

CHRISTIAN FRIEND VOLUME 6

by Unknown

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81 Chapters

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Christian Friend Volume 6

A Song of Degrees

“As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me to the banqueting-house, and His banner over me was love” (Song of Solomon 2:3-4).

This scripture may very fittingly be accepted as a song of degrees in the early history of the soul of a believer; and we say its early history, because there are other and deeper truths which follow; but here we have a little outline of truth suited to babes in Christ who are not yet equal to the strong meat of the Word of God. We hope then our few remarks will prove useful to that deeply-interesting class of readers who have but recently come to the knowledge of Christ, and to that much greater number who, having for years, some of them for many years, known something of His grace, have never yet learned the wondrous blessedness of their present portion in Him.

We are firmly convinced that there is a very wide circle of souls (and the circle is widening every day) who need to have the eyes of their heart enlightened to know the character of their calling, and above all to know what Christ is for them and to them, did they but appropriate by faith His fullness. We feel sure we need only mention it to secure a ready admission, that there are hundreds and thousands of persons having divine life in their souls who know what it is to have Christ for their sins, but who have not the remotest knowledge in any practical way of what it is to have Him for their hearts.

This, then, is what we would specially draw out from the scripture before us. First of all the quickened soul is attracted and charmed by an object outside of itself, and is enraptured by its supreme beauty, and its inviting fragrance: “As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons.” Surely this answers in a divine way to the soul’s first sight of Christ by faith; we do not say it is the meaning of this scripture, which doubtless in its real interpretation refers to the intimate relations of the remnant of Israel and the Lord Jesus to each other in a later and a different day. We simply use the illustration in its adaptation to the believer personally, and as such we accept this word as the soul’s first discovery for itself by faith of the peerless beauty and attractiveness of His blessed person who is “over all God blessed forever.”

The apple-tree in its blossom appears to be suggested; and of all trees, surely this in its early bloom is the most beautiful and attractive to the eye of man. Now this is just what Christ was not (and is not) to the world; for the word of the prophet was fulfilled: “When we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.” But it is what He is, and ever will be, to faith, even “the chiefest among ten thousand;” “yea, He is altogether lovely.” The eye that has fully opened upon Christ has beheld a sight for eternity, has looked upon an object above the brightness of the sun, and may well be blind to everything else by reason of “the glory of that light” (Acts 22:11). Compared to that Tree of Life which God planted for His own glory, who would venture for a moment to speak of the trees of the wood? As well might we compare the sickly yellow hues of an expiring rushlight to the pure and brilliant rays of an electric light. It is Christ in His divine supremacy and heavenly beauty as an object to meet and win the affections of the heart.

Beholding Him, I am attracted to His feet like the woman who was a sinner (Luke 7); the eyes of my heart feast upon His divine perfections as I am irresistibly drawn to Him. Little, it may be, do I know, and far less could I disclose to another, what I find in Himself, or derive from Him; but I am spellbound, riveted with His transcending excellency; I cannot divert my eyes from so commanding, yet so winning, an object. Before Him everything else retires, and the brightest object upon earth pales in its luster.

Thus delighted with Him, I sit down under His shadow with great delight. This is the second degree, and so we may read the verse (see margin). The soul having discovered something of His worth, would tarry and abide in His presence. As John's two disciples lost sight of the Baptist when the Lamb of God passed by, and asked of the One who had become the magnet of their hearts, "Where dwellest thou?" and in response to His own invitation, "Come and see," abode with Him for a full day, or perfect period of time, so here the soul rests permanently in the presence of its object. The One who has entered the arena of the soul is more than enough to fill and satisfy it forever. The soul is enraptured; the heart is charged with untold delight, and would never depart from under the covert of His wings. She takes her place beneath His benignant, overshadowing arms, and finds as much her safety as her shelter there. Not now is He an object only eliciting admiration, but He is the One who stands between me and every evil thing. Once my sins were between me and Him, now is He between me and my sins; they are gone forever, and His everlasting arms embrace me in eternal security. But more than this. As in eastern countries the burning sun is our fiery enemy, so is an overshadowing tree, or a great rock, the most welcome intervention between us and his terrible blast. This also is seen here as a figure of Christ. Under His shadow I find not only my security forever, but that refreshing shade which is afforded by His eternal wings. As the strong quills of the bird shield her brood from every foe, and her downy breast at the Same time affords warmth and comfort to her tender charge, so does His mighty wing stand between me and the enemy; and while on the one hand I experience security from everything without, on the other I learn what it is to be pillowed in spirit already upon His bosom, to enjoy there the eternal security of an assured place in His heart, which nothing shall nullify or disturb. This, then, is what it is to sit down with exultation beneath the tabernacle of His presence, the sanctuary of His shadow!

But there is a third thing— "His fruit was sweet unto my taste." The apostle Peter says, "Unto us who believe He is precious," or more correctly, "is the preciousness." The more we find out one another, the more we discover imperfection, failure, and defect; the more we find out Christ, the more we discover His suitability, His sufficiency, His excellency, and how replete He is with everything calculated to feed and delight the soul. If, of all trees no tree so beautiful in its bloom as the apple, so of all trees is none so valuable for its fruit, affording wholesome food for the hungry, and refreshing drink for the thirsty: it feeds, nourishes, and refreshes. How much more so is Christ all this, and infinitely more, for the needy soul "His flesh is meat indeed, His blood is drink indeed;" as He said, "He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." To the soul that has found its all in Him, how true and how forcible are these simple words, "His fruit was sweet to my taste!" "All, all I want is there!" Dear reader, are these the experiences of your soul? Are you personally attracted and enraptured by this blessed object, this sight for eternity? Well, that, then, is our first degree. Are you consciously under His shelter—His blood between you and God? Himself between you and your sins? Further, Are you housed in the eternal security, and happy in the eternal serenity, which

is found only in one sweet and sacred spot, even under the covert of His wings? That is our second degree.

Again, are you feeding upon Him? The wave-breast and the heave-shoulder are for you as a believer; all the tender affections of His heart, and the resistless might of His upholding arm, are yours for faith to appropriate, use, and enjoy. This, therefore, is our third degree. Now mark, whatever He is for us He is forever. (1) His cloudless beauty can never fade, His surpassing excellency never depart, His peerless perfections never be sullied. Before Him I am less than nothing; yet attracted to Himself, my eyes are filled with the revelation of His person, and my heart enraptured for eternity. (2) His wing of power and breast of love alike are mine; and the security and the shelter they afford me I can, through grace, lay claim to forever. (3) His fruit is sweet to our taste now; the ante-past is ours already; and the full fruition is at hand in the Tree of Life, and the hidden manna, our living food forever and forever.

But there is yet another degree or two more— “He brought me to the banqueting-house.” (margin, “house of wine.”) Oh, who shall declare to us the blessedness of being inside the house, at home with Him there! Yet do not we know something of that anticipated bliss already? If we have indeed passed the three degrees, we shall surely not be blocked at the fourth. Let faith plume her golden wings, and rejoice in those precious words as she soars upward, “He brought me,” Himself the doer of it. Surely He shall have His own unhindered way soon! But ought He not now? And, if we would but let Him, here He tells us what His loving heart would lead Him to do. He would conduct us to His house of wine, the wine of joy and gladness; and His blessed heart would unbend itself, and He would joy over us with singing. Let the reader here pause, and ask himself how much of this divine, this heavenly joy, his heart has experienced today in company of spirit with Christ. Is your joy His joy, and His joy your joy? Have you thus proved that in this at least you are “one spirit with the Lord?” Do you cultivate the joy of Christ and of God as your joy, and thus make manifest that you have taken your eternal place in His house of wine? Alas! how very few of the dear children of God know what it is to joy in Him through our Lord Jesus Christ; many indeed know not what it is to have peace with Him. They have never then sat down under the inviting shadow of Christ; but even of those who have that settled peace of soul, how few have final rest of heart in Him, sitting down together in His house of wine. It is the fourth step in our series, and with the next we conclude our song of degrees. “His banner over me is love.” Have you reached this crowning degree, this climax of all? It is the eternal triumph of His love. On His unfurled banner, waving forever over our heads, shall be read, “The love of Christ which passeth knowledge,” as immeasurable as it is inexhaustible; “He will rest in His love.”

Surely these are degrees in the achievements of grace which enter into glory, and tell of it beautifully and blessedly. But they are for faith now; and, dear reader, if you have never yet done so, let me invite you to take your degrees. Each is a step onward in divine blessedness for the soul—an inviting, cheering, inspiriting step, to which the Holy Ghost would lead the dear children of God. These picture-lessons about Christ, with which the Word of God teems, are drawn by the pencil of God to rejoice our hearts, to increase our faith, to develop our growth by the Holy Ghost— “From glory into glory changed, Till we behold His face.” The Lord do it for His own sake.

W. R. D.

Fragment: Fellowship With the Father

My fellowship with the Father is my taste of the delight He has in the only-begotten.

G. V. W.

The Ground of Confidence Before God

His wing of power and breast of love ground of being perfectly happy before God, because he is perfectly saved. This is the right state of a Christian—that of confidence, not in the flesh (carnal confidence), but confidence and joy before God. A state of want of confidence and of uncertainty as regards himself is a state in which the Christian may be found; he may pass through it, and that even because of a certain work produced in the soul by the Holy Ghost, but it is not his proper state. What the Holy Ghost gives is certainty. Wherever there is uncertainty, it results from the working of our own hearts, even though in connection with (and, in a sense, grounded upon) what is really the work of the Spirit. I may believe that God is holy, and, seeing sin in myself, may begin to reason on my own worthiness as to whether I can or cannot come to God—whether I can have anything to say to God. There may be the desire to go to Him, but then I do not know whether He will accept me. This is not faith; and yet it is constantly the state of soul in which Christians are found. It is not properly a Christian state; it is reasoning upon things known by faith, things found out through faith, but it is not faith. We find in the Word of God that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin; that by the blood of the cross He has made peace; that our sins and iniquities are remembered no more; and, if faith is in exercise, we are happy—we get peace. Faith is the simple-hearted reception of what God has said.

J. N. D.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: the Kingdom of Christ

In the present dispensation grace reigns through righteousness (Rom. 5:21), in the eternal state righteousness will dwell (2 Peter 3:13); but in the millennial kingdom righteousness will reign. This indeed will be its characteristic according to that word of the prophet, "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32:1), or to another of the psalmist, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the scepter of thy kingdom is a right scepter." (45:6). There are indeed two types in Scripture of Christ as King—David and Solomon. David portrays Him in figure as King of righteousness, and Solomon as Prince of peace. These two are combined in Melchizedek, king of Salem "first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace" (Heb. 7:2). These two things, it will be seen, are the distinguishing features of the sway of Christ, the one preceding, and indeed producing the other; for "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever" (Isa. 32:17).

It will be therefore evident to the reader that Christ can be in no sense said to be King of the church. To it He stands in a closer relationship, even that of Head; for believers now are united to Him by the Spirit of God, and are consequently members of His body. True, He is a King as to title, though at present He is a rejected King; and it is as true that the believer owns no authority but His; but it is a confusion of dispensations to aver that Christ is now reigning as King. He will do so; but it will not be until He comes forth in the manner described in the last paper. At the present moment He is sitting at the right hand of God, and there He will continue to sit until His enemies are made His footstool. Then He will appear, and proceed to put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:24,25). This is the kingdom—the kingdom as so explained—that falls to be considered in the present paper. The kingdom of heaven exists now (Matt. 13), so also the kingdom of God (John 3); and believers are said to be translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13), but the reign of Christ as King is confined to the millennium. Thus Mary was told concerning Him, that "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). It is obvious that this promise has never yet been fulfilled; for when He was presented to the Jews as their Messiah they would not receive Him, and finally cried, "We have no king but Cesar" (John 19:15). But every word of God must stand, and thus He will yet be the King of Israel, and not only of Israel, for as Son of Man He inherits still wider glories, "and all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Dan. 7:27). Israel will be the center of this universal dominion, and it will be through them that He will govern the nations upon the earth.

First then on the assumption of His throne, which the reader will now understand is consequent upon His appearing, He will act in judgment after the pattern of David; that is, He will judge everything He finds according to righteousness. Hence the psalmist says, "Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment" (Psa. 72:1,2). He will therefore "gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity," and "the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day there shall be one Lord, and His name one" (Zech. 14:9).

We have a remarkable scene of this character in Matthew 25. Having established His throne in righteousness, all nations are gathered before Him for judgment. This is expressly connected with His kingdom: "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). It is the only time that our Lord applies the title of King to Himself: "Then shall the King say unto them," etc. (vss. 34-40) This shows that the kingdom has been founded—marking, indeed, the commencement of His millennial sway. If now we examine the features of this session of judgment, it will be manifest that there is no pretext whatever for confounding it with that of the great white throne (Rev. 20), or for deducing from it the popular idea of a general judgment—of believers and unbelievers together. It is, in fact, a judgment of living nations; for there is no scriptural precedent for terming the dead "the nations." There are three classes here apparent—the sheep, the goats, and the "brethren" of the King. It will be observed that the way in which the nations had treated the King's "brethren" becomes the ground of their classification, whether among the sheep or among the goats. This fact is therefore the key to the whole scene. Who then are the King's "brethren"? Very clearly they must be Jews—His kinsmen according to the flesh, but also His true servants. We may thus probably find a clue to them in Isaiah 66, in a passage already adduced. There we find that after the Lord has come in judgment, some of the saved are sent to declare His glory among the Gentiles. So in the scene before us, the King's "brethren" have evidently gone forth as His messengers among the nations, and they are therefore invested with a special place and authority, even as the ambassadors of a sovereign now are clothed with all the honor and dignity of the one they represent. The principle on which they are sent forth is that on which the Lord sent out the twelve: "He that receiveth you receiveth me" (Matt. 10:40). Hence the King says to those on His right hand, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me;" and they are made to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. In like manner He says to those on His left hand, "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matt. 25:34-46).

Thus Christ as the King, by the display of His power in righteous judgment, obtains universal dominion; for "the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him" (Psa. 72:10,11). Thereon; having put down all rule and all authority and power, He reigns as Prince of Peace. "His name shall endure forever: His name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Him: all nations shall call Him blessed" (Psa. 72:17).

Leaving the reader to study for himself in the psalms and prophets the details of His millennial kingdom, we may point out a few of its leading features.

(1) Jerusalem will recover its former glory; nay, its future condition will as far surpass its former, as the glory of Christ as King will outshine that of David and Solomon. "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." Again: "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that

despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas thou hast been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through thee, I will make thee an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations" (Isa. 60:10-15). We likewise read: "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God" (Isa. 62:3; see many other passages of the same character); and surely it is only fitting that the metropolis of Messiah's kingdom should be suited to the worthiness, dignity, and glory of the King!

The temple and its services will be revived in, surpassing splendor. (Ezek. 40-46) Some have felt a difficulty as to sacrifices being restored; but the difficulty vanishes when it is remembered that these sacrifices will be simply commemorative in their character. In the old dispensation they had no efficacy whatever apart from their reference to Christ, for it was not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins (Heb. 10:4); and in the millennium they will look back to that one sacrifice for sin which was offered upon the cross, as those under the Mosaic economy foreshadowed it. They will, therefore, but recall to the grateful, worshipping hearts of God's people, the blood of Jesus Christ His Son which cleanseth from all sin.

All nations will come up to Jerusalem to worship. We thus read in the prophet: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob: and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2,3). Zechariah also speaks of a similar thing. He says: "And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles" (14:16).

The animal creation will share in the peace and blessing of that day. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock" (Isa. 65:25; see also Isa. 11:6-9). It is added to the above scripture, "And dust shall be the serpent's meat;" showing, we suppose, that the serpent will be excluded from the deliverance from thralldom under which even the brute creation has hitherto groaned. But as we know, "The creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21).

The curse will be removed from the earth. When Adam told the ground was cursed on his account. Whatever the alleviation of this sentence under Noah, it is not completely abrogated until the reign of Messiah. The psalmist accordingly sings, "Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us" (Psa. 67:5,6). Amos in like manner prophesies, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the trader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt." (9:13) For it is at this time that "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God" (Isa. 35:1,2).

There will be no death, excepting in the way of judgment, throughout the whole of the thousand years. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his

days; for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be cursed" (Isa. 65:20). The meaning of this scripture would seem to be, that death will be entirely exceptional, and then only in the way of righteous judgment. The age of Methuselah may therefore not only be equaled, but surpassed, in this blessed period of Messiah's reign.

All injustice will be instantly redressed. This is connected of necessity with the Messiah's righteous rule. Hence we read, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence: and precious shall their blood be in His sight" (Psa. 72:12-14). Men fondly dream that this is the goal of human enlightenment and progress; but they are ignorant of, or forget, the incurable corruption of human nature, and hence do not consider that even though the whole world were to obtain just and equal laws, they would fail either in their administration or application. No; Christ is the only hope for the earth, as for the saint; for "He cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity" (Psa. 98:9).

But, notwithstanding all these blessed features, there will be rebellions even under the reign of Christ. In Psalm 66 we read, "Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee;" or, as it is in the margin, "yield feigned obedience." The same expression is found in another psalm. "As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me," or, "yield feigned obedience" (Psa. 18:44). It would appear from these statements that the display of Christ's power in judgment will be so overwhelming, as it surely will be in the judgment upon the nations assembled against Jerusalem, that many, not bowed in heart, will yet be terrified into the acceptance of His rule. They will profess subjection while their hearts are alienated from Him; hence they will be as easily tempted to renounce as to submit to His sway. Accordingly we find that after—perhaps not long after—the establishment of His throne, Gog, with a multitude of followers, "a great company, and a mighty army," comes up against His people Israel, "as a cloud to cover the land." But he comes to meet with immediate and utter destruction, so great and overwhelming that "seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land" (Ezek. 38, 39).

Again, at the close of the millennium there is a still larger rebellion, directly attributed to the action of Satan. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog [not to be confounded with the Gog of Ezekiel], to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city" (Rev. 20:7-9). Thus every dispensation closes with failure as a striking testimony to the character and nature of man. Tried in every way, without law and under law, under grace, and at last under the personal reign of the Messiah, he shows that he cannot be improved, that the flesh remains the same, that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, that the carnal mind is enmity with God. The Jews chose a Caesar, yea, a Barabbas, in preference to Christ; and finally man accepts Satan himself, and under his leadership goes to attack and destroy "the camp of the saints... and the beloved city" that are under the special protection of the glorified Messiah. The issue could be but one. There remains nothing for God but to vindicate the holiness of the throne of Christ; and accordingly we read that "fire came down from God out of heaven, and devalued them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into

the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever" (Rev. 20:9,10). Thus closes the period of the thousand years. It was introduced in judgment, and it is closed by judgment; but it will yet be the time of earth's blessing and joy. For it must be remembered that Satan is bound until the close of the period, and hence while the flesh remains the same, the power of evil being thus absent, all the influences to which man is subject will be on the side of Christ. It will be a total reversal of the present state of things; so that the psalmist may well cry, "Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; let the sea roar, and the fullness thereof. Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord: for He cometh to judge the earth: He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with His truth" (Psa. 96:11-13).

But we must leave the reader to enter for himself into a closer study of the subject. Abundant materials for the purpose will be found throughout the Scriptures; and if he but read in dependence upon the Spirit for guidance and teaching, and with his eye upon Christ, it will not be without profit and blessing.

E. D.

Settled Peace

A dead and risen Christ is the groundwork of salvation. “He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification” (Rom. 4:25). To see Jesus by the eye of faith nailed to the cross, and seated on the throne, must give solid peace to the conscience, and perfect liberty to the heart. We can look into the tomb and see it empty; we can look up to the throne and see it occupied, and go on our way rejoicing. The Lord Jesus settled everything on the cross on behalf of His people; and the proof of this settlement is that He is now at the right hand of God. A risen Christ is the eternal proof of an accomplished redemption; and if redemption is an accomplished fact, the believer’s peace is a settled reality. We did not make peace, and never could make it; indeed, any effort on our part could only tend more fully to manifest us as peace-breakers. But Christ, having made peace by the blood of His cross, has taken His seat on high, triumphant over every enemy. By Him God preaches peace. The word of the gospel conveys this peace; and the soul that believes the gospel has peace—settled peace before God; for Christ is His peace (See Acts 10:36; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20). In this way God has not only satisfied His own claims, but in so doing He has found out a divinely-righteous way through which His boundless affections may flow down to the guiltiest of Adam’s guilty progeny.

C. H. M.

Sin and Sins

In the first part of Romans, what we have done—our sins, is the chief subject, and Christ delivered for them in grace, so that they are gone forever for those who believe. But there is another question to be settled—not only what we have done, but what we are. These two questions are raised in Genesis 3. God said to Eve, in verse 13, “What is this that thou hast done?” and to Adam (vs. 9), “Where art thou?” God has, so to speak, asked the question in the first part of the epistle, “What hast thou done?” And when everything is brought to light, and all that we have done is nothing but sin, in His love and grace He has given His Son to put it away. This is up to verse 11 of chapter 5. Now the question of what we are by nature is taken up, “Where art thou?” Then, how God delivers us, not only from our sins, but from what we are as children of Adam, from our sinful nature—which is a much deeper thing. Why do we commit sins? Because we are all born into this world with a corrupt, fallen nature, as in Psalm 51 “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” Yes, a little infant is born in sin; and how soon the sinful nature begins to manifest itself! How soon does a child begin to have a will of its own, to show temper and to be disobedient! The testimony of Scripture is plain as to this evil nature, that it is utterly bad, and not only so, but unimprovable (a fact which many of us are slow to learn).

Let us look at a scripture or two that speak of it. Our Lord, in John 3:6, says: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh;” and this flesh means, not the body, but our sinful nature. Whatever you may do with it, it is unchanged. You may educate the flesh, take every possible pains with it, even make it religious, but, after all, it remains what it began with—flesh. And in Romans 8:7 we have what this flesh is, or rather what the mind of the flesh is — “Enmity against God;” and as “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and never will be anything else, if the flesh lived for a thousand years, at the end of the time it would be still “enmity against God” as at the beginning; “for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.” In Ephesians 4:22 we find that the old man is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” It is evident that, if we are to be happy in the presence of God, we must not only have our sins forgiven, but this corrupt nature of ours, which is enmity against God, must be got rid of. Many think and speak as though the forgiveness of sins was the only thing that was needed in order to fit us for God’s presence; but it is not so. Supposing that a man were on his deathbed, and every one of his sins were forgiven him, would he then be fit for the presence of God? No; because he would still have a sinful nature that hated God; and how could he be happy in His presence?

It is because we have this sinful nature that we find the expression in Ephesians 2:3, “By nature the children of wrath, even as others.” If I have a nature that hates God, and does nothing but sin, I am always, so to speak, drawing down the wrath of God upon me. It is because we have this sinful nature that we are not only guilty, but lost. Guilty, refers to what we have done; lost, to what we are. Thus a little child that is born into the world is lost, but could not be said to be guilty till responsibility begins. An infant, if it dies, requires the death of Christ to save it as much as a grown-up person. We find this in Matthew 18:10-14. The Lord says: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the

face of My Father which is in heaven. For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost." A little child is lost by nature; but it is not the will of the Father that it should perish (vs. 14). And the Son of Man is come to save the lost, therefore it is unmistakably plain from this passage, that little children who die are saved on the ground of the death of Christ. When we think of our lost condition, and our sinful, corrupt nature, we might easily say with the disciples, "Who then can be saved?" With man it is impossible; but with God all things are possible. As it is shown how God delivers us from our sins in the former part of the epistle, we see in the latter part how God delivers us from sin, the evil nature. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). We are here led back to the one through whom we got this sinful nature — Adam, the head of this sinful race; and in the following verses we have first, what Adam was, and the condition' in which the whole race was involved through him; and then, Christ is brought in as the head of a new race, and the results of what He has done are also extended to those who belong to Him. From the beginning of verse 13 to the end of verse 17 is a parenthesis entering more into detail upon the subject. It was then by "one man" that sin entered into the world. Adam sinned, and became a fallen creature, and subject to death, as God had forewarned him. Then he "begat a son in his own likeness, after his image" (Gen. 5:3). And his son inherited his fallen nature; and his son's son, and so on; and that is why you and I were born into this world fallen and with a sinful nature. And mark, it is not sins entered into the world, but sin, the principle, and with it death; "and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Thus by one man all this sin and death came in; and all through committing one offense, transgressing one command that God had given him; but (omitting the parenthesis), as by this one offense all were brought under condemnation, so by one act of righteousness (see margin), that is, what Christ has done, justification of life is held out to all (vs.18). Here we have contrasted the effects of what Adam has done, and what Christ has done. For "as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (vs. 19). It is not the question here of our sins being forgiven, but of being made righteous; not of our actions, but of our state before God.

The parenthesis from verse 13 to 17 enters more fully into the contrast between the two heads, Adam and Christ; also bringing out a very important fact, which we may look at for a moment—"For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law" (vs. 13). Many think that the law was always given to man, but it is not so; the law was not given till four hundred and thirty years after Abraham; but "until the law was given sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed where there is no law;" that is, it is not put to the account of the person, but sin existed before the law was given. I dwell upon this point because of the passage in 1 John 3:4— "Sin is the transgression of the law." It should read, "Sin is lawlessness." It comes from the same word as is translated "without law" in Romans 2:12. If sin was the transgression of the law, there would be no sin before the law was given; but there was, for we read in Romans 5 "For until the law sin was in the world." Besides, it lowers the standard of the holiness of God. Sin is lawlessness, insubjection to God; the very fact of having a will of our own in opposition to God is sin.

The proof that sin was in the world before the law is that "death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of Him that was to come;" that is, Christ. In verse 20 we find why the law was introduced: "The law entered, that the offense might abound." Sin was there before; but the law by forbidding the sin

made it an offense. For instance, we will suppose a man born in sin, and lusting in his heart, not knowing that it is sin, although in the sight of God it is so. The law comes and says, "Thou shalt not lust;" that is the very thing he is doing. The lust now becomes a positive act of disobedience and transgression; "for where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15); "but where sin" (not offenses) "abounded, grace did much more abound;" and "as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

Adam had sinned, and had involved the whole race in ruin, and all that came into the world were sinners by nature; and death, the just judgment of God, was the result. But now grace reigns instead of sin; grace reigns triumphant. God is Sovereign, and does as He wills; and although all seemed hopeless, and sin seemed to have gained the mastery, He is above the sin, and grace reigns. God has come in, and, in spite of the sin, He can act in pure love towards the sinner, although there is nothing in Him to deserve it. But what about righteousness? Christ has died, and accomplished a work upon the cross; and God is so glorified by His work that He has raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in glory, and His righteousness was shown in doing it; so that now, on the ground of the death of Christ, God can and does act in pure grace, but through righteousness; and the greater the sin, the more it magnifies the grace of God that can put it away. If sin abounds, grace much more abounds. The more the sin, the more the grace to meet it; and you can never exhaust the grace of God. Bring together all the sin in the world, and all the sins of men, the failure of Christians, and of the church as a whole, and there is grace super-abounding over it all. Thus grace reigns through righteousness. Truly He is "the God of all grace," and it draws the soul out in praise when we think of it.

But now we have to meet the perverse reasoning of the human mind in chapter 6:1: "If our sin does but magnify the grace of God, we will go on sinning that grace may abound." Such is the flesh; but it is much more sad when professing Christians speak thus. How often, when the blessed truth of the believer's security in Christ is spoken of we hear such expressions, "Dangerous doctrine; if you know you are saved, you can go and sin, and do just as you like!" But how does the Spirit of God meet such objections? In a way that at once completely refutes the wretched reasonings of the flesh, and at the same time brings out a most blessed truth which many believers even have never laid hold of. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (vs. 2) It is a contradiction of terms. How can you live in a thing to which you have died? The very profession of their faith as Christians denied such a doctrine: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death?" It is to a Christ that had died to sin (vs. 10) that they were baptized, and we are buried with Him by baptism unto death. John baptized to a living Messiah on earth; Christian baptism is to a Christ that has died and risen again. For this reason the disciples of John in Acts 19 had to be baptized again in the name of the Lord Jesus—the one who had died and was risen, and that God had made Lord and Christ. It is not "we that ought to be dead to sin," but "we that are dead to sin." If you were to ask the majority of Christians the question, "Are you dead to sin?" what would be the answer? "Oh, no, I am sure I am not dead to sin! I find it in me every day, and it is a great trouble to me." But this verse states the fact: "We that are dead to sin." Scripture always looks at a Christian as having died to sin, and this is how we are delivered from the sinful nature—from ourselves; and the apostle goes on to speak of it in this chapter. In chapter 4 we see how we are delivered from sins; in this chapter how we are delivered from the old

nature—sin.

F. K.

Christ Exalted the Source of Blessing

The Jews did not understand the Scriptures, and fulfilled them through not understanding them. God's ways have gone on through all, manifesting His grace and patience towards man. He placed man on the earth, and then sent law and prophets, until man gets to the end in rejecting all. God tries man, and then brings in the new man, who is the fulfillment of all His blessed counsels—the second Man. Then He takes up the last Adam as the heavenly man into a heavenly place, and all now depends, not on the responsibility of man, but on the stability of God. Life, righteousness, and glory descend from heaven. Is it life that is needed? God gives the life of Christ in resurrection. Is it righteousness? It is a divine righteousness that God gives. Is it a kingdom? It is the kingdom of heaven. All flows down, not simply from God in grace, but from the place which man has in glory, from the counsels of God about the heavenly man in glory. He has first taken Him up, and thence the blessing flows down. The man Christ Jesus has fully met all man's responsibilities. This is the reason of the fullness of the blessing of the gospel, and also that of the kingdom to come. The gospel is the power of God, and the kingdom is to be set up in heaven. The King is gone into the far country, and when He returns it will be to bring in the kingdom of heaven. All the counsels of God now take their center and seat in heaven. Thus, in the largest way, the turning-point in all the plans and counsels of God, is Jesus being set at the right hand of God. All the character, the stability, and the perfectness of our blessing take their source from the exalted Jesus. The character of it is heavenly, the stability is what God has done, and the righteousness that fits me for it is God's.

J. N. D.

God's Object in Our Trials

Ah! has Christ ever touched the quick of your soul in solitude? Do you know the exquisite tenderness of His touch? He does not tear and lacerate. The necessities and trials of saints down here are created by God in order to show them what Christ is for them. If I have taken Him as Lord, I do not expect an easy way. God never meant us to have it as disciples. He takes us into a rough path to show what Christ is, and that in it His grace may be able to vent itself. There is a yearning in His heart up there to let this grace be displayed in a poor, needy people down here—a longing that His strength should be made perfect in their weakness. Do you know for yourself the grace of that living Christ? Do you know what Christ has to do with you, and you with Him? Do you know yourself as one of a flock that belongs to Him, that He is tending and guarding through the wilderness, and carrying on to glory to be forever with Himself?

G. V. W.

Waiting for Christ

That which should characterize the saints is, not merely holding the doctrine of the Lord's coming as that which they believe, but their souls should be in the daily attitude of waiting, expecting, and desiring His coming. But why? That they may see Himself, and be with Him and like Him forever! Not because the world which has been so hostile to them is going to be judged, though God will smite the wicked. It is true there will be mercy to those who are spared. But we have obtained mercy now, and are therefore waiting for Himself—for what He is in Himself to us, and not because of judgment. That would not be joy to me, though it will be to some on the earth; for "in every place where the grounded staff shall pass, which Jehovah shall lay upon him, it shall be with tabrets and harps," (Isa. 30:32). This is not our hope, but simply waiting for Himself. The whole walk and character of a saint depends upon this—on his waiting for the Lord. Every one should be able to read us by this, as having nothing to do in this world but to get through it, and not as having any portion in it— "Turned from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven." This is thought a strange thing now; but the Thessalonians were converted to this hope, for they belonged to a world which had rejected God's Son; therefore they had to turn from these idols "to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven."

What I desire to press upon you all, and myself too, is the individual waiting for the Lord; not as a doctrine merely, but as a daily waiting for Himself: Whatever the Lord's will may be, I should like Him to find me doing it when He comes. But that is not the question; but, Am I waiting for Himself day by day? In 1 Thessalonians 2 the hope is connected with ministry: "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Then Paul would get the reward of his service to the saints. Then in the third chapter the hope is connected with our walk, as a motive for holiness: "Unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints." Then in the fourth chapter the doctrine of the hope is unfolded, the manner of it comes out: "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." Thus, we see what a present expectation the coming of the Lord was; therefore, Paul says, "We which are alive and remain." But why does he say "WE"? Because he expected it then. This was Paul's character then, that of waiting for the Lord. And does he lose that character because he died before He came? No; not at all. Though Peter had a revelation that he should put off the tabernacle of his body, yet did he daily wait for the Lord's coming then. And this will be Peter's character when the Lord does come; he will lose nothing by his death. "Be ye like unto men that wait for their Lord."

The character of their waiting was to be like servants at the hall-door, that, when the Master knocked, they were ready to open to Him immediately. It is a figure, of course, here; but it is the present power of the expectation that is alluded to. And the ruin of the church has come in by practically saying: "My Lord delayeth His coming." "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching."

“Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning” — “your loins girt about with truth” for service. You must not let your garments flow loose; that is, you must not let your thoughts and affections spread abroad, but be ready with your garments well girt up, and your lights burning. This is not rest, for it is an exceedingly tiring thing to have to sit up and watch through a long dark night. But in the spirit of service the heart, affections, thoughts, feelings, and desires must all be girt up. And this requires real painstaking not to let the flesh go its own way; for it is a great comfort sometimes to do this, if but for a moment; but if we do we shall surely fall asleep like the virgins. For as the virgins went to sleep with their oil in their lamps, so may we go to sleep with the Holy Ghost in our hearts. But blessed are those servants who are found watching. The Lord says this is the time for you to be girded, to take your turn in love to serve and watch; but when I come again, and have things my own way, then I will take my turn in love; ungird you and gird myself; and come forth and serve you. You must be well girt up and watchful in the midst of evil; but when the evil is done with, then you may take your rest. When in the Father’s house you may lie down and be at ease; and then your robes may flow down without any fear of their being soiled. In that blessed place of holiness and purity you may let your affections, thoughts, and desires flow out without the fear of their being defiled.

J. N. D.

My Lord Delayeth His Coming

Few things are more clear to faith than the fact that Satan ever seeks to corrupt what he cannot destroy, whether the subject of his evil purpose be the saints of God, or any special truth of His word which has engaged and blessed their souls. The truth of the Lord's coming as the blessed hope of the believer is no exception to this. Since the Lord has graciously revived it in this "midnight" hour, the closing period of the day of grace, it has taken so firm a hold, blessed be His name, upon the souls of His saints everywhere as was never known before since apostolic times; nor was it since those days ever before so generally accepted (through His goodness, and because the time is so near) as it is now. No reason have we to apprehend that, as a doctrine of Scripture, it will ever again lapse into forgetfulness as it did during post-apostolic days down to the commencement of this century.

At the beginning the virgins all went out to meet the Bridegroom; but how soon this testimony was given up, and the whole thing sank down to this— "they all slumbered and slept"—so torpid was Christian life, so silent was true Christian testimony! But at midnight there went forth an arousing cry— (1) "Behold, the Bridegroom!" (2) "Go ye out to meet Him!" How perfectly this has been fulfilled, and how closely these two things—the person of Christ and the meeting Him, or outgoing of heart to Himself as the coming One in spiritual power and testimony, closely allied as they are in character—were connected in the recovered truth and revived testimony of recent times is patent to many. And we thank God that the power of the Holy Ghost has so accompanied this testimony that Satan's mightiest efforts will achieve no success in depriving Christians of what God has so graciously restored to His church. But there is danger that the very depth of our convictions on this score, may close our eyes to the more subtle snare to which we are exposed while scripturally sound on the doctrine itself. The finest characteristic which that hope possesses, regarded practically, is its dateless imminence—in other words, its undefined but certain nearness—and therefore if Satan could succeed in removing this peculiar feature, he knows well he would so emasculate it, that while the shell of the doctrine remained in its structural integrity to satisfy its adherents, the kernel would be abstracted, and its intrinsic value surrendered, since it could no longer be an ever-operating power and "blessed hope" before the soul.

Such then is the peculiar danger of the present day; foreseeing which, Scripture in its divine perfectness furnishes a parable expressly to warn against this singular snare which the enemy lays for professing Christians (Matt. 24:45-51). Another scripture warns against the scoffers of the last days (2 Peter 3); but that phase of the subject is not now before us. The special snare of Satan in this "midnight" hour—which is the winding up of the last days, is that of the retention of sound doctrine as to "the second or pre-millennial advent," "the advent and personal reign of Christ," or "the Lord's second coming," whichever men may term it, with the worldliness and the like which the Lord sets forth in the beating of fellow-servants, and eating and drinking with the drunken; in other words, the violence and wantonness which, whether exerted or restrained, are the real workings of the flesh and the allowance of the world when developed and displayed.

Pressingly therefore would we bring home to our own soul, and to those of our readers, the deep importance of watching against this declension of heart as to the Lord's return, which is the last snare of our cunning and practiced foe. To put what we mean into clear and concise form, can we say, that having been looking for Him so long, for that very reason we are more and more convinced that He is near at hand, and both the desire and the expectation of His coming are, by reason of so long a time having elapsed, growing every day stronger within our souls? This is the true reckoning and conclusion of faith.

Of two things one is clear, that if the long-exercised and dearly-cherished desire of our hearts has not yet been gratified, our souls' expectation not yet fulfilled, either we have therefore clung the more tenaciously to it, having the desire rekindled afresh and more cheerily in our affections each recurring day, and our daily expectation has approximated more and more towards a certainty that He is close at hand, simply because He is surely coming, and has now been expected for so long; or otherwise we have allowed our faith to fail, our desires to cool, and our expectations to falter, having said, as it were, "We have expected Him all these years, and He has never come, nor know we at all when He will;" thus the sense of it, as an everyday increasingly "blessed hope," has escaped from the heart. No marvel that the poor faithless heart turns to the world which it had unwittingly allowed to betray it into declension, saying within itself, "My Lord delayeth His coming," and in consequence giving rein to the flesh and its works.

How different is it to faith! Are earth's scenes at their darkest, the poor body brought down to death's door, as men speak, and life rapidly ebbing away? There is for us no darkness profound enough to be impenetrable to the piercing rays of "the bright and the morning Star," no time so short as to preclude His coming therein, since if there be but time for an eye to twinkle, there is time for Him to come; and, to the joy of His own heart, the first act of His coming will be to produce its full effect upon the bodies of the untold multitudes of His saints in the same twinkling of an eye! To shift the scene, it is equally the privilege of faith to find the Lord's coming the very brightest thing in our horizon, engaging our hearts supremely, and asserting its full place and power never more distinctly than when divine favors upon earth are in their most sparkling array before our grateful and gratified hearts. And if it be not so with us, we may well challenge our souls whether the adorable person of Christ and the promise of His coming again have ever yet assumed their unrivaled place before the eye and in the heart as they should, and as most assuredly they would, were He to us all that He would love to be!

It may suffice if we add to this, that we know nothing that is used of the Holy Ghost more powerfully and more refreshingly to revive from time to time this precious doctrine and hope in the hearts of the saints, than the Lord's Table. And so divinely interlocked are the two things, that seldom if ever are saints really right about either one who are wrong about the other.

The Lord's Supper indeed possesses the wonderful and unique property of converging into one focus His death and His coming, bringing back His death as our only yesterday, and bringing forward His coming as our only tomorrow, the Table being our only today, in which our fellowship is with the Father and the Son, and one with another "until He come." Our yesterday a dead Christ whom we remember, our today a glorified Christ whom we are united to, our tomorrow a coming Christ whom we are longing for, shining upon us as the "bright and the morning Star" while we keep vigil through the long and tearful night of His prolonged and enforced absence.

May the Holy Ghost keep freshly before our souls this “blessed hope,” nor suffer it to be impaired by any of the changing scenes of earth; above all, preserving us from, in ever so remote a degree, saying in our hearts, with Laodicean levity and worldliness, “My Lord delayeth His coming.”

W. R. D.

The Value of Service: Fragment

It is not in the quantity we do, but in the measure of presenting Christ that the value of our service lies, in a world where there is nothing of God.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: the New Jerusalem

So far we have treated only, in the preceding paper, of the earthly characteristics of the millennium. It will be necessary therefore to consider also its heavenly aspect, as presented to us in the new Jerusalem. If the reader will turn to Revelation 19, he will observe that from the eleventh verse of that chapter down to the eighth verse of chapter 21, we have a consecutive narrative. It begins with the coming forth of the Lord Jesus, followed by the armies that were in heaven, to judgment; and then we have the destruction, as already seen, of the "beast," the false prophet, and their hosts, the binding of Satan, the thousand years, the loosing of Satan, the great white throne, and the eternal state (which will be considered in a future paper). Immediately upon this we are led back, in the ninth verse, to a description of the new Jerusalem, which reaches onward to chapter 22; and in this scripture we have the character of the city during the millennium, and its relation, indeed, to the millennial earth.

John says: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the last seven plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (21:9-11). The first thing that strikes the reader is the designed contrast between this scripture and that in chapter 17: "And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will show unto thee the judgment of the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters" (vs. 1). In this chapter we have Babylon depicted, in chapter 21 the new Jerusalem. The former is man's city, and the latter God's; the one the expression of what man is, the other the perfection of God's thoughts, robed in the glory of God. Let the reader carefully ponder the contrast, and learn its divine lessons. Another thing must be remarked: the city is "the Bride, the Lamb's wife." This determines its character. It is the church which Christ has now presented "to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.... holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27), beautified with His own beauty, and having the glory of God. Its position is also to be noted. Both in the second and tenth verses it is seen to come down from God out of heaven; but a comparison of the two scriptures will show us the place the city occupies throughout the thousand years. In the tenth verse it is seen descending out of heaven from God; but after the similar statement in the second, John hears the proclamation, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men," showing that the city now had come down to, and rested upon, the new earth. The inference therefore is—and one which is abundantly substantiated from other scriptures—that in the tenth verse the city descends towards the millennial earth, but rests above it, over the earthly Jerusalem. Poised thus, as it were, above the earthly city, it will be a visible object of light and glory; and this perhaps may explain the language which the prophet addressed to Jerusalem, "The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Isa. 60:19).

We may now examine some of its characteristics.

It is divine in its origin, and heavenly in its character. It comes down from God out of heaven.

It has “the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” Her light therefore is the outshining of the glory in which she is set; for jasper is a symbol of the glory of God (Rev. 4:3). The church is glorified together with Christ in the glory of God, and as such is here displayed. In verses 18 and 19, it is stated that the building of the wall, and the first foundation, are both alike of jasper. The glory of God is thus the stability and security, as well as the light and beauty, of the heavenly city. But the wall excluded everything unsuitable to that glory, as well as guarded everything according to it. (3) The next feature is, that it “had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: on the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (vss. 12-14). It must be carefully observed that all this concerns the wall of the city, and its distinguishing characteristic is the number twelve—twelve angels, twelve tribes, and twelve apostles. As one has said, “It has twelve gates. Angels are become the willing doorkeepers of the great city, the fruit of Christ’s redemption work in glory. This marked the possession too, by man thus brought in the assembly to glory, of the highest place in the creation, and providential order of God, of which angels had previously been the administrators. The twelve gates are full human perfectness of governmental administrative power. The gate was the place of judgment. Twelve, we have often seen, notes perfection and governmental power. The character of it is noted by the names of the twelve tribes. God had so governed these. They were not the foundation; but this character of power was found there. There were twelve foundations; but these were the twelve apostles of the Lamb. They were, in their work, the foundation of the heavenly city. Thus the creative and providential display of power, the governmental (Jehovah), and the assembly once founded at Jerusalem, are all brought together in the heavenly city, the organized seat of heavenly power! It is the assembly as founded at Jerusalem under the twelve, the organized seat of heavenly power, the new and now heavenly capital of God’s government” (4). Then it is measured (vss. 15-17), indicating that it is owned and appropriated by God. The measurements are, it need hardly be said, symbolical—symbolical of a divinely-given perfectness. Thus the city is a cube—equal on every side—finite perfection. (5) Then we have the materials of which the city and the foundations were formed. Again we borrow the language of another: “The city was formed, in its nature, in divine righteousness and holiness gold transparent as glass.”

That which was now by the Word wrought in and applied to men below was the very nature of the whole place (Comp. Eph. 4:24). The precious stones, or varied display of God’s nature, who is light, in connection with the creature (seen in creation, Ezek. 28; in grace in the high priest’s breastplate), now shone in permanent glory, and adorned the foundations of the city. The gates had the moral beauty (every several gate was of one pearl) which attracted Christ in the assembly, and in a glorious way. That on which men walked, instead of bringing danger of defilement, was itself righteous and holy; the streets, all that men came in contact with, were righteousness and holiness—gold transparent as glass.” (6) It has no temple. “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (vs. 22). A temple would speak of concealment, or of a special place where God manifested Himself to those who drew nigh to worship. But all this is past. Even now, while here, we have liberty of access into the holiest of all

(Heb. 10); yea, our place is in the light as God is in the light. In the heavenly city, therefore, God is fully displayed. “

The Lamb is there, my soul—

There God Himself doth rest,

In love divine diffused through all,

With Him supremely blest.

God and the Lamb— 'tis well,

I know that source divine

Of joy and love no tongue can tell,

Yet know that all is mine.”

(7) There is no need of created light. “And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (vs. 23). If God is fully displayed this would be impossible. When He stands disclosed His glory lightens the city, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

“But who that glorious blaze

Of living light shall tell

There all His brightness God displays,

And the Lamb's glories dwell.

God and the Lamb shall there

The light and temple be;

And radiant hosts forever share

The unveiled mystery.”

Having directed attention to the characteristics of the city, we may now pass to consider what is next indicated; namely, the relation of the city to the millennial earth. First we are told that “the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.” (vs. 24) Two slight alterations will make this scripture far more intelligible. The words “of them that are saved” are omitted in all the best editions of the New Testament, as being an unwarranted addition; and the word translated “into” should be given as “to,” or “unto;” or otherwise it would seem as if the kings of the earth had access into the heavenly city! What we are taught then is, first, that the new Jerusalem will shine with such surpassing luster that the nations will walk in its light—the light of the glory in which it is set, and by which it is illumined. It will be thus suspended above the earthly Jerusalem, and from thence will transmit the rays of the glory of God by which it is encompassed and transfused. Moreover, the kings of the earth will render their homage by bringing their glory and honor, as offerings, unto it; thus recognizing it as the object of God's delight, and the scene of the display of His presence and glory, because the throne of God

and the Lamb are there.

It is then added that “the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into (unto) it. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (vss. 25-27). One cannot fail to be struck with the correspondency between this language and that addressed to the earthly Jerusalem by the prophet: “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” (Isa. 60:11). And undoubtedly there will be an intimate relation between the two cities, similar to that between the holy place and the holy of holies in the tabernacle; though the distinction must ever be remembered, that the one city is heavenly, and the other earthly in its character. The open gates are an emblem of the perfect security which the city enjoys, there being “no adversary or evil occurrent”; while the absence of night tells that evil has passed away, and hence there is perpetual day. “It is not merely the absence of evil, but the impossibility of its entrance, which characterized the holy city;” for none “but they which are written in the Lamb’s book of life” are found within.

Next we have the river of water of life and the tree of life. “And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve [manner of] fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1,2). All this again speaks of the relation of the city to the millennial earth, and reveals the source of millennial life and blessedness. The throne of God and the Lamb are the fount, as ever, of grace and life; and the leaves of the tree of life are for the healing of the nations. The glorified only will feed upon the twelve fruits of the tree. Hence it is added, “There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign forever and ever” (vss. 3-5). Adam after his fall was shut out of the garden, and God “placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). Now the tree of life is on either side of the street of the golden city, and the glorified saints find in its fruit sustenance and joy. The curse therefore is forever abolished; for the throne of God and the Lamb are there, and His servants serve Him perfectly, see His face, and have His name in their foreheads. Wondrous expressions of the full and perfect bliss of the redeemed! It is now repeated that there shall be no night there, and that they have no need of created light; for God Himself is the source of their light, as of their blessing, and His glory illuminates the whole scene. In this condition they will reign forever and ever, associated with Christ in all the glories of His royalty and kingdom.

It is therefore not only the earthly blessing we are admitted to view, but God has also brought before us the varied perfections and glories of this heavenly city, which will form such a prominent feature of the millennial period. We have not permitted ourselves to touch upon the question of communication between the heavenly and the earthly spheres. That such communication will exist is beyond a doubt; but upon its modes, or the exact way in which Christ will carry on the government of the earth as King, Scripture is silent. But we are told that “the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The

Everlasting Father, and The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever" (Isa. 9:6,7).

E. D.

At His Gate

“Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors” (Prov. 8:34).

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40:31).

“Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left” (Isa. 30:21).

I am watching at Thy gateway:

Master, speak “a word,” I pray!

Life's journey lies before me,

A lonely, rugged way.

Oh, speak a word of power,

Which my soul will gladly own

Was just the word I needed,

And meant for me alone!

Some, more richly, grandly gifted,

'Midst the throng of hurrying feet,

Sound the tidings—Thou art “coming,”

In the busy, crowded street.

Souls arrested stand to listen,

Wooed and won for heaven above

By that tale of matchless sorrow,

And that tale of wondrous love!

But more humble is my service:

Can I give it such a name

While my heart is filled with sorrow,

And my head is bowed in shame?

Few to speak to, few to listen

As I point them up above;
For the words are faint and faltering,
And my only "gift" is love.
But I'm watching at Thy gateway
For "a word" of sympathy
To some broken heart to whisper,
A message straight from Thee
That blest acquaintanceship with grief
Which Thou didst learn below,
Has fitted Thee to minister
To every child of woe.
And give "a word" to keep me
From snares which lie around;
A melody to charm me
From every earthly sound.
A message—by Thy Spirit
Brought home in power—I pray,
Of guidance, cheer, or warning;
A message for today
A. S. O.

The Gifts of an Ascended Christ

We have seen how the first exhortations, with respect to walking worthy of our vocation, are directed to “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” Nothing is more practical, nothing dearer to the Lord’s heart, than this manifested oneness; and though its restoration is now impossible, yet the principle on which it was founded can be owned, and obedience to the Word of God exhibited.

But it is objected that in all God’s works there is variety, that men’s minds are differently constituted, and that it is impracticable to mold all to the same monotonous pattern. Does the oneness then, so strongly insisted upon in Scripture, imply a lifeless uniformity? The very illustration by which it is constantly described proves the exact opposite. In the human body no two portions are alike, and the endless differences in each of its bones, veins, muscles, and ligaments, all contribute to its healthy action as a whole. Diversity of action does not involve schism and division. Such is the apostle’s argument with respect to the setting of the individual members in the body of Christ. “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body” (1 Cor. 12:17-20). The same fact as to diversity of gifts in one body is presented in the epistle to the Ephesians. The apostle, after dwelling strongly on the manifestation of unity, goes on to say: “But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore He saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (vss. 7, 8). The second of these verses explains the sense in which the word “grace” is used in the first. It is not that display of grace by which sinners are saved, but that by which believers are endowed with the gifts of an ascended Christ. The grace, of course, is the same in both instances, but exercised in a different manner.

There is a marked distinction between the way in which gifts are spoken of in this epistle and in the epistle to the Corinthians. In writing to the church at Corinth the apostle was giving directions as to the use of gift in the assembly, which is regarded as the house of God on earth, administered by the Holy Ghost. Hence the teaching is not so much with respect to the origin of gifts as with respect to their distribution and exercise, which is the proper circle of the Spirit’s activity. “To one,” we read, “is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit,” and so on through the other gifts; “but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will” (1 Cor. 12:8-11). Moreover, as the subject here dealt with is the Spirit’s sovereignty in regulating the exercise of gift in the assembly, all gifts that might be used in the assembly are considered — the sign gifts, such as the speaking with tongues, as well as the gifts for edifying the body.

In the epistle to the Ephesians the question is not the exercise of gift, but its origin and its object. The object is, “For the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ” (vs. 12). The origin is Christ Himself, not acting, however, in His sovereign

rights as the eternal Son of God, but in His acquired rights as the victorious, risen, and ascended man. This agrees with the general character of the epistle. In its earlier chapters we see God's "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 age, but also in that which is to come" (1:19-21). It is in virtue of the same victory and exaltation that Christ now bestows gifts on believers. "When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (vs. 8). To lead captivity captive is a poetical expression signifying the complete triumph over a power by which one has formerly been subjugated, as it is said of Israel in reference to Babylon, "They shall take them captives whose captives they were" (Isa. 14:2). The words are first found in the song of Deborah, when celebrating the victory of Barak over the armies of Jabin, by whom the Israelites had long been oppressed: "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam" (Judg. 5:12). It is adopted in the passage here quoted by the apostle from the Psalms, where it is clearly prophetic of Christ's triumph: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts for men" (Psa. 68:18). The title by which Christ bestows these gifts is therefore as follows: man, as fallen, was in bondage under the fear of death, and under the power of the devil. Jesus has come as man, has entered into our wretchedness, charged Himself with our responsibilities, gone down under our judgment, so that "through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14). Having thus descended and conquered the foe who held us in captivity, He has ascended in triumph, and received gifts from God in His character as the risen, victorious man. Hence it is said, "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (vss. 9, 10). It was in consequence of His humbling Himself and taking the lowest place that He obtained this victory; and in virtue of this victory He "receives gifts for men," or, as the margin reads, "in the man," that is, in His character as man.

It will be seen that the Spirit of God, in quoting this passage, has somewhat varied and extended its scope. The psalm, after declaring Christ's victory, says: "Thou hast received gifts for men," or, "in the man." The apostle quotes it thus: "And gave gifts unto men." The Old Testament shows Christ, as man, receiving gifts in consequence of His triumph. But the Holy Ghost in the New Testament so applies the passage as to show the actual bestowing of these gifts on those for whom they were acquired. Nor is this all. The psalm describes the time when God arises, and His enemies are scattered; when God "is blessed in the congregation, even the Lord from the fountain of Israel;" when, because of His temple at Jerusalem, kings shall bring presents unto Him; when "princes shall come out of Egypt, and Ethiopia shall stretch out her hands unto God." All this looks on to the reign of Christ in glory and majesty; to the full blessing of Israel and the world. Then it is that He receives "gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." But in the epistle Christ is shown as bestowing these gifts before this reign and this period of earthly blessing begin—bestowing them in the sphere of His present interests "unto every one of us." Though the victory has been won, its consequences, in respect to Israel and the world, are not yet seen. But towards the church He already exercises His rights in bestowing the gifts He has acquired. How remarkably this insertion of the present use of gifts, not alluded to in the Old Testament, agrees with the character of the church as a mystery "which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by

the Spirit.”

Though some special gifts are named in verse 11, the language used in verse 7 takes in a wider field. It is said: “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.” In the parable of the talents the Lord distributes “to every man according to his several ability” (Matt. 25:15). This, as the parable shows, includes false professors as well as true believers. It makes clear, however, that all believers are entrusted with some gift to use for their absent Lord. So in the text before us the grace spoken of is given not merely to a few, but “unto every one of us.” In connection with Christ, the Head, “the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (vs. 16). While, therefore, the special gifts needed for public labor are confined to comparatively few, each believer has some gift for the edifying of the body. In Romans 12 where the question is the faithful and diligent use of the gifts bestowed, the apostle names, among others, liberality, showing mercy, and ministry—or service—in the widest sense of the word. A vast circle of responsibility and activity is thus opened up, and a set of gifts brought to light which are equally distinct from the miraculous sign-gifts named in the Corinthians, and from the gifts for public teaching. In this wider sense all receive some gift, for the use of which they are responsible. In verse 11, however, the writer comes to a special class of gifts. “He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.” It does not say that the apostles or others received gifts, but that they were gifts. The subject is not, therefore, the gifts bestowed upon individual believers, but the gifts bestowed upon the church in the form of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

Nothing is said about the continuance of these gifts, and we must look at them separately to see how far they were meant to be permanent or only temporary. As to the apostle, the distinguishing feature was his ability to bear testimony to Christ’s resurrection. Thus in the case of the new apostle chosen by lot, the object, as explained by Peter, was that he might “be a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:22). And even Paul, who had never seen Jesus either during His life or in the forty days before His ascension, rests his apostleship on the same ground. “Am I not an apostle?” he asks. “Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?” (1 Cor. 9:1) And afterward, speaking of Christ’s resurrection, he says, “Last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle” (1 Cor. 15:8,9), thus again associating his apostleship with his having seen the risen Christ. Since this, then, was a condition of apostleship, it is clear that no one who has not seen Christ risen could be an apostle; or, in other words, that apostles were only temporary gifts. But again, apostles and prophets were, so to speak, the foundation course of the church; for we are “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.” No doubt the foundation is permanent, and in this sense the gift is permanent. But this very fact precludes the thought of a succession of apostles; for how could there be a succession of foundations to the same building? The idea of a succession or revival of apostles is therefore a mere fancy of the mind of man, entirely opposed to Scripture, and subversive of all that is there taught concerning apostolic qualifications and functions.

The prophet was also a foundation gift. It was to prophets as well as to apostles that the mystery which had before been hidden was revealed by the Spirit. In certain cases too the prophet foretold

future events. In all these characters the gift of a prophet was only temporary. On the other hand, that part of the prophetic gift which consists of speaking “unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort,” and in this way “edifying the church” (1 Cor. 14: 3, 4), has never been removed, though whether those possessing it are prophets, in the scriptural sense of the word, is at least doubtful.

The gifts of evangelists, pastors, and teachers are of course permanent, and require little explanation. An evangelist is one who brings glad tidings. It may be well to observe that there is nothing to identify evangelization with public preaching. No doubt many evangelists are public preachers; but it would be a great mistake to confine the term to those who thus labor. Perhaps some of the most largely-blessed evangelists are those who, by their writings, or even by their private visits and conversation, have set forth Christ, with little or no qualification for addressing large audiences. No one would for a moment speak slightly of preaching; but it is more easy to be led by a desire for display in this work than in work of a quieter and less public character. Moreover, the effect produced on the conscience and on the heart by the presentation of the truth in private is often far deeper and more durable than that wrought amidst the excitement of preaching. The same may be said of the teacher, who is really the same gift as the pastor, only as teacher he is looked upon rather in respect of the truth he sets forth, and as pastor rather in respect of the flock which this truth nourishes. But there is nothing in either case which necessarily identifies the gift with public ministry. Indeed, while the labors of a teacher may be, those of a pastor almost inevitably must be, of a private rather than of a public character.

T. B. B.

The Secret of Our Weakness

The solemn question that needs to be pressed home again and again upon the hearts of the children of God is, What is the secret of our weakness? We have been born again; we have received the indwelling Spirit; we have much knowledge of Scripture, of God's dispensations and ways, and yet weakness—spiritual weakness—is our prevailing characteristic. There are few who would not assent to this statement. Let us speak boldly, and challenge the consciences of the saints if it be not so. Let us ask whether the sense of it is not often painfully present to our souls? In our contact with the world, are we not often made to feel it? Beholding our fellow-believers entangled in the snares of the world, or in evil associations, do we not often pass them by, because we are conscious of our powerlessness to extricate them? If others are overtaken in a fault, how many of us are "spiritual" enough to restore them in the spirit of meekness? Have we not often to confess that we know not how to meet the difficulties that arise in the church? Nay, is not our weakness expressed in every direction of our spiritual life? In walk and in service, in private and in public? If this be so, why is it? It is quite true our blessed Lord said, "Without me ye can do nothing." (John 15:5) But it is equally true that His servant Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13); and the same apostle reminds Timothy that "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). If indeed we are taught that we are not "sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves," we are also told that "our sufficiency is of God" (2 Cor. 3:3). Again therefore we ask, Whence our weakness? There is reason to fear that it all springs FROM WANT OF WAITING UPON GOD. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isa. 40:31). This scripture is conclusive, and assures us that spiritual strength is the direct consequence of waiting upon God. It is so of necessity; for in so doing we confess our weakness, and express our dependence, and it is only when we are dependent that the Lord can display through us His almighty power. It is here therefore that the recovery must begin. Let us then, individually, and when we meet together, seek for a larger spirit of patient, persevering waiting upon God. The effect of this would soon be manifest in every department of spiritual life. Ministry, worship, prayer meetings, testimony, and walk would all be in the power of the Holy Ghost. We should then fear no difficulty, be afraid of no opposition; but conscious of our utter weakness in ourselves, we should yet continually rejoice in the all-sufficient and omnipotent resources of our God. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: WAIT, I SAY, ON THE LORD" (Psa. 27:14).

What Is a Christian?

Two ladies being in conversation, one said to the other, in reference to a gentleman who had recently died, "Was he a Christian?" "Was he a what?" the other instantly replied, with a puzzled and indignant air. Again, the same lady asked a similar question of a clergyman, respecting a neighbor cut off in the prime of youth. "I don't understand you," he answered in an embarrassed way; but, recovering himself, added, "Oh, certainly; she regularly attended my church, and was most attentive in taking the sacrament!" The indignant answer of the lady was due to the question having implied, as she thought, that possibly the deceased was an infidel, a Mahomedan, or a Jew. The clergyman's answer disclosed his conviction that observance of ordinances and attendance on the so-called "means of grace," conclusively gave title to be termed a Christian. No doubt in each case, were it a question of outward profession and responsibility, distinguished from what does not own the name of Christ, the term could be rightly applied; but the inquiry referred to a state of soul before God, for each of the persons in question had passed out of the sphere of nominal Christianity into another in which the having a name to live while dead could only aggravate eternal guilt. But there is a third class—the great evangelical body—who, utterly rejecting mere nominal Christianity, and equally so a religion of ordinances, insist upon a doctrinal soundness, especially on justification by faith, as the alone ground of approach to God, escape from wrath to come, and making sure of heaven after this life. To be sound upon these doctrines with them constitutes the Christian.

To the first of these classes, it is a mere matter of profession; to the second, a point of observances or religiousness after the flesh; to the third, a question of forgiveness of sins, through faith and sound doctrine. With the first, a Christian is one whose religion is Christianity; with the second, one who carefully fulfills the religious duties enjoined by the clergy; with the third, one who, having exercised faith, will, by final perseverance, be saved at last.

And now, if we were asked the question at the head of this paper by the One who once said, "Whom say ye that I am?" what would our answer be to Him? First, He put the question generally, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" Then came the more searching inquiry, "But whom say ye that I am?" Leaving then what men say to one another, what should we reply to Himself did He in His own person prefer this weighty problem before our souls: "What is a Christian?" I assume that we are believers, and are divinely assured of the sovereign grace of God having apprehended us for glory together with Christ. Well, from the moment that we became believers, to that other moment when at His coming we shall be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, and be eternally embosomed in the glory itself, this whole period of our spiritual history upon earth is the practical working out of this divine problem which philosophy and science can never unravel, and human wisdom never resolve. But through mercy we are privileged here to learn, and now to know, by divine teaching, that which divine power and love will display in glory by-and-by; for when glory fills the scene, God will make manifest to angelic hosts, to Old Testament saints, and to His earthly people, what we Christians are (another class altogether) when made perfect. But that which will then be displayed in

manifested, circumstantial, and heavenly glory, ought, in the power of its own moral and spiritual qualities, to be thus far exhibited and expressed now upon earth by those who are the subjects of this magnificent heavenly calling; and it is only as I learn the former that I am made competent for the latter. Hence we read, "It has not yet been manifested what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." It has not yet, that is, been displayed, but we are meanwhile divinely certified that we shall be perfectly like Christ in glory. The moral and spiritual transformation will then be blessedly completed without a single instance of failure or an ever-so-minute flaw in any. The certainty of this presents a cheering and invigorating prospect before the soul of the saint, which he may cherish and delight in; and knowing it on divine testimony, he is led of the Holy Ghost, by this hope in Him, the Christ of glory, to purify himself now in all practical holiness and Christ-likeness, exhibiting thus how truly he is "one spirit with the Lord" by anticipating the accomplishment, as far as he can, of that which the heart of Christ is set upon, His first and most delightful work when He comes, the conforming us to His own likeness, morally and spiritually, and before Himself forever, To this end it is deeply important that the divine ideal of a Christian should be conceived and apprehended; otherwise we shall go along upon a low level without knowing it, and in a self-satisfied state of soul, while in thorough failure as to true testimony for God.

Positionally, let it be remembered, the first man, once the innocent one, lies under the pronounced and partially-executed judgment of God, a blasted ruin! The second Man, the sinless One, the Holy and the True, having been refused a place here, is at the right hand of the Majesty of the throne of God in the heavens. A Christian is the marvelous outcome, by divine grace, of those two momentous facts; one who, deriving everything naturally from the first man, has morally broken with him, and finished with his world forever, being now united to the second Man, and last Adam, and is thus positionally before God "a man in Christ." In the first man "we were in the flesh," waiting for judgment; in the second Man we are "in Christ, a new creation," having a heavenly calling, made God's righteousness in, and waiting for glory together with, Him. And all along the way to that looked-for consummation we are proving that the flesh, which we are no longer debtors to, to live after, and which we are no longer in positionally, but which practically never ceases to be in us, while we are here, be it ever so little allowed, is a positive, sensible hindrance, and always so, to every Godward movement of hand or foot, of word or thought, in the divine life; proving too that there is not one thing in the scene itself, save the Holy Ghost, the Word of God, and the interests of Christ, that is worthy for a single moment to detain the heart here.

It may be convenient first to look at what constitutes a Christian according to God, and afterward at what according to God characterizes him as such. The first will show us what we are, and the second what we ought to be—this being the scriptural order.

As to the former, the Christian was in the counsels of God before the world, elect of God, chosen in Christ, foreknown and in purpose—predestinated, called, justified, glorified. Being predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son, and being of the many sons to be brought unto glory, of the men given of the Father to Christ, and chosen of Him out of the world, a vessel of mercy prepared for the riches of God's glory to be made known upon, he is justified freely by His grace, has peace with God, having been quickened together with Christ, who has loved him, and given Himself for him; who has borne his sins, and brought his history, as a man in the flesh, to an

eternal end in His cross. Having died with Christ, he is risen with Him, and is not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world, but is seated in Him in the heavenlies, where also he is blessed with all spiritual blessings, being accepted in the Beloved. Having been consecrated a priest unto God and the Father, he has been born of the water of the word, been cleansed by the blood of Christ, and anointed with oil, which is sealing with the Holy Ghost. His eyes have been opened, he has been turned from darkness unto light, and from Satan's power unto God; has forgiveness of his sins, and inheritance among the sanctified through faith in Christ, and has been translated from the power of darkness into the kingdom of the Son of the Father's love. As one separated off for God, he is perfected forever by the one offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, is thus clean every whit, and complete in Him. Brought nigh by the blood of Christ, he has by the same blood title to enter even the holiest with boldness. Before God he has died with Christ, been circumcised with the circumcision of Christ, and has crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts. He has through faith eternal life, the knowledge of the Father and the Son, life abundantly; and this life is Christ, is in Christ, and is hid with Christ in God. As a sheep of the good Shepherd he is called of Him by name, hears and knows His voice, and knows Himself as the Father knows Him and He knows the Father; and he shall never perish, for he is in the hand of the Son and of the Father, from whence none can pluck him. He has God for him, with him, in him, and he is in God and of God. He is a partaker of the divine nature, is born of God as His child, is also an adopted son entitled to say, "Abba, Father" — an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ; has the mind of Christ, and the Spirit of God, that he may know the things freely given us of God; is inseparable from the love of God in Christ Jesus, an object of the intercession in priesthood of Christ. with God, and of His advocacy with the Father, and is one in whom He is glorified. He is united to Him by the Holy Ghost, is bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh. His body is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and he is a vessel of Christ. His body is a member of Christ, and he a member of the body of Christ. The Holy Ghost wrought with Him, a sinner, to bring him to Christ; works in Him, as a believer, for the glory of Christ, and by him, as a servant, for the interests of Christ. He is born of the Spirit, and afterward sealed with the Spirit (who then dwells in him) as God's property for Christ's glory; thus has he fellowship with the Father and the Son, and is no longer in the flesh, but in the Spirit. In a word, he is in relationship to the Father, is united to Christ, and is indwelt by the Holy Ghost; is of the one body by the one Spirit, and is cheered by the one hope of the Lord's return to receive him to Himself.

The Christian is all this, God's new thing upon the earth; he has a new motive, the exalted Man, the Christ of glory; he has a new power, the Holy Ghost dwelling in his body; and he has a new rule, that of the new creation (Gal. 6:16). He has new privileges, new pleasures, new possessions, and a new place, those of the house of God and of the body of Christ on earth, and of the Father's house in heaven, and those joys and affections of relationship which pertain to a holy and beloved child in the family of God, whether here or there. It will be seen that these are all matters of divine power and grace which God, on His part exclusively, makes good to us, and not one jot or tittle of which, blessed be his name, can ever fail. Turning now to the other side, it is all responsibility on our part—the things which we have to make good down here for Him, and it is herein we so lamentably fail. May the review of what His word puts before us on this head incite our souls to greater diligence for His glory!

If we look at what characterizes a Christian according to God, we find in the New Testament a thousand things presented as to this by the Holy Ghost. A few of these may be profitably pointed out, chiefly from the words of the Lord Himself, and from Paul's writings. He confesses Christ before men, loves his enemies, has his loins girded and his light burning, waiting for his Lord; and while watching for Him to come, occupies himself diligently with His interests, trades with the talents committed to him on His Lord's account, submits to His action through the word in cleansing his feet, and seeks to wash those of his fellow-disciples; has the commandments of Christ, and keepeth them, and His word also, rejoicing, because he loves Him with an unselfish love, that He is gone to the Father. He knows the Father and God, and loves because he knows; and loving Him that begat, loves those who are begotten of Him. He ought to walk as Christ walked, and, if need be, ought to lay down his life for the brethren. He is filled with the Spirit, is led of the Spirit, minds the things of the Spirit, walks in the Spirit, lives in the Spirit, sows to the Spirit, and brings forth the fruit of the Spirit.

Reckoning himself dead, he presents his body a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, and is not conformed to the world, but is transformed from it—puts on the Lord Jesus, and provides not for lusts of the flesh, yields the members of his body as instruments of righteousness unto God, is not overcome of evil, but overcomes evil with good (Romans). If he have a wife, is as though he had none, weeping is as though he wept not, rejoicing is as though he rejoiced not, buys as though he possessed not, and uses the world as not his own; caring for the things of the Lord, that he may be holy both in body and in spirit; keeps under his body, and brings it into subjection. Judging and examining himself, he eats of the bread, and drinks of the cup, discerning the Lord's body, and showing His death until He come. He is steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Beholding the glory of the Lord, he is changed into the same image; bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, the life also of Jesus is manifested in his body; he lives unto Him who died for him, and rose again. He refuses to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, but does good unto all, chiefly unto them who are of the household of faith (1 and 2 Corinthians). He stands fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made him free, glories in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, and walks according to the rule of the new creation. (Galatians) He walks worthy of his vocation, endeavors to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, grieves not the Holy Spirit of God, is kind, tender-hearted, forgiving even as Christ, and an imitator of God as a beloved child; walks in love and as a child of light, proving what is agreeable unto the Lord, and having no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness; giving thanks always for all things, wearing the panoply of God, that Satan may gain no advantage, nor prevent his enjoyment of his present portion in heaven. (Ephesians) He looks not on his own things, but on the things of others, esteeming his brother more highly than himself; works out his salvation with fear and trembling, shining all the while as a light in the world, and holding forth the word of life. Worships God in the Spirit, rejoices in Christ Jesus, has no confidence in the flesh, forgets the things behind, and presses toward the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. Is careful for nothing, but makes every request known to God. Things true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report engage his thoughts. He learns in every state to be content, and is able to do all things through Christ who gives him power. (Philippians) Walks worthy of the Lord, being fruitful in every good work, growing by the knowledge of God; seeks and sets his mind on things above; as elect of God, holy and beloved, puts on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind; doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by

Him. Walks in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time, his speech being with grace seasoned with salt (Colossians). Not rendering evil for evil, but abstaining from every appearance of it; always rejoicing, unceasingly praying, proving all things, holding fast the good (1 and 2 Thessalonians). Endures hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, purging himself from every vessel unto dishonor that he may be a vessel unto honor, sanctified and meet for his Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Adorning the doctrine of our Savior-God in all things, he denies ungodliness and worldly lusts, living righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope and appearing in glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, and speaking evil of no man, shows all meekness unto all men for His sake (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). He runs with patience the race set before him, laying aside every weight, and looking steadfastly on Jesus; follows peace with all men and holiness; goes forth to Christ without the camp, bearing His reproach; offers the fruit of his lips in praise to God continually, nor forgets the other sacrifice of doing good and communicating; obeys his leaders, and submits to such because they watch for his soul, counting upon the God of peace to make him full-grown in all this, working in him whatever is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen (Hebrews).

Now what is of exceeding interest and of deepest moment is to see that both what constitutes and what characterizes a Christian are entirely new things in revelation, neither constituting nor characterizing Old Testament saints.

But in His word God has been pleased, not only to teach us doctrinally and by precept what a Christian is, but to give us a specimen Christian in Stephen, and another in Paul. The former was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost; full of grace and power; exhibiting the energy of divine life, and the reality of present union with Christ by the Holy Ghost, under the most violent antagonism and enmity from those in whom His very name gave rise to dire and deadly hatred; presenting under such conditions the greatest composure of spirit, and testifying of the ways of God and the failure of His people, until their gnashing teeth led him to turn away from this ruthless world to find in a waiting Christ up there all his expectation and all his desire. And thus while the stones of his enemies (undeterred by his beautiful face, shining as the face of an angel) were showered upon his mangled body, his bleeding eyes were directed to that glorified Christ, the sight of whom enabled him, while commending to Him his spirit, to pray after His own example for those who, not wisting what they did, were by their profane violence sending His martyred servant into His presence as the messenger of their' further refusal of Himself and His grace. This was a pattern Christian's pattern death!

In the other case we have a Christian's pattern life on earth. Already it has been remarked, that before God the Christian is "a man in Christ:" It was such an one that was caught up into the third heaven. But Paul was not always there, nor were we ever; yet always was he "a man in Christ;" never for a moment was that interrupted. Fourteen years had elapsed since his rapture into paradise; but then as now, and now as then, was he the "man in Christ," who had been that once in such wondrous elevation. He says, "I know a man in Christ.... such an one caught up to the third heaven." Clearly does he distinguish three things— (1) Visions and revelations of the Lord, as to which he had been caught up into paradise; (2) The man in Christ, which was his true and abiding state as a Christian before God; (3) What he was actually and personally, concerning which he said, "Of myself I will not boast, unless in my weaknesses." Of these the first was peculiar to him

as an apostle—a special grace conferred in relation to visions and revelations of the Lord, of which he was to be the depository. In this experience we have no part, it being an unique thing for the special object God had in view by this His chosen vessel. But as to the second, we maintain it to be what essentially pertains to the constitution of a Christian—he is generically “a man in Christ.” Nothing short of this can suffice before God; and we, dear reader, may predicate this of one another, that just as much as the beloved and honored apostle himself (though we may have failed to apprehend it) are we, through the grace of God, eternally before Himself men “in Christ.” For, be it observed, were it otherwise we should not be of the new creation at all; for “in Christ” is its special feature. We are made “alive unto God in Christ Jesus;” anyone “in, Christ is a new creation,” “created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” The third thing is practical. As to this even Paul would not boast, except as to those weaknesses which the flesh ever seeks either to apologize for or to conceal. Not so he. On the contrary, he would glory or boast in them; for thus he proved the sufficiency of the grace of Christ for His feeble servant, and the reality of the power of Christ tabernacling over him. The first, then, is what is possible; the second, what is essential; the third, what is desirable in the Christian state; that which is “essential” being what constitutes the Christian, and that which is “desirable” what characterizes him according to God.

Thus we get the Christian divinely delineated—always and unchangeably before God “a man in Christ,” but practically in weakness. If extraordinarily elevated, as Paul, needing an extraordinary thorn to keep the flesh in check, the weakness proving the sufficiency of the grace of Christ, so that we glory in it, having in result the mantle of His power cast over us, as the covering of a tent, thus overspreading us, and finding, as it were, its sojourning-place with the very feeblest saint on earth.

The Christian, then, is “a man in Christ” before God; but he is characteristically a man for Christ before men. So perfectly was Paul this that he could say, and say it soberly and sincerely, “For me to live is Christ.” And so far as Scripture teaches us, perhaps the best definition of a Christian is found in these two things—one who before God is a man in Christ, and before men is living a life which is Christ. It is surpassingly beautiful to see Paul’s confidence in Him, and as profoundly blessed as beautiful: “Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death?” He seems to survey every inch of the ground between himself and the glory, and finds Christ equal to it all, and himself in Him. “I can do all things through Christ who gives me power.” Was this the apostle or the Christian? We unhesitatingly say that this was characteristically the Christian. “To me to live is Christ.” This was what he expressed before the saints, what he was before the world (though it might not understand it), living down here upon earth a life in which “Christ is all” (Col. 3:11)—his light and his life, his motive and object, his power for walk and service, and his prize forever in glory, center and circumference of every plan and purpose of his soul, of every desire and prospect he indulged, in all things and always—Christ magnified in his body.

Thus, we learn that a Christian is one who is out and out for God; going along with Him day by day; led by His unseen hand, and sustained by His unseen power; fed from His precious word, and guided with His loving eye; with no end in view but the interests of Christ on earth, and no future before him but glory with Himself at His coming. Such are they upon whom through an opened heaven angelic beings now look down as they did upon “Christ, once humbled here;” every day an object of unflagging interest to them, of unbounded affection to the Father, of joy and delight to the heart of Christ, and of His unwearied ministrations by the Holy Ghost the Comforter!

Eternally saved and perfectly happy in Christ, having confidence and joy in His presence, being in divine righteousness, spotless perfection, and cloudless favor unchangeably before God forever, he is also upon earth “a Man of God,” who, like his Lord, is here to bear witness unto the truth, entering into the thoughts and purposes of God for the glory of Christ, to whom he is united, and tracking his Master’s steps along the scene of His refusal. Thus he fills a wonderfully blessed place, new and singular, in God’s present actings in the world, answering to the endearing relationship in which he is set to the Father, to the blessed association he has already with the Christ, and to the glory to which he is predestinated when He comes. Thus is he led to express, through grace supplied, what He would have His joint-heirs now to be after the example He left His own, and seeking full and entire identification with Him in His spirit, His walk, His ways, His refusal, the fellowship of His sufferings, or whatever else His path conducts us through. This of course brings constant self-judgment and conscience-work; for the heart imbued with the thoughts and feelings of Christ will ever desire to judge in itself everything contrary to Him; and one’s apprehension of the course of things around us being formed by the knowledge of God’s estimate of it, one becomes more and more a stranger and an outcast in the scene, knowing it to be no rest for us, but merely an arena in which to further the interests of one’s Lord and Master while we wait for His call to the glories that shall follow. Thus has he judged himself, and also condemned the world, as Noah in his day, and is in it only to be a witness of God’s grace to it, and as reflecting as His representative the glory of the glorified man at His right hand, sustained too in that testimony by the cheering thought that there is not a moment in the history of his soul that he is not an object of tenderest solicitude to the heart of Christ.

In conclusion, wonderful a thing as the Christian is, let us remember, first, that apart from Christ he can do nothing (John 15:5); and second, that he is but a means to all end, and not the end itself. All the counsels of God relate to the glory of Christ; and our calling and blessing, the present ways of God with us, and our glorification with Him ere long, all converge to that one purpose of the heart of the Father—the glory He has predetermined for the Son of His love. But if we reflect that a Christian’s body is a temple of the Holy Ghost; that he is himself united to Christ already, and is in Him a new creation; that he is an adopted son of God, and is loved as Christ is loved, we must acknowledge that he is before God the very next thing to Christ, and, save that blessed One Himself, is the greatest personage ever seen upon earth, or to be manifested in glory.

In view of the wonderful scope of Christianity according to God, may not the language of our hearts day by day fittingly be, “I am just trying to be a Christian; not to be constituted one, but to be characteristically that which I am eternally before God— ‘a man in Christ’”?

W. B. D.

Fragment: Sign of Spiritual Decay

The lack of spiritual perception is the sure sign of spiritual decay.

Fragment: Failure of the Priesthood

On the failure of the priesthood the prophet becomes supreme.

Plain Papers on the Lord's Coming: the Great White Throne and the Eternal State

The millennium closes the long series of earthly dispensations. God's dealings with the earth, whether in grace, mercy, or judgment, are now concluded; and hence the earth and the heaven disappear before the face of Him who has taken His seat on the great white throne (Rev. 20:11). The final judgment comes between the end of the millennium and the commencement of the eternal state; but before this, an event takes place, dismissed in a word in the scripture just adduced, of great magnitude and importance. It is the destruction of the earth and the heavens by fire. Peter thus speaks of it: "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burned up." And again: "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein" (rather, on account of which) "the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat" (2 Peter 3:10,12). The day of the Lord, it should be remarked, covers the whole period of the thousand years. It comes as a thief, introduced as it will be by the Lord's appearing; and at its close, the consumption of the earth and heavens by fire takes place. Hence Peter says, "In the which," because it is included in, though at the end of, the day of the Lord. It is the same event indicated in the Revelation by the words, "From whose face the heaven and the earth fled away," stating the fact only without giving the means of their disappearance; but, as we see from Peter, fire is God's chosen instrumentality for the destruction of this present scene. Then follows the great white throne; the final judgment therefore takes place after the passing away of the earth and the heaven. The character of this judgment will demand a closer examination.

First, then, as to the Judge. It is made to appear from the authorized version that God Himself is the Judge: "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God" (Chapter 20:12). It is, however, well known that "throne" should be substituted for "God;" and it is very clear from other scriptures that the Lord Jesus is the occupant of, the One that will sit upon, the great white throne. He Himself said, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father." Again: "As the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man" (John 5:22-27). With this agree also the words of Paul when he says that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10,11). The One therefore who was once upon this earth, but rejected and crucified, is He who will sit in judgment upon those who refused Him as Savior and Lord; for the Father wills that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor Himself. In His occupancy therefore of this throne of judgment, God publicly vindicates Christ in the presence of men and angels, and holds Him forth as the object of universal honor and homage; so that now every knee that had refused to own Him in the day of grace must at last bow before Him in acknowledgment of His Lordship and supremacy. As seated on the great white throne, He has become the Arbiter of the eternal destinies of all His enemies.

The throne on which He sits is described as “great,” and as “white.” It is great as suited to the dignity of its occupant; and it is white as a symbol of the character of the judgments that will be pronounced, every one of which will be according to the holiness of the nature of God.

This judgment is upon persons, not things, and upon unbelievers only. John says, “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before the throne; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [hades] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (12-15). If the exact statements of this Scripture are examined, it will be apparent that there is no trace of any believer in this vast and unnumbered throng. Indeed, as already shown in previous papers, all believers are caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air at His second coming. There remain therefore, besides those, who are left in their graves at His return, only two classes—millennial saints, and millennial unbelievers or rebels. But millennial saints will not die; and hence, since this scene includes only the dead (vs. 12), those who stand before His throne for judgment is composed entirely of the wicked or unbelievers. This conclusion is established in another way. We have two kinds of books opened as the basis of judgment. There are the books of works, and there is the book of life; and it is said that “the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” (vs. 12). They are judged, in fact, upon two grounds—positive and negative. Their works are produced in evidence against them; and the absence of their names from the book of life shows that they have no title to mercy or favor; for “whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.” There is no trace of a single one having his name there, and their works therefore become the ground of their sentence; and we know that by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified (Rom. 3:20). As another has said, “Another element was brought into view. Sovereign grace alone had saved according to the purpose of God. There was a book of life. Whosoever was not written there was cast into the lake of fire. But it was the finally closing and separating scene for the whole race of men and this world. And though they were judged every man according to his works, yet sovereign grace only had delivered any; and whoever was not found in grace’s book was cast into the lake of fire. The sea gave up the dead in it; death and hides the dead in them. And death and hades were put an end to forever by the divine judgment. The heaven and earth passed away, but they were to be revived; but death and hades never. There was for them only divine destruction and judgment. They are looked at as the power of Satan. He has the power of death, and the gates of hades; and hence these are forever destroyed judicially.” The last enemy, death, is now destroyed; for Christ “must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.”

Before we pass on to the eternal state, another scripture must be considered. We read in Corinthians, “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. Then [cometh] the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He hath put all things under His feet. But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all

things under Him And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15:22-28). This in many ways is a most remarkable passage, comprehending as it does all dispensations, or at least covering them in its scope. The immediate subject of the apostle is that of the resurrection. After therefore stating the fact that all die in Adam, and the corresponding truth that all shall be made alive in Christ—that is, the "all" connected with Christ, as the "all" in the former case include all connected with Adam—he gives us the order in which the latter shall be accomplished. The resurrection of Christ was the first-fruits of this wondrous harvest, they that are Christ's, which should be gathered in at His coming. "Then cometh the end." But between this "then" and the foregoing "afterward" the millennium is included, so that "the end" brings us down to its close; and, indeed, farther still, down to the close of the judgment of the great white throne. It is this point which needs to be observed; for it is the termination, as such, of the mediatorial kingdom. Hence we find that He delivers up the kingdom to God the Father. All things having been subdued under Him, He yields up the kingdom to Him that put all things under Him, and Himself takes a subject place, that henceforward God may be all in all. It is the close and the surrender of His earthly kingdom, and thenceforward as the glorified man He is Himself subject. But it must be carefully remembered that His essential deity forever abides; indeed, the term "God," used thus absolutely, includes Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. It is a wondrous revelation; for thereby we learn that throughout eternity He will retain His glorified humanity, moving among the ranks of the redeemed, all of whom are conformed to His image, as the FIRSTBORN among many brethren. If therefore we have, on the one hand, in this scripture the surrender of the earthly kingdom, we have also, on the other, the introduction to the eternal state, wherein God is all in all.

But it is in the Revelation that we find the fullest description of the eternal state: "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Rev. 21:1). Isaiah had spoken of new heavens and a new earth (chap. 65: 17), but only in a moral sense as connected with the millennium. Peter takes up his language, and under the guidance of the Holy Ghost gives to it a deeper meaning. "Nevertheless," he says, "we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). But it is in the Revelation that we see in the vision the actual fulfillment of the promise. We are moreover told that "there was no more sea;" for the time of separation was over and gone, and every part of the new scene was brought into ordered beauty before God; everything would be according to His own mind. Thereon the holy city comes into view. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." There are several points to be noticed in this wondrous description of the perfection of the eternal state. First, the holy city is seen coming down from God out of heaven. As we have before remarked, during the millennium it is set above the earthly Jerusalem; but now, though John goes back both to its origin and character, it descends lower still, until it rests upon the new earth which has now been formed. The millennial earth could not have received it, because, great as was its blessedness, it could not, being still imperfect, have been the home of the eternal tabernacle of God. This is reserved for the new earth wherein righteousness

would dwell—have its abiding home. And mark how the city is depicted— “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” The thousand years have passed, and the city is still robed in her bridal beauty. Age cannot dim her youth, and hence she is still “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” The proclamation is now made, “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men.” We gather therefore that the glorified church is the dwelling-place of God; and just as in the wilderness encampment the tribes were arranged round about the tabernacle, so here we find men—the saints of other dispensations—grouped about God’s tabernacle in the eternal state. The Lord had said to His people Israel in the wilderness, “I will set my tabernacle among you: and my soul shall not abhor you. And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people” (Lev. 26:11,12; see also Ezek. 37:26,27). And now in the unfoldings of His grace, according to the purposes of His love, His word is accomplished after the perfection of His own thoughts. His tabernacle is now with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, their God.

Next we have the blessedness of the inhabitants of the scene. But how is it described? In the very way that appeals the most powerfully to hearts that have known the sorrows and tribulations of the wilderness.

There will be the absence of everything that had caused us grief or anguish here. First, “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;” not a trace of former sorrow shall remain, and God Himself will remove it. What infinite tenderness in the expression that God Himself shall do this! Even as a mother will tenderly wipe away the tears of her child, so God Himself will delight to wipe away all tears from the eyes of His saints. And once wiped away they can never return; for “there shall be no more death” (how many tears has death wrung from bereaved ones in this scene!), “neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain.” All these, the former things, will have forever passed away—these dark clouds—before the perpetual sunlight and joy of the eternal presence of God.

“And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And He said unto me, Write; for these words are true and faithful. And He said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things” (rather, these things); “and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (vss. 5-8). Thus all is made new; the new creation has reached its consummation. Everything within and without is very good; perfect, as measured by the holiness of God. It is therefore a scene in which He can dwell with complacency and delight. All has flowed from Himself, and all redounds to His glory; for He is both Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

The scene is then closed by the announcement of grace, promise and judgment. Every one that is athirst may receive of the fountain of the water of life freely. The overcomer shall inherit all these things. To borrow another’s language; “The world for the Christian is now a great Rephidim. This is the twofold portion of his final blessedness: he shall have God for His God, and be His son. Those who feared this path—did not overcome the world and Satan, but had walked in iniquity—would have their part in the lake of fire. This closes the history of God’s ways.” It will be remarked that

there is no mention of the Lamb. The reason is, as has been pointed out, that the Son also Himself is now subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

E. D.

The Edification of the Body of Christ

Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers, such, as we have seen, are the gifts of an ascended Christ. But it is important to take notice that they are gifts, not offices. The confusion of these two things has led to the greatest disorder, and the widest departure from God's thoughts. In the epistles to the Ephesians and Corinthians, where we have the fullest teaching with respect to gift, office is not even named. The most complete instruction concerning office is contained in the first epistle to Timothy, where the subject is the proper ordering and administration of the house of God. This harmonizes precisely with the character of the truth contained in these various letters, and shows how completely distinct gift and office are from one another. Gift is the provision made by an ascended Christ for the building up of His body, the church. Official character and responsibility, on the one hand, are associated with the regular ordering of the church as administered by man; and as soon as that order ceased to exist, office had no further place.

The only officers named in Scripture are elders (also called overseers or bishops) and deacons. Both these were ordained by apostles, or apostolic delegates, and exercised their office in the assembly of the city to which they belonged. This assembly consisted of all believers in the city, who were gathered together as one body. Since no such assembly is now to be found, or is indeed possible—since the church, as to its outward order, has become a ruinous heap, no more presenting even a semblance of its divinely-instituted oneness—it is clear that there can no longer be any officers similar to those named in Scripture. Nay, even if there could be a restoration of church unity, and an assembly which could, in the Scripture sense, be styled the assembly of any particular town, it would still be impossible to have officers, inasmuch as there is no longer any scriptural mode of ordaining them. Man may invent substitutes in his sectarian gatherings; but they are not, and cannot be, the officers spoken of in the Word of God. They are mere arrangements of human convenience, without any scriptural sanction or authority. The use of the same names as those given to the officers of the apostolic church is simply misleading, and the claim to appoint such officers, in whatever way, is at once a denial of the church's ruin, and a usurpation, however unintended, of apostolic authority.

This will make it clear that the distinction between gift and office is one of the very deepest importance to the church's welfare; for had gift been in any way dependent upon office, the gift must have ceased as soon as the church fell into ruins. But as it is, though office has ceased through the failure and disorder into which the church has fallen, gift, the grace bestowed by an ascended Christ, is just as free as ever. Amidst the wildest confusion, amidst the grossest corruption, amidst the infinite sub-division of that which ought to have retained and exhibited its divine unity, the Lord can still freely bestow His gifts, and has done so, in matchless grace, through every age of the melancholy history of the church on earth.

(To be continued)

The State of the Heart

A Heart identified with the interests and glory of God has known and believed the love of God, and has confidence in the thoughts of God towards us. Our hearts ought to be able to go to God without the slightest thought of anything but the outflowing of God's heart toward us in Christ. He looks for it—with such a walk that the conscience will not have to get clean when it comes to Him.

The Father's Love

All here is put conditionally as to the ways of God towards us. Their place and position is not only settled, but known. "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." We get the known life being in Him (vs. 20). Now then, "If a man love Me he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." There's the condition. It is not here loving Him because He first loved us, but it is another thing; it is dealing with a child. It is not a question of being a child, that question is never raised, but a question of an obedient child, and of love in dealing with a child; and I find the thing that comes first is our loving Him and the Father's government; that depends on the conduct of the child, and is because he is a child. You are under this government of God. "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me." He does keep in the name of Father all His children; but holy Father, that is how He keeps. We know that we are in Christ, and Christ in us; and if Christ is in me, nothing ought to be seen in me but Him, and peace in our souls: the peace Christ had Himself, that He made for us. He never had a cloud upon His conscience; He stood ever in the perfect sense of divine favor. We are in His place in this world, loved as He is loved. As soon as He has set us on this ground—the only true Christian ground—in no other aspect can God look at us but as "accepted in the Beloved." Christ being in us, we are called to walk with God; and if I am keeping His commandments, I get a little further into His mind. The proof of our love to Him is obedience.

Now how far are we waiting in the present enjoyment of the manifestation of Christ to our souls? How far are we conscious of the affections belonging to this relationship to the Father? walking in it, the Holy Ghost not grieved? and the effect is (not to make me think of myself, as of failure, but) to occupy me with the blessed manifestation of God to my soul, the positive enjoyment of the certainty of my place with Him never to be lost, conscious acceptance. Then He does begin to deal with us as walking with Him. Again, in chapter 15, it is our abiding first; but He will make His abode with us. This is the practice after "ye are clean." You are clean; now then "abide in Me." It is not a question of acceptance, but to bring forth much fruit. It is the Father's government in respect of our walk. God as a loving Father, as a holy Father, taking cognizance of our walk, ways, and words. The whole question becomes one of walk and communion, of Christ manifesting Himself to my soul, and of that which hinders and interrupts this. He says, "I am going away, but I am coming to be with you that you may enjoy my presence." Are we so walking that we can enjoy Christ's presence? If He comes, is the effect to bring to light some of my badness? or would it be the full blessedness of joy in Him? If in the power of Christ's word my habit is walking with Christ in everything, and if Christ comes in, there is only joy in my heart (of course, if my heart has got enfeebled as to present grace in Him, it has to deal with my state), death has lost all its power; the only thing left is, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." The manifestation of Christ to the soul gives the manifestation of the love and interest He has in His own.

Things that used to delight us become dung and dross; more than that, they have lost their power, and are things that become oppression to the spirit, that are not Christ. Souls get accustomed to live without Christ, without full communion with Him, in the blessedness of full salvation. He is the

blessedness of it, as He will be our everlasting joy; this is fellowship. I desire that your hearts may have activity of the Spirit to get into the atmosphere of what will be in heaven—to live in its fellowship with Him—common feelings, common thoughts, common joys; and if we do, the Father and the Son come and make their abode with us, to live in the thoughts, the joys of holiness and love, and we with a nature capable of delighting in it. But even when we do enjoy the real manifestation of Christ, we find there is very little power of doing so continuously. Stephen looked up steadfastly into heaven, and he was full of the Holy Ghost; that is the effect of it. But with us it does not last long; we do not look up steadfastly. It dies out, is lost; not lost so as not to come again, but it is not with us the constant living in that place where all else is judged out.

“If a man love Me, he will keep My words.” It is always that, and the Father and the Son, with the revelation of all that they are to the soul, the things on which our affections are to be set, which prop everything else. The effect is, I am joying in Him It gives amazing strength to heart and spirit in our walk; the heart is discovered if living in these joys, the eye is single, and the whole body full of light. We find in Hebrews the means of being sustained in that position. Walking in the world, the tendency of everything is to distract; we have to live in the things not seen. Paul says, “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh;” all he had to do with the world as a man identified with Christ in glory, was to bring that Christ into the world. All I know about myself is that I am dead.

It is a great thing to know that we are walking in a world of which Satan is the god and prince; and that “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” The world is not of God. He made all things, but He did not make the world as it is; sinful man, deceit and vanity, made the world; it is all in the bondage of corruption.

Christ came into the world, took up our place as man, was tempted in all points, and now appears in the presence of God for us. Of course He had no lust; but I don’t want intercession for my lusts, I want the hatchet of God’s word, which is sharper than a two-edged sword. The Word of God comes in to detect every thought and intent of my heart. I find the devil putting up in every shop something to draw me aside, and I do want mercy and grace to help in time of need. He presented all things to Christ to turn Him aside in the way, and it is when we are in the way that he seeks to stop us. It is the testing and trying of the inward life, to see if we will walk after Christ, having no object but Him, following hard after Him. There is mercy; we are weak; He helps our infirmities. He knows all the trials in the path of faith. Others may not stick fast; I may be left alone. He understands all perfectly; He has been thoroughly put to the test; though out of it now, He is thoroughly cognizant of all that we pass through. It is not failure in Hebrews; the heart can always go boldly. It is access to God into communion, title to look up to God because Christ has appeared in the presence of God for us. There can be no imputation. We get into the thought of forgetting that He is in the presence of God for us.

When I get to the epistle of John it is fellowship. The moment I have an idle thought, an uncharitable thought, the fellowship is gone. Nothing that does not come from the Spirit of God can be fellowship. It may be restored, but the thing is stopped, and if you go on long a terrible hardness comes over the conscience. God is light; light and darkness can have no communion. Here I get Christ in the character of advocate to restore. I have not been obedient, not kept His commandments, not been diligent in looking for mercy and grace, the Word of God is not abiding

in me; then the Advocate comes in, in virtue of righteousness and in virtue of propitiation, bows me and humbles me before God, and communion is restored. There is nothing so dangerous as getting the soul to do without that, getting into the state of being away from God without finding it out. He that is accustomed to walk in the light of God's countenance will find it out. It is not a question of sin, but you are so walking with God that you are conscious immediately if you are not in the light, if you feel anything creeping over your heart which would enable you to go a whole day without finding God revealed to your heart. Are you content to live without any manifestation of Christ to your soul? He loved us, and He desires that this should be a spring of joy in our souls.

He has gone back to heaven, but He is not going to leave you comfortless. "I will come to you." Is there an echo in your hearts to this coming Christ? Is this fellowship with Him your heart's joy? He will come and will manifest Himself to us as not to the world. Let us remember that we are bought with a price. God has taken us up for eternal salvation, and the way He takes us up is to draw our hearts after Christ. He does create a want in the heart for this manifestation of Christ. Does your heart say, "That's what I want?" Or is it possible you avoid it because it is a claim upon you?

The Lord give us to keep so close to Him that the affections of Christ's heart, so wonderfully declared to us, may find an echo in our hearts.

The Secret of Power

What is now, and what has always been, the secret of spiritual power in any? This is a question of grave importance for us; but the answer is one we as Christians ought to know something at least about. Such a question is seriously necessary to be both asked and answered today; and little able as we may be to reply to it fully, our lack may help us to seek the divine answer. One thing at least is clear, that where power has been known, either individual or collective, two things (among others perhaps) have been realized by the saints who have known it. First, God's own immediate presence with His people; and secondly, man's (that is, their own) utter impotency.

It is to be regretted that with certain Christians there should be such an appearance of satisfaction in speaking of that power which they knew in early years long past, and which they gravely tell us has now passed away. They are fain to cry out with Job, "Oh that it were with me as in months past, as in the day when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness; as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle" (Job 29:2-4). All this is sorrowful, inasmuch as it neither helps themselves nor any who hear them. Very different is such a state of soul from that of Paul, who says, "But one thing... forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:13,14). Very different too was this experience of Job from that of the wise man in an earlier day than that of Paul, who declares that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). And surely this is as it should be. Nearing the object of desire, the way becomes brighter and brighter. Brightened as the past may have been by His presence, I am nearer to Him now; how can I therefore regret and long for those days of shadow and darkness to come again through which in the past He led me? "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed" (Rom. 13:11,12), and we are journeying from the night of Shadows (illuminated notwithstanding by His love) to the day of His manifested glory; and if glimpses of His power and presence have cheered us here, what will it be to abide with Him?

But as to power, I turn now to a passage in the Old Testament to see how in the past His presence was manifested, the power of which wrought in a twofold way; and then I desire to note for myself this twofold effect: first, on His own people; and secondly, on all that raised opposition thereto. "When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language; Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion. (Consequence) The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou wast driven back? Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs? (Answer) Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob; which turned the rock into a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters" (Psa. 114:1-7).

What a picture we have here drawn by the Spirit for our contemplation! As the morning light dawns on Rameses we see, not a well-disciplined army with ability to meet its enemies, but six hundred

thousand footmen going forth apparently without resources, and encumbered with the care of wives and little ones. May we not say, What a powerless, defenseless, and easy prey they are to the wandering hordes of the desert? But no, beloved reader; a blood-bought people, and powerless in themselves truly, is going forth; but not alone. At that time “Judah was His sanctuary, and Israel His dominion.” Jehovah was in the midst of His people, and what was the result? “The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.” Now nothing in nature is more restless than the sea, (Isa. 57:20), and nothing in nature so apparently immovable and unbending as the mountain (Psa. 46:2-3; Matt. 17:20); but both confess to a power sovereign and supreme; both bow to its presence, and own it. Nature’s might must flee and tremble in His presence; and this is man, who hath power as lord over all His creation—man in his restlessness, man in his pride!

And while they marched on in obedience and dependence on it (the power of His presence with them), all was well. It scattered all the opposers; it prepared for them fountains in the desert. But they must remember that He is with them; they must not be inconsistent therewith. Truly He is for them, and against all who are against them; as He says, “Blessed is he that blesseth thee, and cursed is he that curseth thee” (Num. 24); but He cannot overlook inconsistency in any of His people with the fact that He is there. If they practically ignore Him, it is but that independent restlessness and pride of man which ever opposes Him; and if it work in them, then because they are His people He must deal with it. So again and again He had to remind them of Himself, there in their midst, as they murmur and wander forty years in the wilderness to humble them (Deut. 8: 2, 3). If they desire to have Hobab for eyes (Num. 10:31-33), He (the ark) immediately goes before them to find out their resting-places. If they faint, feeling but as grasshoppers before the giants of Anak, and the “cities great and walled up to heaven,” they faint because they have left the Lord out. But Caleb, the man of faith, cannot do this. He brings Him before the rebellious company, saying, “If the Lord delight in us, then He will bring us into this land.” Yet the people must bear their iniquities for this their unbelief forty years, “each day for a year,” from twenty years old and upward; “in this wilderness they shall be consumed, and there shall they die” (Num. 14).

“Our God is a consuming fire,” and His saints must not forget it; they must own it first, before (going out in power) it makes itself felt for them. I see this everywhere among the saints who have gone before us in the path of faith. Thus it wrought in Jacob’s case. While he was in servitude in Padan-Aram, and oppressed by Laban (Gen. 31:38-41), far away from the place of testimony, God does not interfere on Jacob’s behalf; but when (himself in obedience, and a crippled man) he is again on the way, though weaker than before as to outward appearance, yet it is then, as he journeyed, that the Spirit writes of him: “The terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them;” and they did not pursue after Jacob (Gen. 35:5). Ah! in that being crippled lies the secret. He has learned that he is in the way with God—it regulated him—and then God makes the power of His presence to be felt on those who would hinder His poor servant. It is the same today. And Paul learned it in his path down here. “Most gladly,” says he, “therefore will I glory in mine infirmities, that the power of Christ may tabernacle (lit. have its dwelling-place) on me” (2 Cor. 12:9). And thus, too, it bowed Job in its presence before it dealt with his three friends, and before it blessed his own family (Job 42:5,6). Similar also was its effect upon the prophets Isaiah (Isa. 6:5) and Elijah (1 Kings 19:11-13). That power which can if it please “rend the mountains, and break in pieces the rocks before the Lord,” makes itself known to Elijah, and to His saints, in a still small

voice: "And it was so, that when Elijah heard it he wrapped his face in his mantle." Blessed Master, and blessed servant, may we now more diligently listen to catch Thy yoke! What have we left, beloved reader, as our resource today? The most blessed revelation that we can have here on earth: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. 18:20) HE IS THERE. (Not He will come there perhaps before our meeting closes; He nowhere says that); He is there when we come. Does the fact of His presence regulate us who are gathered? Does it banish forever all that restlessness and pride of nature which we all more or less possess, so that His people may unhindered go up to Him? Do restlessness, natural ability, and the pride of man, ever exalting itself, flee and tremble in His presence? In short, do we really desire spiritual power individually, and in the assembly? Then we must begin with ourselves. Can I expect to know it myself, or to see its action on others (1 Cor. 14:24,25), if it have no power over me then present? Nature, and the carnal mind, can find no quarter in any soul who truly realizes the LORD'S presence, whatever others may allow. But He IS there, even if I do not realize it individually. May it lead us to judge and refuse that in us which we know HE cannot own.

One question more. If I go on, forgetful of what is due to His presence, must He not deal with me, and will He not do so sooner or later, in order to maintain what is due to Him, and to separate me from evil? (1 Cor. 11:30-32)

H. C. A.

The Edification of the Body of Christ

We have seen that office was local in its character, and required the ordination of apostles or apostolic delegates. In both these particulars gift presents an entire contrast. We read of the bishops and deacons of a particular church; but we never read of the evangelist, pastor, or teacher, of any particular church. These were gifts bestowed upon the church as a whole, and a teacher or evangelist in one place was also a teacher or evangelist in every place to which he went. Moreover, they were the gifts of an ascended Christ, and never required, or could have received, any human sanction. This was clearly the case with apostles; for when, as Paul tells the Galatians, "it pleased God to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus" (Gal. 1:15-17). And it was the same with respect to the teacher. As soon as Aquila and Priscilla had taken Apollos, "and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly," without asking any ordination or authorization he began to proclaim the truth which he had learned. Nor was this deemed irregular; for "when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much that had believed through grace" (Acts 18:26,27).

The gifts of an ascended Christ, then, whether apostles, evangelists, or teachers, received their authority from Him alone, and exercised it in responsibility to Him alone. Of course an apostle's advice as to the place or mode of labor would be received with great respect; but he possessed no authority, nor did his advice take away from the responsibility of the individual workman. Thus when Paul "greatly desired" Apollos to go to Corinth "his will was not at all to come at this time." And as with the exercise, so with the authorization—it came from Christ only. To accept sanction or ordination from men, or to connect their labors with any local appointment, would have been a

departure from God's order, and would have been a marked affront to Christ's authority, by declaring it insufficient unless supported by human approval.

These gifts were bestowed "for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of the ministry, unto the edifying of the body of Christ" (vs. 12). As to standing, the saints are perfected already. All the blessings and privileges recorded in the earlier portion of the epistle belong to the weakest believer, who is sealed by the Spirit of God, no less than to the strongest. But the question here is our practical acquaintance with the truth, and the power it gives us both for maintaining sound doctrine and for pursuing a godly walk. The two prayers in the first and third chapters are directed to these ends, and in the things they ask there is unlimited room for growth. Christ, ascended and triumphant, has therefore bestowed the gifts named in this chapter in order that saints may be perfected. This is always His object. We may be content with a low state, a low walk, a low appreciation of our blessings, a low intelligence of the ways and purposes of God; but Christ is not content. From the height of His glory He is still occupied with the wants of His people, and the first purpose to which He turns His triumph is to send down gifts which shall minister to their growth.

These gifts are provided "unto the work of the ministry." This does not mean, as we have shown, the establishment of any official order of men. It is really Christ's ministry, the work of service He began on earth, now carried on in another form through these gifts which He has bestowed upon the church. There is another object dear to His heart besides the perfecting of individual saints, and this is "the edifying of His body." Whether this is carried on through the work of the evangelist in bringing sinners to the knowledge of the truth, or whether through that of the teacher and pastor in establishing and strengthening those who are thus brought in, it is equally precious to Him who "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," and who recognizes in it, notwithstanding all its failures, His own "body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." How little do we enter into Christ's thoughts as to the preciousness either of the individual believer or of the church, the "one pearl of great price," which He has purchased at such a cost! In verse 14 the apostle shows more fully what is meant by "the perfecting of the saints." It is, that "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Nothing less than this will meet God's thoughts about us. Here it is not a question of filling up the body of Christ, but of individual growth. The point towards which we are to grow, that which constitutes the perfect man or the full stature, is oneness in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God. This will not indeed be fully reached till we see face to face; but meanwhile there is to be growth—growth in "the faith;" that is, in acquaintance with God's revealed mind, and growth of heart in knowledge of Jesus the Son of God Himself. These are in accordance with the two prayers of the first and third chapters. In the first the apostle asks for growth in the faith, "that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe." In the second He asks for growth in knowledge of Christ, that He "may dwell in your hearts by faith;" that ye may be "rooted and grounded in love;" and that ye may "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

It is not only growth in the faith, however, or even in the knowledge of the Son of God, that is here spoken of. Besides this, we find that the "oneness" elsewhere insisted on is again introduced. The goal towards which the gifts should aid us is, "till we all come unto the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God." In this there should be progress; for thus only do we come "unto a

perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” We are to exhibit a perfect man—a man fully grown up in Christ. But where there are sects and divisions, believers, instead of being full-grown men in Christ, are only babes. They are carnal, not spiritual—walking as men instead of showing forth Christ. These divisions came in, as we have seen, through the eye being taken off Christ and occupied with men. If the eye is fixed on Christ, the maturity— “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”—here spoken of will practically display itself in our walk. Thus alone believers, “with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The apostle then shows us the results of this maturity in Christ. The first is, that soundness of judgment in spiritual things which renders even the most unlearned believer proof against the subtleties of the human intellect, drawing away the heart from “the simplicity that is in Christ” into all sorts of false teaching— “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (vs. 14). It is important to observe how this vantage-ground is gained. It is not by human learning, or by skill in controversy. This verse connects itself with the one immediately preceding it, showing that our stability in the midst of the shifting currents of human opinion and speculation is the result of our being full-grown in the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God; that is, of our possessing an intelligent acquaintance with the Word of God, and a heart acquaintance with the blessed Lord Himself. No safeguards against error and false doctrine are proposed by the Scriptures, or can be of the smallest avail if set up by man, except these two.

But God is never satisfied with negative results, and it is not enough therefore that we should be shielded from error. He desires something more for us, that we, “holding” (not merely “speaking”) “the truth in love, may grow up unto Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ” (vs. 15). The knowledge of the faith is, as we have seen, the weapon which alone enables us to “hold the truth” amidst the “opposition of science falsely so called.” But there must be a corresponding state of soul, showing that the truth is operative in the heart as well as the mind, that it is forming the affections as well as the intellect. Hence the truth must be held in love; for without both of these there can be no “growing up unto Christ in all things.” Where, on the other hand, the truth of God is really held, not simply as an intellectual creed, but in love, the believer will grow up unto Christ—will become more and more assimilated in his walk and ways to the blessed Lord.

And it is from Him alone, who is “the truth,” and who “is love,” that real growth must come. From Him “the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (vs. 16). Here then we have important teaching, not only as to the part which the Head, but also as to that which the members play, in this “increase of the body.” Of course all the power for growth, all the supplies, come from the Head. Hence the whole is said to be “from,” or “out of” Him. But the “compacting” of the whole is “through (not from) that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in its measure of each part.” Though all comes from Christ, yet each believer takes his proper place; and thus through him, in his measure, the cementing and filling up of the body is carried on. This is true through grace in spite of man’s failure; but surely it is a deeply humbling fact, that this wondrous unity should have no outward manifestation here on earth. Our failure cannot indeed prevent God’s grace; but should not His grace make us ashamed of our failure?

T. B. B.

(Concluded from page 84)

Thou Art My Father

From the German.

Thy hand, O God, on me bestoweth
So many blessings full and free,
That my whole soul with joy o'erfloweth,
And poureth out glad praise to Thee.
Yet poor and cold my praise compared
With this which Christ hath taught my heart—
This truth which, risen, He declared,
That Thou, O God, my Father art.
Though by my friends I be forsaken,
And I go traveling on alone,
Though health and strength are from me taken,
And all earth's joys from me are gone,
Yet have I still this priceless treasure,
Which Christ hides deep within my heart—
Its value I can never measure—
That Thou, O God, my Father art.
I have Thyself! Naught further needing,
I rest in peace while here I roam;
The road along which Thou art leading,
However rough, aye tends to home.
Teach me to walk along it near Thee,
Thy love controlling all my heart,
With evermore this truth to cheer me,
That Thou, O God, my Father art.

A. L. M.

The Institution of Animal Sacrifice

The institution of sacrifice is not shrouded in mystery. It is true that there is only one book which furnishes us with authentic information about it, and there is only one historian who has given us any account of what took place on that occasion. But that book is the Bible—God's inspired Word; and the historian is Moses, a prophet mighty in words and in deeds. (Acts 7:22) No eyewitness then, as men would speak of one, has transmitted any record of it; yet it is from one who was present that we learn anything about it. He to whom acceptable sacrifice was that day offered has caused the history of it to be related, and has furnished us in His grace with the suited instruction which flows from it.

As long then as the Bible remains extant upon earth, so long will that history be preserved amongst men. Forever and ever we know will the remembrance of that sacrifice abide before God. It was late however in the world's history, and towards the close of that period during which a written revelation was being provided, that the full teaching about Abel's offering was set forth in God's book. The Lord caused Moses to write the history as a bystander might have narrated it. God, by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, has placed on record the secret history connected with it, but only when that secret history could be made available for the instruction of mankind. For Israel under law the history of Abel's sacrifice would be instructive; for saints who are called to walk by faith, the principle on which righteous Abel acted, it is of all-importance for them to know.

Before the fall, and until after the flood, animal food was not given to man. The life of the animal was not therefore to be taken to nourish man's bodily frame. Whence then came the thought of animal sacrifice? Adam and Eve, in the garden just after the fall, learning that they were naked, sewed fig leaves together to make themselves aprons, or girdles—a vain attempt at covering their nakedness, as they quickly discovered, for the girdle of fig leaves was found to be insufficient the moment that they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day. Naked they both were, that was too true; but the attempt to cover their nakedness with the fig leaves was an admitted failure. The attempt however proved two things; first, that they had no idea of procuring a covering by killing any animal; and second, that man's own thought of that which is sufficient to cover his nakedness falls short of what is needed, as well as of God's gracious provision on his behalf. The guilty pair formed girdles of fig leaves; the Lord God made coats of skin, and clothed them. A coat is more than a girdle, and it clothed them; but the coats were of skin. The life of an animal which was not needed for their bodily sustenance had to be taken that the nakedness of the transgressors should be covered; but this thought was wholly of God.

Again, when Cain and Abel approached the Lord with an offering, they each came with a present or gift (minghah) as an acknowledgment of whose creatures they were, but without, it would seem, the offering being called forth by anything wrong that they had done. Cain, we may believe from the order of the narrative, approached first, and brought of the fruit of the ground. Abel brought of the firstlings of the flock and their fat. Each brought of that which they had an offering unto the Lord. Now, bearing in mind that the ground was then cursed in a way it is not now, nor has been

since the flood (Gen. 5:29), Cain's offering must have cost him a great deal of toil. Wherein then consisted the difference between the sacrifice of the brothers? What made the one acceptable and the other not? The epistle to the Hebrews tells us, as it recounts, that "by faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." It was not then from mere intuition on his part, nor from convenience either, that his selection of a sacrifice proceeded. He offered of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat by faith, understanding in some way, unrevealed to us, that such would be acceptable to God. For creatures born in sin can only approach a holy God on the ground of the death of the sacrifice.

From that day this truth has never been allowed to die out. But such a truth was foreign to man's thoughts till God disclosed it; for just as Adam and Eve resorted to the fig leaves, so Cain sought to approach God with the fruits of the ground. Adam and Eve learned the inutility of the girdles; Cain was taught the impossibility of one born in sin approaching God with acceptance through offering of the fruits of the ground. The voice of the Lord God made Adam and Eve conscious of their mistake. The Lord, looking on Abel's sacrifice with acceptance, demonstrated to Cain the insufficiency of the ground on which he was attempting to stand before God. In both cases the teaching that was lacking came from God. Cain might have said that he had done his best, and that his fruit had cost him a great deal of labor; but all that weighed nothing in the balance, for the simple question to be answered was not what he would bring, but what would be acceptable to God. For this the mind of God had to be made known; and henceforth it was patent that death was needful, if the offering and the offerer were to be accepted before the throne.

This truth then made known, was taken up by man after the flood in his ignorance and dread of God's wrath, and sadly perverted; for, not content with bringing animals in sacrifice to God, the heathen, and Israel too in their apostasy, resorted to human sacrifices to appease an offended deity. How the devil, if he cannot hide from a man a truth, will endeavor to pervert it, that, whilst appearing to do right, man may in reality do wrong! For man is blind indeed, and a ready prey to the devil, unless subject to divine teaching.

That life must be surrendered on man's behalf is a cardinal doctrine of Scripture; and that no life, but that of one who is man, will really avail before God, is also plainly taught us in the Word (Heb. 9:22), and this was God's purpose before the foundation of the world; but that God would accept on behalf of a sinner the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul, would be either a denial of the fall and of the sinfulness of man, or of the holiness of the Being whom man thus attempted to propitiate. Thus, whether we think of the need of death in sacrifice, or of the One by whose death all was accomplished for those who believe on Him, this is clear, that man of his own thoughts, or as led of the enemy, would never have understood what God could accept on behalf of the sinner; for, apart from divine teaching, man knows not the depth of his need, nor the holy nature of his God; and nothing more is wanted to demonstrate this than to leave man to act in such a matter after the counsel of his own will. Adam and Eve, and Cain, and men after the flood, are solemn witnesses to the truth of this allegation; but Scripture, which tells us of this, instructs us as to all that is needful for the vilest and the lost to have a perfect and everlasting standing before God; and the earliest teaching about it is provided in the history of the two brothers, Cain and Abel.

So early in the world's history was the question raised, and when raised settled forever by the Lord Himself-How shall one born in sin be accepted before Him Adam and Eve were transgressors who

had thereby fallen from innocence. As such they must always stand out apart from their descendants. Cain and Abel were the two earliest born in sin — the condition in which we all were by nature. Hence God's ways with them, and the ground on which He could accept them, is full of instruction for us. Cain brought what he thought would do. Abel offered what he understood would be acceptable to God. By faith he did it. And the Lord, we read, settled the question speedily, simply, properly, and that forever. Speedily, for it was settled at once; simply, "for the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering, but unto Cain and to his offering He had not respect;" properly, for it is the prerogative of God to determine as He will, on what grounds He can allow a fallen creature such as man is to be at home forever before Him. This was made clear to both the brothers.

Abel understood it; Cain was fully aware of it, and his countenance fell. Both learned it from God, and we are to learn it from God likewise. The action of God determined the question for them; the Word of God settles the matter for us. But as they, so we, are taught it by God, and from the principles then established God has never departed, nor ever will; and three important ones are established for us by the history of Abel's sacrifice.

First. It is God's prerogative to declare on what terms He will accept one ruined by the fall. And He does that, never allowing a creature to act in this matter after the counsel of its own will. For what creature that has sinned has a just estimate of God's character, and a due understanding of His holiness? For all this we are cast upon revelation. So to approach Him acceptably we need divine instruction.

Second. If death is required ere we can stand in acceptance before Him, we are thereby indebted to another, and are proved to be helpless as regards ourselves; for it is a cardinal and self-evident truth, that no one can die to make atonement for himself, and no one by his own death can deal effectively with the question of his sinful nature. Needing then the death of the sacrifice, all our toil, all our efforts to establish by life-service a standing before God, must, like Cain's, be labor in vain. We shall be going on a wrong line, and one which can never by any circuitous course, however long, lead us to God. Hence we need that which God tells us He has provided, and has also accepted—the death of His own Son on behalf of those who shall believe on Him. Truth about His person, establishing His fitness to be the sinner's substitute, is brought out in succeeding revelations, which we need not here anticipate. The deep necessity of death is the point this history of Cain and Abel illustrates. Christ has died, and has also been raised from the dead—the token that God has accepted Him as the substitute and sin-offering in all its fullness, and that nothing is wanted to make His atonement of full avail before God (Heb. 9:14). The importance of this truth is immense, and is especially needful in these days to be remembered, when sacrifice on the altar has ceased, as far as we are concerned, forever; for the principle, that death must come in on behalf of the sinner, has not been altered, nor ever will. Nay, it has been established on more solid ground than ever since the death of the Son of God has been set forth in the Word, and the danger to man if he rejects that truth stands out more distinctly than ever. "No man," says the Lord, "cometh unto the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). Through the veil, that is to say His flesh, a new and living way, we have boldness to enter the holiest by His blood (Heb. 10:19-20).

Third. The offerer, as we learn from Abel's sacrifice, is associated inseparably with the offering. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and to his offering He had not

respect.” (Gen. 4:4,5) Abel was not accepted apart from the firstlings of his flock; and, as we learn from Hebrews 11:4, the bringing of his offering testified that he was righteous. The value of the offering was known only to God, and Abel stood before Him accepted according to all its value in His eyes. And Cain could see, and did see, that an accepted sacrifice had been that day presented to God. How close to the accepted worshipper was Cain! Yet how far off was he spiritually from God! He knew his brother was accepted, as the Lord looked to his offering, but that acceptance availed not for him. The fact of a sacrifice having been accepted avails nothing for anyone who is not identified with it. Identified with it, as Abel was, the knowledge of its acceptance is of great importance. Hence the question becomes an individual one. Since God has accepted the sacrifice of His Son (proved to us by raising Him from the dead, and the sending of the Holy Ghost to teach us about it), is each one standing before God on the ground of that sacrifice, or is he not? If the former, each one is accepted according to all its value; if the latter, though, like Cain, such an one may know of its acceptance, he has no part in the benefits which result from it.

From this short history connected with these two brothers; who by birth after the flesh stood originally on precisely the same ground, these different principles are clearly to be deduced. But early as they were established, how many have still need to learn about them! Blessed is that man for whom this history has not been written in vain.

C. E. S.

Fragment: Christ's Atoning Sacrifice

EITHER Christ's atoning sacrifice is sufficient, or it is not. If it is sufficient, why those doubts and fears? The words of our lips profess that the work is finished, but the doubts and fears of the heart declare that it is not. Every one who doubts his full and everlasting forgiveness denies, as far as he is concerned, the completeness of the sacrifice of Christ.

C. H. M.

The Passover and the Red Sea

It is well to distinguish, for our souls' profit, the difference between the Passover and the Red Sea. For a person may hear the gospel, and receive it with joy, and be rejoicing in forgiveness of sins; he may see the loveliness of Christ, and have his affections drawn out toward Himself; but if full redemption is not known, as typified by the Red Sea, if he does not know himself to be risen with Christ on the other side of death and judgment, he is almost sure to lose his joy when temptation comes and he feels his own weakness. The joy of Exodus 15 is, that God has absolutely redeemed them out of Egypt, and brought them in His strength to His holy habitation. This is a very different thing from the joy of the Passover—being delivered from just and deserved judgment. In the Passover Jehovah had made Himself known to them as the God of judgment. The blood on the doorposts screened them from judgment; it kept Him out, and He did not come into their houses to destroy. Had He come in, it must have been in judgment. At the Red Sea it was another thing—even God coming in strength as their salvation. The Passover delivered them from His judgment; the Red Sea from their enemies. The moment His people are in danger from Pharaoh, He comes in. The very sea they dreaded, and which appeared to throw them into Pharaoh's hands, becomes the means of their salvation. Thus through death God delivered them from death; like as Christ went down into the stronghold of Satan, went down under the power of death, and, rising again from the dead, delivered us from death. Thus was there an end of Pharaoh and Egypt to them forever. The Red Sea is redemption out of Egypt; God Himself is their salvation. He whom they had feared, and justly as a Judge, is become their salvation. They are redeemed; no longer were hoping for mercy, but able to rejoice that judgment was past, and to sing His praises for having brought them to His holy habitation—to God Himself; in the light as He is in the light—and brought there before they had taken one step in the wilderness, or fought one battle with their enemies.

There is no conflict properly till redemption is known. They did not attempt to fight with Pharaoh, but only to get away from him. They groaned under his yoke, but did not combat against him. How could they? They must be brought to God first — be the Lord's host before they can fight His enemies or their own. And so it is with an individual soul. I have no power to combat Satan while I am still his slave. I may groan under his yoke, and sigh to be delivered from it; but before my arm can be raised against him, I must have a complete and known redemption. The Israelites are not only happy in escaping the pursuer; it is a full conscious redemption from Egypt and Pharaoh, and they can count on God's power for all the rest. "The people shall hear, and be afraid: the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away" (Ex. 15:14,15). Their joy does not arise from having no enemies, but from God's own divine power taking them up, and putting them in His own presence.

J. N. D.

Michtam of David: a Golden Psalm

It is always interesting, and profitable surely, to trace the way in which the Spirit of God conducts the soul of the saint forward in truth, working, like the principle of life in vegetation, silently and unseen, but ever working, to carry forward the soul from its springtime to its autumn maturity. A thousand influences may stand opposed, like the chilling winds and leaden skies, the biting frosts and devastating blight in nature; but in spite of all with ceaseless, noiseless activity, yet in divine energy, the unwearied witness of a glorified Christ works on toward the desired end—the presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. As the Lord Himself said to unbelieving Israel, “My Father worketh hitherto and I work,” so may we say of the Spirit of God; there is the same divine activity in goodness, not only in respect to saints in their corporate character, but towards individual believers. All are under the tutoring hand of the Holy Ghost as objects of unflagging interest and culture for the glory and joy of Christ.

Nor is it at all difficult, if we go back to a past dispensation, to find the same principle underlying the inspired words of David and others in the Old Testament. Like water seeking, and, if the supply be kept up, invariably attaining, the level of its source, so the sacred strain rises higher and higher till it loses itself in the immeasurable elevation from whence it flowed, and to which it has returned.

The sixteenth psalm is a case in point. The psalmist cries to El (the mighty One), trusting in Him. It is the place of dependent subjection; man trusting in God, and leaning upon Him in holy, confiding dependence. This is the key-note of the psalm. Fittingly then the soul addresses Him, though no words be uttered, and its language is, “Thou art my LORD” (Adonai, Lord in blessing). It is in fact Messiah upon earth who speaks, pleading His trust and confidence, and who then looking up unto Adonai says, “My goodness extendeth not to thee;” for He speaks as a man, and therefore will not assert His equality with God; but looking to the saints, says of them, “In whom is all my delight,” or “my good pleasure.” How beautifully does David’s Michtam thus mark with precision the position of Christ as a man, taking a place of subjection here upon the earth, and in that place making Jehovah alone His portion, and the saints only His delight! Every false god He refuses utterly: “Their drink-offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.” With His whole heart He repudiated idolatry, that ancient sin of Israel soon to be more blasphemously revived: as a man upon earth Jehovah alone was Messiah’s Adonay. And surely this was true of the psalmist, as it is today of every true saint of God.

The progress of the inspired strain is now marked clearly; for we read, “Jehovah” (name of divine relationship) “is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot.” The soul of the saint is here confessedly in the presence of its object, and the heart opens to its own blessedness. First, I speak of Him and of what He is to me, and then I speak to Him and of what He does for me. He is my portion, my all; or, as in Colossians 3:11, when correctly rendered, “Christ is everything.” The portion of my inheritance, and the portion of my cup. The “inheritance” of this verse and the “heritage” of the next are the future thing, while the “cup” and the “lines” are the present thing. He speaks first of the inheritance and then of the cup. How true is this in the

experience of saints! Many an one knows that Christ will be his portion forever, who has afterward to learn that just as truly and as blessedly is He his portion now. Both are true—

“We want Thee here each hour of need,

Shall want Thee, too, in glory!”

And both are equally true and equally important. For when afterward we have learned that Christ is our portion all along the road, and that in Him are infinite resources for faith to draw upon, and when we have proved how utterly impossible it is to get along a single step heavenward without Him, we are apt to think that He is more to us and more necessary here than ever He can be there, where all the hindrances shall be gone. Ah! neither will that do; whether we are in the wilderness or in the land, whether in the furnace or on the throne, He is the essential element in all our blessing and in all our joy. For this reason to be with Him will be heaven, and to be like Him will be glory. When my heart has left its every weight below, when my new nature is unshackled and unassailed, when my spirit is emancipated from its burdensome clay and has entered upon the tenancy of a glorified body, its “house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” what shall I find in heaven capable of addressing me in a way suited to my blessedness but the One who bled for me here to procure it? Whom shall I find, did I search every nook in glory, capable of assuring my heart amid its rapturous newborn joy, or of receiving the first adequate tribute of a love which Himself had inspired, save the One who became incarnate, that in life, and in death, and in resurrection, there should come forth unto His saints the revelation of His Father and our Father, of His God and our God? How fittingly then says the psalmist in another place, “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.”

Next we have the speaking to Him. It is a real privilege to the saint of God to speak of Christ; but how much greater the privilege of speaking to Him! especially since we know that with this is coupled an even greater thing, His speaking to us, as He said, “My sheep hear My voice.” Here we speak to Him— “Thou maintainest my lot.” Oh, what a joy it is, amidst all the exigencies and vicissitudes of this checkered scene, to be able to turn the heart from every opposing thing, as we read, “Though a host should encamp against me my heart shall not fear;” to be able to turn to Himself and say, “Thou maintainest my lot!” Oh, harassed, tried, troubled, sorrow-filled saint of God, look up from this time forth and exclaim, “Thou maintainest my lot!” How tranquilly, then, the soul passes to the discovery that our lot (whatever be its drawbacks) is a singularly good one. As we sometimes sing—

“O, Lord, how blest our journey, while here on earth we roam,

Who find in Abba’s favor our spirit’s present home.”

In unison with this the psalmist says, “The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places (or the best places); yea, I have a goodly (or most excellent) heritage.” In the eyes of the worldling it may not appear an enviable one, but “the secret of Jehovah is with them that fear Him.” And when we have learned that the Lord Himself is His people’s portion, whether here or in glory, and that Himself is the maintainer of their lot, we readily acquiesce in David’s words, and own the pleasantness and the goodness of what His love has ordained for us. Dear reader, is it so with you? Whatever your lot below, and however it may appear to yourself or to others on earthly principles, can you look up and say, “The lines are fallen unto me in the best places; I have a most excellent heritage. Thou

maintainest my lot”?

But the saints of God need guidance, and they also need instruction; and David's God was Paul's, concerning whom said the apostle, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." So here we find, "I will bless Jehovah, who hath given me counsel." What beautiful confidence was the psalmist's—indeed, we may say, was that of Christ as a dependent man. He had turned to Jehovah, and Jehovah had answered him, and had opened his ear morning by morning to hear as the learner (Isa. 50:4); and now with a worshipping heart he can testify of Him that He had given him counsel. And the night-season afforded its lessons too: when all else was hushed into quietude his own heart spoke, and its exercises yielded instruction of no little value. It is herein saints lamentably fail. They know so little of retirement of spirit in the presence of God, when no eye sees but His. In silence and solitude before the day broke, bringing its calls and its claims, its discords and its distractions, the psalmist had passed through a season of meditation, during which God wrought exercise of heart and conscience, which spread its sober and salutary effect over the day's activities. Surely herein is something to be coveted, and to be cultivated too by the saints of God.

But now we hear again and distinctly the voice of One greater than David, the prophetic language of One who was both David's root and David's offspring; for though the sweet singer of Israel no doubt entered into it in measure, only He who was Jehovah's fellow, "the faithful and true witness," could fully say, "I have set Jehovah always before me." Still the principle has its direct application for us also, and is of immense importance as a practical thing in the path of a saint across this poor world. "I have set," indicates settled purpose of heart, a distinct spiritual activity of the soul; and we, dear reader, may well ask ourselves whether we can say that we have thus practically enthroned Christ in the foreground, whether as a spiritual action of the new nature we have given to Him this commanding and abiding place before the soul, so that He is ever in front of us, never to be less than our one object, our one purpose, our one desire.

"My Lord, my Life, my Rest, my Shield,

My Rock, my Food, my Light!"

And if it is indeed thus with us, if this little couplet be the truth, and not mere lip-language, shall we not know the sequence in the verse as the blessed issue of His tender mercy, "Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved"? Is it not just like Himself, that when we have made Him our everything, He should take up His place at our right hand as the answer to our fealty of heart to Him, as though He said, Since you have put me before you, I will take sides with you and be for you, so that you may never be moved? The next thing is, that the effect of this is seen in gladness and rejoicing of heart as a present reality; there is resurrection, too, in the future. It is still the prophetic language of David's Son and David's Lord; and thus we read that in the same hour in which His heart was broken over the woe-deserving cities, "Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." (Luke 10:21) Shall we venture, dear reader, to tell you why you have so little joy of heart, so little gladness of spirit? and why therefore you and I are such a poor testimony of the power of grace, so poor epistles of Christ? Ah! it is because we have in so small a degree got Him as the one only ever-abiding and supremely-enthroned object before the heart. The secret of joy is obedience, confidence and dependence; and every saint who is exhibiting a lack of it is publishing a libel upon Christ. The Man of sorrows in the hour of sorrow

“rejoiced in spirit;” and no servant of His ever trod a more thorny path than he who said, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice;” and who when he said it was in bonds, and apparently at the mercy of an imperial and cruel despot.

But we must hasten on. “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, nor suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” This was literally fulfilled we know in His case (Acts 2:25-32; 13:34-37); for though He had power to lay down His life, and power to take it again, He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, “crucified through weakness, yet He liveth by the power of God.” And then finally we read that Jehovah opens before Him “the path of life.” Death and hades could not imprison Him, were powerless to hold Him, and now He holds their keys (Rev. 3:18) for us His saints. Those in whom is His good pleasure, as in Him was that of His Father when He trod the path of life (albeit to Him through death) in this terrible world.

But in entering upon resurrection He has opened the path of life to us in all its inviting beauty before our souls, “a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture’s eye hath not seen: the lion’s whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.” Faith delights to have Him conduct it along that shining way which His own steps have traced, that path of the just which “is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” In His presence even here on earth our fullest joy is found, and the fullness itself awaits us, and is surely very nigh at hand! Addressing Him, the saint loves to say, “Thou wilt show me the path of life” (is doing it, and will, the blessedness of it being enhanced a thousand-fold by His own discovery of it to our souls); “In thy presence is fullness of joy” (oft in measure proved down here, but to be immeasurably proved ere long when we shall know, if we have not yet learned it, that His presence is more, oh, how much more! than the glory itself); “At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (the unceasing, unabating bliss which shall be ours in endless enjoyment in the place of dignity and glory).

Thus jubilantly ends this golden strain. The circle is complete. And just as a lofty rainbow crowning the summer skies derives all its splendor from the sun, yet spans with its beauty the earth from whence its elements have sprung, so throughout eternal ages shall the luster of divine glory canopy the heavens and compass the earth, and the happy and undying refrain of our never-ending song shall be, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore.”

W. R. D.

The Table of Shewbread

Three articles only were found in the holy place—scene of the customary service of the priests—of the tabernacle. These were the table of shewbread, the candlestick, and the golden altar of incense. All were made with a special object in view, and therefore each possesses its own distinct typical significance. That of the shewbread table we propose to elucidate, as the Lord may enable us, in this paper.

First, the composition of the table demands our attention. It was made of shittim-wood, and overlaid with pure gold. (Ex. 25:23-25) The shittim-wood is a type of what is human; and gold, as ever, is an emblem of what is divine. Hence, we have here presented to us a figure of Christ in His human and divine natures as combined in His person. As to the material therefore, there is entire correspondence with the ark, which is also a symbol of the person of our Lord.

The Bread on the Table. It is in the passage from Leviticus that we find the particulars of the loaves: "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake. And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the Lord. And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord. Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant. And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto Him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute." (24:5-9) (1) The loaves or cakes were made of fine flour. This at once points to the meat-offering, which in like manner was made of fine flour, with the addition of oil and frankincense (See Lev. 2). No leaven is mentioned, whereas in the two wave loaves (Lev. 23:17) leaven is expressly specified—for the obvious reason that, in this case, the loaves represent the church, and therefore leaven—emblem of evil—is found in them. But the fine flour is a type of the humanity of Christ, and hence the loaves of the shewbread are without leaven, He being holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, absolutely without sin. (2) The loaves were baked. They set forth therefore Christ as having been exposed to the action of fire—the judgment of God's holiness by which He was searched and tested when upon the cross, and found to answer, and to answer perfectly, its every claim. (3) They were twelve in number—six in a row. So on the shoulders of the high priest there were the names of six tribes on the one, and the names of six tribes on the other. The loaves equally point to the twelve tribes of Israel. The number twelve signifies administrative perfection of government in man, and hence there were twelve tribes, twelve apostles, twelve gates, and twelve foundations in the holy city, New Jerusalem (See for an illustration of this meaning Matt. 19:28). The twelve loaves may then be taken to represent Israel in its twelve tribes; and this will give us, in connection with the significance of the number twelve, God revealed in Christ in association with Israel (for Christ was of the seed of David, and heir to his throne—Luke 1:32) in perfection of government. This will be displayed according to the predictions of the prophets (Psa. 72) in the millennium. But the loaves were on the table, and hence, on the other hand, Israel is seen in association with Christ before God. (4) Another thing should be noticed. "And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row,

that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Lev. 24:7). The frankincense typifies the sweet fragrance of Christ to God. Observe therefore that Israel in its twelve tribes is ever presented before God, covered with all the fragrance of Christ, and maintained there through all the night of their unbelief in virtue of what He is, and has done—the sure promise of their future restoration and blessing. Hence the loaves were to be set in order “before the Lord continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant” (Lev. 24:8). They may be unfaithful, as they have been, but God cannot deny Himself; He abideth faithful, and as a consequence, though they have been scattered throughout the world because of their unbelief, He will yet perform His counsels of mercy and truth, and gather them from the four corners of the earth, and reinstate them in their own land in fullness of blessing—blessing which will be established in and secured by Him who is symbolized by the shewbread table.

An illustration of this may be gathered from the border of the table: “And thou shalt make unto it a border of an handbreadth round about, and thou shalt make a golden crown to the border thereof round about” (Ex. 25:25). It is very clear that the object of this border was to maintain the loaves in their position; and if the ornamental crown of gold be taken as an emblem of the divine glory of Christ, the lesson taught will be, that Israel is secured in its position in Christ before God by all that He is as divine; nay, that His divine glory is concerned in their maintenance in it, as well as in preserving them for all the blessing which He Himself has secured, and on which they will therefore one day surely enter. But there is more than Israel’s position in this symbol. It embraces in principle that of every believer. There in the holy place ever before the eye of God, covered with the grateful fragrance of the frankincense, is he seen in Christ. It is indeed the perfect presentation of the believer to God. In other words, it is our acceptance in the Beloved.

We may now consider the bread as food for the priests: “And it shall be Aaron’s and his sons’; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto Him of the offerings of the Lord made by fire by a perpetual statute” (Lev. 24:9). Feeding indicates identification and communion with the thing fed upon. This is expressly brought out by the apostle Paul in his teaching concerning the Lord’s table. “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:16,17). It was the same with the priests.

For example, they ate also of the sin-offering in certain cases (Lev. 6:26), and thereby identified themselves with it. Feeding therefore upon the shewbread is a symbol of the fact that Christ, as the Priest, ever identifies Himself with Israel before God. It was only to be eaten, it will be remarked, in the holy place. It is then Christ, in communion with the thoughts of God, identifying Himself with the twelve tribes in the exercise of His priesthood. This brings before us a very blessed aspect of truth. That He is the High Priest of this dispensation all admit; but it is not sufficiently borne in mind that, notwithstanding Israel’s unbelief, He identifies Himself in His priestly office with them before God, and that He will come out of the holiest into which He has entered as Melchizedek, and be a Priest upon His throne over a willing people. “The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psa. 110:2-4).

Then we have the provision for the journey: "And thou shalt make for it four rings of gold, and put the rings in the four corners that are on the four feet thereof. Over against the border shall the rings be for places of the staves to bear the table. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold, that the table may be borne with them" (Exod. 25). The children of Israel were pilgrims in the wilderness, and hence the tabernacle and all its furniture were made for them in this character, and accompanied them in all their wanderings. Christ is ever with His people; and the very rings and staves, equally with the table itself, composed of gold and shittim-wood, point to Him as the God-man. But it is in the book of Numbers that the details for the transport of the table when on the march are given. "And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: and they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof" (Num. 4:7,8). The inner covering, it will be observed, is a cloth of blue—symbol of what is heavenly; next, a cloth of scarlet—scarlet being an emblem of human glory or Jewish royalty; and outside came the covering of badgers' skins—a type of protection from evil. Regarding the whole, the table with its shewbread, as Christ in association with Israel, to be hereafter displayed in perfection of administrative government, the meaning of this arrangement will be apparent. The cloth of blue was immediately upon the gold; that is, the heavenly character of Christ was in intimate association with what He was as divine. The scarlet next—royalty, or human glory, because being in the wilderness the time for its manifestation had not yet arrived. That will be connected with the kingdom at His appearing. The badgers' skins are therefore outside, as concealing His human or royal glory, and as expressive of that holy vigilance which guarded Him on every hand from evil while in wilderness circumstances.

All the vessels connected with the table were made of gold (vs. 29), all significant of that which was divine as befitted the service of the One who was really God manifest in flesh, and who will be confessed in the future day of Israel's blessing as their Lord and their God. It will thus be seen that every detail, as well the whole table, speaks of Christ. May our eyes be opened to perceive every aspect of His person and work as presented to us by the Spirit of God.

E. D.

Living Christ in the World

The believer, “through the law,” as shown by the apostle Paul, is “dead to the law,” that he may “live unto God.” He can say, like Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” This is his standing before God, and the result upon his outward conduct should be, as with the apostle, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:19,20). He has no longer the law, but Christ, for his standard. To live Christ, that is, to reproduce as it were the life of Christ in our own, is true Christian walk. Christ always walked in the Spirit, and if we are walking in the Spirit we “shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh,” but shall bring forth those fruits of the Spirit—that “love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance,” which adorn in such rich clusters the life of the blessed Lord (Gal. 5:20-23). It is impossible to gather grapes from the thorns of the old nature. Christ is the true vine, the one stock from which fruit for God can be brought forth. Only as we are branches abiding in Him can we bear fruit like His own; only thus is it possible for us “so to walk even as He walked” (John 15:5; 1 John 2:6).

These truths are beautifully brought out in the passage now before us. The apostle having shown how a believer can walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called in the church, next goes on to indicate how he should carry out the same principle in his conduct towards his fellow-men, whether believers or unbelievers. He does not put Gentile converts under law, but while not bringing them on to Jewish ground, he carefully removes them from Gentile. “This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness (or hardness) of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (vss. 17-19).

Such is man, as fallen, and left to the guidance of natural conscience and reason. Truly he is “without excuse,” for the ignorance is not a guiltless one. “When they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was hardened.” It was because “they did not like to retain God in their knowledge” that He “gave them over to a reprobate mind,” or a mind void of judgment (Rom. 1:21,28). So in the passage we are considering. It is “because of the hardness of their heart” that their understanding is darkened; and in their ignorance they are alienated from the life of God. Thus they walk “in the vanity of their mind,” the vain, sinful desires and feelings of the natural heart being their only guide. Nor is this all. Corrupt appetites, followed without restraint, soon deaden the conscience and poison the affections, so that all right natural feeling is lost. This is the lamentable condition of the Gentile world. They are “past feeling,” the restraints of conscience and even decency are removed, and giving themselves over to depraved appetites, they “work all uncleanness with greediness.” Thus it was with the world before the flood, when the whole earth was filled with “corruption and violence.” Thus it was with the cities of the plain, till God rained upon them fire and brimstone from heaven. Thus it ever has been when man has been left to himself to follow the leading of his own evil heart.

But the Ephesians had, through grace, been brought out of this state of things. They had another guide, as widely removed from mere natural conscience on the one side as from law on the other. "But ye," says the apostle, "have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth" (vss. 20-24). These Ephesians had learned, not law, but Christ. They had by faith heard Him, and been taught by—or rather in—Him, according to the truth of which His own life as man had been the perfect and divine manifestation. The truth as it is in Jesus does not mean the doctrinal truth of salvation, but the perfect, holy walk of truth, as shown in His person; for when Jesus is spoken of in this way it refers to His life and walk here in the world. The Ephesians had "learned Christ" in the only way in which He can be learned. The natural man may learn of Christ; the spiritual man alone can learn Him. For "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). There must be the hearing ear before Christ's words can be understood. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, "Why do ye not understand My speech? even because ye cannot hear My word" (John 8:43). The Ephesians had heard Christ, and been instructed in Him. The words that He spoke, "they are spirit and they are life," and they had produced their quickening power on the hearts of these saints. Hence they knew the truth as it showed itself in the spotless, holy life of Jesus.

This was to be practically manifested in their own lives. They belonged no more to the flesh, and therefore their walk was not to be according to the old model "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." They had done with the old creation, as to their standing before God, and were seen in a new creation, as quickened together with Christ. This then was to be their new model. Being "renewed in the spirit of their mind," they were to walk after a new fashion, not according to the law of the old nature, but as having "put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth." The new man is man in the new creation—the creation which has its head in Christ, the creation which draws its character from Christ. To walk as having put on the new man is therefore to walk as Christ walked; for this new man is created according to God's nature in righteousness and holiness suited to His own truth.

This standard once acknowledged, practical results are to follow; and it is interesting to see how even the most common-place acts are submitted to this new test. Thus the apostle says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another" (vs. 25). Moral philosophers have discussed the question why men should not lie, and wide differences have existed among them on the subject. But moral philosophy never assigned as a reason anything like what is given here. The life of Christ is to be our rule, not worked out through imitation, but worked out by the fact that we are quickened together with Him, and created anew on His model. This settles the whole question. Who can imagine falsehood from the lips of Him whose words were the words of God, and whose truth was the truth of God?

Just as little could falsehood be found in the lips of one who walked in His spirit, showed forth His life. There is, indeed, another reason given, also characteristic of this epistle, "for we are members one of another." How practical the "one body" is. No man would lie to himself; no man could imagine the hand trying to deceive the foot, or the ears trying to deceive the eyes. Just as little

should believers in Christ deceive each other. Being members of Christ, “we are members one of another”—parts, as it were, of the “one new man” which Christ has made us “in Himself.”

Another result is seen in the next admonition, “Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil” (vss. 26, 27). Our Lord was angry with certain persons, “being grieved for the hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:5). There is therefore an anger which is of God, but the abiding wrath which springs from vindictive feeling is not of God. Even the anger kindled by godly indignation against evil may too readily degenerate into fleshly passion. We must beware therefore that in anger we “sin not,” and guard against vindictive feelings by watching that the sun does not go down on our wrath. Otherwise the tempter may come in, and we are not to “give place to the devil.”

The next exhortation is a little startling from its very obviousness, “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (vs. 28). We must remember that the early assemblies were formed of persons just brought out of heathenism, with all its abominations, and consisted in part of slaves, an oppressed and degraded class, among whom theft was practiced without scruple or shame. The exhortation too goes beyond open theft, and in principle condemns all taking of unfair advantage, such as even the fuller morality of our own day often but feebly condemns. But the interest of the exhortation lies rather in the motive than in the course of conduct enjoined. If believers had been under the law, a simple appeal to the eighth commandment of the decalogue would have been enough. But we are not under the law, but under grace. What is the obligation then imposed by this position? Not only to do “the righteousness of the law,” but a great deal more. Did Christ stop with doing the righteousness of the law? On the contrary, He went far beyond it. The law requires that we should love our neighbor as ourselves, but it does not require us to lay down our lives for our neighbor. This however was what Christ did; and if the life of Christ is in us, “we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16). So extreme a sacrifice may indeed be rarely demanded, but the spirit of it may always be shown. Christ not only did not injure man, but “though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. 8:9). His whole life was one of self-sacrificing love. How beautifully this reappears in Paul, “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you” (2 Cor. 12:15). The Christian should walk in the same path, as he has the same life, not only refraining from stealing, or taking unfair advantage, but working to have the means of ministering “to him that needeth.”

This the Holy Ghost, by one of the simplest exhortations in Scripture—an exhortation which from its common-place character might to our blind reasoning seem hardly worthy of a place in such an epistle—brings out one of the most striking differences between law and grace. Law simply prohibits evil; grace delights in doing good. Law is what God demands from man; grace is what God is in Himself. How sad, then, to see believers, who have been brought into liberty and associated with Christ, falling back into the lower class of motives and principles, and putting themselves again in bondage under a system to which they are declared to be “dead by the body of Christ.” The whole “righteousness of the law” shone out in the ways of Christ, and will shine out in the ways of one who is abiding in Christ. But how infinitely beyond law the grace revealed in every action of that perfect life! And this is what will appear, of course in a vastly inferior degree, but still as a real fruit of abiding in Him, and walking in the power of the new life in which we are quickened together with Him.

The same thing may be observed in the next exhortation, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers."

(vs. 29) A special class of corrupt communications, such as might be expected from Gentiles who wrought "all uncleanness with greediness," is alluded to in the next chapter; but here the exhortation has a wider scope. "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" asks our Lord of the Jews (Matt. 12:34). A corrupt tree can only bring forth corrupt fruit. The words, as well as the works, will bear the character of the heart from which they proceed. But it is not enough that the believer merely abstains from corrupt communications such as naturally belong to "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." He has put on the new man, of which Christ is the perfect representative. Did Christ merely refrain from evil in His conversation? No; His words, like His life, "ministered grace unto the hearers." And so will the words of one who is in communion with Christ. Just so far as we walk after "the new man" will our words resemble the words of Him of whom it is written, "Grace is poured into thy lips, therefore God hath blessed thee forever" (Psa. 45:2).

T. B. B.

The Only-Begotten of the Father

“He that cometh from above is above all.”—John 3:31.

It is only when we begin to “behold the glory of the Lord” in one light and another by the four evangelists, and especially as presented throughout this gospel of John, that our souls gather up, and at last concentrate all their rays in the one great confession of His person as “the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The knowledge of this glory will then prepare us for its blessed counterpart; namely, “the Son in the bosom of the Father” come to declare Him to us.

On our part we thankfully and gladly own, as taught of God, “He that cometh from above is above all;” and in happy keeping with this glorious manifestation of His person, one loves to hear the forerunner say of Him at the outset of this gospel, “There standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe’s latchet I am not worthy to unloose.” Consistently too with this testimony, and the further unfolding of Christ’s glory from first to last, one loves the sweet savor of Mary’s spikenard at the close, when in the maturity of her faith and ripening affection she anointed the feet of Jesus for “His burial,” and wiped them with the hair of her head. Between these varying appreciations of John the Baptist and Mary of Bethany, the mother of Jesus likewise holds her place at “the marriage of Cana,” and in the full satisfaction and confidence of her heart bids the servants do “whatsoever He saith unto you.”

Happy and encouraging as these and other such experiences of personal love to the Lord from one and another are to us in our day, yet we only advance in it individually as we are led on by the Word, and our own anointing through the Spirit to Himself, in the deepening knowledge of who, and what He is. We shall find ourselves thus drawn into the circle “of His own glory” by His acts and deeds, and shall be detained there by the immensity of the objects which brought Him down from above, and the weighty words which He spoke, and the mighty work of redemption which He began and finished for the glorious and holy majesty of God upon this earth, ere He departed into the heavens.

In the beginning of His loving ways and intercourse with men and women day by day as “He who cometh from above,” we recall likewise with delight those two disciples whom He attracted into the place where He dwelt, and who abode with Him that day. Indeed, from His own dwelling below in the first chapter of John, on and up to “the Father’s house” above in the fourteenth, which He is gone to prepare, and into which He is presently coming to receive us, these various habitations could only suit and serve Him as they were owned or shared by “the excellent of the earth,” in whom was all His delight. His divine errand in grace to us, was to draw men out of the world to Himself, and attach them by a love which made them feel it was past all finding out, but which nevertheless had them for its object, and found its satisfaction with them and in their company. “His delights were with the sons of men;” and his whole life long was but one gathering-time, in which the whole multitudes who pressed upon Him, either to be taught or to be fed, were His welcome guests. Much more if we add to this His love, which was stronger than death, and by

which He saved us on the cross, and brought us to God.

Still, as an example of its varying manner and measure, it may be helpful and certainly refreshing to recall the two extremes—of Nathanael drawn out from under the fig-tree to Him; and John, the beloved disciple, drawn to Him in the confidence of loving assurance at the supper table to repose upon His breast. So again, as “the Son of Man which is in heaven,” He drew Nicodemus on, that He might, through the cross, give him a title to life, and show him how to see and enter into the kingdom of heaven. How lovingly too He did this by the way of Moses, and the serpent lifted up upon the pole, as foreshadowed in the hour of Israel’s calamity at Hormah, and their sore rebuke under the hand of Jehovah! But in His rich grace He descended further down into the depths of human misery than this, that by impassable gulfs and distances from God (to every one else) He might draw sinners out of their distresses and ruin, and attach them by redemption through His blood eternally to Himself and to God. Who does not over and over again recall the day when He sat upon Jacob’s well, and tarried for the woman of Samaria to come for its water, that He might give to her guilty conscience and troubled heart, a drink from the springs of life in glory? How too He loved to reveal Himself, and who He was that drew the living water, as He handed it to her, and bade her thirst no more, neither come thither again to draw! Higher and mightier than the angel of Bethesda, as He traveled on He declined to trouble the water for the first who could step in, but drew forth the man—to Himself who was the last—that one who had been bound thirty and eight years, and had no friend to put him in, Immediately He takes the place as “above all,” and gave him the power to carry the bed which had hitherto held him as its captive, and in virtue of a transmitted energy which was from above, to take it up and walk, as the everyday witness of the One who had made him free.

After all, this living water to the woman of Samaria, and this loving power to the impotent man at Bethesda, are only some of the droppings out of “the fullness” which dwells in Him. In the greatness of His own glory, which He had with the Father before the world was, He had come down into this valley of Baca, as the Lamb of God, to make it a well, and even be in it as He passed along, like the rain which “filleth the pools.” He is come who alone could reach the very core of its misery, and heal it at the fountain-head of its corruption, as “the taker away of the sin of the world.” Moreover, in Him was life, and the life was the light of men; and to “as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” Life and light have issued out from divine love in the bosom of the Father, and are brought into the midst of men by “the Word made flesh,” who dwelt among us in the veiled, and yet the unveiled, glory of His mysterious manhood.

“He that cometh from above is above all” was manifested in every thought and deed of His life. This brightness of the Father, is the unfailing sun of the new creation of God; and it is in “this glory” He passes along by the well and the pool in this groaning creation.

“The glory” of the One in the eternal Sonship, which He had with His Father and the Holy Ghost before ever the world was, accepted the body prepared for Him; and in this manhood-glory it is that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.” He it is moreover who has thus entered into the palace of the strong man and spoiled his goods, and taken away the armor wherein he trusted. The height of His own person in the glory of the Godhead, and the depth of His own grace in the humiliation-glory of the body He assumed,

were necessary for the accomplishment of the work which was given Him to do—a work which in its result reached to the highest heavens, and delivered from the lowest hell. But whatever the skill and love of the potter, “the flesh profiteth nothing;” for though He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, yet the world knew Him not.

A lapsed world and the usurper were in question before God; and therefore a world that lieth in the wicked one, in its alienation and enmity against Christ the Son. Besides this He had come “to His own” (according to the flesh), “and His own received Him not.” Where was He to turn now in such a world, when even these were against Him on whose behalf He came? Could He count upon the excited multitude who ate of the loaves and were filled, and who were moved towards Him in favor every now and then, when they saw the miracles which He wrought in Jerusalem? No! Jesus would not commit Himself to their selfishness and pride, because He knew all men, and “needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man.” Their highest thought would be to take Him by force, and make Him a king for their own political ends, and by popular will. Everything on His side with the Father was perfect, and shone out in its brightest and best; and yet at such a moment all was at its very worst with men, and pointing at the greatest moral distance from God. These extremes are manifest as we come forth to stand upon the threshold of this wonderful gospel by John. On the one hand we measure all by Him who cometh from above as the Savior of the world, and who “is above all;” or view the awful chaos, and confusion, and enmity which came from beneath, and with which sin, and Satan, and death filled it, and wrapped it around.

J. E. B.

Fragment: Satisfied With Him

To grow in the knowledge of Christ is our life and privilege. The search after novelties which are foreign to Him is a proof of not being satisfied with Him. But he who is not satisfied with Him does not know Him, or at least has forgotten Him! It is impossible to enjoy Him, and not to feel that He is everything—that is to say, that He satisfies us, and that by the nature of what He is, He shuts out everything else.

J. N. D.

Fragment: Hidden in Christ

Where living faith is in any soul, there has been the communication of the divine nature to that soul. God can look on us with the same delight as on Christ, because we are hidden in Christ. We cannot stop the flow of His love and delight in Christ, and it all flows through us, as being in Him.

G. V. W.

Christ and the church: Husbands and Wives: Ephesians 5

The exhortation through Ephesians is of a peculiar character. I think generally believers in the present day are not sufficiently aware that it is an exhortation based and built on the fact that we have got the life that expresses itself in the particular way which this epistle traces out. God made man, and there were certain things according to the first creation right and proper for the creature. Dependence on the Word of God, and love toward all his fellows, man has lost all the power of that through sin. There is then a new creation, and that creation is described in the first chapter of this epistle. We are God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10); that is, we are the thing which He has made. Verse 9: "Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." It is not workmanship as a thing in which God is acting at the present time (that is quite true); but if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature—he is altogether taken out of time old into fellowship with the new. Christ, as a man down here essentially divine, perfectly pure, had power to do God's will, and did it. I am in Christ, and then came the works He has created us to—works essentially different from those of the first Adam. The works we have traced out in the end of chapters 4 and 5 are the works of truth, and of love, and of light—of truth, in that God revealed what was truth when His Son came into the world; of love, in that God delighted in Christ, and has so united a people with Him that He can so speak of us as being "in Christ." He says, "Be ye followers of God as dear children, and walk in love as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us."

And then again (vs. 8), He brings out light: "Ye were sometimes darkness, now are ye light in the Lord." These works we found redemption works. Adam could not know "the truth." It is not truth abstractedly; it is Christ, the full expression of what God is, and the full discovery of what man's need is; that is, the truth in which I have been created. Bring Christianity into the scene, everything gets its character stamped upon it according to what Christ is. "All His paths drop fatness," tender mercy, and goodness, as He goes through the work. Am I a Christian—God's workmanship in Christ? Truth: what is the truth? Do you talk about the truth? Why, you are a sinner! I say, "You need not tell me that. My sinnership and the measure of my saintship have been proclaimed upon the throne of God; for the Lamb of God, who died for me, is there." Righteousness: I am in Christ. How can God receive one who has no claim on Him at all? Surely if He honors the Christ of God, He will turn His back upon the man who is the very contrast. Ah, yes! but Christ has sat down as the Savior, and righteousness is secured to me in Him—the righteousness of God. Was it right for God to receive Christ? Ah! surely it was. He sits there at God's right hand as the Savior. It was for sinners with not a rag, not a title to present. By the very extremity of the evil connected with me, Christ cannot do without me. He wants me for the very proof of what that very righteousness is in which He is before God.

Then the "love." Well, how did all the real delight of God have a sweet-smelling savor? Where did it come out? Just where Christ met all the very thoughts of God: "I could sweep man away with the besom of destruction; but then, I have not my own way. I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." The Father turned to the Son as the only Person who

could meet the difficulty; therefore He met the Father's mind, and made Himself a sweet savor unto God as meeting the question of the holiness of God. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." "Now are we the sons of God." Love, beloved, would humble by love.

"Now are ye light in the Lord." It is all perfect light. We can draw near to the holiness of God, right through the veil up to the place where God Himself is, and dwell in the light, and see God, what He is. I am part of God's workmanship in that way; and after tracing out those three elements of the new creation as He does in the fifth chapter, He comes down to a sort of testing of our hearts and circumstances where we are, and He says, "Now let joy abound in your hearts." The mind of man is one-sided; it will go into great joy, and forget other things; and He who wrote this knew there was need, so He puts in another word, "Rejoice evermore; and again I say, Rejoice." Now, that is a test for what you are really down here in the wilderness. Can you give thanks always for all things? It is a test of the grace really in its purity in us. "Giving thanks always for all things." The workmanship of God can bear that test. "Rejoice evermore." God is my joy, and I am for Him. Christ is my exceeding great reward; and though He remove real blessings from us as He often does, we are to give thanks always for all things. Have I not enough to rejoice in, not only when He barks the fig-tree, and lays bare the vines, but in spiritual conflicts, temptation, so as to bring out our weakness? "Giving thanks always for all things;" that is a part of what the privilege of the Christian is according to this new nature He has given to us.

A little word, a happy word, I would put in from Philippians. A bold, confident man would say, "I have learned the whole lesson." God had him in the school teaching him. What should enable Paul to say to those Philippians, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure"? There is God working in, and before there is God working in, there is the having set us in Christ. He is working in us according to the nature He has brought us into. Then He takes up these relationships down here; and it is most blessed to see how not only all these things in connection with domestic life—wives and husbands, parents and children, servants and masters, which, alas man in this nineteenth century so dishonors on earth—how all these things passed before the mind of the blessed Lord as the Spirit has given them.

Just for a moment or two let me call your attention to what was more particularly upon my mind, what is said of Christ in His love. First of all, He is said to be the Head of the church, and the Savior of the body. Now the church, in the sense it is spoken of here as His body, is made up, so far as the elements of it are concerned, of sons of God. The title is special. Before I can belong to that church I must be a son of God; but creating a body for Christ was needful to God. Brought to Him in that sense, we find there is a certain measure of glory, moral glory, which will come out in displaying that He is the Head of the body, and we are members in particular (vs. 25). He speaks of His love. I find often a good deal of practical truth in the way that is presented: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church." "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you." I lay the stress entirely upon "as I have loved you;" that is, Christ took up the believer before the foundation of the world by the hand of God. It makes all the difference, if I do that to my brethren; it is not that I have got to pay out love to them, much less expect it, but I have got to look at the believer and say, there is a man that God gave to Christ before the foundation of the world. He may be walking very rightly towards me; never mind. Christ did not throw up His shoulder towards Peter; He brought Peter down, knew how to do it, knows

each one as given to Christ before the foundation of the world, and therefore having power to find fresh water to wash one another's feet, "even as Christ." He did not love us first of all when He was in the world; so He says, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church." We have His love and His conduct brought out to us in Philippians. He was associated with His Father in the thought that it would be a good thing for God to go off the throne and become a man, stain the pride of man's heart, to show how a man could be down here on earth in dependence upon God, doing nothing but God's will.

He had this love, everything, in association with God. God trusted Him for it, sent Him for it. He came the perfect servant; therefore when He says in that verse, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church," it is not only that the love of the husband is to be a love that spends itself, but he must take up the object on whom the love is spent and connect it with the mind of God; then it is all self-denial on the part of the husband. The first thing when this company was brought before His mind was, not only that He loved them, as sons of God, or as a body that would be brought by Him into the glory, where God and the Lamb would display all their glory, but that He had to give Himself for it.

The merchantman seeking goodly pearls found one pearl of great price, and went and sold all that he had and bought it. The Son of God could not have the Bride at all if He had remained in divine glory. He must take a lower place in which man could become associated with Him; utterly go down to qualify us for that glory. He took a place by which He could; He gave Himself for it, and then again, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of water by the word," set it apart. None but He who was the Son of God could have given that Nazariteship to the church which is here expressed. When Christ met us first of all, beloved, we had nothing but sin. What would cleanse us? What had we of our own but sin? Nothing could take out the scarlet stain of sin but His own life-blood, and that blood has touched my conscience. I am separated by that blood; that blood is on my conscience; I am to walk as separated to God. There is the putting apart, and the washing of water by the Word, the constant application of the Word of God to the soul to keep up cleanliness, the cleansing of all. It could not be unless the Son of God had us in His hands. Then after the separation—primarily to God, if any child of God sin we have an advocate with the Father—it comes in to keep the conscience clean; there is the constant application of the Word of God to us. He applies the word by the Spirit to the heart of the babe in Christ to show that he was not under condemnation, but under acceptance; to the young man, that he cannot identify himself with the things round about him, he cannot carry the dust of earth into heaven. You understand this word? Your answer is, "Following Him into heaven you get rid of it." He applies the word in entirely different ways to each one of us, not only to classes, but to each separate soul. There is love! What a variety of expression His love has! The Son of God, to identify Himself with the Father's mind in the thoughts of God that He should have a church, quietly waiting, and His love never failing during four thousand years, finding nothing in man to commend man to Him—all in Himself. His love perfectly ready for God, laid out for them to do everything for Him; the first thought in His mind, after waking up out of the grave, thoughts of love about His people—"My Father and your Father, my God and your God." "Go and tell Peter." What blessed words of love! And nearly two thousand years have run their course, and He is just as diligent on the part of those who are brought to Him now as He was then. Did you ever think of the extraordinary position we are in as the manifestation of His love? Because He bore you upon His heart, and me. He saw us in the

stream of time, just picked us up, and is making us know the love, just as His people were brought out through the wilderness. Perhaps He will appear before we get to the end of the course. Then there will be the thought, expressed according to His mind and His Father's mind, what this love of God is — “the church given me as my Bride;” this church connected with the manifestation of the glory of God. He will present it to Himself — He will, and with triumph. There is what He throws the husband upon as the well of water where he would always find water. The Christian's springs are never dry. “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.” There is love in Christ's heart for us. The one who is called to hold the place of a husband can draw from that spring fresh water to enable his soul — what? to please himself in his wife? No; to take her up in the association where she is set, to help her — never a will of his own, always with this thought about God.

Then, on the other hand, when he speaks about the wife it is just the same beautiful help given to the soul in the circumstances. He says, “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.” You follow me as I follow Christ. A thousand little things that it makes no difference how they are settled unless it be according to God. If I were a husband, and had to settle the burden of the responsibility, then the wife is quit of it clearly, and the will is bowed. The responsibility rests upon the other side. Well now, a servant with a master—a tyrant? Never mind; it is God trying me, not my master. Just leave it in the Lord's hands, perfectly willing in subjection to Him. A most blessed thing it is, beloved, where the wife finds grace in all that passing relationship (for it is a passing one) not to take it up as that which will minister to her own joy, but finds herself as the one he can reckon on most blessedly from the retired position in communion with the Lord, so that when in the hurry and drive of the business and duty of the husband he expresses what should be done, he just finds her heart at home with Christ. I do not know what tells more on real character than just finding this. When the husband, perhaps a strong character, can say this of wife, “Well, the one thought of her soul is, what will please Christ? Why do I not do this thing? Well, I found my wife praying about the thing, and she was not sure it was His mind.” “Shall we not be more like the world if we do this thing?” It is not the putting forth her own will; it is really being the keeper of the king's head. “God has given me one whose thought is always what the Lord would have.” It would be the very thing to keep the husband and his heart before God, who knew over and over again where his foot would have slid, but there was one in the Lord's presence watching and praying before God to find out what was the Lord's mind, and throwing the mind forward because of the very difficulties, so that the heart can pass on quietly. We have the ear of our God, and His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear; and His arm is stretched forth in the token of His love to the people that know His name and hang upon Him.

G. V. W.

The Only-Begotten of the Father

There is at this crisis of time a parallel to be found between the creation in the book of Genesis, and this beginning of the new creation in the gospel of John; and it lies in this one thing, that when God began to act in each for His own glory, everything was either in a material chaos; or else morally under sin and the curse, and was at its very worst. In Adam's world the darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the earth was without form, and void. We must remember too that it was this very world, made by Him four thousand years before, into which He came as “God manifest in the flesh”—a world which had lost the knowledge of God, and which now knows Him

not. Moreover, it is “His own” according to the flesh, with whom He had journeyed by “the angel,” and which He had redeemed out of Egypt by the hands of Moses and Aaron, that now received Him not. How vast these differences are seen to be, between the original description in Genesis of “the beginning” of this creation, where man was only seen and known in happy relationship with the Creator, and standing before God in His own likeness too, and the Creator walking with him! In this beginning of the new creation of God in John, after the first had been “made subject to vanity,” and when the Word that was with God came forth into this ruined world in grace, it was swarming with millions of hearts which knew Him not, or would only hate Him, even if He revealed Himself to them in the mystery of flesh and blood! Who but He that came from above could bring “life and light” into it, as He did in Himself by His incarnation? Who but He could proclaim “grace and truth” in its streets as He loved to do, so long as they would let Him live to do it? Who but He could “fall into the ground and die” as a corn of wheat, that through His death He might be waved before God in resurrection on the first day of a new week, in triumph, as the first ripe sheaf from off this harvest-field that would eventually fill the heavenly garner? Who but He “could breathe upon His disciples” after He was risen from the dead, and say, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted”?

“He that cometh from above is above all;” for who but He could redeem us to God by His blood, and put us in present relationship with Himself as the ascended One with His Father and our Father, His God and our God? Who, save this Son of the bosom, could thus bring back the Father into a world from which as Creator He had withdrawn in righteous judgment, leaving the cherubim with the flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life in proof of His holy grief against sin, and of His hot displeasure against the liar and murderer? Who else than this Son from the beginning could walk, though in unknown paths as yet, but still in conscious power, amidst all the ruin of mankind, to meet it and hush it, and call those who felt its heavy pressure the most, to come unto Him for relief, and find rest to their souls? Again, who but He could come forth from behind the cloud that concealed Him to mere flesh and blood (and yet that revealed Him to the eye of faith) in company with the Father, in that work of all other works—as “the quickener” and raiser of the dead? “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

If challenged in all these glories by the men of the Pharisees, who made a fair show of themselves in the flesh, and who refused Him in all His own characters; who but He could gird Himself with power, yea, step into another position, and as the Son of Man declare that “God had given Him authority” to execute judgment also? Have to do with the Son of God they must, for “He that cometh from above is above all;” and if they would not take eternal life and forgiveness of sins, by faith in Him while they lived upon the earth, and talked with Him in the day of grace; He would call them out of their graves to be judged by Him for their sins, and for their refusal of eternal life, in the day of the vengeance of Almighty God. They shall come forth unto the “resurrection of damnation;” for He is to be “the Judge of the quick and the dead.” In the meanwhile, He could pass along day by day in this world as through a valley of dry bones, and speak a quickening word, by which all those who heard should live, through “the incorruptible seed” dropped into the hearts that received Him. The heavenly source and springs of sovereign grace and almighty power in the Father and the Son must needs be uncovered, and flow forth in power by the Holy Ghost. The time was come to set aside the flesh, and to refuse the six waterpots of purification at Cana in Galilee, or the well at Sychar, or the pool of Bethesda, and the angel of the Lord; for these were but remedial

measures, and were neither the fullness of life nor of grace. The ministry of the Son who came from above, and which is now before us, is of a totally different order, and takes its rise in “the bosom of the Father,” and flows forth through the unfailing and loving channel of Him who dwelt there; and is dispensed according to no other rule, and given out in no scant or uncertain measure to us who are its recipients. There is but one love, and this love dwells in the fullness of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and is the well from whence the living and healing waters spring forth in our gospel, where all is “from above,” and brought to us by Him who is “above all.” Sing ye unto it; for this is the well of which Jehovah spake typically to Moses—“Gather the people together, and I will give them drink.”

This new wine must be put into new bottles, and with our evangelist the bottles are as new as the wine, and “both are preserved.” Mere probation and relief imply help, and mere help is only human support; but quickening into life, is divine power. The vessel itself was in question with Nicodemus; for “that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Thus in like manner “the wine for the marriage” was drawn from another vintage, and the fruit of grapes which never grew under this material sun. The bottles and the wine were by new creative power. Who does not bow before the Son of the eternal counsels, when presented in this gospel in His grandest act, as “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world”—He who will eventually bring back and put all the tempted, strayed, and lost, but “elect ones,” into correspondence with God? Yea, more than this, bring them into relationship with the Father by means of redemption through His own most precious blood, as the “Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world”? Who has not stood and wondered at the love of God which surmounted its greatest sin, and only took occasion by it to come down into its darkest hour, and send forth the dove with its olive-branch, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved?

Moreover, what was this in figure but “the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost,” that in a new nature, and under this anointing, and as sons of God, we might enter upon our new fellowship with the Father and with His Son in the light where God dwells? “The only-begotten of the Father” is thus declared to us by John, and from His first introduction by incarnation, till He comes up out of death in resurrection, and breathes out the Holy Spirit on His disciples, He passes along in His glories “full of grace and truth.” He was thus seen, and handled, and felt; so that one and another could say to us, Out “of His fullness have all we received,” and grace “answering to the grace that is in Him.” If we group the persons together of whom we have spoken, it is only to add that Nathanael received of this “fullness” when he left his place under the fig-tree, and confessed Jesus to be “the Son of God,” and “the King of Israel.” Likewise the wedding of Cana changed its character under this “fullness” to gain another and a divine one, by becoming the scene for the “beginning of miracles,” and the place where Jesus “manifested forth His glory.” So also Nicodemus, master of Israel, turned his back upon himself and the law of Moses, in order to receive “grace for grace” through faith in “the Son of Man lifted up” upon the cross; and, as we well know, the woman left her water-pot to receive from the “fullness,” and drink at the spring-head of life eternal. Again, the impotent man left the pool which he had clung to for its healing virtue, and the angel which descended at a certain season; to receive out of the “fullness” that quickening and raising and overcoming “power of life” by which he took up that whereon he lay, and walked.

Sin and transgression, violence and corruption, had ripened the world for the judgment of God in righteousness; but their existence and growth upon the earth, had likewise suited it for the fullness

of quickening power and the grace of Christ. It was this turned it into a cornfield “white already to harvest,” and fitted for the reaper. The true Boaz had come “in the fullness of time” into His barley-field, and was gathering His sheaves into His bosom, as we have seen in these blessed ways of His with the elect; or else ordering those whom He had sent into harvest to let fall “handfuls of purpose” for the stranger, that the man of the Jews, and the woman of Samaria, and the cripple of Bethesda, and we, might rejoice together with the sower and reapers, and gather the fruit thereof unto life eternal. Jesus does not know this world as God created it for a resting-place, but He accepts it as sin and the devil have marred it. He found it fitted only for another sowing and another reaping, and so He uses it “as the sower” who brought the good seed to scatter broadcast over the earth.

Beautiful and suited is it for us in this our day, according to these and other patterns than the sower, to work with Jesus in His loving ways of emptying the vessels, and then filling them up to the brim, as He passed in and out amongst the sons and daughters of men, with whom “were all His delights” when on earth. Nor is He changed a whit, now that He is in the heavens; for what is the “still small voice,” if we listen to the gospel of God from the right hand of the Majesty on high, but “bring me yet a vessel,” and in the fullness and freeness of His grace adding, “borrow not a few”? Better still, if when we pass into the depths of His delights, and understand Him when He bids us to “draw out now, and bear to the governor of the feast.” And “the ruler of the feast called the bridegroom, and saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.”

Blessed Jesus! and this is what thou art doing for thine own glory, and the delight of God with the sons of men—the redeemed! Well may we have this scripture engraven on the fleshy table of our hearts: “He that cometh from above is above all,” till He come again to receive us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also!

J. E. B.

(Continued from page 140)

Perfection

The “perfect” ones spoken of in Philippians 3:15 are those who have laid hold of the truth of being risen and glorified with Christ on high; not only knowing the forgiveness of sins, but apprehending the higher truth of resurrection in Christ. And it is as these we are called to walk. This is the same perfection as is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 2:6. The only perfection the apostle has before him is to be like Christ in glory.

J. N. D.

The Sweet Savor of the Sacrifice

Animal sacrifices, instituted by God before the flood, were continued after it; and Noah, on his coming forth from the ark, offered up burnt-offerings on the newly-ordered earth, on which that sacrifice was subsequently to be offered to God, which could forever satisfy and glorify Him.

And now we meet for the first time with a description of the sacrifice. Of Cain and Abel we read that they brought an offering unto the Lord. Of Noah we learn that he offered burnt-offerings (Gen. 8:20), but only of every clean beast and of every clean fowl; the institution of animal sacrifice having necessitated an understanding of which of the creatures endowed with life men might bring an offering unto the Lord. With this essential element in an acceptable sacrifice Noah was before the flood well acquainted (Gen. 7:2), though the means by which he had learned it have not been recorded. But reading, as we do in the law, God's definition of clean beasts and clean birds, and finding that there is moral teaching connected with the subject (Lev. 11), we must surely conclude, that no man by natural intuition could have discovered which would be regarded in God's eyes as clean, and which would not.

With the giving of the law further teaching in reference to sacrifice was unfolded; but prior to that we meet with burnt-offerings (Gen. 8; 22 Ex. 10:25;18: 12; Num. 23.; Job 1: 42), with sacrifices which resembled in character somewhat the peace-offering of the Mosaic ritual (Ex. 10:25;18: 12; 24: 5), and drink-offerings (Gen. 35:14). At times burnt-offerings and those called sacrifices could be offered up together (Ex. 10:25;18: 12; 24:5). At times it would seem each was offered alone. Noah, Abraham, and Job offered burnt-offerings alone. Jacob probably at Galeed (Gen. 31:54) offered that which had somewhat the character of the peace-offering, apart from any accompanying burnt-offering. But when at Beersheba, on his way to Egypt, he sacrificed (46:1) unto the God of his father Isaac, the sacred historian has probably left undefined (as he has done in Ex. 5:3) the nature of the sacrifices which the aged patriarch there offered to God. But they were animal sacrifices; and throughout the book of Genesis, subsequent to the deluge (Jacob's drink-offering excepted), we read of none others being brought to God. What God had instituted outside the garden of Eden was continued after the flood; and since every one of the human race who survived the deluge was present before Noah's altar, no fresh revelation to re-establish the truth of the acceptability of animal sacrifice was needed by the nations which peopled the earth. Each progenitor of a nation must have carried with him from the cradle of the race the knowledge that such sacrifices could be offered to God. Immensely important as such teaching was, it was not all that God intended to impart; for ere He had called Israel out of Egypt, and had given them a ritual in which sacrifices occupied so prominent a place, the Lord made known in His own way what He thought of the burnt-offering, and something too of what it was in His eyes to give up to death an only son, We learn these lessons from the histories of Noah, of Job, and of Abraham.

Noah, as he came forth from the ark, reared up his altar, and offered his burnt offerings. We read of nothing more that he did. With the remembrance fresh, as it must have been, in his mind of what the earth had been when last he had trodden upon it, seeing what it then was, and surveying all

that remained of man, and of every living thing in which was the breath of life that moved upon the earth, then gathered together near the ark, every animal which had entered into it having come out of it, gratitude for preservation, and a sense of the sustaining care of the Creator must surely have filled his heart. Yet for aught we know no prayer was uttered on that solemn occasion, nor was any hymn of praise raised by the patriarch, as the common expression of the feelings of his heart and of those that were with him. It may have been a silent service that went on. We read of nothing that God had heard, but only of what He smelled. A silent service perhaps, yet how full of meaning to Him, and instruction to us; for our attention is clearly meant to be fixed on the sacrifices then offered up, on which the Lord's eyes rested, and which were well pleasing to Him.

A sweet savor! This is the first time we meet with such an expression. From earth it ascended to God. Surveying an undefiled world prepared for man, God pronounced all that He had made to be very good (Gen. 1:31). When He brought Noah out of the ark into a newly-ordered scene, we read of the sweet savor of the sacrifice. This earth was defiled; but what ascended to Him from the altar of Noah spoke of the pure and spotless death of the Son of His love. In that He could take delight, though man was a fallen creature, and this world was defiled by sin. But who could have told us what that sacrifice was in His sight? None but God Himself. So He acquaints us with this; first by revealing the thoughts of His heart in consequence of it, and next by recounting what He did, and what He said to Noah and to his sons. For all that we know of that day's proceedings are detailed—only in the written Word. No tradition yet discovered has preserved any account of them.

"The Lord smelled a sweet savor; and the Lord said in His heart" (before He spoke to Noah He spoke to Himself), "I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease" (Gen. 8:21,22). The Lord would change His way of dealing with man, and would institute, as long as earth should last, an abiding order of things. We are all witnesses to the faithfulness of His word in this. He has not again cursed the ground; He has not again smitten every living thing; He has not broken in upon the established order of seasons and times.

But why these thoughts and purposes of God? Because of the sweet savor of the sacrifice. Man had not improved so as to furnish any reason for a change of dealing with him. The Lord's estimate of man after the flood differed little, if at all, from that before it (Compare Gen. 6:5 with 8:21). Before the flood God spoke of evil as being constantly in the heart of His creature man. After it He declared it was innate.

"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Beholding the active wickedness of man, God traced it back to his heart, every imagination of the thought of which was only evil continually. Viewing all that yet remained alive on earth of the human race, God declared that man himself was unchanged. "Only evil!" What a description of us all by nature! As children of Adam, then, we have nothing to boast of before God.

Now this estimate of man expressed in Genesis 8 refers (let the reader mark it) to those alive after the flood, who had been in the ark, and had been preserved through the judgment. There were but eight people on the earth, and one of them was Noah, the righteous one (Gen. 7:1), when the Lord thus communed with Himself. The ungodly (2 Peter 2:5) had been swept away, but man was no

better; and the Lord's ways with man before the flood, cursing the ground (Gen. 3:17), had not altered him; nor did the witnessing by man of divine judgment at the flood improve him in the least. His nature, inherited from Adam, is incurably bad. Now if centuries of God's dealings with man on earth did not change it, will centuries of punishment elsewhere be likely to effect the alteration? Adam at the end of his nine hundred and thirty years' life on earth was no better than he was just after the fall. Methuselah, who lived for nine hundred and sixty-nine years, had just as corrupt a nature at the close of his life as he began with when born into this world. Time then is no element to be taken into account in this matter. Nothing can change a nature. What man really needs is a new one. And as no length of punishment can alter what a man really is in his nature before God, so no amount of punishment inflicted by God, and endured by man, would justify the divine Being in removing His hand from off the sinner, and putting him in heaven before Him. The man will remain unaltered in his nature by all that he has passed through. And God, who is unchangeable in holiness, would have on that ground no reason to consent to any remission of punishment. How early was the incurability of man's evil heart declared by God, of which subsequent history affords such abundant proofs. Take Israel, God's earthly people, hedged round with ordinances to keep them separate from the idolatrous nations around them. God's estimate of them, and of man in general in the days of David, Psalm 14:2,3, plainly tells us. And the apostle in Romans 3 quotes from that psalm, and from other Old Testament scriptures, to acquaint us with God's judgment of man after the cross. The education of the world, as men speak, had been going on for centuries; men's minds had been cultivated very highly, as the writings of the ancients abundantly testify; yet man, the apostle was inspired to declare, was in himself unchanged. By the new birth those subjects of it became children of God, and as such had a new nature; but in all others there was no change nor real improvement.

Passing on to the closing days of this dispensation, we learn that even the presence of Christianity upon earth, unless man is converted by the testimony of God, will leave him no better morally than it found him. We have only to compare 2 Timothy 3:1-5 with Romans 1:28-31 to prove that; and when the Lord shall come to reign, the unconverted will not desire His advent. All in heaven will rejoice at the establishment of the kingdom in power. Creation too will be glad; but the nations will be angry. (Rev. 11:18) Such will be their feelings at the commencement of His reign. What will be their state at its close? Having enjoyed outward blessing throughout it, such as this earth and men on it have never yet known, Revelation 20:8 supplies us with the solemn answer. They will be ready to combine under the leadership of the devil against the beloved city, and the camp of the saints. Hatred to God, and to all that is of God, will still characterize them.

Punishment then, whether suffered or witnessed, does not change man. Advantages and education, whatever external polish the latter may give, equally fail to alter his evil nature. Truth professed, but not possessed, will leave him in the condition it found him; and millennial blessing will not eradicate his innate hostility to all that is of God. The announcement therefore of a change in God's dealings with him did not arise from any improvement in man, whether present or prospective. It arose simply and solely from the sweet savor which God smelled. Hence we are permitted to see what God can do for man by virtue of the death of His Son. It was this that was before Him as He smelled a sweet savor, and straightway communed with Himself. Man was unchanged. God was unchangeable in holiness, but He could righteously deal in grace with him, because of that sacrifice, the sweetness of which rose up in anticipation before Him. Nor was man

only concerned in that; for creation, which shares man's fortunes (Rom. 8:20,21), was to participate in beneficial results arising out of it. The order of nature and of the seasons was henceforth to abide unchanged as long as earth should last. An interruption in it, like that occasioned by the flood, should not occur again; nor should every living thing be smitten again as they had been. Each year, then, each season, each day, as they come round, witness to us of the faithfulness of God to His word, and of the benefits secured by that sacrifice of sweet savor. That the seasons return with regularity all acknowledge; but this, which should lead man to own that God is faithful to what He has said, will be used, Peter warns us, when writing of the evil in the last of the days, to make men doubt the fulfillment of the divine predictions respecting the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," men will say (2 Peter 3:4). Foolish, blind creatures; for the stability of the order of nature in connection with earth only dates from the burnt sacrifice of Noah. Yet the enemy, with that fact distinctly stated in God's word, will induce men, from the unvarying order of things they see around them, to discredit the Lord's faithfulness in fulfilling that which He has foretold.

But to return. We read that, besides speaking to Himself, the Lord opened His mouth to let those around the altar learn of His ways in goodness with them all. God blessed Noah and his sons. This was something quite new. He had blessed Adam and Eve when in innocence. He had blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; but never, that we read of, did God bless a sinful creature, till Noah had taken of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and had offered them as burnt-offerings unto the Lord. Then He waited not a moment. What was there to wait for? The ground was laid in type on which He could bless, and He did it. He blessed Noah and his sons with him. Before the flood God spoke to Noah, but never addressed one word to his sons. After the burnt-offering had ascended up to Him He spoke to them all, and recognized them all as having a place before Him. He blessed them all in the fullest way as regards earthly things, and as creatures of earth, sinful though they were, could enjoy His blessing.

One feature should be noticed in the blessing after the flood. Noah was not the head of a race, so God could not speak to him as He did to Adam. Headship of a race belongs to the first man and to the second man. Noah was neither of these. We miss therefore, in the terms of the blessing bestowed on him and his sons, those significant words, "and subdue it," of Genesis 1:28, which were addressed to our first parents. Noah, though the father of all alive upon the earth, did not occupy that place in creation which Adam had filled. But that which God never gave to Adam He bestowed on Noah and on his sons. To Adam there were given for meat every herb bearing seed, and every tree in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed (Gen. 1:29). After the fall God only allowed them to eat of the herb of the field (3:18). But on the acceptance of Noah's burnt-sacrifice, God gave to man everything on earth for food—all that grew, and everything that lived on earth, in the air, and in the sea, blood only excepted. From this God has never withdrawn. This divine blessing has never been revoked. What God then said holds good to this day. The grant is as free as ever (1 Tim. 4:4,5). The exception, however, then made remains uncanceled, as the council at Jerusalem reminded the converts from among the Gentiles (Acts 15:29). For those under law, and as long as they were under it, there were restrictions as to meats and articles of food; for those not under it, blood only was and is withheld. So as we exercise our freedom as to articles of food, and of flesh especially, we are sharing in the grant the Lord then made on the ground of the sweet savor of the sacrifice. Did the grant depend for its continuance of man's obedience it would have

been forfeited long ago. Had it been promised on the ground of any improvement to be made in man's nature, it never could have been enjoyed. But given solely as it was on the acceptableness of the sacrifice, its continuance was not dependent on conditions which man had to fulfill; and as long as that sacrifice, of which Noah's burnt-offerings were but types, shall abide in acceptance before God, so long, whilst men need such food, can that grant continue. In this we see an illustration of a principle of great importance to us. All depends for man's blessing on this, What is the sacrifice in God's eyes? What ground is this to rest upon! Here God can act according to the dictates of His own heart. Here man, unworthy though he be, can receive richly and unconditionally from God.

C. E. S.

The Friendship of the World

“The friendship of the world is enmity with God; whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” Powerful testimony! which judges the walk and searches the heart. The world’s true character has now been manifested, because it has rejected and crucified the Son of God. Man had been already tried without law, and under law; but after he had shown himself to be wholly evil without law, and had broken the law when he had received it, then God Himself came in grace; He became man in order to bring the love of God home to the heart of man, having taken his nature. It was the final test of man’s heart. He came not to impute sin to them, but to reconcile the world to Himself. But the world would not receive Him; and it has shown that it is under the power of Satan and of darkness. It has seen and hated both Him and His Father.

The world is ever the same world: Satan is its prince, and all that is in it, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but of the world. The heart of man, the flesh, has since the fall been always enmity against God. It is often thought and said, that since the death of Christ, Satan is no longer the prince of this world; but it was precisely then that he declared himself as its prince, leading on all men, whether Jews or Gentiles, to crucify the Savior. And although men now bear the name of Christ, the opposition of the world to His authority remains the same.

Only observe and see if the name of Christ is not dishonored. Man may indeed be taught to honor it; but it is none the less true that where he finds his enjoyment, where his will is free, he shuts out Christ, lest He should come in and spoil his pleasures. If left alone he does not think of Him, he does not like to be spoken to of the Savior; he sees no beauty in Him that he should desire Him. Man likes to do his own will, and he does not want the Lord to come and oppose it; he prefers vanity and pleasures.

We have the true history of the world and its practical principles in Cain. He had slain his brother, and was cast out of the presence of God, despairing of grace, and refusing to humble himself. By the judgment of God he was made a vagabond on the earth; but such a condition did not suit him. He settled down where God had made him a vagabond, and he called the city after the name of his son, to perpetuate the greatness of his family. That his city should be deprived of all the delights of life would have been unbearable; therefore he multiplied riches for his son. Then another member of the family invented instruments of music; another was the instructor of artificers in brass and iron. The world being cast out from God, sought to make its position pleasant without God, to content itself at a distance from Him. By the coming of Christ, the state of man’s heart was manifested, not only as seeking the pleasures of the flesh, but as being enmity against God. However great His goodness, it would not be disturbed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of the world, nor submit itself to the authority of another; it would have the world for itself, fighting to obtain it, and snatching it from the hands of those who possessed it. Now, it is evident that the friendship of this world is enmity with God. As far as in them lay, they cast God out of the world, and drove Him away. Man desires to be great in this world; we know that the world

has crucified the Son of God, that it saw no beauty in the One in whom God finds all His delight.

J. N. D.

IF I am not in communion, it is for the Holy Ghost to speak to my conscience, instead of using me. If I get knowledge merely to communicate it, I shall be as dry as a millstone. When we enjoy Him for His own sake, it flows forth to others.

The Wilderness

This chapter is the wilderness, and we have practically to think of that. The wilderness was not God's purpose. His purpose was to bring them from Egypt into Canaan; but we are brought into the wilderness to learn God's ways and government, that we may be exercised in faith and hope. We have to learn in the wilderness what His ways with us are. In Exodus 3:4,5, and 6:2-8, there is not a word about the wilderness; nor in Exodus 15. But as to the actual fact, the effect of bringing them out of Egypt was to bring them into the wilderness. The result of redemption is, that in the wilderness we have to learn a great deal of God, and a great deal of ourselves. God has taken the believer up, and taken him out, and brought him to Himself. It is a complete deliverance from Egypt, and Canaan comes in as the purpose of God; but the wilderness is brought in between. The Christian cannot be in a difficulty that Christ is not sufficient for, nor on a long dark road where he cannot find Him enough.

God's rest is where He can find perfect rest. We are not there yet; for do you think God could find rest in this world? Have you even found rest in it? Did Christ rest here? Never. Though He was perfect love above all the evil, yet He could not rest. When the Jews charged Him with breaking the sabbath, in John 5, He says, "My Father worketh hitherto, and work." He works in grace now. Could love rest in the midst of woe? When everything is in accordance with His mind, when all the saints are perfectly conformed to Christ in glory, when Christ is glorified, when all purpose is accomplished, then, as it is expressed in Zephaniah, God will rest in His love; He will see of the travail of His soul, and will be satisfied. That will be our rest too. There will be nothing there to hinder our enjoyment of the love and glory of God. The full result of redemption will be accomplished, and God will rest because His love has no more to do to satisfy itself. As regards my conscience, it is at rest now; but the effect of that is to bring me, not into rest, but where I can "labor to enter into rest."

God wants as a present thing our hearts to be in tune with His; He wants it to be so in our everyday life; therefore we find here, "Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart." "Now," God says, "your heart and mine want to have a little talk together. I am going to show you what is in your heart, and to show you that I know it." He has brought us to Himself; and do you think if all that is in your heart is not brought out to Him that it will be all right between you? Do you think a father likes to have his heart all different from his child's heart? He likes that the whole spirit, tone, and mind of his child should be suited to His. God passes us through the wilderness that we may learn this. No question of imputing sin to us, but of the dealings with the soul. You often see a true Christian not knowing whereabouts he is at his deathbed, because he has not had everything out with God day by day. Paul says, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." The exercise was whether his heart was in everything attuned with God's heart. Now Christ's heart was. He could say, "I do always those things which please Him." Enoch walked with God; and he had this testimony, that he pleased God. He was walking in God's presence, and the effect of it was that he pleased God.

Are you walking with God? You cannot walk with Him without having everything out before Him. If you have anything on your conscience you will not be happy. Every step we take we see Him better, the light gets clearer, and we find things to judge that we had not known must be judged before.

According to that which you know of the glory of God, are your hearts up to it? And supposing they are not, what is the effect of God's presence? Why, it has to set my conscience at work, in order to bring me into communion: "My son, give me thine heart." Now, are your hearts given to God out and out? "He humbled thee," He brings us to our bearings, "suffered thee to hunger," causes us to live a life of faith, "and fed thee with manna." Do not our souls sometimes loath this light food? Is it not true sometimes that Christ does not satisfy this heart? "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Of course, if your hearts are cleaving to something else, Christ will not satisfy you: "That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." Christ quoted this to the devil in the wilderness. He had no orders from God for the stones to be made bread, and He had taken on Him the form of a servant. His mind was inert until it had God's will to make it act. The word of the Lord abides forever; it comes from God; it is heavenly; and he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Now mark another thing, that while He kept them in dependence on the Word of God to guide them, He did not allow the nap of their coats to wear out; He thought of everything for them. "He withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous;" not a moment that He does not think of them. Then comes another character of it: "As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee." First of all God passes us through circumstances which exercise us, feeding us all the time, and taking unfailing care of us. But then there is the positive discipline, the breaking of the will; and so we glory when we come into trials, because they work patience. God puts us in the wilderness to break our wills. Every day one sees God doing it; and people do not know where they are, and get questioning the love that does it. Look for a moment at Romans 5. God loves us as He loves Christ, and we rejoice in hope of the glory where Christ has entered. For the past there is not a sin left on me; the present, perfect divine favor; the future, the glory where Christ is. "And not only so." When He has gone through the whole thing, that is not all. I am not only rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, but I am glorying in tribulations also, because God is not withdrawing His eyes from me in them. Then "the hope" is so much the brighter; for I say, "Ah! my rest is not here; that is a clear thing." And the hope makes not ashamed, because I have the key to it all in the love of God shed abroad in our hearts. It is God's ways and work to make us know ourselves. There can be no question of the love, because it gives the key to it all. How has He proved His love? Why, it goes on to that in the next verse, "Christ died for the ungodly." Then He says again, "And not only so." What? "But we joy in God;" not merely joying in salvation, in His favor, and the like, but in God. I have learned to know myself, all my forgetfulness of God; but in this very judgment of self I have learned to joy in God. It is to bring the heart into this tune with God that He has to break it down, and humble it; but this being in tune is never got, that settled consciousness of association with God, until these ways and works of His have got to the bottom of self. It is not that we shall not have to contend with it afterward, but its back is broken, and I have no trust in myself.

The natural man says, "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?" But at the end of Psalm 139 he says, "Search me, O God, and try the ground of my heart." Up to the knowledge that you have of

divine things, is your heart in tune with them? Could you say, "Search me, O God"? It is a painful process sometimes. What was wrong in Job was that He was getting pleased with himself. He had said, "When the eye saw me, it blessed me." He learned to say, "Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself." As I experience self, I abhor myself: "Lead me in the way everlasting." Beloved friends, there is a way everlasting, and it is in that way everlasting that God comes and searches out the heart. Are you content to have every motive searched out? It must be so if our communion with God and joy in Him are to be full and uninterrupted.

We get these three things—the proving of our hearts, the chastening, and the conflict with Satan (vs. 15), "to do thee good at thy latter end." If your souls want to walk in fellowship and peace with God, you must learn it in that wilderness where you find there is no good in you, but you learn to know Him in the perfectness of that love. It is present joy and fellowship with God; and if we go on with it, if self has been learned, when death comes, then it is just, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord;" and it is the brightest moment in the life. Some have to learn to abhor self upon the deathbed; hence much exercise. You have to go through all these exercises of heart, which are self-knowledge. It is not the heart going back to see whether God has redeemed me or not, but it is God getting our hearts as redeemed ones to joy in Him "Because Thy favor is better than life, my lips shall praise Thee." "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness." If you want to walk and glorify God in fellowship with the Father and the Son, then you must go through this, "having the conscience exercised to be void of offense," that you may walk with God. And as to the affections of the heart, there may be Christ at the bottom, and a walk which no one can blame at the top. But between these two is another—all the thoughts and intents of the heart, what I practically am in my thoughts and inner life. You must have your soul practically exercised; you must learn God's ways with you, that you may be in tune with Him.

The Lord give us to know more of a walk with God, that we may have the kind of peace that Christ had in His walk down here—that peace of heart that the soul knows in walking with God, in fellowship with the Father and the Son. The Lord give you to know what it is to have everything in your heart open before God.

The Candlestick of Pure Gold

After the table of shewbread follows the candlestick. There was besides these two another vessel in the holy place; namely, the altar of incense. But this is omitted here, because it was a vessel of approach rather than of display; and, as already pointed out, everything connected with the manifestation of God is given before that which was needed to come into His presence is described. Unless this distinction is borne in mind, instead of order and method all will seem to be confusion.

“And thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side: three bowls made like unto almonds, with a knop and a flower in one branch; and three bowls made like almonds in the other branch, with a knop and a flower: so in the six branches that come out of the candlestick. And in the candlestick shall be four bowls made like unto almonds, with their knops and their flowers. And there shall be a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, and a knop under two branches of the same, according to the six branches that proceed out of the candlestick. Their knops and their branches shall be of the same: all it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it. And the tongs thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof, shall be of pure gold. Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was showed thee in the mount.”

First of all, the form of the candlestick must occupy our attention. If the description be carefully read, it will be seen that the candlestick had seven branches; that is, a central shaft with three branches springing out from either side (See vss. 17, 18; also 37:17, 18). There were therefore seven lamps upon the one candlestick. The number seven also plays an important part in its ornamentation. There were “three bowls made like unto almonds” in each of the six branches (vs. 33), and “four bowls made like unto almonds” in the candlestick (vs. 34); that is, in the central stem from which the branches sprung. The number seven is thus a marked characteristic.

The next thing for consideration is the material of which it was made, and the character of its light. As in the mercy-seat so in the candlestick, there was nothing but pure gold. (vs. 31) No shittim-wood is found in its structure, and hence nothing human is prefigured by it; all is divine. From chapter 27 we gather that the light was fed by pure “oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always” (vs. 20). Oil in Scripture is ever a symbol of the Holy Ghost. The apostle thus says of believers, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One” (1 John 2:20); and the Apostle Paul speaks of our having been “anointed” (2 Cor. 1:21). Putting therefore these three things—the number seven, the gold, and the oil—together in their typical meanings, the result is that the significance of the candlestick is, Divine light in its perfection in the power of the Spirit. It is God giving the light of the Holy Ghost; and this is displayed in its sevenfold perfection. The Lord thus

addresses the church in Sardis as having “the seven Spirits of God;” that is, the Spirit in His perfection (as indicated by the number seven) and energy (Rev. 3:1); and we read also of “seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 4:1).

What then, it may now be inquired, was the purpose of the candlestick? This would seem to have been twofold. First, it was set in the holy place “over against the table” (26:35; 40:24). It thus stood opposite to, and threw its light upon, the table of shewbread. This therefore, it may be inferred, was the object in its being thus placed. Now the table of shewbread symbolizes, as explained in a former paper, the manifestation of God in man (Christ) in perfection of administrative government; and the twelve loaves on the table represent Israel, as also believers, in Christ before God. The light of the candlestick shining then upon the table, is the Holy Ghost bearing testimony to the future display of administrative perfection in Christ, when He shall have taken His power, and shall reign from the river unto the ends of the earth; likewise to Israel’s (as well as the believer’s) true place in Christ before God. These truths may be obscured or forgotten on earth, but there in the holy place, before the eyes of God, they are fully displayed, and exhibited by the perfect light of the Spirit. But, secondly, the light was for the illumination of the candlestick itself. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick. And Aaron did so; he lighted the lamps thereof over against the candlestick, as the Lord commanded Moses” (Num. 8:1-3). That is, giving out the light of the Holy Ghost reveals the beauties of (or beautifies) the vessel through which it is displayed. A perfect illustration of this is seen in the transfiguration of our blessed Lord, when, as we read, “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:2). It was ever so throughout the whole of His blessed pathway for those whose eyes were opened (see John 1:4; 2:11); but on the mount His beauty was manifestly displayed. So also in the case of Stephen. We read that he was “a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost,” and that “all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:5-15). It is so with every believer in the measure in which the light of the Holy Spirit—Christ indeed—shines out through his walk and conversation.

But it may be further asked, What answers on earth to the perfect light of the Spirit, as symbolized by the seven-branched candlestick in the holy place? Christ did perfectly. He was thus the Light of life and the Light of the world (John 1:4; 8:12). Never for one moment was the light of the Spirit obscured in Him; it shone purely and steadily, illuminating the darkness through which He passed with its blessed lifegiving radiance throughout the whole of His life. He was a perfect vessel. After His departure from this scene, and His ascension, the church was constituted the light-bearer (Rev. 1:20). That is her character, however grievous her failure; a failure which will finally issue in her utter rejection as the vessel of testimony upon earth (See Rev. 3:16). The individual believer answers to it also in the measure in which he presents Christ in his walk and ways. Paul thus writes to the Philippians, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation (generation), among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:14,15). It is also interesting to observe how the light was maintained. “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Without the vail of the testimony, in the tabernacle of the congregation, shall Aaron order it from the evening unto the morning before the Lord continually: it

shall he a statute forever in your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure candlestick before the Lord continually" (Lev. 24:1-4; also Ex. 27:20,21). First, the children of Israel were to bring the pure oil olive. This will point to the responsibility of God's people on earth, the vessel in which it was to be displayed—Israel then, now the church. Then Aaron was to order the lamps. By this is taught that the light of the Spirit in its display can only be maintained by the priestly care and intercession of Christ. He alone could use "the tongs thereof, and the snuff-dishes thereof;" for both alike were made of pure gold. (vs. 38) Every ray of light that shines out below, whether through the church or the individual believer, is but the answer to His priestly work. In this connection it may be remarked that the oil olive was to be "beaten" for the light (27:20), and that the candlestick itself was to be made of "beaten" work. This may point to the fact that the intercession of Christ is grounded upon the efficacy of His work on the cross, the terms "beaten" shadowing forth the sufferings of Him by whose stripes we are healed.

Lastly, notice the duration, of the light. It was to be "from the evening unto the morning." The lamp is for the night; and all through the night of Israel's unbelief, until the day dawn and the shadows flee away, the golden candlestick is to be ordered before the Lord. The testimony to their true place is maintained all through the weary years of the darkness of their unbelief by the intercession of Him whom they have rejected and crucified. But at last He Himself shall be for them "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain" (2 Sam. 23:4). The hope of the Christian is more immediate; for "the night is far spent, and the day is at hand." But while waiting, may our lamps—fed with the true oil, and ordered before the Lord continually—shine out ever more brightly until the Lord's return.

E. D.

Followers of God

The life of Christ shining forth from the believer is true Christian walk. It is not merely negative, abstaining from evil, but positive, abounding in grace like His who “went about doing good.” There is, however, another motive added, equally in accordance with the general character of this epistle. After exhorting the believer to “let no corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers,” the apostle adds, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Among the privileges of the believer especially enumerated in this epistle we read, “After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession” (Chapter 1:13,14). This verse declares God’s purpose concerning us, and shows the perfect security of the believer who is thus sealed. He is sealed for a permanence, sealed “until the redemption of the purchased possession;” that is, until he receives the inheritance which he now enjoys only in promise.

What, then, is the practical application made of this truth? Is it to sanction carelessness of walk? Is it to give the smallest toleration to sin? Nothing could be more dishonoring to the holiness, or more destructive to the truth of God, than this thought. The very opposite is the fact. Though the believer who falls into sin does not forfeit his standing as sealed of the Spirit, he does grieve the Spirit, and therefore loses all the joy which the presence and fellowship of the Spirit impart. Hence the apostle, instead of using the sealing of the Spirit as an excuse for carelessness, urges it as a motive to circumspection. We get the same truth in the epistle to the Corinthians, where, in warning believers against sensual conduct, he tells them that their bodies are members of Christ, and then further asks, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19,20). In both cases the believer is said to be sealed or indwelt by the Holy Ghost, and the conduct enjoined is not in order to get or keep this privilege, but because he already has it.

Here again we see the distinction between law and grace. Law demands a certain walk as the means of obtaining a position. Grace bestows the position, and demands a corresponding walk. Law gives no power, but exacts the penalty for failure; grace remits the penalty, and then bestows the power. Law is like the vain attempt to carve a dead stock into the likeness of a living tree. Grace supplies the sap and vital energy which makes it a living tree.

It may be well to distinguish between the grieving of the Spirit here spoken of, and two other expressions found in other parts of the Word. Stephen, in addressing the Jewish council, says, “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51). Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians, exhorts them thus: “Quench, not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings” (1 Thess. 5:19,20). Now both these expressions differ, as the connection will show, from the grieving of the Holy Spirit of God spoken of in the passage before us. Resisting the Holy Ghost is refusing the testimony which He gives, whether by prophets, by the mouth of Jesus Himself, or by the apostles

after His ascension. This the Jews had done through their whole long history, as Stephen had just been showing, and they were still persisting in the same path of unbelief. The quenching of the Spirit, on the other hand, is connected with ministry. Though Christ risen and ascended is, as we have seen, the author of gifts, their distribution and their exercise in the assembly are regulated by the "Spirit dividing to every man severally as He will" (1 Cor. 12:11). Any usurpation of this power by man, or any rule or regulation not sanctioned by the Word, which restrains the Spirit's freedom of action in this matter, is quenching the Spirit; and as prophecy was the most important gift for "edification, and exhortation, and comfort," in the church (1 Cor. 14:2-4), the apostle connects the command, "Quench not the Spirit," with the further warning, "Despise not prophesyings."

Grieving the Holy Spirit is quite a different thing. In Galatians the exhortation given is, "If we live in (or by) the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). That the Spirit is our life is assumed, and the practical injunction founded upon this is, that we should have Him also for our power of walk. So again we are told to "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. 5:16,17). In writing to the Romans, also, the apostle says that "the minding of the flesh is death; but the minding of the Spirit is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6). It is only, then, as we are walking after the Spirit that the flesh is prevented from acting, or that our conduct can be pleasing in God's sight. If the flesh acts, the Holy Spirit is grieved, and the effect of grieving the Holy Spirit is to destroy fellowship with God.

Moreover the Spirit was promised by Jesus to His disciples as the One who "shall take of mine and shall show it unto you" (John 16:15); and besides this, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). But how can the Holy Ghost be ministering Christ to our hearts, and shedding abroad God's love in them, while we are walking in sin, walking after the flesh? The effect, therefore, of grieving the Holy Spirit of God is, to lose that revelation of Christ, and that shedding abroad in our hearts of God's love which it is the special work of the Spirit to bestow.

The apostle now goes on further to specify the walk suited to a believer, and again we find that the standard held up is infinitely higher than that of law. For while law sets before us what man ought to be, grace sets before us what God is. Law reveals God's righteousness, grace reveals His heart, reveals Himself, and that in the scene where all His perfections receive their brightest manifestation. Believers are exhorted, therefore, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers (literally, imitators) of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor" (4:31; 5:1, 2).

Let us look for a little at both the positive and negative side of this picture. As usual, the negative comes first. We have already seen that there is a righteous anger, an anger that never transgressed the limits of righteousness in the blessed One of whom it is recorded, but which needs to be most jealously watched lest it should degenerate into fleshly passion in the believer. The anger here spoken of however, is, as the context will show, of a different character, and is simply the work of the flesh. In Galatians, where the contrast between the fruits of the flesh and

those of the Spirit is so strongly marked, we find among the works which are declared to be manifestly of the flesh, “hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditious, heresies, envyings” (Gal. 5:20,21). Such works, then, are unsuited to those who are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God; they grieve the Spirit; they belong to the old man which we have put off, and have nothing to do with “the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and holiness of truth.” How beautifully the same connection is shown in the writings of another apostle, who, after reminding believers that they are “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever,” continues his exhortation— “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 1:23; 2:2).

Let us note in passing the condemnation so repeatedly and emphatically pronounced in Scripture against “evil speaking.” No doubt there is much that may truly be said against almost any believer. It does not follow that because a person speaks evil, he speaks falsely. But the more thoroughly one is brought to judge one’s own condition before God, the less disposed one is to that censorious, fault-finding spirit which delights to detect and expose the failings of others. There are sorrowful occasions when it is necessary to deal with evil; but the Christian is most happily and profitably occupied when he is thinking on “whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise” (Phil. 4:8). It is God’s work to justify, Satan’s to accuse. How beautifully the Lord Himself speaks the praises of His imprisoned forerunner, even in the moment when He sent the needed warning, “Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me” (Matt. 11:6-11). How ceaseless His compassion, now, as High Priest, towards “them that are ignorant and out of the way.” How tender and unfailing His intercession, as advocate with the Father, for the believer who has sinned. Contrast with our readiness to speak evil, the generous warmth which glows in the words of Paul when naming his fellow-soldiers and companions in labor.

But the Holy Ghost never stops with negatives. There is the positive side of the picture also. We are made, morally of course, “partakers of the divine nature,” and as such God Himself is our example; just as in John we read, that “if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11). Hence the model for our walk towards our fellow-believers is God’s own love to us. The same tenderheartedness, the same forgivingness that God Himself has shown in forgiving us, we are called upon to exhibit towards each other. We are children, and “dear children”—how God delights to tell out the love of His heart towards us! We ought therefore to be followers, or imitators, of Him to whose love and grace we owe all we have, all we are, all we hope to be.

But the example of Christ is also set before us, and that in the matchless love which made Him give Himself on our behalf. Of course in the atonement which He made Christ stands all alone. There He is the One forsaken of God, and that as the bearer of sin. For us to be so forsaken would be eternal perdition; but, thanks be to God, “by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified,” so that we are as secure as Christ Himself, “because as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). We are not told therefore to “walk in love” as Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us a sin-offering unto God, but as Christ gave “Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor.” There is a vast difference between these two things. As bearing sin, Christ was under the judgment and curse of God, “made a curse for us.” As glorifying

God in death, as exhibiting the perfect obedience due from man, and the perfect grace that belongs to God, He was never so acceptable, never so much the object of the Father's delight, as when He gave up His life upon the cross. It was this entire surrender of self for God and man that made Him the perfect sweet-savor offering, whose fragrance morning and evening ascended to God from the brazen altar.

This, then, is the model of walk presented to us. How marvelous the thought that in the poor self-sacrificing love of our hearts God can find, as it were, some faint savor of the infinite fragrance of that perfect self-sacrifice in which Christ offered Himself upon the cross! In degree, of course, the difference is as wide as between the infinite and finite, between heaven and earth; but yet this is the model placed before us, this the type in every blurred copy of which God can still find His delight. Thus Paul, writing to the Philippians in acknowledgment of their gift, says, "I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." (Phil. 4:18) So again to the Hebrews, "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb 13:16). To what an immeasurably higher level the standard is raised when the living Christ Himself is thus placed before the soul, than when the believer is again brought beneath the mandates of a lifeless law!

T. B. B.

The Bearings of the New Creation

"If any one be in Christ, there is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. And all things are of the God who has reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 5:17-18).

"In Christ Jesus neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but new creation. And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:15-16).

"For we are His workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God has before prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14).

Few subjects are to the saints of God more interesting or more weighty than the new creation; but we may also add that few are less generally understood. We all know that "God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;" and we read, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him" (Gen. 1:26-27). We all accept that in the exercise of creatorial rights God was entitled to put the man He had created (an intelligent being, able to know and do His will) under any conditions He saw fit to impose. Indeed we may go further, and say that in the very nature of things the relations of an intelligent creature to his Creator require that he should receive and observe a revelation of His will. Thus we find that the Lord God had no sooner placed His creature in the garden He had planted for him than He "commanded the man." He was entitled to man's obedience, for he was His handiwork; to his confidence, for He had done him nothing but good; and to his dependence, for He was not only the source of his being, but his Sustainer and his Supplier through evening shade and morning sheen. Alas, how soon he fell! and how deep his fall! We do not dwell on the dismal story. "Where art thou?" and "What is this that thou hast done?" tell their own tale more impressively than any human language, and indicate conclusively that obedience, confidence, and dependence, the vested rights of God in His creature, had been flagitiously denied Him. That which man owed to God, the true debt of his nature, he failed to pay, and in consequence brought its righteously ordained but terrible penalty upon himself and his prospective race. The righteousness of God demanded the imposition of a penalty, and no less did the holiness of God require that its rigorousness should mark His eternal abhorrence of sin. The divine commentary upon this is, "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

To that Adamic creation we all belong naturally and physically. Were I an angel, I should belong to the angelic creation, another and earlier order of intelligent existences, though equally with us creatures, and equally under creature obligations. But I am a man, and thus belong to the human family, the material creation; and that which, as we have seen, pertains to the creature as such pertains to me, because I am a creature. Unless God could cease to be Creator, He could not

cease to have creatorial rights or claims; and unless I could cease to be His creature, I could not cease to owe Him creatural obligations; He is our “faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19).

But it may be asked, (1) Is there not for us a change of relationship? (2) Are not our old creation debts all gone in the cross? (3) Are not the things of the old creation passed away and replaced by a new creation? (4) Have we not died out of all that you have referred to, our old man being crucified with Christ? (5) Are we not redeemed from the curse of the law, being dead to it by the body of Christ?

Such questions, deeply interesting as they are, indicate no small degree of confusion in the enquirer’s mind. A sound nomenclature is in these things of the first importance. Unless penalty be distinguished from debt, person from nature, that which is physical from that which is spiritual, the old man from the so-called old creation, and creature-obligations from the demands of the Mosaic law, no clear and correct conclusions are possible.

Now let us see, (1) What “change of relationship” is possible between a creature and his Creator as such? My son may become my servant or my master; but he can never cease to be my son. New and added relations there may be, and there are, between God and us; but those which He has formed are as eternal as Himself. Sin never changed the fact of man’s creatureship, though it constituted him a sinner; grace has not changed it, though it has made him a son of God; and neither will glory forever and forever. Adam innocent, Adam a sinner, Adam a believer, Adam in glory by-and-by, in no one of these conditions more than in another was, and is, and will be a human being, intelligent, and therefore responsible, under, and never from under, creature-obligations, whether in a state of probation in Eden, a state of failure in the world, or in the perfected state in the Father’s house, when “spirit and soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23) will be glorified with Christ. Equally so is a sinner alive in this scene under these obligations; and should he go down to perdition will never drown them in the lake of fire, though he will then be where their breach is as irremediable as their validity is irrevocable.

The obligations referred to, constituting our original indebtedness to God, belong to our creature-ship, not to our sinnership, if we may use the word. Thus while the penalty of every default, in other words, the sins we have committed, has been borne by Christ, the divinely-provided Substitute, the ever-existing responsibility we are under as creatures remains untouched, being uninvalidated by the work of the Cross.

Scripture never speaks of the “old, creation,” or of old debts, or old indebtedness, as some do, for the palpable reason that the creation referred to, and the obligations attaching to us therein, are never obsolete, nor ever will be. Sin has come in for the time being, and spoiled that which God made and pronounced “very good;” but the sin of the world (John 1:29) will be taken away eventually—

“He’ll bid the whole creation smile,

And hush its groan.”

The new creation is entirely a spiritual thing, and is only in Christ, who is “the Beginning of the creation of God” (See scriptures at the head of this paper). Hence it is an entire mistake to regard it as having come in successively to take the place of the physical or natural creation. That which

is moral does not supplant or replace that which is material. It is an essentially new character and divine order of blessing super-added to what went before, which latter God will yet clear of its ruin, and of which we shall be witnesses for eternity. So far from the natural creation being set aside, I could not possibly be a new creation unless I were generically of the Adamic; for it is from such, and not from angels, is formed a new creation, essentially heavenly and constituted for heaven, having Christ, its glorified Head, already there, who is over all, God blessed forever! The eternal state will consist of a new heaven and a new earth, when the tabernacle of God will be with men, and He will dwell with them and be their God!

(4) That we have died in the death of Christ is unquestionably true to faith; but let us not be misled. This is never predicated of us as creatures, but as men in the flesh; that is as sinners under broken responsibilities. In His death we have died, and in His resurrection are risen. Our old man is crucified with Christ; its history is thus forever closed in the cross; but the person, the living, sentient being, the accountable creature, continues, being born again, and a new creation in Christ, having then a new order of responsibilities super-imposed and connected with the former, which have now new motives, and get a higher character.

(5) The curse of the law is not at all a question of creature-obligations as such. Five and twenty centuries rolled by (during which those obligations were in full force, however unfulfilled) ere the law and its condemnation came in; then only to one people of all the nations of the earth, and to them only because they in their self-sufficiency entered into a covenant of works. Says the apostle, "It was added because of transgressions" (Gal. 3:19).

Let us recapitulate then the conclusions we submit to the reader for his prayerful consideration.

Man as a creature owes to God obedience, confidence, and dependence. So long as I am a creature I am under this inherent obligation; it is my debt to God. I have not ceased, and shall never cease to be a creature; therefore I shall never cease to owe this debt.

Man as born into the world is also a sinner as to his nature, and every default of his debt to God is a committed sin; accordingly by nature and by practice we are sinners and sinful.

But Christ became the divine substitute of them that believe, and as such bore the penalty of our sins, which penalty we had incurred by default of our obligations to God. In His death He also ended for faith our history (not as creatures, but) as men in the flesh—sinners under judgment. Through grace we as believers have in consequence received eternal forgiveness of our sins. We also reckon that in His death we died, and thus our old man was crucified; moreover, we are in Christ a new creation, essentially heavenly.

We have here three distinct things—man as a creature, man as a sinner, and man as a believer. To the first belong characteristically the creature responsibilities; to the second belongs the penalty for his sins; to the third belong-remission of sins and new creation.

The first did not (looked at alone) call for Christ's death, and Christ's death has nothing necessarily to say to it. The second brought in the work of Christ in atonement, in whose death we are accounted to have died, and have thus put off the old man, which is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed. The third is that into which I am brought as the result of the resurrection of Christ, and which is so wonderful in its character that the apostle predicates of our

bodies that even now they are members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost.

Thus two of these things, the first and third, remain to me. (1) That I am as I have been from birth, and ever shall be, a creature owing to God obedience, confidence and dependence; my original obligation maintained in its immutable validity, and which indissolubly attaches to me in common with every intelligent creature, be he man or angel, and in whatever condition of existence. (2) That new and distinct order of purely spiritual blessedness which is only in Christ (involving relationship to the Father as a son, union with Christ by the Holy Ghost given, and eternal glory), which I came into for eternity by the death and resurrection of Christ, in whom I have died and am risen. But the same being in its very essence a heavenly thing, it awaits its blissful consummation when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; when the natural body shall be changed into a spiritual body, being fashioned like unto the glorified body of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Himself the beginning of the creation of God!

In no respect whatever are these two things incompatible with each other, nor do the obligations and responsibilities pertaining to the second (incomparably higher though they be in character) set aside or weaken those which are inherent in the first; but entwined together they subsist in perfect harmony, in divinely established order, and in eternal duration. Even amid the wondrous blessedness of the Father's house, where the unsullied joy is as perpetual as profound, in the dignity and the grace of a seat in the throne of Christ as being of His body and of His bride, though enraptured in the ineffable delight and ecstatic bliss of His own presence (heaven's crowning joy to my soul), throughout all eternity shall I love to obey Him who formed me by the skill of His hand, shall love to confide in Him who won me with the love of His heart, and shall love to depend upon Him who divinely upholds me for His own glory forever and forever!

W. R. D.

Fragment: Humility

Humility before all gives courage before all.

The beginning of all excellence is to confess that we have none.

J. N. D.

Waiting for the Coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ

“There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa. 73:25).

“The desire of all nations shall come” (Hag. 2: 7).

“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life ” (Prov. 13:12).

“Yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37).

“Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him” (1 Thess. 4:14).

“Surely I come quickly” (Rev. 22: 20).

Coming, though “hope” is fading

Into the gloom of night;

And sorrow is darkly shading

Prospects which once were bright.

Coming to end the sorrow,

Coming to ease the pain,

Bringing our loved ones “with Him,”

Never to part again!

Coming! no distance lying—

Stretching far into space—

Between the joy of “believing,”

And the joy of “seeing” His face!

Coming! Ah, but a moment,

And perhaps these (yes shall see

The form of the One who “died and rose,”

And is coming again for me!

Then the waiting-time will be over,

The pain, and sorrow, and strife;

And the heart’s “desire cometh,”

Truly a “a tree of life.”

A. S. O.

Siloe and Shiloh

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified)" (John 7:37-39).

The occasion was the closing day of the great festival. The feast of Tabernacles had lasted its prescribed seven days, during which the people dwelling in booths (Lev. 23:42) had recalled and commemorated their tent life in the wilderness, where God had led them forty years to humble them and to prove them, that they might know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord (Deut. 8:2,3). The last or eighth day (typical of our first or Lord's day) was the feast of the In-gathering (Ex. 23:16). It was the greatest day of all, the celebration of the gathering in of the fruits of the goodly land, when, harvest being ended, the corn, and wine, and oil had all been stored. Of the three great festivals, this feast of Tabernacles and of In-gathering was the greatest of the Jewish year; and of its eight days this was the last, the greatest, and most joyous. Doubtless the nation had rejoiced exceedingly, and the Lord had probably seen the people with the golden vessel from the sanctuary, provided for this ceremonial, carrying of the still waters of Siloe's fountain, and pouring them out during the chanting of hosannahs, as a libation upon the sacrifice on the altar. The acclamations of Israel resounding within the temple are carried far beyond its precincts, and rehearsing the song of Isaiah 12, the excited company take up at least the letter of his words, "With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Haply, too, they congratulate one the other with many a hearty salute on being present this memorable day, while they say amongst themselves exultingly, "He who has never seen the rejoicing at the pouring out of the water of Siloam, has never seen rejoicing in his life."

Thus were the people of God's national choice and special favor occupied, and such were their self-satisfied thoughts; but the whole scene was a hollow and a heartless sham. One was there who had come up to the feast in Jerusalem, being of the royal line of Judah, David's root and David's offspring, whose unhonored presence exposed the real character of the nation's celebration. They avowedly celebrated that they had been led as a flock in the desert, but the Shepherd of Israel before their very eyes they knew not; and so far from having learned that man liveth by every word from the mouth of God, the living Word Himself, to whom all revelation divinely pointed, is amongst them unrecognized! They celebrated the ingathering of the fruits of the field and of the vineyard, but yielded no honor to the Lord of the harvest! The ancient prophecy of their father Jacob, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the peoples be," was as little understood as was Shiloh Himself known when He was in their midst in the crowded city of their solemnities! To Judah, as predicted by the dying patriarch, had Shiloh come, and was amongst His own tribe; but not even Judah was gathered to Him! They may have rejoiced in Siloe's waters in stirring strains, and sung of wells of salvation, but the Savior Himself is refused; and accordingly

to salvation they remain strangers.

How must the Lord's tender heart have been pained at all that passed around Him! We may in some measure conceive what it must have cost Him, though only His own sensitiveness to the breach between Jehovah and His people could fully appreciate it. He goes up tardily and secretly—for those weighty reasons which, however, not even His own kindred could penetrate—but He goes up; for the type and the antitype must be brought together, the foreshadow conducting to that which produces it. Whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, Jehovah must testify in the midst of His people. They are keeping one of Jehovah's solemn feasts, but His heart is breaking at their unbelief; for they know not the time of their visitation (Luke 19:44). "Jesus stood and cried." He knew the real barrenness of the noisy, self-glorious scene; they were in the land and in the holy city, but it was a moral desert. Though they valued not the word which went forth from the mouth of God, they must hear it from His faithful Witness; and though they rejoice in Siloe's waters, but are oblivious of Him to whom they pointed (the sent One, John 9:7), His love shall direct them to rivers of eternal blessing. The Lord therefore takes His stand in the midst of the moving throng, and stretching forth His hands, cries aloud to Israel, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." Full well knew He that the nation had no heart to receive Him, neither thirsted she for the eternal springs: thus He makes the call an individual one, answering in character to what He had said to the woman at Jacob's well, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." The wondrous fact, first stated to Samaria's guilty daughter, is now reaffirmed to the still more guilty daughter of Israel, that One is before her in the plenitude of His grace, not accusing her of her iniquities, nor exposing the emptiness and poverty of her solemn assemblies, but touchingly appealing, with outstretched hands laden with proffered blessing, to the aching heart of any who, like the treasurer of Candace, are retiring from Jerusalem unsatisfied with the proud city's festivities and religious rites, coveting and craving a more excellent and soul-satisfying portion. And as in relation to the woe-deserving cities He had earlier in his testimony said, as indeed none but He could say, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," so here within the walls of more culpable Jerusalem He cries, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink." Jehovah-shammah, "the Lord is there," and "Come unto Me," is at once the evidence that Shiloh has come, and thus Jehovah has visited His people, and the testimony that He has put blessing within their reach of such a character as to emancipate every burdened conscience, and to refresh and satisfy every troubled spirit. But they would not! The true fountain of Siloe is flowing for them, the wellsprings of salvation opened, that whosoever will may drink; but, alas! for these waters there is no thirst.

Again, He speaks: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The previous verse spoke of His person, the life-giving One, present amongst them, and the blessedness of coming to Him who is able to save; but, as He said, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." Yet now He opens up in striking figure the character and compass of the believer's blessing; but the inspired penman carefully guards against our concluding it could have been then fully possessed. The believer's characteristic blessing comes out in connection only with the glorified Man at God's right hand. A Christ incarnate, a Christ in devoted service, a Christ obedient unto death, nay, even a risen Savior seen forty days of His disciples, will not suffice; but the Christ of glory, exalted to the right hand of the throne of the

Majesty in the heavens, is essential to the gift of the Holy Ghost as a divine person dwelling in the believer. Up to this portion of John's gospel we have three beautiful and precious instances in which the Lord Jesus takes His place as an evangelist; the first is with Nicodemus, the second with the woman of Sychar, while the third is the case in hand. Let us for a moment observe their difference. In one we have a ruler of the Jews, probably an upright, amiable man, standing well with those around him; in another a woman of the city, guilty and depraved; in the last a chosen nation in the day of her religious festivities. But there is only one Savior. He is the needed One, and He is there, self-presented to the needy soul.

"Uncalled Thou cam'st with gladness,

Us from the fall to raise;

To change our grief and sadness

To songs of joy and praise."

The lifted-up "Son of Man" in one case, "the gift of God" in the next, and the "Come unto Me" of the last, all tell the same affecting tale of a Savior there in the fullness of His grace, and in whom alone is. salvation. Nor is that all; for in each instance there is the Holy Ghost too. Nicodemus must be "born of the Spirit;" Samaria's daughter must get the "living water," a divine and eternal spring; and now, in the third case, as the issue of the smitten Rock, and consequent upon His being glorified, "rivers of living waters" flowing forth from the believer, fructifying and refreshing others, as well as himself, as they flow on to their ocean source. But that which is of deepest interest as to evangelization is to see that the Lord Jesus, here in His labors in the gospel, presents this high and blessed teaching undeterred by the fact that its accomplishment was "not yet." He stops not short of this wonderful heavenly truth concerning a glorified Christ and its result—the gift of the Holy Ghost as a divine person dwelling in saints on earth, and which water of life, bursting its bounds, as it were, would flow forth for the blessing of those around, like deep and rapid streams whose winding courses ensure rich and verdant meadows on either hand, while their unimpeded and undiminished volume bespeaks their exhaustless, immeasurable supply!

It may be here remarked, that while Jacob's ancient prediction by the Spirit of God left room for unbelief in the refusal of Shiloh, it also gave room for faith; for had the nation received and installed Him as Messiah, the Prince and Ruler of Judah, and to Him had the peoples been gathered, the prophecy would have received a complete fulfillment. As it is, the first or negative part only is yet fulfilled, and the rest waits a millennial accomplishment when all nations will be gathered to and blessed in the Shiloh of Judah (Gen. 49:10).

In the scene we are contemplating He stands before them as the sent One of God in the precious, perfect grace of His heart to man, the true and thenceforth ever-flowing Siloe, so long as could be found a needy one thirsting for the water of life. If they knew Him not in the dignity and moral glory of His blessed person as Shiloh, the Man of rest, the Prince of peace, the anti-typical Solomon to whom the scepter alone by right belongs, that shall not deter Him from fulfilling the will of Him that sent Him and finishing His work, as He said, "I know that His commandment is life everlasting" (John 12:50).

But, in conclusion, it is such truths as the risen Man glorified in the presence of God upon the throne of the Father; the new creation in its wonderful scope and bearings, of which He is "the Beginning;" the Holy Ghost given in person and in power, dwelling in us in immeasurable fullness, and uniting us to Christ in glory in the membership of one Body; and the Lord's return to meet us in the air, "that blessed hope;" it is these and similar truths that we are privileged not only to rejoice in as our own portion as beloved children of the Father, but also to present all around to others, whether in preaching the gospel or in dealing with individuals. The Lord give His beloved servants to imitate Himself in the testimony of His abounding grace, and to present before souls the unimpaired magnitude of this heavenly order of blessing; and none the less should they meet but with such an issue to their testimony as did the Master Himself, concerning whose auditory we read that, scarce refraining from laying hands upon Him, they went every man unto his own house! And what about Himself? Ah! dear reader, as the refused One He pursued in silence and in solitude His toilsome path to Olivet (John 8:1), and it may be, like David in the day of his refusal, weeping as He went up (Compare 2 Sam. 15:30 with Psa. 126:6). Such is true testimony, and such its present reward; yet how blessed "for His sake" (Phil. 1:29).

"Lord, accept our feeble song!

Power and praise to Thee belong;

We would all Thy grace record,

Holy, holy, holy Lord!"

W. R. D.

Fragment: Dealing with Self

Are you dealing with yourself on the ground of your going to be like Christ in glory – seeking to be like Him now? Can you say that is the way your life is spending itself? In loneliness of heart perhaps, but spiritual energy that cares only for that — “This one thing I do.”

Fragment: to Follow

To follow is the starting-point of true service.

Fragment: Doing His Will

Entire confidence in the Lord's love gives courage to do the Lord's will.

Fragment: What He Will Do with Me

It is not what I am to do, but what He will do with me.

Fragment: The Day-Star

The Day-star arising in my heart is what completely delivers me from the world.

Children of Light

Believers are exhorted to be “imitators of God as dear children.” Now God has revealed Himself as love and as light. He is of course righteous and holy; but we never read that God is righteousness or holiness, whereas we do read that “God is love,” and that “God is light.” In former verses God is seen as love, and hence we are told to “walk in love.” Here God is seen as light, and hence we are told to “walk as children of light.”

The universal principle is, that believers are to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called.” Since, then, believers are “called to be saints,” or “called saints” (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2), their ways should be such as are suitable for saints. So it is here. They are not called to become saints by a saintly walk, but are urged to a saintly walk because they are saints through God’s calling. Hence the apostle says, “But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient [or suitable]: but rather giving of thanks” (vss. 3, 4). These believers had once walked in the lusts of the flesh, “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.” But they were now saints, or sanctified; and having the life of Christ, they were to show forth this life in their walk. How unfit for those thus sanctified to be walking in uncleanness!

How unbecoming in the followers of Him who, though rich, for our sakes became poor, to be eagerly clutching at the riches of this world! Nor is it merely in deed, but in word, that believers are to act “as becometh saints.” The light, foolish, and often filthy talk to which as heathen they had been accustomed was as little suitable to those “quickened together with Christ” as the deeds named in the previous verse, and must be just as completely put away. The lightness of heart which in the old man thus expressed itself, might now in the new man find a suitable expression in the “giving of thanks.”

But another motive is added. “For this we know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” (vs. 5). The believer is a joint-heir with Christ; for in Him “we have obtained an inheritance.” But if we are to have part “in the kingdom of Christ and of God,” we must be morally suited to it in character. As seen in Christ indeed we are already made “meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;” but here the question is not so much one of standing as of conduct. And in this too the great principle holds, that if we are to be in God’s presence, we must be fitted for it; “for without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”

No doubt there is often grievous failure; but this does not alter the principle. What distinguishes a well-governed state is order and obedience to law. What distinguishes the kingdom of God is holiness and purity of walk. There are, even in a well-governed state, instances of disorder and disobedience to law; and there are, even among members of the kingdom of God, instances of unholiness and impurity of walk. But in both cases this is a departure from the normal order. In both cases the distinguishing characteristic is not the departure from the normal order, but the

normal order itself. Thus license and immorality are condemned equally by the grace and by the government of God, and the believer is appealed to, both as a saint and as a member of the kingdom of Christ and of God, to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith he is called.

Man's vain philosophy might indeed seek to pervert the doctrine of grace into a sanction of immorality; but against such corruptions of the truth the apostle warns them: "Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them" (vss. 6, 7). There needs no lengthened argument. The vanity of the teaching which would sanction such practices is seen at once by the fact, that these were the very practices for which God's judgment comes upon the children of disobedience. They had been in this condition themselves; walking "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." But God had called them out of it; and how could He possibly endure that they should walk in the very acts from which they were thus delivered? "For," he argues, "ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord" (vss. 8-10).

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Christ has come to reveal God in this as in all other ways. He is "the true Light, which, coming into the world, lighteth every man." Hence He speaks of Himself as "the light of the world," and declares that "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12). The character of the believer is therefore that he has left the darkness, and is in the light. Now Scripture knows no such thought as a man who is in the light walking in darkness. It knows indeed, and gives abundant instances, of the failing and falling of believers; of those who are in the light not acting up to it; and of much else which shows how the flesh, where allowed to work, is just as bad in the converted as in the unconverted person. But for all this the human thought that a believer can, because secured through grace, continue to walk and delight in sin is utterly opposed to the teaching of God's word: "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6,7). The two broad classes are therefore the believer, who walks in the light, and has fellowship with God; and the unbeliever, who walks in darkness, and has no fellowship. The Ephesian converts had once belonged to the former class, but were now in the latter. As children of the light, they were to show what was acceptable to God; to bring forth the fruit of light (not of the Spirit, as in the English version), which are "goodness, and righteousness, and truth."

Where light is, darkness disappears. The light of God shining into the heart dispels the evil; not indeed changing the old nature, but enabling us to judge it and its deeds; to take the place of Job, when he saw himself in God's presence: "Now mine eye seeth Thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:5,6). Hence, where the rays of God's light are allowed to search the heart there is real and deep judgment of evil, as well as practical separation from it. So the apostle goes on: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things, that are reproved are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and

Christ shall give thee light” (vss. 11-14). The believer not only walks in the light, but by so doing becomes himself a source of light. He does more than refuse to have fellowship with “the unfruitful works of darkness;” as “light in the Lord” he reproves them. Noah “condemned the world.” His own faith and walk were the lights which disclosed the thickness of the moral darkness around. So our Lord says, “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22). Thus it must ever be in God’s moral government. Darkness does not discover itself, but is discovered by the light. Mere philosophy, however deep, cannot show things according to God’s thoughts. Life and light must go together.

There must be divine life in the soul before God’s light can be received. Only the quickened soul can discern in Christ the light of the world, and see all things in the form and color in which this light reveals them. “Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

The whole of the preceding exhortations are thus briefly summarized: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (vss. 15-17). Folly and wisdom in Scripture are not merely intellectual qualities, but have always a moral character. It is the fool who says in his heart, “There is no God.” It is the fear of the Lord that is declared to be the beginning of wisdom. The believer as a child of light has “the mind of Christ;” he has the Holy Ghost to teach him the deep things of God. However little gifted in mere worldly wisdom or knowledge, he has “an unction from the Holy One,” and so has the mind of God in all that concerns His things. But the flesh is constantly present to lust against the Spirit, and it needs circumspection therefore, constant watchfulness, to walk as wise men, and not as fools. This is what the Christian is exhorted to exercise. If he is called out of the folly of the world, and has the hidden wisdom of God given him, he is urged to walk worthy of his vocation. And this is all the more necessary because the times are evil, so that every opportunity needs to be seized.

A particular example is then given which illustrates the principles thus laid down: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (vss. 18-21). The world’s joy expresses itself in a carnal manner; it is mere natural excitement, such as that caused by wine. The believer’s is to be in contrast with this. It is not the exhilaration ministered by mere natural causes, but the deeper delight ministered by the Spirit of God. It is one thing to be indwelt by the Spirit, and another to be filled with the Spirit. All believers are indwelt; but how few, alas, are filled! As we have seen in former numbers, the Spirit, though still sealing, may be grieved, and not able to minister either peace or joy. But to be filled with the Spirit is to be under the direct energy of the Spirit’s action. It is here put in contrast with the forced, natural mirth caused by wine. In place of this the believer should have the joy and happiness shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. This will find its suitable outlet in expressions of joy; not the foolish songs of the world, but the psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs in which the heart, filled with the sense of God’s goodness, delights to pour forth its feelings. Thanksgiving is as natural to hearts thus tuned as the idle songs of the world are to the heart excited by the world’s gaiety and folly.

There is another word added which seems to come in somewhat strangely: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." The mirth excited by wine is quarrelsome and self-assertive; not so the gladness of heart shed abroad by the Spirit. The deep sense of grace which calls forth praise and thanksgiving to God humbles instead of exalting. The fuller the heart is of praise to God the lower it will be in its own esteem, and hence the submission one to another; not indeed out of simple kindness and good-nature, but in the deep sense of the fear of God, which never ceases to fill the heart occupied with His goodness and love.

T. B. B.

Living Christ

No Christian should be standing for himself; in every company and in every place we must make manifest another, even Christ. The saints are to be an epistle of Christ, read by all; to be the living expression of what was in the mind of Christ. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” Take this word, and apply it to yourself in its power. Are you leaving the savor of Christ behind you in every place, as perfume is left behind by those who carry it—so sweet as to be unmistakable wherever left? If you are doing this, it is because you are bearing about in your body the death of Jesus, so that His life is manifested in your life. We cannot begin to live with Jesus until we have died with Him.

G. V. W.

Fragment: One With Christ

What a thought! to be so one with Christ, so living Christ, that we have to put as a test to everything, "Would my Lord like this or that?" The Christ of God, who has made me one with Himself, what does He think of it?

G. V. W.

The Water and the Blood

John alone of the evangelists mentions the flowing of the blood and water from Christ's side; he alludes to it in his epistle too. It is a beautiful testimony of divine grace, answering the last insult man could heap upon Him. They drove Him outside the camp, put Him to death on a cross, and then, to make assurance doubly sure, the soldier gives Him a blow with his spear. Salvation was God's answer to man's insult—sin in his rejection of Him; for the blood and water were the signs of it.

In John's epistle the water is named first, because, looked at on God's side, water comes first; in the history it cannot: "Forthwith came there out blood and water;" in the epistle, "Not by water only, but by water and blood." The point is, that eternal life is not found in the first Adam, but in the second; the witnesses to this are the water, the blood, and the Spirit. You want purifying to have eternal life; you will get it nowhere but in death, and in that of Christ in grace. You want. expiation, and the blood of Christ makes that; you want the Holy Ghost. Christ is not only dead, but glorified, and the Spirit is given, the witness that there is no life in the first Adam but in the Son. His power is found in that which marks the total breach of the first man with God and of God with him, save in sovereign mercy. In the epistle, John is showing that moral cleansing will not be enough. The Spirit is named first when God applies it. The Word is the instrument, but it is by death itself. You must have cleansing, but the cleansing is death. The water coming forth from the side is purity; and you can have purity by death only, and by His death.

J. N. D.

The Surrender of an Only Son

"It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4), yet nothing else in which there is the life of the flesh could man offer with acceptance before God. It was not, however, till after the lapse of many centuries, that the efficacious death of one who is man was directly treated of in the Word. We have to wait till we come down in the history of mankind to the days of David, and to those also of Isaiah, for plain though prophetic teaching on such an important matter (Psa. 22;40 Isa.); for to John the Baptist was it first given to point the people of Israel to the person of Him who is the Lamb of God. (John 1:29,36) But long ere the days even of David, as we now see, God was setting forth in His word truths about the death of His Son. What a subject, then, must that be to God, since it was continually in His thoughts; and before ever He began to commit to writing His revealed will, He indicated by His dealings with men, and by His words to His saints, what was ever before Him.

In the offerings which we have already passed in review, we have seen traced out something of God's dealings with men, in virtue of the sacrifice of His Son. In the histories of Abraham and of Job, we learn from God's words recorded in them more about that death which is of such interest to Him.

Between the building of Noah's altar and that erected by divine direction on a mountain in the land of Moriah more than four hundred years elapsed, during which period we read not of any fresh teaching as to either the need, or the acceptability of sacrifice. Men had not ceased to make use of altars (Gen. 12:7; 13:4, 18); but God did not disclose, that we read of, anything fresh in reference to sacrifice. Yet how many important events had taken place in the interval! The confusion of tongues, and the consequent dispersion of mankind abroad upon the face of the earth, had been already effected. The glory of Nimrod's kingdom had culminated, and its power had evidently declined; for an Elamitic monarch, Chedorlaomer, was the head of that confederacy, which, sweeping like a flood over Palestine, carried all before it, until Abraham, the Hebrew, the stranger in that land, at Hobah, on the left of Damascus, made the four victorious kings disgorge their prey. Besides this an event of still more importance, and one which concerned all the world, had taken place in the encampment of that patriarch who was called the "Friend of God;" the heir had been born to Abraham, in whose line the promised seed was in due time to appear. For twenty-five years had Abraham to wait between his departure out of Haran and the birth of his son and heir (Gen. 12:4; 17:17). But at the end of that time Isaac was born, the meaning of whose name his mother well understood, as she said, "God has made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me" (Gen. 21:6).

For a time after Isaac's birth there seems to have been a cessation of divine communications to Abraham, till God tested His servant by demanding the death of the heir, with whose continuance in life all the patriarch's hopes were bound up. God's right to demand His servant's son was incontestable. Life belongs to God; He gives it, and He withdraws it, when and where He will. Abraham fully acknowledged this right. He paused not in the carrying out of the divine command;

for “he rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt-offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.” Everything was provided, nothing was forgotten; the wood, the fire, and the knife, all were thought of. There was no hurry, which so often produces forgetfulness, nor was there any delay. All was prepared for the offering up of Isaac his son. What must it have been to Abraham to travel that three days’ journey, the sole depository of a secret which he could communicate to none of his fellow-creatures, and one so dreadful in its consequences to himself! But he had sustainment in that trial, and we learn what it was. He knew God as the God who quickeneth the dead. He had proved that in his own person (Rom. 4:17). He would therefore count on Him to manifest Himself as the God of resurrection in the raising up of Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19). With this confidence he moved forward to the place of which God had told him. The trial to which his faith was put he was enabled to stand, and was thereby justified by works (James 2:21). But the trial was severe, and the language in which the command had been given must have gone like daggers to his heart. “Take now thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest,” God had said to him at Beersheba. If the Lord had by an accident or by a sickness taken away Isaac, the stroke would have been a severe one, and his father could not have warded it off. But the patriarch was commanded himself to offer up his son. On no one had God ever made such a demand. To no one surely will He ever speak in like manner again. “Thy son.” All his parental affection must have been called out at the mention of the word. “Thine only son.” It was true indeed that he had but one; for in Isaac God had said his seed should be called (Gen. 21:12). “Whom thou lovest.” God well knew what the patriarch felt about the lad, yet He commanded him to surrender that object of his love: and Abraham was obedient.

Reaching the place indicated, he prepared to carry out his work. All was made ready for the sacrifice, but as yet there was no sign that God would interpose, and provide a substitute. The lamb of which Abraham had spoken to Isaac, where was it? Isaac now bound on the altar, the father with uplifted hand was just about to slay his son, when the angel of the Lord called to him out of heaven. There was One who though unseen had been a witness of all that Abraham had been doing, and One, too, who could read his heart, and know all that he was suffering in his soul. But now the trial was over; God had tested the obedience of His servant. in the most rigorous manner, and through grace that servant had proved himself obedient to all that was demanded of him. The angel of the Lord, Jehovah Himself, therefore now interposed: “Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me” (Gen. 22:12). A direct command having been given Abraham to offer up his son, nothing but a fresh command to spare him would have kept the patriarch from surrendering to death his well-beloved Isaac. How perfect on this occasion was his obedience!

As the servant he was obedient, as a creature of God he admitted the claims of God, and that all which he possessed was at the Lord’s disposal. He had done what was right in surrendering Isaac; for God had commanded him to do it. Could he, then, claim anything from God because of this manifestation of obedience? Clearly not. He had only done what it was his duty when commanded of God to do. All will agree surely in this. All, then, must own that we can lay claim to no merit on the ground of obedience to God; yet how often may there be found lurking in the corner of the heart, if it be not openly expressed, the thought of preferring a claim on God to be rewarded

because of obedience rendered to Him. If God rewards obedience He is free to do so, though we could never demand it. He acted in this way with Abraham. He will act in this way with His servants (Luke 19:11-27).

Isaac spared, Abraham discovered a ram caught in the thicket by its horns, and offered it up as a burnt-offering. Isaac had asked about a lamb Abraham assured him that God would provide one. But instead of a lamb, there was a ram brought by God to that spot; and having offered it up for a burnt-offering instead of Isaac his son, Abraham's work on the mountain was ended. What feelings must have filled his heart we can well imagine. How thankful he must have been to the Lord who provided the substitute for his son. Never surely did he forget all that he had passed through during those three eventful days. Never was that place to be forgotten, nor its association with the Lord's goodness to him to drop out of remembrance. So he called it "Jehovah-jireh"; that is, the Lord will provide. For the words in which he had answered Isaac had in the fullest way come true. "My son, God will provide," he had said (vs. 8). The Lord did provide, he could ever after declare. But once more the angel of the Lord addressed him, and in language which he could not have expected. "By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (vss. 16-18).

How richly was Abraham blessed! To Isaac, the type of the heavenly one, the son and the heir, and who never left the territory God promised to Abraham (Gen. 26:2-3), a seed as numerous as the stars of the heavens was promised. To Jacob, the exile and wanderer, from whom the twelve tribes came, a seed as the dust of the earth (28:14) was promised, each illustration fitting in its place. But to Abraham, the father of the faithful, both of heavenly and earthly saints, a seed as numerous as the stars, and as the sand on the seashore, was now promised. Patriarchal blessing in the fullest way was to be his. Victory too, which should not be reversed, the Lord assured him was in store for his earthly seed. But besides and above all this, in his seed, which is Christ (Gal. 3:16), should all the nations of the earth be blessed, because Abraham obeyed God's voice.

Three thoughts we have here of instruction to us. It was a very precious thing in God's eyes for Abraham thus to surrender Isaac, so He blessed him. Next, the blessing was both full and distinctive. No one was ever blessed by God in the same way. And lastly, the blessing was made sure in resurrection; for it was after Isaac was raised in figure from the dead that the angel of the Lord thus addressed his father. But is this all that we are to learn from this history? Surely not; for we may read, as it were between the lines, another history which more immediately concerns us; namely, the surrender by God of His only Son to die upon the cross for sinners, and what it was in God's eyes to give up to death One so precious. Thus, whilst testing Abraham's faith, and proving the reality of the work in his soul, all the fruit of divine grace, God had before Him another thing—the carrying out His own purpose in grace by the sending His Son to die as man upon the cross. What we share in as the fruits of that death other Scriptures teach us. What it was for God to give His well-beloved Son to die, this history it is which in any measure illustrates it to us, "Thy son, thine only son, whom thou lovest." All this was true as it regarded Abraham; all of it is true likewise as it regards God. His only-begotten Son (John 3:16), His well-beloved One, God gave to die for the ungodly. Are we wrong in thinking that, when God reminded Abraham of what Isaac

was to him, there was present to His own mind that purpose conceived in His heart before the foundation of the world, but only carried out ages after Abraham and Isaac had been gathered to their fathers? How the angel of the Lord dwelt on the thought of the only son. Three times over was Abraham reminded of it. How precious was that surrender by the patriarch of his son! How great an act was it in God's sight! "Now I know," said the Lord, "that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me." So both by His words, and by His dealings with Abraham, the Lord plainly declared what such an act of surrender was in His eyes.

Again, Abraham had to offer his son himself. No one took away Isaac's life by force. His father had to give him up. They started from Beersheba with the young men accompanying them, but no human creature went with the father and the son as far as the mountains in the land of Moriah. Thither they went alone together. Abraham with his own hands bound Isaac on the altar, and with uplifted arm was about to deal the death-blow, when the angel of the Lord called him to desist. God the Father, however, actually gave up His Son, who drank the cup given to Him by His Father, and in obedience to the Father's will really died upon the cross.

But why was the land of Moriah selected for the surrender of Isaac? It was not one of the patriarchal places of worship, like Shechem, Bethel, or Beersheba. We read not that Abraham had ever been there before, or that he revisited it, and worshipped there again; nor in the lives of either Isaac or Jacob is that land even once mentioned. In the history of Solomon (2 Chron. 3:1), the answer to the question is found. It was there the temple was to be built, on the site of Araunah's threshing-floor. It was also in the near neighborhood of mount Moriah that the Lord. Jesus Christ must have hung on the cross. We understand therefore the reason of its selection as the site on which Abraham was to offer up Isaac—God there foreshadowing the death of His well-beloved Son for those who should believe on Him. The land of Moriah! The temple was built on mount Moriah, but the name in Abraham's day designated more than the future site of the temple.

Thus far the parallel may be traced between the offering up of Isaac and the death of the Lord Jesus. But there is a marked difference as well. Isaac was saved from death through a substitute provided of God. The Lord Jesus actually died. From the command to offer up Isaac we learn that the sacrifice of human life would be acceptable to God, though, as we know, Isaac himself could never have been a sacrifice which God could accept. For, born in sin like all of us, he could never have been a sacrifice holy and without blemish; for such one without sin was needed. Only one such has ever been on earth since the fall, and that one, the Lord Jesus Christ, did offer Himself a sacrifice of sweet savor acceptable to God. No human sacrifice then but one could be accepted. But that one has been, and the value of it abides unchanging before the throne. So, after God had traced out in the transactions of that day all that could be typified of the death of Christ, by the surrender of Isaac on the part of Abraham, a substitute was provided for the patriarch's son, and that substitute was a ram.

In this, as throughout the history, the Lord acted according to His own thoughts, showing that He alone foreknew the real character of that sacrifice which He would accept on man's behalf. For although a lamb would equally have typified the sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ, we must admit, as we study the Mosaic ritual, that it would not have been in keeping with the aspect of the Lord's death set forth in this history. A ram suggests the thought of consecration, which a lamb does not. And though at times rams were offered with bullocks and lambs in the same offering

(Num. 28:11,19,27; 29:2, 8,13,17), there were occasions when a ram was appointed to be offered alone. The trespass-offering was a ram. (Lev. 5:18; 6:6) The burnt-offering on the day of atonement for Aaron and for his house and for all Israel was to be for each a ram (Lev. 16). At the completion of the Nazarite's vow of separation to God, the peace-offering was to be a ram (Num. 6:14). And at the consecration of Aaron and his sons, it was the blood of the ram, called the ram of consecration, which was put on the tip of their right ear, on the thumb of their right hand, and on the great toe of their right foot (Lev. 8:22-23). Consecration, therefore, we learn from Leviticus 8 was connected in thought with a ram, and hence its special fitness as the sacrifice that day on the mount of the Lord. For there was typified in the readiness of Isaac to obey his father, the readiness of the Lord Jesus to consecrate Himself to do the Father's will.

We have seen in the sacrifice of Abel the ground upon which one born in sin can approach God. We learn from that of Noah how the Lord can bless sinners because of the sweet savor of the sacrifice. In this history of Abraham offering up his son, we have very different teaching about that one offering, of which all were types. Here we have nothing of its value on man's behalf; but we see typified—firstly, that a man could be offered in sacrifice acceptably to God; secondly, that the true sacrifice would be the Son, given up to death by the Father, and what such a surrender is in God's eyes; and thirdly, that the Son who should die, would in obedience to His Father yield up Himself as an offering, a sacrifice well-pleasing to God.

There is yet further teaching about sacrifice, ere we look into the offerings prescribed by the law.

C. E. S.

Guidance in Service

The question presents itself: In what manner and to what extent can we expect the direction of God in our work? The answer is analogous to that which we have already given with respect to the intervention of God in order to liberate us from dangers. We cannot expect visible and sensible interventions; but we can expect with certainty the care and direction of God by His Spirit in the heart if we walk with Him— “To be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” —to be led by the Spirit if we walk in humility (Rom. 9:14; Col. 1; see also Psa. 32:8,9). I do not doubt that, if we walk with God and look to Him, the Spirit will put in our hearts the special things that He wishes us to do. Only it is important that we keep in memory the Word of God, in order that it may be a guard against all our own imaginations; otherwise the Christian who lacks humility will do his own will, often taking it for the Holy Ghost. That is but the deceitful folly of his heart—first, that it knows them; secondly, taking it for the Holy Ghost. But I repeat, he who looks with humility to the Lord will be conducted by the Lord in the way, and the Holy Ghost who dwells in him will suggest to him the things which He wishes him to do.

J. N. D.

Waiting for God's Son

The doctrine of the Lord's coming is brought out in a remarkable way in these two epistles. These Christians were those who "waited for the Son from heaven." If we compare 1 Thessalonians 1:1 with John 20:17, we shall see in the former the Lord speaks of the assembly, in the latter individually, in the character of sons. I have been struck lately with the way the two are often confounded; and frequently the truth connected with those who form the assembly is overlooked. It is important to notice the distinction of the family from the assembly. In Ephesians we see it is the sons of God who make up the assembly. The thought of the Bride carries the mind to the display of His glory, as Eve was the companion of Adam, sharing all with him. If we think of the family — sons — it is the Father's house comes before us. Two different spheres of glory, the glory of the palace New Jerusalem is the sphere of the Bride's glory, and the Father's house that of the children; but the assembly is made up of sons and daughters. They know Christ in the Father in John 14:20, and the assembly as the Bride is in God the Father likewise. I am brought apart by God to wait for the Son from heaven. God will judge according to what He separated me to. What induced me to wait for the Son from heaven? What inducement do we find? Why are we unable to be satisfied until we see Himself? In Thessalonians we do not get circumstantial glory, nothing beyond limit of the glory of Himself. I should be a most unspiritual person if I did not want to see Himself. What is the reason? He is hidden in the Father; I know Him there. I know myself in Him there, and the assembly in Him there. He would say to us, You cannot look at Me in the glory where I am, and separate yourself from Me. There is a Person there on whom the Father pours out all His affection, and we hear the word dropping out, "I in My Father, ye in Me, I in you." He is thinking of me down here.

Many ask, Where is the church? I might say to such (but it might not be gracious), You will never see it, because you are not looking unto the Father and the Son. Neither the Father nor the Lord Jesus have ever changed their minds about the Bride. We could not say that the saints in any given place are a fair presentation of the Bride, though they form a part of it. Is there not a motive for me to say, I cannot be satisfied till I see Him of whom this is true? Another thing there is that is touching to the soul; the Lord is not satisfied with our being down here, and by our gleaning by faith what is true of Him up there. He wants us to be with Himself. In the energy of His love He brings us into connection with His past, present, and future. In verse 3 we get three things. When the Lord Jesus shines down into the soul, when the light of Christ gets hold of the soul, it puts me into another position; faith has told its work upon us. When Israel went out of Egypt it was plain to all that they were gone; and when by faith people get hold of the Lord Jesus, it is plain enough, they find, that they have lost those who were their companions before. The early Christians passed from the company of the priests and Jews to the disciples. We have to do with Christ, who is alive from the dead, and the living Christ has to do with us; then, if we get our conscience soiled, if we have failed, then it is we find in times of weakness the value of a living Christ in heaven. We know Christ who was in humiliation (past) a present Christ in heaven serving the people for whom He gave Himself.

The early Christians might have been anxious for Him to come, but His eye was on us. We should not have been thus in an eternity of blessing had He come then. How resolute He has been! He will not sanction the least departure from Himself on the one hand, but how gentle on the other. Has He not a claim on us? After speaking at Exeter the other night of His coming, an old woman came up to me and said, "I am so impatient for the Lord to come; He won't come." I said, "If He had come a hundred years ago you would have been shut out; you ought to go home and thank Him He still tarried. If He had foreclosed the thing, where would the many have been? Have you any children? Are they waiting? Then go home, and thank the Lord He has not yet come." Ah, how patiently He has waited for us, and are we to be in a hurry? It endears Him to us that He did wait so long, that He is waiting still for some dear to our own souls. His love to us, His service as alive from the dead challenges our hearts. If a servant had been in an office for thirty or forty years, and then had no care for his master, what should we think of him? Christ is in heaven, busy with poor, wretched beings down here, showing out the exceeding greatness of His love, and gentleness, and patience towards them in all their weakness and infirmity. Such is the nearness of our position in which we are placed, that we are the only people who know what the next movement of the Lord will be. We look to see the Son with joy; we are a peculiar people—peculiar honor is put upon us—to be those who are waiting for Him. When the Son comes down from the throne on high we shall be able to say, "This is our God, and we have waited for Him."

What is the whole tomorrow of the Christian and of the children of God? We are not kept to be waiting to see the improvement in the arts and sciences, to see the place prepared for antichrist, but we are kept individually to wait for the Son from heaven. The individuality of it strikes me, to wait for Himself (1 Thess. 2:19). The eye of the apostle passed over across Jordan. Who shall I meet there? My Master, the blessed Lord, whose divine fullness has won my heart; who, in the affection of His heart, has brought before me His present, past, and future, and wreathed them round my soul, and called me to wait for Himself. But there is another thing. All you Thessalonians will be there; I shall see you there, you among whom I have labored. It will be joy to see those among whom he has labored surrounding him. People sometimes ask, Shall we know one another? It is evident Paul had no question about it, that then he should know these loved Thessalonians. It was not inconsistent that Paul, who saw the Lord as his Light and his Hope, should think too of meeting those among whom he labored. How this thought makes the scene a home scene. The Lord is there, the one great and distinctive object through whom and from whom all the joy flows of those who are there filled with joy. Ah! it will be no strange scene; human affections are renewed, and the heart too is occupied with those he walked and labored among down here.

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13 tells us how we are to go through this wilderness and conflict of the way; it shows all the evil and enemies working, and shows, if people are to go on to the end, the need of abundance of love one to another. Chapter 4:13. We get here what enables us to say, "By the love wherewith He has loved me, made me partaker of all the benefits which flow from His death and resurrection, made me know I shall inherit all things with Him by that love I wait, I long to be with Him. Nothing can satisfy me till I am at home with Himself; there we get the open display of His complete triumph. He is now up there in His solitude, but He is pouring forth the glory and virtue which makes His people triumph over every adverse circumstance. He left His divine glory once, as we read in Philippians 2, and He will leave it a second time. He will leave His Father's throne

and the glory again, because His heart cannot brook separation. When all His purposes are accomplished He will come forth again, because His love, His heart, is set upon His people.” Is there not something in this for the heart to lay hold upon, that there lives one human heart in heaven who so desires to have His people with Him that He will leave the throne to take a glory which He can share with them? (vs. 18).

Do you ever think of the hour when He will come forth? of the state of utter weakness and incompetency those will be in when He comes to take them to glory? Out of every thousand, nine hundred and ninety-nine of their bodies, I suppose, will be in the grave, and those who are alive and remain will be in bodies in such a condition as to be impossible to mount up to Him. If we follow up the individuals who are to be in glory to the very last instant before He comes, they will be bearing the mark of death and Satan’s work, and they have no power in themselves. It is not the Lord trying to hide what sin has done; He lets it go on. The Lord comes forth, and then victory! If He were to come now we could not but bound up to meet Him. He uses the condition of His people, their weakness and incompetency, to show forth the virtues of His person as the resurrection and the life. Some will be in the graves, others in their mortal, corrupt bodies; but He takes occasion of their state to show what sort of a person He is. He comes forth, He speaks the word, the dead in Christ rise first. What makes it so precious is the outshining of His person, of that which belongs to Him alone, of the man Christ Jesus, whom God delights to honor.

How came the long list of those who have died—the stream of death that has rolled on? Ah! the resurrection morning will tell us. It is reserved for Him to display Himself as life and resurrection. Will it not be most precious to behold Him in that day when He comes in His faithfulness to claim His own? Not one will be forgotten; not one of those who have believed in Him will be passed by. What sort of power is it that can raise up the body of a Stephen or Paul—the bodies of the saints? It is not creation-power. Who is it that keeps the dust of His saints? Who knows where to find the dust of His saints? If we only think of it we can but say, it is a marvelous instance of His faithfulness. In the confusion and bustle of the night they went out of Egypt. Joseph’s bones were not forgotten. The Lord remembers each one. He speaks the word, they rise.

Do you find the circumstances of mortality press upon you? Do you know what Satan’s fiery darts are? what conflict is? Is it no joy to you to know the One who has graven your names upon His bosom, who sees and watches you in your path of sorrow and rejection, is coming down to claim you and all that are His? Your soul alive already; so if He came now you would never see death, but He would fill up your body with immortality, and cause all that is mortal and corruptible to go out of it. What victory! I come out of my Father’s presence as a victor, as the resurrection, as the life, to look for a people whose hearts are set upon me. What a victory! what an One to come and look for me, to claim me as His own, and to fill me with Himself, and nothing but Himself! He is showing out the divine perfection of life and incorruptibility, and so death is swallowed up in victory. Do you feel the pressure of circumstances? the cruel tyranny of Satan — man continually rushing in or pushing you aside to make room for himself? Do you not say, “I long for His coming? How blessed to see resurrection teeming forth! to see Him come forth as the fountain of eternal life! There will then be the springing up and triumphing over everything. We are to be waiting for the person of our Lord....” I remark in this epistle how little is said of circumstantial glory. It is a question of the bride and Bridegroom of the children of the Father and of the only-begotten Son. Nothing ought to be before the soul but meeting Him. I would ask you whether you know what it is

to set your soul in the position of waiting for Him? I and called to be one who is looking out for Him, reminding myself continually that He is coming, that my soul may be constantly kept in a waiting position.

G. V. W.

The Christian at Home

The family is especially dealt with in the epistles which treat of the church. Those epistles which take up church order and rule take up also the order and rule of the family; and those epistles which show the church as the body of Christ, show also how this relationship, and the principles it involves, affect the family life. Family relationships were instituted by God in Eden, and confirmed after the fall. Christianity does not change their outward character, but infuses into them new and divine principles. The husband is the responsible head of the house, and the mutual obligation subsisting between him and his wife, his children, and his servants, is the subject of the portion now before us. The question is not one of rights on either side, but rather of the way in which each, as having the life of Christ, should exhibit this in his conduct towards the other.

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the Head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything” (vs. 22-24). Part of the curse pronounced on the woman at the fall was, “Thy desire shall be [subject] to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). Christianity confirms this order, but so remodels it that all trace of the curse disappears.

The subjection of the believer to the Lord, or of the church to Christ, is no curse or bondage, and these are now the models of wifely subjection; for she is to be subject unto her own husband, “as unto the Lord,” and as “the church is subject unto Christ.” How beautiful to see a human relationship, and one too which derives a part of its character from the fall, thus transformed into a type of the mystery in which God displays His “manifold wisdom” unto “the principalities and powers in heavenly places.”

The subject is expanded in dealing with the other side. “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 might be holy and without blemish” (vss. 25-27). Here, though natural affection is owned, a far higher order of love is brought in, so that the earthly relationship is re-cast, as it were, in a heavenly mold. The past, present, and future love of Christ to the church are all made to bear on the duty of the husband to his wife. And how beautiful the unfolding of this love is! Christ loved the church—not only saints, but the church—and gave Himself for it. It was the “pearl of great price” for which He sold all that He had. Now He watches over it, cleansing it from defilement by the application of His word. Soon He will present it to Himself in His own beauty, “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband,” the object of His own eternal delight.

And here the order of creation is brought in, and made to blend, as it were, with that love of Christ of which it furnishes so beautiful a type. “So ought men to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth Himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of His body, of His

flesh, and of His bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall he joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (vss. 28-31). The peculiar mode of Eve's creation out of Adam both gives marriage a special sanctity, so that the wife is to be cherished as a part of the husband's own being, and furnishes an exquisite type of Christ's relationship with the church. As Adam was not complete without Eve, so Christ, though Head over all, is not complete without the church, "the fullness [completion] of Him that filleth all in all." As Adam fell into a deep sleep, so Christ went into death. As Eve was formed out of Adam, so the church is quickened with Christ, and has His own life. As Adam acknowledged Eve to be bone of His bone and flesh of his flesh, so does Christ acknowledge the church. As Adam was bound to care for and cleave to the woman thus formed out of himself, so Christ delights in nourishing and cherishing the church which is His own body. How wonderfully all that belongs to this divinely-instituted relationship is raised by being thus linked up with the tender, watchful love of Christ over the church!

This, of course, is the grand subject, and therefore the apostle writes: "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Still the relationship of husband and wife is also in his view, so he adds, "Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (vss. 32, 33). Though the believer is not promised his portion in this life, yet he is told that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. 4:8). We have an illustration here. Who cannot see the happiness that would reign in the house where the relationship of husband and wife was formed on the godly model here furnished?

The subjection of children to their parents is part of God's order as seen in nature; and under the law a special blessing was attached to the observance of the commandment in which this duty was enjoined. Christianity takes up the obligation, but transplants it from natural to divine ground. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and thy mother; which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth" (Chapter 6:1-3). Thus the obligation of children, as of wives, is connected with "the Lord." It is not merely the dictate of nature, though perfectly right, but the acknowledgment of the Lord's claims as represented in the parents. The blessed Lord Himself, who "learned obedience," was the beautiful example of this. Of Him in His lifetime it is recorded that He went with His parents "to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." The law is not here introduced as showing that believers are under it, but as proving the special value which God attached to this duty, so as even to depart from the ordinary character of law, by coupling it with a promise which makes known the connection between this duty and earthly blessing.

But the duty is not one-sided. The apostle adds, "And ye, fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (vs. 4). Both parents are to be obeyed, but this admonition is addressed only to the fathers. This may be partly because fathers are more likely to err in the provoking of their children to wrath than mothers; but the principal reason is that the father, as the head of the house, is responsible to God for the bringing up of the children, and he is treated on the ground of this responsibility. This principle, as seen in Eli's case, runs throughout Scripture. It is all the more solemn because under Christianity the children are already holy, as belonging to the house of God; and the obligation is therefore the greater to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The Israelites were holy by birth—not personally, but as belonging to a nation set apart to God—and therefore the fathers were to

instruct the children in the law, their then link with God. So Christian parents are to instruct their children as to what becomes the holy character which attaches to them as members of a Christian family.

The next class of household relationships differs from the others in being one instituted by social rather than natural causes. The servants here named were bondsmen. Whether slavery is right or wrong, humane or cruel, is not the point here. Christianity takes men in the social position in which it finds them, and shows how they may live Christ in that place. It is not occupied in remodeling society, but in teaching the believer to exhibit Christ. He was to be subject to the powers that be; and as these authorized slavery, he was to obey the laws in this as in other matters, seeking freedom lawfully if he could, but if not, to be content with his lot. The service rendered under present social conditions differs in its legal basis, but this does not alter the obligations on either side named by the apostle. Nay, if there is any difference, the obligation is even stronger; for service rendered for wages should surely be given as cheerfully and performed as thoroughly as service exacted by bondage.

“Servants,” therefore, are exhorted to “be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (vs. 5-7). Here again the obligation is taken out of the range of the old creation, and connected with Christ in glory. Like wives and children, the servants are exhorted to render their obedience “as unto Christ.” This at once transfers their duties to a higher region than either the legal compulsion of the old system, or the legal contract of the present. Even a slave’s duties were at once ennobled and sweetened if he could say, “I am doing this, not for reward, or to escape punishment, but to please Christ.” It was not to be a question of whether the task imposed was reasonable or unreasonable, light or arduous. Wrong endured, or severe labor performed for Christ’s sake, might be cheerfully borne.

How beautifully our Lord Himself furnishes the example of this. He “took upon Him the form of a servant.” Though entitled to be free, He submits to tribute lest He should offend them. So the believing servant, under the cruelest and most tyrannical treatment, was to show out the life of Christ in him. “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.... for even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:19-21). And as the cheerful and diligent obedience of the servant was the means of showing forth Christ, so any failure in the respect or subjection here enjoined would bring reproach on His name. Hence the apostle, in writing to Timothy, says, “Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and His doctrine be not blasphemed” (1 Tim. 6:1).

Nowhere is the honor of Christ spoken of as bound up with the conduct of the believer, so remarkably as in the case of the servant. The very hardships of his lot, the very injustice and cruelty with which he was liable to be treated, only rendered the power of the life of Christ in him the more conspicuous. And before none other is the reward of his conduct so distinctly set: “Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free” (vs. 8). How cheering to the suffering bondsman, to look beyond the drudgery and unrequited labors of his earthly lot, and to know that the faithful toil endured with

good will for the Lord's sake here, is not and never will be, forgotten, but will all "be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ!" (1 Peter 1:7).

And if Christ, as the Lord of the inheritance, holds out the hope of reward to the servant, so He utters words of warning to the master: "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him" (vs. 9). "The same things" probably mean what is called in the Colossians, "that which is just and equal." The principle here is the counterpart of that in the last verse. Even a Christian master might forget that social distinctions, though recognized and sanctioned on earth, have no existence in Christ's judgment. Master and servant will all answer to Him. To the one whose low position might cause discouragement He holds out, therefore, the prospect of reward for faithful service; to the one whose high position might lead to oppression, He holds out the judgment that will follow an abuse of power. Though the law might give the injured servant no redress, the master was reminded of another tribunal before which he must stand, and in which his conduct to his servant would be judged, not according to man's laws, but according to the estimate of Him that is holy, Him that is true. Thus Christ is made the standard of everything in the Christian's walk. Whether as wife or husband, as child or parent, as bondsman or master, the rule is, that having Christ's life, the walk of Christ is to be shown forth in the believer's ways. "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk even as He walked."

T. B. B.

Fragment: Character of a Christian

The character of a Christian is thorough abstraction of heart from the world.

Fragment: a Christian Not Dead to the World

A Christian who is not dead to the world is but a stumbling-stone to every one who seeks to follow Christ.

Communion, Work, and Encouragement

The history of the remnant returned from Babylon has peculiar interest; and suggesting much that is so important for guidance, it cannot be considered without profit by those who would understand its typical bearing upon ourselves, inasmuch as it is the same grace which watched over, encouraged, and bore with that backsliding company then (Hag. 1:5-11), which those conscious of failure now need to know as their only resource, whilst in shamefacedness they are bowed down under a sense of the reality and magnitude of their failure (See Dan. 9:20).

Glancing backward for a little, time was when in Israel's day the nation answered to the twelve loaves on the table of shewbread; but that state of things ceased, the nation divided-Israel, beginning with idolatry, ended with judgment; Judah, preserved in grace for David's line for a time, also departed from Jehovah, and was carried into Babylon—night settling down upon the scene of testimony. Never-failing grace, notwithstanding all, would still maintain something suitable to itself. The ever-merciful Jehovah accordingly restores a feeble few to the land, gathering them to the original center with a divinely-wrought desire to have Him duly recognized, whose Spirit remained amongst them (Hag. 2:5), by erecting a house for His name, in which He would vouchsafe to find pleasure (Hag. 1:8) — however mean this temple would be compared with that demolished through their sin.

They too are permitted to enter into that pleasure, and their inward joy rises upward towards its blessed source while they sing, "For His mercy endureth forever" (Ezra 3:11), "toward Israel," adds unselfish faith, which, so far from circumscribing God in His gracious actings, loves to reckon upon His faithfulness towards all within the spheres of His revealed relationship. Here God sees something to meet His mind—a seven-branched golden candlestick, yielding light amid all the darkness in virtue of the golden oil which His grace supplies (Zech. 4:12,1-3). Testimony to Him as Lord of all the earth (vs. 14), perfect, in a sense, though administrative power, which gave the table of shewbread its significance, remained with the Gentiles. Thus thought God of the restored remnant, though contemptible in the eyes of those who knew Him not nor His ways. So in church days that same grace established and maintained heavenly testimony concerning the accepted One at God's right hand, whose present place is the seal of the world's condemnation, because of having rejected Him when He came in grace, and because He came in weakness. Once the world refused Him the place which Jewish testimony claimed as "Lord of the whole earth." Now it is more deeply culpable in having formally cast out that same blessed One when He came, though in tenderest pity. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Cor. 5:19).

But man, alas! getting occupied with his own weakness, through lack of faith, rather than with Him who finds in it only occasion for bringing glory to Himself, becomes discouraged, and is glad of any reasonable excuse to slip out of his responsibility. He does so when in this condition. Circumstances arise which try his devotedness (compare Ezra 4:23,24; 5: 1, 2, 5); but in this he also finds an occasion for what pleases flesh better; namely, self-aggrandizement or gratification.

How natural to hearts which were growing lukewarm it was to obey the King's command! Not more so than that, ceasing to build God's house, they found an opportunity for embellishing each his own (Hag. 1:1,4,9). At this point the prophets Haggai and Zechariah enter upon the scene, having been sent by God to rally the backslidden remnant. Their zeal in the matter is commensurate with the magnitude the evil of abandoning the work assumes, when the temple is viewed as that in which the glory of Jehovah was essentially involved (Hag. 1:8). This is an aspect of devotedness outside the whole range of thought of those who only, or habitually, contemplate man's blessing and happiness. To such the gathering of a feeble few around the center which God is pleased to recognize is a matter of no moment—waste time and trouble, prejudicial in fact—should this gathering in any way cramp or hinder a “movement” which has in view “the benefit (as man thinks) of the community.”

In the chapters named the prophet Zechariah is addressing the two chief actors in this blessed work of God—Joshua and Zerubbabel. The dealings of God with His two beloved servants at this juncture display the most precious grace and wisdom. Each is dealt with according to the exigencies of his office—the high priest as worshipper is engaged with the foundation; Zerubbabel the workman with the superstructure. At the outset communion with God, seen especially in Joshua's case, introduces the question of fitness to approach God; carrying forward the work, in the case of Zerubbabel, suggests the question of adequate strength. Thus in the prophet's vision conscience-smitten Joshua stands mute before God, while the accuser pleads against him; and God, while admitting Joshua's state, in love takes up his cause. Happy the portion of him whom God renders sensible of guilt, and silent in that sense, only to teach him what Divine love can do for him against all who would condemn, and with him when bowed down under the burden of a state which conscience can but own! The accuser being silenced by the authority of Him, the object of whose blessed love Joshua now is, he is dealt with according to that love, in full view of the righteousness which cannot wink at iniquity. The iniquity is removed, the robe is provided and the miter, and Joshua duly established in his office (vss. 5-7), being then also made fully sensible of the responsibility attaching to his position. To sustain him here, and those who “sit before” him in similar testimony, Christ is prophetically introduced by an assurance based upon the foundation-stone already laid before Joshua (vss. 8, 9), by God Himself too—watched over, and engraved by Him, figure of the blessed One of whom God has said, “Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious.” Thus is Joshua drawn, by the arms of infinite, condescending love, into the nearness in which he may see with God what is involved in their present undertaking, and taste the delight which He finds in viewing what foreshadowed His beloved Son, upon whom all their hopes hang. His seven eyes are engaged with it; and it is only those who are dull to apprehend the glory promised in connection with “the Branch,” and blind to the dignity conferred upon the present basis of their operations by being linked with Him, that would not find, in what they were so ready to abandon, at once the expression of God's grace to them, and an occasion for evincing the sincerity of their gratitude to God for what He had just done in their restoration.

These considerations have led us from the foundation to the building. All was contemptible to man, because outside the course of great things where he ever loves to move. It is everything for the faithful heart's comfort, which has learned to rest in God's estimate of things, to find that He is pleased with what man is prone to despise. Jesus moved amongst the base things, was crucified in weakness, and was despised and rejected of men. Well for the soul that has more than the

world's estimate of the lowly Nazarene, and has realized what God has said of the believer, "dead with Christ," from the scene where He was sold for "thirty pieces of silver;" well for Zerubbabel (chap. 4) to have God's mind concerning that "day of small things." "Not by might, nor by power," just the things which would be likely to fill the eye amid Babylon's splendor and display; just the things that all are reckoning upon now for the accomplishment of the many "movements" on foot for the benefit of man; the very possible snare, too, of many who, by their profession, are content with the day of small things, but who have not yet learned to see God in them; and to be content also with the power which is alone adequate to sustain them—a power known only to faith, which, when apprehended, is sure to eclipse everything known to man, notwithstanding all his splendor, accompanied by a wisdom which writes confusion upon all his pretentious organizations by the word, "My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."

Shall Zerubbabel now shudder beneath the discouraging shadow of the "great mountain," condescend to reckon upon its aid, or even borrow in any way from the pretentious scenes of his people's shame? Using by faith the power with which he is furnished, the great mountain melts, and all man's display is mere vanity when he walks contentedly with the God who finds pleasure in the day of small things, while sin characterizes display. What joy it is to Him to undertake afresh what is a matter of rejoicing (vs. 10), to Him whose seven eyes run to and fro through the whole earth—the matter of rejoicing, may we not add? to Him who ever delights to furnish conscious weakness with strength adequate to undertake and accomplish those things in which He would have us act as to Him.

J. K.

Two things the heart wants which characterize life: energy, which desires an object to go after, to win Christ; and secondly, the peaceful, quiet enjoyment of the place we are in. This is rest — the happiness of knowing a settled, unclouded relationship. Relationship goes on beyond the glory: after the kingdom, and all is over, we shall still be children.

The Opened Ear

When discoursing with His disciples after His resurrection, the Lord said “that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning” Him, indicating the concurrence of testimony to be found in that threefold division of Old Testament Scripture as to Himself. The subject at the head of this paper will furnish us an instance of this concurrent testimony which we may profitably examine and compare.

In Exodus 21 we have a deeply-interesting Jewish ordinance, and the very first that was enacted in Israel of a judicial character after the law of the Ten Commandments had been promulgated at Sinai, and Jehovah had declared His will as to the altar of burnt-offering. It established that the Hebrew servant who should be bought must fulfill his prescribed term of service, and was afterward entitled to his liberty; but should he have acquired during his servitude a wife and children, these he must surrender to his master, going out alone. In case, however, his affection to his master, to his wife and to his children, precluded his doing so, provision was made by Jehovah for the Hebrew servant to indulge the yearnings of his heart, but at the expense no less of a painful ordeal than of a perpetual service. It was also enacted that he should voluntarily and emphatically make public declaration of the fact and the grounds of his refusal to be manumitted. His master in presence of the judges should then transfix him with an awl through the ear to the door or doorpost, by which procedure his service would be constituted a perpetuity. Who can fail to observe in this striking and significant enactment a beautiful type of that incomparable Servant whose meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, and to finish His work?—that blessed One whose service to His Father (or master), to His church (or wife), and to His earthly people (or children) will in its unfading and unforgotten moral glory be the eternal expression of a love to Him, to us, and to them, which is and which shall be as perpetual as it is profound—

“Love that no tongue can teach,

Love that no thought can reach;

No love like His!”

If we now turn from “the law of Moses” to “the Psalms” (see Psa. 40), we find again the opened or digged ear of this devoted Servant. The subject of the psalm is the devotedness of Christ to God: “Blessed is the man” (literally, it has been said, the strong man) “that maketh Jehovah his trust.” Though the poor and the needy One, He was mighty to save, and strong to deliver; but is depicted here as the sorrowing, suffering Witness bent upon doing the bidding of God, in the body which had been prepared Him, and waiting patiently upon Jehovah-Elohim, delighting to do His will, whose law was in the midst of His bowels! What a picture is this of the perfect Servant, the sent-one of God! And in the midst of it we read that beautiful exclamation that forms the divine answer to the exquisite type of Exodus 21— “Mine ears hast thou opened” (or digged).

Again, if we add to these the completing testimony of “the Prophets” (see Isa. 50:4-7), we get a yet fuller delineation of the devotedness and self-abnegation of this peerless Servant—the Servant of

God's counsels, of the Father's will, and of Jehovah's glory, but also of our necessities here, and of our blessedness when we are perfected! "The Lord God," He says, "hath given me the tongue of the learned that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned" (perhaps more properly learner, compare chapter 8:16, disciples, and 54:13, children). "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back. I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." Surely no language could more touchingly express how truly He had emptied Himself to become the dependent Man upon earth! And here we may fittingly remark how suitably the ear, being that organ through which commands are received, and instruction acquired, is in the Scriptures referred to made the subject of the ordinance of Jehovah and of the prophetic teaching of David and Isaiah concerning God's faithful Servant—the Lawgiver, the Psalmist and the Prophet thus uniting their testimony concerning Him who was to come "to do Thy will, O God." Nothing could be more beautiful than the attitude of the Lord Jesus as listening morning by morning with the opened ear of a subject will, to take instructions from His Father ere He went forth to fulfill the assiduous service of each recurring day!

Thus also may we understand what otherwise might seem inexplicable, His reluctance or refusal to do at one time what He really does shortly afterward, three instances of which in John's gospel will probably occur to the reader. In the second chapter His mother, as they sit together at the marriage in Cana, says to Him significantly, "They have no wine." In His answer He affirms, "Mine hour is not yet come." But we seem to gather from the narrative that there was but a short break, a trifling pause, before He wrought the kindly miracle that manifested forth His glory! Also in the seventh chapter, when His brethren suggest His going up to the great feast of tabernacles, "Then Jesus said unto them, My time is not yet come: but your time is always ready," indicating surely to us that while they gave the rein to their own will, doing as they listed, He of the opened ear waited upon the will of Another. So He abides in Galilee; but a day or two afterward, probably to be in time for the closing day, which was the feast of ingathering, He goes up to Jerusalem; and what a message He is charged to convey! what an announcement He makes (Jehovah having visited His people) had there but been opened ears to hear! Again in the eleventh, after receiving from the beloved sisters of Lazarus the pathetic message concerning the sickness which had invaded the home in Bethany, He abides two days still in the same place where He was. "Then after that" He gives the unexpected word to His disciples, "Let us go into Judaea again." May we not say that when the touching appeal from the sorrowing family reached Him He had received no word from the Father, and consequently, resisting the sympathetic impulses of His love, He moves neither hand nor foot? As the girded Servant both hand and foot must wait orders, to be received through an opened ear, and not until then must He allow the generous dictates of a loving heart to bring them into activity, even on behalf of ever so beloved an object. Who then could portray what that tender nature of His sustained at knowing the sickness of His friend and the anguish of the sisters, so affectingly conveyed in the brief word they had sent Him? Who could describe what He felt in His deep human compassion and sympathy, as with omniscient eye He followed the ravages of the disease up to its culmination in death, tarrying throughout the whole two days, rooted, as it were, to the place where He was, intently expecting the word on which He waited? At length He gets this morning note; the Lord Jehovah wakened His ear to hear as the learner, and at length He gives the signal for departure.

Now, however, arises another thing. His disciples, in the timidity of unbelief, bring in their human fears, and would dissuade Him from returning to Judaea; there is a lion in the way! How full of divine wisdom and of heavenly light is the ready reply with which He not only silenced their objections but banished their anxieties! "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him." And thus as He would not be induced by the precious, tender love of His human heart to move towards Judea until He had Jehovah's word in His ear, so on the other hand will He not be deterred from returning thither by any apprehensions of Jewish enmity or Satanic opposition. The will of Him who sent Him had fallen upon His opened ear, and it is enough.

What a lesson in subjection to the Father's will do these scriptures convey to us if we had only His teachableness of spirit He is unmoved by His mother's suggestions, by His brethren's entreaties, and by His own heart's promptings; and equally is He unhindered by the dissuasions which emanate from His bosom disciples. As the perfect Servant, in absolute submission of will and perfect self-surrender, He waits upon Jehovah's word; and having that, He treads the hitherto-untrodden path of a perfectly obedient and dependent man. He who was Jehovah's fellow gave Himself unto suffering and servitude, and hid not His face from shame and spitting. Precious, peerless Savior!

If, in conclusion, we may add a word as to His distinct characters of service to us, three well-known scriptures will bring its past, its present, and its future character divinely before us. In Hebrews 10 the apostle refers to Psalm 40, a scripture we have already looked at, where the words "mine ears hast thou opened" are quoted according to the Septuagint, "a body hast thou prepared Me." In that body He bare our sins, and by His death delivered us from the wrath to come. He was serving us there; for this was the will of God, that through such service He should glorify Him, and take spoils from the enemy.

In John 13, before going away, knowing the Father had committed everything to His hand, He disinvests Himself, and becomes the girded Servant of our present daily need, in the same act rebuking His disciples for their unseemly strife (compare Luke 22:24), and setting before them what His ministrations on behalf of His saints should be during the long night of His enforced absence, in which also He would be a pattern for our care and love to one another.

And lastly, in Luke 12—where He gives every true saint the character and the credit of being a watcher for His return, He lovingly cheers their hearts with the hitherto-unheard-of disclosure, that He had a deeply-cherished purpose to fulfill in the glory, even that of making us to sit down to meat, and coming forth Himself even then also as the girded Servant of those whom He will delight to serve forever. May the reader and the writer of these lines have the understanding so opened by Him of the opened ear, that through grace we may gather up this lesson from the law of Moses, the Psalms, and the Prophets concerning Himself, that, being imbued with the like spirit, we may exhibit more of His own self-abnegation to the glory of our Master and God!

W. R. D.

The Gospel of John

The more we examine the gospel of John, the more we shall see One who speaks and acts as a divine Person—one with the Father—alone could do, but yet always as One who has taken the place of a servant, and takes nothing to Himself, but receives all from His Father. “I have glorified Thee:” “now glorify Me.” What language of equality of nature and love! But He does not say, And now, I will glorify Myself. He has taken the place of man to receive all, though it be a glory He had with the Father before the world was. This is of exquisite beauty.

J. N. D.

The Power of Truth in Days of Weakness

No one who is exercised as to the present condition of the saints of God can doubt the low and feeble state presented practically on every side, and for those who have hearts to feel, the present distress affords abundant cause for sorrow and humiliation. But it is not true that this state of things is indicated merely or mostly by spiritual boast, and the assumption of a divine standing, with a very low spiritual state. Alas there are other causes, and in an opposite direction too, more fertile and prolific, and exhibiting open departure from the truth. For example, who can deny the amount of open worldliness and earthly-mindedness amongst the saints? and that too not only allowed, but contended for. The families, houses, appearance, of too many of the Lord's people at the present time tell a mournful tale as to this. Where this is the case, it is vain to look for heavenly ways; indeed, such are the strongest opponents of the truth, that our "commonwealth has its existence in the heavens."

Now when I use the term world, or worldliness, it is in no sense in the limited construction assigned to it by many. In this way there is a very insidious and convenient method of retaining that element of the world which suits us; namely, by contracting the area to which the Scripture phraseology applies, and branding as legal and morbid those who, in some feeble measure at least, perceive that there is a manner of life suitable to, and flowing out of, what the apostle calls "my doctrine." No doubt legal effort and spiritual pride are not the fruits of the Spirit of God; yet neither is the minding earthly things, which is enmity to the cross of Christ; nor worldliness, and the friendship of the world, which is enmity against God. When I speak of the world, it is what the world is according to the sanctuary. It is very significant and painful, the desire on the part of many to disparage and cry down that character of divine teaching and truth, which as a spring and motive can alone give tone and direction to a walk and way suitable as well as pleasing to the Lord. Indeed, it may be safely asserted, that if the truth be refused, the power for practice and walk is gone. But it is said, "Are not the ways of those who hold these truths, in many instances, sorrowful to contemplate?" Alas! this is not denied; but what then? If I suffer my soul to depreciate in the slightest degree the truth in consequence, Satan has gained his point. Denounce the false practice and unseemly ways as strongly as we may, I believe a more excellent course is to cherish in our own souls more deeply that which the enemy has assailed, and show by our ways and our walk, by our unworldliness and self-denying devotedness to Christ and His interests, a true specimen of those united by the Holy Ghost to Christ glorified at the right hand of God.

Now it may be confidently maintained that there cannot be practice suitable to the mind of our Lord if the doctrine be defective, though it is fully admitted it is quite possible to have correct doctrine, and be defective in practice; still, it would be a false line of action altogether, to disparage, at least in appearance, the truth of God, in our earnest zeal to expose defective practice; and yet who that looks beyond the mere surface of things at the present moment can fail to perceive the consequences and effects upon many of this mode of treating failure? There are many of the saints of God at present who are cheated of their privileges and blessing, not only by reason of the deplorable low condition of soul, and unholy ways, of those who doctrinally have accepted the

believer's place in Christ in heaven, but quite as much by reason of the unwise, however well-intentioned, effort made to expose and correct such evil practice. Now in looking at Scripture, we shall never find practices or ways of saints treated in such a manner as to weaken the truth of God. Take the saints of God at Corinth for example. What could be more deplorable than their state as an assembly? There was not only evil, but known evil, in their midst, and they were "puffed up," and had not "mourned." They were, in the words of the Holy Ghost, "carnal;" they had among them "envying, and strife, and divisions." There were "contentions" among them—"I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ;" yet of these very saints, in that state, and before he speaks of it, or deals with it, the apostle says, "I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:4-9).

We have like testimony to this way of the Spirit in 1 Corinthians 5:7: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened;" as if he had said, Preserve that purity in practice which is yours in principle. We shall find the same thing in the second epistle, tried though the apostle was in spirit and heart, almost supplanted in their affections by one who sought by natural means to set aside God's apostle. Still, ere he meets it all, observe how fully he accredits them, notwithstanding all his sorrow on account of their ways. Take for example 2 Corinthians 3:3. They were in fact "the epistle of Christ;" and may I ask, What more could be said of any individual saint than is here affirmed of a company gathered to His name? Think of being Christ's letter of commendation! That epistle might be soiled and blotted, yet it was none-the-less for that the epistle of Christ. And so it is true now, that a Christian is in standing and destiny heavenly; for he is united to Christ in heaven, has all his living relationships and hopes in heaven, and hence he ought to be in practice and ways on earth what he is by sovereign grace in Christ before God; and the surest way to secure the practice desired is to insist upon the truth as to our place in Christ which produces it, and maintains it. "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen," and "remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent," are words which very vividly convey the mind of the Lord as to His way of dealing with a state of decline or declining.

The same truth underlies all the teaching to the assemblies of Galatia, and I refer to it because there we find how Satan was seeking to intrude false doctrine; as at Corinth, it was bad practice or morals. In the face of it all observe how strongly the apostle insists upon their true standing—"They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." And this, moreover, to those who practically were tempted to deny the standing to which these words refer. It is said that there are those who have now their eyes opened to the believer's heavenly standing, and because they know the standing they imagine themselves practically heavenly. This to me is strange: that being ignorant of it should produce such a state I can well understand; but not surely where the eyes are opened to it. I believe the soul that knows its union with a risen and glorified Christ will feel, and increasingly, how feeble is the expression of Him in its ways and walk. Its language surely will be, "Not that I had already attained, either were already perfect;" but, nevertheless, in lowly, humble, earnest faith, it would also say, "But I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for

which I am apprehended of Christ Jesus;" for nothing is more certain than that the position in which sovereign grace has set us in Christ in heaven, uniting us to Him there by the Holy Ghost who has come down, when divinely known and enjoyed, not only judges all that is contrary to it in our ways, but also measures our littleness of divine stature in such a way as not to lead us to despair, but humbly to use the power which God has given in the Christ in whom we are before Him.

A man cannot carry himself as a prince if he be not a prince; it is vain to insist upon princely ways without princely position. If a man think himself to be what he is not, he is either deluded or deranged; if he be careful to be what he is, it is the path of consistency and wisdom. The truth is that God in sovereign goodness has been pleased to take up poor, vile creatures—"sinners of the Gentiles"—to magnify in them the riches and glory of His grace; such He has cleansed from all their sins, washed them white as snow, and brought by divine power into an entirely new position in Christ, the last Adam, at God's right hand, and united them to Him there by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." And this observe not at all in respect of the future, for that is treated of in the next verse, but the present position of those who, though once vile and wretched, have been visited in delivering grace.

If, then, God has so wrought for His own glory, are we to resist? Is it too much to say that a Christian is a heavenly person? Is it too much to expect a manner of life expressive of our heavenly origin and destiny? And is not the objective side of this grace of God the true motive and spring of what is subjective, the Holy Ghost being the power for a walk in keeping with Him in whom we are, and by whom all has been made good? Again, who can limit the enjoyment of the spiritual man in communion with the mind and thoughts of the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ? Surely when an apostle by the Spirit could say, "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God" (2 Cor. 5:13), it is evident there is a sphere and condition of communion and satisfaction open to all His saints; as has been blessedly said, "His ecstasy was not excitement or folly; but if out of himself it was with God; if sober, it was the calculation of love for their good." And we find the same person, as regards the unreconciled, persuasive even in these words, "We entreat for Christ, be reconciled to God."

I would add one word in respect of the place which death practically has in relation to this; and here, I believe, lies the secret of our low walk. The reckoning of faith and the realization of faith are not sufficiently prominent in our thoughts; the bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, is the only way to express practically what we are in Christ in heaven; and this must be "always," even as of old the camp of Israel was at Gilgal. Circumcision is both positional and practical: Colossians 2:11 is the former; Colossians 3:5, the latter. Finally, as to service, it has been said that certain parts of it are considered "unsuited to the heavenly atmosphere." Some foolish person may have said so whose word would not weigh on any other subject. Alas that the spirit of opposition should be so manifested! yet it is undeniable that none would be more fitted or ready to serve in any practical act of Christianity than those whose souls were consciously in possession of their place in Christ in heaven; others might excel in quantity, but quality could alone be found with those. The church of Ephesus is not refused of the Lord Jesus its full roll of laborious service, yet it did not meet His heart for all that. Surely this is not without its warning for us today as to how possible it is to do works excellent in themselves, yet valueless in Christ's eyes. To the church of Philadelphia, on the other hand, He says, "I know thy works." He does not enumerate

them as He did those of Ephesus. It is not improbable that in the eyes of others they were insignificant, and those who did them but as men asleep and inactive; yet they possessed the quality which His heart values — “thou hast a little power, and hast kept My word, and has not denied My name.” Verily, the one who knows what it is to be in Christ in heaven, and is seeking to express it practically on earth, will be ready for any service to which the Lord may call; but they will seek His sending and His glory as well as His mind in regard to it; for while deeply touched by the misery of man, or the sorrows of His saints, the object, motive, spring, must be Christ Himself, and thus man is best ministered to and served. And I will add that such an one will not use any power for Christ on earth other than the Holy Ghost. In fine, no one would be more self-denying, earnest, laborious; but the same acts have a very different meaning when viewed from the standpoint of the mind and pleasure of our Lord. The Lord grant to His beloved saints in these last days more real true apprehension by the Spirit of their real origin and destiny, so as to present it more practically in their ways, walk, and service on earth, knowing that “our commonwealth has its existence in the heavens, from which also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior.”

W. T. T.

The New Creation

The fact that there is a new creation is of itself sufficient to prove that failure has come in on the first (compare Heb. 8:13), and that whatever may have been the divine delights, as scene after scene came forth from the forming hand of God, when the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy, yet now He who made it surveys it no longer with satisfaction; for another potter has been at the wheel, and produced the ruin and the sorrow that lie around and upon us too.

But before we proceed to say anything of the new creation, it is well to look back and seek to apprehend something of the satisfaction of God as He beheld the work of His hands, and pronounced it all very good; and something too of the feelings with which He must have regarded the disobedience and sin of the man whom He had created in His own image, that so we may have deepened in our souls the sense of our sin against Him who is perfect goodness; and the sense too of the exhaustless resources and boundless grace of Him who has turned the temporary success of the enemy into a means of more brightly displaying, and an occasion for fully manifesting, the riches of His glory. Man, who was given a place upon earth, and lost it by disobedience, is now to be taken into heavenly glory. The sin that brought in the curse has been the occasion of revealing a far more glorious character of blessing. Man's rebellion has been the dark background on which is now displayed, in the brightest colors, the infinite and exceeding riches of the grace and the glory of God. And may we not say — and with worshipping hearts may it be—that it could not be otherwise? for if God had nothing wherewith to meet and overturn Satan's apparent success, then indeed would the latter have succeeded in his great object of trampling God's glory in the dust, while the insulted Majesty of the Most High would have remained unvindicated, and thus would it have been proved that there was one with more power than God, and that was Satan himself.

The Bible is the history of Satan's attempt to dishonor God while using man as his instrument for this purpose. The Old Testament records the complete failure of the First Adam, with promises and predictions of the triumph of the Second; while the New Testament reveals to us that the battle is over, and the victory won, and the Great Victor gives to those who believe in Him a share in the glory He has won, and power while here over the enemy He has conquered. Now the full results of that wondrous victory are not yet publicly manifested, though they most surely will be; and when the new creation is displayed in all its blessedness, the new heavens and the new earth, with the saints of every age in their glorified bodies, then will it be seen what was the infinite value of the blood of the Lamb, which has thus forever secured God's glory and man's richest blessing. And first let it be observed that redemption was no afterthought, only proposed when failure and ruin had come in; but that this ruin had not only been provided for from all eternity — for 1 Peter 1:20 tells us that Christ, as the Lamb, was "fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" — but, in the surpassing riches of the wisdom of God, was to be made the occasion of bringing out a larger blessing for man and a deeper glory to God. Up to this time man had been blessed here, and given dominion over this whole creation, while the Creator came down to hold converse with

him in the garden; and here, if sin had not come in to interrupt it and to bring in all its attendant consequences of death and sorrow, here that holy converse might have gone on, and man would have ruled as the vicegerent of God upon earth. But how immediately did the fall alter all this. Man could no longer be at ease in the presence of God, but hid himself the moment he heard His voice. Satan had thus far succeeded in his effort: the creature had rebelled against the Creator, and, as the sad consequences, death was to be man's lot, sorrow was to be multiplied to the woman, toil to be the man's portion, while the curse was pronounced upon the earth and the serpent. But there was a bright light for faith to behold and rejoice in, amid all the darkness of that dark and dreadful day; for the promise was there, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head," that he who had caused all this sorrow, the author of all this misery, was himself to be completely vanquished by the promised seed; and what might have seemed to sight was the successful beginning of Satan's attempt against the power and glory of God, was to end in his complete and everlasting ruin in the lake of fire.

Amid all the want and suffering and sorrow that lie now so thickly around us on every hand, it is refreshing to the spirit to look onward to the day when the groaning of Creation shall give place to the universal song of gladness; when man's days shall be lengthened out, so that at a hundred years old he shall be but a child; when the King shall be seen in His beauty, and the inhabitant of the land shall no more say, "I am sick."

Man boasts now of his inventions and discoveries, and of his success in gratifying his tastes, and ministering to his ease and comforts. He points to the progress in the arts, so that the simplest things of everyday life are now made attractive to the eye; and as he looks upon his telegraphs and railways, and all the wonders of this wonder-working age, he says in spirit—"Is not this great Babylon that I have built! I sit as a queen, and shall see no sorrow." Little reeks he, alas, of all it costs, in order that the commonest things may be produced that contribute to his comfort and enjoyment. As he whirls along at express speed in his luxurious carriage, he thinks not of the toilsome lives that are spent in the bowels of the earth in order that he may travel at ease. He bestows not a thought on those who spend their days amid the ceaseless whirl of machinery in an unhealthy atmosphere, and still more noxious morally, in order that he and his may be clothed with the products of the ever-busy loom. Can we suppose that necessities or comforts produced under such conditions will be worthy of Him who shall then wield the scepter of this world? And does not all that the prophets tell us of that golden and glorious age justify us in concluding that then the sentence pronounced in Eden will be reversed, and that under the peaceful sway of Christ the Lord, man shall no longer eat his bread in the sweat of his brow?

The blessings of that millennial age which the earthly people will enjoy, when the saints of this and previous dispensations will be in their place in heavenly glory, are largely unfolded to us in the prophetic writings. But the state and time of blessedness unending and undefilable will not yet have been reached, and such alone will be worthy of God, and must for His own glory of very necessity be brought in. Bright as will be that day when the sun shall no more be needed; for the Lord shall be to Israel an everlasting light, and her God her glory: blessed as will be that time when "Thy people shall be all righteous:" yet the state of things thus described is but a faint dim outline—a feeble illustration of that unending day of unutterable blessedness, when the new creation will be displayed in all its glory; and God Himself will rest in the deep repose of a satisfaction that nothing can heighten, and in the fullness of delight that never can be increased.

Before, however, the dawning of that eternal day that no darkness shall ever shroud, no night succeed, Satan is once more to be loosed from his prison; and man, who through the millennial age has been surrounded with nothing but blessing, is once again to be put to the proof. Once more will there be found a countless multitude deceived by the father of lies, who at his bidding will encompass the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And, just as before the millennium, the city was besieged (Zech. 12:2), the enemies of God's people smitten by His judgment (Zech. 12:4,9;14. 3, 12), while the beast and false prophet were consigned at once to their eternal doom (Rev. 19:20); so now, by a direct judgment from God will His enemies all be devoured (as to their bodies) by the fire from heaven; while the devil who deceived them, will be at once cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, there to be tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10). And now shall the heavens pass away with a great noise, and the elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up; while the saints who had been living on the millennial earth will be transferred to the new heavens and the new earth, that will then come forth in a beauty that will never be tarnished, and a glory that will never grow dim. He that sits upon the throne will have said, "Behold, I make all things new;" and then will God's eternal purposes find their full accomplishment, for the tabernacle of God will be with men and He will dwell with them, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God.

Through the long ages of this world's history had He been working, and as the result souls had been born again, and endowed with divine life and a new nature, and thus been introduced into that new creation in which God will find His never-ending rest. Each soul that has thus come under the forming hand of God is thereby a new creation; for the life then given finds not its sustenance, joy, or strength, in anything here, but outside of this world altogether, in God Himself, so that even when the truth of a new life and nature had not been revealed, yet even then its instincts and actings were seen. And thus we find Abraham looking for a city whose builder and maker was God, and David finding his joy in God Himself, which the Adam-nature never did nor can do. One by one during their lifetime here had these "new creations" been called out and endowed with the requisite title and the fitting capacity to enjoy a heavenly portion. The measure in which this was revealed differed widely before and after the exaltation of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost, but when faith is exchanged for sight, then will it be found that the saints of former dispensations, as well as of the present, have been capacitated and empowered to enjoy that new scene and sphere where all things are of God, all things after His own heart, all things suited to Himself. To the saints of this period who constitute the church is given the wonderful privilege, while here on earth, of knowing their heavenly place and portion, and of even now in spirit dwelling there, and thus having that blessed scene, not merely as the object of their hopes, but finding in it their present joy.

Too often, alas in every age has Satan succeeded, by the attractions he presented to the old nature, in hindering some from anticipating that eternal day, or from enjoying in spirit now a heavenly place, so that many a one has turned aside and sought some quiet haven, some pleasant resting-place in this world, but only to find that he that was born of God could never rest in a world of sin, defiled and disturbed by the presence and activity of Satan. But now in God's eternal rest will His saints of every age, forever delivered from a fallen nature, with their bodies changed into the likeness of Christ's body of glory, and with a capacity for enjoyment which will never fail in satisfaction through the everlasting ages, adore the grace of Him who has brought

them into such a scene, the New Creation, fully displayed now in all its blessedness, and all worthy of its divine Author. Now will the seventh day of the first creation find its true antitype; for now once more will God be able to look out upon the work of His hands, and to pronounce it all very good. Now will He rest with everlasting satisfaction and delight in a rest that shall never again be broken, and which has been the hope that has cheered His saints in every age, invigorating their spirits, and gladdening their hearts as they passed through the sufferings and sorrows of this wilderness-world.

There are those who might desire to have this blessedness more fully unfolded to them; but surely it should be enough for us, and more than enough, to know that God is going to bring us into His own rest—a state and a scene that shall be altogether worthy of Himself, and in which everything will be after His own heart. There no sin can ever enter, no sorrow can ever intrude; there the gold will never be tarnished, and the blaze of that glory will never grow dim; there in unsullied holiness and spotless light will shine throughout the eternal ages that new creation, of which we already are, and in which we shall then forever be, to God's eternal praise and glory. And if this be the scene to which already we belong, and if the Holy Ghost has come down to enable us in some measure in spirit to enter into it, and to bring us now into the enjoyment of it do we not well to ask ourselves how far it has been made good in our souls, so that we are formed and molded by it? There is a rule by which we are to walk here, and that is the rule of the new creation (Gal. 6:15-16); and though at present we are found in earthly circumstances, yet have we been given all we need, so that we may pass through them in a heavenly manner. Suffer me then, my reader, to ask you in all affection, Is everything about you—the training of your family, the conduct of your business, the discharge of your duties, the employment of your time, the furniture of your house, the apparel on your person, your associations and your friendships, is it all suited to that heavenly scene? and does it all unmistakably declare that you are heavenly in your ways? and that the new creation is not for you, as it is for many, like an idle song, or a pleasant tale, but a blessed reality in your soul, of formative power in your ways, and affecting you in every detail of your life?

F. S. M.

Fragment: Duties

Duties are more apt to lead away the soul from God than open sin. Many a Christian has been ensnared by duties whose heart would have shrunk from open sin.

J. N. D.

Fragment: Christ and Love

Christ is both loveliness and love immense, and loves to be re-loved with love the most intense.

Job and Jethro

To the book of Job, the earliest written portion of the Word, as has been supposed, we must next turn in the prosecution of our inquiry about sacrifice and offering. Living after Abraham, but before the Exodus, as it is probable that he did, we gather from statements in this book how one, who was not descended from Abraham, resorted, as occasion called for it, to the practice of sacrificing burnt-offerings to God.

Who were Job's parents we know not; but his dwelling-place was in the land of Uz, and therefore he was one of Shem's descendants (Gen. 10:23), and his friends belonged likewise to the Shemitic branch of the great human family. Teman, the ancestor of Eliphaz, was a grandson of Esau. (Gen. 36:11) Shuah, the progenitor of Bildad, was one of Abraham's children by Keturah. (Gen. 25:2) We gather therefore from these genealogical details whereabouts the land of Uz probably was, Lam. 4:21 confirming the deduction that it lay not far from Edom.

When and how Job learned about God. is not recorded. But as with Balaam so with Job, there were those outside the immediate circle of Abraham's family who knew and worshipped the Almighty; yet if we class those two men together in that matter, how great was the difference between them. The former, overcome by temptation, would have cursed God's people, if he could, for the sake of earthly reward, and he perished with Jehovah's enemies, the Midianites (Num. 31:8). The latter, when in the depths of his troubles, turned not from God, and stands out with Noah and Daniel as pre-eminent for his righteousness (Ezek. 14:14). In his family he must have been alone. (Job 1:5) Even his wife was no help to him in the day of his troubles (2:9); yet he held on his way through grace, and had this testimony borne of him by the Lord to Satan, that there was "none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil" (Chapter 1:8).

Upright himself, he had concern for his children, and, though we read not of his offering up any sacrifice for himself, we are told he did it for others. And he is the earliest example that we have of one so acting, and the first person, too, in the record of Scripture history who offered an offering for sins committed. This was his practice as often as he feared that his children had sinned, and had cursed God in their hearts (Job 1:5). This patriarch, then, is the first person we read of who ministered at the altar on behalf of others. Throughout the book of Genesis the officiator at the altar appears in the character of offerer as well. In Job's case it was different. So that with which we are so familiar from the Mosaic ritual, the priest officiating on behalf of others, we see first exemplified in the practice of the patriarch Job, who offered burnt-offerings for his sons, according to the number of them all. He as a just one for unjust ones appeared before God.

Very simple was his faith. As often as his children met together on their festive occasions, so often did Job offer up burnt-offerings for them all. As often as he feared they might have sinned did he come before God with sacrifices for each of them. He understood evidently, that none of them could be forgiven their sin, unless a sacrifice was offered up on their behalf; therefore he offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all. In his day that one sacrifice, by which

believers are perfected forever, had not been consummated, so Job sacrificed for his children as often as he thought they had need of it. But we have not the slightest hint that he sacrificed twice to deal with the question of the same sin. He seems to have understood that a sacrifice once offered up for any sin was enough in God's eyes, and having done that, he could rest contented about it. In this he was really before many in our day, who have yet to learn what it is to rest on the offering up of that one perfect sacrifice for sins, by which God has been forever glorified, and by which believers are perfected for a continuance (Heb. 10:14).

Three distinct points, then, in the Scripture teaching about sacrifice are first met with in this one verse of the book of Job. A righteous person is seen officiating on behalf of sinners. Next, the acknowledgment is made, that each one who has sinned has need of a sacrifice to be offered upon his behalf. And thirdly, Job rests satisfied with the offering up of one sacrifice, without any repetition of it, for the sin which had been committed.

But was Job right in acting on such principles? Any question that might have been raised God set at rest by His communication to Job's three friends, which is given us at the end of the book, commanding them to offer up seven bullocks and seven rams for a burnt-offering; for they had not spoken of God the thing that was right, as His servant Job had (Job 42:7). They had sinned, so they needed a sacrifice, otherwise the Lord must have dealt with them after their folly. Nothing, then, could procure their exemption from such dealing except the burnt-offering here prescribed. A sacrifice therefore can deal with the question of sin when committed. This the friends of Job proved. Seven bullocks and seven rams they were commanded to bring the whole forming but one burnt-offering; for one sacrifice was enough in God's eyes; a repetition of it was not to be thought of. Seven animals of each kind — a perfect number, for seven is the highest indivisible number — were demanded of God. Nothing should be wanting to assure them of the settlement of the question of their sin, perfectly and forever. This the Almighty in His grace provided. But nothing could avert from them divine judgment except such a sacrifice. Job understood that heinous sin, however thoughtlessly committed, required a sacrifice to put it away. The Lord taught His three friends that a sacrifice was equally requisite for that which man would think little or nothing about. But the sacrifice once accepted, the question so settled was not to be reopened.

Thus far we have divine teaching in patriarchal times, of the beneficial results to man of a sacrifice offered up to God. Nothing less than the death of the sacrificial victim will avail for one born in sin, that he may with acceptance approach his God. Now such a sacrifice is a sweet savor to God, and on the ground of it He can bless the sinner, and that how fully! Its sweet savor we can all understand, since the true offering is that of God's Son, given by the Father to die, and He willingly surrendering Himself to death in obedience to the Father's will. Nothing can be more precious to God than this, so nothing more does the sinner need; for he learns how it can deal effectually once and forever with the question of his guilt. And it is God Himself who provides the sacrifice, and who makes known its acceptableness before Him. Now all this was set forth before the giving of the law. Nor was it confined to the seed of Jacob, to whom the Mosaic ritual was delivered.

Before, however, turning to that, there is other instruction on this subject, which should not be overlooked. We have learned about the burnt offering. We must briefly look at that which till the days of Moses went simply by the name of a sacrifice. This, which is mentioned in Exodus 10:25; 18:12; 24: 5, was festive in its character; and in Exodus 24:5 it is described by that term,

translated a peace-offering Very probably at Galeed (Gen. 31:54), where Jacob and Laban feasted together, sacrifices of this character were offered up, of which they and their respective companies partook, a solemn ratification of the covenant entered into between the father-in-law and the son-in-law. As to the time and the occasion on which such a sacrifice was instituted, we have, however, no information. In the days of Moses it was nothing new; for he speaks of such before Pharaoh as distinct from burnt offerings, and as a sacrifice which apparently needed no further explanation on his part; and until after the giving of the law we read of no other animal sacrifices but these two. In the burnt-offering all went up to God. On the sacrifice, as this other was originally termed, the offerer and those concerned feasted together, God, it is likely, having His part, and they theirs. On the ground of the accepted burnt-offering blessing came down to men. In this sacrifice the parties concerned eat bread before God (Ex. 18:12). These were solemn and, it might be, happy seasons. Solemn because they eat before God; happy seasons surely when they were rejoicing in something God had done. Thus at the ratification of the covenant at Sinai, young men offered burnt-offerings, and sacrifices of peace-offerings, and the elders of Israel saw the God of Israel, and did eat and drink on the mount (Ex. 24:11). A solemn but happy time that was, a momentary glimpse, as it were, of what a people, represented on that occasion by the seventy elders, could enjoy when in unbroken covenant relation with their God.

Again, when Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, had heard of all that the Lord had done for Israel, he rejoiced at all the goodness shown to them, and "took a burnt-offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God" (Ex. 18:12). This was a festive occasion, yet a solemn one, because they were before God; though withal a happy one, because Jethro and they were together rejoicing for all the goodness Jehovah had shown to Israel.

Thus, before the revelation to Moses of God's mind about the offerings, related in Leviticus 1-7, those who acknowledged God knew how to have seasons of holy fellowship with one another before Him. But to have such seasons the sacrifice was needed. We understand, as we study the peace-offering appointed by the law, the real meaning of this, learning as we do of whom the sacrifice was a type. How simple was such a service, but how speaking! For seasons of holy joy, and happy fellowship with each other before God, death was positively needed—the death of the sacrifice. But that provided, fallen creatures though these were, they could rejoice before God, and with each other.

C. E. S.

Plain Words on Justification

That was a grave question that was propounded by one of the ancients to the patriarch Job more than three thousand years ago, "How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" And as it has lost none of its interest by the lapse of centuries we may fittingly inquire, (1) Is there such a thing as justification with God? Evidently Bildad the Shuhite (Job 25) would have inclined to a negative answer; for he proceeds, in language not a little pathetic, "Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight. How much less mortal man, that is a reptile? and the son of Adam, who is a worm?" And if we turn to the words of the psalmist David, we find (Psa. 143:2) that he speaks in a similar strain, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified." Happily we live in the meridian light of the New Testament; and as we consult its pages we are at no loss to discover the true answer to our question. That wonderful third of Romans that stops every mouth, and proves every man guilty before God, adds further, that by "deeds of law shall no flesh be justified in His sight." We are consequently forbidden to marvel that the Shuhite of patriarchal days, and the psalmist in Israel's palmier times, should alike—knowing nothing beyond the flesh and the law—conclude there was no justification before God. For us, on the contrary, how blessed it is to find that when the apostle summarily describes man's condition and guilt in the brief words, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," it is but a preparatory clearing of the ground for the gracious assertion that follows in the same breath, "Being justified freely by His grace." We read also in Galatians 3, "The Scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen." And again, in Romans 8, "Whom He called, them He also justified." These then being God's words, we need not multiply proofs that there is such a thing as justification before God.

Let us now inquire, (2) Who is the justifier? In the nature of things justification involves a justifier. Who then is this justifier? Again we turn to Romans 3, and in verse 26 read those blessed words, "To declare, at this time His (God's) righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." So also in Romans 8:30, "Whom He (God) called, them He also justified." God, then, is the Justifier, and the importance of this can scarcely be overstated; for whom He justifies must be justified indeed! It is no fallible work, marked and marred by human imperfection, but an altogether divine thing of incontestable and immutable value for eternity. The magnitude and grandeur of this piece of divine truth fired the heart of the apostle when he exclaimed, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth?"

We prefer as our next inquiry, (3) Who are they who are justified? For if there be such a thing as justification, and, as we have found, God Himself the Justifier, it is of importance for us to understand whom He justifies. Again we turn to Romans 3:26, and read there the conclusive words, that He is "the justifier of him that believeth, in Jesus." Nothing could be more plain. It is the believer, and the believer only, whom God justifies.

We do not hesitate to say that no person can possibly know what it is to be justified who is not a believer in that blessed One—the Man of Calvary once, but the Man of Glory forever! But perhaps

it will be answered, that in the next chapter we read of God justifying “the ungodly.” Perfectly true, but not in his ungodliness; for it instantly adds, “his faith is counted for righteousness,” from which it is clear that the word describes his state up to the time when he became a believer, and accordingly—not as then ungodly, but as then a believer—God justified him. This word “ungodly” then describes man’s state by nature, and that is fully unfolded in the fifth chapter, where three expressions are used descriptive of our natural condition. In the sixth verse, “without strength;” in the eighth verse, “sinners;” and in the tenth, “enemies.” The first of these terms is negative, man is powerless for good works; the next is positive, he is practically an evil worker, a sinner; the last is worst of all, he has a heart whose inmost springs are at enmity with God. This was clearly proved when Christ was here on earth; for God Himself was manifest in the flesh, and dwelt among us in perfect love to man, and was hated without a cause. He was the song of the drunkard, and for His love they gave Him hatred. Such is man! Nevertheless, blessed forever be His name, “By Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.” Such is God!

But it is time we address ourselves to the question, (4) What is justification? Refer, please, to Romans 4:3 for God’s answer to our inquiry: “Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Again, in verse 5: “To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” And also in verse 9: “Faith was reckoned to Abraham, for righteousness.” The simple answer then is that justification is judicial righteousness; in other words, God’s accounting or adjudging us to be righteous before Himself—on what ground we shall see by-and-by. At present we must be clear as to the thing itself, and would emphatically impress upon the reader’s mind this simple, but profoundly important truth, that justification signifies the being accounted by God and before God to be judicially righteous, which is the positive, absolute, and changeless standing of the believer now and eternally. This and this only is justification. Thus it is not merely pardon or forgiveness, which is rather of a negative character, but a positive state of accomplished and ever-subsisting righteousness in Christ before God that we are already brought into by God’s own act, as the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

Here let it be noted, parenthetically, that Scripture gives no support to the thought that Christ’s practical righteousness in His holy, blameless life on earth, than which nothing down here was ever so divinely perfect in moral beauty, is accredited to our account for justification. That He magnified the law, and put honor upon it in His own person, is fully admitted; but nothing found in Scripture gives countenance to the mistaken notion that this was imputed to us; in other words, to the theological dogma of “imputed righteousness.” The Scriptural doctrine of righteousness imputed signifies, if Scripture alone is to determine, simply and solely that we are accounted to be righteous apart from law-keeping as to the principle of it (Rom. 3:21), and apart from works of any kind practically (Rom. 4:5).

It is our judicial standing, which is signified by this imputation of righteousness, and upon this ground alone, that “we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Rom. 4:24); the character of it being, not that law-keeping (which was never really required of Gentiles), for other good works done by Christ, are put to our account, which would be to make the life of Christ a vicarious thing, and thus utterly to disturb and distort His relations to God—but that, as to sin and death and judgment, “as He is” (the glorified Man in the presence of God), “so are we in this world.” This is the scriptural doctrine of the imputation of righteousness, and beautifully exhibits

the divine character of our justification.

Further, let us inquire, (5) What is it by which we are justified? Romans 4:25 teaches that Jesus our Lord was raised for our justifying; chapter 5:1, that we are justified on the principle of faith; and, verse 9, that we are justified in the power of His blood. Each of these verses helps us to gather up an answer. In its intrinsic character our justification is according to the value of the blood of Christ to God; by that alone are we justified Godward; and according to its priceless worth is the character of our acceptance and standing in His holy presence. But looked at manward, it is by faith; that is we get it on that principle and not on the principle of works. And practically we are not, and cannot be, justified until faith has been exercised by us. Thus we read in the peculiarly incisive language of chapter 4:5, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Accordingly Abraham, undistinguished for works but pre-eminent for his faith, is presented as the pattern of a justified man. Again, it is in direct connection with resurrection—the resurrection of Christ. He was raised, we read, for our justification; and unless we have part in His resurrection we are not justified. God is our Justifier, and the risen Christ in His presence is our representative in justification, the expression of that state of ever-subsisting accomplished righteousness in which we are set as God's justified ones in virtue of His death (2 Cor. 5:21).

Lastly, let us ask, (6) What are the results of it? The verses we were just now looking at supply the final answer. First, our sins (offenses) are all gone; for the One who was thus raised had been delivered for them; that is, on account of them and for their putting away, and He having been raised up they can no longer have a place before the God who has righteously dealt with them, that He might be just, and yet have the joy of being Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. Second, having been justified, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Peace is eternally established between us and Himself! Third, "Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him." The first has to do with the past, for my sins were blotted out by His blood; the next with the present, for it is now that I have peace with God; and the last with the future, for the wrath is the wrath to come; and I am assured, on divine testimony, that I am so cleared before God, and so accepted and established in love, that I am entitled to "have boldness in the day of judgment." (1 John 4:17).

How wonderful in every point of view is our justification before God; the Lord give us a truly scriptural apprehension of it, "to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved."

W. R. D.

Further Thoughts on the Secret of Power

The question considered in a former paper was, What is now, and what has ever been, the secret of spiritual power in any? The attention of the reader was there directed to God's presence in the midst of His redeemed people, and that this apprehended and governing us was and is the secret of spiritual power; that is, the Spirit of God in us, and God Himself with us, and for us. I would now seek to direct attention to how far this presence of God with His people may be hindered in its manifestation, and how far spiritual power may consequently be thereby lost.

It is evident, whether we look at Old Testament days or New Testament times, that there was not and cannot be spiritual power in us, save by the action of the Holy Ghost. Then, as now, where spiritual power was manifested in an individual or in a company, He wrought it. We see the first in such a case as that of Samson (Judg. 13:25; 14: 6, 19), and again in Zechariah 4:6; and the second in that of Israel (already quoted), in Psalm 114, and Haggai 2:5.

Now two things are true as to the Holy Ghost, since His descent on the day of Pentecost: 1st, He dwells in the individual believer (1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 1:13; Acts 2:3-4); and 2nd, He dwells in the assembly (1 Cor. 16-17; Eph. 2:22; 1 Cor. 12:4,11,13,28-29). On these two facts, the presence of the Holy Spirit in the individual believer, and His presence in the assembly of God, two important exhortations are founded in the New Testament: 1st, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30); and 2nd, "Quench not the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). "God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth unto God" (Psa. 62:11). And it is well for us ever to remember this, lest pride occupy us with the vessel and what is wrought, rather than with its Author. He ever abides the same, whatever be the state of the vessel—whether it be an assembly or an individual. Ah! it is well for poor man, for us, ever to remember this, "Power belongeth unto God."

But redemption being wrought out, and Jesus glorified, necessities for the descent and dwelling down here of the Holy Ghost, power came down (see John 7:39; Acts 2:33), He descended (Acts 2:4) to work in testimony in the assembly of God, and in the individual believer, and to "abide forever" (John 14:16-17; 15:26, 27). "Power from on high" (Luke 24) is down here on earth, and will ever abide (Acts 1:8); not a mere influence, but a person—one whose influence is felt. The redeemed of the Lord need a leader, and they need power; and He came to be both, and He is both for us, as was said in an earlier day to Joshua. "As captain of the Lord's host am I now come," and what is this to me? "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." Reader, is it thus with thee and with me? Oh the liberty and joy of such a moment! and the peace of soul that I (though one of the redeemed) can only know, as I learn in His presence that "power belongeth unto God!" "God is greater than man He giveth not account of any of His matters" (Job 33). And while it is true that by the Holy Ghost God dwells in, and desires to act in the assembly, and also in the individual believer, His actions are not limited to these, though He is primarily here to act in these two; and when His action is hindered in either, it is clear that there is something wrong. But, as always, so now, God can act, and does act, as He will, and

in whom He will. So in the world outside He used an unconverted Balaam, and spoke when He chose, through a dumb ass. (Num. 24:2) And thus, too, He used Saul, the son of Kish, though he was not himself the Lord's. (1 Sam. 10:6,10; and 16:14) Again, He can use, in New Testament days, those of whom He will have to say, "I never knew you;" though they themselves may boast, "In Thy name we have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works" (Matt. 7:22,23); and to this class, doubtless, Judas Iscariot must belong, who was one of the twelve (Compare with this last-named Scripture Matt. 10:2,4,8).

But besides using an unconverted man, God can also use one who is a believer, but who may not be intelligent as to what the Holy Ghost is bringing out through him. Thus in past ages holy men of God spake as they were moved of the Holy Ghost, themselves not always understanding their own utterances. (See 1 Peter 1:10-12; and 2 Peter 1:19-21) So was it also in 1 Corinthians 14:14, where one using the gift of tongues may possibly pray in the Spirit, while the understanding may remain "unfruitful;" and this the apostle seeks to correct. In the spirit one might, thus speaking, "speak mysteries;" but the apostle would rather speak five words with his understanding in the assembly. He says, "I will pray with the Spirit, but I will pray with the understanding also." In the Old Testament communications, and again when they used the gift of tongues, it did not always happen that the "understanding" of the speaker grasped the import of his message; but now the Word of God is complete (Col. 1:25), His purposes all revealed (Rev. 22:18,19), and the vessel should understand the mind of the Spirit, and should be in perfect harmony with the mind of Him who uses it. "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16), so that while to them it was said, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man to conceive" (Isa. 64); to us today it is said, "God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:9-12). It is only "he that is spiritual" that discerneth the "all things" in this passage, or grasps the Spirit's mind.

It has become necessary to draw the attention of believers to these two facts; for they are sometimes challenged: 1st, That God can use even an unconverted man if He so please; and 2nd, That He can also use a converted man, when he who is so used may not understand what the Spirit is communicating through him. Let us remember these things, lest we be found unintentionally guilty in these days of that early sin of the house of Jacob named in Psalm 78:41. They "limited the Holy One of Israel." But we must remember that if the Holy Ghost thus uses one unconverted, or again one who lacks "understanding" though converted, these are now the abnormal actings of the Spirit. He desires rather to use the believer, and he who, being himself of full age, has the understanding developed, so that He can identify the one used with Himself. So likewise He desires to act in, and to identify the assembly with, His actions. (Rev. 22:17) The Spirit abides on earth forever, as we have seen, and is "power from on high." And God desires that the believer should be "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). In himself he is an empty vessel, yet he remembers (wondrous truth) that "he that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit" (1 Cor. 6:17). His desire for every believer then is that He may be "strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3). Was it not manifest in Stephen, a man "full of the Holy Ghost, and full of faith and power?" who, being thus "full of the Holy Ghost" (a power not of man, but which filled the poor vessel), could calmly yield to be stoned to death for Christ's testimony, and by those too who did "always resist the Holy Ghost," yet he in the moments of bodily anguish was enabled, like His Master, to pray for his murderers. Here the power of the Holy Ghost is seen so acting as to identify

itself with the vessel, the two being practically one— “one Spirit.” Now a disregard of the exhortation, “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God” (to which we will now return), hinders the action of the Holy Ghost, and prevents His thus manifesting His power in the vessel to so sustain it—that it is, not sometimes, but daily seen to be sustained (John 4:14) by those who know nothing of the secret (Psa. 25:14). While, as of old (for the power abides), if the Spirit guide and direct all that is said and done in the assembly, being ungrieved and unquenched, the power is felt there; it is one voice, and one unbelieving falling down must own it and confess that “God is among you of a truth” (1 Cor. 14:25; Rev. 22:17 – 1st sentence).

And further, and what is of all importance, my own individual enjoyment as a believer, of the ministry of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter (John 14:17,20,26;16:13), which is my portion until I am with the Lord, must depend on my not grieving the Holy Ghost; and my present peace and rest of spirit (and the consequent manifestation of them) derived from Him—a power that keeps me superior to surrounding influences—depends on this too; for God is in no way hindered in His communion with a faithful soul, whatever may be the confusion and evil, either among the Lord’s people or in the world, of the day in which he may be living. To deny this is to say God is overcome of evil (see Rev. 3:20); while the power for blessing and edification of a gathered company (where manifested) will as surely depend on the unquenched presence and action of the Holy Ghost in their midst; for in both “power belongeth unto God.”

The source of spiritual power, then, God present by His Spirit, is continuous; the manifestation of it is not necessarily so, but dependent. May we challenge our hearts, as the day darkens, as to these two things: first, What is there in me individually? and, secondly, What is there among us as a company, which hinders the manifestation of spiritual power? And first let us keep continuously in mind that, notwithstanding the point to which, as a Christian, any one of us has attained in past days—and there are attainments (Phil. 3:16); who among us will boast of them? there is no such thing as the present enjoyment by me of spiritual power—the ministry of the Holy Ghost—if the Holy Ghost be dwelling in me a “grieved” Spirit. And while this is so there cannot be to others the manifestation of spiritual power in me. When the Holy Spirit is grieved in me, every attempt to go on before others as if nothing had happened does but manifest my weakness to them. And this is true, however useful I may have been to them, as one owned of God for blessing in past days. Like Achan, the thing that weakens has been allowed where I ought to govern. With him it was in the tent; with me it is in myself; and in vain, though a very Samson before, will one who has grieved the Spirit (unless there has been self-judgment) go out to shake himself “as at other times.” In vain; his strength is gone, and God’s Nazarite, now powerless in the presence of the enemy, though once so mighty, is presently seen to be blind—the poor blind captive and sport of the uncircumcised! (Judg. 16). Sad and sorrowful sight! yet is it one by no means uncommon to Him who has spiritual vision. What is it, then, to grieve the Holy Spirit? Where He dwells ungrieved there are manifested “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22,23). All these are not human, but divine; and the Spirit must be acting where they are produced. Can it, then, be said that I am lacking any of these, and yet the Holy Spirit is not grieved? Impossible; for the fruits then seen are those of the flesh in the activity of human will, and not the will of God (Gal. 5:16-21). There may be recovery, both of an individual (see 1 Cor. 11:28-31) and of an assembly (see 2 Cor. 7:8-11), and this is wrought by self-judgment, so necessary to us all; but without it there surely must be a loss of

spiritual power, and nothing but confession and self-judgment will restore it. Everything that is done in an individual or in an assembly, until self-judgment has done its work, is done with an effort—the sure sign of weakness—and, as before said, will but manifest the real condition to those who may have eyes to see (1 Cor. 2:15).

Again, the opponent to the working of the Spirit of God is the spirit of the world— “the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.” “But,” says the apostle, “we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.” (1 Cor. 2:12) Hence arises another question, Can I allow in myself that which is of the world (and hence of the spirit of disobedience), and the Holy Spirit yet remain in me ungrieved? In myself I detect the workings of nature— “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life;” to all of these Satan ministers, in this huge system called “the world.” All these are “not of the Father, but are of the world” (1 John 2:15-17). Can I allow them to work in me? and will the Holy Spirit meantime preserve and manifest in me His own energy? Impossible. Says the apostle James, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). And I have not to go outside of myself to discover these principles that govern the world And it is in little things—things scarcely suspected, yet things which, if examined in the light, will be found to be not “of the Father, but of the world,” that we are so easily robbed of spiritual strength. Everything that I do as one in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, strikes a thrill for good or for evil through all the saints; for “by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13,26). And besides this, my enemies are not “flesh and blood;” they may come to me in that form, but they are not natural but “spiritual.” No carnal or natural weapons can overcome them—no; conquest and victory can be by spiritual power alone. “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12). But all our power is gone if the Holy Ghost be hindered from manifesting His power in us, since in ourselves without Him we possess none.

Finally, I suppose none will question that one who is “grieving the Spirit” is not the one to minister in an assembly of the saints, however useful he may have been to them in former days. Two evils are committed where such an attempt is made; for the Spirit is not only further grieved in the effort, but is also quenched possibly as to His action by means of another in the assembly. Edification in such a case there is not, but the manifestation of weakness, manifest to all present who have spiritual discernment. Hence the frequency of our “leanness,” felt both individually and collectively; for the ministry of the Holy Ghost in both is the secret of spiritual power. Without it there is none, and confusion reigns. The apostle says, “I will pray with the spirit, but I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, but I will sing with the understanding also” (1 Cor. 14:15). The instrument understands the mind of him who plays on it, if the Holy Spirit be not grieved or hindered within him; and if in the assembly He acts in such a vessel, the assembly is edified, if the Spirit be not quenched there.

The day darkens. We are in danger of seeking to keep up a form of godliness without the power (2 Tim. 3: 5). May the Lord give us increased energy in these last days. “To them that have no might He increaseth strength.” And may all His beloved people seek to maintain the grave importance of not grieving the Holy Spirit of God in themselves, whereby they cut off their own individual supplies of food, which ever come to us by the Holy Ghost’s ministering Christ to us; and as to the

assembly, the solemn importance of not quenching the Spirit, and thus depriving the gathered saints of that ministry and sustenance so necessary for the edification and growth of the body.

H. C. A.

Philadelphian Decline

It is, and has ever been, the tendency of our nature to settle down at a point where an awakened conscience has experienced a measure of ease. We become dull in responding to the claim of the latter, especially when it is brought under the influence of fuller light; listless if invited to try sweeter pastures beyond a point of present attainment, having found comfort here—a comfort perhaps not now enjoyed as hitherto; and energy of heart flags, no longer counterbalancing the premature desire for rest; all leading into a state of moral prostration, in which there may certainly be an abundance of outward activity, but only as a form of godliness without the power. This comes not as a consequence of evil altogether, but through a selfish use of what grace has given (Deut. 32:15).

Many details of Old Testament history verify such a law; but the grace which records this testimony to what man is, as warning for us, has moved alongside its unworthy object, and ever and anon found opportunity to address the lulled conscience, and recall the callous heart to a sense of its need. Israel, in the days of Hezekiah, Josiah, and Ezra, furnishes striking illustrations; and we constantly notice in the recipients of blessing, as accompaniments and evidences of the operations of divine grace in them, acknowledgment of guilt, subduedness of expression, and self-abasement, together with a readiness to apprehend, and willingness to take, the path provident grace rendered available for the true-hearted in the midst of failure. Thus Ezra, as mouthpiece for those who “trembled at the words of the God of Israel,” speaks with shame and blushing of “a little reviving in our bondage” (Chapter 9:4,6,8). This does not preserve the remnant from again wandering grievously through love of ease and self-occupation (Hag. 1:4; Ezra 4:23,24;5. 12), affording never-failing grace a fresh occasion of shining forth in urgent appeal through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. The people were forgetting the prime object in their restoration (Ezra 9:9); (how full of instructive warning to us, gathered for worship, as well as testimony!) and are rallied, but again fail, as seen in Malachi 3, to which Calvary forms, as far as their responsibility was concerned, the lamentable sequel.

Nor can we here end with the history of perpetual backsliding, of this sad tendency to failure. Perfectly revealed as grace now is, one might almost entertain the not uncommon thought, that of failure there could be no more, were it not that such Scriptures as 2 Timothy, 2 Peter, and Jude teach the reverse. The failure warned of, and foretold by the apostles, has indeed come in, and one can see its withering shadow flit along the pages of history from the very days of the apostles themselves to the great white throne. There it ends, and forever, thank God. Rather does perfect grace manifest the wretchedness of what induces failure, and how deep are its roots in weak unworthy man. And not alone have we God's grace and man's sin thus reciprocally proved, but the New Testament also in several places prophetically furnishes a development of the latter (1 Cor. 10:5-10; Jude 11). Again, there is a blending of the former with the latter in an historical way, as in the case of Israel, in the epistles to the seven churches of Asia; for here the spiritual eye discerns more than a mere superficial bearing in Christ's words (Rev. 2, 3). The epistles, though doubtless primarily addressed to the assemblies named, then existing, are believed to constitute a resume of

the church's history, responsibly considered, from the time of John to the moment when it will be rejected as an irretrievably failed testimony, the saints being, about the same juncture, taken away to be forever with the Lord. One can admire the divine wisdom displayed in veiling the history so as to be of effect to those whom it immediately concerned; and the beautiful consistency shown in avoiding the formal shape which would in them interfere with immediate expectancy of our Lord's return, and thus also with the sanctifying effect of "that blessed hope" (1 John 3:3; Col. 3:35); whilst the gracious Shepherd's care for us is also manifest, who now can peculiarly profit by it, the whole thing being fully before us, in a day of such peculiar need.

As has often been explained, each epistle gives marks distinctive of seven phases or stages through which the church has to pass. The second, third, and fourth replace the first, second, and third respectively. The fourth and last three coexist at the Lord's return (2:25; 3:3, 11, 21), each arising in the order given, and each in turn characterizing the state of things in the church, from the Lord's point of view.

It is also very widely admitted that several phases have had their day, and that even the marks of Philadelphia have also been discernible in these days, when everybody is beginning to feel that events rush forward toward the solemn climax. But whether or not the stage of the church's history, marked by Philadelphian intelligent devotedness to the Person of our precious Lord, has ceased to be characteristic, and that in this respect the phase determined by Laodicean indifference to His claims has taken its place, may still be questioned, though doubtless a well-defined Laodicean position, even now exists alongside Thyatira, Sardis, and Philadelphia, lacking only development. But may we not inquire, Does the Philadelphian assembly of our day, the true expression of the church as Christ's Body, as well as the evident testimony to failure in its responsible aspect—called forth by abounding grace after centuries of darkness—does this enjoy an immunity from the tendency which caused departure from the Pentecostal state, and which, as we have seen, brought in such complete failure after a similar manifestation of grace to the remnant restored from Babylon? Can we boast of better prospects, as to faithfulness, at the Lord's second coming than obtained at His first?

We see a remnant in Thyatira, another in Sardis, and room for a true heart even in Laodicea. There is, however, compunction felt in supposing the possibility of the same in Philadelphia at the Lord's return; for this would imply decline in the mass, by no means flattering, but full of warning for each soul; but surely its suitability to the Lord's eye, at one point in its history, no more precludes the possibility of its decline than that the beautiful thing He set up at Pentecost should so completely fail. As a matter of fact, individuals do drop out of Philadelphia—abandon the confession of the truth as a whole—and pass on to Laodicean ground, not so often to Thyatira or Sardis, which are too wide of the truth. But what if they lack the honesty which leads some to the place characterized by lukewarmness, and remain in the form of godliness unsustained by its power? One can easily see, from the state of things and of persons, where the truth is professed in many cases, that though Philadelphia should go on to the Lord's coming, alongside a gradually developing Laodicea—ultimately characteristic—Laodiceanism may give increasingly distinct coloring to much of the material built upon the ground of the truth. Many who outwardly tread God's path in ecclesiastical matters may, by boastfulness, perhaps based on the nature of the position they occupy, deny the truth they profess, and be distinguished by little else than a feeling best expressed in Laodicean words: "I am rich and increased with goods." Blessed grace indeed it

was which removed the accumulations of eighteen centuries, and discovered to us the sure foundation of God with its seal; but how ill does boasting in the matter comport with the beautiful example seen in Ezra's case, already alluded to (Chapter 9:6-8).

Hence, without assuming anything beyond the mere possibility of such a state of things being found amongst us at any time (and oh, are we free from it?), it is evident that upon the ground where once the Lord could address a poor weak company in terms of loving, encouraging approval, circumstances may be apprehended—if they are not come—which would test all, cause some to drop aside, prove others to have little more than a form of godliness without the power; and, as a consequence, render faithful testimony to our Lord, largely individual in its character, brighter perhaps as hearts true to Him realize the effects of growing laxity. There can be little doubt that the truth alone must ever guide—faith. They who walk in it can assert nothing short of this; that is, that they occupy ground established by what it teaches, while pressing its claims upon all who profess allegiance to it untruly—this, together with a clear testimony to the nature of the position so established, as well as to the power which can alone set and maintain any truly on it. But in view of all this one can conceive how powerlessly and arrogantly the claims may be made and the testimony given, how easy it is in giving an answer to “every man that asketh,” to slip from the becoming “meekness and fear” of a consciously unworthy receiver into the spirit of the sad boast already mentioned; so that the anomaly enters of a believer even on Philadelphian ground possessing traits of Laodicean state!

Again, it is clear that an influx of formation through want of watchfulness (Jude 4; Matt. 13:25) — as possible now as at the outset of this (the church) period — would surround those really true to the Lord with numbers, for the sake of advantages or to suit some taste, who, it might be easy enough to perceive, are not even seeking to walk up to their profession, just as in the case already spoken of, of the restored remnant gathered to their true center—Jerusalem. There were the few mentioned in Malachi 3 who “feared the Lord and thought upon His Name” associated with others, outwardly on the true ground, who were quite otherwise-minded (See vss. 14, 15). This is a solemn contemplation, and the prospects, should the Lord tarry, offer little to cherish a boastful spirit. But amid the gloom of such reflections, there exists one point of purest light, this precious consolation, that God's aim in everything is the glory of His Son: this too, it may be, at the cost of a painful manifestation of failure in those who occupy the privileged place of testimony, when the testimony only denies the Name it professes to set forth. The true heart, ever also desirous of this, may continue in the enjoyment of sweetest communion whatever betides—a communion of which that aim forms both the link and theme. It is a mercy God has given us “a nail in His holy place” (Ezra 9:8; Isa. 22:23); the real secret of enlightenment and a “little reviving,” as well as a “remnant to escape,” which at every step proves its increasing feebleness. May God so keep our hearts occupied with Christ above, that while learning His perfections as the Father delights to unfold them to us, we may be able calmly to view all the tossings, which do but manifest the weakness of man, and the unchangeableness of condescending grace!

J. K.

The Character of Nehemiah

We see in Nehemiah himself a heart touched with the affliction of his people, a precious token of the grace of God; and He who had produced this feeling disposed the king's heart to grant Nehemiah all he desired for the good of the people and of Jerusalem. We see also in Nehemiah a heart that habitually turned to God, that sought its strength in Him, and thus surmounted the greatest obstacles. The time in which Nehemiah labored for the good of his people was not one of those brilliant phases which awake the energies of faith, and even the energy of man, imparting to it their own luster. It was a period which required the perseverance that springs from a deep interest in the people of God, because they are His people; a perseverance which, for this very reason, pursues its object in spite of the contempt excited by the work, apparently so insignificant, but which is not less the work of God; and which pursues it in spite of the hatred and opposition of enemies, and the faintheartedness of fellow-laborers (chap. 4:8, 10, 11); a perseverance which, giving itself up entirely to the work, baffles all the intrigues of the enemy, and avoids every snare, God taking care of those who trust in Him. It is also a beautiful feature in Nehemiah's character, that in spite of his high office he had all the detail of service so much at heart, and all that concerned the upright walk of God's people.

This history shows us, first of all, how, when God acts, faith stamps its own character on all who surround it. The Jews, who had so long left Jerusalem desolate, are quite disposed to recommence the work. Judah, however, is discouraged by the difficulties. This brings out the perseverance which characterizes true faith when the work is of God, be it ever so poor in appearance. The whole heart is in it, because it is of God. Encouraged by Nehemiah's energy, the people are ready to work and fight at the same time. For faith always identifies God and His people in the heart. And this becomes a spring of devotedness in all concerned. Let us remark, that in times of difficulty faith does not show itself in the magnificence of the result, but in love for God's work, however little it may be, and in the perseverance with which it is carried on through all the difficulties belonging to this state of weakness; for that with which faith is occupied is the city of God and the work of God, and these things have always the same value, whatever may be the circumstances in which they are found.

J. N. D.

Wrestling in the Heavenly Places

Believers are in this epistle seen in Christ. They are blessed “with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places” in Him, and made to “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” This is where God’s grace has set them; and their walk in the world is to be such as befits those holding so marvelous a position. The same fact determines also the character of their conflict; for though the believer has a perfect title to these blessings and this position, his practical enjoyment of them in this world depends entirely on the extent to which he lays hold of them by faith. In heaven there can of course be no conflict; then it will all be rest, and calm, undisturbed possession, with no foe to seek to drive us out of the field. Here, however, it is entirely different; we are not only surrounded with foes on every hand, but we have a special class of enemies to meet, and a special kind of conflict to maintain, in consequence of the heavenly place into which we are brought.

We have a type of this in Joshua, where the Israelites come up from the Jordan, a figure of resurrection, and enter into the land, which represents the heavenly places. The day will come when Israel will have rest in the land, and all conflict will be over. But it was not so when they crossed under Joshua’s guidance. Their title was good, for it rested on God’s promise to Abraham; but they were yet in a scene of conflict, a scene calling for self-judgment, for watchfulness, and for courage. So it is with us. The heavenly places are ours in title, and we too, as “quickened together with Christ,” are entered into them. But, like Israel, the time for undisturbed possession has not yet come, and we must hold our ground in them by vigilance and conflict. The Israelites began at Gilgal, the hill of circumcision; and so we are called upon to “put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts.” Having thus in type put the flesh in the place of death, the Israelites had to gird themselves for conflict with giants, dwelling in “cities great and walled up to heaven,” enemies in comparison with whom they were “in their own sight as grasshoppers.”

So, too, we have enemies, principalities and powers in heavenly places, compared with whom all our strength is mere weakness. Joshua was exhorted— “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Josh. 1:9). So, in the portion we are now considering, the exhortation is— “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (vs. 10). The conflict is not one as to standing. There the believer can say, “In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” In these conflicts in the heavenly places, however, the believer is himself called upon to wage war, to “put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (vs. 11). The power of Satan and the spiritual principalities is, indeed, already broken; but their wiles are always to be dreaded, and call for unceasing watchfulness. They cannot change or lower our standing, but they can cheat us of the enjoyment of it, and so rob God of the glory which our walk and conversation should bring Him; for Satan’s object always is to deprive God of His glory, and the believer of his blessing. And here, where God is setting a people in Christ, accepting them in the Beloved, “to the praise of the glory of His grace,” Satan’s craft is specially put forth to

lower the standard of blessing, and lead them to take an inferior place, and therefore a place less honoring to God than that which He has assigned them.

Hence our conflict, as set forth in this epistle, is for the possession by faith of these heavenly places, and our enemies are those who would seek to drive us from them. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high (or heavenly) places" (vs. 12). This conflict is one we must sustain if we would practically enjoy the heavenly place and the heavenly blessings which are ours in Christ. "The old corn of the land" can only be eaten in the land. But it is clear that no strength of ours can cope with such enemies as those now arrayed against us. What, then, is our resource? God has made ample provision; He has stored up in His divine armory a harness which can withstand even such assaults as those we have to resist. "Wherefore," He says, through the apostle, "take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (vs. 13). Thus, though we are ourselves to wage this warfare, it is as strengthened with the power of God's might, and equipped with armor from God's magazine.

What, then, is this suit of armor? "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (vss. 14-17). We have seen how Joshua was assured of the Lord's presence; but this was not promised unconditionally. The condition was this— "Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest" (Josh. 1:7). Such was Joshua's armor for the conflict which typifies ours—the truth of God, grasped by faith and followed in obedience. God's presence could alone give victory, and this depended upon obedience. So, too, the believer can only sustain his conflict by having his "loins girt about with truth." Thus only can he baffle "the wiles of the devil." Had Eve been thus guarded, how could the serpent have deceived and destroyed her? This, then, is the first requisite for withstanding his wiles. The immutable truth of God's word is the only anchor that can steady the soul amidst all the waves of temptation with which the devil assails it.

But what is the security which this truth gives? How does it enable us to meet the devil's wiles with unruffled breast? It furnishes us with the breastplate of righteousness, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Assured that God is our Justifier, we can keep possession of the heavenly places from which the devil would seek to dislodge us. A doubt upon this point, and all is lost, as to the practical enjoyment of our heavenly position. Our title to it is, that we are "made the righteousness of God in Christ;" and our practical power to make good the position depends on our grasp of this truth. The heart once calmly resting on the full work of Christ and our standing in Him, all the efforts of Satan to dislodge it are vain. It is protected with the breastplate of righteousness, which all his shafts cannot pierce. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" is the triumphant answer to all his assaults in this direction. This breastplate, as has been said, is the believer's righteousness in Christ, not the righteousness of his walk. It must be remembered, however, that unrighteousness of walk saps the heart's confidence and destroys its communion, so that though the believer's standing may be certain, his own sense of it is weakened, or even lost, and thus he

is wholly unable to maintain his ground against the wiles of the devil.

“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God;” and if it is necessary that our breast should be shielded from danger by the consciousness of our righteousness in Christ, it is equally necessary, along the rough road we have to tread, that our feet should be “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” The assurance that every question is settled between God and our souls, that we have full unclouded peace with Him, can alone keep our feet steady in the conflict we have to wage with the craft of the enemy. Without this we shall be sure to trip at the critical moment of the fight, for if Satan can once insinuate a doubt on this point, it is vain to suppose we can hold our ground for conscious enjoyment in the heavenly places. All these, however, are only kept by faith. The truth of God, our righteousness in Christ, and our peace with God, are indeed the believer’s portion, even when his faith fails; but it is only as his faith is in active operation that they can avail him in baffling the wiles of the devil, or in maintaining his heavenly standing. It is necessary, therefore, that over all these he should cast the protection of faith— “above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked” —or, rather, “of the wicked one.”

And closely connected with this is another piece of defensive armor— “the helmet of salvation.” This, like one of the former figures, is doubtless taken from the Old Testament prophecy, which speaks of Christ as putting on “righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon His head” (Isa. 59:17). But with Christ it is the righteousness which He executes in judgment, and the salvation which He brings as the deliverer of His people. With us it is the righteousness and salvation we have in Him. If righteousness is the breastplate which protects the heart from misgiving, the helmet is the crowning piece of the armor, which enables the believer to hold his head erect in the conflict, the consciousness of full assured salvation, which gives a title to the heavenly places, and therefore gives confidence in maintaining the ground against all the stratagems of the foe.

There is, in addition to these pieces of defensive armor, one offensive weapon— “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.” It is interesting to see the close connection between the first and last piece of God’s panoply. The truth of the Word is the power to gird up the loins; the sword of the Word is the weapon to put Satan to flight. Our Lord Himself furnishes us with an example in the use of both. He repels all the subtle attacks of Satan by the simple use of the Word. In the first two temptations, however, He uses it only as a defensive piece of armor, baffling the enemy, but not, as it were, wounding him. On the third occasion, on the contrary, He uses it as a sword, inflicting so deadly a thrust that the enemy is put to flight.

Such is the armor in which God has clothed us for this conflict in the heavenly places. Our attitude there is defensive—guarding what is already ours through grace. But this defensive attitude, being maintained solely by what we have in God, needs constant prayer. Dependence alone enables us to hold the heavenly places in spite of Satan’s opposition; and this dependence expresses itself in prayer. The Apostle therefore adds— “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (vs. 18). What a place prayer has in almost all the apostle’s letters! How earnest and incessant his own prayers for the saints! A constant sense of dependence on God, and of God’s interest in His people—the two great essentials to prayer, shine forth in all his writings and his ways. So, too, in the gospel of

Luke, where we have the path of the perfectly dependent man, do we not continually find Him going apart to pray, and even spending whole nights in prayer? How much of the weakness and failure we have so constantly to deplore arises from our being so unlike the apostle, and the blessed Lord Himself, in this respect! and he who best knows the value of prayer will most desire the prayers of others. Thus the apostle constantly asks the prayers of believers, even as he does here, exhorting them to pray “for all saints; and for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (vss. 18-20). It is not for his liberation, or for any personal benefit, that he seeks their prayers; but only that through him “the mystery of the gospel” might sound forth, and thus glory be brought to the name of Christ. Oh for more of the apostle’s singleness of eye in those whom the Lord now uses to proclaim His word.

It is beautiful to see, too, how tenderly he cares for the feelings of the saints, counting on their affections, and sending one who, while helping them in their souls’ growth, would also meet the anxiety of their hearts for news respecting his own position and circumstances. “But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things; whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and that he might comfort your hearts” (vss. 21, 22). The personal messages and salutations, so beautiful in some of the epistles, are not given here, being probably carried by Tychicus himself. But the warm love of the apostle’s heart to all the saints glows forth in the parting benediction— “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” –or incorruptness— “Amen” (vss. 23-24). How comprehensive and beautiful a prayer to close this epistle, an epistle which unfolds all the purposes of love in God’s heart towards us, the wonderful blessedness of our standing “in Christ,” the walk suited to our heavenly calling, and the weapons furnished for our heavenly warfare. It is doubtful whether the “Amen” is in the original; but surely it will be the suited response of every believing heart.

T. B. B.

Things Present

“I am persuaded that neither death nor life... nor things present... shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:38).

“All things are yours, whether... life or death, or things present... and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor. 3: 22).

“Neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us” (Num. 14:9).

I know the future all is bright,

The Cross has made my heaven secure;

The blood of Christ, on Calvary shed,

Has made my peace divinely sure.

I know none dare to separate

The Savior and the sinner—when

His blood has rolled its crimson flood

Over the guilty souls of men.

But though my future thus is bright,

When sin and death shall all be o’er;

Over the present hangs a cloud,

Though sunshine sleeps on yonder shore.

Until I fully grasp that word

Which in my soul its music rings;

“Nothing can part us from God’s love—

The future nor the present things”

“Nor present things”—the daily life,

With all its small ten-thousand needs,

Can’t separate us from the One

Who e’en the sparrow daily feeds.

“Nor present things”—the little cares

Which daily, hourly, constant rise,
Like some dark cloud which, stretching o'er,
Blots out the sunshine of the skies.
"Nor present things"—the woes which sweep
Like floods upon the lower land,
Which often seem so dark and deep,
We fail to recognize God's hand.
"Nor present things" —the wildest storm
But rushes on our outer life,
And cannot reach its inner depths—
Oft calmest in the midst of strife.
They "cannot separate;" they only prove
The channels for those streams of love,
And grace, and tenderness—which all our need
Is hourly drawing from above!
They "cannot separate;" they only make
Us nearer, closer still to cling;
Our very weakness is our plea
To bind us to our strength in Him!
They "cannot separate;" they only bring
Him nearer, closer, to us here—
His love to meet our daily needs;
His sympathy, our hearts to cheer.
They "cannot separate;" they'll soon be o'er,
And we, redeemed, with those above
Will say, while gazing on the past
"Twas there we learned His heart of love!"
A.S. Oliphant

Burning and Eating the Sacrifices

There was a twofold character in the offering which has its counterpart for us in Christ, and the want of firm grasp of this, to distinguish and yet maintain them together lies at the root of much want of enjoyment and of feebleness in the children of God. The first and most fundamental point was, that in the offerings there was that which was consumed. Being identified with the sin of man, it was consumed under the wrath and indignation of God, or it went up as a savor of rest, as that which was sweet and acceptable to God, as, for instance, in the burnt-offering. In the sin-offering there was God's judgment of sin, and therefore the greater part was burnt outside the camp. But besides this there was another character that entered into the sacrifices. In very many cases men partook of them. In the meat-offering and peace-offering such was the fact, and even in the offering for sin the priest had a portion.

And I believe that this is what is referred to here. These Jewish Christians were in great danger of forgetting their privileges. They had abandoned everything that they had once revered as the religion given them by God; they were no longer gazing on things that shadowed His glory. The grandeur, the magnificence, the glory of the Levitical institutions, all was left behind. God was not now, as of old, thundering from heaven. He had wrought with infinitely greater moral glory. He had sent His Son from heaven. Pardon and peace had been brought, and joy and liberty in the Holy Ghost; but all this was unseen. It is, however, one thing to enter into the comfort of the truth when all is bright and fresh, and another thing to hold it fast in time of reproach, shame, derision, and the falling away of some. When the first joy is somewhat lessened, the heart naturally returns to what it had once rested on. And there is always this danger for us—when evil is felt, the blessing not being so present to the soul.

Who among us that has long known Christ, known His ways, has not felt this snare? And what is the divine remedy? It is just that which the Holy Ghost here uses— “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever.” We must not sever this verse from the succeeding one— “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines...” The Holy Ghost would guard these Jewish believers against that which, compared with our own proper Christian blessings, is mere trash, earthly priesthood, holy places, offerings, tithes, and so on. These things, after all, were but novelties compared with the old thing, which is Jesus. Looked at historically, Christianity may seem a new thing. He had been but recently manifested; but who was He? and whence had He come? He was “the first-born of every creature;” yea, the Creator. “All things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” He was the One whom God intended to manifest from all eternity, and here we see Him in His complete person — “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” Through Him God could bless; with Him He would have us occupied.

We are told a little before to remember them that had the rule over us; to follow their faith, even if themselves were gone. But these all pass out of the scene, while “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever.” This is the only thing that abides unchangeably, and

establishes too. “Meats have not profited those who have been occupied therein.” Many might have abstained (it was God’s bidding that they should); but if occupied with the thing it was not for their profit. Christ was the substance; all else was shadow. Therefore He goes on to say, “We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.” If others have the husk, we are feeding on the kernel. (The “tabernacle” was used to express the Jewish thing). Everything had passed away in Christ. In Philippians the apostle could speak contemptuously of circumcision in contrast with having Christ, even though it was of God. To be occupied with it, now that Christ was come, was to be outside, to be of “the circumcision.”

“To eat.” It was not merely the offering, nor the burning of the offering, but the partaking of it. We have got Christ Himself, and our sins put away—sin, root and branch, dealt with by God. There is not now one question unsettled for us who believe. Has He one question unsettled with Christ? And if not with Christ, He has not with us; for He died and rose for us, and we are one with Him! As in the Jewish system, God and the offerer had their portions in the sacrifices, so now we may say that God has His own portion in the same Christ on whom we feed. The entrance into this exceedingly blessed thought is one of the things which the children of God greatly fail in—that we are seated by God Himself at the same table where He has His own joy and portion. Of course there is that in which we cannot share. In the burnt-offering all went up to God. The sweet fragrance of all that Christ was goes up to Him.

We must remember that God has His infinite joy in Christ; and not only for what He is in Himself, but for that which He has done for my sins. When we think of this, all of self is absorbed, and must sink before it. The old nature we have still; but it is in us to be crushed. We have to treat it all, its likings and dislikings, as a hateful thing. But the new life needs sustaining. It grows by feeding. As in natural life, the mere possession of riches will not sustain life. It is not only true that Christ is my life in the presence of God, but I must make Christ my own for my food, eating of Him day by day (John 6). He is in very deed given to us to be turned by faith into nourishment for us. And the sweet thing is, that we are entitled thus to think of Christ, given by God to be this food for us. It is not only that Christ is God’s, but He is ours too. Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

J. N. D.

Fragment: Habakkuk 2:20

When abiding in the presence of God, we have not an evil, or an over-abundant speech. “The Lord is in His holy temple, let all the earth keep silence before Him.”

The Altar of Incense

The place which the altar of incense occupies in the directions which Moses received is most instructive. Up to the end of Exodus 27 everything is arranged in respect of the manifestation of God — the symbols of display, as they are sometimes termed. Thereon it becomes the question of approaching God; and hence the next thing is the appointment and the consecration of the priests, these only having the privilege of entering the sanctuary. But before proceeding further, the perpetual burnt-offering is given; for until the people are before God in all the acceptance of its sweet savor, and God Himself is dwelling in their midst, sanctifying the tabernacle by His glory, and setting all apart for Himself, there could be no drawing nigh, no access into His presence. In other words, there could be no worship apart from the savor of the sacrifice and the presence of Jehovah. Everything thus being prepared, the symbols of approach follow; that is, those sacred vessels that were used in connection with coming into God's presence; and the first of these is the golden altar, or the altar of incense.

“And thou shalt make an altar to burn incense upon: of shittim-wood shalt thou make it. A cubit shall be the length thereof, and a cubit the breadth thereof; foursquare shall it be: and two cubits shall be the height thereof: the horns thereof shall be of the same. And thou shalt overlay it with pure gold, the top thereof, and the sides thereof round about, and the horns thereof; and thou shalt make unto it a crown of gold round about. And two golden rings shalt thou make to it under the crown of it, by the two corners thereof, upon the two sides of it shalt thou make it; and they shall be for places for the staves to bear it withal. And thou shalt make the staves of shittim-wood, and overlay them with gold. And thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony, where I will meet with thee. And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat-offering; neither shall ye pour drink-offering thereon. And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin-offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the Lord” (Ex. 30:1-10).

It was made of the two materials which characterized the ark, the table of shewbread—shittim-wood and gold (Ex. 30:1-5). The altar itself therefore—apart from its use—was a figure of the person of Christ, Christ as both God and man, God manifest in flesh. Connected with the altar this is significant, teaching, as it does, that there is no access to God but through Christ; that He indeed is the foundation both of our approach and worship. The priest (the worshipper) at the altar saw nothing but the gold, and God saw only the gold, that which was suited to Him, suited to His own nature.

The remembrance of this gives boldness when bowing in His presence. It is indeed a wondrous mercy that Christ is before the eye of God, and before the eye of the worshipper, Himself the

meeting-place between God and His people, as well as the foundation of His people's acceptance.

The position of this altar is given in the sixth verse. It was to be put "before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony." The brazen altar was outside, in the court of the tabernacle, the first thing that met the eye of one coming out of the camp to the entrance of the court. It thus taught that the question of sin must be settled before admission could be obtained. The altar of incense was inside, in the holy place; and none but the priests had access to it. There was in fact the laver between; but this is not yet mentioned, because the value of the sacrifice on the brazen altar brings at once (in figure) to the golden altar. The brazen altar tested man in responsibility; and the claims of God's righteousness being met by the sacrifice, He could introduce the believer into His own immediate presence, give him priestly privileges, and consequently access, in the person of the priest, to the altar of incense. Once the claims of the brazen altar met, nothing could shut out the worshipper from the golden altar. His title was perfect. This is seen in the epistle to the Hebrews. The blood that was shed on the cross gives boldness of access into the holiest (See Heb. 10). There is therefore the most intimate connection between the two altars.

The use of the altar may now be considered. Aaron was to burn sweet incense (incense of spices) thereon morning and evening when he dressed the lamps (vss. 7-8). The materials of which the incense was composed are named in the thirty-fourth verse. It is there called a perfume. Remark that it was burnt on the altar. It was the action of fire that brought out its sweet fragrance. This explains its significance. The fire is a type of the searching judgment of God, of His holiness as applied in judgment; and it was through this that our blessed Lord passed when upon the cross. But the only effect of the action of the holy fire upon Him was to bring out a "cloud" of sweet perfume. The incense typifies this—the fragrance of Christ to God; and inasmuch as it was to be a perpetual incense (vs. 8), it shows that this fragrance is ever ascending before the throne. If the efficacy of His work is presented in the savor of the sacrifice, the acceptability of His person is denoted by the incense. The two things are distinguished on the day of atonement. Aaron went in with incense into the holy of holies before he sprinkled the blood upon and before the mercy-seat. So Christ Himself entered with His own blood; but, if it may be so said where all is inseparably connected, He Himself takes the precedence even of His blood. It is indeed what He is in Himself that gives the blood its unspeakable preciousness.

But what, it may be inquired, is the meaning of this action on the part of Aaron? First, Aaron is a type of Christ, and a type of Christ at the altar in the holy place. He is thus, in burning the incense, a figure of the prevailing intercession of Christ. Aaron, be it remembered, goes into the holy place in all the virtue of the sacrifice which has been consumed upon the brazen altar. The incense moreover that he burns with the holy fire is always acceptable to God. Hence it teaches that the intercession of Christ ascends to God acceptably through the efficacy of what He is and what He has done. It cannot therefore fail. And as this incense was perpetual, so He ever liveth to make intercession for us; and on this account He is able to save His people to the uttermost, all the way through, even to the end of their wilderness journey. What comfort this assurance gives to His people, encompassed by the infirmities, difficulties, and trials of their desert path!

Secondly, Aaron at the altar of incense is a figure of the believer, inasmuch as all believers are priests. This aspect is exceedingly instructive; for thus regarding the burning of the incense it is a type of worship. First, then, it should be observed again that Aaron (and the believer as presented

by him) is before the golden altar in all the sweet savor of the burnt-offering; for it is through the virtue of this sacrifice that access into the holy place is enjoyed. This is of great importance. It teaches that there can be really no worship until we know what it is to be brought into God's presence in all the acceptance of Christ; not only knowing that our sins are cleared away, but also apprehending that we are before God in all the acceptability of Christ Himself, in all His inexpressible fragrance. Secondly, it is Christ in all that He is to God which is presented to God in worship; not our own feelings, not our own thoughts, but that which delights the heart of God; and that is Christ Himself, Christ as the One who has glorified Him on the earth, and finished the work which He gave Him to do. Thirdly, we gather that the essence of all worship lies in communion with God in all that Christ is, and in all that He has done; for when we worship by the Holy Spirit we present to God that in which He delights, and we delight in that which we present, and thus our thoughts, feelings, and affections are in unison with those of God Himself. Then worship—adoration of the highest character — is the result. Such is our priestly work at the altar—the perpetual presentation of the merits of Christ; and if we intercede there, our intercession also is according to the value of Christ. Hence He could say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye ask the Father in My name, He will give it you" (John 16:23).

There is a connection, it will be observed, between the incense and the lamps. Aaron is directed to burn the incense when he dresseth the lamps morning and evening. The lamps, as explained when speaking of the candlestick, are the manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit. This was seen in perfection in Him who was the light of the world, and should be displayed likewise both in the church and in the believer. But the point here, is that the light was maintained by priestly care. Aaron dressed the lamps. It is so now. The manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit is ever dependent upon the priestly action of Christ; and the burning of the incense—intercession or worship—will always be in proportion to the display of the Spirit's power. These three things indeed are inseparable—the priestly care of Christ, the manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit, and the worship of His people. In other words, if believers are not shining as lights in the world, they cannot burn incense at the golden altar, they are powerless for worship. Walk and worship are related; for if the believer is not in the presence of God in his ways throughout the week, he will not know what it is to be inside the rent veil, when gathered around the Lord at His table to show forth His death. Or, still to put another aspect, there will be no worship except as the result of the manifestation of God in the power of the Spirit. Hence the lamps must be dressed when the incense is burnt.

Warnings follow as to the use of the altar; and if Leviticus 10:1 be combined with this scripture, there are three things forbidden to be used upon this altar. First, there must be no strange incense. The incense offered must be divinely compounded—and no other could be accepted. If, for a moment, this be taken literally, what awful presumption is witnessed in many "churches" in Christendom in this day! Base imitations of this holy compound (the penalty of making which was death—see verse 38) are used in public services by those who claim to be priests, and for the worship of God! Even a Jew would regard it as abomination, and yet professing Christians can endorse its use! Surely an evidence both of the corruption of Christianity and of the power of Satan. Looking at it as an emblem, we are taught that nothing but the fragrance of Christ is acceptable to God in worship. Everything offered apart from Christ is "strange," and cannot be accepted. Secondly, no burnt sacrifice, no meat-offering, and no drink-offering must be offered

upon this altar. This would be to confound the golden with the brazen altar, and consequently to forget our true priestly position. It would be the same mistake now, if when gathered for worship, we took our place at the cross, instead of inside the rent veil. This is an error into which many souls unwittingly fall. The consequence is they never know the joy of being brought to God in virtue of the work of Christ; and hence they cannot occupy their true priestly position. Lastly, the scripture from Leviticus forbids the use of strange fire. It must be God's fire—fire kindled from heaven, from before the Lord (Lev. 9:24), and no other. Applying this to believers, the lesson is, that they can only worship by the Spirit of God. Natural fervor, and natural emotions, however produced, would in this sense be "strange" fire. It was for this reason, doubtless, that the priests were forbidden to drink wine or strong drink when they entered into the tabernacle. The effects of wine simulate those produced by the Spirit of God (See Acts 2:13,15). The fire equally with the incense must be divine to be acceptable upon the golden altar. A lesson which Christians of this day would surely do well to lay to heart, when the attempt is made on every hand by sights and sounds to work on the natural man to aid him in the worship of God. May they learn that all such things are really abominations in the sight of God!

Once a year atonement was to be made upon the horns of the altar with the blood of the sin-offering of atonements (vs. 10). The account of this is found in Leviticus 16. The reason of it was the imperfection of the priesthood. The true place of the priest was before the golden altar; and being what he was, he defiled the very place of his approach to God (compare Lev. 4:7); and hence the need of the continual application of the blood of atonement. This is instructive from its typical contrast. One sacrifice now avails forever. Christ has perfected forever by His one offering them that are sanctified; and consequently without interruption they enjoy perpetual access even into the holiest of all.

Finally a remark may be made upon the provision for the carrying of the altar through the wilderness. The staves and the rings are given here, and need no observation, as they are of the same material as the altar. But in Numbers 4:2 we find that there were two coverings: first, a cloth of blue; and secondly, outside, the badgers' skins. The blue—emblematic of what is heavenly—the heavenly character, as flowing from priestly intercession, and indeed as connected with the priestly position, was concealed. It was for the eye of God alone. Then come the badgers' skins, signifying that holy vigilance by which Christ guarded Himself from evil. This is outside, because it is a question of passing through the wilderness, where evil abounds. It teaches, therefore, that if the heavenly character is to be maintained, there must be unwearied watchfulness, and incessant diligence to guard ourselves, through the use of the Word, from the contaminations and pollutions which beset us on every hand.

E. D.

Fragment: Our Hearts in Heaven With Christ

If our affections and desires are lingering on earth, or stopping short of a glorified Christ in heaven, as the One in whom our life is hid, and to whom we are presently to be conformed in glory, and that in the glory where He is, we shall soon find that earthly things are more than dross and dung. Leave a stone on the ground for a time, and it will gradually sink into it. And our hearts, if they are not practically in heaven with Christ, will soon become attached to earthly things.

Millennial Glory

The mind of Peter on the hill was very much that of Jacob at Bethel. In one sense it was delight to him beyond expression, so that he might have said, "There was no more spirit in him." "Master, it is good for us to be here," tells the unforced necessary joy and satisfaction which the spot and occasion inspired. But then the occasion was a little too much for him. He feared, just as Jacob at Bethel, feeling that he was at the gate of heaven, and yet saying, "How dreadful is this place!" This may imply a serious state of soul in some sense; but it is a necessary state, while man is as he is. Even John in Patmos was overreached by the glory, though that was rather the judicial glory of Christ. This on the hill was the millennial, and in that a difference of experience may be accounted for. But still glory has ever proved itself too much for man, and a freeness was needed to give him ease in the presence of it, as Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others show us.

Paul in the third heavens had no alarms. He had visions and audiences which he could not communicate to others; but they did not alarm or overpower him at all. And this distinction is simple as well as manifest; for Paul was not as Peter. Peter on the hill was still flesh and blood. Paul in Paradise was simply "a man in Christ," whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell; the body may have been no help to him, neither was it any hindrance to him. If he enjoyed all these blessed communications both in seeing and hearing, he did so without the sense of his being like Peter in the body, and therefore is he the more sure witness of the state of a spirit having enjoyment incommunicable to others, but unalloyed with any fear or other exception to himself. Thus, however, it was with Peter and his brethren on the hill. The place was glorious, and they could have remained there forever; but still they were not altogether prepared for it. The joy of the place itself spake in them and through them when they said, "It is good for us to be here." The necessary unpreparedness of flesh and blood for the vision told of itself in the fear that accompanied this.

But mark the operation of this glory further. When the Lord reached the foot of the hill, the multitudes on seeing Him "were greatly amazed, and"—some of them at least—"running to Him saluted Him." This is very remarkable; but, meditated on a little, it is full of beautiful and interesting meaning. I have no doubt that the Lord bore on His person the reflection or shine of the glory unto which He had just been transfigured on the top of the hill. The word "amazed" here is the same as "affrighted" in chapter 16:5; and there it distinctly expresses that sentiment of the soul which is awakened by the vision of a glorious heavenly emotion. So that I doubt not the Lord was here seen under some shine or reflection of the glory.

But what does all this tell us? I believe it is designed to bear us on to the day when the glorified family in heaven will visit the earth, and be recognized and enjoyed in their peculiar heavenly persons. They will be known by the people in the footstool that they belong to a scene above, and surpassing their own. "The glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another." They will be recognized in such a character. The throne will be known to be theirs, while the footstool is the place of those whom they occasionally visit. But this sentiment of the soul, while felt

and owned, and in its beautiful and perfect measure acted on, will not be overwhelming. They salute Jesus, though amazed.

J. G. B.

The Judgment-Seat of Christ

Everything will come out there! There can be no disguise at all in the pure, bright light before the throne of the discernment of Christ, where all the full intelligence of His mind will beam out on His people. It is not the question of being saved, but of how we, as saved ones, have been walking. Is it strange, since it cost Christ so much to accomplish that sacrifice, that when He gets His people home He should say, "Now let us look at their walk, no question as to their acceptance; but let me see whether they have walked according to my Father's thoughts, who would have His sons and daughters walking as those who are separated unto Him by the blood of His Son; as those bought with such a price, did they walk worthy of it?"

G. V. W.

The Four Evangelists of Samaria

The ancient histories preserved in the Old Testament, are not only full of fitting instruction for saints as to the ways of God in discipline, but are often remarkable illustrations of His grace to the world. And not unfrequently are they so singularly so, that we cannot but conclude that God permitted the events and inspired the record with that special object. We venture to suggest that the siege of Samaria is a salient instance (2 Kings 6:12).

Let us trace the intensely interesting narrative. A famine was raging inside the city because of the siege without. In other words, there was an active and powerful enemy outside, and a grievous lack of resources within. It is exactly the state of the natural man, one who is unsaved. Bad enough is it to be under the attack of a foe, vigilant and unrelenting! how much worse to be without resources! Not only powerless to inflict a blow, but unable to bear an assault from the hosts arrayed against us. What a famine it was! Tender women, each of them mothers, confederating together to take the lives of their children, and when one victim had been cooked and eaten, its mother the next day, exasperated because the child of the other was withheld, and the cannibal dish she had looked forward to not forthcoming, appealing then to the king for a redress he was too unnerved to give her! Again we say, What a famine was this, effacing from women the very attributes of their sex — gentleness, tenderness, and love of their offspring! And yet is there not an even more terrible famine raging this moment — a famine of the Word of God! Perhaps we shall be told that this is far from the truth; for never was there such a profusion of Bibles in use as now, every year increasing the number of those which issue from the press. True; but the question is not to what extent the Word of God issues from the press, but to what extent it enters the human heart. There was corn and flour enough and to spare outside at this time, but not a grain could be found inside the beleaguered city. And so is it in the antitype; the Word of God is multiplied without end; but, dear reader, how much of it is hid in thine heart (Psa. 109:11), so that, should there be a prolonged attack of the adversary, there shall be no lack of divine resources wherewith to sustain it? Alas in every unsaved soul there is a famine of the Word of God; and there is moreover the active enmity of Satan without—answering to the two things which afflicted Samaria at that terrible crisis.

The sixth chapter closes in the utter despair that had come upon the heads of the people. The seventh opens as with a trumpet call, with a message of mercy from the Lord: “Then Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the Lord.” Things being at their very worst, God comes forth to do His best. Oh, how like the cross! When man had proved himself not only to be incorrigibly bad, but to be bereft of all resources, “without strength,” and taken captive by the devil at his will, it was at such a moment that God came upon the scene, finding in the deep and dire extremity of the case a coveted opportunity, and a fitting platform for bringing into display the glory of His precious and abounding grace. Surely it is this abundant mercy which is betokened in the way in which His prophet was charged to announce glad tidings to guilty Israel, the famine-stricken and closely-besieged men of Samaria. How truly it indicates that God has resources inconceivable to us, and that we know “not what a day may bring forth!” Had the occupants of the harassed city

been asked as to the next day, would they not have replied, with mournful wail, "Tomorrow shall be even as this day, and worse"? But what a matchless hidden resource, what a male of might, what a Man in reserve, God had by Him in the person of Christ, before all worlds blessed forever; more than fulfilling now for the hungry soul what was then proclaimed to the hunger-bitten citizens of despairing Samaria, "Thus saith the Lord; tomorrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel in the gate of Samaria." These were the glad tidings for the starving men and women and perishing children of the apparently doomed city. Could anything be finer than this magnificent announcement, which the prophet Elisha had been charged to convey by the God against whom they had so sinfully offended, a proclamation of the abounding supplies which He would pour into their lap on the morrow—in a word, the Lord's salvation. Like their fathers at Pi-hahiroth, they had but to stand still and hold their peace, for the Lord would fight for them. Most emphatically was this announced under the distinct authority of His name: "Hear ye the word of Jehovah; thus saith Jehovah." Did they but believe it, it could not fail to give instant relief to their over-wrought and anguished hearts. It would be a signal then for the rising of that dense dark cloud which had so long enveloped their spirits, converting the tomorrow of their dread and despair into a day to be watched for as a desired haven of peace and plenty.

But if there was no faith in Jehovah's testimony, the dark pall would continue to cast its heavy folds over them, their benighted today would be unrelieved by hope, and their dreaded tomorrow unbrightened by a single ray of light. To faith, on the contrary, the harrowing scene of sorrow, suffering, and death would be illuminated with the presence and the word of Israel's God, Jehovah of hosts. And mark—the wondrous announcement was weighted with no restrictions or conditions. Like the gospel of our salvation, it was good news from a Savior-God that He had entered the scene to meet their lamentable case, according to the deep compassions of His blessed heart, and to effect a complete deliverance for them, as unexpected as it was unasked. How this was received we are not informed, save as to one man, one of the nobles of the kingdom, and a courtier, who answered the man of God with derision. God would have to make windows in heaven before He would bring that about, was the nature of his unbelieving retort. But the prophet was equal to the occasion, being led to make instant answer: "Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof."

The issues of the gospel are here distinctly before us—abundant blessing declared unconditionally; believed in, bringing instant relief, and lighting up all the horizon of the future with gladness; refused, only adding to present misery the certainty of future judgment. Four leprous men are now seen at the entering in of the city. We are not told whether they had heard anything of the prophet's word from heaven or not. But they own with deep anguish their desperate case. Why should they sit there until they die? If they enter the city, it is to die; if they sit still, they will die. Why not give themselves up to the enemy? Peradventure their lives will be spared; and if not, they do but die. Surely it were better to be slain by the hand of the foe than to waste away ignobly by slow starvation. So they creep forth in the twilight hour for the purpose of surrendering to the enemy. What a striking lesson for unbelieving hearts! Their wretchedness drove them to trust their enemies; man's deeper misery fails to induce confidence in God. They cast themselves into the arms, as it were, of a powerful and proved adversary, but man will not trust the One who has demonstrated His precious love by every proof it were possible for even Himself to give! How faithless, how unbelieving is poor, wretched man, who, in spite of the entreaties and the evidences

of His mercy, His long-suffering, and His forbearance, is utterly without confidence in a God who is love. Regarding Him as his enemy, man will not trust the One who can alone bless Him, and who waits upon him in his abject penury with untold mercies for eternity; while these poor lepers, who had a real and mighty enemy in Benhadad and his hosts, nevertheless trusted him, and in result made the wonderful discovery, in answer to the confidence of their hearts” When they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, no man there!” Not an enemy to be found; no, not one! All that were against them gone; every foe vanished; not a hand uplifted to bar their progress. Nor was that all. From one end of the camp to the other, nothing but a profusion of spoil met their astonished gaze. They enter a tent and feast to repletion, and with newfound strength carry forth silver and gold and raiment, which they hide for future need; and again they do the same, as much as they would—monarchs of all they survey! Out of the eater has come forth meat, honey out of the carcass of the lion. What a wondrous reverse of fortune! starvation exchanged for satiety; anxiety and dread of the foe replaced by the discovery that the enemy was gone, and all his treasure was strewn at their feet, spoils of an adversary they had never encountered, a fortune theirs for which they had never toiled! How lovely and how perfect an outline of the grace which bringeth salvation, and of the matchless way in which God acts for His own glory when He delivers from going down into the pit. “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God, eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Syria being in the ascendant, these loathsome objects of unutterable misery might have fittingly concluded on the forfeiture of their lives to Benhadad; but God had interposed when hope had expired, all being apparently lost, and destruction dogging their steps. The hand of Jehovah was uplifted; with His finger He just troubled the atmosphere, causing the Syrian host to hear a noise as of an approach of armies upon their flanks, and thus in the same twilight hour that the four despairing men came to the end of themselves, saying, as it were, like Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,” God dispersed the foe to a man, like the chaff of the summer threshing-floor, so that not a foot or a finger opposed their way of life, liberty, and blessing! They found a feast to begin with (Luke 14:16) for present necessity, and a fortune to follow (Eph. 1:3) for their permanent endowment. Oh, what a God, what a wonder-working God, is ours! But the blessing frightens them by its immensity; God had given them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. All around was profusion of treasure greater than they could ever appropriate, and they spake to one another saying, “We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light some mischief will come upon us,” reminding us of what we read elsewhere, “necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!” Accordingly “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh;” in a word, they became evangelists! Impelled by the magnitude of their own blessing, and the discovery of its boundless extent spreading out on every side for “whosoever will,” as it were, fields “white already to harvest,” they re-enter the doomed city now as heralds of divine mercy, announcing to “the king’s household” who are perishing with hunger (like those who know not the profusion of blessing waiting the appropriation of faith), that the siege is raised, and more than heart could wish is within their very reach!

They succeed at length in getting the ear of the king; to him the news is too good to be true; he hugs his sackcloth afresh, and (reasoning as he does instead of believing) nothing better than sore misgivings of greater evil fill his soul. His retinue doubt and fear, anon they hope, and at length

they try if it can be true. And what a discovery eventually reveals itself to them—all the way to Jordan nothing but peace and plenty, bounty and blessing, for everyone who has faith to quit the city of destruction and death for the open plains of God's manifested intervention in goodness; "all the way was full of garments and vessels;" yes, all the way to Jordan!

Thus the word of the Lord was fulfilled as to His mercy. Fine flour and barley were sold in the gate of Samaria at plenty price, and the very haste and excitement of the people in their joy of heart at such a deliverance was the means of fulfilling upon the king's aide-de-camp the sentence pronounced by the prophet. He saw the bounty and the blessing of the people, but tasted it not; like Dives, lifting up his eyes in hell, beholding Lazarus exalted to Abraham's bosom, but not even a drop of cold water alleviating the depth and intensity of his own eternal misery. Thus was the word of the Lord fulfilled also in judgment. What a graphic picture of abounding grace to the believer and of inevitable judgment to the derider of God's salvation; not "one jot or one tittle" of God's word failing, but all brought to pass as the prophet of Jehovah had spoken.

In conclusion, may we remember, dear reader, with solemnized but adoring hearts, that though a false alarm, as men speak, the commotion of a breath of air by the finger of God, may suffice to overthrow the enemies of His people, only the real endurance by the Son of His love of relentless judgment due to us, was sufficient for the blotting out of a single sin. "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.

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