?” “The Lord God has given Me the tongue of the learned, that I may speak a word in season to him that is weary.” I understand words of comfort and strength; I understand the path.

“Lest ye be weary and faint in your minds.” We should not faint in that path; we should renew our strength as eagles. His strength is sufficient; but if not looking to and trusting Him, we get wearied and faint in our mind. I have not strength to go through without help (Chapter 4:12). What makes you faint? Because your heart is off Christ. And what took it off? Something else which the Word of

God must find out, and pierce through as with a sword. If the flesh is at work, the manna becomes "light food," and you want something else. If you are not diligent you do not get the manna. The sun arises, and it is gone. The Word of God is quick and powerful; it is the very thing we want. Then there is another hindrance—infirmity and weakness. But we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched by these—the feelings of our infirmities; only often there is an admixture of will, and the will of man is the most vigorous tree that there is. God must deal with it. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous."

Here is our everyday life. There is not one of us whom God does not follow in every detail of life, and bears always, never failing for a moment. What constancy! What thorough fullness of grace! He sees what is hindering us in the enjoyment of heavenly things, and deals with it. Wherever my will is working, even in little things, there is not the fear of God; that is, the sense of God's presence which keeps my will down; my eye resting on God, and holding to His will and His character. If we are walking aright, the presence of God is more real to us than man's presence. The fear of God is the character of God applied to my circumstances. The effect of God chastening is to hold God's hand on my will; where His presence is felt, self has to hold its tongue. We struggle and writhe often against the chastening till God gets His place in our hearts. Against whom was I complaining, and fighting, and struggling? Against God, who gave His own Son for me. "As His fear is, so is His wrath." He is dealing with me so as to bring me to be silent before Him. When this fear is wakened, then faith is at work, and there is a capacity for understanding His love again. I get back to see His purpose too. He is going to bring me into Canaan, and I was going back in heart to Egypt. Then my eye follows Jesus, who is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, and sees where I am to be led up to. The soul gets into the light of the favor of God, which is better than life: "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

"My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." Suppose the Lord's hand is upon one of you, the great principle is, that He is doing it for your good. Whom He loveth He chasteneth. Love would not do it if not needed. Do not despise it. God loves you too well to punish you for nothing. You say, "Oh, I don't despise it; my heart is sinking under it!" Not so either. Do not faint; it is love that does it, and love will bring good out of it. Mark, too, we are to expect chastening; there is a great deal to correct. You may be as sincere as possible, and, as to the purpose of your heart, single-eyed; but is there nothing hindering you? You may not know what. Would you wish God to leave it there? He knows the thoughts and intents of your heart when you do not; and He is not a Physician for nothing. No child is without chastening, bringing us nearer to God. We must all know how easily we get out of God's presence; and He does it for our benefit, that we may be partakers of His holiness, that holiness which is in God Himself. Mark how thoroughly this is grace. He calls us according to His holiness, and then sets about making us partakers of it; and when all is done, there are "the peaceable fruits of righteousness." Like Paul's thorn in the flesh, our very service and devotedness may bring us into suffering for His sake, and at the same time into that which humbles the flesh. The thorn was something that met him in his service, made him despicable, and was a correction to the tendency to be puffed up. God may give it the character of a trial for Christ.

While we have courage and energy, yet, as in an evil day, He says, "Walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise." Christians need not make trials for themselves by want of circumspection. If

you are not careful and vigilant, be sure the devil is; and he never forgets to watch for an opportunity of injuring. "Make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way." There are lame saints, and it is the lame men who want a straight road. A man full of Christ can walk through many a difficulty without suffering for it; but all are not such; and for those who are not, remove every difficulty out of the way. Be of good cheer; you are come to mount Zion, or grace.

Reciprocal Affection

It is a blessed thing to cultivate in our hearts; not only the sense of what God has done for us, but also what He in grace has made us to be for Himself. It is most blessed to get away from ourselves, and entering into the secret of God's presence, there to learn what those sentiments are which fill His heart. The Spirit of God makes those who believe in Christ to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; so the apostle Peter says in his first epistle (1:8). That is our side of this joy, but "It is meet that we should make merry and be glad," is His, for the Father has His joy as well, and it is boundless. He rejoices to have children near to Him—children who can enjoy God. "Christ suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God;" and "we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. 5:11).

It is that we may enjoy Himself that we are made nigh by the precious blood of Christ. It is not merely what He gives us, but Himself, who is to be the portion of our souls, and this is the fruit of the new birth. Because born again, we enjoy God Himself. "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But what is this new birth? It is our getting a new nature, which has the capacity to enjoy and understand and know God. The soul gets this as the fruit of His grace. We are made to enjoy God; but then He has His side as well. His joy is to have His children near to Him, and we are to have the sense that there is nothing between our hearts and Himself. Thus we see there is the joy of the Father, and the children's joy likewise. In chapter 4 of the Song of Solomon we see Christ's part in this joy. The relationship here presented is not that of father and children. Of that the words of our hymn speak:

"Thou the prodigal hast pardoned,

Kissed us with a Father's love;

Killed the fatted calf, and called us

E'er to dwell with Thee above.

"Clothed in garments of salvation,

At Thy table is our place;

We rejoice, and Thou rejoicest,

In the riches of Thy grace."

In the fourth chapter of the Song it is the bridal relationship which comes out. It is the joy of the Bridegroom and of His bride.

We are prone to read this book so as to find Christ in it, and our hearts glow as we trace Him in its various scenes; but it is very sweet to turn for a moment and learn what the bride is to Christ. No language could be more lovely than that which we find He uses with regard to her. Listen to Him! "Behold, thou art all fair, My love"—all fair; "there is no spot in thee." Yet the more we know of

Christ, the more we know of ourselves; and as we walk with God, as the years roll by, we take lower and lower estimates of ourselves. Each year we think less of ourselves than we did the year before. So much is this the case that the heart is apt to become legal. The exceeding worthlessness of what we find within us is so apparent to us. How blessed then, notwithstanding all we see ourselves to be, that Christ says of us, "There is no spot in thee; thou art all fair, My love!"

It is blessed to dwell upon the Lord's thoughts of His people; to think of the Lord's pity, and of His compassionate love, though. that is not the love referred to in the Song. Here it is the love of complacency. He is rejoicing over His bride, and he speaks of her beauty and of her comeliness. But how can He find in us that which can delight Him? He does find that which is the joy and rejoicing of His heart, though not because of what we are in ourselves. It is all the result of what He Himself has invested us with. Jacob found in Rachel that which met the desires of his heart; and we find in Christ that which satisfies us; and Christ finds in His bride, the church, that which delights His heart. "Ah!" you say, "it may be so when He will have presented us to Himself 'a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' Then the church will be holy, and without blemish. Then all that which is worthless shall have been dropped, and only that which is His own perfect workmanship will abide."

But that is not the moment to which this chapter points. That day of glory and exceeding joy will come; but what we find here is something more wonderful than what will then be shown forth. Here we learn that even now, whilst we tread the sand of the desert, on our way to the glory that awaits the bride and Bridegroom, He finds in the church that which delights His heart. He waits in heaven at the Father's right hand for the nuptial-day. Whilst then He is the portion of our hearts, He finds in us the portion of His heart. Look at what He says. As the Bridegroom speaks of His bride, the expressions of His love and appreciation deepen. He says to her, "Thou hast ravished," or taken away, "my heart; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes." Do we think of this? Do we believe it, beloved, that we are a joy to Him? We might well say of Him, that He has stolen away our hearts; but when He says we have ravished His heart, surely it is a wonderful thing. His delight is found in us; in the one He calls His bride.

It is not the individual believer, but the collective thing that is here spoken of. It is always the body of believers when the bridal affections of Christ are referred to; but in order that our souls, as a whole, may walk in the power of this wonderful truth, we must each individually be in the enjoyment of it. Each saint must dwell on that which Christ is seeking for in the assembly of His saints. It is through grace alone, I need not say, that any of us can enter into this—His joy concerning His own. But, I repeat, unless each one is individually enjoying it for himself and herself, we shall not, as a whole, answer to that which Christ is seeking us to be for Himself. There must be in your soul and in mine the sense of what we are to Christ. When this is known, and the heart has tasted it a little, we sigh to know it more deeply.

Look now at the response He gets from the bride. In chapter 1 she is heard to say, "Thy love is better than wine." She knows His love, and it is better to her than all beside; but His language exceeds hers. Hear what the Bridegroom says to her: "How much better is thy love than wine!" (4:10). What grace in Christ to say this of such poor heartless ones as you and me! Yet this is the estimate Christ forms of any little love He now finds in our souls to Him. "Thy lips," He continues,

“O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue.” Every word that falls from the lip, all that is the fruit of grace in the soul, is to Him like the droppings from the honeycomb. In Scripture honey indicates that which is food as well as refreshment. How such a scripture as this judges us! What has our conversation been? Has it been that which could feed as well as refresh the heart of the blessed Lord? “A garden enclosed,” He says, “is my sister, my spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” All this means she is entirely for Him, only for the Bridegroom. Ah, beloved, it is blessed when the soul gets to this! All that I am, and all that I have, belong to Him, to Jesus only. I am to be for Him here, and He says I am His own. He wants me for Himself.” Is not His desire enough to make each soul surrender fully to Him? “He died... that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15).

But the Bridegroom enlarges on what the bride is to Him. “Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices: a fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.” Such is Christ's appreciation of “His own,” and we should have the sense of all this in our souls, of what He sees His people to be. If we carried in our souls more the thought of what we are to Christ, He would be more to us. The eye would then be more off ourselves, and off one another. Then would our gaze on Him be more steady, and the joy of our souls be more calm and holy. Then we should be more jealous of that which would cause any distance between our souls and Christ. We would watch with eagerness its approach, and be able to shun it.

But He cares for His glory, and does preserve us for Himself; so we read, “Awake, O north wind.” He sends His north wind, bearing its wave of trouble to rouse the careless one. We do not like this; but it is good and wholesome for the spices in His garden. It shakes them out. The wind gets through the branches, and the fragrance is poured forth. Trouble checks us. It casts us on God, and presses out that which is of Christ in us. Thus we learn what He would teach us. Then He can vary His dealings; the wind is changed. He says, “Come, thou south wind, and blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.” He gives deep enjoyment of Himself. He makes the sun of His presence to shine in upon our souls, and the heart turns to Him, and says, “Let my Beloved come into His garden.” The joy of communion is then known and enjoyed. Then the heart says, “I am all for my Beloved. I am my Beloved's, and His desire is towards me. Let Him eat His pleasant fruits.” The soul enters into His thought as to His bride. And how does He respond to her desire to have Him near her? “I am come,” He says, “into my garden, my sister, my spouse.” He appreciates that which is devoted to Him He says, as it were, “It is all mine;” or, “I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk.” As the soul enters into communion, and is conscious that He draws near, the heart goes out more and more to Him. “Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.”

But as we thus muse on this joy of communion between the Bridegroom and His bride, we may well bow our heads in humiliation, and say, How little have we known of it! How little can we have been the joy and rejoicing of His heart! True, very true; yet faith lays hold of God's estimate of things.

Turn for a moment to 2 Corinthians 11:2, and see how the apostle sums up this matter. “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” The Song of Solomon does not go beyond the day of espousals, but Paul points to the nuptial day, when the espoused one will be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. What does he mean by a chaste virgin? It is one who is true, about whom a breath of reproach could not have been; so he warns them: “I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” We need more of this simplicity, brethren—the simplicity that is in Christ. Let our souls awake! Let us say before Him, “He is everything to me, and I am everything to Him.”

W. T. P. W.

Expository Papers on the Romans

Our Lord, when on earth, constantly quoted from the Old Testament; and in the desert, when tempted of Satan, always answered him with, "It is written;" so here it is— "What saith the Scripture?"—an important word for us in these days. It is not "What does this or that man think?" or, "What is your opinion or mine?" but, "What does God say?" that is the question. Let the Scripture decide everything. This verse is quoted from Genesis 15:6, and is an unanswerable proof to a Jew, taken from his own Scriptures, that Abraham was justified by faith. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God" (vs. 2). Now let the Scripture decide the question. "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This would be unanswerable, for he was counted righteous, not for any works that he had done, but because he believed God.

It is the same with us as it is brought out further on in the chapter. Verses 4 and 5 seem to be a sort of practical comment upon this truth; and they bring out in a most clear and full way the fact that we are justified, not upon the ground of our works at all, but by faith. And this is very necessary, for it is the natural thought of our hearts that we must do something in order to merit the favor of God, and to be saved. How universal is the answer, when one asks another as to their hope of salvation, "We must do the best we can." Another says, "We must keep the law;" and another, "Believe in Christ and keep the law." The law truly is of works: "Do this and thou shalt live." But the law and the gospel are two distinct things, and are as opposite as the east to the west; and mixing up the two must lead to endless confusion. You cannot be saved half by the works of the law and half by faith in Christ; either you must be saved by Christ, or you must be lost, "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse" (Gal. 3:10).

To show how the law and the gospel are confused in the minds of people, a person who was told that if he was to be saved it was not by working for it, said, "Now I can prove to you from Scripture that we must do something to be saved" —he would not have it that a person could be saved without any works of his own—so taking a large Bible down from the shelf, he turned over the leaves, and found Ezekiel 18:27, and read exultingly, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." "There!" he said, "is not that works?" He did not see that the whole of the passage was not the gospel at all, but the law, and God's dealings with Israel under law; also, that Galatians 3:10 says, "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse;" so, that if a person is on the ground of law-keeping at all before God, he is under the curse, because he is totally unable to keep it. It is astonishing how the mind of man tenaciously sticks to the idea that there must be something to do to be saved. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" one said to the Lord when on earth. The jailor at Philippi again, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" But let us look at verse 4 of our chapter: "Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. Grace means unmerited love and favor. If a person works or does anything for salvation, he makes God his debtor—he has done this and that, and he thinks that God owes him salvation for it; but this is not the ground of grace at all. In natural things it is the same principle. If a man works hard all the

week, he claims his wages as his right; it is no act of favor of his master to give him what he has earned. So with salvation. If we had done the smallest thing to deserve it, it would not be of grace; for grace is favor bestowed upon one who does not deserve it. No; it must be one thing or the other—saved wholly on the principle of works, and thus earning salvation; or wholly on the principle of grace, as we read in Romans 11:6, which is the same principle: “And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work.” But the Scripture is as plain as possible on the point, and this fifth verse of our chapter is perhaps one of the strongest on the subject, “But to him that worketh not.” No one could get over this plain statement of Scripture; and this verse not only clears the ground by telling us it is “to him that worketh not,” but unfolds to us in few words—but how full and weighty—the whole plan of justification.

We constantly find this in Scripture, that in one short verse we have contained a whole volume of precious truth; and so it is here. It is, “To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness.” Here God is the object of faith, as in Abraham’s case “Abraham believed God.”

First, “It is to him that worketh not, but believeth” (working and believing are here contrasted). And who are we to believe in? The God “that justifies the ungodly.” Who but God could do that? A human judge could not do it: he might let the guilty one off; or be merciful to him; but it is not in the power of any human judge to justify a guilty criminal: for to justify him he must clear him from every charge that could be brought against him, which if he was guilty he could not do. But, blessed be His name, God can, and that in a way perfectly consistent with His own perfect righteousness. He justifies the ungodly.

We have seen on what ground He does it in the third chapter how He can say to an ungodly sinner, on the ground of the death of Christ, “I have nothing against you.” We have to go back to this blessed truth over and over again, even as Christians, for we are often apt to be disappointed because we do not find some good in us; but we are justified, not upon the ground of being good, but upon the ground of being ungodly. So now, if a soul sees he is utterly ungodly, and owns he can do nothing at all to merit salvation, and believes in the God who justifies him as an ungodly one, on the ground of Christ’s death, his faith is counted for righteousness, even as “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.”

There is a passage in the epistle of James (chap. 2:14-26), which to some might appear to contradict this “not of works” doctrine: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?... Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which said, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness.” This might seem to be a contradiction to Romans 4, but in reality it is not so; it only brings out the perfection of the Word of God. In Romans 4 the question is justification before God (vs. 2); in James it is rather before men. And as God alone can read the heart, when it is a question of our fellow-men, we can only judge of what is within by outward actions. If we see this, verse 14 of James 2 becomes clear.; the stress is upon the word “say.” It is not said, “What shall it profit if a man has faith;” but “if a man say he has faith.” It is outward profession. What is the use of a man saying he believes, if his outward actions

deny it; it shows there is no reality in it. Thus the act of Abraham offering up Isaac on the altar showed he 'believed God who was able to raise him up from the dead, and thus' he could offer up the one in whom the promises of God were to be fulfilled (See Heb. 11:17-19). Also the action of Rahab the harlot, in hiding the spies, proved that she believed that the Lord had given them the land, and that Jericho was to be destroyed.

Thus before God we are justified by faith; before men by works. The works before men show that we possess the faith that justifies us before God; just as you see smoke coming out of a chimney, you say, "There must be a fire inside, for I see the smoke." So you see the, good works, and you say, "That person must be a child of God, because of such and such things that he does;" as in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 the apostle saw their "work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope," and therefore he knew their election of God. As to the ground of our justification before God, it is as clear as possible that it is, as we have been seeing in Romans 4, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

And now—what David says is cited as another example to prove the same thing; for Abraham and David were the two that a Jew would recognize as indisputable authority. "David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying" (quoting Psa. 32), "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (vss. 6-8). Here it is not a question of works, or of having any righteousness of our own; on the contrary, it supposes a man to be a sinner, and to have no righteousness of his own, and God forgives him on the ground of pure grace, and although the sin is there, does not impute it. Blessed is that man! We see a beautiful illustration of this in Numbers 23:21. Israel was indeed a sinful people, murmuring and rebellious; as Moses said, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you" (Deut. 9:24). Sin was unmistakably there, and yet when the enemy sought to curse them, what was Balaam forced to say? "He [God] hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath He seen perverseness in Israel." The iniquity was there; but God, said, "I do not behold it." The perverseness was apparent; but God said, "I do not see it." We know on what ground God could say that of Israel, and does say it of us—the blood, of the Lamb.

We are all sinners by nature, "and in many things we offend all," but God does not impute sin to those who believe in Jesus. This is the only thing that can give us confidence in the presence of God, the knowledge that whatever sin there may be, God will not impute it to us, if we are true believers on His Son. This is indeed blessedness that David describes. But, to renew the thread, of our subject, "cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness" (vs. 9). Is this blessedness spoken of (that is, justification by faith) only for the Jew, or is it for the Gentile as well? for the point we are considering is, that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. Circumcision was the characteristic sign of being a Jew, the token of God's covenant with His earthly people Israel (Genesis 17:10). But when was Abraham reckoned righteous? Before he was circumcised at all, thus showing that the righteousness by faith was not to be confined to God's earthly people Israel alone, but to all who believe, although they are not circumcised (vss. 10, 11). This would be an unanswerable argument to a Jew, who gloried in circumcision as the distinguishing mark of God's earthly people; that when Abraham was reckoned righteous, he was uncircumcised. And " he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith

which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed to them also” (vs. 11).

Abraham was reckoned righteous by faith before he was circumcised, so that circumcision has nothing to do with it; therefore he is the father of all them that believe; that is, he is the first example; the head of the family, so to speak, of those that are justified upon the same principle; by faith—as in Galatians 3:7, “They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” He is also “the father of circumcision” to those “who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.” Here circumcision, is the true spiritual circumcision, not “that which is outward in the flesh,” but real separation to God; and Abraham was the first pattern of this. That is the meaning of the expression, “Father of circumcision,” in verse 12.

F. K.

Expository Papers on the Romans

God’s promise to Abraham that he should be heir of the world was not through the law (vs. 13), for we see in Galatians 3:17 that the law was given four hundred and thirty years after, but through the righteousness of faith. This truth is fully unfolded in Galatians 3, showing that the law, which was given after the promise, could not make the promise void. The law was introduced afterward, and “was added because of transgressions” (Gal. 2:19). Because “the law worketh wrath” (vs. 15), all that the law could do was to work wrath, because it said to a man that had a sinful nature, “Thou shalt not lust.” He lusted by nature; but when the law said, “Thou shalt not lust” (covet), it made it a positive act of disobedience, and thus a transgression; “for where no law is, there is no transgression.” It is not said, “There is no sin;” but, “There is no transgression;” for sin is ever sin in God’s sight, whether a person knows it or not; but where God gives an express command, such as, “Thou shalt not lust,” then disobedience to that command becomes a transgression; and where the transgression is proved, there is nothing but the wrath of God against it. But now in verse 16 we have the blessed fact, “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace.” Faith and grace go side by side, “By grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8); but you cannot mix up the law with either, it was added as a thing by the way to bring out what man was, that sin might be made exceeding sinful. It is of faith that it might be by grace, in order that the promise might be sure to all the seed; that is, not only to those who are naturally descended from Abraham, but those who have Abraham’s faith.

The next verses unfold more in detail the character of Abraham’s faith, and also of ours, which is very instructive and practical; for many souls are exercised about their faith, wondering whether they have believed rightly. In verse 17, we have not only that Abraham believed God, but that he believed the God of resurrection; “Before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.” In verse 3, we find the simple expression of Abraham’s faith, “Abraham believed God.” It is not said that he believed in God, but that “he believed God;” that is, believed what God told him. Beautiful and simple expression of what faith is. Many think of faith as a sort of inward feeling or experience, and so, because they do not have these experiences, often wonder whether they have the right faith. But faith is not feeling or experience, but dependence upon what another has said or done. In natural things it is simple enough. If someone that you can trust tells you something, you believe him; you do not question whether you have believed rightly, or whether your faith in what he has said is strong enough, you

simply take him at his word. For instance, if you are going to London, you ask one of the railway officials which is the London carriage, and you take your seat, perfectly satisfied that you are right, because you believe the man that told you. You have no feeling that you are in the right train; but because you trust to what the official told you, you are perfectly happy and confident that you are right. That is faith in a man. Faith in God is the same, only in the one case it is believing what a man says, and in the other it is believing what God says: and this is what true faith always does. There is such a thing as mere head belief; that is, the natural intellect acknowledging the truth of God, as we find an instance in John 2:23: "Many believed in His name, when they saw the miracles which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself unto them." There was simple outward recognition of the truth, but no saving faith. Again, in the case of Simon, in Acts 8:12: "When they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also." His was only an intellectual assent to the truth, without any saving faith at all; for "he had neither part nor lot in the matter" (vs. 21).

But some might ask, "How am I to know that mine is not mere intellectual assent, but real saving faith?" I think this verse (Rom. 4:3) gives us an example of what true faith is— "Abraham believed God." One may intellectually believe what man says, and a person may be taught about Christ, and believe about Him, just in the same way that he believes there was such a person as Henry VIII, or any other matter of history. When one is really in earnest as to his soul's salvation, and believes what God says about Christ, that is not head belief, but faith in God. Intellectual faith believes what man says; saving faith believes what God says. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13, they received the Word of God not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, and consequently they were saved. Abraham's case is a beautiful and simple illustration of what faith is; he believed God. Let us turn to the account in Genesis 15. Abraham was about an hundred years old, and Sarah, his wife, ninety, and they had no child; and God said, "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, "So shall thy seed be" (vs. 5). Suppose Abraham had looked at himself, or had attempted to reason for a moment, where would he have been? But no; in Romans 4:19 we read, "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb." He did not look at himself at all. How many have said, "But I don't feel saved; surely if I was saved I should feel differently to what I do." Suppose Abraham had said, when God said, "So shall thy seed be," "But I don't feel as though this was true:" how could he have felt it? He did not think of himself at all, he did not wait to feel it; but, contrary to nature and reason and human possibility, he simply took God at His word, he believed what God had said, and that is faith. "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." Unbelief always staggers at what God says, and so does human reason, because it cannot understand it. But "Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith," and the result was, he gave glory to God. For it does glorify God to take Him simply at His word, and trust Him implicitly without reasoning or doubting. Some say it is presumption to say we are saved. So it would be, if God did not say so; but if God says we are saved, it is not giving glory to God to doubt it, but the contrary. Surely it is greater presumption to doubt what God says, than to take Him simply at His word; and He says, "All that believe are justified from all things." Abraham was "strong in faith." What constitutes being strong in faith? Simply taking God at His word, as Abraham did, and thus he gave glory to God; and he was "fully persuaded that, what He had

promised, He was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also." That is, not only was Abraham reckoned righteous because he believed God, but we shall also be reckoned righteous if we believe God in the same way; only, although we believe the same God that Abraham did, the character of our faith is a little different. Abraham believed in a promise, "that what He had promised, He was able also to perform;" we are reckoned righteous "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." We do not believe, like Abraham, in what God is going to do, but in what He has done, in raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead; but the object of our faith is the same as Abraham's; that is, God. These three last verses of this chapter are most important, for they give us the ground of our justification, and of peace with God; for the first verse of chapter 5 is linked on to them: the division of the chapters breaks the connection. And notice here, it is not said our faith will be counted for righteousness, if we believe in Christ, true as that is; but on the God that raised up Christ; and this is most important, for many have peace as long as they think of Jesus come to seek the lost, and of His love and peace, as seen, for instance, in the gospels, who, nevertheless, when they hear of God and His holiness and the judgment-throne, have misgivings as to whether it is all right; but if this truth is realized that we find in these verses, there must be peace.

F. K.

Expository Papers on the Romans: Peace With God

The first thing for us to see, as believers, in order to our having peace is, that “He (Christ) was delivered for our offenses.” When we were considering chapter 3 we touched upon the twofold aspect of the death of Christ, propitiation and substitution, as typified on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16)—the blood on the mercy-seat for God’s eye, and the sins confessed over and borne by the scapegoat.

In chapter 3:25 we have the mercy-seat; the blood is shed, God is satisfied, and upon this ground the gospel can be freely proclaimed to every creature. In verses 23-25 it is substitution; that is, Christ actually taking the place of those who believe, and answering to God for their sins, “He was delivered for our offenses;” and in 1 Peter 2:24, “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” Yes, precious truth! the Lord of glory left the throne, and, emptying Himself, took a servant’s form, and was made in the likeness of man; but that would not suffice. If we are to be saved, He must go to the cross, and take our sins upon Him. There is such a danger of the ear getting accustomed to certain well-known passages of God’s word, such as the above, that the sense is in measure lost. But let me ask, Have you in any little measure realized (as we all profess to believe) that the Lord Jesus really took your sins upon Him on the cross; not some of them, but all of them, made them His own? Have you ever pondered that verse in Psalm 40:12, “Mine iniquities have taken hold upon Me?”

It is Christ that is speaking, as is unmistakably clear from verses 6-8, quoted in Hebrews 10:5. How could that blessed One speak of “mine iniquities”? Had He any? No; they were our iniquities. He in grace took our sins upon Him on the cross, and what is the result? He is forsaken of God on account of them, drinking that cup of wrath to the very dregs, and bearing the judgment of God, which otherwise must have fallen on us; and after saying, “It is finished,” “bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.” Then “He was buried” in the “new sepulcher, wherein was never man yet laid,” thus showing the reality of His death. Now we see the One who took our sins upon Him lying in death on account of them. Whom had we offended? God. And who has to be satisfied about our sins? God. If Christ had been left in the grave, it would have shown that the work was insufficient to put away our sins; and that God, against whom we had sinned, was not satisfied with the work of our Substitute. But it was not so. God raised Him from the dead. What did that show? That He was satisfied with the work that was accomplished for our sins. The Lord, as we have seen, took our sins upon Him; and the same God, who gave Him in love, now raises Him from the dead—the eternal proof that He is satisfied, and that our sins are gone forever.

The death of Christ paid the mighty debt of sin; but God’s raising Him from the dead is God’s acknowledgment that the debt is paid. The resurrection of Christ is the proof to the believer that his sins are gone forever; for “He was raised again for our justification.” In 1 Corinthians 15:17 we find the converse, “If Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins.” It does not say, “If Christ has not died,” but, “If Christ be not raised, ye are yet in your sins.” But He is raised; then what is the blessed conclusion for believers to draw? Ye are not in your sins. Look up into the glory of God,

dear trembling believer, and there see that blessed One, the Lord Jesus Christ, the risen, glorified man, at God's right hand! He took your sins upon Him on the cross; but He has not got them on Him now. Where are they then? Gone forever. We believe in the God "that has raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead." And if God has raised Him from the dead who took all our sins upon Him, that God can have nothing whatever against us, any more than He has against Christ Himself; for He "was raised again for our justification." "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Chapter 5:1).

There are two things in this verse; first, we are justified by faith; and secondly, we have peace with God, the latter the result of the former. It is God Himself, as we have seen, who has come in, and in love given His Son for our sins, and has now raised Him from the dead, and has perfectly justified us who believe; and what is the blessed result? "We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." How blessed! And this peace with God belongs to every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ; it is not confined to those only who are fathers in Christ, or to advanced Christians, but it is the common portion of all who are justified. It is so beautifully simple when we take Scripture as it stands. In Acts 13:39 we read, "All that believe are justified;" and in Romans 5, "Being justified, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Yes, blessed be His name, it is all through Him that we have this peace with God. Many are trying to find peace by looking in at themselves, or by waiting for some inward change or feeling. But, dear reader, you will never find peace that way; it is not God's way; the ground of peace, and God's way of getting peace, is found in these verses we have been considering (Chapter 4:23; 5:1). And what does the Holy Ghost occupy us with in this passage—our experiences or feelings? No; but with Christ, and God's raising Him from the dead. He occupies us with an object outside of us altogether. We are justified who believe; and "being justified, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." We possess peace; for the expression, "peace with God," does not simply mean that we are saved, but that we know that God has nothing to lay to our charge, and that we can be in His presence without fear. That is the first step, and till we know this peace with God there can be no growth in spiritual things or advance in truth.

But in verse 2 we have something more; not only have we peace with God as regards our sins, but "we have access by faith into this grace (favor) wherein we stand." As there were two parts in verse 1, so are there in this clause. First, we stand in favor; second, we have access by faith into it. We ever stand, as Christians, in the unclouded favor of God: this is our portion. It does not enter here into what this place is, or how we are there; it simply states the fact. If it were asked, "What is this favor in which we stand?" the answer would be, in one word — Christ; for Christ is gone back to God as the risen Man, having glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work that was given Him to do; and now He is before God, in the most perfect acceptance and favor, and we, as believers, are brought into the same place — "My Father, your Father; My God, your God" (John 20:17). His place is ours. But all this is only implied in verse 2: "This favor in which we stand." It is well for us to remember this: that if we are Christians at all, we always stand in the perfect favor of God; and God never hides His face from a true believer, because He never hides His face from Christ; and we are accepted in Him.

But there is more. Not only do we stand in favor, but we have access by faith into it; that is, by faith we enter now into what is our unchanging standing before God in Christ. We have not to wait to get to glory to enjoy it, but we enter into it now by faith. We are justified, and we have peace with

God; we stand in favor, and have access into it. This is what we possess now. But although we have all these blessings, we have still these bodies of humiliation, we still bear the “image of the earthy,” and are in the wilderness, encompassed with infirmity and failure on every hand; still there is something bright before—the glory of God, and we rejoice in hope of that; we possess all the rest that we have been speaking of now, but the glory is a hope, because we have not got it yet — “For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” (Rom. 8:24). It is not a hope in the sense of there being any uncertainty about it; but when Scripture speaks of anything in the future that we do not yet possess, it is called a hope. We do not hope to be justified, for we are justified; but we hope for the glory, because we have not got it yet. And not only are we going to be in glory, but the thought of that bright glory of God, which is to be our eternal home, where we shall be like Christ, makes us rejoice in the midst of suffering and infirmity here. Do you, dear reader, rejoice in hope of the glory of God? Is the glory such a bright reality to your soul, that it makes you rejoice even now? Once we had come short of the glory of God (chap. 3:23); but now we can rejoice in hope of that same glory; we have been made fit to be there, through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But there is more — “we glory in tribulations also.” We are in the wilderness, surrounded by trials and difficulties, and in early days persecution too; but now we can even glory in them. What a wonderful man a Christian is! An unconverted man might endure tribulations, and even be patient under them; but he could not glory in them. How is it then that Christians can? “Knowing that tribulation worketh patience.” Trials which come, subdue our will, and are used of God to make us patient, and cast us on God, and bring us more into His presence, and by that means we gain experience, both in what God is and what we are; and if that is the case, we can glory in them, and this experience makes the hope of glory all the brighter and more real. And this hope is not a false hope, or one we have need to be ashamed of, because, although we are in trials, and men might say, “How can God love you, and let you be in such trouble?” His love is “shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost,” which is given to every believer; we have a sense of the perfect love of our God toward us. Even here the Spirit of God does not lead us to look in at ourselves, but points out the greatest expressions of the love of God that could be: “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly” (vs. 6); “Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us” (1 John 3:16). Let us look for a moment at the order in which the various truths are brought out in these five verses of this chapter; for it is God’s order, and therefore must be instructive to us. Many have the thought that they must have this or that experience, or look within and see certain fruits of the Spirit, in order to have peace with God, and put the knowledge of justification and peace at the end of the Christian course, and a something which is to be attained to, and that it is only some very spiritual Christians that arrive at this state of assurance.

But that is not God’s order, In these verses the first thing is, we are justified; that is the starting-point. Then, being justified, the result is, “We have peace with God.” But a person may have got to know that they are justified from their sins, and then get into trouble about their state, and the sinful nature that dwells in them. Thus the next truth that they learn is their standing in Christ; they enter by faith into this place of favor in which we stand, and then rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Now they are in a condition to walk through the wilderness, and we get patience and experience spoken of; but mark, experience is put after peace, and not before. In verse 5 we have the Holy Ghost, which dwells in the body of every believer, and it is remarkable that here is the first

mention of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, connecting it with having peace with God; for it is only “after having believed the gospel of your salvation” that we are “sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13).

It is beautiful to see that after peace is known, and there has been the learning of patience and experience, gained perhaps by years of the wilderness journey, that the Holy Ghost leads back to the first simple truths of the gospel, as they are called, in order to give us a sense of the love of God; and thus it ever is, as we grow in grace, and get experience in the things of God, the so-called simple foundation truths become the deepest and most wonderful. It is always a bad sign to hear saints say, “Oh, it is only the gospel, we have got beyond that!” Can we ever, shall we ever, throughout eternity, get beyond the truths of the gospel? Shall we ever know the depths of the meaning of such a verse as John 3:16, “God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son”? Never!

F. K.

The Sinew That Shrank

There are three parts in the history of God's ways with Jacob which are not only important because of their prophetic character, and still future application in blessing to Israel and the whole world, but on account of the deep moral instruction they convey to us, in the man who was thus called out to walk with God. The first is in Genesis 28, called "Jacob's vision at Bethel;" the next in chapter 32, where "an angel wrestles with him;" and the third in chapter 35, when "Jacob is again summoned to Bethel."

The name of Jacob (supplanter) casts its dark shade upon the man; and, as Esau said at the beginning of his path, "Is not he rightly named Jacob? for he hath supplanted me these two times: he took away my birthright; and, behold, now he hath taken away my blessing." With such an one as this God had to walk in all the way by which He led him, but to correct him in grace, and to teach him in the end that human policy and cunning (especially when used in connection with the promises of God) only complicate the path of faith, which finds its sufficiency in the Promiser alone. One great lesson we all have to learn, who have to do with "the living God," is that the ways and means by which He accomplishes His purposes touching our "birthright," and also our "blessing," are as distinctly His own care as the things He promises. Indeed, we may ask, How can it be otherwise, if His own glory lies hidden in the promised blessing? Human contrivance and cautious planning, which are the open faults in Jacob, not only stamp his character, but necessarily create, by their action, a moral distance between himself and the "God of his father Abraham and Isaac," which must not be allowed.

Communication with Abraham, we may observe, did not begin in the distance of "a vision by night" (though he had a vision), nor was it measured by "a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reaching to heaven"—whatever this may and does mean prophetically. These would have been as much out of place morally in God's intimacy with His "friend," and with the head of the family of faith (who bound his only son Isaac upon the altar, in the day when God taught Abraham), as they were consistent and in keeping with Jacob, the supplanter and schemer. His first lessons were when "the sun was set, and he tarried all night in a certain place," in the day that he fled away from Esau to Laban, at the advice of Rebekah. It seems to me that the ladder, whilst it allows of communication between parties at the top and at the bottom, yet marks as plainly the distance which it maintained. In John's gospel "the ladder" is done away and gone; for how could there be a ladder when the Word was made flesh? "The angels of God henceforth," Jesus said, "ascend and descend upon the Son of Man."

God will not, however, allow anything in the man at the foot of the ladder to interfere with His purposes and objects; on the contrary, the promises are repeated and confirmed to Jacob, without condition or reserve on the part of God; for who or what can withstand Him when He is risen up out of His place? Still, as regards Jacob, when he awaked out of his sleep it was to say, "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." Does not this mark his state? and is not the moral distance of the ladder confirmed by what follows? "And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place!"

though he adds, “This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.” Nevertheless, Jacob does not lose the relation of a worshipper; and this is very precious on the part of the God of Abraham towards the object of His love, for he took the stone pillow, and “set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it,” and changed the name of Luz into Bethel—though he be only at “the gate,” and “the ladder.”

The ruling passion of the supplanter and the bargainer breaks out even in this intercourse with God at Bethel. “And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on; then shall the Lord be my God: and I will surely give the tenth [of what He bestows] back to Him.” Nature, which always fears the circumstances it is in, shows itself to be at work under this form of piety, in order to find relief in God; but it does not get beyond their reach by such means. There may be a measure of faith in all this; but the stipulation is for God to be with Jacob in the way that he takes, so that he may come again to his father’s house in peace. How far outside and beyond this little circle of mere human interests and ideas lay the promises of God, which He had just rehearsed to the ear of faith: “Thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad.... and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.” Instead of getting out into liberty by the exercise of faith in the largeness of God’s thoughts about him, which embraced “the whole earth” in ultimate blessing, Jacob would have been content with the measure of his own individual safety, and satisfied if the Lord would have limited Himself to the littleness of the vow that Jacob vowed, immense as this vow may have seemed to the contractedness of flesh and blood. Alas for us, if we see clearly the mote that is in our brother’s eye, and discover not (nor remove) the beam that is in our own eye!

Genesis 32 seems to me the correction of this forwardness of the flesh by the wrestling of the angel which it records. The beginning is significant — “And Jacob went on his way” — which introduces us to his methods and plans for appeasing the wrath of his brother Esau, whom he feared. The faith which strengthens itself, and can be at home only in the revealed purpose of God, and then occupy itself in intercession for those who lie outside, as Abraham did for Lot, is not after this pattern in Jacob. On the contrary, unbelief and carnal policy, carefully wrapped up in their own fears, betray themselves by the very expedients to which they have recourse, as well as by their style of action. The resources which would have commended another man in Jacob’s eyes are the things to which he turns, that he may find grace in the sight of his brother. All this fleshly cunning mixes itself up too with a certain dependence upon God, expressed in his prayer, though he has not confidence enough to be quiet in the hand of God for protection and deliverance. How often the flesh exposes itself to another by the very concealments which it practices upon its owner! So he turns again to the presents and gifts which he designs to employ in order to pacify Esau. He gets no answer to his prayer, and follows his own devisings with his goats and sheep, camels and asses. Nor is this enough; but he delivers them into the hands of his servants, every drove by themselves, with a further charge to “put a space betwixt drove and drove,” and arranges even the form of words for the messengers’ mouths. So far away is the heir of promise from the dignity that attaches to him as appointed by the Lord, that he is lost in the guilt of his own act, by which he supplanted his brother, and cringes before him as a servant in the presence of “my lord Esau.” Lower than this he cannot well go; and at this point it is, when at his wit’s end, that the Lord takes him in hand for gracious discipline: “Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him

until the breaking of the day.” The flesh itself is now to be dealt with, which occasioned all this corrupt and deceitful planning between himself and his brother; and the bargaining with God in chapter 28, when lying at the foot of the ladder he was afraid and said, “How dreadful is this place.”

The beginning of a deep lesson was introduced here, when the wrestler prevailed not, but put forth his hand, and “touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.” In later times, and in a more spiritual and personal way (by grace), has the flesh and its actings been put to the proof, and discovered and dealt with summarily. It was when Jesus was on the earth, and had gathered the company of His disciples round about Him day by day in the enjoyment of His love, that “they all forsook Him, and fled.” It was in the weakness of their own flesh and when so intimate with such a One that they broke down, and denied Him in the hour of His own danger and death wrestling even till “the break of day” did not cure Jacob the supplanter, whatever the severer course of the touch, and the sinew that shrank in the hollow of the thigh, may have done with him individually. Nationally, when the law was given through “the disposition of angels” by the hand of Moses, wrestling, if we may so say, was again established with the tribes of Israel; but the effect of this striving was to learn that “the strength of sin is the law,” and they are dispensationally “broken out of their olive tree” as the consequence. It is indeed a long and humbling history of the wrestling, and the sinew that shrank up in the very place of its strength, from Jacob’s day to Peter’s, when the Lord said to him, “Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” The wrestling at Peniel, the law as the schoolmaster, Jesus in the midst of His disciples on earth, or Paul caught up to the third heavens, could not get rid of this “sin in the flesh.” Jacob might “halt upon his thigh” all the days of his life, and Paul might come from paradise with “a thorn in the flesh,” the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he should be exalted above measure; but the flesh in each was flesh still. Severer and final measures, which far exceed the sinew, or the law, or the sieve, or the thorn, thank God, have been adopted at the cross of Christ for our effectual deliverance from its dominion. It is there only it has received its death-blow; for there God has “condemned sin in the flesh,” and set it aside forever between Him and us. In prospect of this it may be, and at “Peniel,” that Jacob learned his early lesson by “the sinew that shrank” under the touch of the angel.

It is well to remember, too, that in this struggle “the name of Jacob,” the supplanter, was refused by the wrestler, and changed; for he said, “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed.” Nor is it without meaning that Jacob on his part called the name of the place Penuel. “For I have seen God face to face,” said he, “and my life is preserved.” And yet further we may notice what is pointed out to us, that as Jacob “passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh.” Precious combinations were these in the experience of Jacob; and still more so are they to us who commemorate the deeper truth of death at the cross, where we reckon “the old man crucified,” and know in effect that we are “alive unto God through Jesus Christ” (not that life is preserved), and we see God face to face in our risen and ascended Lord: “For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” This is our Penuel; and when we by faith in communion with the Father’s love pass over (like Jacob in his day), our sun, rises upon us, and “we all looking on the glory of

the Lord with unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit.”

(To be continued)

The Sinew That Shrank

On the other hand, may we as steadfastly refuse the flesh in all its affections and lusts, and mortify our “members which are upon the earth,” as did the children of Israel by their affinity with Jacob their progenitor. In acknowledgment of the day of his wrestling, and their identification with him as “Israel,” they eat not of the sinew which shrank, which is upon the hollow of the thigh “unto this day.” Do we perpetuate this refusal of the flesh as they did? Are we faithful according to the judgment of God upon the flesh, which He condemned on the cross? Do we bear about in the body “the dying of the Lord Jesus,” that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our body? As a consequence of this “suffering in the flesh,” do we no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God? (See 1 Peter 4:1-2). The Spirit says of us, “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). Neither Israel nor we eat of the sinew that shrank.

In Genesis 35 the ladder is gone, and with it Jacob in his original character of supplanter and bargainer is gone too; nor do we find any more the activity and strength of the flesh, which lasted up to the break of day in its determination and will. God Himself can come in and take His own place now that the wrestling is over, and has perfected its work. Refreshing it is to the heart that knows anything of itself and of the ways of God to find Him take all out of our meddlesome hands into His own. It is in this way our chapter begins: “God said unto Jacob, Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother.” Quite in character with this gracious direction are Jacob’s own proceedings; for it is not only himself who is once more in the presence of God, but, like Abraham, he commands “his household after him” to judge themselves according to what becomes the face of God, whom he saw at Penuel. “Then Jacob said to his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments; and let us arise, and go up to Bethel.”

He gives God the right place now; for even the altar is no longer to be commemorative of Jacob and Bethel, but it is henceforth to bear the name of El-bethel, or the God of Bethel, as its great and distinguishing character. This entire change from the garments they wore, to the altar of their worship, and the stripping themselves of their ornaments, as well as the denial of the strange gods that were in their hands, and their burial “under the oak, which was by Shechem,” stamp another pattern upon Jacob. “Be clean” is now his word, as indeed it was afterward by the priests, and then again by the prophets whom God sent into the midst of His people, until Christ came forth, and did the work which enables God Himself to testify that “the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.”

So “God appeared to Jacob again, when he came out of Padan-aram, and blessed him; and said, Thy name shall not be called any more Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name.” Thus the whole circle widens, and is filled with the light of God’s own presence; and in grace Jacob, and all that his name implied, is buried at Shechem too. The same grace that refused to call him any more Jacob

declares henceforth his name to be Israel; and He who loves to roll away every reproach from off His people writes upon Him this new name, sealing it as His own act, for "He called his name Israel." Here too we may remark that the reserve which was maintained on God's part whilst the wrestling with the flesh was going on, so that He said to Jacob, "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after My name?" and declined to give it, has no place or occasion longer. "And God said unto him, I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings...and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee." All is now as it should be, without let or hindrance; "and God went up from him in the place where He talked with him," without ladder or angels on His part, and in the absence of all terror and fear about person or the place on Jacob's, for the distance that produced both is gone. There is an advance also in the character of the faith that followed, now that Jacob is no longer a wrestler, but in the peace and communion of a worshipper and a prince with God. Thus the pillar and the oil poured on its top, which was in keeping with "the vision" of the house of God, and the gate of heaven at the outset, must here, in the reality and enjoyment of "the presence," have its drink-offering superadded. Jacob can no longer say, "The Lord is in this place, and I knew it not," for God had come down to him, and changed him into a prevailer "with God and with men." Moreover, he now stands identified under the name of Israel with all God's purposes and promises to patriarchs or tribes, and to peoples and nations, whether for their own covenanted blessing or for the glory of all the kingdoms of the world. What could Jacob do in the presence of such grace? He "set up a pillar in the place where God talked with him... and he poured a drink-offering thereon, and he poured oil thereon. And Jacob called the name of the place where God spake with him Bethel." There is remarkable progress and advancement here, as amongst any in our day, when there is growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Without these elements our worship will be impoverished, and the worshipper be feeble.

When this is not the stand-point of faith before God through Christ, and communion is not maintained upon the fact that we are "clean every whit, and made nigh," there must be again the ladder, or may be the gate of heaven. Perhaps, too, "how dreadful is this place," if conscience be not purged and ruled by the blood of Christ, but is only quick in a deepening sense of what God is in His own holiness, and what Jacob, the supplanter, is likewise in the flesh as in His presence. Nor will any escape out of this moral distance by doing as Jacob did, and taking a part with him as a bargainer with God, or a vow-maker. We must be receivers, and not givers, and abide under the new name of Israel (after the wrestling is finished), for we are dead. Then "the fruit of the Spirit" takes the character which David gave to his offerings and the offerings of the princes, "Of thine own have we given Thee;" for whatever comes from God goes back to Him in the sweet savor of Christ, by whom it is produced in us. This intermediate process must be gone through with Jacob, and the flesh withered in the sinew, where its strength dwells, by taking part, and reckoning by faith that God has entirely done with it by death at the cross. This is indispensable now before the nearness and intimacy of the soul is established with God in unclouded confidence at Bethel, or with El-bethel and its drink-offering. Here it is that Jacob comes out from under the cloud of his crooked policy, and follows on in the pathway of God's own footsteps. And we never walk so securely as then, though it will surely be with sorrow and yet with rejoicings. "They journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed" in birth with her son. In the depth of her trouble, and the hour of her death, "she called his name Ben-oni," (or, the son of my sorrow); "but his father called him Benjamin," (or, the son of my right hand), giving forth

the double titles, which by birth belong to Jesus alone as “the Man of sorrows,” and yet on the other side of the cross and His sufferings the Son of the Father’s right hand, exalted to be “a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance” (in a yet future day) “to Israel, and remission of sins.” How blessed thus to have been a link in the chain of God’s purposes, quietly and happily following Him in the path by which He accomplishes “the birthright and the blessing” for His own glory and the glory of His “Ben-oni-Benjamin” in that day. Far better, as now, in the perfect revelation He has made of Himself, as “the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” and our God and Father in the Son of His love, by death and resurrection, to wait for His shout, and the church’s rapture!

In conclusion, we may notice how “wittingly” Jacob acts in his last days in full accordance with the mind and ways of God, instead of continuing crafty and cunning in his own as at the first. The instance which is narrated in chapter 48 gives us, I think, this proof. “It came to pass... that one told Joseph, Behold, thy father is sick: and he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim,” whom Jacob claimed as his own, saying, “as Reuben and Simeon, they shall be mine.” In the bestowment of the blessing Israel guided his hands wittingly, though Joseph was displeased, putting his right upon Ephraim’s head, and his left upon Manasseh. The sovereignty of God “according to election” had been established in the birth of Jacob and Esau; and now the firstborn is to be set aside in the divine order of blessing. So he set Ephraim before Manasseh, saying, “His younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations.” All the lessons which Jacob had to learn touching “the birthright,” as well as the order of “the blessing” (apart from the venison and the mess of pottage), are now well gone over with God, and learned. He has but to gather all his sons around him, and, as a prophet of the Lord, “tell them all that shall befall them in the last days.” He charges them further to bury him with his fathers in Machpelah, in the land of Canaan, that he may stand in his own lot in the resurrection, and be found in the right place till then, in the cave where Abraham buried Sarah, and where they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and where Jacob said, “I buried Leah.”

In the bright record of those “who obtained a good report through faith,” this last act of the order of the birthright, and of the blessing upon Ephraim and Manasseh, stands out as sufficiently remarkable to memorialize Israel. “By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph” (in the unclouded certainty of the promises of El-elohe-Israel); “and worshipped on the top of his staff.” He thus passes away from us as “the heir of promise,” and content to be only “a pilgrim and stranger on the earth”—a true worshipper leaning on the top of his staff—till “Ben-oni-Benjamin” comes a second time in His own glory, and the glory of His Father, and the glory of the holy angels. The staff will then give place to the throne and the scepter and the royalties of the kingdom promised to him by the “I am” at Bethel. And many “shall come from the east, and the west, and sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,” and drink wine new with their Messiah, and great shall be the peace of His people.

How happy to accept all our blessings, whether now or hereafter, on our birthright title, and hold them in undisturbed communion with “the Father and the Son,” under the anointing and witness of the Holy Ghost that dwelleth in us, till the day of our translation and of the church’s rapture comes Rebekah’s counsel at the first, and the clever contrivances of Jacob, have been made foolish and contemptible, as all ours will surely be too; for God catcheth the wise in their own craftiness. His new order is, “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”

“The birthright” and “the blessing” are ordained of God to us in the Son of His love. May we value them so highly as to walk in true character with Him May we be regardless of the venison in the hunting-field, and Rebekah’s savory meat, but keep close to the appointed Heir of all things till He comes to claim possession and take us in as joint-heirs with Himself.

(Continued from page 237)

J. E. B.

A Song in the Desert

“They journeyed...toward the sunrising...And the Lord spake unto Moses, Gather the people together, and I will give them water. Then Israel sang this song, Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it” (Numbers 21:11-17).

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand” (Rom. 13:12).

“I Jesus...am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star” (Rev. 22:16).

Nearly now the last stage trodden

Of the desert way;

All behind them lies the darkness,

All before the day.

But some hearts were weary traveling,

Murmuring at the road;

Half forgetting their deliverance

By the mighty God.

“Naught,” they said, “there lies around us

But the desert sand;

Oh to see once more the rivers

Of Egyptia’s land!”

Then God’s heart of deep compassion

Sent the message free:

“If the people look for water,

Gather them to Me.”

Forty years of desert wandering,

Proving man was vain;

Turning back in heart to Egypt

When a pressure came.

Forty years of desert wandering,

Mercies sweet and new
Every day their path surrounding,
Proving God was true.
Now the journey almost over,
Trial well-nigh past,
He would have them, as when starting,
Raise a song at last.
Naught but desert sand around them,
Not one spot of green;
But the glory of His presence
Lighting up the scene.
Desert weariness forgotten
By that mighty throng,
As around that springing water
Voices rise in song.
Not a song of "victory" only
Now their voices fill;
But the deeper blest experience"
God is with us still."
Nearly now the last stage trodden
Of the desert way;
All behind us lies the darkness,
All before-the day.
Wondrous day of glowing promise,
Dimming all beside,
When the One who died to win us
Comes to claim His Bride.
And while watching for His coming,
Waiting here below,

He would have us in the desert

Find the waters flow.

Streams of sweet and deep refreshment

Gladdening all the throng,

Giving us, when gathered round Him,

Blessing and a song.

A. S. O.

A Straight Betwixt Two

The fact that Paul was led of the Holy Ghost in the pages of inspiration to put his own example before the saints of Corinth, Philippi and Thessalonica respectively, for their observance, gives a divine value to the exercises of his soul which has no parallel in the Word of God. His conversion, we read, was a delineation of the ways of Christ in others (1 Tim. 1:16); his service for Christ was for imitation of the Lord's laborers (1 Cor. 4:16); in his giving offense to none, but seeking to please all for their profit that they might be saved, he imitated Christ, and was a pattern for all saints in their intercourse with those around (1 Cor. 10:32-33;11:1); in his own personal walk he was their model (Phil. 3:17); and his sufferings put him into blessed companionship with his Lord and Master, as yet another example to any who were enduring fierce persecution for His name's sake (1 Thess. 1:6). This being seen, it will at once be admitted that we have not only to accept Paul's teaching, but we have sedulously to observe Paul himself. Nor will any who are spiritually-minded either repudiate the obligation or weaken its force, because God has been pleased to put upon record what indicates that Paul was not always in the direct current of the Holy Ghost; for none can deny that in the same Scriptures He has furnished a sufficient safeguard for every exercised heart against the danger of following blindly in the path of His servant. We thankfully reflect too, that the defects seen in so wonderfully distinguished a witness for God, only bring into more striking relief and beauty by the enforced comparison we make, the precious and divine perfections of the peerless One whose steps he followed— "THE faithful witness." Nor must we omit to recognize that what we term Paul's failures, far from being lapses from rectitude in doctrine or practice, consisted in the pursuit of some divine but subsidiary object, or the pursuing a normal object in another way, rather than that which the Spirit of God had in view at the time in accordance with the call of Christ; in a word, a lower line of action and of testimony than he was entitled to pursue, but which, nevertheless, was so far sanctioned of God as to be overruled for the accomplishment of blessed issues for His glory.

He writes to his beloved Philippians, telling them how his life trembled in the balance. He is in the metropolis of the Gentiles, and ostensibly (how little really!) he is under Caesar's power—that of the fourth empire. The great apostle of the Gentiles and the fourth beast of Daniel's dream, the head of Gentile authority, are upon the scene together; and what shall be the issue? Will the "great iron teeth," represented by Nero and Imperial Rome, tear in pieces, on this occasion or upon a later one, God's wonderful witness of mercy to these very Gentiles? We shall see. Sooner or later the head of Gentile dominion shall do this for Paul, as had the leaders of the Jews "killed the Lord Jesus." Jerusalem, the spiritual Sodom, in her usage of the Master shall be followed by Rome, the spiritual Babylon, in her treatment of His elect servant, thus successively consummating their guilt, and in so doing giving effect to Paul's doctrine: "there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Meanwhile, how impressive in its moral grandeur is Paul's noble resolve, as sober as sublime, the elevated utterance of a "prisoner of Jesus Christ" – "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death." In this sense the issue was the same in either case, Christ should have His

glory—Nero and the power of Satan, exerted or restrained, should compass no other end. His life had been the exalted expression of his thoroughness for Christ; his death would be that of Christ's thoroughness for His servant: either way Christ would be magnified, and neither the emperor nor the adversary could frustrate it. Further, not only whether living or dying was he the Lord's, but so thoroughly was there self-abnegation on the one hand, and on the other personal identification with his Lord's interests and path and spirit, that to him life upon earth was fairly and fully expressed by only one word— "Christ," and to die still more so; for he would go direct to Him; the enfranchised spirit would then enter into retreat with Himself in the paradise of His own immediate presence. He had already "suffered the loss of all things" of which man could deprive him; nay, had he not rather bartered them away for the winning of Christ, and in this been the gainer? What he had lost he counted "filth," whereas his gain was the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord!

But his life remained; all else was gone. Would it be no loss to have his life taken? This also would be gain. Long before, in writing to the saints at Corinth, he had scheduled death as forming part of the personality of the believer's estate. It were better then to be under Caesar's sword than Caesar's scepter. Did he do his worst, he but brought Paul the sooner into the presence—joys of his Lord. But another consideration now arises. How would it affect these dear saints whose love and bounty he was acknowledging? nor them only, but the assembly at large? Could he forget them in weighing which he should choose? That which he was writing about becomes a painful exercise of soul in the beloved apostle. He was going through this strait with God, and its exercises were deeply felt. Should he choose life, that was "Christ," and in his body Christ was magnified. Should he choose death, he gained, he went to Christ, and Christ should be magnified in his departure. This latter was that to which his soul impulsively turned; it was his real, his ardent desire, the being with Christ. So much better was it than remaining in the flesh, that, did he consult his own heart, he would court death, he would covet to depart; for then would he be in the unclouded presence of the One he lived and labored to win. But the gratification of his own heart, even in so inestimable a way, must be subordinated to the interests of the beloved saints he addressed; his continuance in the body was more necessary for their sakes. This then was his strait; he had liberty to choose, God thus exercising his soul, that He might test his strength and his motive, and for the moment he hesitates. Will he gratify these purely spiritual instincts of the new man? Will he indulge the divine desire of his own heart? Will he delight his spirit with the ineffable blessedness which only the glory can transcend? No. He finds in Christ Himself motive enough to enable him to forego his most ardent personal desire. Did he choose death, it would be for his own sake; he would choose life for his Master's sake. Did he choose death, it would be gain to him; but life would be gain to Christ. His own interests should therefore be subservient to the interests of his Lord. Gladly would he have laid down his life for the brethren; was it not a greater thing in his case to live for them, spending and being utterly spent on behalf of those for whom Christ had died? His Lord had continued voluntarily with His disciples, being seen of them forty days after His resurrection, speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God for their furtherance and joy of faith. Paul had caught the spirit of his Master, and thus records the solution of the divine problem: "Having confidence of this, I know that I shall remain and abide along with you all for your progress and joy in faith; that your boasting may abound in Christ Jesus through me by my presence again with you."

How much can we say we know of exercises such as these? The strait which the apostle had passed through was the exact admeasurement of his spiritual strength, the crucial test of his self-denial for Christ's sake, and the unimpeachable proof how pure was his governing motive. Oh wonderful servant of an infinitely more wonderful Master! Blessedly did he issue from the trial, becoming a pattern for us in this also, and a witness of what the grace of Christ can do in an earthen vessel, when the interests of that glorified Man on high rise paramount above everything else, eclipsing every lesser interest, because the heart has Him only for its object. Can any of us venture to say that we are thus bent upon the interests of Christ touching His members below? That this one thing, and only this one thing, so far as our choice is concerned, detains our souls away from His desired presence? That, well knowing how very far better it is to depart and to be with Him than being here, preferring His gain to our own, we elect to continue in this dark scene, since here alone we can further in our little measure, for His own sake, the interests of Him who is infinitely more to us Himself, both as object and motive, than is even the personal blessedness we should find in His presence? May He tutor our souls, as He loves to do, both by precept and example, in these lessons of denying self for His own sake!

W. R. D.

The Three Doors

One reason why some do not clearly apprehend the Lord's teaching in this beautiful discourse is, because they do not consider the circumstances under which it was delivered; and another difficulty sometimes arises from not distinguishing between the three doors here spoken of.

In the previous chapter, the Lord had given sight to a man who had been born blind. This raised the jealousy of the Pharisees; so that when he faithfully confessed that it was Jesus who had opened his eyes, they cast the man out of the synagogue. When the Lord heard that the man had been cast out, He found him, and revealed Himself to him as the Son of God, which drew forth the confession, "Lord, I believe. And he worshipped Him." He was evidently one of Christ's sheep, and heard His voice. It was under these circumstances that our Lord delivered this searching and memorable discourse of the shepherd and the sheep. He began by saying, in the hearing of the Pharisees, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." It was indeed a striking utterance, in which the Lord, in His perfect wisdom, used the case of natural blindness, just marvelously cured, to show that some who were blind needed spiritual sight. That is, one effect of Christ's having come as the Faithful Witness and the Light of the world, was that those who were blind, spiritually blind, might so receive sight as to be able to see Him with the eye of faith; and on the other hand, that those who, like the Pharisees, judged themselves competent to discern and enter into divine things might become thoroughly conscious of their blind condition. These searching words evidently touched the consciences of some of the Pharisees; for we are told that when they heard these words, they said unto Him, "Are we blind also?" Our Lord replied, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth" (John 9:39-41). How pointed and penetrating were these brief sentences of our adorable Lord; for here, speaking again with spiritual signification, He connects the consciousness of being thoroughly dark and blind with forgiveness of sins. As long as a man leans on his own competency to perceive and judge of the things of the Spirit, he gives the most unquestionable proof of his being in nature's darkness and guilt, or spiritually blind. But when he takes his place before God as blind, and totally incompetent to discern and judge of the things of God, he becomes an object of divine grace and power, and is assured of the remission of his sins through faith in the Lord Jesus. What folly and self-deception for men to say, "We see," when they are really blind, and in their sins! These probing utterances of our Lord forcibly remind us of Elihu's words to Job: "He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light" (Job 33:27,28). How forcible and emphatic then are the words, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth!"

Thus we learn that it was the self-confidence and creature-competency of these Pharisees which proved them to be blind, and in their sins. Thereon our Lord proceeds, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep" (vss.

1, 2). The subject here is the door into the sheepfold. The Pharisaic rulers and teachers were in the sheepfold—the Jewish nation—but had not entered it by the divinely-appointed way. Instead of entering by the door, which they were unable to do, they by their own efforts climbed up some other way. They had thus thrust themselves into the office of caretakers of those who were in relation to God. But with all their official trappings, human credentials, and distinctive rank among men, they were not accredited of God; for they had not entered in by the door; the sheep did not hear them. Instead of really caring for the sheep, they were thieves and robbers.

The first door then to which our Lord calls attention is “THE DOOR INTO THE SHEEPFOLD.” Into this door our Lord entered, and the porter opened to Him, because He brought all the credentials belonging to the Shepherd of Israel, the true Shepherd of the sheep. Prophets had long ago marked out His characteristics. Moses wrote of Him as “The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel,” and said unto the people, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear” (Gen. 49:24; Acts 7:37). We are further told that He who should stand and feed in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord, would be of Abram’s seed, out of David’s loins, the virgin’s Child, and born in Bethlehem, “whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting” (See Gen. 22:18; Psa. 132:11; Acts 3:20; Isa. 7:14; Mic. 5:2-4). Wise men announced His coming into the world, as His star in the heavens had guided them. The angel of the Lord visited the shepherds, who were watching their flock by night, and while the glory of the Lord shone round about them, announced the glad tidings, saying, “Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord,” when suddenly a multitude of the heavenly host gave glory to God in the highest (Luke 2). The faithful remnant too, divinely taught, welcomed Him into the sheepfold with great delight. Simeon took Him up in his arms, and joyfully exclaimed, “Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared;” while “Anna spoke of Him to all them who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” But it was for John, when Jesus was about thirty years old, publicly to announce Him as the Son of God, and the Lamb of God, saying, “I knew Him not: but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God” (John 1:33,34). Thus the man Christ Jesus brought every proof with Him that He was Jehovah’s Shepherd, the fellow of the Lord of hosts, and to Him the porter opened. Besides, He called His own sheep by name, whether it was Matthew, the publican; Mary of Magdala, out of whom He cast seven devils; a Samaritan adulteress, or industrious fishermen, those whom He called heard His voice, and followed Him. He loved His sheep; He came to give them life more abundantly; to feed them, care for them; lead them out of false things; do everything for them—without money and without price. In purest love He freely laid down His life for them, and His purpose was to gather them together into one flock (John 10:16). Thus we see clearly that He entered into the sheepfold by the door, and that He manifested in every way that He was “the Shepherd of the sheep.”

The second door mentioned in this beautiful discourse is “THE DOOR OF THE SHEEP”—Christ Himself, the door by which the sheep would be led out of Judaism; for we are informed that the Shepherd of the sheep not only calleth His own sheep by name, but leadeth them out.

(vs. 3) It is very important to see this clearly. We are told that Jesus came to His own (His loved nation), and His own received Him not. They were so sunk in sin that they hated Him without a

cause, and at length openly declared that they preferred a murderer to their own Messiah whom God had sent. The loved nation had terribly departed from God. Though they contended for the outward observance and sanctity of the Sabbath day, and the periodical observance of certain feasts, yet they had so far forgotten God, and corrupted His truth, that these became mere formalities. Instead, therefore, of reading in the gospels of “the feasts of Jehovah,” as they are called in Leviticus, we find “the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh;” and again, “the Jews’ feast of tabernacles was at hand” (John 6:4; 7:2). The nation, too, had been given up to the Gentiles, in God’s governmental displeasure, because of their sins. We do not therefore find our Lord re-establishing Judaism, or restoring the sheep to that from which the nation had so manifestly fallen, but He led them individually outside corrupt things with Himself. When they knew Christ, and became associated with Him, they not only heard His voice, but knowing that He putteth forth His own sheep, and goeth before them, they were constrained to follow Him. It is important to see not only that Christ is the Good Shepherd, but that He is “the door of the sheep”—the door whereby the sheep were led out of a corrupted Judaism, through His calling them to have to do with Himself.

Early in Israel’s history, when Jehovah’s name had been dishonored by the sin of the golden calf, and judgment had fallen upon the people, we find that “Moses 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 that sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp.” There it was that they found Jehovah’s presence; for “it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and Jehovah talked with Moses” (Ex. 33:7-11). Thus we see that Moses, the servant of the Lord, led the faithful OUT; and every one who sought the Lord went out, and that the way of truth in this evil time was without the camp for all who sought the Lord.

Again we see in the epistles, that in the last days, when the profession of Christianity would be associated with all kinds of evil, and “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,” the path of the faithful is clearly marked out, “From such turn away.” The Lord thus leads His own out (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Elsewhere the faithful are enjoined to “go forth therefore unto Him (Christ) without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:13). It is in the very last epistle Paul wrote that He contemplates terrible corruption and departure from the truth, and declares that things will be so bad under the name of Christianity, that “seducers will wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” It is there he appeals to saints for individual faithfulness to the Lord, and urges them to separate themselves from evil. “If a man therefore purge himself from these (vessels to dishonor), he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). These and other Scriptures show that when evil and corruption have come in, the faithful are to purge themselves from it, because it cannot be purged out, and that the Lord would still, by His word and Spirit, be leading them out. In this the Lord is “the door of the sheep,” as well as their Leader. Therefore no one can possibly be in a right position here without having personal intercourse with the Lord—the door of the sheep—and being subject to the guidance of His word and Spirit. Difficulties and uncertainty soon become removed when souls really get before the Lord, and are willing to be led by Him. It is easy enough to mingle with others who are taught of the Lord, and led by Him; but how can anyone be really honoring Christ, except he is acquainted with His mind, and subject thereto, because it is His mind, and is

acting on it for His glory, whatever the reproach may be? The Lord is the Leader, the Door, and the Object for those who go forth unto Him; and we may be assured that His special presence and blessing will be outside of that which men try to accredit with the name of Christ, but which is corrupt and evil. Thus we see that Christ being the door of the sheep for leading His own out of corrupted Judaism is in accordance with a divine principle of action, which is equally incumbent in these days of corrupted Christianity. The path of the faithful now is surely to go outside of that which dishonors His name, and there to find His presence and His blessing. Happy indeed are they who know what it is to be before the Lord, what it is to be led by Him, and to be outside with Him, in separation from everything which dishonors His name.

The third door mentioned by our Lord in this discourse is THE DOOR OF SALVATION. He said, "I am the door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9). This door is Christ. Thus the Lord presented Himself as the only way of salvation, the only door of escape from coming wrath; and the door stands wide open now, not to Jews only, but also to Gentiles—"any man." It is, "Whosoever will, let Him take the water of life freely." His arms are here thrown open, and He welcomes all, and casts out none that come to Him. Observe, He is "the door"; there is no other. It is not a long, dreary, circuitous passage, but a door; and we know that to enter a door, one step only is needed. A person who is outside the door takes one step, and he is inside; he has entered in. And so the soul that now believes God's testimony to the truth of salvation by Christ alone at once enters into God's presence by faith, through Jesus the Savior, who died to save sinners. Salvation then is only by Christ—"By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved." It is also free to all; no exception is made. No one who desires it is debarred from this wondrous blessing; for it is open to "any man." "If any man enter in, he shall be saved." Having received Jesus as the door, and having entered in by faith, he is entitled to salvation—salvation from sins, from condemnation, from wrath, from hell; he is saved with an everlasting salvation. "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 5:9). When the soul thus knows the blessedness of having entered in by "the door," taking the Lord at His word, he finds peace with God, is reconciled to God by the death of His Son, and is a child of God through faith in Christ Jesus. He knows the Good Shepherd, having heard His voice; and being willing to be led by Him, is blessed indeed.

Lastly, observe that such "shall go in and out, and find pasture." He can go into the presence of God inside the veil, and find strength and comfort there, where the good, great, and chief Shepherd is. He can also go out in the Lord's service, and find His presence and blessing in seeking to feed and refresh His sheep and lambs, according to that word, "He that watereth shall be watered also himself" (Prov. 11:25).

H. H. S.

These Sacrifices

We have then in these sacrifices: Christ in His devotedness unto death, burnt-offering; Christ in the perfection of His life of consecration to God, meat-offering; Christ the basis of the communion of the people with God, who feeds, as it were, at the same table with them, peace-offering; and finally, Christ made sin for those who stood in need of it, and bearing their sins in His own body on the tree, sin-offering.

J. N. D.

On Worshipping the Father

One of the saddest considerations which, among others, arises in the soul in respect to our brethren entangled in the systems of men is, that they know so little, theoretically and practically, of worship; nor can we be surprised, when we reflect that they have little, if at all, understood either the object, the power, or the conditions of it. Being thus but ill-acquainted with its character, they are further fettered by the lack of suited occasions for its happy exercise. Let any one conversant with the Establishment, and with the many forms of orthodox denominationalism, see if he can point out, among the multiplicity of celebrations, services, and meetings, any single occasion, from one year's end to another, in which opportunity is afforded for unhindered worshipping the Father, in spirit and in truth, by those who are in relationship to Him as children. The very A B C of worship, as taught to a Samaritan woman just come to a knowledge of Christ, was, that "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 4:23-24). Can we say that this first lesson in worship has been truly understood or acquired by one such believer out of a hundred with whom we come in contact? Go where you will, in city, town, village, or hamlet, you find that what gives a feature to the architecture of a street, or the picturesqueness of the landscape, is one of the many so-called "places of worship" which have become the most numerous of all public buildings; and whoever, let it be said, has most truly the spirit of his Master, will be the last to lift a hostile finger against any one of them. But when are the worshippers in spirit and in truth gathered together, as such, to worship the Father who is seeking them? and where, and what is the worship that goes up within those walls? Will any round of ceremonial or celebrations, high or low, be accepted of God in place of that which He covets from His gathered saints, according to the revelation of His own mind? Shall the strains of pealing organ, intoned ritual, or intellectual oratory be suffered to stifle the accents of the heart? Can vested priests, or humanly-ordained ministers, be allowed of Him to supersede our direct approach to Himself in full-handed worship in spirit and in truth? God wants such worshippers, and the worship they are qualified of Him to render. What a parody upon this are "places of worship" without worshippers! So entirely has the true character of Christian worship been lost, that, as was said of one of the cities of ancient Greece, renowned for its idolatry, it was easier to find a god than a man, so may it be said of many a spot in Christendom today, that it is easier to find a "place of worship" than one intelligent worshipper.

Do we take this to heart as we ought, in humiliation before God? Do we acknowledge as we should, this sad departure from God's ways in those who bear His name? Alas, alas! we so live amongst it, and are so saturated by it, that we fail to mourn over it and to confess it, as we could scarcely fail to do if for the first time we witnessed such lamentable blindness of heart as to what is due to Him. And are we clear as to worship ourselves? and do our meetings present any adequate expression before God of what He delights to behold when His saints come together for this special end? Shall we mourn over the grievous defection of our brethren in the sects, as though we were exempt from failure? We cannot.

But while fully acknowledging this, we thankfully own that we are not shackled by the want of fitting occasions or suited conditions for its unhindered exercise. Both opportunity for and liberty in worship are ours. Through mercy too we know something of the object and power of it, and our qualification as purged worshippers for the enjoyment of this lofty and blessed privilege. It is an immense mercy to be able to say this, as occupying a position where neither vested interests nor human prescriptions bar the outflow, by the Spirit of God, of spontaneous worship to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The more, however, we recognize the reality of having such a position given us, and of possessing through grace an ability for filling it to His glory, the more we must admit the responsibility it imposes, and lament that it is so poorly fulfilled. That we have been brought into a wealthy place, none will deny; but if I have not possessed myself of it in the length of it and in the breadth of it, the very riches around me, which others are enjoying, only make more conspicuous that I am personally indigent; while, on the contrary, the more I appreciate and avail myself of the mine of wealth laid open to faith, the more am I enriched by it in an ever-increasing ratio. "Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." No one having an adequate sense of what true Christian worship is, in its elevated divine character, but must often be painfully impressed with the poverty of it which marks many meetings, and is observable at one time or another in all. We need to be awakened to it, that our hearts may be stirred up to apprehend afresh, and to appreciate fittingly the wondrous privilege which is ours, of worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth. The Lord put this lesson of John 4 before a poor Samaritan woman but just brought to know Himself—a babe of an hour old—and yet, alas! how many are they who, having known the Lord for years, have never apprehended the true character of Christian worship! That it flows from a sense of benefits received, may well be allowed; but the very fact of its flowing from it, shows plainly enough that worship, and the sense of benefits from which it flows, are not the same thing. And, happily, the further it flows, the more truly it gets its character expressed; like a river seeking the sea, which shapes its way in that given direction, and, oblivious of its feeble source, expends its acquired volume in dignity and power upon the object from which its elements were originally drawn, and by which it has ever been attracted.

However fully our souls may be impressed with the perfection of the work which has set us in cloudless favor before God forever, and the blessedness of being in His presence who did that work, yet more is required to produce worship. This will be at once seen when we remember that, properly speaking, worship is now a tribute to the Father, the happy sense of a known, enjoyed, and eternal relationship of the highest order being an essential element in its character. Were we asked to define Christian worship, we could not answer better than by citing one of the prophetic verses in Psalm 22 "I will declare Thy name unto My brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee" – the Father's name declared unto His brethren, Christ in their midst when assembled, leading their praises to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God. It is based upon redemption accomplished by death and resurrection; for immediately that Christ can say, "Thou hast heard Me from the horns of the unicorns," He can give vent to His own personal joy in leading out the hearts of the redeemed in praise to the Father, in fellowship with Himself. Christian worship, then, is that of His brethren gathered as the assembly of God, having Christ in their midst leading their praises, and the Father the object of worship—as the Holy Ghost, it may be added, is the power. Now if this be seen, it precludes the thought of individual worship. The woman of Samaria learned principles of worship from the lips of an infallible Teacher; and the man of John 9 had his eyes opened not only to see, but to see Him, the Son of God, and might well be

down at His feet doing Him the homage of a grateful heart. But how much more was needed before Christian worship could be fittingly rendered! The very foundations had yet to be laid in the death and resurrection of Christ, in the anticipated virtue and value of which He could alone begin to reveal the Father; as He said, "I have declared Thy name;" adding, however (which is of such precious interest to us), "and will declare it." Accordingly, after being raised from among the dead by the glory of the Father, the activity of His ardent love to His disciples is displayed in His instant presentation of His Father's name anew, binding them up with Himself in its power and plenitude, and accrediting them now as His "brethren," thus fulfilling to the letter the first part of verse 22 in the psalm. And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, and the assembly of God formed by the Holy Ghost's advent from a glorified Christ—gathered, as His brethren then were, unto His name as never before, and moreover baptized by Him with the same Spirit into union with Himself in one body—the latter part of the same verse was equally fulfilled; for He took His place "in the midst," according to Matthew 18:20, to lead the praises of His saints to His Father and their Father, to His God and their God. This was the inauguration of Christian worship; then for the first time was it expressed in its true spiritual significance; and if this be understood, it sweeps away every thought of its possessing a formal or ceremonial character—every such observance of it doing violence to its very nature.

Drawn of the Holy Ghost, as the assembly of God, to the person of Christ, His brethren (because of being gathered unto His name) have His presence in their midst—a matter of deepest, yea, of paramount importance; and every note of praise or worship, if not what the Spirit of God draws out in direct address to the Lord Jesus, should be recognizable as that which He is Himself leading forth from His saints to gladden afresh the heart of the Father. As to this, how interesting and how seasonable is it to observe that Christ is now engaged in these three distinguished services to the Father—declaring the Father's name unto His brethren (John 17:26; Psa. 22:22); glorifying the Father (John 17:1); and leading the praises of the assembly to and before the Father, as seen in the beautiful prophetic utterance of the same psalm. We ought never to lose sight of the special and peculiar joy of the Son in glorifying, in whatever way, the Father, according to the precious import of that touching appeal in John 17 "Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." The Father having glorified the Lord Jesus in response to this word, He is now glorifying the Father; and surely never more so than when He gathers us by His Spirit around Himself to concentrate our hearts' affections, and the praises of our lips (as His beloved brethren), upon His Father and ours, in that happy worship in spirit and in truth which it is His deepest joy as well to lead as to inspire.

May we, through grace, remember, that ever so deep a sense of benefits, and the most profound gratitude for them, may exist, and even in the presence of Christ, without one true note of praise or worship being sounded out from the heart. But our worship is that of sons, rendered in spirit and in truth, in the fellowship of the assembly of God, by the Lord Jesus Christ and His brethren, on the ground of His death and resurrection, which are so made good to our souls in the power of the Holy Ghost, that, undetained by any form of self-occupation, we are free to joy and delight ourselves, through Him, in His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

W. R. D.

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