

THINGS NEW AND OLD VOLUME 14

by C.H. Mackintosh

A collection of articles and writings by C.H. Mackintosh from Things New and Old Volume 14, covering various biblical topics and Christian teaching.

49 Chapters

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Things New and Old Volume 14

A Deathbed Conversion by a Dream

Job 33:14, 15.

He could not bear the dreaded cross.

He could not count this world but loss,

He could not face its scorn and shame,

Nor wear the Savior's lowly name.

But sickness came, and death drew near,

And with it sorrow, pain, and fear,

And now he longs to be forgiven,

And wear a glorious crown in heaven.

Now christian friends drew round and prayed.

And many a warning word they said;

But all their words to him were loss,

He sought the crown, but shunned the cross.

Till, in the vision of the night,

The One drew near whose word is light,

And o'er the sleeper kindly bent,

And to His loving heart gave vent.

"Poor sinner; I am Christ thy God:

Behold the crown, bought with my blood:

Thou couldst not bear one pang for me,

"Who died, from hell to set thee free!

Thou couldst not wear my easy yoke,

Who all thy galling fetters broke,

Nor meet for me, slight, scorn, disgrace,

Who took for thee the servant's place;

Thou couldst not count the world as loss—

Well—take the crown without the cross.”

These gracious words the sleeper woke,

And into rapturous strains he broke;

Thy cross, thy shame, be all my own:

Thine, Savior, only is the crown.

A.A.W.

Alone with Jesus

(Read John 8:1-11.)

The more closely and prayerfully we study the four gospels, the more clearly do we see the distinct design of the Holy Ghost in each, and the perfect way in which He has pursued and carried out that design, even in the most minute details. The grand theme of each is Christ; but in no two of the gospels is He presented in the same way. In Matthew, we have Him as the Messiah—Son of Abraham, Son of David—a Jew—Heir of the promises made to the fathers—Heir of the throne of David—Fulfiller of the prophecies—presented to Israel, according to their own scriptures, and deliberately rejected.

Such is the distinct object of the Holy Ghost in Matthew—such His marked design. This He pursues throughout, with unswerving faithfulness. To this end everything is made subservient. With a view to this He culls, groups, and arranges His materials. For this, chronological order is set aside without hesitation and without apology. Scenes and circumstances, separated by many months, are grouped together, by the skilful hand of the Holy Ghost, for the specific purpose of presenting His subject in perfect keeping with the scope and design of the entire gospel, from which He never diverges the breadth of a hair. In a word, Matthew groups for dispensational ends. His is what we may venture to call the great dispensational gospel. Thus much as to Matthew.

In Mark, we have our blessed Lord as the Servant the perfect Workman—the divine Minister—the indefatigable Preacher and Teacher, whose days were given to work, and His nights to prayer—who could hardly find time to eat or sleep—the most laborious Worker that ever wrought in God's great harvest held. Mark tells us, by the Holy Ghost, what the Savior did and how He did it. His gospel is a marvelous record of work, from first to last. We have no record of our Lord's birth—no genealogical chain stretching away back to David, to Abraham, or to Adam. There was no need to trace the pedigree of One who came to serve—to work—to toil night and day. The question in Mark is not so much who He was, as what He did. We are simply told that He was "Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and forthwith the inspired penman plunges into his subject, and gives us a rapid survey of a life of unparalleled labor—a path of service pursued with unflinching decision, from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary—resumed in resurrection and carried on from the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. See Mark 16:19, 20.

Thus much as to Mark, who, we may further add, observes throughout the strict historical order. It is important for the reader to note this, as it will enable him to see the instances in which both Matthew and Luke depart from strict chronological sequence.

Luke gives us "The man Christ Jesus." Such is preeminently his theme. Hence he gives us the pedigree traced up, not merely to David and Abraham, but to Adam and to God. It is not the Messiah, nor the Jew nor the worker, but the man. All that is exquisitely human we have in Luke, just as we have all that is purely Jewish in Matthew, all that is directly ministerial in Mark. Luke groups for moral ends, as Matthew for dispensational purposes. Mark does not group; he simply

records, in historic order, the facts of our Lord's marvelous ministry.

Now, before turning to that gospel from which the subject of this paper is selected, we would request the reader's earnest attention to what we have stated in reference to the three synoptical gospels, as they have been called. We would ask him to study the gospels for himself; to compare the passages diligently; to seek to understand why Matthew or Luke departs, in any given case, from the exact order of time; to ask God to teach him, by His Holy Spirit, the true reason for every such departure. In this way, we feel persuaded, he will reap a rich harvest of blessing. He will obtain a deeper insight into the infinite wisdom that dictated those peerless documents. He will rise from his study with a more profound faith in the plenary inspiration of these wonderful narratives.

Furthermore, he will see that those very passages in which the rationalist, the skeptic, or the infidel has sought to find flaws and discrepancies, present the most striking and exquisite proofs of divine wisdom and marked design. He will be convinced that there is no standing-ground between these two conclusions, that the evangelists were either divinely inspired, or they were the most senseless narrators that never put pen to paper. That they were divinely inspired is proved in every page, in every paragraph, in every line. The internal evidence is perfectly irresistible; and hence it follows that these inspired writers could no more clash one with another than two heavenly bodies, while pursuing their divinely appointed orbits, could come in collision. If, therefore, there seem to be a discrepancy, it is simply because of our ignorance. Let us devoutly own this, and wait for further light.

We shall now proceed with our immediate theme.

The Gospel of John has a character peculiarly its own. In it the Holy Ghost unfolds to our view the Person of the Son of God—the Word—the Eternal Life—the true God. It is not the Messiah, as in Matthew—not the Minister, as in Mark—not the social Man, as in Luke; but the Son, what He was in Himself from all eternity; what He was, though rejected by Israel and the world at large; what He was to any poor way-worn, heavy laden, sin-burdened creature who crossed His blessed path.

Such is the lofty theme of the divinely inspired John. And what is so peculiarly touching is, that while he gives us the very highest possible view of the Blessed One—the most glorious revelation of the Person of the Son—he, nevertheless, continually shows Him to us alone with the sinner. This surely is a fact full of sweetness, comfort, and divine power for us.

Let us look at the opening paragraph of John 8—a paragraph that bears upon its every clause the stamp of divine inspiration. Our blessed Lord, having spent His night on the lonely mountain top, is found, early in the morning, at His post, teaching the people in the temple. Into His holy and gracious presence, the scribes and Pharisees bring a poor convicted sinner—one respecting whom there could be no possible mistake—one who had openly and flagrantly broken the law of Moses. They quote the law against her. "Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?"

Here then was a case. These men, no doubt, thought to involve our Lord in a dilemma. They wanted to bring Him into collision with Moses—to make it appear that He was throwing the law overboard. This might seem very clever; but ah! what is cleverness in the presence of God? Still their purpose was obvious. If He had said, "Stone her," they might pronounce Him no better than Moses. If, on the other hand, He had said, "You must not stone her," then He was making void the

law. But He said neither. “The law was given by Moses,” and the Lord allows it to stand in all its majesty, in all its stringency, in all its force. He came not to destroy the law, but to magnify it in the very highest possible manner, both in His life and in His death.

It is a very grave error indeed to suppose that the law is set aside. So far from this, the apostle, in his first epistle to Timothy, declares that, “The law is good if a man use it lawfully.” If the law were dead or set aside, it could not be said to be good for anything, for that which is dead is good for nothing. What then is the law good for? Not for justification, but for conviction—not as a rule of life, but as a rule of death.

It is thus our Lord uses it in the scene now before us. He turns the sharp edge of the law right back against the men who had quoted it against a poor fellow sinner. With those men He could have no sympathy whatever. They had conducted this woman into His presence in order to have judgment pronounced and executed upon her. But He had not come to judge, but to save. And yet, as He says, at verse 16, if He judged, His judgment was true—oh! how true in the case of the scribes and Pharisees! They had accused the sinner, and they would fain accuse the Savior; but He makes them accuse themselves. “Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground.” There He was the great Lawgiver Himself, the very One whose finger had written the first set of tables. How little they knew this! They were quoting the law against a fellow sinner, in order to find occasion against the Lawgiver. What a position for men to find themselves in! In the presence of the Lawgiver, quoting the law, themselves guilty before Him!

There is something awfully interesting here. Indeed there is not such a scene anywhere else in the sacred canon. It is perfectly unique. Little did these men know what they were doing for the poor convicted one, and for untold millions besides, when they led her into the presence of Jesus. Her very best friends could not have done better for her.

But let us pursue the marvelous narrative. “So, when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” They were determined to have an answer, and truly He let them have one. If they would place Him, before the time, in the judgment seat, He must judge all. He could not give a partial judgment. He could not judge one and let another pass. In point of fact, He judged no man. The object of His blessed mission to a world of sinners was not judgment, but salvation. He came not to cast a stone at a poor, guilty sinner. They could never get Him to engage in such work, blessed forever be His glorious name. How could a divine Savior cast the stone of judgment at a lost convicted sinner? Impossible. If there was a sinless one among them, let him proceed to do the work of judgment. No doubt the sinner was guilty, and moreover, the sentence of Moses was as distinct as possible; but where was the executioner? This was the puzzling question. Who could dare to lift the first stone?

What a complete turning of the tables is here! What becomes of all the cleverness? What an intensely interesting moment! What principle was at stake! There is the sinner—there is the law—there too is the Lawgiver; but who will presume, in His presence, to execute the sentence? This is the point? “And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.” Does this remind us of the writing of the second set of tables that were enclosed in the ark and covered with the mercy seat? Is there anything significant, anything suggestive, in these two writings on the ground? One thing is clear, namely, that conscience was set to work. “They which heard it, being convicted by

their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.”

Nothing can exceed the moral power of all this. These Scribes and Pharisees are driven out by the intense power of the light that was shining upon them. They could not stand it. Neither human cleverness nor human righteousness can stand the test of the divine presence. These men were wrapped up in the cloak of their own fancied sanctity, and hence they could not endure the light. In order to be able to abide in the presence of God, we must take our true place as utterly lost, guilty, and undone—no cloak—no righteousness—no holiness—no wisdom—not one jot or tittle of anything good in ourselves. But the scribes and Pharisees were not on this ground at all. They were men of character—men of weight—men of reputation, in the world; and the light of what God is—God in Christ—was shining, in full blaze upon them, and they dare not say they were without sin, and all that remained was for them to make their escape as speedily as possible from the action of a light that was reading them through and through.

But why did they begin with the eldest? Why was he the first to retreat? Because he had the greatest reputation to maintain—the character of highest standing to support. No one who has a reputation to maintain—a name or a character to keep up, amongst his fellows, can stand for a moment in the light of the presence of God. Such an one can do well enough in the presence of his fellows; he can get on in the world inasmuch as there such are highly esteemed. A man of character is respected amongst men. But let us remember these solemn and salutary words, “That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” God values a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a lowly mind. “To this man will I look, even to him who is of a broken and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.” Now the scribes and Pharisees were the direct opposite of all this, and hence they could find no place in the presence of Jesus.

“They went out,” not in a crowd, not promiscuous, but “one by one.” Conscience is an individual thing. Had they remained, they must strip off their cloaks, and cry out, “Just as I am, without one plea.” For this they were not prepared. They were thoroughly confounded, and sent about their business. The Light of the world was shining in the full luster of His heavenly beams, and these muffled men could not endure His brightness, and so they went out and left the poor sinner alone with Jesus.

Blessed moment for her! The whole scene cleared. No answer, no sentence—no executioner—not a single stone of judgment. How was this? Was she not a sinner? Yes, a flagrant one. Was not the law against her? No doubt. How was it then? Jesus was there—the divine embodiment of “grace and truth,” and He was not going to stone a poor convicted sinner. It was not for such an object that He had left that bright and blessed world above. Had it been only a question of stoning the sinner, Moses could have managed that. There was no need for Moses’ Master to come down into this world.

But oh! there was grace in the heart of Jesus—yes, grace and truth, and truth and grace. Both shine out, with peculiar luster, in this truly inimitable scene. “Truth,” in its mighty moral force, had driven the accusers from the scene; and now “grace,” in all its sweetness and soothing power, rises with healing in its wings upon the soul of the poor trembling sinner, and sounds in her ears these precious words, “Neither do I condemn thee.” Precious accents! sweet, ineffably sweet, to a broken heart and contrite spirit! gladdening beyond expression to one who had, a moment before,

been expecting the stones of judgment to fall thick upon her guilty head. Mercy rejoices over judgment; and grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, that blessed One knew what it was to cost Him to speak such words in the ear of a sinner. It was to cost Him His life. That woman deserved to die. There could be no question about that. "The soul that sinneth shall die" was the stern sentence of God's law—the solemn enactment of His government. Was Jesus going to reverse this sentence? Nay; but He was going to bear it in the sinner's stead. He, the sinless One who alone had the right to cast the stone at the sinner, was to expose Himself to the stroke of justice, and have the stone cast at Him.

Such is the solid basis on which the glorious ministry of reconciliation rests—the atoning death of Christ—His giving Himself the just for the unjust. It will perhaps be said that there is nothing about atonement in John 8 True; the great subject of the entire Gospel of John is the Person, not the atoning work of the Son. But it is needful, nay essential, for us to know the ground on which our blessed Lord could speak those words of balm and consolation in a sinner's ear, "Neither do I condemn thee." That ground is, unquestionably, His sacrificial atoning death. In no other way—on no other ground, could sin be passed, remitted, or blotted out. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Solemn yet glorious words! Solemn, as letting us know what sin is. Glorious, as letting us know what remission is.

But let us carefully mark the authority on which the woman knew she was not condemned. What was it? Simply the word of Jesus. She knew it because He said it. Blessed authority—nothing like it—none other but it. Christ's work the basis—His word the authority. How simple! How solid! How satisfactory! Nothing can touch it. All the powers of earth and hell—men and devils, cannot shake this foundation—the foundation of a divine work, a divine word—a foundation on which the reader who needs and desires it, may rest this moment, and rest forever.

The scribes and Pharisees knew nothing of this ground or this authority. If they had met the woman on her way out from the Lord's presence, and questioned her as to the issue of her interview, how they would have scorned the idea of "no condemnation!" They would have sent her to a reformatory or a penitentiary, and after some years of moral reform they might begin to admit that there was some faint hope for such a wretched creature. But ah! what a sorry basis is moral reform! —what a poor authority is a human certificate! No, reader; it will never do—never stand—never suit either for God or for thy precious soul. It must be all divine. And so it is, blessed be God! Christ did the work—God speaks the word—faith behaves and fills the heart with peace and joy. Nor this only. The same grace that fills the heart with peace, gives power over sin in all its workings. For let it never be forgotten that an indissoluble link binds together these two utterances, "No condemnation"—"Sin no more." Grace shines in the one; holiness breathes in the other.

An Arrow from the Quiver of God

A lady was once distributing tracts on board a steam-packet; and, amongst others, she handed one to a gentleman. She passed along the deck, and as she returned she was deeply pained to see him tear the tract in fragments and fling it overboard. She simply said, as she walked past him, "You will have to account for that."

The gentleman thought no more of the matter. The tract was flung upon the waters, as he imagined, and he forgot all about it. But not so the living God. He had not forgotten either the tract or the man who had torn it up. He caused a little scrap of that torn tract to be blown by the breeze into the gentleman's bosom; and that very night, as he was undressing to go to bed, the fragment of the tract fell out of his bosom. He took it up. It was but a very small scrap; but it was just large enough to contain two words of immense weight and deep solemnity, namely, God and eternity; and along with these two words, the lady's pointed utterance came back to his memory, "You will have to account for that."

Thus, then, this gentleman had before his mind those three grand and solemn realities, God—Eternity—Judgment. Tremendous words! He lay down, but not to sleep. There was no sleep for his eyes, or slumber for his eyelids that night. He was full of tossing to and fro till the morning. The words, God, eternity, and "you will have to account for that" rang in his ears, and sounded deep down in his heart.

He arose from his couch and sought to drown his anxiety in the cursed intoxicating cup. But it would not do. He awoke from his wine only to feel with augmented force those solemn words, "God! —Eternity!—Judgment to come!" In short an arrow from the quiver of God had entered his soul. He had thought to get rid of that little tract—to drown that silent messenger. But no; God had His eye upon him. God sent the breeze and caused it to blow that identical scrap of the torn tract into his bosom. Of the scores of scraps into which the tract had been torn, not one would do but that very one, because it contained the very words which the Eternal Spirit meant to use as an arrow to pierce his soul.

How marvelous are God's ways! Who but an atheist could doubt that the hand of God was in that breeze which blew that little fragment into the gentleman's bosom? Blessed be His name, He knows how to reach the soul; and when He begins to work, nothing and no one can hinder. He had His eye upon that precious soul, spite of all his enmity and all his efforts to turn aside the arrow which sovereign grace had aimed at his heart. The gentleman thought to get rid of the tract; but God was determined that just so much of the tract should lodge in his bosom as contained the arrow that was to be lodged in his heart. In vain did the gentleman seek to get rid of his impressions, to stifle his convictions. His misery increased, his anxiety became more intense. There was but one thing which could heal his wound and that was the precious balm of the gospel, the soothing virtues of the blood of Christ. He was brought under the sound of the gospel, and his troubled soul found rest in the finished work of Christ.

And now reader, what sayest thou to these things? Hast thou ever felt aught of the awful solemnity of those words, "God—Eternity—and Judgment to come?" Remember, we earnestly pray thee, thou hast, sooner or later, to meet God—to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. Do think of this! Think of what it will be to meet God out of Christ—to stand, in all thy sins, before the great white throne, where every man will be judged according to his works—to spend a never ending eternity in the dreadful flames of hell. We confess the thought is perfectly appalling. Eternity! What an overwhelming word! Say, beloved reader, art thou prepared for it? If not, why not? Why delay another moment? Why not flee now—just now, to the arms of a Savior-God who stands ready to welcome thee to His bosom? Oh! do come, we earnestly beseech thee! Come to Jesus, just as thou art. Trifle not with thy precious immortal soul. Suffer not the god of this world any longer to blind thine eyes, and deceive thine heart. Let not the pleasures of sin and the fascinations of the world any longer detain thee. Flee from the wrath to come. Time is short. The day of salvation will soon close, the acceptable year of the Lord will speedily pass away from thee. The door of mercy will soon be closed upon thee forever.

Do, oh! do, dear fellow sinner, listen to the warning note once more sounded in thine ear. God calls thee. Jesus calls thee. The Eternal Spirit calls thee. Turn not away thine ears. Say not, "Time enough." Thou knowest not what the next hour may bring forth. It may be thou wilt never see another sun rise; and oh! the thought of being cut off in thy sins and consigned to an everlasting hell is intolerable. We long for thy salvation. We would entreat thee by all that is grave, solemn, and momentous, to come this very hour to Jesus. Trust Him and thou shalt never perish. Believe in Him and thou shalt be saved. May this paper prove to thy precious soul an arrow from the quiver of God!

But ere the trumpet shakes

The mansions of the dead,

Hark, from the gospel's cheering sound,

What joyful tidings spread!

Ye lost ones, seek His grace

Whose wrath ye cannot bear;

Fly to the shelter of His cross,

And find salvation there.

The Blessed Home

There is a blessed home, beyond these azure skies,
Where saints with Christ in glory live, in life that never dies.
There is a blessed home, beyond earth's toil and din,
Where we in white shall walk with Christ, beyond the reach of sin.
There is a blessed home, beyond night's glittering sky,
Where neither griefs, nor pain, nor woes, nor death shall e'er come nigh.
There is a blessed home, where every prayer and tear
Will find its record written full, in answer bright and clear.
There is a blessed home, where prayer is turn'd to praise;
When in the light of Jesus' love we'll rest for endless days.
There is a blessed home, where God our Father dwells;
And every child who enters there, the note of glory swells.
Within that blessed home, around our Father's board,
The endless feast will then be spread of hidden manna stored.
Within that blessed home His "new name" we shall bear,
Inscribed upon the fair "white stone," His special love to share.
Within that blessed home, within our Father's rest,
Within the everlasting arms, forever loved and blest!
O Father, Christ, and home! to be forever there
Is joy unspoken, love untold, and bliss beyond compare!

The Blood Which Speaks

Unseen by human eye, Abel fell—the anger of Cain had spent itself upon its victim—the earth was stained with human gore, and the only tongue, as Cain doubtless thought, that could have witnessed against him was motionless beside him. Death, which entered the world by sin, now received its first victim. Did Abel supplicate for his life? That probably will never be known on this side the grave. No human ear overheard what passed between the brothers, and now the awe-inspiring stillness of death was undisturbed by Abel's voice. Evidently Cain thought his work was a success, for when God asked him, "Where is Abel thy brother?" he boldly denied all knowledge of what had but recently taken place. But the second question must have instantly dispelled all hopes of security and immunity from punishment. "What hast thou done?" proved that God knew of the deed, and the announcement, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground," told of a witness against him of which he had never dreamed.

That blood which he had shed had a voice which God heard, and He interpreted it to Cain. All was open to God, and to His ear it had spoken. Abel had not accused his brother, nor cried to God for vengeance; but his blood, poured out on the earth, spoke in terms which the Creator could understand. One made in the image of God, though in Adam's likeness, had fallen to the ground, the victim of jealousy and hatred; and whilst to Cain all seemed quiet, God heard what he did not, and took immediate steps in respect to it. He passed sentence on the murderer without interposing any delay; and that sentence, applying as it did to Cain's existence on earth, held out no hope of its remission, nor even of relaxation of its penalties; for God acted not according to what Cain thought or felt about the matter, but according to what that blood was in His sight; as He heard the voice of his brother's blood, when to Cain's dull ear everlasting stillness had settled down on the scene. The justice of God's action no right-minded person could or would question. Cain had sinned and he must suffer for it.

The blood cried to God, the blood of a righteous man. Of Abel's righteousness there could be no doubt. God's acceptance of his sacrifice attested it, and the Lord Jesus afterward affirmed it. (Heb. 11:4; Matt. 23:25.) Could not that blood then avail before God on Cain's behalf? No. Abel was righteous, yet he needed a sacrifice for himself, as his offering shadowed out, therefore he never could atone by his merits for his brother's sin, nor could they be placed to Cain's account. "None can by any means redeem his brother, nor give unto God a ransom for him" (Psalm 49:7), the Psalmist declares; yet, if any saint could have helped by his merits a sinner on earth, here we should say was the opportunity for it. It was the first sin committed against a fellow creature, and God, not man merely, acknowledged the one who died was righteous. But all Abel's righteousness availed not for Cain. God acted not according to Abel's merits, but according to what that blood spoke of. So inviolable was the sentence, and immediate was the judgment. He knew all along what Cain would do; but till the blood of Abel was shed, the ground was not laid on which He could act. When however Cain showed what he was, and the blood had cried to God, action forthwith took place, for God responded to that voice. A fugitive and a vagabond was Cain to be on the earth, and the ground which he had cultivated with such success should henceforth refuse to

reward his toil. Daily then and hourly would he be reminded of the condition into which he had been brought when that blood had been shed, a condition which never would alter, for it was based on what had taken place.

Thank God we read of the blood of another which speaks likewise. In this the two have a resemblance; but, speaking better things than that of Abel, tells us of a difference. It is called the blood of sprinkling, a term which the Hebrews would understand. Their forefathers had been sprinkled with blood in company with the book of the covenant, a token that they accepted the responsibility of the terms of the covenant, and would submit to the penalty if they broke them. The blood of sprinkling speaks, we read. It has a voice, which, like that of Abel, God has interpreted, and a voice to which all do well to give heed, for it speaks of better things than his did. Pardon, peace, redemption, a standing before God in the holiest—these are some of the better things of which it bears witness. “This is my blood of the new testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins,” the Lord said to His disciples the night before He suffered. From His lips they heard something about His blood. “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins,” is the statement of the apostle Paul concerning himself and others when writing under the guidance and by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. “By him to reconcile all things unto himself, having made peace by the blood of his cross,” we read of in Colossians; and “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,” we are told of in the Hebrews. Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:20; Heb. 10:19.

Abel’s blood spoke, and judgment ensued. The blood of sprinkling speaks (for its voice is never silent), not of man’s deserts, but of God’s favor; for whilst witnessing of man’s guilt, who acted after that spirit of Cain, we learn from God Himself that it avails to put away sin. The contrast between the blood of these two is great. Thank God it is so, but the principle of action on His part we learn is similar. He delayed not to speak and act when Abel’s blood cried. He acts now in accordance with what the blood of His Son declares. Abel’s blood cried to God: the blood of sprinkling has a voice to God, and speaks to us. That cried for vengeance; this tells of God’s judgment against sin having been undergone, so that He can now righteously act in grace. Irremediable was Cain’s condition after God passed sentence upon him; irrevocable are the blessings of all who believe on His Son. Immediate too were the results for Cain; not less so are they for those redeemed by the blood of Christ; for that which is based on bloodshed can take effect at once, and will never, never alter.

Perishing souls, be wise!

Look to the blood-stain’d cross!

Dare you that cross despise?

Dare you, at last, be lost?

Jesus, the Just, has died,

Died for the sinner’s sin!

Justice is satisfied!

Hasten and enter in!

Hasten, ere mercy's door
Close on your aching view!
Ere the last chance be o'er—
Sinner! there's room for you!

Child of God Must Walk Alone

The child of God must walk alone
If he would live and walk with thee;
And only to such hearts are known
The joys of thy blest company.
Alone with thee, O Master!
Where the light of earthly glory dies;
Misunderstood by all, I dare
To do what thine own heart will prize.
Such be my path through life down here—
One long, close, lonely walk with thee;
Until, past every doubt and fear,
Thy face in light above I see.

Christ Died! Then I Am Clean: Not a Spot Within

Christ Died! Then I Am Clean: “Not a Spot Within”—

God’s mercy and love! “not a cloud above:”

’Tis the Spirit, through faith, thus triumphs o’er sin:

“Not a cloud above”—“not a spot within.”

Meditations on the Christian's Hope

Thou hast done well, my soul, in meditating on the Christian's standing, state, vocation, and warfare: these are subjects of the deepest personal interest, and subjects with which every Christian ought to be well acquainted according to the revelation of God. But there is yet another theme, equally personal and important, on which thou mayest profitably muse for a little; I mean the Christian's hope—the hope of thy Lord's return. Here, then, let thy thoughts, and not thy thoughts only, but thy affections, be centered. The blessed Lord, the Son of the living God, coming from heaven for thee, is the true and proper object of thy hope—thy expectation. It is a question of affection—a family scene.

The Father's house, into which He will introduce thee, is not the place of governmental glory, but of the manifestation of His grace and love. Thou wilt be in the same house with the Son—this is thy hope. O wondrous, blessed, glorious hope! What grace! What love divine! We may know something of God's love to sinners, but what can we know of the Father's love to the children—of the Bridegroom's love for His Bride? The former is compassion, but the latter is complacency.

Faith and Hope

Hast thou ever thought, my soul, on that strange anomaly so common among Christians—that though Christ is the one object of their faith, He is not the one object of their hope. Many think that the coming of the Lord means nothing more than that He comes for us when we die; and that at the last, there will be one general resurrection and one general judgment. It would be difficult to say what is the proper hope of such, for all is indefinite, indeed, we may say, confusion. Even as to the proper object of faith, and its blessed results, all is dark and cloudy.

Nothing, surely, can be more natural, in a Christian sense, than that He who is the object of our faith should also be the object of our hope. But simple as this is, it is all important. Thou wilt do well to trace the twofold path a little.

When we know Christ as the one who loves us, and died for us, we have no difficulty in trusting Him: we believe in Him—we have faith in Him. The knowledge of His love creates the most unquestioning confidence; the testimony of the word to the power of His blood meets all our anxieties. We are happy—perfectly happy in Him. His love answers to every desire of the heart, and His sacrifice to every need of the conscience. With every wish met, and every desire satisfied, we must be happy, and can only love and praise the Lord. But why is He not equally the one proper object of hope? Why is He not the daily expectation, as well as the daily rest of the soul? Most sure and certain we are, that when a Christian dies, his soul is immediately with the Lord in paradise; and a blessed precious truth it is; but it is never spoken of in scripture as the hope of the Christian: rather that we shall not die, but be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. There is no reason or necessity why a Christian should die; Christ has died for him. But if he should die, death to him is called a “falling asleep in Jesus”—a being put to sleep by Jesus. How sweet, how blessed, the thought, O my soul! This is the way a believer dies: the poor body is laid to sleep, and

the soul ascends on angels' wings to be with Christ, till the morning of the first resurrection.

But what saith the scripture? faith can only rest on the word of God. Many speak of these things as the "peculiar view's" of a particular class of Christians; but the one question is, Has God spoken plainly on the subject? On nothing more so; the difficulty is in the selection; but a passage from Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians may be the most convenient to refer to now. There we have a special revelation from the Lord, for the express purpose of giving further truth in detail as to the coming and glory of the Lord Jesus. Carefully read 1 Thess. 4:13-18.

The Thessalonians, evidently, had been converted by means of a gospel that embraced the truth, usually called, "The Lord's second coming in glory." This is apparent from Acts 17, where we find the unbelieving Jews giving a political turn to their accusations, by saying, "These all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." No doubt the apostle preached the truth of the Lord's coming to reign in glory. Hence it was, that from the time of their conversion, they were looking day by day for His return. But in the meantime, some of their brethren died. This troubled them greatly. Their sorrow was excessive. Not that they had any fear about the salvation of their friends, but because they would not be present to welcome the Lord, and to be received by Him. When the apostle heard of their troubles, he wrote to them at once. They were comparatively uninstructed, and also greatly persecuted both by the Jews and the heathen. Their opportunities of learning had been very few. The apostle was not allowed to remain long with them after their conversion because of the persecution; and the books of the New Testament were not then written. But their ignorance and distress only gave the fitting opportunity for the Lord to reveal His mind more fully on this blessed subject.

In the new revelation which the apostle received, the order of events is given. This is important; though no doubt given in the first instance to meet the sorrowing hearts of the Thessalonians, it is also intended for the instruction of the saints of God in all ages: but the best way will be to go over the verses as they stand; and, first, we would notice,

THE SORROW OF THE THESSALONIANS.

Ver. 13. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope." These warm, earnest-hearted, but young Christians had not been instructed as to how the dead saints could be with the Lord when He comes, and share His glory. They were so full of the expectation of the Savior's return, that they had never thought of any of them dying before He came; so that they were in great trouble when some of their brethren fell asleep. But now, observe, my soul, and give good heed to what the apostle says to them. Does he find fault with them for their too ardent hopes of the return of Jesus? Did he say they were too much occupied with it? or that they were excited and lacked sobriety? Familiar to thy mind are such sayings from many of thy fellow Christians; but no such word drops from the pen of the apostle. Their waiting for the Lord is mentioned in each chapter of both epistles, and most surely to their praise. Neither does he seek to comfort the bereaved—as is commonly done—by reminding them that they would soon follow—that they would soon rejoin the dear departed in heaven. No, indeed; true as that might be, he does not refer to it as a ground of comfort. The Thessalonians are maintained in the thought that they were still to look for the Lord during their life-time, and a fresh revelation is given to assure them, that all who have fallen asleep in Jesus will have equally their part in the glory with those who are alive at His coming.

Ver. 14. "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." The first thing that the apostle does is to fix the eye of the sorrowing ones on Jesus—on Him who died and rose again. True comfort is only to be found in looking to thee, O most blessed Lord, and divine strength to glorify thee in our deepest afflictions. There we see victory over death and the grave—there we see the one who died, was buried, rose again, and is now in glory. He is the believer's life. We triumph in like manner—"Even so." Our life is connected with Him who thus died and rose again, and belongs to the glory. All who have fallen asleep in Jesus will be raised, and leave the earth precisely as He did. "There is this difference," says one: "He went up in his own full right; He ascended. As to us, His voice calls the dead, and they come forth from the grave, and the living, being changed, all are caught up together. It is a solemn act of God's power, which seals the Christian's life and the work of God, and brings the former into the glory of Christ as His heavenly companion. Glorious privilege! Precious grace! To lose sight of it destroys the proper character of our joy and our hope."

Meditations on the Christian's Hope: the Appearing in Glory

The Appearing in Glory.

The marriage supper being over, and all things ready, the blessed Lord, as the last Adam, with His heavenly Eve, the glorified saints and the angelic hosts, prepare for the appealing in glory, and for taking possession of the earth. But before accompanying them thither, it may be well to notice what has taken place there since the rapture of the saints, and what things in general have come to.

When the true Church shall have left the scene, the merely nominal part, left behind, shall be at once and forever rejected by Christ. (Rev. 3:16.) Then the Spirit of God began to work in the Jewish remnant, and they, as the missionaries of the new testimony, preached "the everlasting gospel to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation and kindred, and tongue, and people." The judgment of the living nations in Matt. 25 discriminates as to the results of this testimony; and Rev. 7 shows us the saved multitudes of both Jews and Gentiles by means of "the everlasting gospel." But while the love of God was thus active, and the power of the Spirit thus manifested, Satan was exerting all his power and bringing up all his forces to corrupt the whole earth, and dispute its possession with the Lord's Anointed.

Rejected professors, "because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved," shall be given up to strong delusion, that they might believe a lie—awful doom—they are now at the mercy of Satan. Antichrist and the false prophet—the one the head of the civil power, and the other of the ecclesiastical—fill the whole scene of the Roman earth with their blasphemies. Outside, the nations are angry and mustering their hosts for battle. The dragon and his angels are overthrown by Michael and his angels, and their place is found no more in heaven, or in heavenly places. Satan and his angels, being cast down to the earth and knowing their time is short, concentrate all their evil there. And such will be his power, that when God ceases to hinder his working—as He will do for a time—men will fall down and worship the beast, and the dragon that gave him his power. Human sin, in the person of Antichrist, who is also idled with Satan, rises to its greatest height, and all is ripe for judgment. But let us now return to our heavenly company.

The Lord is coming: He is on His way. Look up, my soul, what seest thou? Heaven is open: "And behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." But mark, He does not come alone, the armies of heaven follow Him. "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." This, we must remember, is a vision which the prophet saw, and not a question of real horses. It is the symbol of the Lord appearing in power and great glory. He comes to put down all the wickedness of man and of Satan on the earth. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." The Antichrist, the kings of the earth, and all associated with them shall be utterly overthrown. Isa. 11; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 19.

THE MILLENNIUM.

It may be well to pause here for a moment, before speaking of the millennium, and meditate on this solemn scene. Hast thou given it much thought, my soul? In a moment, suddenly, when the world is intoxicated with pleasure, and saying "Peace and safety," the heavens open. The once rejected Jesus of Nazareth comes forth: He is clothed in light and majesty; His breastplate is righteousness; His sword is girded on His thigh: His eyes are as a flame of fire; and on His head are many crowns. Saints and angels follow in His train, and celebrate His praise. But what of the godless world below? "Every eye shall see him;" and every heart shall be struck with astonishment; the instruments of daily occupation shall drop from every hand, and all the world, with eyes uplifted, shall stand still. But there is no hope for the rejecters of Jesus now. Their death-knell is rung; the Lord's hand has laid hold on judgment; "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Amongst the many lessons which thou mayest learn from these approaching judgments, there is one especially I pray thee to remember: Let the solemn realities of thy Lord's coming and kingdom be so mirrored on thy soul as to move thee to increased earnestness, yea to burning zeal, in preaching the gospel, and in all thy work with precious souls. True, thou wilt be with the Lord thyself, but forget not those who are in danger of being left behind through the deceitfulness of sin. But to return.

We have seen the heavenlies cleared of Satan and his angels; the earth cleared of its wicked kings; the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire; and now we have the binding of Satan. (Rev. 20) Victory is complete! the hidden source of all the evil is bound in the abyss for a thousand years. The blessed Lord takes the kingdom. "The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever." This is the millennium—Christ openly, manifestly governing, and Satan bound. These are the two grand features of that blessed period, and by which it is distinguished from all former dispensations.

What a mighty change! what an immense relief to this groaning earth! Satan and his evil angels banished from the abodes of men: Christ reigning, and His risen saints associated with Him on the throne His heavenly and earthly glory. Then shall come creation's day of boundless blessedness so constantly spoken of in the Old Testament. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey. The wild beasts of the field shall become gentle and harmless as the lamb, and warfare and strife shall cease from amongst the children of men. Thus will God reverse the history of man; He will heal his sorrow, relieve his misery; crown him with health, peace, and plenty, and spread joy throughout the restored creation, according to His estimate of the cross of His beloved Son. In that day it will be seen and acknowledged, that the cross of the Lord Jesus is the foundation of the wide spread scene of millennial glory and blessing.

There are three ways in which Christ will fully reveal and glorify God—grace, government, and glory. The first He did in His humiliation; the second He will do in the millennium; and the third throughout eternity. Thus the millennium will be the revelation of God in government for a thousand years. All language fails to speak of what its blessedness must be. Satan no longer free to tempt men. and the goodness of God displayed in blessing men; the heavens above, Israel and the Gentiles below, the earth, the sea, the lower creation—all brought under the government of Christ—all embraced in His wide dominions; and all to the glory and praise of God by Him.

But nothing can be more humiliating to man than what we find at the end of the millennium. God will then show that a thousand years of glory will not convert the human soul without His saving grace. The moment Satan is again free and exercises his power, the unconverted portion of the Gentile nations are deceived by him. He gathers them together in rebellion; but fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them utterly.

THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

We have now come to the last and closing scene in the history of man—the day of judgment. All is solemn—most solemn—eternally solemn for all who stand before that throne. “And I saw,” says John, “a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.” There need be no difficulty on the reader’s part in distinguishing this last sessional judgment from the Lord’s coming and the first resurrection. When the Lord comes. He comes from heaven to earth; and the earth, as we have seen, is universally blessed under Him. But that is not the case here. There is no earth to come to: both heaven and earth are fled away, and there is no place found for them. It is the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead at the close of the millennium. All are judged according to their works: the book of life is searched in vain for a single name that stands before the great white throne; all are condemned, and cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

But before parting, and parting forever, with so many of thy poor fellow creatures, be exhorted, O my soul, to pause, to reflect, to weigh up in faith’s balances, the last sight of those countenances of agony, and the final sentence of the Judge. Remember, thou shalt see those faces no more forever.

At the commencement of the millennium the saints are seen sitting upon thrones in association with Christ. “They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.” (Rev. 20:4.) This was their time of public reward for service done to Christ during His absence. “The time is come,” says the seer, “that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great.” (Rev. 11:18.) But on the great white throne Christ is seen alone. While it was a question of governing the millennial earth, the saints governed with Him; but now it is a question of eternal judgment, and in this He acts alone. Nevertheless, they will be with Him, according to that all-precious word, “Forever with the Lord.”

And thus shall it be: all that ever lived in this world, for the first and last time, shall stand face to face—the righteous with the Lord, the wicked standing before Him. What a sight! what a moment! What a difference now between the two companies! the one in bodies of glory and shining in the image of Christ; the other in the naked realities of their sad condition. Stripped of every false covering, each one must see his sins in the light of divine holiness and righteousness. All must be there. “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.” The depths, the unseen world, are forced to deliver up their miserable prisoners, that they may hear from the lips of the once-rejected Jesus their final sentence. The heavens and the earth are fled away, and nothing is to be seen but the great white throne of dazzling brightness, and the glorious majesty of Him who sits upon it. But all are now gathered, and time is no longer. The guilt and anguish of the heart are seen in all faces; and the awful sentence, uttered amidst the dreadful silence of that solemn scene, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, will send back the wicked into the depths of woe,

woe unutterable. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." But the glory and beauty of the Savior, Jesus, whom they despised in time, and the myriads of happy saints who surround Him and who shall be forever with Him, can never, never, be forgotten.

Thus closes the history of man, and the events of time. Eternity begins. The wicked lost, the righteous saved; and all the ways of God forever vindicated. His love creates new heavens and earth as the future dwelling place of His children; and God comes down to dwell among them. "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." Rev. 21:1-7.

Meditations on the Christian's Hope: the Order of Events

Ver. 15-18. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The apostle always wrote, we must remember, under the direct guidance and full sanction of the Spirit of God; but here there is something special—something that was required for the instruction and consolation of the sorrowing Thessalonians, therefore he introduces the new revelation with a "This we say unto you by the word of the Lord." We have a similar instance in 1 Corinthians 11, when the apostle says, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." That was given to correct an abuse as to the observance of the Lord's supper; this, to correct a mistake as to the Lord's coming.

But mark the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to His young disciples; He assures their hearts, that in the order of events connected with His coming, the first that takes place is the resurrection of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, and that in place of losing anything by having departed, they will be the first that are ready to go up and meet the Lord. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." So far from those who have fallen asleep in Jesus missing the joyful hour of His coming, they will be raised before the living are changed. This is grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus; at the same time we know, that every event connected with His coming shall be accomplished in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, so that the interval cannot be estimated.

But now, my soul, observe in silent wonder, the shining forth of this twofold glory of the Lord Jesus: He rises from His throne, He descends from heaven, He gives the word Himself, the voice of the archangel passes it on, and the trumpet gives a well-known sound. The imagery is military. As well trained troops know the orders of their commander by the sound of the trumpet, so will the army of the Lord answer instantly to His call. All the dead in Christ shall rise, and all the living shall be changed; and they shall all enter into the cloud, and be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall they ever be with the Lord. No separation then; therefore the apostle adds, "Comfort one another with these words."

Thus the apostle explains to the Thessalonians how God will bring with Jesus all who sleep in Him. From verse 15 to 18 is a parenthesis, which accounts for what is said in the 14th: "Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." When the Lord returns in glory, all the saints will be with Him; but, previously, He has awakened the sleepers, changed the living, and translated both to heaven.

The Rapture of the Saints.

And now, the saints are gone—all gone—gone to glory—gone to be with the Lord forever! What a thought—what an event, O my soul! Not a particle of the redeemed dust of God's children left in

the grave; and not a believer left on the face of the whole earth! all caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. But who can think—who can speak of the happy reunions on that morning of cloudless joy? Doubtless the Person of the Lord will fix every eye and ravish every heart; still, there will be the distinct recognition of those, who, though long parted from us here, have never lost their place in our hearts. And as all will perfectly bear the image of the Lord, we can never lose sight of Him. Though every one will have his own identity, and his own special joy, yet all will be like the Lord, and the joy of each will be the common joy of all. “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together,” will be a note of praise often sung, as we meet to part no more forever.

Yes, my soul, heaven is a home, a social place; and surely the blessed Lord who has prepared that home of love will ever have the first thought, the first place, yet He Himself will connect the brightest scenes in glory with the darkest days of the wilderness. This is evident from what the apostle says in the second chapter. At the very moment when he was hindered by Satan from visiting his beloved Thessalonians, who were sorely persecuted, he looked beyond those troublous times and saw his children in the faith around him in the glory. “For 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? For ye are our glory and joy.” But there are many other scenes of earth that will have a bright reflection in the glory. Many cross my mind, some I well remember; but I forbear, their record is on high.

“Hark to the trump! behold it breaks
The sleep of ages now:
And lo! the light of glory shines
On many an aching brow.
Changed in a moment—raised to life;
The quick, the dead arise,
Responsive to th’ archangel’s voice,
That calls us to the skies.
Undazzled by the glorious light
Of that beloved brow,
We see, without a single cloud,
We see the Savior now!
O Lord, the bright and blessed hope
That cheered us through the past,
Of full eternal rest in thee,
Is all fulfilled at last.”

Here pause a little, O my soul; meditate on this wondrous scene. Who will meet thee there? Who will greet thee with a joyous welcome in that happy land? Who will clasp thy hand, to the sundered no more forever? But oh! how completely all are changed, and yet how perfectly all are identically the same. One cannot be mistaken for another; and not one can be unknown. But chiefest of all thy joys that morning, and from which all thy other joys shall flow, will be to see His face, hear His voice, and behold His glory; or, as St. John says, and sums up all blessedness in two expressions; "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." Surely God Himself could not have done a better thing for us than to make us like Christ; and a richer blessing He could not have bestowed than to give us to see Him as He is—that means, we shall see Him and know Him in all the realities of His love, and in all the greatness of His many glories. This will be the fullness of our joy, the everlasting spring of our never-ending delight.

The Interval Between the Rapture and the Appearing.

But to where, may I ask, does the Lord conduct His saints after He meets them in the air? To heaven, surely, to the house of many mansions which He has prepared for them, according to His own promise in John 14 "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Nothing can possibly be plainer or simpler than these words. Their first meeting in the air may be foreshadowed by Isaac meeting Rebecca in the wilderness. We see in her beautiful behavior the most reverent love: and we see in his love and kindness the fulfillment of the promises and testimonies of Eliezer: "And Rebecca lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel;.....and she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done." This may be like the Holy Spirit delivering up His sacred charge to the Son of the Father; though He will dwell in the Church forever. "And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife: and he loved her." Gen. 24.

Having passed into heaven, the saints will then be manifested in the light; as the apostle says, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. 14:10, 12.) But this does not mean, observe, that the saints, as to their persons, shall stand in judgment. Christ has been judged for them, and they, as he says Himself, shall never come into judgment. But it does mean, that all their works and ways will be seen in the light of His presence, and that we shall then know His estimate of all that we have done for Him. Being in our bodies of glory, we shall be incapable of experiencing anything like fear or unhappiness; but when manifested in the light we shall have a perfect knowledge, according to the mind of Christ, of every moment of our past history. All that was of self or of Christ in our motives, objects, and service, will then be seen—all that we failed to understand in time, will be perfectly known then, at least as regards our connection with Christ, His Church and service. But, surely, everything as to ourselves will be lost sight of when seen side by side with His patient grace; and we shall pass from His tribunal in admiring wonder and praise at the patience which bore with our ways in the wilderness, and brought us safe to glory. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known." 1 Cor. 13:12.

All things being now ready, the marriage of the Lamb takes place, according to the vision of St. John. (Rev. 19) "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." He

presents her to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish. (Eph. 5) What a day that will be! What a day even for heaven, so long accustomed to glory! What a mustering of its myriad hosts to do Him honor! But this will be a new glory—the bridal glory of the Lamb! O wondrous thought, transcendent glory! The bride ranks with her Bridegroom, the wife ranks with her husband! As He is, so she is—where He is, there she is—what He has, that she has. And all forever and forever. But tell me, O tell me this, my soul, will thine eyes behold that glory? —will thy heart taste these joys? —will thy feet stand in that holy place? —will these nuptial glories be thine? What sayest thou? —answer me. At perfect rest my heart is as Isaac confirmed all that had been testified of him to Rebecca, so shall the true Isaac confirm all that has been spoken of Him to His Church, which is His body, and His bride.

The marriage scene, and the marriage supper of the Lamb are little more than announced, they are not described. But the book of the Revelation is not the place to speak of the Father's house, and the intimacies of love; but rather of the righteous ways of God, and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. Nevertheless, we are permitted to see the bride, the guests, the preparations, and to hear of the blessedness of all present. "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And immense weight is to be attached to the concluding sentence of this brief account of the nuptial scene: "And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God." What grace is thine, O most gracious God our Father, to give such double assurance of that blessed future to thy weak and often doubting ones! May we be faithful to our Well-beloved, to whom we are now affianced, and only think of and prepare for that coming day, which will be the summing up of all blessedness and the consummation of all Christian hope.

Meditations on the Christian's Warfare

In thy further Meditations, O my soul, on the Christian's "Vocation" there is yet one department which thou wilt do well duly to consider; namely—The Christian's Warfare." Rare qualities are needed in warriors, and great honors are heaped on the victorious: but who praises the coward? Alas, he stands at the head of the dark list of the lost, in Rev. 21:8. "But the fearful."—"The fearful" here means those who are afraid to confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, from the fear of consequences. They are cowards in reference to Christ. This, in God's sight, is a sin of the meanest and blackest character; for such evidently know something of Christ and of His goodness, and yet they are ashamed of His name before men.

Therefore, under the ignominious brand of "the fearful," or cowards, they are consigned to their own place in the lake of fire.

But these, being altogether unbelievers, cannot be contrasted with those who are valiant for Christ. It is only with believers that we have to do in meditating on christian warfare. Nevertheless, there are some amongst us who are but little skilled in the use of the shield and sword, and show but little courage in the day of battle. Training is necessary, with a perfect knowledge of the enemy's position, and of our own vantage ground. Therefore we invite—we entreat, all our readers, and especially our youthful christian readers, to study with us the important subject of the Christian's conflict. You are enlisted, you do wear the uniform, you ought to fight; victory is certain, the honors are everlasting; and only think of Him who is your "Leader and Commander." You will have no such opportunity of distinguishing yourselves for Christ in heaven. Lose no time then in waking up to the consciousness that you are soldiers, and that you must learn to fight. There is no discharge in this war, and no truce with the enemy.

But what of thine own experience, O my soul, in this warfare? Knowest thou well the sound of the trumpet that calls thee to battle? Art thou always ready and willing to obey the summons? A false humility might lead thee to plead thine own weakness, and a would-be honoring of Christ might lead thee to plead His strength as sufficient without thee; but thou must never plead either the one or the other to get rid of responsibility. And, remember, it is more with the wiles than with the strength of the enemy thou hast to contend. This is an important consideration and one that must never be forgotten. Who can speak of his wiles, his depths, his snares, his stratagems, innumerable? These must not be underrated. We need both the wisdom and strength of the Lord to resist them; and of these the apostle here speaks.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." This is the first sound of the trumpet, we may say: and to what, we inquire, does it call the saints—does it call thee? Certainly not to survey the stronghold of the enemy, or to show thee what thou hast to overcome; but sweetly to turn all thy thoughts to the Lord Himself. Before a word is said about enemies or conflicts, thou art called to survey thy strength in the mighty Lord, as seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies. This is grace—the grace of the Lord Jesus, and like the ways of the Spirit when acting towards us for Him—"Be strong in the Lord." But this touches a high note of privilege

and blessing, as well as of security and strength. Clearly, this is the first thing to be understood: what are we to understand by the words— “In the Lord?”

All through this epistle the apostle speaks of the saints as seated together in heavenly places in Christ. In chapter 1 we learn that God raised Him up from the dead, and set Him in the heavenlies. In chapter 2 we learn that God in doing this, laid the foundation of our association with Him there. In chapter 3 we are seen as a testimony to principalities and powers, that they might learn by this unity the manifold wisdom of God. In chapter 4 the doctrine of the “one body” is unfolded. In chapters 5, 6, practical exhortations are given on the ground of these great truths. Hence the saints are addressed in the passage before us as “in the Lord.” This is where they are for themselves in virtue of their union with Him as risen and exalted. It is the common heritage of all that belong to Christ; and their own proper place, according to the counsels of God. But here they are exhorted to use it as a fortification against the wiles of the enemy. And this we must do if we would be victorious, and fully enjoy our proper christian privileges.

But in what way, thou mayest ask, am I to fortify myself in a heavenly Christ, against the wiles of Satan? How can he reach me there? It seems difficult to understand the true character of this conflict.

Unless the inquiring Christian knows his position as a member of the body of Christ in the heavenlies, according to the teaching of the epistle to the Ephesians, there will be great difficulty in understanding the true character of this conflict. The portion of scripture before us is evidently addressed to such. It assumes that we have died and are risen again in Christ; that we are sitting in heavenly places, and enjoying our heavenly portion in Him. But Satan and his hosts are also regarded as in heavenly places; so that there must be conflict if we would practically maintain our position there.

It will be seen then that this conflict is not merely the mortifying of the flesh, or contending with the temptations of this world, though these, of course, have to be overcome. Neither is it, as many think, a question as to the state of our souls before God. He who has clothed us with the best robe, killed for us the fatted calf, and fitted us to be guests in His own presence chamber, has no conflict with us. And there need be no doubts or fears as to the final results of His grace. It is really a question of fighting with wicked spirits, who deceive and reign in darkness. Hence the exhortation, “Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the idles of the devil. For we wrest not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the riders of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.” (See marg.)

We are here reminded of the Lord’s directions to Joshua, and of Israel’s enemies in the land of Canaan. These were types of the mightier and deadlier foes with which the Christian has to fight. The Canaanites were but enemies of “flesh and blood;” we have to encounter wicked spirits in heavenly places, even principalities and powers. These titles give us some idea of their supremacy over the human mind, at least over those whom they have first blinded. (2 Cor. 4:3, 4.) To resist such enemies as these, we must be armed with the panoply of heaven— “The whole armor of God.” Mere human wisdom and strength are of no avail in this warfare. But it will assist us greatly to consider first, and briefly, the character of the wars in Canaan.

Made for thyself, O God!

Made for thy love, thy service, thy delight;
Made to show forth thy wisdom, grace, and might;
Made for thy praise, whom veiled archangels laud;
O strange and glorious thought, that we may be a joy to thee!

Yet the heart turns away

From this grand destiny of bliss, and deems

'Twas made for its poor self, for passing dreams;

Chasing illusions melting day by day:

Till for ourselves we read on this world's best—

“This is not rest.”

Nor can the vain toil cease,

Till in the shadowy maze of life we meet

One who can guide our aching, wayward feet

To find Himself, our Way, our Life, our Peace.

In Him the long unrest is soothed and stilled,

Our hearts are filled.

O rest, so true, so sweet!

(Would it were shared by all the weary world!)

'Neath shadowing banner of His love unfurled,

We bend to kiss the Master's pierced feet;

Then lean our love upon His boundless breast,

And know God's rest.

F. B. H.

Meditations on the Christian's Warfare

The Wars in Canaan Under Joshua.

The children of Ham were settled in the land when the children of Israel entered it. But God had set it apart for Israel (Deut. 32:8); and the Canaanites must be expelled from the land of promise.

“Arise,” said the Lord to Joshua, “go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.” (Josh. 1:1-9.) Up till now, we may say,

there had been no fighting.

The wilderness was the scene of temptation—the place of discipline for themselves, not of fighting with others, though occasionally they had to combat foes, as in the case of Amalek. But now that they had crossed the Jordan and received their orders, they must fight for the possession of the land. Every inch of ground would be disputed by the enemy. But they had nothing to fear from the Canaanites: God was with His people, as He said to Joshua, “As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come.” He had given them the land, and accurately defined its boundaries, but specified one condition as the only principle of actual possession. “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.”

It was only on this condition that they could possess the land, though freely given them of God. This is an important principle; note it, and see that thou understand it well. There was no fighting, strictly speaking, until they crossed the Jordan; after that, the sword was to be drawn, and ought never to have been sheathed while there was a Canaanite in the land. They had only to trust in God and be guided by His word, and victory would follow them at every step. “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life.” This was God’s sure word of promise to Joshua their leader. What an honor to be thus led, and led only to triumph—to plant the foot of victory on the neck of every foe. They were never to be left, never to be forsaken; His presence in power would always be with them, and His word would be a sure guide to them. Only they were to be very strong, very courageous, and observe to do all things according to the word of the Lord. But—alas, alas, we know what happened. They failed—they sadly failed. They followed not the God of Israel, though He was in their midst as a man of war. They never took possession of all the land which God had given to them. Nevertheless, the word of the Lord abideth sure. The day will come when in virtue of the death of their own Messiah, every man shall stand in his own lot, according to the boundaries assigned by God Himself. But now for the application for these types.

Like Israel of old, the Christian, we may say, enters his heavenly Canaan without striking a blow. Crossing the Red Sea makes him a pilgrim and a stranger—brings him into the great scene of temptation; crossing the Jordan makes him a warrior—brings him into the scene of conflict. Thus we read in Ephesians, the great antitype of the book of Joshua; “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Here, then, we are clearly taught what God has done for us, not what we have to do for ourselves. In His “rich” mercy and “great” love, He has brought us out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, the wilderness, the Jordan, and landed us in our heavenly Canaan. But we are not raised up to these heavenly places, merely to enjoy our rich privileges there; we have enemies to fight, like the people of Israel under Joshua.

It is not so difficult to understand the character of the fighting under Joshua; but what, may I ask, is the character, influence, or mode of action, of these wicked spirits? Stratagem, cunning, and lies, are their most successful weapons. They will challenge thy title, question thy fitness, and in every way dispute thy present possession of the heavenlies. Thou must know thy ground well, at every point, in order to maintain it. And to this end, thou must be guided entirely by the word of God, apart from feelings—thou must know what it is to be in heaven as a matter of faith, while still on earth as a matter of fact. Thou must also understand the blessed truth of being in the presence of

God in all the acceptancy of Christ, though still here in the midst of difficulties, failures, and infirmities. In short, thou must maintain, in the face of every foe, thy present title to heaven, thy fitness to be there, and thy large possessions as an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. 1 John 4:17; Rom. 8:17.

One of their most successful wiles is to insinuate, or boldly to affirm as the case may be, that Christians cannot enter or enjoy heaven till after they die—that their deliverance is not complete. This is one of the most subtle snares of the enemy, and by this lie thousands are deceived. He insinuates that our deliverance is not complete, neither as to the law, the flesh, or the world. Hence the bondage of many. But to those who know the truth as to their position in a risen Christ, it is a barefaced falsehood. Does not God say in His word, that we are now seated in the heavenly places in Christ; that we may now enjoy the good things of heaven as the fruit of our own country; just as the children of Israel began to eat of the old corn of the land of Canaan, when the wilderness manna ceased? But no, says the adversary however sure you may think yourself of heaven, you cannot be there until you die; crossing the Jordan means the act of death. Hence the falsehood of Satan has become the belief of many Christians. “We believe we shall go to heaven when we die,” is the doctrine of nearly all Christendom. Comparatively few would say, “We are there already, in Christ, and who shall separate us?” Not, observe, “We hope to join Christ in heaven when we die”—though that also is true—but being joined to the Lord now, we are there already, as one with Him; hence the challenge of faith is, “Who shall separate us?” Unless the Christian is master of his position, Satan will beguile him to settle down in his lie. When we die and go to heaven, our fighting days are done. We shall need no armor there, thank the Lord. The soul rests in the paradise of God, and the body sleeps in Jesus until the morning of the first resurrection.

Christ Risen, The Measure of Our Deliverance.

And now, my soul, may I ask, What knowest thou for thyself of these blessed truths? Knowest thou what true Christian ground is, as to thy standing in the presence of God? Faith answers, Surely the deliverance which Christ has wrought out for us is perfect. All depends on the completeness of His work. Christ risen from the dead is the measure of our deliverance: and being made the righteousness of God in Him, our title is clear to be in the same glory with Him. But as the enemy bears me such a grudge, because I am so much better off than he is, he tries his utmost to weaken my hold of the truth, to interrupt my fellowship with Christ, to hinder my enjoyment of His love, and to dim my apprehension of His glory. On the other hand, he will try hard to ensnare with present things, lawful and unlawful. These are some of the things that we have to war against. But the easiest way to victory is to hold fast the truth and walk in the light as God is in the light.

Good, and true, my soul. But in what way is “Christ risen the measure of our deliverance?” It is a matter of faith, and perfectly plain to those that believe. We were dead in sin, Christ died for sin; and we can now say, we have died with Him, or, died in His death. But God quickened us together, raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And now, being associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Holy Ghost, we are entitled, as a matter of faith, to regard the flesh as done with before God, as if our old nature had been nailed to the cross, and brought to its end there, and we received our new nature in resurrection. This is what St. Paul says in writing to the Galatians: “They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections

and lusts.” He does not say, “They are to crucify it,” as if it were something to do, or something going on. But “they have done it.” And it is done in the case of every one who receives a crucified Christ. Therefore it is all true to faith and in God’s sight. The raising up of the twelve stones out of the bed of the river Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood, and setting them up at the camp in Gilgal, is a striking type of our being raised up with Christ, and seated in heavenly places in Him.

But all who understand the meaning of the Red Sea and the Jordan will have no difficulty on this point. The former shadows forth deliverance from the slavery of sin and Satan, the justification of God’s people, and the judgment of their enemies. These blessings flow from the death and resurrection of Christ for us. But this brings the people into the wilderness, the place of sojourn; the land lies before them. The latter is a very different type. There is no rod of judgment lifted up over the waters, as at the Red Sea. When the feet of the priests that carried the ark of the covenant approached the Jordan, the overflowing waters fell back, and the children of Israel passed clean over. They now leave the wilderness, enter Canaan, the manna ceases, and they eat of the fruit of the land. This shadows forth the blessed Lord going first down into the waters of death, and bringing us into the heavenly places. Clearly, then, the Red Sea represents Christ as dead and risen for us; the Jordan, as our death and resurrection with Him; or, as one has forcibly said, “The grand point of the Red Sea is what Christ brings us out of, and that of the Jordan is what Christ brings us into.” Bless the Lord, O my soul, thy deliverance is complete! the world, sin, Satan, death, and judgment are behind thee. And now, having explained the allusion to the wars in Canaan, the course is clear. Buckle on thine armor, brace it tightly; put to the sword every wrong thought, feeling, desire, motive, or object, by which Satan might gain an advantage over thee. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places are thine; see that thou maintain thy possession of them in present enjoyment. And at the same time, see that thou maintain a holy and consistent testimony here on the earth.

Meditations on the Christian’s Warfare

“Wherefore 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.” Here the apostle repeats the exhortation of verse 11. His own mind is deeply impressed with the frightful array of our foes. He reviews them, and describes their position and character in verse 12. Thereupon he sounds a second alarm in verse 13. “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God.” No part must be left unguarded. The enemy knows how to take advantage of the smallest opening.

The next thing to which the apostle calls attention is, the character of the period during which this conflict lasts. He calls it

“THE EVIL DAY.”

Some take this “day” to comprehend the whole period of the believer’s life, or more especially his seasons of trial and suffering; but in this view we lose sight of Christ. There are others who think it refers to the entire period since Christ was crucified. The absence of Christ from the earth, the presence of Satan as the “prince of this world,” and the manifestations of his power, as permitted by God, constitute “the evil day.” Christ was the light of the world while He was in it, but He was rejected and crucified, and He returned to His Father. Since then this world has been again in darkness and governed by demons. Though of course God is supreme, and overrules all for His

own glory and His people's good. Satan is the god whom this world worships, and the prince whom it follows. How solemn! how awful the thought! What a dreadful place this world must be! Surely we should all care less for it than we do, were this terrible fact believed. See verse 12.

God dwells in the light. How different! how blessed the thought! And His children are privileged to dwell in the light with Him; the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, having cleansed them from all sin, they have been made whiter than snow, and fitted to dwell in the light of heaven. But they have a mission on earth. They are God's light-bearers to the benighted people of this world. "Among whom," says the apostle, "ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." (Phil. 2:15, 16.) Hence the struggle—the conflict between light and darkness—between the children of God, and the rebellious principalities and powers who rule over the darkness of this world. And hence, we may add, "the evil day." The enemy hates the light as the thief the watchman's lamp. He will do his utmost to harass and annoy the children of light. He will seek to mislead them in their path, to darken the light that is in them, by insinuating wrong views and wrong applications of the truth; and he will seek by every means to make them falsify their position, both in the heavenlies and on the earth.

This is the enemy, and these are the kind of attacks which the Christian has to meet and contend with. He has to withstand them, to resist them at every point; and having done all to stand. Having done all that a soldier can do, and however complete the victory he may have gained, yet still he must stand, the war is not over. We must maintain our ground whether in peace or in war, and be found standing, after the last battle has been fought and the last victory won.

But in what way, may I ask, has the believer strength to oppose the forces of the enemy? There is but one answer to this question. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit, who abides with the Lord's people during the entire period of the Lord's absence; and, consequently, during the entire period of "the evil day;" so that He who is for us is greater far than all that be against us. Bless the Lord! What comfort, what encouragement, what strengthening of the hands to war, what certainty of victory, what security against defeat! This was thy care and love for us, O most blessed Lord! True to thy word of sweetest consolation to the disciples; "I will not leave you comfortless"—as orphans in the world—"I will come to you. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not [not being incarnate], neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you." John 14

Knowest thou, my soul, what a good day that will be for this poor world when the Lord returns? Then it will be the presence of Christ as reigning over the whole earth, and Satan shut up in the bottomless pit. This will make all the difference. The absence of Christ now and the presence of Satan make "the evil day;" but the absence of Satan from the earth then and the presence of Christ will make "the good day"—the bright millennial day, when the whole earth will be filled with His glory. Observe that He says, "I will come unto you." This may have had a certain fulfillment in the coming down of the Holy Ghost, but it can only have its complete fulfillment in the coming of the Lord Himself: as He says plainly in the same chapter, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Nothing can be plainer—nothing sweeter than these words; and sweeter still the thought, He is not speaking here of glory, which will be universal, but of home, which will be special, and of the love which will characterize it forever.

Oh, shorten then, in thy mercy, most gracious Lord, “the evil day.” It is a day of abounding iniquity, of increasing infidelity, of wars and rumors of wars. And a day, thou knowest, of difficulty, sorrow, and suffering to many of thy people. The whole creation awaits thy coming. “For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.” Oh, then, hasten that day of glory—that long-promised holiday of peace and plenty—of rest and rejoicing throughout the whole earth. Then the nations “shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” Isa. 2:4.

But to return to our text. We will now examine the different pieces of the armor of God, that we may know their uses and how to apply them; and first of all we are to have

THE LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH.

What are we to understand by the loins, the girding, and the truth, may I ask? These three things would naturally open a wide field for meditation, but as we have dwelt at some length on the nature of the conflict, we must be brief on the several pieces of the armor.

1. The loins represent the chief seat of strength when duly girded. (Job 31:20; 40. 16.) Peter applies this figuratively to the inner man, when he says, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.” Thereby signifying, that the thoughts, desires, and affections, are the springs of action—the motive power of the soul; and therefore, must be kept from exposure to the enemy by indulging our own will. We are only strong when kept from wandering beyond the limits of the girdle. This is of first importance to the christian warrior. The enemy has no hold on a heart thus encircled with the truth of God.

2. Girding is the application of truth to the soul—the intimate dealing of the word with the will—the movements of the heart. This is arming for conflict in the most practical and effectual way; but it must be done in the presence of God before we meet the enemy. The soldier’s girdle fastens his other pieces of armor more closely to him, whereby he is able to march and strong to fight. “Thou hast girded me with strength,” says the psalmist, “unto the battle.” (Psalm 18:39.) There is also an allusion to the custom of the oriental nations, who gird their long loose garments about their loins that they may not hinder them in their traveling or working. Elijah girded up his loins, and ran after Ahab. (1 Kings 18:46.) It is the bracing up of the affections —the whole inner man—for Christ and for the things of Christ. When the heart cleaves to the Lord, as the garments cleave to the loins under the tight belt of the girdle, the enemy cannot reach the gates of the soul.

3. The truth is a comprehensive term; but here the Spirit may refer to a line or character of truth which would be our best safe-guard against the attacks of the enemy—truth suited to the position we are called to occupy. “Having your loins girt about with truth.” The soul is thus to be garrisoned with the truth. There must be no access to, or egress from, the citadel of the soul, unless searched by the truth. It applies to everything—to both the inner and the outer man. But the chief province of truth, when used of the Spirit, is to act upon the conscience and bring it into the presence of God, where our most intimate thoughts, feelings, desires, motives, and affections, may be fairly and fully judged. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb. 4:12.

Here, pause for a moment, my soul, and wonder; and well thou mayest. Mark and meditate on the depths, fullness, and penetrating power of the word of God. What a volume of truth we have in these seven words, "Having your loins girt about with truth." All that is needed for the government and defense of our inward thoughts and outward ways, is folded up in these few words. By taking heed thereunto, thou wouldst be fortified in the first movements of thy soul against the wiles of the enemy. There would be nothing to answer to his suggestions. By this piece of armor, spiritually understood, the soul is maintained in communion with God, and the enemy kept at a safe distance. Thus it was with the blessed Lord—thus it may be with thee, my soul. He is the warrior's example. "It is written," was thy strong tower, most gracious Lord. It was not in reasoning with the enemy that thou didst vanquish him; but in the perfect application of the word to thyself, and to the circumstances around thee.

As the Second Man, the Lord moved and acted according to the written word. "Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust," was the ground He took and the ground He maintained as a servant, though He was a Son. He never acted on His own will. He was girt about with truth. He waited on God. If no word came, He waited still. He would do nothing without the word of God. "It is written," must precede everything. This is safe ground for thee, my soul, and this only is safe ground—"It is written." Forget it not, I pray thee, it would keep thy heart in communion with God in the midst of all circumstances; but especially in conflict keep it before thee: engrave it on thy shield, inscribe it on thy banner, and let it be thy watchword to discern between friends and foes.

Pole-star on life's tempestuous deep;

Beacon when doubts surround;

Compass, by which our course we keep;

Our plummet-line to sound.

Our shield and buckler in the fight;

In victory, s hour the palm;

Comfort in grief; in weakness, might;

In sickness, Gilead's balm.

Meditations on the Christian's Warfare

The second piece of armor commended to the christian soldier is the breastplate, and the metal it is to be made of is righteousness—practical righteousness, blameless conduct, a holy walk with God. This gives courage in the day of battle. It would matter little what else the christian warrior possessed, if he was without his breastplate. The most vital part would be exposed to the enemy's fire. Besides, being a center piece, it gives unity to the whole. If a man's conscience reproaches him, and if he knows that the world would reproach him if it knew all, how can he hold up his head and face the enemy boldly? He is thinking about himself, fearing detection and exposure. His breastplate is gone, he fears the blow may fall on the unprotected part. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry; but the face of the Lord is against them that do

evil." Psalm 11:7; 34:15, 16.

When the thoughts and affections are governed and kept in order by the truth, there will be a good conscience—a holy and a righteous walk with God and before men. This association of ideas seems beautifully united in Eph. 4:24: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;" or, the "righteousness and holiness of truth." The truth produces both. Hence the beauty of the divine order. First, the heart; second, the conduct. Righteousness is the due attention to what we owe relatively to God and man. As says the apostle, "And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." (Acts 24:10.) This is practical righteousness—a righteousness which gave the apostle amazing courage, holy boldness, when he stood up before his enemies. Holiness is rather that which repels evil—instinctively repelling that which is contrary to God. Thus the happy combination of the "righteousness and holiness of truth" form the sterling metal of the Christian's breastplate.

And now, see that thou well understandest this important truth, O my soul. To lose a good conscience is to be robbed of thy strength in the day of conflict. Only he who has a good conscience can be bold and fearless when called to go forth and face the enemy. But need I remind thee, before closing our meditations on the breastplate, that the righteousness we have been speaking about is quite distinct from the righteousness of God, in which we stand accepted in Christ Jesus? He is our righteousness, complete and unchangeable in the presence of God; but not in the character of a breastplate. All conflict is over there. But while here we need practical righteousness for successful conflict with our adversary the devil. Nevertheless, the righteousness of God which we are made in Christ Jesus is the foundation of the other. Without the knowledge of this we should be feeble warriors, and an easy prey to Satan's wiles. He who made our peace and finished our righteousness is now in the presence of God for us. Blessed Lord, maintain us while down here in practical righteousness, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. See 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9; Rom. 3:21, 22; 10:3, 4.

Meditations on the Christian's Warfare

We now come to the third piece of armor in the Christian's panoply. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." This part of the armor distinctly refers to the Christian's walk. He is to go forth in peace—shod with peace; and yet he is a man of war, and clad in armor from head to foot. The helmet covers his head in the day of battle, and the shoes his feet. And these he is to wear so long as he keeps the field against the enemy.

But in what way, may I ask, is the christian soldier to be a peace-maker? There seems in this a great contradiction. Admitted, my soul, but the contradiction is only in appearance. The most gentle Christian must be a stem warrior. And more, would I say, in proportion to his power as a peace-maker, will be his power in conflict with the adversary. Here is a point in the divine science of Christianity, worthy of thy most patient study. But now, remember the order, the secret is this:—When truth governs the heart, the conscience is good. We are bright and happy in ourselves, and peaceful in our ways with others. There is integrity of heart to begin with, truth in the inward parts, consistency in our conduct, and seeking the happiness of others. The salvation of the lost, the leading of such to know Him who made peace by the blood of the cross, and the happiness of the saved, become the grand objects of the peace-maker. Over such a one the enemy can gain no

victory. He is unassailable. There is no point exposed. He maintains his ground. But, on the other hand, when there is carelessness as to the saving peace of the sinner, and laxity in our own christian ways, the conscience becomes bad, we are unhappy, we get into trouble, we trouble others; we are exposed to the attacks of Satan, he wounds in many places, we cannot bold up our head.

In such a case, the heart is not governed by truth. The belt, as it were, is unbuckled—the garments are allowed to fly loose. Where are the thoughts now—especially the affections—the painful results of such a course spread far and wide? Persons, families, the Church of God, are troubled. The seeds of discord grow apace, and many chief friends are separated. Satan, thou wilt perceive, has gained a great victory. But stay a moment, I pray thee. Tell me, what was the beginning of all this trouble—this shameful defeat? Just this, my soul, and mark it well; God begins with the heart, and so should we. We are to wear a girdle of truth. This is the first thing. Departure from the truth of God as our only guide, exposes the mind to its own resources, or rather, to the suggestions of Satan.

Alas, we have gone out of the way. Then come excuses, explanations, and exaggerations. Practically the girdle has dropped from the soldier's loins, his breastplate is lost, and in place of being shod with peace, he is shod with dissension. One Christian out of communion with the Lord may prove a root of bitterness to many. Unhappy in himself, and vexed with himself, he is soon angry with others. Whereas, when the Christian is in communion, he is at peace with God, and filled with the peace of God, and goes out in the sweet peace of the gospel to others—to both saints and sinners.

And now, understandest thou, my soul, how the Christian is both a man of peace and a man of war? Yes, not only so, but I see clearly, that unless he be a man of peace he cannot be a man of war. And hast thou also noticed that there is a special honor and blessing attached to the manifestation of this christian grace. Has not the Lord Himself said, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God." But why? Because He is the God of peace—the great Peace-maker; and they are like Him. He gave His Son to make peace. There is nothing on which His heart is more set. Peace, my son, was the language of the father's kiss to the prodigal—the first utterance of his heart. Nothing more manifests our relation to God as His children than peace-making. "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

The expression, "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," is extremely beautiful. It gives the idea of the Christian carrying peace into every scene which he enters. What a mission—Peace! What a title—Children of God! The reconciliation of the sinner to God, and the blessings of peace to the saints, are the objects of his heavenly mission. (John 20) Should he enter a scene which has been one of trouble, he will find out the way, if possible, to make it one of peace. But should he fail, he can look to God and patiently wait on Him. His character and mission is Peace.

Meditations on the Christian's Warfare: the Helmet of Salvation

(Eph. 6:10-18.)

The helmet of salvation and the shield of faith are intimately connected, though perfectly distinct. The latter is confidence in what God is; the former in what He has done. The shield conveys the idea of a more general confidence in God Himself, the helmet of a more special personal assurance in the deliverance He has wrought for us in Christ Jesus. Thus, as we have seen, the one is over all, the other crowns all. Our defensive armor is complete. We can hold up our heads with holy boldness in the day of battle; we can meet the strongest enemy, or all the hosts of hell with invincible courage; we have put on "the whole armor of God," we are covered with the strength and the salvation of God. Bless the Lord! What a new salvation! "Complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." What enemy can harm us, what enemy can reach us there? In the light as God is in the light, the rulers of this world's darkness will never venture there. We are raised in Him even above the angels that never sinned. Wonderful, blessed, glorious truth! May we use it for His glory, the blessing of our souls, and the defeat of our enemies!

But hast thou well considered, my soul, that our "helmet" is a known salvation? More, much more, than merely hoping to be saved at last. The enemy would soon cast down such a helmet from thy head. Well, but is it not scriptural to hope for salvation? What does the apostle mean when he says, "And for an helmet the hope of salvation?" Surely nothing can be plainer than that. True, but the apostle is speaking in 1 Thess. 5 of the hope of the Lord's coming; not of our forgiveness and acceptance. In this connection it includes glory, for which, of course, we hope or wait. Some think that whenever and wherever the word "salvation" is used, it must mean the salvation of the soul from sin and hell. This is a great mistake, and it has been the means of perplexing many, and leading many into false doctrine. The passage referred to is extremely beautiful. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation." Those here addressed are the children of light and of the day—children that are walking in communion with God in "faith and love," and with the bright, far-seeing eye of "hope," fixed more especially on Christ, who is coming to take us up to be with Himself in glory. This is the true and proper hope of the Christian—of the Church—the hope of her Lord's coming. We have now everything but glory. We are still in the natural body, therefore we hope, we wait for the glorious body; but not uncertainly, thank the Lord: no, we "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5:2; Phil. 3:21 But there is another passage which teaches, as many say, that a known salvation is impossible in this world—that we must wait till we come to the judgment seat before we can know for certain how it will go with us. It is this, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Now, it is said, we may work well for a while, but sadly fail in the end and come short at last.

As in the other passage, the mistake arises from not seeing the meaning of the word "salvation." To see its application the connection must be considered. Both in this verse and throughout the epistle "salvation" is regarded as a future thing. Paul himself says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." This, of course, he could not be until he was with Christ in

glory. Clearly then our final deliverance from conflict of every kind is implied in the word “salvation” as here used. Hence Christ is spoken of as a “Savior” in the same chapter, when He comes to transform our vile bodies. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” Here it is not merely a question of the salvation of the soul from sin, but of the body from humiliation. The mistake arises from supposing that “salvation” has only one meaning in the New Testament. Those who think so must often feel in a difficulty. For example, in Rom. 13 we read, “For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” How is this to be explained? Simply by the context. There is difficulty. We find it spoken of in connection with “the day;” but the day had not arrived—the day of glory. But it was coming nearer and nearer every day. Hence the heart is cheered and encouraged in conflict by the Spirit’s word which follows: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.”

What then, thou mayest still ask, is the real meaning of these words, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Carefully look for a moment, my soul, at what goes before, and what follows after these words. Then thou wilt find the key to the passage. Paul has left the saints at Philippi, God is with them. Not that God was absent when Paul was present, that is not the question. God never leaves nor forsakes His people. But when a father is present and doing everything for his children, they are disposed to lean on him; when he is away from them, they must think and work for themselves. Thus it was, so far, with the Philippians. “Wherefore,” he says, “my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” The apostle who last labored among them was now far away, a prisoner at Rome. He was no longer present to help them with his counsel and spiritual energy. They were now cast more immediately on God Himself. Hence he says, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Therefore, they ought to work all the more earnestly, even with “fear and trembling,” seeing God was working in them. He exhorts them to “fear and tremble,” not lest they should fall and be lost, but lest they should dishonor God by any want of zeal, diligence, earnestness, or faithfulness, in the day of trial.

All hinges then, thou wilt now see, on these two things, the absence of the apostle; the presence of God. They had now to meet the wiles of the enemy without the aid of Paul’s presence; but God was engaged for them, and acting in them; therefore their loss was turned into great gain. They were thrown entirely upon God for all needed help, counsel, and guidance. Nothing can be more encouraging than this passage when rightly understood. In place of perplexing and weakening the believer, it nerves him for service and warfare. What a thought, when we find ourselves engaged in such a conflict, to know that God Himself is with us and engaged for us! At the same time, we must not forget that there is a deep and solemn warning in the apostle’s words. As if he had said, You have many difficulties and dangers to meet and overcome in your path through the wilderness. The conflict is a serious one: you have the efforts of a mighty, subtle, and active foe to war against; and I am no longer with you to help with my counsel, to exhort and stir you up by my example; so that you must be more prayerful, more watchful, more circumspect, more personally dependent on the resources of God Himself. “For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Thus were they crowned, and so should every warrior be crowned, in the day of battle, with a known and an enjoyed salvation.

The apostle is our noble example in all this, as well as our wise counselor. It was this helmet of salvation that gave him, when a prisoner and in chains, such boldness and energy in the midst of his enemies. Undaunted by the power of the world that was arrayed before him, he lifted up his head in the conscious enjoyment of his relationship to God, and of his resources in Him; and earnestly wished his judges and his audience were as happy as himself. "I would to God," said Paul to Agrippa, "that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts 26:29.) He was not thinking about himself, he had nothing to fear for himself; no blow from the enemy could deprive him of his helmet, it was secured by the cross and the glory of Jesus; and brightly it shone before all. This present, known salvation set him free to think about others, care for the good of others, and appeal to the hearts of others, in words of burning eloquence. Thus may we war and fight, with salvation as our helmet, through the power of an ungrieved Holy Spirit.

Meditations on the Christian's Warfare: the Shield of Faith

Another piece, and another kind of armor, is now introduced—the shield of faith. It is for defensive warfare. It defends the soul from the assaults of the enemy. The first three parts, as we have seen, relate to the spiritual condition of the Christian's own soul, and to his walk. But a piece of defensive armor is needed to cover these. Each of them is so constantly the aim of Satan's attacks. Hence the need of the shield, that his venomous efforts may be ineffectual. "Above all," or, over all; or, added to all the rest, "taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

We have here two things for our meditation.

1. The exhortation; "above all, taking the shield of faith."
2. The argument pressing it; "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

What then are we to understand by the shield of faith? Faith in God as unchangeable in His grace and love—a confidence in Him, answering to what He is to us in Christ Jesus. It is the full assurance of the heart in the love of God, according to the revelation which He has given of Himself. God for us, should be emblazoned on the christian shield. This is more than the faith, observe, that simply receives God's testimony concerning Christ for salvation; though founded on that, of course. It is a deep and blessed work of God's Spirit in the soul, whereby the blessed consciousness that He is for us, and that His favor is unchangeable, is maintained in the heart. This is the invulnerable shield of faith: it covers the whole man. it is over all. While this shield is raised, no arrow of Satan can possibly reach us. They all fall pointless to the ground. What a mercy, O my soul! What a provision of grace, to be shielded from the poisoned shafts of the foe! How dreadful to be stung in the heart, in the conscience, in the ways, by the fiend of hell! Blessed Lord! impress our souls with the importance of these words, "Above all." "Above all, taking the shield of faith." Does the apostle elevate this grace "above all" the other graces, as well as "over all" the others? Enough, however, to mark its unspeakable importance. Still meditate, O my soul, on the character and uses of thy shield, and take a still wider view of what the Spirit has taught us.

How blessed to find that God is often called in scripture the Shield of His people. "Fear not," said God to Abram, " I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1.) "For thou, Lord," says the psalmist, "wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield." (Psalm 5:12.) The living God is His people's shield. What rest, what security this gives! Behind His ample shield we have nothing to fear.

2. We now turn, for a moment, to the second thing: "Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The enemy's first and dreadful aim will be to weaken in our hearts this unquestioning confidence in God, to edge in by some means unbelieving thoughts, to insinuate that God is not all love, all goodness. These are his fiery darts, darts of unbelief. Especially when there has been failure; when the heart, by some means, has been turned away from God, will he

drive the soul to despair if he can. He will press upon the fallen one the terrible thought that God is against him, that God has abandoned him, that there is no hope. Hence the Lord's prayer for Peter that his faith might not fail him, that he might not be tempted, in consequence of his great sin, to unbelieving thoughts of God. There is no suffering so great as the agony of despair. Those who have witnessed it in others will never forget it. What must it be to pass through it! It partakes of the torments of hell—the forsaken place—the place where hope never enters. Nothing but the shield of faith can quench the fiery darts of unbelief.

The efforts of Satan to seduce, to act upon the desires of the flesh and of the mind, are entirely different to his fiery darts. There is pleasure of a certain kind in gratifying these desires. But there is no pleasure of any kind in yielding to unbelieving thoughts of God. Despair, more or less, is the result. At the same time, his seductions, if yielded to, expose the soul to his further and hotter attacks. If we have opened the door to him in gratifying an evil desire, one may have to suffer terribly from his fiery attacks before we are restored to the confidence and peace of God. But pray, tell me how these dreadful darts may be detected and avoided? They are truly awful to think of. Yes, indeed, my soul, they are truly awful. They are called fiery darts, because they are like a consuming fire in the soul; at least if they bring the soul to the point of despair. His great object is to darken the light of God in the soul and hide from it His love and favor. But few cases reach this point, thank God, where accomplished redemption is known. But here, prevention is better than cure; let us see how these inroads of the enemy may be prevented.

The most effectual way is being at home and happy in the presence of God. The personal knowledge of pardon and acceptance in the Beloved—of being complete in Christ, silences doubts, dispels fears, and quenches the fiery darts of the wicked. But the grand sheet-anchor of the soul is the knowledge of God's unchangeable love as He has made Himself known to us in Christ. We may, alas, for a time, become indifferent, careless, lukewarm—turn aside, fall away; but the door is always left open for our return, and no change can take place either in God's heart, or in His counsels towards us. The heart, in the calm assurance of His love, can say, I change, you change, all change; but He changes not. Circumstances change, friends change, everything around may seem changing; but there is no change in Him. Oh! what a hold this gives the soul of the living God! What peace, what joy, what repose, what happiness, and what irresistible power against the enemy! His arrows cannot reach us here. We are behind the shield of faith. Under the painful sense of failure, the heart is broken by the assurance that His love is the same, and cannot change towards us, though chastening may be necessary. But in place of doubts or dark despair under His chastening hand, there will be the bowings and the meltings of worship.

Meditations on the Christian's Warfare: the Sword of the Spirit

The sword is the symbol of aggressive warfare. The first three parts of the armor protect us as to our own state, the second two are defensive, the sixth is aggressive. We have but one weapon to use against the enemy—the word of God. But if we know how to handle it, or, what is equally important, how to draw it, no enemy can resist it. Anyone may draw the carnal sword, though any one may not be able to strike with it. But not so the sword of the Spirit. We can only draw it aright when guided by the Holy Spirit. It is the sword of the Spirit. That is, we must be walking in communion with God, and in the un-grieved power of the Holy Spirit, to use it either offensively or defensively. Thus the right passage will be suggested to the mind and applied with divine power. Mere human intelligence and human capacity are of no avail in this warfare. The word of God is our only but all-sufficient weapon. It baffles the power of Satan, it detects his wiles, it disables every adversary, it silences the voice of self, it brings light into the scene of conflict, and discovers the dark deceptions of the foe.

But it may be well for thee, my soul, to turn aside for a little and meditate on the Lord's use of the word when in conversation with the Jews and when in conflict with Satan in the wilderness. The former he so answered from scripture that no man durst ask him any more questions; the latter he vanquished with all his hosts and spoiled him of his goods. Oh! for divine skill to use, after the manner of our Lord, the word of God—the Spirit's sword! Lord, help us to quote the right passage and at the right time; and so to maintain our position according to the word, that the enemy may gain no advantage over us!

But the sword of the Spirit is also used actively in our spiritual warfare. Christianity is essentially aggressive in its character. It judges all that is opposed to its pure and heavenly doctrines. It wages war with the mighty empire of unbelief in its ten thousand forms. The gospel is to be preached to every creature under heaven and this side of hell. It openly attacks carelessness, worldliness, formality, infidelity, superstition, error, and vice of every kind. It assails no political body, state, or kingdom; but it storms the citadel of individual hearts and consciences, and seeks to win souls one by one to the Captain of our salvation, Christ Jesus the Lord.

When the empire of Satan is thus invaded and threatened, we may rest assured that he will leave no stratagem untried, no force unused, to hinder our progress, and to quench the light of our testimony. Hence the continual, the unending, the unmitigated warfare. But our weapons are spiritual, our victories are peace, the sharp sword of the Spirit piercing the conscience, subdues the heart, and brings the conquered soul in triumph to the feet of Jesus.

Prayer in The Spirit.

We have now had before us the several parts of the armor of God—the panoply of heaven—that which refers to our state both inwardly and outwardly—self-judgment, governed affections, practical godliness, confidence in God, a peaceful and peace-making walk, joy in salvation, the active energy of the Spirit, both in the sword and girdle, by the word. But behind all these, there is

a hidden spring of power, which gives connection and strength to the whole armor, and without which all would be of no avail. It is dependence on God: a dependence which expresses itself in prayer. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

The strength and blessedness of this position cannot be over-estimated. In all thy meditations, O my soul, there is no point more worthy of thy closest, deepest study. It places the soul in connection with God, and in dependence on Him. Thus, remember, all thy battles are to be fought, and all thy battles will be victories. Observe for a moment the structure of this remarkable verse. It is, "Praying always"—on all occasions—habitual and complete dependence. And, "in the Spirit"—in the power of the Holy Spirit—in communion. "And watching thereunto with all perseverance," active, vigilant. "And supplication for all saints"—earnestness, interest in others, affection which turns everything into prayer. This is the soul's strong tower—every soul's strong tower. All have not gifts for public ministry—for fighting in the front lines, but all have the privilege of thus drawing near to God, and abiding there.

The spirit of prayer in the christian warfare is like wisdom in the human mind—like gravitation in the material world. It combines, it keeps the different pieces of armor in their respective places, and maintains a mutual dependence the one upon the other. And remember this, my soul, and remember it always, whether in peace, or in war. Nothing will keep thee more in the fight than "praying always"—nothing will give thee a deeper sense of thine own weakness—nothing brings thee more into communion with the strength and favor of God, and nothing the enemy dreads more.

Be watchful and diligent then, O my soul, in the use of this weapon. See and avoid everything that would make thee unspiritual—that would lead thee away from God, or interrupt thy communion with Him. Thy strength lies in communion. May the spirit of entire dependence on God characterize thee as a child in the family, a member in the body, and a servant in the kingdom.

NOT A CLOUD CAN ARISE.

Not a cloud can arise to darken the skies

But is sent from my Father above;

Not a breath e'en can blow on His child below

Save as bearing some message of love.

So good is the Lord, and so true to His word,

Not a sparrow without Him can fall;

His children may be oftentimes toss'd on life's sea,

But He'll still the rough winds at their call.

He ever is near—to their call will give ear,

When, not doubting, they look unto Him

Who is able to save from death, hell, and the grave—
His power, as His love, is supreme.
The sun must obey, and his journeying stay,
When the Lord gives the word of command:
Yea, Satan will fly at His child's feeble cry,
Who relies on His love and strong hand.
All things work for good, to those saved by the blood
Of the Lamb that was slain in their stead;
Not a trial can come but shall hasten them home
Long the path He designs them to tread.
Faith rests upon God, and through fire and through flood
Urges on to its home in the skies,
Where Jesus is gone to prepare it a crown,
And it counts every hour as it flies.
It longs to be home, and its language is, "Come,"
"Come, Lord Jesus!" and call me away:
I sigh thee to see, and e'er with thee to be
In those regions of ne'er-ending day.
My crown thou art there—I thy glory shall share,
The reward of thy suff'ring and shame—
The blessing is mine, but the glory is thine,
And my boast is alone in thy name.
Bristol, May, 1871. T. S.

Christ's Recall

Return!

O wanderer from my side!

Soon droops each blossom of the darkening wild,

Soon melts each meteor which thy steps beguiled,

Soon is the cistern dry which thou hast hewn,

And thou wilt weep in bitterness full soon.

Return! ere gathering night shall shroud the way

Thy footsteps yet may tread, in this the accepted day.

Return!

O erring, yet beloved!

I wait to bind thy bleeding feet, for keen

And rankling are the thorns where thou hast been;

I wait to give thee pardon, love, and rest.

(Is not my joy to see thee safe and blest?)

Return! I wait to, hear once more thy voice,

To welcome thee anew, and bid thy heart rejoice!

Return!

O fallen; yet not lost!

Canst thou forget the life for thee laid down,

The taunts, the scourging, and the thorny crown?

When o'er thee first my spotless robe I spread,

And poured the oil of joy upon thy head,

How did thy wakening heart within thee burn!

Canst thou remember all, and wilt thou not return?

Return!

O chosen of my love!

Fear not to meet thy beckoning Savior's view;
Long ere I called thee by thy name, I knew
That very treacherously thou would's't deal;
Now I have seen thy ways—yet I will heal.
Return! Wilt thou yet linger far from me?
My wrath is turned away, I have redeemed thee!
F.R.H.

Short Papers on Church History

The Romans professed to tolerate all religions, from which the commonwealth had nothing to fear. This was their boasted liberality. Even the Jews were allowed to live according to their own laws. What was it then, we may well ask, that could have caused all their severity to the Christians? Had the commonwealth anything to fear from them? Had it anything to fear from those whose lives were blameless, whose doctrines were the pure truth of heaven, and whose religion was conducive to the people's welfare, both publicly and privately?

The following may be considered as some of the unavoidable causes of persecution, looking at both sides of the question:

1. Christianity, unlike all other religions that preceded it, was aggressive in its character. Judaism was exclusive; the religion of one nation. Christianity was proclaimed as the religion of mankind or the whole world. This was an entirely new thing on the earth. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," was the Lord's command to the disciples. They were to go forth and make war with error, in every form and in all its workings. The conquest to be made was the heart for Christ. "The weapons of our warfare," says the apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:4, 5.) In this war of aggression with existing institutions, and with the corrupt habits of the heathen, the disciples of Jesus had little to expect but resistance, persecution, and suffering.

2. The pagan religion, which Christianity was rapidly undermining and destined to overthrow, was an institution of the State. It was so closely interwoven with the entire civil and social systems, that to attack the religion was to be brought into conflict with both the civil and the social. And this was exactly what took place. Had the primitive Church been as accommodating to the form as Christendom is now, much persecution might have been avoided. But the time had not come for such lax accommodation. The gospel which the Christians then preached, and the purity of doctrine and life which they maintained, shook to the very foundation the old and deeply rooted religion of the State.

3. The Christians naturally withdrew themselves from the pagans. They became a separate and distinct people. They could not but condemn and abhor polytheism, as utterly opposed to the one living and true God, and to the gospel of His Son Jesus Christ. This gave the Romans the idea that Christians were unfriendly to the human race, seeing they condemned all religions but their own. Hence they were called "Atheists," because they did not believe in the heathen deities, and derided the heathen worship.

4. Simplicity and humility characterized the Christians' worship. They peaceably came together before sunrise or after sunset, to avoid giving offense. They sang hymns to Christ as to God; they broke bread in remembrance of His love in dying for them; they edified one another and pledged

themselves to a life of holiness. But they had no fine temples, no statues, no order of priests, and no victims to offer hi sacrifice. The contrast between their worship and that of all others in the empire became most manifest. The heathen, in their ignorance, concluded that the Christians had no religion at all, and that their secret meetings short papers on church history were for the worst of purposes. The world now, as then, would say of those who worship God in spirit and in truth, that “these people have no religion at all.” Christian worship, in true simplicity, without the aid of temples and priests, rites and ceremonies, is not much better understood now by professing Christendom, than it was then by pagan Rome. Still, it is true, “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:24.

5. By the progress of Christianity, the temporal interests of a great number of persons were seriously affected. This was a fruitful and bitter source of persecution. A countless throng of priests, image makers, dealers, soothsayers, augurs, and artisans, found good livings in connection with the worship of so many deities.

6. All these, seeing their craft in danger, rose up in united strength against the Christians, and sought by every means to arrest the progress of Christianity. They invented and disseminated the vilest calumnies against everything christian. The cunning priests and the artful soothsayers easily persuaded the vulgar, and the public mind in general, that all the calamities, wars, tempests, and diseases that afflicted mankind, were sent upon them by the angry gods, because the Christians who despised their authority were everywhere tolerated.

Many other things might be mentioned, but these were everywhere the daily causes of the Christians’ sufferings, both publicly and privately. Of the truth of this, a moment’s reflection will convince every reader. But faith could see the Lord’s hand and hear His voice in it all: “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves; they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought See Mosheim’s “Ecclesiastical History,” vol. 1., p. 67. Cave’s “Primitive Christianity early chapters before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.....Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.” Matt. 10.

Having said this much as to the great opposition which the early Church had to contend against, it will be necessary to glance for a moment at the real cause or causes and means of the rapid progress of Christianity.

Doubtless the causes and the means were divine. They proved themselves to be so. The Spirit of God, who descended in power on the day of Pentecost, and who had taken up His abode in the Church and in the individual Christian, is the true source of all success in preaching the gospel, in the conversion of souls, and in bearing testimony against evil. “Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.” Besides, the Lord has promised to be with His people at all times. “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” (Zech. 4:6, 7; Matt. 28:18- 20.) But our object at present is to look at things historically, and not merely according to the assurance of faith.

1. One great cause of the rapid spread of Christianity is its perfect adaptation to man in every age, in every country, and in every condition. It addresses all as lost, and supposes a like want in all. Thus it suits the Jew and the Gentile, the king and the subject, the priest and the people, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, the learned and the ignorant, the moral and the profligate. It

is God's religion for the heart and asserts His sovereignty there, and His only. It announces itself as the "Power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." It proposes to raise man from the deepest depths of degradation to the loftiest heights of eternal glory. Who can estimate, in spite of every prejudice, the effect of the proclamation of such a gospel to miserable and benighted heathens? Thousands, millions, tired of a worthless and worn out religion, responded to its heavenly voice, gathered around the name of Jesus, took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, and were ready to suffer for His sake. Love ruled in the new religion, hatred in the old.

2. Its sanction and maintenance of all earthly relations, according to God, were other reasons for the acceptance of the gospel among the heathen. Each one was exhorted to remain in these relationships, and seek to glorify God therein. The blessings of Christianity to wives, children, and servants, are unspeakable. Their love, happiness, and comfort were an astonishment to the heathen, and a new thing amongst them. Yet all was natural and orderly. A Christian, who is said to have lived about this time—the early part of the second century—thus describes his co-temporaries: "The Christians are not separated from other men by earthly abode, by language, or by customs. They dwell nowhere in cities by themselves, they do not use a different language, or affect a singular mode of life. They dwell in the cities of the Greeks, and of the barbarians, each as his lot has been cast: and while they conform to the usages of the country, in respect to dress, food, and other things pertaining to the outward life, they yet show a peculiarity of conduct wonderful and striking to all. They obey the existing laws, and conquer the laws by their own living."

3. The blameless lives of the Christians; the divine purity of their doctrines; their patient, cheerful endurance of sufferings worse than death, as well as death itself; their disregard for all the objects of ordinary ambition; their boldness in the faith at the risk of life, credit, and property; were chief means in the rapid spread of Christianity. "For who," says Tertullian, "that beholds these things, is not impelled to inquire into the cause? And who, when he has inquired, does not embrace Christianity? and when he has embraced it, does not himself wish to suffer for it?"

These few particulars will enable the reader to form a more definite judgment as to what it was that tended on the one hand to hinder, and on the other to further the progress of the gospel of Christ. Nothing can be more interesting to the christian mind than the study of this great and glorious work. The Lord's workmen, for the most part, were plain unlettered men; they were poor, friendless, and destitute of all human aid; and yet, in a short time, they persuaded a great part of mankind to abandon the religion of their ancestors, and to embrace a new religion which is opposed to the natural dispositions of men, the pleasures of the world, and the established customs of ages. Who could question the inward power of Christianity with such outward facts before them? Surely it was the Spirit of God who clothed with power the words of these early preachers! Surely their force on the minds of men was divine! A complete change was produced: they were born again—created anew in Christ Jesus.

In less than a hundred years from the day of Pentecost, the gospel had penetrated into most of the provinces of the Roman empire, and was widely diffused in many of them. In our brief outline of the life of St. Paul, and in the chronological table of his missions, we have traced the first planting of many churches, and the propagation of the truth in many quarters. In large central cities, such as Antioch in Syria, Ephesus in Asia, and Corinth in Greece, we have seen Christianity well

established, and spreading its rich blessings among the surrounding towns and villages.

We also learn from ecclesiastical antiquity, that what these cities wore to Syria, Asia, and Greece, Carthage was to Africa. When Scapula, the president of Carthage, threatened the Christians with severe and cruel treatment, Tertullian, in one of his pointed appeals, bids him bethink himself. "What wilt thou do," he says, "with so many thousands of men and women of every age and dignity, as will freely offer themselves? What fires, what swords, wilt thou stand in need of! What is Carthage itself likely to suffer if decimated by thee: when everyone there shall find his near kindred and neighbors, and shall see there matrons, and men perhaps of thy own rank and order, and the most principal persons, and either the kindred or friends of those who are thy nearest friends? Spare then, therefore, for your sake, if not for ours."

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We now resume the narrative of events, and the next in order to be related, is The Martyrdom of Ignatius. There is no fact in early Church history more sacredly preserved than the martyrdom of Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch; and there is no narrative more celebrated than his journey, as a prisoner in chains, from Antioch to Rome.

According to the general opinion of historians, the Emperor Trajan, when on his way to the Parthian war, in the year 107, visited Antioch. From what cause it is difficult to say, but it appears that the Christians were threatened with persecution by his orders. Ignatius, therefore, being concerned for the Church in Antioch, desired to be introduced to Trajan's presence. His great object was to prevent, if possible, the threatened persecution. With this end in view, he set forth to the emperor the true character and condition of the Christians, and offered himself to suffer in their stead.

The details of this remarkable interview are given in many church histories, but there is such an air of suspicion about them, that we forbear inserting them; it ended, however, in the condemnation of Ignatius. He was sentenced by the emperor to be carried to Rome, and thrown to the wild beasts for the entertainment of the people. He welcomed the severe sentence, and gladly submitted to be bound, believing it was for his faith in Christ and as a sacrifice for the saints.

Ignatius was now committed to the charge of ten soldiers, who appear to have disregarded his age and to have treated him with great harshness. He had been bishop of Antioch for nearly forty years, and so must have been an old man. But they hurried him over a long journey, both by sea and land, in order to reach Rome before the games were ended.

He arrived on the last day of the festival, and was earned at once to the amphitheater, where he suffered according to his sentence, in the sight of the assembled spectators. And thus the weary pilgrim found rest from the fatigues of his long journey in the blessed repose of the paradise of God.

It has been asked, Why was Ignatius taken all the way from Antioch to Rome to suffer martyrdom? The answer can only be conjecture. It may have been with the intention of striking fear into other Christians, by the spectacle of one so eminent, and so well-known, brought in chains to a dreadful and degrading death. But if this was the emperor's expectation he was entirely disappointed. It had just the opposite effect. The report of his sentence and of his intended route spread far and wide,

and deputations from the surrounding churches were sent to meet him at convenient points. He was thus cheered and greeted with the warmest congratulations of his brethren; and they, in return, were delighted to see the venerable bishop, and receive his parting blessing. Many of the saints would thereby be encouraged to brave, if not to desire, a martyr's death and a martyr's crown. Among the number who met him by the way was Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, who, like Ignatius, had been a disciple of St. John, and destined to be a martyr for the gospel. But beside these personal interviews, he is said to have written Seven letters on this journey, which have been preserved in the providence of God and handed down to us. Great interest has ever been, and still is, attached to these letters.

But however worthy of all honor Ignatius may be as a holy man of God, and as a noble martyr for Christ, we must ever remember that his letters are not the word of God. They may interest and instruct us, but they cannot command our faith. That can only stand on the solid ground of the word of God, never on the infirm ground of tradition. "Scripture stands alone," as one has said, "in majestic isolation, pre-eminent in instruction, and separated by unapproachable excellence from everything written by the apostolic fathers; so that those who follow close to the apostles have left us writings which are more for our warning than our edification." At the same time, these early christian writers have every claim to our respect and veneration with which antiquity can invest them. They were the cotemporaries of the apostles, they enjoyed the privilege of hearing their instruction, they shared with them the labors of the gospel, and freely conversed with them from day to day. Paul speaks of a Clement—a so-called apostolic father—as his "fellow-laborer, whose name is in the book of life." And what he says of Timothy may have been at least partly true of many others; "But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, and afflictions." Phil. 4:3 Tim. 3:10, 11.

From those who were so highly privileged, we should naturally expect sound apostolic doctrine—a faithful repetition of the truths and instructions which were delivered to them by the inspired apostles. But such, alas! is not the case. Ignatius was one of the earliest of the apostolic fathers. He became the bishop of Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, about the year 70. He was a disciple of the apostle John, and survived him only about seven years. Surely from such a one we might have expected a close resemblance to the apostle's teaching; but it is not so. The definite and absolute statements of scripture, as coming direct from God to the soul, are widely different to the writings of Ignatius and of all the fathers. Our only safe and sure guide is the word of God. How seasonable then is that word in the First Epistle of John, "Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning: if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father." (1 John 2:24.) This passage evidently refers more especially to the person of Christ, and consequently to the scriptures of the New Testament, in which we have the display of the Father in the Son, and made known to us by the Holy Spirit. In Paul's epistles, we have more fully revealed the counsels of God concerning the Church, Israel, and the Gentiles, so that we must go farther back than "the fathers" to find a true ground of faith; we must go back to that which existed from "the beginning." Nothing has direct divine authority for the believer, but that which was from "the beginning." This alone secures our continuing "in the Son and in the Father."

The epistles of Ignatius have been long esteemed by Episcopalians as the chief authority for the system of the English Church—and this must be our excuse for referring so fully to this "father."

Nearly all their arguments in favor of episcopacy are founded on his letters. So strongly does he press submission to the episcopal authority, and so highly does he extol it, that some have been induced to question their genuineness altogether, and others have supposed that they must have been largely interpolated to serve the practical interest. But with the controversy on these points we have nothing to do in our "Short Papers."

We will now resume our history from the death of Trajan, in the year 117, and briefly glance at the condition of the Church during the reigns of Hadrian and the Antonine from A.D 117 to 180.

Although it would be unjust to class Hadrian and the first Antonine with the systematic persecutors of the Church, nevertheless, Christians were often exposed to the most violent sufferings and death during their dominion. The cruel custom of ascribing all public calamities to the Christians, and of calling for their blood as an atonement to the offended deities, still continued, and was generally yielded to by the local governors, and unchecked by the indifferent emperors. But under the reign of the second Antonine, Marcus Aurelius, the evil spirit of persecution greatly increased. It was no longer confined to the outbursts of popular fury, but was encouraged by the highest authorities. The slender protection which the ambiguous edicts of Trajan, Hadrian, and Antonius afforded the Christians was withdrawn, and the excited passions of the idolatrous pagans were unrestrained by the government. It is most interesting to the student of scripture history to see how this could take place under the reign of a prince who was distinguished for learning, philosophy, and general mildness of character.

The past sixty years of comparative peace had opened a wide field for the propagation of the gospel. During that period it made rapid progress in many ways. Christian congregations increased in numbers, influence, and wealth throughout every quarter of the Roman dominions. Many of the rich, being filled with divine love, distributed their substance to the poor, traveled into regions which as yet had not heard the sound of the gospel, and, having planted Christianity, passed on to other countries. The Holy Spirit could not thus work without awakening the jealousy and stirring up all the enmity of the supporters of the national religion. Aurelius saw with an evil eye the superior power of Christianity over men's minds compared with his own heathen philosophy. He then became an intolerant persecutor, and encouraged the provincial authorities to crush what he considered a contumacious spirit of resistance to his authority. But the gospel of the grace of God was far above and beyond the reach of Aurelius; and neither his sword nor his lions could arrest its triumphant career. In spite of the bloody persecutions which he excited or sanctioned, Christianity was propagated throughout the known world.

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But here we must pause for a little, and look around us. There is something deeper far in the change of government towards the Church than the merely historical eye can discern. We believe that we are now come to the close of the FIRST PERIOD and the opening of the SECOND.

The EPHESIAN condition of the Church, looking at it in this light, may be said to have ended with the death of Antoninus Pius, in the year 101; and the Smyranean condition to have commenced with the reign of Marcus Aurelius. The persecution in Asia broke out with great violence in the year 107, under the new edicts of this emperor; and Smyrna especially suffered greatly: the justly esteemed Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, suffered martyrdom at this time. But in order to prove the

view we have taken, it will be necessary to glance briefly at the addresses to the churches of Ephesus and Smyrna. And first, the address to the church of Ephesus. Rev. 2:1- 7.

The grand object of the Church in this world was to be “the pillar and ground of the truth.” It was set up to be a light-bearer for God. It is thus symbolized by a “golden candlestick”—a vessel which bears the light. It ought to have been a true witness of what God had manifested in Jesus on the earth; and of what He is now when Christ is in heaven. We further learn from this address, that the Church, as a vessel of testimony in this world, is threatened with being set aside unless its first estate is maintained. But, alas! she fails, as the creature always does. The angels, Adam, Israel, and the Church, kept not their first estate. “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee,” saith the Lord, “because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.”

There was still, however, much that He could praise, and He does praise all that He can. As an assembly, they had patience; they had labored and not fainted; they could not bear “evil men,” or those who were seeking the highest place in the Church. Nevertheless, He feels the departure from Himself. “Thou hast left thy first love.” He speaks as one disappointed. They had ceased to delight in His love to them, and hence their own love to Him declined. “First love” is the happy fruit of our appreciation of the Lord’s love to us.” “Outward testimony might go on,” as one has said, “but that is not what the Lord most values, though value it He does, so far as it is simple, genuine, and faithful. Still He cannot but prize most of all hearts devoted to Himself, the fruit of His own personal, self-sacrificing, perfect love. He has a spouse upon earth, whom He desires to see with no object but Himself, and kept pure for Him from the world and its ways. God has called us for this: not only for salvation, and a witness for Himself in godliness, though this is most true and important, but beyond all for Christ—a bride for His Son! Surely this should be our first and last, and constant and dearest thought; for we are affianced to Christ, and He at least has proved the fullness and faithfulness of His love to us. But what of ours!”

It was this state of things in Ephesus, and in the Church at large, that called for the intervention of the Lord in faithful discipline. The Church, as planted by Paul, had already fallen from its first estate. “All seek their own,” he says, “not the things of Jesus Christ.” And again, “All they which are in Asia be turned away from me.” Hence the tribulation spoken of in the address to the church in Smyrna. Though the Lord is full of grace and love in all His ways towards His fallen and failing Church, still He is righteous withal and must judge evil. He is not seen in these addresses as the Head in heaven of the one body, nor as the Bridegroom of His Church; but in His judicial character, walking in the midst of the candlesticks, having the attributes of a judge. See the first chapter.

It will be observed by the reader, that there is a measured distance and reserve in the style of His address to the church at Ephesus. This is in keeping with the place He takes in the midst of the golden candlesticks. He writes to the angel of the Church, not to “the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus,” as in the epistle by Paul.

There have been many disputes about “who is meant by the angel.” He was a person, we believe, so identified morally with the assembly, that he represented it, and characterized it. The Lord addresses the angel, not the church immediately. “The angel,” therefore gives the idea of

representation. For example, in the Old Testament we have the angel of Jehovah; the angel of the covenant: and in the New, we have the angels of the little children, and so of Peter in Acts 12 they said, "It is his angel."

We will now briefly glance at the address to the church at Smyrna. Rev. 2:8-11.

Our interest in the history of the Church is greatly increased when we see that the Lord has distinctly marked its successive epochs. The outward condition of the Church down to the death of the first Antonine—so far as it can be ascertained from the most authentic histories—answers in a remarkable way to what we learn from scripture, and short papers on church history especially from the address to Ephesus. There was outward consistency and zeal; they were unwearied. It is also evident that there was charity, purity, devotedness, holy courage, even to the greatest readiness to suffer in every way for the Lord's sake. At the same time it is clear from both scripture and history, that false doctrine was making its way, and that many were manifesting a most unworthy zeal for official pre-eminence in the Church. That forgetfulness of self, and that care for Christ and His glory, which are the first-fruits of His grace, were gone. Historically, we now come to the Smyrna period. For the convenience of the reader we will give the address entire.

"And unto the angel of the Church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; he that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Here the Lord meets the declension by sore tribulation. Milder means had not answered the end. This is no uncommon case; though they may have thought that some strange thing had happened to them. But all their afflictions were known to the Lord, measured by Him, and ever under His control. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." The period of their sufferings is exactly specified. And He speaks to them as one that had known the depths of tribulation Himself. "These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." He had gone through the deepest sorrow, and through death itself—He had died for them and was alive again. They had this blessed One to flee to in all their trials. And as He looks on, and walks in the midst of His suffering ones, He says, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Thus He holds in His hand the martyr's crown, ready to place it on the head of His faithful overcomer.

We will now turn to our history, and mark its resemblance to the above epistle.

THE SECOND PERIOD OF THE CHURCH'S HISTORY COMMENCED ABOUT A.D. 107.

The reign of Aurelius is marked, under the providence of God, by many and great public calamities. We see the hand of the Lord in faithful love chastening His own redeemed and beloved people, but His anger was kindled against their enemies. The eastern army, under Verus, returning from the Parthian war, brought with it to Rome the infliction of a pestilential disease which was then raging in Asia, and which soon spread its ravages through almost the whole of the Roman empire: there was also a great inundation of the Tiber, which laid a large part of the city under water, and swept away immense quantities of grain from the fields and public storehouses.

These disasters were naturally followed by a famine which consumed great numbers.

Such events could not fail to increase the hostility of the heathen against the Christians. They ascribed all their troubles to the wrath of the gods, which the new religion was supposed to have provoked. Thus it was that the persecution of Christians in the Roman empire began with the populace. The outcry against them rose up from the people to the governors. "Throw the Christians to the lions!" "Throw the Christians to the lions!" was the general outcry; and the names of the most prominent in the community were demanded with the same uncontrollable hostility. A weak or superstitious magistrate would tremble before the voice of the people, and lend himself as the instrument of their will.

But we will now take a nearer view, under the guidance of the various histories that are before us, of the manner of these persecutions and of the behavior of the Christians under them the persecution in Asia. A.D. 167.

In Asia Minor the persecution broke out with great violence, such as it had never been before. Christianity was now treated as a direct crime against the state. This changed the face of everything. Contrary to the rescript of Trajan, and the conduct of still milder emperors, Hadrian and Antonine, the Christians were to be sought for as common criminals. They were torn from their homes by the violence of the people, and subjected to the severest tortures. If they obstinately refused to sacrifice to the gods, they were condemned. The wild beast, the cross, the stake, and the ax were the cruel forms of death that met the Lord's faithful ones everywhere.

The prudent and dignified Melito, bishop of Sardis, was so moved by these unheard of barbarities, that he appeared before the emperor as the Christians' advocate. His address throws much light both on the law and on the conduct of the public authorities. It is as follows:—"The race of God's worshippers in this country are persecuted as they never were before, by new edicts; for the shameless sycophants, greedy of the possessions of others—since they are furnished by these edicts with an opportunity of so doing—plunder their innocent victims day and night. And let it be right, if it is done by your command, since a just emperor will never resolve on any unjust measure; and we will cheerfully bear the honorable lot of such a death. Yet we would submit this single petition, that you would inform yourself respecting the people who excite the contention, and impartially decide whether they deserve punishment and death, or deliverance and peace. But if this resolve, and this new edict—an edict which ought not so to be issued even against hostile barbarians—comes from yourself, we pray you the more not to leave us exposed to such public robbery."

There is, we fear, no ground to believe that this noble appeal brought any direct relief to the Christians. The character and ways of Aurelius have perplexed the historians. He was a philosopher of the sect of the Stoics; but naturally humane, benevolent, gentle, and pious; even childlike in his disposition, some say, from the influence of his mother's training; yet he was an implacable persecutor of the Christians for nearly twenty years. And the perplexity is increased when we look to Asia, for the proconsul at this time was not personally opposed to the Christians. Still he yielded to the popular fury and the demands of the law. But faith sees beyond the emperors, governors, and people; it sees the prince of darkness ruling these wicked men, and the Lord Jesus overruling all. "I know thy works and tribulation.....Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer.....Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.....He that

overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”

Aurelius, with all his philosophy, was an utter stranger to the sweetness and power of that name which alone can meet and satisfy the longings of the human heart. All the speculations and boastings of philosophy have never done this. Hence the enmity of the human heart to the gospel. Self-sufficiency, which leads to pride and self-importance, is the principal part of the Stoic's religion. With these views, there could be no humility, no sense of sin, and no idea of a Savior. And the more earnest he was in his own religion, the more bitter and vehement would he be against Christianity.

In a circular-letter addressed by the Church of Smyrna to other christian churches, we have a detailed account of the sufferings of the faithful unto death. “They made it evident to us all,” says the church, “that in the midst of those sufferings they were absent from the body; or rather, that the Lord stood by them and walked in the midst of them; and, staying themselves on the grace of Christ, they bid defiance to the torments of the world.” Some, with a strange, momentary enthusiasm, rushed in self-confidence to the tribunal, and declared themselves to be Christians: but when the magistrate pressed them, wrought upon their fears, showed them the wild beasts, they yielded and offered incense to the gods. “We therefore,” adds the church, “praise not those who voluntarily surrendered themselves; for so are we not taught in the gospel.” Nothing less than the presence of the Lord Jesus could strengthen the soul to endure with tranquility and composure the most agonizing torments, and the most frightful deaths. But thousands have borne with meekness, cheerfulness, and even with joyfulness, the utmost that the power of darkness and the fourth beast of Daniel could do. The pagan bystanders were often moved to pity by their sufferings, but never could understand their calmness of mind, love to their enemies, and willingness to die.

We will now conclude this general account of the persecution in Asia, and notice particularly the two most eminent persons who suffered death at this time; namely, Justin and Polycarp.

THE MARTYRDOM OF JUSTIN, SURNAMED MARTYR.

Justin was born at Neapolis, in Samaria, of Gentile parents. He carefully studied in his youth the different philosophical sects; but not finding the satisfaction which his heart longed for, he was induced to hear the gospel. In it he found, through God's blessing, a perfect rest for his soul, and every desire of his heart fully met. He became an earnest Christian, and a celebrated writer in defense of Christianity.

Early in the reign of Aurelius, Justin was a marked man. Information was laid against him by one Crescens. He was apprehended with six of his companions, and all were brought before the prefect. They were asked to sacrifice to the gods. “No man,” replied Justin, “whose understanding is sound, will desert true religion for the sake of error and impiety.” “Unless you comply,” said the prefect, “you shall be tormented without mercy.” “We desire nothing more sincerely,” he replied, “than to endure tortures for our Lord Jesus Christ.” The rest assented, and said, “We are Christians, and cannot sacrifice to idols.” The governor then pronounced sentence—“As to those who refuse to sacrifice to the gods and to obey the imperial edicts, let them be first scourged and then beheaded, according to the laws.” The martyrs rejoiced and blessed God, and being led back to prison, were scourged and afterward beheaded. This took place at Home about the year 165.

Thus slept in Jesus one of the early Fathers, and earned the glorious title "Martyr," which usually accompanies his name. His writings have been carefully examined by many, and great importance is attached to them.

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The behavior of the venerable bishop of Smyrna, in view of his martyrdom, was most christian and noble in its bearing. He was prepared and ready for his persecutors, without being rash or imprudent, as some at times, through excitement, had been. When he heard the shouts of the people, demanding his death, it was his intention to remain quietly in the city, and await the issue which God might ordain for him. But, by the entreaties of the Church, he suffered himself to be persuaded to take refuge in a neighboring village. Here he spent the time, with a few friends, occupied, night and day, in praying for all the churches throughout the world. But his pursuers soon discovered his retreat. When told that the public officers were at the door, he invited them in, ordered meat and drink to be set before them, and requested that they would indulge him with one hour of quiet prayer. But the fullness of his heart carried him through two hours. So that the pagans themselves were affected by his devotions, age, and appearance. He must have been over ninety years of age.

The time being now come, he was conveyed to the city. The proconsul does not appear to have been personally hostile to the Christians. He evidently felt for the aged Polycarp, and did what he could to save him. He urged him to swear by the genius of the Emperor, and give proof of his penitence. But Polycarp was calm and firm, with his eyes uplifted to heaven. The proconsul again urged him, saying, "Revile Christ, and I will release thee." The old man now replied, "Six and eighty years have I served Him, and He has done me nothing but good; and how could I revile Him, my Lord and Savior?" The governor finding that both promises and threatenings were in vain, he caused it to be proclaimed by the herald in the circus, "Polycarphas declared himself to be a Christian." The heathen populace, with an infuriated shout, replied, "This is the teacher of atheism, the father of the Christians, the enemy of our gods, by whom so many have been turned away from offering sacrifices." The governor having yielded to the demands of the people, that Polycarp should die at the stake, Jews and pagans hastened together to bring wood for that purpose. As they were about to fasten him with nails to the stake of the pile, he said, "Leave me thus: He who has strengthened me to encounter the flames, will also enable me to stand firm at the stake." Before the fire was lighted he prayed, "Lord, Almighty God, Father of thy beloved Son, Jesus Christ, through whom we have received from thee the knowledge of thyself; God of angels, and of the whole creation; of the human race, and of the just that live in thy presence; I praise thee that thou hast judged me worthy of this day and of this hour, to take part in the number of thy witnesses, in the cup of thy Christ."

The fire was now kindled, but the flames played around the body, forming the appearance of a sail filled with wind. The superstitious Romans, fearing that the fire would not consume him, plunged a spear into his side, and Polycarp was crowned with victory.

These are but short extracts from the accounts that have been handed down to us of the martyrdom of the revered and venerable bishop. The martyrologies are full of particulars. But the Lord greatly blessed the Christ like way in which he suffered for the good of the Church. The rage of the people cooled down, as if satisfied with revenge; and their thirst for blood seemed quenched

for the time. The proconsul too, being wearied with such slaughter, absolutely refused to have any more Christians brought before his tribunal. How manifest is the hand of the Lord in this wonderful and sudden change! He had limited the days of their tribulation before they were cast into the furnace, and now they are accomplished: and no power on earth or in hell can prolong them another hour. They had been faithful unto death and received the crown of life.

THE PERSECUTIONS IN FRANCE. A.D. 177.

We will now turn to the scene of the second persecution under this emperor's reign. It took place in France, and exactly ten years after the persecution in Asia. There may have been other persecutions during these ten years, but, so far as we know, there are no authentic records of any till 177. The source from which we derive our knowledge of the details of this latter persecution is a circular letter from the churches of Lyons and Vienne to the churches in Asia. Whether there be any allusion to these ten historical years in the words of the Lord to the Church at Smyrna, we cannot say. Scripture does not say there is. Comparing the history with the epistle, the thought is likely to be suggested. "Ye shall have tribulation ten days." In other parts of this mystical book, a day stands for a year, and so it may in the epistle to Smyrna. History gives us the beginning and the end as to time, and the east and west as to breadth of scene. But we will now look at some of the details, in which the resemblance may be more manifest.

Imprisonment was one of the main features of their sufferings. Many died from the suffocating air of the noisome dungeons. In this respect it differed from the persecution in Asia. The popular excitement rose even higher than at Smyrna. The Christians were insulted and abused whenever they appeared abroad, and even plundered in their own houses. As this popular fury burst forth during the absence of the governor, many were thrown into prison by the inferior magistrates to await his return. But the spirit of persecution on this occasion, though it sprang from the populace, was not confined to them. The governor, on his arrival, seems to have been infected with the fanaticism of the lower classes. To his dishonor as a magistrate, he began the examination of the prisoners with tortures. And the testimony of slaves, contrary to an ancient law in Rome, was not only received against their masters, but wrung from them by the severest sufferings. Consequently, they were ready to say what they were required, to escape the whip and the rack. Having proved, as they said, that the Christians practiced the most unnatural and worst of crimes in their meetings, they now believed that it was right to indulge themselves in every cruelty. No kindred, no condition, no age, nor sex was spared.

Vettius, a young man of birth and rank, and of great charity and fervency of spirit, on hearing that such charges were laid against his brethren, felt constrained to present himself before the governor as a witness of their innocence. He demanded a hearing, but the governor refused to listen, and only asked him if he too was a Christian? When he distinctly affirmed that he was, the governor ordered him to be thrown into prison with the rest. He afterward received the crown of martyrdom.

The aged bishop, Pothinus, now over ninety years of age, and probably the one who had brought the gospel to Lyons from Asia, was of course good prey for the lion of hell. He was afflicted with asthma and could scarcely breathe, but, notwithstanding, he must be seized and dragged before the authorities. "Who is the God of the Christians?" asked the governor. The old man quietly told him that he could only come to the knowledge of the true God by showing a right spirit. Those who

surrounded the tribunal strove with each other in giving vent to their rage against the venerable bishop. He was ordered to prison, and after receiving many blows on his way thither, he was cast in among the rest, and in two days fell asleep in Jesus, in the arms of his suffering flock.

What a weight of comfort and encouragement the words of the blessed Lord must have been to these holy sufferers. "Fear none of these things which thou shalt suffer," had been addressed to the Church in Smyrna, and probably carried to the French churches of Lyons and Vienne by Fothinus. They were experiencing an exact fulfillment of this solemn and prophetic warning; "Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried." They knew who was the great enemy—the great persecutor—though emperors, governors, and mobs might be his instruments. But the Lord was with His beloved suffering ones. He not only sustained and comforted them, but He brought out, in the most blessed way, the power of His own presence in the feeblest forms of humanity. This was, we venture to say, a new thing on the earth. The superiority of the Christians to all the inflictions of tortures, and to all the terrors of death, utterly astonished the multitude, stung to the quick their tormentors, and wounded the stoic pride of the emperor. What could be done with a people who prayed for their persecutors, and manifested the composure and tranquility of heaven, in the midst of the fires and wild beasts of the amphitheater? Take one example of what we affirm—an example worthy of all praise, in all time and in all eternity.

BLANDINA, a female slave, was distinguished above the rest of the martyrs for the variety of tortures she endured. Her mistress—who also suffered martyrdom—feared lest the faith of her servant might give way under such trials. But it was not so, the Lord be praised! Firm as a rock, but peaceful and unpretending, she endured the most excruciating sufferings. Her tormentors urged her to deny Christ, and confess that the private meetings of the Christians were only for their wicked practices, and they would cease their tortures. But, no! her only reply was, "I am a Christian, and there is no wickedness amongst us." The scourge, the rack, the heated iron chair, and the wild beasts, had lost their terror for her. Her heart was fixed on Christ, and He kept her in spirit near to Himself. Her character was fully formed, not by her social condition, of course—that was the most debased in these times—but by her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, through the power of the indwelling Holy Ghost.

Day after day she was brought forth as a public spectacle of suffering. Being a female and a slave, the heathen expected to force her to a denial of Christ, and to a confession that the Christians were guilty of the crimes reported against them. But it was all in vain. "I am a Christian, and there is no wickedness amongst us," was her quiet but unvarying reply. Her constancy wearied out the inventive cruelty of her tormentors. They were astonished that she lived through the fearful succession of her sufferings. But in her greatest agonies she found strength and relief in looking to Jesus and witnessing for Him. "Blandina was endued with so much fortitude," says the letter from the church at Lyons, written seventeen hundred years ago, "that those who successively tortured her from morning to night were quite worn out with fatigue, and owned themselves conquered and exhausted of their whole apparatus of tortures, and were amazed to see her still breathing whilst her body was torn and laid open."

Before narrating the closing scene of her sufferings, we would notice what appears to us to be the secret of her great strength and constancy. Doubtless the Lord was sustaining her in a remarkable

way as a witness for Him, and as a testimony to all ages of the power of Christianity over the human mind, compared with all the religions that there were or ever had been on the earth. Still, we would say particularly, that her humility and godly fear were the sure indications of her power against the enemy, and of her unfaltering fidelity to Christ. She was thus working out her own salvation—deliverance from the difficulties of the way—by a deep sense of her own conscious weakness, indicated by “fear and trembling.”

When on her way back from the amphitheater to the prison, in company with her fellow sufferers, they were surrounded by their sorrowing friends when they had an opportunity, and in their sympathy and love addressed them as “martyrs for Christ.” But this they instantly checked; saying, “We are not worthy of such an honor. The struggle is not over; and the dignified name of Martyr properly belongs to Him only who is the true and faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, the Prince of life; or, at least, only to those whose testimony Christ has sealed by their constancy to the end. We are but poor humble confessors.” With tears they besought their brethren to pray for them that they might be firm and true to the end. Thus their weakness was their strength, for it led them to lean on the mighty One. And so it always is, and ever has been, in small as well as in great trials. But a fresh sorrow awaited them on their return to the prison. They found some who had given way through natural fear, and had denied that they were Christians. But they had gained nothing thereby; Satan had not let them off. Under a charge of other crimes they were kept in prison. With these weak ones Blandina and the others prayed with many tears, that they might be restored and strengthened. The Lord answered their prayers, so that when they were brought up again for further examination, they steadfastly confessed their faith in Christ, and thus passed sentence of death on themselves, and received the crown of martyrdom.

Nobler names, as men would say, than Blandina’s, had passed off the bloody scene; and honored names too, that had witnessed with great fortitude; such as Vittius, Pothinus, Sanctus, Naturus, and Attalius; but the last day of her trial was come, and the last pain she was ever to feel, and the last tear she was ever to shed. She was brought up for her final examination with a youth of fifteen, named Ponticus. They were ordered to swear by the gods: they firmly refused, but were calm and unmoved. The multitude were incensed at their magnanimous patience. The whole round of barbarities were inflicted. Ponticus, though animated and strengthened by the prayers of his sister in Christ, soon sunk under the tortures, and fell asleep in Jesus.

And now came the noble and blessed Blandina, as the church styles her. Like a mother who was needed to comfort and encourage her children, she was kept to the last day of the games. She had sent her children on before, and was now longing to follow after them. They had joined the noble army of martyrs above, and were resting with Jesus, as weary warriors rest, in the peaceful paradise of God. After she had endured stripes, she was seated in a hot iron chair; then she was enclosed in a net and thrown to a bull; and having been tossed some time by the animal, a soldier plunged a spear into her side. No doubt she was dead long before the spear reached her, but in this she was honored to be like her Lord and Master. Bright indeed will be the crown amidst the many crowns in heaven, of the constant, humble, patient, enduring Blandina.

But the fierce and savage rage of the heathen, instigated by Satan, had not yet reached its height. They began a new war with the dead bodies of the saints. Their blood had not satiated them. They must have their ashes. Hence the mutilated bodies of the martyrs were collected and burned, and

thrown into the river Rhone, with the fire that consumed them, lest a particle should be left to pollute the land. But rage, however fierce, will finally expend itself; and nature, however savage, will become weary of bloodshed; and so many Christians survived this terrible persecution.

We have thus gone, more than usual, into details in speaking of the persecutions under Marcus Aurelius. So far, they are a fulfillment, we believe, of the solemn and prophetic warnings of the address to Smyrna; and also, in a remarkable manner, of the Lord's promised grace. The sufferers were filled and animated by His own Spirit. "Even their persecutors," says Neander, "were never mentioned by them with resentment; but they prayed that God would forgive those who had subjected them to such cruel sufferings. They left a legacy to their brethren, not of strife and war, but of peace and joy, unanimity and love."

Short Papers on Church History

In tracing the silver line of God's grace in His beloved people, we have now to notice a report which was widely spread among the Christians after the beginning of the third century. It occurred towards the close of the reign of Aurelius, and led him, it is said, to change the course of his policy towards the Christians. In one of his campaigns against the Germans and Sarmatians—who were then called barbarians—he was thrown into a situation of extreme peril. The burning sun shone full in the faces of his soldiers; they were hemmed in by the barbarians; they were exhausted by wounds and fatigue, and parched with thirst; while, at the same time, the enemy was preparing to attack them. In this extremity, the twelfth legion, said to be composed of Christians, stepped forward and knelt down in prayer; suddenly the sky was overspread with clouds, and the rain began to fall heavily. The Roman soldiers took off their helmets to catch the refreshing drops; but the shower speedily increased to a storm of hail, accompanied with thunder and lightning, which so alarmed the barbarians that the Romans gained an easy victory.

The emperor, so struck with such a miraculous answer to prayer, acknowledged the interposition of the God of the Christians, conferred honors on the legion, and issued an edict in favor of their religion. After this, if not before, they were called "the thundering legion." Historians, from Eusebius down, have noticed this remarkable occurrence.

But, like a tale that is often told, many things have been added to it. There is good reason to believe, however, that a providential answer in favor of the Romans was given to prayer. This much seems quite evident. And to faith there is nothing incredible in such an event; though some of the circumstances related are questionable. For example, a Roman legion at that time would probably number five thousand men; and there may have been a great many Christians in the twelfth—which was a distinguished legion—yet it would be hard to believe that they were all Christians.

On their return from the war, they no doubt related to their brethren the merciful intervention of God in answer to prayer; and which the Church would record and spread amongst the Christians to His praise and glory. But the facts are even more fully confirmed by the Romans. They also believed that the deliverance came from heaven, but in answer to the prayers of the emperor to the gods. Hence the event was commemorated, after their usual manner on columns, medals, and paintings. On these the emperor is represented as stretching forth his hands in supplication, the army as catching the rain in their helmets; and Jupiter as launching forth his bolts on the

barbarians, who he slain on the ground.

A few years after this remarkable event, Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher and the persecutor, died. Great changes quickly followed. The glory of the empire, and the effort to maintain the dignity of the old Roman religion, expired with himself; but Christianity made great and rapid advancement. Men of ability and learning were raised up about this time, who boldly and powerfully advocated its claims with their pens. These are called Apologists. TERTULLIAN, an African, who is said to have been born A.D. 160, may be considered as the ablest and the most perfect type of this class.

The more enlightened of the heathen now began to feel that if their religion was to withstand the aggressive power of the gospel, it must be defended and reformed. Hence the controversy commenced; and one Celsus, an Epicurean philosopher, said to be born in the same year as Tertullian, stood forth as the leader on the controversial side of Paganism. From about this period—the closing years of the second century—church records become more interesting, because more definite and reliable. But before proceeding farther with the general history, it may be well to retrace our steps and glance briefly at the internal history of the Church from the beginning. We shall thus see how some of the things which are still observed, and with which we are familiar, were first introduced.

CHAPTER 9.

The Internal History of The Church.

Here we step once more on sure ground. We have the privilege and satisfaction of appealing to the sacred writings. Before the canon of scripture was closed, many of the errors, both in doctrine and practice, which have since troubled and rent in pieces the professing Church, were allowed to spring up. These were detected and exposed by the inspired apostles, in the wisdom and grace of God. If we keep this in mind, we shall not be surprised to meet with many things in the internal history of the Church entirely contrary to scripture. Neither need we have any difficulty in withstanding them. We have been armed by the apostles. The love of office and pre-eminence in the Church was manifested at an early period, and many observances of mere official invention were added. The “grain of mustard seed” became a great tree—the symbol of political power on the earth: this was and is the outward aspect of Christendom; but inwardly the leaven did its evil work, “till the whole was leavened.”

Those who have carefully studied Matt. 13 with other passages in the Acts and the epistles relating to the profession of the name of Christ, should have a very correct idea of both the early and later history of the Church. It embraces the entire period, from the sowing of the seed by the Son of man, until the harvest, though under the similitude of the kingdom of heaven. This is a great relief to the mind, and prepares us for many a dark and distressing scene, wickedly perpetrated under the fair name and cloak of Christianity. We will now turn to some of these passages.

1. Our blessed Lord, in the parable of the wheat and tares, predicts what would take place. “The kingdom of heaven,” He says, “is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.” In course of time “the blade sprang up and brought forth fruit.” This was the rapid spread of Christianity in the earth. But we also read “then appeared the tares also.” These were false professors of Christ’s

name. The Lord Jesus sowed good seed. Satan, through the carelessness and infirmity of man, sowed tares. But what was to be done with them? Were they to be rooted out of the kingdom? The Lord says, No; "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest;" that is, till the end of the age or dispensation when the Lord comes in judgment.

But here, some may inquire, Does the Lord mean that the wheat and the tares are to grow together in the Church? Certainly not. They were not to be rooted out of the field, but to be put out of the Church when manifested as wicked persons. The Church and the kingdom are quite distinct, though the one may be said to be in the other. The field is the world, not the Church. The limits of the kingdom stretch far beyond the limits of the true Church of God. Christ builds the Church; men have to do with extending the proportions of Christendom. If the expression, "the kingdom of heaven," meant the same as "the Church of God," there ought to be no discipline at all. Whereas the apostle, in writing to the Corinthians, expressly says, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person." But he was not to be put out of the kingdom, for that could only be done by taking away his life.

The wheat and the tares are to grow together in the field until the harvest. Then the Lord Himself, in His providence, will deal with the tares. They shall be bound in bundles and cast into the fire. Nothing then can be plainer than the Lord's teaching in this parable. The tares are to be put away from the Lord's table, but not rooted out of the field. The Church was not to use worldly punishments in dealing with ecclesiastical offenders. But, alas, the very thing which the Lord is here guarding His disciples against came to pass, as the long list of martyrs so painfully shows. Pains and penalties were brought in as discipline, and the refractory were handed over to the civil power to be punished with fire and sword.

2. In Acts 20 we read that "grievous wolves" would make their appearance in the Church after the departure of the apostle. In Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians—supposed to be his first inspired epistles—he tells them that the mystery of iniquity was already at work, and that other evil things would follow. In writing to the Philippians he tells them, weeping, that many walk as "the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things." Many were calling themselves Christians, but minding earthly things. Such a state of things could not escape the spiritual eye of him whose one object was Christ in glory, and practical conformity to His ways when on earth. In his Second Epistle to Timothy—probably the last he ever wrote—he compares Christendom to "a great house," in which are all manner of vessels, "some to honor, and some to dishonor." This is a picture of the outward universal church. Nevertheless, the Christian cannot leave it, and individual responsibility can never cease. But he is to clear himself from all that is contrary to the name of the Lord. The directions are most plain and precious for the spiritually minded in all ages. The Christian must have no association with that which is untrue. Such is the meaning of purging himself from the vessels to dishonor. He is to clear himself from all that is not to the Lord's honor. John and the other apostles speak of the same things, and give the same divine directions; but we need not here pursue them further. Enough has been pointed out to prepare the reader for what we must meet with in that which calls itself Christian.

THE IMMEDIATE FOLLOWERS OF THE APOSTLES.

Here an important question arises, and one that has been often asked, At what time, and by what means, did clericalism—the whole system of clergy—gain so firm a footing in the professing church? To answer this question fully would be to write in detail the internal history of the Church. Its growth and organization were gradual. The constitution and character of the christian Church were wholly changed by the introduction of the clerical system. In short, it was recast in the mold of Judaism. The distinction between bishops and presbyters, between a priestly order and the common priesthood of all believers, and the multiplication of church offices, followed rapidly as consequences. But, however obscure and difficult to trace many of the details of clericalism may be, we have no doubt as to its real source—the synagogue was its model.

We learn from the whole of the New Testament that Judaism was the unwearied and unrelenting enemy of Christianity in every point of view. It labored incessantly, on the one hand to introduce its rites and ceremonies; and on the other, to persecute unto the death all who were faithful to Christ and to the true principles of the Church of God. This we see especially from the Acts and the Epistles. But when the extraordinary gifts in the Church ceased, and when the noble defenders of the faith, in the persons of the inspired apostles, passed away, we may easily imagine how Judaism would prevail. Besides, the early churches were, chiefly composed of converts from the Jewish synagogue, who long retained their Jewish prejudices.

Clericalism, then, we firmly believe, sprang from Judaism. From the days of the apostles until now the root of the whole fabric and dominion of clericalism is there. Philosophy and heresy, no doubt, did much to corrupt the Church and lead her to join hands with the world; but the order of the clergy and all that belongs to it must be founded on the Jews' religion. It is more than probable, however, that many may have been persuaded then, as many have been since, that Christianity is a continuation of Judaism, in place of being its perfect contrast. The Judaizing teachers boldly affirmed that Christianity was merely a graft on Judaism. But throughout the epistles we everywhere learn that the one was earthly and the other heavenly; that the one belonged to the old, and the other to the new creation; that the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

We will now return to the immediate followers of the apostles.

The apostolical fathers, as they are called, such as Clement, Polycarp, Ignatius, and Barnabas, were the immediate followers of the inspired apostles. They had listened to their instructions, labored with them in the gospel, and probably had been familiarly acquainted with them. But, notwithstanding the high privileges which they enjoyed as scholars of the apostles, they very soon departed from the doctrines which had been committed to them, especially as to church government. They seem to have completely forgotten—judging from the epistles which bear their names—the great New Testament truth of the Holy Spirit's presence in the assembly. Surely both John and Paul speak much of the presence, indwelling, sovereign rule, and authority of the Holy Spirit in the Church. John 13-15, Acts 2 Cor. 12; 14, Eph. 1-4 give plain directions and instructions on this fundamental truth of the Church of God. Had this truth been maintained according to the apostle's exhortation, "Endeavoring to keep"—not to make—"the unity of the Spirit," clericalism could never have found a place in Christendom.

The new teachers of the Church seem also to have forgotten the beautiful simplicity of the divine order in the Church. There were only two orders of office bearers—elders and deacons. The one

was appointed to attend to the temporal, the other to the spiritual need of the assembly of the saints. Elder or bishop simply means overseer, one who takes a spiritual oversight. He may have been “apt to teach,” or he may not; he was not an ordained teacher, but an ordained overseer. And as for the institutions of divine appointment, we only find in the New Testament, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Nothing could be more simple, more easily understood, or more plain, as to all the directions given for faith and practice; but there was no room left for the exaltation and glory of man in the Church of God. The Holy Ghost had come down to take the lead in the assembly, according to the word of the Lord, and the promise of the Father; and no Christian, however gifted, believing this, could take the place of leader, and thus practically displace the Holy Spirit. But, from the moment that this truth was lost sight of, men began to contend for place and power, and of course the Holy Spirit had no longer His right place in the assembly.

Scarcely had the voice of inspiration become silent in the Church, than we hear the voice of the new teachers crying loudly and earnestly for the highest honors being paid to the bishop, and a supreme place being given to him. Not a word about the Spirit’s place as sovereign ruler in the Church of God. This is evident from the epistles of Ignatius, said to have been written A.D. 107. Many great names, we are aware, have questioned their authenticity; and many great names contend that they have been satisfactorily proved to be genuine. The proofs on either side lie outside of our line. The Church of England has long accepted them as genuine, and consider them as the basis, and as the triumphant vindication of the antiquity of episcopacy. The following are a few specimens of his admonitions to the Churches.

Short Papers on Church History

Ignatius, in the course of his journey from Antioch to Rome, wrote seven epistles. One to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallians, Romans, Philadelphians, Smyrneans, and one to his friend Polycarp. Being written on the eve of his martyrdom, and with great earnestness and vehemence, and having been the disciple and friend of St. John, and at that time bishop of Antioch, probably the most renowned in Christendom, his epistles must have produced a great impression on the Churches; besides, the way to office, authority, and power has always a great charm for vain human nature.

In writing to the Church at Ephesus he says, “Let us take heed, brethren, that we set not ourselves against the bishop, that we may be subject to God.....It is therefore evident that we ought to look upon the bishop even as we do upon the Lord Himself.” In his epistle to the Magnesians he says, “I exhort you that ye study to do all things in a divine concord: your bishops presiding in the place of God; your presbyters in the place of the council of the apostles; and your deacons, most dear to me, being entrusted with the ministry of Jesus Christ.” We find the same strain in his letter to the Trallians: “Whereas ye are subject to your bishop as to Jesus Christ, ye appear to me to live, not after the manner of men, but according to Jesus Christ who died for us.....Guard yourselves against such persons; and that you will do if you are not puffed up: but continue inseparable from Jesus Christ our God, and from your bishop, and from the commands of the apostles.” Passing over several of his letters to the churches, we will only give one more specimen from his epistle to the Philadelphians: “I cried whilst I was among you, I spake with a loud voice—attend to the bishop, and to the presbytery, and to the deacons. Now some supposed that I spake this as foreseeing the division that should come among you. But He is my witness for whose sake I am in

bonds, that I knew nothing from any man; but the Spirit spake, saying on this wise: Do nothing without the bishop; keep your bodies as the temples of God; love unity; flee divisions; be the followers of Christ, as he was of His Father.”

In the last quotation it is verse evident that the venerable father wishes to add to his theories the weight of inspiration. But, however extravagant and unaccountable this idea may be, we must give him credit for honesty and sincerity. That he was a devout Christian, and full of religious zeal, no one can doubt; but that he greatly deceived himself in this and in other matters there can be as little doubt. The leading idea in all his letters is the perfect submission of the people to their rulers, or of the laity to their clergy. He was, no doubt, anxious for the welfare of the Church, and fearing the effect of the “divisions” which he refers to, he probably thought that a strong government, in the hands of rulers, would be the best means of preserving it from the inroads of error. “Give diligence,” he says, “to be established in the doctrine of our Lord and the apostles, together with your most worthy bishop, and the well-woven spiritual crown of your presbytery, and your godly deacons. Be subject to your bishop and to one another, as Jesus Christ to the Father, according to the flesh; and as the apostles to Christ, and to the Father, and to the Spirit; that so there may be a union among you both in body and in spirit.” Thus the miter was placed on the head of the highest dignitary, and henceforth became the object of ecclesiastical ambition, and not un-frequently of the most unseemly contention, with all their demoralizing consequences.

CLERICALISM, MINISTRY, AND INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY.

It is assumed that these epistles were written only a few years after the death of St. John, and that the writer must have been intimately acquainted with his mind, and was only carrying out his views. Hence it is said, that episcopacy is coeval with Christianity. But it matters comparatively little by whom they were written, or the precise time; they are not scripture, and the reader must judge of their character by the word of God, and of their influence by the history of the Church. The mind of the Lord, concerning His Church, and the responsibility of His people, must be learned from His own word, and not from the writings of any father, however early or esteemed. And here, it may be well, before leaving this point, to place before our readers a few portions of the word, which they will do well to compare with the above extracts. They refer to Christian ministry and individual responsibility. Thus learn the mighty difference between ministry and office; or, between being esteemed for your work’s sake, not merely office sake.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, from verse 45 of chapter 24 to verse 31 of chapter 25, we have three parables, in which the Lord addresses the disciples as to their conduct during His absence.

1. The subject of the first is the responsibility of ministry within the house—in the Church. “Whose house are we.” Thus we read, “Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.” Real ministry is of the Lord and of Him alone. This is what we have to note in view of what took place on the very threshold of Christianity. And He makes much of faithfulness or unfaithfulness in His house. His people are near and dear to His heart. Those who have been humble and faithful during His absence will be made rulers over all His goods when He returns. The true minister of Christ has to do directly with Himself. He is the hireling of no man, or of any particular body of men. “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so

doing.” Failure in ministry is also spoken of and dealt with by the Lord Himself.

“But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite His fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken.” This is the other and sad side of the picture. The character of ministry is greatly affected by holding or rejecting the truth of the Lord’s coming. In place of devoted service to the household, with his heart set on the master’s approval, on his return, there is assumption, tyranny, and worldliness. The doom of such, when the Lord comes, will be worse than that of the world. “He shall appoint him his portion with the hypocrite”—Judas’ place—where “there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Such are the fearful consequences of forgetfulness of the Lord’s return. But this is more than a mere doctrinal mistake, or a difference of opinion about the coming of the Lord. It was “in his heart,” his will was concerned in it. He wished in his heart that the Lord would stay away, as His coming would spoil all his schemes, and bring to a close all his worldly greatness. Is not this too true a picture of what has happened? and what a solemn lesson for those who take to themselves a place of service in the Church. The mere appointment of the sovereign, or the choice of the people, will not be enough in that day, unless they have also been the chosen of the Lord and faithful in His house.

2. In the second parable, professing Christians, during the Lord’s absence, are represented as virgins who went out to meet the Bridegroom and light Him to His house. This was the attitude of the early Christians. They came out from the world, and from Judaism, to go forth and meet the Bridegroom. But we know what happened. He tarries: they all slumbered and slept. “And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him.” From the first, till the beginning of the present century, we hear very little about the coming of the Lord. Now and then, here and there, a feeble voice may be heard on the subject; but not until the early part of the present century did the midnight cry go forth. Now we have many tracts and volumes on the subject, and many are preaching it in nearly all lands under heaven. The midnight is past, the morning cometh.

The revival of the truth of the Lord’s coming marks a distinct epoch in the history of the Church. And, like all revivals, it was the work of the Holy Spirit, and that by instruments of his own choosing, and by means which He saw fitting. And how like the Lord’s long suffering, that in this great movement there should be time given between the cry and the arrival of the Bridegroom to prove the condition of each. Five of the ten virgins had no oil in their lamps—no Christ, no Holy Spirit dwelling in them. They had only the outward lamp of profession. How awfully solemn the thought, if we look at Christendom from this point of view! Five of every ten are unreal, and against whom the door will be shut forever. How this thought should move to earnestness and energy in evangelizing! May we wisely improve the time thus graciously given between the going forth of the midnight cry, and the coming of the Bridegroom.

3. In the first parable, it is ministry inside the house; in the third, it is ministry outside the house—evangelizing. In the second parable, it is the personal expectation of the Lord’s coming, with the possession of that which is requisite to go in with Him to the marriage supper of the King’s son.

“The kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.’ Here the Lord

is represented as leaving this world and going back to heaven; and while He is gone there, His servants are to trade with the talents committed to them. "Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two." Here we have the true principle and the true character of christian ministry. The Lord Himself called the servants and gave them the talents, and the servant is responsible to the Lord Himself for the fulfillment of his calling. The exercise of gift, whether inside or outside the house, although subject to the directions of the word, and always to be exercised in love and for blessing, is in no wise dependent on the will of sovereign, priest, or people, but on Christ only, the true Head of the Church. It is a grave and solemn thing for anyone to interfere with Christ's claims on the service of His servant. To touch this is to set aside responsibility to Christ, and to overthrow the fundamental principle of Christianity.

Priesthood was the distinguishing characteristic of the Jewish dispensation; ministry, according to God, is characteristic of the Christian period. Hence the utter failure of the professing church, when it sought to imitate Judaism in so many ways—both in its priesthood and its ritualism. If a priestly order, with rites and ceremonies, be still necessary, the efficacy of the work of Christ is called in question, In fact, though not in words, it strikes at the root of Christianity. But all is settled by the word of God. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever sat down at the right hand of God: from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.....Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin." Heb. 10:1-25.

Ministry, then, is a subject of the highest dignity and the deepest interest. It testifies to the work, the victory, and the glory of Jesus, that the lost may be saved. It is the activity of God's love going out to an alien and ruined world, and earnestly beseeching souls to be reconciled to Him. " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed to us the word of reconciliation." (2 Cor. 5:19-21.) Jewish priesthood maintained the people in their relations with God; christian ministry is God in grace delivering souls from sin and ruin, and bringing them near to Himself, as happy worshippers in the most holy place.

To return to our parable. There is one thing specially to be noticed here, as showing the Lord's sovereignty and wisdom in connection with ministry. He gave differently to each, and to each according to his ability. Each one had a natural capacity which fitted him for the service in which he was employed, and gifts bestowed, according to the measure of the gift of Christ, for its fulfillment. "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Eph. 4) The servant must have certain natural qualifications for his work, besides the power of the Spirit of God. If the Lord calls a man to preach the gospel, there will be a natural ability for it. Then the Lord may create in his heart by the Holy Spirit a real love for souls, which is the best gift of the evangelist. Then he ought to stir up and exercise his gift according to his ability, for the blessing of souls and the glory of God. May we remember that we are responsible for these two things: the gift graciously bestowed, and the ability in which the gift is to be exercised. When the Lord comes to reckon with His servants, it will not be enough to say, I was never educated for, or appointed to, the ministry. The question will be, Did I wait on the Lord to be used by Him according to what He had fitted me for? or did I hide my talent in the earth? Faithfulness or unfaithfulness to Him will be the only thing in question.

That which distinguished the faithful from the unfaithful servant was confidence in their master. The unfaithful servant knew not the Lord: he acted from fear, not from love, and so hid his one talent in the earth. The faithful knew the Lord, trusted Him, and served from love, and were rewarded. Love is the only true spring of service for Christ, either in the Church or in the outside world. May we never be found making excuses for ourselves, like the “wicked and slothful” servant, but be ever reckoning on the love, grace, truth, and power of our blessed Savior and Lord.

Short Papers on Church History

It may be only fair to suppose that those good men, by whose means a new order of things was brought into the Church, and the free ministry of the Holy Spirit in the members of the body excluded, had the welfare of the Church at heart. It is evident that Ignatius, by this arrangement, hoped to avoid “divisions.” But, however good our motives may be, it is the height of human folly—if not worse—to interfere with or seek to change the order of God. This was Eve’s mistake, and we all know the consequences too well. It was also the original sin of the Church, and from which it has suffered these eighteen hundred years.

The Holy Ghost sent down from heaven is the only power of ministry; but the Lord must be left free to choose and employ His own servants. Human arrangements and appointments necessarily interfere with the liberty of the Spirit. They quench the Holy Spirit. He only knows where the ability is, and where, when, and how to dispense the gifts. Speaking of the Church as it was in the days of the apostles, it is said, “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he [the Holy Ghost] will.” And again we read, “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal,” or for the profit of all. (1 Cor. 12) Here all is in divine hands. The Holy Spirit dispenses the gift. It is to be exercised in acknowledgment of the lordship of Christ; and God gives efficacy to the ministry. What a ministry! Spirit, Lord and God: its source, power, and character. How great, how sad the change, to king, prelate, or people! Is not this apostasy? But while we object to mere human appointment to office, qualified or not qualified, we would contend most earnestly for the ministry of the word to both saints and sinners.

The Church, alas, soon found that to hinder ministry, as it is set before us in the word of God, and introduce a new order of things, did not hinder divisions, heresies, and false teachers springing up. True, the flesh, in the most real and gifted Christian, may manifest itself, but when the Spirit of God is acting in power, and the authority of the word owned, the remedy is at hand: the evil will be judged in humility and faithfulness to Christ. From this time—the beginning of the second century, and before it—the Church was greatly disturbed by heresies; and as time rolled on, things never grew better, but always worse.

IRENÆUS, a Christian of great celebrity, who succeeded Pothinus as bishop of Lyons, A.D. 177, has left us much information on the subject of the early heresies. He is supposed to have written about the year 183. His great book “against heresies” is said to contain a defense of the holy catholic faith, and an examination and refutation of the false doctrines advocated by the principal heretics.

The Origin of The Distinction Between Clergy And Laity.

Christianity at the beginning had no separate priestly order. Its first converts went everywhere preaching the Lord Jesus. They were the first to spread abroad the glad tidings of salvation, even before the apostles themselves had left Jerusalem. (Acts 8:11.) In course of time, when converts were found sufficient in any place to form an assembly, they came together in the name of the Lord on the first day of the week, to break bread, and to edify one another in love. (Acts 20:7.) When the opportunity came for an apostle to visit such gatherings, he ordained elders to take the spiritual oversight of the little flock; deacons were chosen by the assembly. This was the entire constitution of the first churches. If the Lord raised up an evangelist and souls were converted, they were baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This was of course outside the assembly, and not a church act. After due examination by the spiritual as to the genuineness of the evangelist's work, and the assembly being satisfied, they were received into communion.

It will be seen, from this brief sketch of the divine order of the churches, that there was no distinction such as "the clergy," and "the laity." All stood on the same ground as to priesthood, worship, and nearness to God. As the Apostles Peter and John say, "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." And thus could the whole assembly sing, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood; and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." The only priesthood then, in the Church of God, is the common priesthood of all believers. The humblest menial in the palace of the archbishop, if washed in the blood of Christ, is whiter than snow, and fitted to enter the most holy place and worship within the veil.

There is no outer court worship now. The separation of a privileged class—a sacerdotal order, is unknown in the New Testament. The distinction between clergy and laity was suggested by Judaism, and human invention soon made it great; but it was episcopal ordination that established the distinction and widened the separation. The bishop gradually assumed the title of Pontiff. The presbyters, and at length the deacons, became, as well as the bishops, a sacred order. The place of mediation and of greater nearness to God was assumed by the priestly caste, and also of authority over the laity. In place of God speaking direct to the heart and conscience by His own word, and the heart and conscience brought direct into the presence of God, it was priesthood coming in between them. Thus the word of God was lost sight of, and faith stood in the opinions of men. The blessed Lord Jesus, as the Great High Priest of His people, and as the one Mediator between God and men, was thus practically displaced and set aside.

Thus, alas, we see in the Church what has been true of man from Adam downwards. Everything that has been entrusted to man has failed. From the time that the responsibility of maintaining the Church as the pillar and ground of the truth fell into man's hands, there has been nothing but failure. The word of God, however, remains the same, and its authority can never fail, blessed be His name. One of the main objects of these "Short Papers" is to recall the reader's attention to the principles and order of the Church, as taught in the New Testament. "God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." That is, we must worship and serve Him according to the truth, and under the guidance and unction of the Holy Spirit, if we would glorify His name and worship and serve Him acceptably.

Almost all ecclesiastical writers affirm that neither the Lord Himself nor His apostles gave any distinct precepts as to the order and government of the Church—that such things were left to the wisdom and prudence of her office bearers and the character of the times. By this assumption the widest range was given to the human will. We know the consequences. Man sought his own glory. The simplicity of the New Testament, the lowly path of the Lord and His apostles, the zeal and self-denial of a Paid, all were overlooked, and worldly greatness soon became the object and ambition of the clergy. A brief sketch of the bishop's office will set these things in a clear light, and, we doubt not, will greatly interest our readers.

WHAT WAS A BISHOP IN EARLY TIMES?

The humblest peasant is familiar with the grandeur and worldly greatness of a bishop; but he may not know how a minister of Christ and a successor of the humble fishermen of Galilee came to such dignity. In the days of the apostles, and for more than a hundred years after, the office of a bishop was a laborious but "good work." He had the charge of a single church, which might ordinarily be contained in a private house. He was not then as a "lord over God's heritage," but in reality its minister and servant, instructing the people and attending on the sick and poor in person. The presbyters, no doubt, assisted in the management of the general affairs of the Church, and also the deacons; but the bishop had the chief part of the service. He had no authority, however, to decree or sanction anything without the approval of the presbytery and people. There was no thought then of "inferior clergy" under him. And at that time the churches had no revenues, except the voluntary contributions of the people, which, moderate as they doubtless were, would leave a very small emolument for the bishop, after the poor and needy were attended to.

But in those early times office-bearers in the Church continued, in all probability, to carry on their former trades and occupations, supporting themselves and their families in the same manner as before. A bishop, says Paul, "must be given to hospitality." And this he could not have been had he depended for his income on the earnings of the poor. It was not until about the year 245 that the clergy received a salary, and were forbidden to follow their worldly employments; but towards the close of the second century, circumstances arose in the history of the Church which greatly affected the original humility and simplicity of its overseers, and which tended to the corruption of the priestly order. "This change began," says Waddington, "towards the end of the second century; and it is certain that at this period we find the first complaints of the incipient corruption of the clergy." From the moment that the interests of the ministers became at all distinguished from the interests of Christianity, many and great changes for the worse may be considered to have begun. We will notice some of these circumstances; and first,

THE ORIGIN OF DIOCESES.

The bishops who lived in cities, either by their own preaching or by the preaching of others—presbyters, deacons, or people—were the means of gathering new churches in the neighboring towns and villages. These young assemblies, very naturally, continued under the care and protection of the city churches, by whose means they had received the gospel and were formed into churches. Ecclesiastical provinces were thus gradually formed, which the Greeks afterward denominated dioceses. The city bishops claimed the privilege of appointing office-bearers to these rural churches; and the persons to whom they committed their instruction and care were called district bishops. These formed a new class, coming in between the bishops

and the presbyters, being considered inferior to the former and superior to the latter. Thus distinctions and divisions were created, and offices multiplied.

THE ORIGIN OF THE METROPOLITAN BISHOP.

Churches thus constituted and regulated rapidly increased throughout the empire. In the management of their internal affairs, every church was essentially distinct from every other, though walking in spiritual fellowship with all others, and considered as part of the one Church of God. But, as the number of believers increased and churches were extended, diversities in doctrine and discipline sprang up, which could not always be settled in the individual assemblies. This gave rise to councils or synods. These were composed chiefly of those who took part in the ministry. But when the deputies of the churches were thus assembled, it was soon discovered that the control of a president was required. Unless the government of the Holy Spirit in the Church be owned and submitted to, there must be anarchy without a president. The bishop of the capital of the province was usually appointed to preside, under the lofty title of the Metropolitan. On his return home it was hard to lay aside these occasional honors, so he very soon claimed the personal and permanent dignity of the Metropolitan.

The bishops and presbyters up till about this time were generally viewed as equal in rank, or the same thing; the terms being used synonymously; but now the former considered themselves as invested with supreme power in the guidance of the Church, and were determined to maintain themselves in this authority. The presbyters refused to concede to them this new and self-assumed dignity, and sought to maintain their own independence. Hence arose the great controversy between the presbyterian and the episcopalian systems, which has continued until this day, and of which we may speak more particularly hereafter. Enough has been said to show the reader the beginning of many things which still live before us in the professing church. In the consecrated order of clergy he will find the germ out of which sprang at length the whole mediaeval priesthood, the laws of celibacy, and the fearful corruptions of the dark ages.

Having thus glanced at what was going on inside the Church from the beginning, and especially amongst her rulers, we will now resume the general history from the death of M. Aurelius.

Short Papers on Church History

Christianity, under the successors of Aurelius, enjoyed a season of comparative repose and tranquility. The depravity of the contemptible Commodus was overruled to subserve the interests of the Christians after their long sufferings under his father; and the brief reign of many of the emperors left them no leisure to war against the aggressions of Christianity. "During little more than a century," says Milman, "from the accession of Commodus to that of Dioclesian, more than twenty emperors flitted like shadows along the tragic scene of the imperial palace. The empire of the world became the prize of bold adventure, or the precarious gift of a lawless soldiery. A long line of military adventurers, often strangers to the name, to the race, to the language of Rome—Africans, Pyreans, Arabs, and Goths—seized the quickly shifting scepter of the world. The change of sovereign was almost always a change of dynasty, or, by some strange fatality, every attempt to re-establish an hereditary succession was thwarted by the vices or imbecility of the second generation."

Thus the Christians had about a hundred years of comparative rest and peace. There were, no doubt, many cases of persecution and martyrdom during that period, but such cases were more the result of personal hostility in some individual than from any systematic policy pursued by the government against Christianity. The first and commanding object of each succeeding emperor was to secure his contested throne. They had no time to devote to the suppression of Christianity, or to the social and religious changes within the empire. Thus the great Head of the Church—who is also “head over all things to the church”—made the weakness and insecurity of the throne the indirect means of the strength and prosperity of the Church.

But although the reign of Commodus was generally favorable to the progress of Christianity, there was one remarkable instance of persecution which we must note.

APOLLONIUS, a Roman senator, renowned for learning and philosophy, was a sincere Christian. Many of the nobility of Rome, with their whole families, embraced Christianity about this time. The dignity of the Roman senate felt itself lowered by such innovations. This led, it is supposed, to the accusation of Apollonius before the magistrate. His accuser, under an old and unrepealed law of Antoninus Pius, which enacted grievous punishments against the accusers of Christians, was sentenced to death and executed. The magistrate asked the prisoner, Apollonius, to give an account of his faith before the senate and the court. He complied, and boldly confessed his faith in Christ; in consequence of which, by a decree of the senate, he was beheaded. It is said by some to be the only trial recorded in history where both the accused and the accuser suffered judicially. But the Lord's hand was in it, high above both the accuser and the magistrate, Perennius, who condemned them both. From this period many families of distinction and opulence in Rome professed Christianity, and sometimes we meet with Christians in the imperial family.

After a reign of about twelve years, the unworthy son of Aurelius died from the effects of a poisoned cup of wine.

PERTINAX, immediately upon the death of Commodus, was elected by the senate to the throne; but after a brief reign of sixty-six days was killed in an insurrection. A civil war followed, and Septimus Severus ultimately obtained the sovereign power in Rome.

Christianity Under The Reign Of Severus. A.D. 194- 210.

In the early part of the reign of Severus he was rather favorable to the Christians. A christian slave, named Proculus, was the means of restoring the emperor to health, by anointing him with oil. This remarkable cure, no doubt in answer to prayer, gave the Christians great favor in the eyes of Severus. Proculus received an honorable position in the imperial family, and a christian nurse and a christian tutor were engaged to form the character of the young prince. He also protected from the popular indignation men and women of the highest rank in Rome—senators, their wives and families—who had embraced Christianity. But, alas, all this favor towards the Christians was merely the result of local circumstances. The laws remained the same, and violent persecutions broke out against them in particular provinces.

Persecutions Under Severus. A.D. 202.

It was not till about the tenth year of his reign that the native ferocity of his dark and relentless mind was manifested against the Christians. In 202, after his return from the East, where he had

gained great victories, and no doubt lifted up with pride, he put forth his hand and impiously dared to arrest the progress of Christianity—the chariot of the gospel. He passed a law which forbade, under severe penalties, that any of his subjects should become either Jews or Christians. This law, as a matter of course, kindled a severe persecution against young converts and Christians in general. It stimulated their enemies to all kinds of violence. Large sums of money were extorted from timid Christians by some of the venal governors as the price of peace. This practice, though yielded to by some for the sake of life and liberty, was strongly denounced by others. It was considered by the more zealous as degrading to Christianity, and an ignominious barter of the hopes and glories of martyrdom. Still the persecution does not appear to have been general. It left its deepest traces in Egypt and Africa.

At Alexandria, Leonides, father of the famous Origen, suffered martyrdom. Young people at schools, who were receiving a christian education, were subjected to severe tortures, and some of their teachers were seized and burned. The young Origen distinguished himself at this time by his active and fearless labors in the now almost deserted schools. He longed to follow in his father's footsteps, and rather sought than shunned the crown of martyrdom. But it was in Africa—a place we only think of now as a dark, miserable, and thinly peopled desert—that the silver line of God's marvelous grace was most distinctly marked in the heavenly patience and fortitude of the holy sufferers. "We must indulge our readers with a few brief details.

The Persecution In Africa.

Historians say, that in no part of the Roman Empire had Christianity taken more deep and permanent root than in the province of Africa. Then it was crowded with rich and populous cities. The African type of Christianity was entirely different to the Egyptian. The former was earnest and impassioned, the latter dreamy and speculative, through the evil influence of Platonism. Tertullian belongs to this period, and is a true type of the difference we have referred to; but more of this further on. We will now notice some of the African martyrs.

Perpetua And Her Companions.

Amongst others who were apprehended and martyred in Africa during this persecution, Perpetua and her companions, in all histories, hold a distinguished place. The history of their martyrdom not only bears throughout the stamp of circumstantial truth, but abounds with the most exquisite touches of natural feeling and affection. Here we see the beautiful combination of the tenderest feelings and the strongest affections, which Christianity recognizes in all their rights, and makes even more profound and tender; but yet causes all to be sacrificed on the altar of entire devotedness to Him who died entirely devoted to us. "Who loved me," as appropriating faith says, "and gave himself for me." Gal. 2:20.

At Carthage, in the year 202, three young men, Revocatus, Saturnius, and Secundulus, and two young women, Perpetua, and Felicitas, were arrested, all of them being still catechumens, or candidates for baptism and communion. Perpetua was of a good family, wealthy and noble, of liberal education, and honorably married. She was about twenty-two years of age; was a mother, with her child at the breast. Her whole family seem to have been Christians except her aged father, who was still a Pagan. Nothing is said of her husband. Her father was passionately fond of her, and greatly dreaded the disgrace that her sufferings for Christ would bring on his family. So

that she had not only death in its most frightful form to struggle with, but every sacred tie of nature.

When she was first brought before her persecutors, her aged father came and urged her to recant and say she was not a Christian. "Father," she calmly replied, pointing to a vessel that lay on the ground, "can I call this vessel anything else than what it is?" "No," he replied. "Neither can I say to you anything else than that I am a Christian." A few days after this the young Christians were baptized. Though they were under guard they were not yet committed to prison. But shortly after this, they were thrown into the dungeon. "Then," she says, "I was tempted, I was terrified, for I had never been in such darkness before. O what a dreadful day! The excessive heat occasioned by the number of persons, the rough treatment of the soldiers, and, finally, anxiety for my child, made me miserable." The deacons, however, succeeded in purchasing for the christian prisoners a better apartment, where they were separated from the common criminals. Such advantages could usually be purchased from the venal overseers of prisons. Perpetua was now cheered by having her child brought to her. She placed it at her breast, and exclaimed, "Now this prison has become a palace to me!"

After a few days, there was a rumor that the prisoners were to be examined. The father hastened to his daughter in great distress of mind. "My daughter," he said, "pity my gray hairs, pity thy father, if I am still worthy to be called thy father. If I have brought thee up to this bloom of thy age, if I have preferred thee above all thy brothers, expose me not to such shame among men. Look upon thy child—thy son—who, if thou diest, cannot long survive thee. Let thy lofty spirit give way, lest thou plunge us all into ruin. For if thou diest thus, not one of us will ever have courage again to speak a free word." Whilst saying this, he kissed her hands, threw himself at her feet, entreating her with terms of endearment, and many tears. But, though greatly moved and pained by the sight of her father, and his strong and tender affection for her, she was calm and firm, and felt chiefly concerned for the good of his soul. "My father's gray hairs," she said, "pained me, when I considered that he alone of my family would not rejoice in my martyrdom." "What shall happen," she said to him, "when I come before the tribunal, depends on the will of God; for we stand not in our own strength, but only by the power of God."

On the arrival of the decisive hour—the last day of their trial—an immense multitude was assembled. The aged father again appeared, that he might for the last time try his utmost to overcome the resolution of his daughter. On this occasion he brought her infant son in his arms, and stood before her. And thus she stood before the tribunal, before the assembled multitude, before the admiring myriads of heaven, before the frowning hosts of hell. What a moment! what a spectacle! Her aged father, his gray hairs, her tender infant; to say nothing of his agonizing importunities; what an appeal to a daughter—to a young mother's heart! "Have pity on thy father's gray hairs," said the governor, "have pity on thy helpless child, offer sacrifice for the welfare of the emperor." But Perpetua was calm and firm. Like Abraham of old, the father of the faithful, her eye was not now on her son, but on the God of resurrection. Having commended her child to her mother and her brother, she answered the governor, and said, "That I cannot do." "Art thou a Christian?" he asked. "Yes," she replied, "I am a Christian." Her fate was now decided. They were all condemned to serve as a cruel sport for the people and the soldiers, in a fight with wild beasts, on the anniversary of young Geta's birthday. They returned to their dungeon, rejoicing that they were thus enabled to witness and suffer for Jesus' sake. The gaoler, Pudus, was converted by the tranquil behavior of his prisoners.

When led forth into the amphitheater, the martyrs were observed to have a peaceful and joyful appearance. According to a custom which prevailed in Carthage, the men should have been clothed in scarlet like the priests of Saturn, and the women in yellow as the priestesses of Ceres; but the prisoners protested against such a proceeding. "We have come here," they said, "of our own choice, that we may not suffer our freedom to be taken from us; we have given up our lives that we may not be forced to such abominations." The Pagans acknowledged the justice of their demand, and yielded. After taking leave of each other with the mutual kiss of christian love, in the certain hope of soon meeting again, as "absent from the body and present with the Lord," they came forward to the scene of death in their simple attire. The voice of praise to God was heard by the spectators. Perpetua was singing a psalm. The men were exposed to lions, bears, and leopards; the women were tossed by a furious cow. But all were speedily released from their sufferings by the sword of the gladiator, and entered into the joy of their Lord.

The interesting narrative, which is here abridged, and said to have been written by Perpetua's own hand, breathes such an air of truth and reality as to have commanded the respect and confidence of all ages. But our main object in writing it for our readers is to present to them a living picture, in which many of the finest features of christian faith are beautifully blended with the finest and tenderest christian feelings; and that we may learn, not to be complainers, but to endure all things for Christ's sake, that so His grace may shine, our faith triumph, and God be glorified.

A few years after these events, Severus turned his attention to Britain, where the Romans had been losing ground. The emperor, being at the head of a very powerful army, drove back the independent natives of Caledonia, and regained the country south of the wall of Antoninus, but lost so many troops in the successive battles which he was obliged to fight, that he did not think proper to push his conquests beyond that boundary. Feeling at length his end approaching, he retired to York, where he soon afterward expired, in the eighteenth year of his reign.

Short Papers on Church History

After the death of Septimus Severus—except during the short reign of Maximin—the Church enjoyed a season of comparative peace till the reign of Decius, A.D. 249. But during the favorable reign of Alexander Severus, a considerable change took place in the relation of Christianity to society. He was through life under the influence of his mother, Mammsea, who is described by Eusebius as "a woman distinguished for her piety and religion." She sent for Origen, of whose fame she had heard much, and learned from him something of the doctrines of the gospel. She was afterward favorable to the Christians, but there is not much evidence that she was one herself.

Alexander was of a religious disposition. He had many Christians in his household; and bishops were admitted, even at the court, in a recognized official character. He frequently used the words of our Savior, "As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise." (Luke 6:31.) He had them inscribed on the walls of his palace and on other public buildings. But all religions were nearly the same to him, and on this principle he gave Christianity a place in his eclectic system the first public buildings for Christian assemblies.

An important point in the history of the Church, and one that proves its altered position in the Roman Empire, now comes before us for the first time. It was during the reign of this excellent

prince that public buildings were first erected for the assemblies of Christians. A little circumstance connected with a piece of land in Rome shows the true spirit of the emperor and the growing power and influence of Christians. This piece of land, which had been considered as a common, was selected by a congregation as a site for a church; but the Company of Victualers contended that they had a prior claim. The case was judged by the emperor. He awarded the land to the Christians, on the ground that it was better to devote it to the worship of God in any form than apply it to a profane and unworthy use.

Public buildings—christian churches, so-called now began to rise in different parts of the empire, and to possess endowments in land. The heathen had never been able to understand why the Christians had neither temples nor altars. Their religious assemblies, up till this time, had been held in private. Even the Jew had his public synagogue, but where the Christians met was indicated by no separate and distinguished building. The private house, the catacombs, the cemetery of their dead, contained their peaceful congregations. Their privacy, which had often been in those troublous times their security, was now passing away. On the other hand, it must also be observed that their secrecy was often used against them. We have seen from the first, that the Pagans could not understand a religion without a temple, and were easily persuaded that these private and mysterious meetings, which seemed to shun the light of day, were only for the worst of purposes.

The outward condition of Christianity was now changed—wonderfully changed—but, alas, not in favor of spiritual health and growth, as we shall soon see. There were now well-known edifices in which the Christians met, and the doors of which they could throw wide open to all mankind. Christianity was now recognized as one of the various forms of worship which the government did not prohibit. But the toleration of the Christians during this period rested only on the favorable disposition of Alexander. No change was made in the laws of the empire in favor of Christians, so that their time of peace was brought to a close by his death. A conspiracy was formed against him by the demoralized soldiery, who could not endure the discipline which he sought to restore; and the youthful emperor was slain in his tent, in the twenty-ninth year of his age, and the thirteenth of his reign.

The Lord's Dealings with The Clergy.

Scarcely had the new churches been built, and the bishops received at court, then the hand of the Lord was turned against them. It happened in this way.

MAXIMIN, a rude Thracian peasant, raised himself to the imperial throne. He had been the chief instigator, if not the actual murderer of the virtuous Alexander. He began his reign by seizing and putting to death all the friends of the late emperor. Those who had been his friends he reckoned as his own enemies. He ordered the bishops, and particularly those who had been the intimate friends of Alexander, to be put to death. His vengeance fell more or less on all classes of Christians, but chiefly on the clergy. It was not however for their Christianity that they suffered on this occasion, for Maximin was utterly regardless of all religions, but because of the position they had reached in the world. What can be more sorrowful than this reflection?

About the same time destructive earthquakes in several provinces rekindled the popular hatred against the Christians in general. The fury of the people under such an emperor was unrestrained,

and, encouraged by hostile governors, they burnt the newly-built churches and persecuted the Christians. But happily, the reign of the savage was of short duration. He became intolerable to mankind. The army mutinied and slew him in the third year of his reign; and a more favorable season for the Christians returned.

The reign of GORDIAN, A.D 238-244, and that of PHILIP, A.D 244-249, were friendly to the Church. But we have repeatedly found that a government favorable to the Christians was immediately followed by another which oppressed them. It was particularly the case at this time. Under the smiles and patronage of Philip, the Arabian, the Church enjoyed great outward prosperity, but she was on the eve of a persecution more terrible and more general than any she had yet passed through.

One of the causes which may have contributed to this was the absence of the Christians from the national ceremonies which commemorated the thousandth year of Rome, A.D 247. The secular games were celebrated with unexampled magnificence by Philip; but as he was favorable to the Christians, they escaped the fury of the pagan priests and populace. The Christians were now a recognized body in the state, and however carefully they might avoid mingling in the political factions or the popular festivities of the empire, they were considered the enemies of her prosperity and the cause of all her calamities. We now come to a complete change of government—a government that afflicts the whole Church of God.

The General Persecution Under Decius.

DECIUS, in the year 249, conquered Philip and placed himself on the throne. His reign is remarkable in church history for the first general persecution. The new emperor was unfavorable to Christianity and zealously devoted to the pagan religion. He resolved to attempt the complete extermination of the former, and to restore the latter to its ancient glory. One of the first measures of his reign was to issue edicts to the governors, to enforce the ancient laws against the Christians. They were commanded, on pain of forfeiting their own lives, to exterminate all Christians utterly, or bring them back by pains and tortures to the religion of their fathers.

From the time of Trajan there had been an imperial order to the effect, that the Christians were not to be sought for; and there was also a law against private accusations being brought against them, especially by their own servants, as we saw in the case of Apollonius; and these laws had been usually observed by the enemies of the Church, but now they were wholly neglected. The authorities sought out the Christians, the accusers ran no risk, and popular clamor was admitted in place of formal evidence. During the two succeeding years a great multitude of Christians in all the Roman provinces were banished, imprisoned, or tortured to death by various kinds of punishments and sufferings. This persecution was more cruel and terrible than any that preceded it. But the most painful part of those heart-rending scenes was the enfeebled state of the Christians themselves—the sad effect of worldly ease and prosperity.

The Effects of Worldliness in the Church.

The student of church history now meets with the manifest and appalling effect of the world in the Church. It is a most sorrowful sight, but it ought to be a profitable lesson to the christian reader. What then was, is now, and ever must be. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, is not now less sensitive to the foul and withering breath of the world than He was then.

What the enemy could not do by bloody edicts and cruel tyrants, he accomplished by the friendship of the world. This is an old stratagem of Satan. The wily serpent proved more dangerous than the roaring lion. By means of the favor of great men, and especially of emperors, he threw the clergy off their guard, led them to join hands with the world, and deceived them by his flatteries. The Christians could now erect temples as well as the heathen, and their bishops were received at the imperial court on equal terms with the idolatrous priests. This unhallowed intercourse with the world sapped the very foundations of their Christianity. This became painfully manifest when the violent storm of persecution succeeded the long calm of their worldly prosperity.

In many parts of the empire the Christians had enjoyed undisturbed peace for a period of thirty years. This had told unfavorably on the Church as a whole. With many, it was not now the faith of an ardent conviction such as we had in the first and second centuries; but of truth instilled into the mind by means of christian education—just what prevails in the present day to an alarming extent. A persecution breaking out with great violence, after so many years of tranquility, could not fail to prove a sifting process for the churches. The atmosphere of Christianity had become corrupted. Cyprian in the West and Origen in the East speak of the secular spirit which had crept in—of the pride, the luxury, the covetousness of the clergy, of the careless and irreligious lives of the people.

“If,” says Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, “the cause of the disease is understood, the cure of the affected part is already found. The Lord would prove his people; and because the divinely-prescribed regimen of life had become disturbed in the long season of peace, a divine judgment was sent to re-establish our fallen, and, I might almost say, slumbering faith. Our sins deserve more; but our gracious Lord has so considered it that all which has occurred seems rather like a trial than a persecution. Forgetting what believers did in the times of the apostles, and what they should always be doing, Christians labored with insatiable desire, to increase their earthly possessions. Many of the bishops who, by precept and example, should have guided others, neglected their divine calling to engage in the management of worldly concerns.” Such being the condition of things in many of the churches, we need not wonder at what took place.

The emperor ordered rigorous search to be made for all suspected of refusing compliance with the national worship. Christians were required to conform to the ceremonies of the Roman religion. In case they declined, threats, and afterward tortures, were to be employed to compel submission. If they remained firm, the punishment of death was to be inflicted, especially on the bishops, whom Decius hated most bitterly. The custom was, wherever the dreadful edict was carried into execution, to appoint a day when all the Christians in the place were to present themselves before the magistrate, renounce their religion, and offer incense at the idol’s altar. Many, before the fearful day arrived, had fled into voluntary banishment. The goods of such were confiscated and themselves forbidden to return under penalty of death. Those who remained firm, after repeated tortures, were cast into prison, when the additional sufferings of hunger and thirst were employed to overcome their resolution. Many who were less firm and faithful were let off without sacrificing, by purchasing themselves, or allowing their friends to purchase, a certificate from the magistrate. But this unworthy practice was condemned by the Church as a tacit abjuration.

DIONYSIUS, bishop of Alexandria, in describing the effect of this terrible decree, says, “that many citizens of repute complied with the edict. Some were impelled by their fears and some were

forced by their friends. Many stood pale and trembling, neither ready to submit to the idolatrous ceremony, nor prepared to resist even unto death. Others endured their tortures to a certain point, but finally gave in." Such were some of the painful and disgraceful effects of the general relaxation through tampering with this present evil world; still it would ill become us, who live in a time of perfect civil and religious liberty, to say hard things of the weakness of those who lived in such sanguinary times. Rather let us feel the disgrace as our own, and pray that we may be kept from yielding to the attractions of the world in every form. But all was not defective, thank the Lord. Let us look for a moment at the bright side.

The Power of Faith and Christian Devotedness.

The same Dionysius tells us that many were as pillars of the Lord, who through Him were made strong, and became wonderful witnesses of His grace. Among these he mentions a boy of fifteen, Dioscurus by name, who answered in the wisest manner all questions, and displayed such constancy under torture that he commanded the admiration of the governor himself, who dismissed him in the hope that riper years would lead him to see his error. A woman, who had been brought to the altar by her husband, was forced to offer incense by someone holding her hand; but she exclaimed, "I did it not: it was you that did it;" and she was thereupon condemned to exile. In the dungeon at Cartilage the Christians were exposed to heat, hunger, and thirst, in order to force them to comply with the decree; but although they saw death by starvation staring them in the face, they continued steadfast in their confession of Christ. And from the prison in Rome, where certain confessors had been confined for about a year, the following noble confession was sent to Cyprian: "What more glorious and blessed lot can, by God's grace, fall to man than, amidst tortures and the fear of death itself, to confess God the Lord—than, with lacerated bodies and a spirit departing but yet free, to confess Christ the Son of God—than to become fellow-sufferers with Christ in the name of Christ? If we have not yet shed our blood, we are ready to shed it. Pray then, beloved Cyprian, that the Lord would daily confirm and strengthen each one of us, more and more, with the power of His might, and that He, as the best of leaders, would finally conduct His soldiers, whom He has disciplined and proved in the dangerous camp, to the field of battle which is before us, armed with those divine weapons which never can be conquered."

Among the victims of this terrible persecution were Fabian, bishop of Rome, Babbles of Antioch, and Alexander of Jerusalem. Cyprian, Origen, Gregory, Dionysius, and other eminent men, were exposed to cruel tortures and exile, but escaped with their lives. The hatred of the emperor was particularly directed against the bishops. But in the Lord's mercy the reign of Decius was a short one; he was killed in battle with the Goths, about the end of 251.

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As the name of Cyprian must be familiar to all our readers, and a name most famous in connection with the government and discipline of the Church, it may be well to notice particularly the serene fortitude of this father in the prospect of martyrdom.

He was born at Carthage about the year 200; but he was not converted till about 246. Though in mature age he possessed all the freshness and ardor of youth. He had been distinguished as a teacher of rhetoric, he was distinguished as an earnest, devoted Christian. He was early promoted to the offices of deacon and presbyter; and in 248 he was elected bishop by the general desire of

the people. His labors were interrupted by the persecution under Decius; but his life was preserved till the year 258. On the morning of the 13th, of September, an officer with soldiers was sent by the proconsul to bring him into his presence. Cyprian then knew his end was near. With a ready mind and a cheerful countenance he went without delay. His trial was postponed for a day. The intelligence of his apprehension drew together the whole city. His own people lay all night in front of the officer's house with whom he was lodged.

In the morning he was led to the proconsul's palace, surrounded by a great multitude of people and a strong guard of soldiers. After a short delay, the proconsul appeared. "Art thou Thascius Cyprian, the bishop of so many impious men?" said the proconsul. "I am," answered Cyprian. "The most sacred emperor commands thee to sacrifice." "I do not sacrifice," he replied. "Consider well," rejoined the proconsul. "Execute thy orders," answered Cyprian, "the case admits of no consideration."

The governor consulted with his council, and then delivered his sentence. "Thascius Cyprian, thou hast lived long in thy impiety, and assembled around thee many men involved in the same wicked conspiracy. Thou hast shown thyself an enemy alike to the gods and to the laws of the empire; the pious and sacred emperors have in vain endeavored to recall thee to the worship of thy ancestors. Since then thou hast been the chief author and leader of these guilty practices, thou shalt be an example to those whom thou hast deluded to thy unlawful assemblies. Thou must expiate thy crime with thy blood." "God be praised!" answered Cyprian; and the crowd of his brethren exclaimed, "Let us too be martyred with him." The bishop was carried into a neighboring field and beheaded. It was remarkable that but a few days afterward the proconsul died. And the emperor Valerian, the following year, was defeated and taken prisoner by the Persians, who treated him with great and contemptuous cruelty—a calamity and disgrace without example in the annals of Rome.

The miserable death of many of the persecutors made a great impression on the public mind, and forced on many the conviction, that the enemies of Christianity were the enemies of heaven. For about forty years after this outrage, the peace and prosperity of the Church were not seriously interrupted; so that we may pass over these years for the present, and come to the final contest between paganism and Christianity.

CHAPTER 10.

THE GENERAL STATE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Before attempting a brief account of the persecution under Diocletian, it may be well to review the history and condition of the Church, as the final struggle drew near. But in order to form a correct judgment of the progress and state of Christianity at the end of three hundred years, we must consider the power of the enemies with which it had to contend.

1. JUDAISM.—We have seen at some length, and especially in the life of St. Paul, that Judaism was the first great enemy of Christianity. It had to contend from its infancy with the strong prejudices of the believing, and with the bitter malice of the unbelieving Jews. In its native region, and wherever it traveled, it was pursued by its unrelenting foe. And after the death of the apostles, the Church suffered much from yielding to Jewish pressure, and ultimately remodeling Christianity on the system of Judaism. The new wine was put into old bottles.

2. ORIENTALISM.—Towards the close of the first and the beginning of the second century, Christianity had to wend its way through the many and conflicting elements of eastern philosophy. Its first conflict was with Simon Magus, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. Though a Samaritan by birth, he is supposed to have studied the various religions of the east at Alexandria. On returning to his native country, he advanced very high pretensions to superior knowledge and power; and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the great power of God." From this notice of Simon we may learn what influence such men had over the minds of the ignorant and the superstitious, and also, what a dreadful power of Satan the early Church had to contend with in these evil workers. He assumed not merely the lofty title of "the great power of God," but that he combined in himself the other perfections of Deity. He is spoken of by writers generally as the head and father of the whole host of impostors and heretics.

After being so openly and shamefully defeated by Peter, he is said to have left Samaria, and traveled through various countries, choosing especially those which the gospel had not reached. From this time he introduced the name of Christ into his system, and so endeavored to confound the gospel with his blasphemies, and confuse the minds of the people. As to his miracle and magic working, his marvelous theories about his own descent from heaven, and other emanations, we say nothing, only that they proved, especially in the east, a mighty hindrance to the progress of the gospel.

The successors of Simon, such as Cerinthus and Valentinus, so systematized his theories as to become the founders of that form of gnosticism with which the Church had to contend in the second century. The name implies pretensions to some superior knowledge. It is generally thought that St. Paul refers to this meaning of the word when warning his son Timothy against "science," or knowledge, "falsely so called."

Although it would be out of place in these "Short Papers" to attempt anything like an outline of this widespread orientalism or gnosticism, yet we must give our readers some idea of what it was. It proved for a time the most formidable opponent of Christianity. But as the facts and doctrines of the gospel prevailed, gnosticism declined.

Under the head of the gnostics may be included all those in the first ages of the Church, who incorporated into their philosophical systems the most obvious and suitable doctrines of both Judaism and Christianity. Thus gnosticism became a mixture of oriental philosophy, Judaism, and Christianity. By means of this Satanic confusion the beautiful simplicity of the gospel was destroyed, and for a long time, in many places, its real character was obscured. It was a deep laid plan and a mighty effort of the enemy, not only to corrupt, but to undermine and subvert the gospel altogether. No sooner had Christianity appeared than the gnostics began to adopt into their systems some of its sublimest doctrines. Judaism was deeply tinged with it before the christian era: probably from the captivity.

But gnosticism, we must remember, was not a corruption of Christianity, though the whole school of gnostics are called heretics by ecclesiastical writers. As to its origin, we must go back to the many religions of the East, such as Chaldean, Persian, Egyptian, and others. In our own day such philosophers would be viewed as infidels and utter aliens from the gospel of Christ; but in early times the title heretic was given to all who in any way whatever introduced the name of Christ into

their philosophical systems. Hence it has been said, "If Mahomet had appeared in the second century, Justin Martyr, or Irenams would have spoken of him as a heretic." At the same time we must own that the principles of the Greek philosophy, especially the Platonic, forced their way at a very early period into the Church, corrupted the pure stream of truth, and threatened for a time to change the design and the effects of the gospel upon mankind.

ORIGEN, who was born at Alexandria—the cradle of gnosticism—about the year 185, was the father who gave form and completeness to the Alexandrian method of interpreting scripture. He distinguished in it a threefold sense—the literal, the moral, and the mystical—answering respectively to the body, soul, and spirit in man. The literal sense, he held, might be understood by any attentive reader; the moral required higher intelligence; the mystical was only to be apprehended through the grace of the Holy Spirit, which was to be obtained by prayer.

It was the great object of this eminent teacher to harmonize Christianity with philosophy; this was the leaven of the Alexandrian school. He sought to gather up the fragments of truth scattered throughout other systems, and unite them in a Christian scheme, so as to present the gospel in a form that would not offend the prejudices, but insure the conversion of Jews, gnostics, and of cultivated heathens. These principles of interpretation, and this combination of Christianity with philosophy, led Origen and his followers into many grave and serious errors, both practical and doctrinal. He was a devoted, earnest, zealous Christian himself, and truly loved the Lord Jesus; but the tendency of his principles has been, from that day to this, to weaken faith in the definite character of truth, if not to pervert it altogether by means of spiritualizing, and allegorizing, which his system taught and allowed.

THE MALIGNITY OF MATTER was a first principle in all the sects of the gnostics; it pervaded all the religious systems of the East. This led to the wildest theories as to the formation and character of the material universe, and all corporeal substances. Thus it was, that persons believing their bodies to be intrinsically evil, recommended abstinence and severe bodily mortifications, in order that the mind or spirit, which was viewed as pure and divine, might enjoy greater liberty, and be able the better to contemplate heavenly things. Without saying more on this subject—which we do not much enjoy—the reader will see that the celibacy of the clergy in later years, and the whole system of asceticism and monasticism, had their origin, not in the scriptures, but in oriental philosophy.

PAGANISM.—Not only had the Church to contend with Judaism and Orientalism, it also suffered from the outward hostility of Paganism. These were the three formidable powers of Satan with which he assailed the Church in the first three hundred years of her history. In carrying out her Lord's high commission—"Teach all nations.....preach the gospel to every creature"—she had these enemies to face and overcome. But these could not have hindered her course had she only walked in separation from the world, and remained true and faithful to her heavenly and exalted Savior. But alas, alas, what Judaism, Orientalism, and Paganism could not do, the allurements of the world accomplished. And this leads us to a close survey of the condition of the Church when the great persecution broke out.

A SURVEY OF THE CONDITION OF THE CHURCH. A.D 303.

Dioclesian ascended the throne in 284. In 286 he associated with himself Maximian, as Augustus; and in 292 Galerius and Constantius were added to the number of the princes, with the inferior title of Caesar. Thus, when the fourth century began, the Roman empire had four sovereigns. Two bore the title of Augustus; and two the title of Caesar. Dioclesian, though superstitious, indulged no hatred towards Christians. Constantius, the father of Constantine the Great, was friendly to them. At first, the face of christian affairs looked tolerably bright and happy; but the pagan priests were angry and plotting mischief against the Christians. They saw in the wide spreading triumphs of Christianity their own downfall. For fully fifty years the Church had been very little disturbed by the secular power. During this period Christians had attained an unexampled degree of prosperity; but it was only outward; they had deeply declined from the purity and simplicity of the gospel of Christ.

Churches had arisen in most of the cities of the empire, and with some display of architectural splendor. Vestments and sacred vessels of silver and gold began to be used. Converts flocked in from all ranks of society: even the wife of the emperor, and his daughter Valeria, married to Galerius, appear to have been among the number. Christians held high offices in the state, and in the imperial household. They occupied positions of distinction and even of supreme authority, in the provinces and in the army. But, alas, this long period of outward prosperity had produced its usual consequences. Faith and love decayed; pride and ambition crept in. Priestly domination began to exercise its usurped powers, and the bishop to assume the language and the authority of the vicegerent of God. Jealousies and dissensions distracted the peaceful communities, and disputes sometimes proceeded to open violence. The peace of fifty years had corrupted the whole christian atmosphere: the lightning of Dioclesian's rage was permitted of God to refine and purify it.

Such is the melancholy confession of the Christians themselves, who, according to the spirit of the times, considered the dangers and the afflictions to which they were exposed in the light of divine judgments.

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Already the Church has passed through nine systematic persecutions. The first was under Nero, then Domitian, Trajan, Marcus, Severus, Maximin, Decius, Valerian, Aurelian. And now the fearful moment has arrived when she must undergo the TENTH, according to the prophetic word of the Lord: "Ye shall have tribulation TEN days." And it is not a little remarkable that not only should there be exactly ten government persecutions, but that the last should have continued exactly TEN years. And, as we saw at an earlier part of the Smyranean period, exactly TEN years elapsed from the beginning of the persecution, under Marcus, in the East, till its close in the West. The christian student may trace other features of resemblance: we would rather suggest such features than press their acceptance upon others, though we surely believe they are foreshadowed in the Epistle to Smyrna.

The reign of Dioclesian is one of great historical importance. First, it was rendered conspicuous by the introduction of a new system of imperial government. He virtually removed the capital from ancient Rome to Nicomedia, which he made the seat of his residence. There he maintained a court of eastern splendor, to which he invited men of learning and philosophy. But the philosophers who frequented his court, being all animated with extreme hatred against Christianity, used their influence with the emperor to exterminate a religion too pure to suit their polluted minds. This led to the last and greatest persecution of the Christians. It is only with the

latter we have to do. And as all histories of this period are gathered chiefly from the records of Eusebius and Lactantius, who wrote at this time and witnessed many executions, we can do little more than select and transcribe from what has been already written, consulting the various authors already named.

The pagan priests and philosophers above referred to, not succeeding well in their artifices with Dioclesian to make war with the Christians, made use of the other emperor, Galerius, his son-in-law, to accomplish their purpose. This cruel man, impelled partly by his own inclination and partly by his mother, a most superstitious pagan, and partly by the priests, gave his father-in-law no rest until he had gained his point.

During the winter of the years 302 and 303, Galerius paid a visit to Dioclesian at Nicomedia. His great object was to excite the old emperor against the Christians. Dioclesian for a time withstood his importunity. He was averse, from whatever motive, to the sanguinary measures proposed by his partner. But the mother of Galerius, the implacable enemy of the Christians, employed all her influence over her son to inflame his mind to immediate and active hostilities. Dioclesian at length gave way, and a persecution was agreed to: but the lives of the Christians were to be spared. Previously to this, Galerius had taken care to remove from the army all who refused to sacrifice. Some were discharged and some were sentenced to death.

The First Edict

About the 24th of February the first edict was issued. It ordained that all who should refuse to sacrifice should lose their offices, their property, their rank, and civil privileges; that slaves persisting in the profession of the gospel should be excluded from the hope of liberty; that Christians of all ranks should be liable to torture; that all churches should be destroyed; that religious meetings should be suppressed; and that the scriptures should be burnt. The attempt to exterminate the scriptures was a new feature in this persecution, and no doubt was suggested by the philosophers who frequented the palace. They were well aware that their own writings would have but little hold on the public mind if the scriptures and other sacred books were circulated. Immediately these measures were resolved upon: the church of Nicomedia was attacked, the sacred books were burnt, and the building entirely demolished in a few hours. Throughout the empire the churches of the Christians were to be leveled to the ground, and the sacred books were to be delivered to the imperial officers. Many Christians who refused to give up the scriptures were put to death, while those who gave them up to be burnt were considered by the Church as traitors to Christ, and afterward caused great trouble in the exercise of discipline towards them.

No sooner had this cruel edict been affixed in the accustomed place, than a Christian of noble rank tore it down. His indignation at injustice so flagrant hurried him into an act of inconsiderate zeal—into a violation of that precept of the gospel which enjoins respect towards all in authority. Welcome was the occasion thus furnished to condemn a Christian of high station to death. He was burnt alive at a slow fire, and bore his sufferings with a dignified composure which astonished and mortified his executioners. The persecution was now begun. The first step against the Christians having been taken, the second did not linger.

Not long after the publication of the edict, a fire broke out in the palace of Nicomedia, which spread almost to the chamber of the emperor. The origin of the fire appears to be unknown; but, of

course, the guilt was charged on the Christians. Dioclesian believed it. he was alarmed and incensed. Multitudes were thrown into prison, without discrimination of those who were or were not liable to suspicion, the most cruel tortures were resorted to, for the purpose of extorting a confession; but in vain. Many were burnt to death, beheaded, and drowned. About fourteen days after, a second fire broke out in the palace. It now became evident that it was the work of an incendiary. The heathen again accused the Christians, and loudly cried for vengeance; but as no proof could ever be found that the Christians had any hand in any way in these fatal conflagrations, a strong, and, we believe, truthful suspicion rested on the emperor Galerius himself. His great object from the first was to criminate the Christians, and alarm Dioclesian with his own more violent measures. As if fully aware of the effect of these events on the dark, timid, and superstitious mind of the old emperor, he immediately left Nicomedia, pretending that he could not consider his person safe within the city.

But the end was gained; and that to the utmost extent which even Galerius or his pagan mother could have desired. Dioclesian, now thoroughly aroused, raged ferociously against all sorts of men and women who bore the Christian name. He compelled his wife Prisca, and his daughter Valeria, to offer sacrifice. Officers of the household, of the highest rank and nobility, and all the inmates of the palace, were exposed to the most cruel tortures, by the order, and even in the presence of, Dioclesian himself. The names of some of his ministers of state have been handed down, who preferred the reproach of Christ to all the grandeur of his palace. One of the chamberlains was brought before the emperor, and was tortured with great severity, because he refused to sacrifice. As if to make an example of him to the others, a mixture of salt and vinegar was poured on his open wounds, but it was all to no purpose. He confessed his faith in Christ as the only Savior, and would own no other God. He was then gradually burnt to death. Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and Andreas, eunuchs, who served in the palace, were put to death. Anthimus, the bishop of Nicomedia, was beheaded. Many were executed, many were burnt alive; but it became tedious to destroy men singly; and large fires were made to burn many together; others were rowed into the midst of the lake, and thrown into the water with stones fastened to their necks.

From Nicomedia, the center of the persecution, the imperial orders were dispatched, requiring the co-operation of the other emperors in the restoration of the dignity of the ancient religion, and the entire suppression of Christianity. Thus the persecution raged throughout the whole Roman world, excepting France. There, the mild Constantius ruled, and, though he made a show of concurring in the measure of his colleagues, by the demolition of the churches, he abstained from all violence against the persons of the Christians. Though not himself a decided Christian, he was naturally humane, and evidently a friend to Christianity and its professors. He presided over the government of France, Britain, and Spain. But the fierce temper of Maximian, and the savage cruelty of Galerius, only awaited the signal to carry into effect the orders from Nicomedia. And now the three monsters raged, in the full force of the civil power, against the defenseless and unoffending followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

“Grace begun shall end in glory;

Jesus, He the victory won;

In His own triumphant story

Is the record of our own.”

Short Papers on Church History

Not long after the first edict had been carried into execution throughout the empire, rumors of insurrections in Armenia and Syria, regions densely peopled with Christians, reached the emperor's ears. These troubles were falsely attributed to the Christians, and afforded a pretext for a second edict. It was intimated that the clergy, as leaders of the Christians, were particularly liable to suspicion on this occasion, and the edict directed that all of the clerical order should be seized and thrown into prison. Thus in a short time prisons were filled with bishops, presbyters, and deacons.

THE THIRD EDICT.

A third edict was immediately issued, prohibiting the liberation of any of the clergy, unless they consented to offer sacrifice. They were declared enemies of the state; and wherever a hostile prefect chose to exercise his boundless authority, they were crowded into prisons intended only for the basest criminals. The edict provided that such of the prisoners as were willing to offer sacrifice to the gods should be set free, and that the rest should be compelled by tortures and punishments. Great multitudes of the most devout, godly, and venerable in the Church, either suffered capitally, or were sent to the mines. The emperor vainly thought that if the bishops and teachers were once overcome, the churches would soon follow their example. But finding that the most humiliating defeat was the result of his measures, he was goaded on by the united influence of Galerius, the philosophers, and the pagan priesthood, to issue another and a still more rigorous edict.

THE FOURTH EDICT.

By a fourth edict, the orders which applied only to the clergy were now to be extended to the whole body of Christians. The magistrates were directed to make free use of torture for forcing all Christians—men, women, and children—into the worship of the gods. Dioclesian and his colleagues were now committed to the desperate, but unequal contest. The powers of darkness—the whole Roman empire—stood, armed, determined, pledged, to the defense of ancient polytheism, and to the complete extermination of the Christian name. To retreat, would be the confession of weakness; to be successful, the adversary must be exterminated: as to victory, there could be none, for the Christians made no resistance. Historically, it was the final and fearful struggle between paganism and Christianity; the contest was now at its height and drawing to a crisis.

Public proclamation was made through the streets of the cities, that men, women, and children, were all to repair to the temples of the gods. All must undergo the fiery ordeal—sacrifice or die. Every individual was summoned by name from lists previously made out. At the city gates all were subjected to rigid examination, and such as were found to be Christians were immediately secured.

Details of the sufferings and martyrdoms that followed would fill volumes. As edict followed edict, in rapid succession and in wrathful severity, the spirit of martyrdom revived; it rose higher and higher, until men and women, in place of being seized and dragged to the funeral piles, leaped into

the burning flames as if ascending to heaven in a chariot of lire. Whole families were put to various kinds of death; some by fire, others by water, after enduring severe tortures; some perished by famine, others by crucifixion; and some were fastened with their heads downwards, and preserved alive, that they might die a lingering death. In some places, as many as ten, twenty, sixty, and even a hundred men and women with their little ones, were martyred by various torments, in one day.

In almost every part of the Roman world such scenes of pitiless barbarity continued with more or less severity, for the long period of ten years. Constantius alone, of all the emperors, contrived to shelter the Christians in the west, especially in France where he resided. But in all other places they were given up to all sorts of cruelties and injuries, without the liberty to appeal to the authorities, and without the smallest protection from the state. Free leave was given to the heathen populace to practice all sorts of excesses against the Christians. Under these circumstances the reader may easily imagine what they were constantly exposed to, both in their persons and estates. Each one felt sure of never being failed to account for any violence he might be guilty of towards the Christians. But the sufferings of the men, however great, seemed little compared with the women. The fear of exposure and violence was more dreaded than mere death.

Take one example. "A certain holy and devout female," says Eusebius, "admirable for her virtue and illustrious above all in Antioch for her wealth, family, and reputation, had educated her two daughters—now in the bloom of life, noted for their beauty—in the principles of piety. Their concealment was traced, and they were caught in the toils of the soldiery. The mother, being at a loss for herself and her daughters, knowing what was before them, suggested that it was better to die, betaking themselves to the aid of Christ, than fall into the hands of the brutal soldiers. After this, all agreeing to the same thing, and having requested the guards for a little time, they cast themselves into the flowing river, to escape a greater evil." Although this act cannot be fully justified, it must be judged with many considerations. They were driven to despair. And sure we are that the Lord knows how to forgive all that is wrong in the action, and to give us full credit for all that is right in our motives.

For a moment the persecutors vainly imagined that they would triumph over the downfall of Christianity. Pillars were raised, and medals were struck, to the honor of Dioclesian and Galerius, for having extinguished the christian superstition, and for restoring the worship of the gods. But He who sits in heaven was at that very moment overruling the very wrath of these men for the complete deliverance and triumph of His people, and the acknowledged defeat and downfall of their enemies. They could martyr Christians, demolish churches, and burn books, but the living springs of Christianity were beyond their reach.

Great and important changes began to take place in the sovereignty of the empire. But the Head of the Church watched over everything. He had limited and defined the period of her sufferings, and neither the hosts of hell, nor the legions of Borne, could extend these one hour. The enemies of the Christians were smitten with the direst calamities. God appeared to be making requisition for blood. Galerius, the real author of the persecution, in the eighteenth year of his reign, and the eighth of the persecution, lay expiring of a most loathsome malady. Like Herod the Great, and Philip II. of Spain, he was "eaten of worms." Physicians were sought for, oracles were constituted, but all in vain; the remedies applied only aggravated the virulence of the disease. The whole

palace was so infected from the nature of his affliction, that he was deserted by all his friends. The agonies which he suffered forced from him the cry for mercy; and also an earnest request to the Christians to intercede for the suffering emperor in their supplications to their God.

From his dying bed he issued an edict; which, while it condescended to apologize for the past severities against the Christians, under the specious plea of regard for the public welfare and unity of the state, admitted to the fullest extent the total failure of the severe measures for the suppression of Christianity; and provided for the free and public exercise of the Christian religion. A few days after the promulgation of the edict Galerius expired. For about six months the merciful orders of this edict were acted upon, and great numbers were liberated from the prisons and the mines; but, alas, bearing the marks of bodily torture only short of death. This brief cessation of the persecution showed at once its fearful character and alarming extent.

But Maximin, who succeeded Galerius in the government of Asia, sought to revive the pagan religion in all its original splendor, and the suppression of Christianity, with renewed and relentless cruelty. He commanded that all the officers of his government, from the highest to the lowest, both in the civil and military service; that all free men and women, all slaves, and even little children, should sacrifice, and even partake of what was offered at heathen altars. All vegetables and provisions in the market were to be sprinkled with the water or the wine which had been used in the sacrifices, that the Christians might thus be forced into contact with idolatrous offerings.

New tortures were invented, and fresh streams of christian blood flowed in all the provinces of the Roman empire, with the exception of France. But the hand of the Lord was again laid heavily both on the entire and on the emperor. Every kind of calamity prevailed. Tyranny, war, pestilence, and famine, depopulated the Asiatic provinces. Throughout the dominions of Maximin the summer rains did not fall; a famine desolated the whole East; many opulent families were reduced to beggary, and others sold their children as slaves. The famine produced its usual accompaniment, pestilence. Boils broke out all over the bodies of those who were seized with the malady, but especially about the eyes, so that multitudes became helplessly and incurably blind. All hearts failed, and all who were able fled from the infected houses; so that myriads were left to perish in a state of absolute desertion. The Christians, moved by the love of God in their hearts, now came forward to do the kind offices of humanity and mercy. They attended the living and decently buried the dead. Fear fell upon all mankind. The heathen concluded their calamities to be the vengeance of heaven for persecuting its favored people.

Maximin was alarmed, and endeavored, when too late, to retrace his steps. He issued an edict, avowing the principles of toleration, and commanding the suspension of all violent measures against the Christians, and recommending only mild and persuasive means to win back these apostates to the religion of their forefathers. Having been defeated in battle by Licinius, he turned his rage against the pagan priests. He charged them with having deceived him with false hopes of victory over Licinius and of universal empire in the East, and now revenged his disappointment by a promiscuous massacre of all the pagan priests within his power. His last imperial act was the promulgation of another edict, still more favorable to the Christians, in which he proclaimed an unrestricted liberty of conscience, and restored the confiscated property of their churches. But death came and closed the dark catalog of his crimes, and the dark line of persecuting emperors, who died of the most excruciating torments and under the visible hand of divine judgment. Many

names, of great celebrity both for station and character, are among the martyrs of this period; and many thousands, unknown and unnoticed on earth, but whose record is on high and whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Thus closed the most memorable of all the attacks of the powers of darkness on the christian church, and thus closed the last hope of paganism to maintain itself by the authority of the government. The account of the most violent, most varied, most prolonged, and most systematic attempt to exterminate the gospel ever known, well deserves the space we have given to it, so that we offer no apology for its length. We have seen the arm of the Lord lifted up in a gracious but solemn manner to chastise and purify His Church, to demonstrate the imperishable truth of Christianity, and to cover with everlasting shame and confusion her daring but impotent foes. Like Moses we may exclaim, "Behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." Thus we see why the bush was not burned, or Israel in Egypt not consumed, or the Church in this world not exterminated: God was in the midst of the bush—He is in the midst of His Church—it is the habitation of God through the Spirit. Besides, Christ hath plainly said, referring to Himself in His risen power and glory, " Upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Exod. 3; Matt. 16.

Correspondence

1. "E. M.," Kentish Town. We dare not attempt to pronounce a judgment in such a case as you name. Speaking generally, we quite believe that a child seven years old, with sound mental faculties, is responsible, according to the measure of light and religious privilege enjoyed. As to the special case in question, who can tell what may have passed between the precious soul and a Savior God, even at the very last moment? God forbid that any one should seek to rob a weeping parent of the ineffable consolation flowing from the persuasion that his precious child is with Jesus. We once heard of a man who fell from his horse and was converted ere he reached the ground. He used, in after life, to say, "Between the stirrup and the ground, I mercy sought, and mercy found." Oh! dear friend, what cannot the rich, sovereign, abounding mercy of our God accomplish?

2. "H. J.," Chatham. In Gal. 5:21, the apostle is speaking of a class of persons who are characterized by the evil fruits specified in the context. The term "πρασ-σωνης," is characteristic. No doubt, a child of God, if not watchful, may fall into any of the sins referred to; but he is not characterized by them—he does not live in them— does not belong to the class who habitually commit such things. Should he, unhappily, be overtaken, he is restored by the advocacy of Christ, whose precious intercession procures for the erring one the grace of repentance, self-judgment, confession, and restoration. Such is the precious grace of God.

3. "M. H.," Twickenham. We do not see how "we could say that we formed part of the Church before, we were brought to believe in Christ, speaking as individuals." How could persons living in unbelief and enmity be said to form part of the Church, save only in the purpose of God? In this latter sense, Saul formed part of the Church of God even when he was persecuting it; but he did not actually form a part of it until he was converted. The thing is simple enough.

4. "F. T.," Bermondsey. The case which you have laid before us is, in our judgment, more a matter of spiritual feeling than of principle. Scripture is totally silent on the point, and therefore we must not legislate. We must beware of hampering the servants of Christ in their individual work, by any conventionalities of our own. We have the deepest sympathy with the evangelist and the Sunday school teacher. We claim for them a very broad margin—the very broadest indeed that can be yielded, without traversing the principles of the New Testament. We would not for the world throw stumbling blocks in their blessed pathway; and when we see any one disposed to do so, our earnest cry is, "For the Lord's sake, and for precious souls' sake, let them alone; why trouble ye them?" We feel persuaded, dear friend, that if our hearts were really filled with the love of Christ, and the intense desire to snatch souls from the flames of hell, we should not trouble ourselves or others as to whether we used a board, a handbill, or a bellman; our motto would be, "Do the work as well as you can; but do the work." We desire to bow, with reverence, to the authority of holy scripture, in all things. We would treat conscience with the deepest respect. But as to crotchets and conventional rules, we are determined, by the grace of God, to give them as wide a berth as possible.

5. "J. S. S." Isa. 57:16 sets forth the precious truth that God will not always be wrath, nor contend with His people Israel. There is rich mercy in store for them. There is a day coming in the which they shall look upon Him whom they pierced, and mourn. Then shall they prove the cleansing virtues of the fountain opened by the hand of sovereign grace, for sin and for uncleanness in the house of David. Bright and blessed day for Israel and for all the earth! May the Lord hasten it!

6. "G.E.," Swansea. The "woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars" (Rev. 12:1), symbolizes the nation of Israel, through whom Christ—"the man-child"—according to the flesh came. "The sun" is the symbol of supreme authority; "the moon" of derivative; "the stars" of subordinate authority. Israel is destined to be the center of all God's government on the earth. We have also, in this marvelous passage, the birth, the ascension, and future supremacy of the Messiah, together with all the abortive efforts of Satan in opposition. As to the sun, moon, and stars, see Joseph's dream. As a sample of the dragon's acting, see the conduct of Herod in Matthew 2. In the rapture of the man-child, you do not get the Church, as such, save as mysteriously involved, which it most surely is. We heartily thank you, dear friend, for your kind and encouraging communication. The Lord be praised!

7. "A. M.," Shepherd's Bush. Matt. 18:23-35 does not refer to the question of "eternal life." Its primary application is to the Jew and his mode of dealing with the Gentile. Notwithstanding the abounding mercy which God had shown to the Jew, the latter would not listen to the idea of mercy to the Gentile. The consequence is, as the apostle declares, "The wrath is come upon them to the uttermost." (1 Thess. 2:16, see the entire context.) The apostate nation will never be forgiven. A remnant will be saved, through grace, and become the nucleus of the restored nation. No doubt, dear friend, we professing Christians have to learn a very important lesson from this scripture, namely, the urgent necessity of cultivating a forgiving spirit. If we fail to act in grace, we are in danger of losing the sense of grace in our own souls. How dreadful for one who has been forgiven all his sins, to drag a fellow sinner to the judgment-seat on account of a little money! Let us note particularly the closing words of our Lord, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also to you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses." This marks the application of the entire passage to our Father's governmental dealings with us, from day to day. It is a terrible thing for a professing Christian to harbor an unforgiving spirit. We do not see how it is possible for such to have any real sense of grace, or any communion with God; nor should we wonder to find such given over to the most tormenting feelings, as the expression of God's judgment upon a wrong state of heart. May we, beloved friend, ever cultivate a loving, genial, tender, forgiving spirit. We may rest assured our God delights in this. God loves a cheerful giver, and a frank forgiver, because that is precisely what He is Himself, blessed forever be His name!

8. "H. M. S.," Royal Oak. We have referred to the passage to which you call attention, and we cannot see the ground of your difficulty. The object is to guard against any surrender of the truth of God, while fully owning our many failures in practice. There is always a danger of seeking to lower God's standard to meet our practical state, instead of judging our state by God's standard. We trust that a little further consideration of the entire passage will remove your difficulty.

9. "J. W. O.," Lower Clapton. Thanks for your kind note and the accompanying lines. Oh! that we may live in that blessed hope of seeing our bright and morning star.

Correspondence

10. "C," London. We most cordially agree with all you say as to the importance, yea the absolute necessity, of all the teachers in the Sunday school being, not only converted, but also subject, in all things, to the authority of God's word, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We have more than once referred to this subject in our replies to various correspondents, as also in our "seventh letter on the work of evangelization." Hence, therefore, when speaking of the need of the teachers' conferring together, we had no such idea as you seem to attribute to us, when you say, "What! with unconverted teachers, or those who do not see their place at the Lord's table?" We reply, far be the thought. We emphatically declare our conviction that no one is fit to co-operate in the work of Sunday school teaching who is not truly converted to God, and in the enjoyment of settled peace. And further, we believe that in order to have full fellowship among the teachers they should be seeking to walk in the light. They may not be able to see eye to eye on every point; but clearly they can only have fellowship as they walk in the light. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise [or differently, $\tau\epsilon\rho\omega\varsigma$] minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing." Philippians 3:15, 16.

Another Sunday school worker has written to us for counsel as to certain points; but her letter has been mislaid. If she would kindly write to us again, we shall endeavor to reply. We are sorry to give her so much trouble. It is remarkable the number of questions that spring up on the subject of Sunday school teaching. Surely the work is simple enough if we were only simple in taking it up. What is so much needed is an intense desire for the eternal salvation of the dear children—a desire which will express itself in earnest efforts to reach them by every scriptural means. And surely, if all the teachers in the school were wholly bent on the one grand object, they would be led to wait upon God, both in private and together, that He would be pleased to grant them the desire of their hearts.

11. "E. A. J.," Essex. Heb. 11:26 teaches us that Moses chose the very same character of reproach as Christ Himself, namely, the reproach arising from identification with God's people in all their need, their sorrow, and their degradation. He might have acted for them. He might have stood apart from them, and helped them by his personal influence. He might have patronized them; but none of these things could be called "the reproach of Christ." This latter is seen in Moses "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God." This was what Christ did perfectly. "In all their afflictions he was afflicted." Eph. 6:2 does not teach that Christians are under the law; it merely shows that obedience to parents is not confined to Christianity, but was inculcated even by the law. As to fasting, we deem it to be a very precious exercise when spiritually observed. Though you may not have heard it referred to in lectures, many others have. As to your fourth query, the matter can only be introduced by the expression "speaking after the manner of men." In point of fact, we know it was necessary that Christ should suffer—"Thus it behooved him"—such was "the determinate counsel of God." People may say, "If Israel had received the Messiah, the kingdom would have been set up." But they did not receive Him. They rejected and crucified Him. No doubt they were tested by His coming and offering Himself to them as their King; but His precious atoning death was the necessary basis of all the counsels of God, as to the Jew, the Gentile, and the Church.

12. "G. R." The parable of the talents in Matt. 25 applies to the great principle of christian service and responsibility during the time of our Lord's absence. It is not a question of eternal life or

salvation; but simply of service according to our several ability. The primary application of Luke 13:7 is to Israel; but we may all learn a solemn lesson from it. Let us seek to be fruitful and not be cumberers of the ground. We live in a day of easy profession. God looks for reality, for diligence, for earnestness, and integrity of heart. May we be watchful, and never rest satisfied with mere head knowledge or lip profession. The Lord will have "truth in the inward parts."

13. "T. E." & "C. M. E." Rev. 7:9 is a distinct answer to your first question. As to your second, it seems strange how any Christian could raise such a question. Surely it will ever be our joy to own ourselves sinners saved by grace. Can we ever forget this? God forbid!

14. "N. B.," Taunton. It must be entirely a question of individual faith. You must walk before God; but seek to walk in happy loving fellowship. You should both wait upon God together, and seek to be of one mind in the Lord. This is your happy privilege. It is of the utmost importance for man and wife to cultivate the daily habit of waiting together on the Lord. It has a marvelous effect upon the whole range of domestic life. Bring everything before God, pour out your hearts together. Have no secrets, no reserve. Then will your hearts be knit together in holy love, and the current of your personal, conjugal, and domestic life will flow peacefully and happily on, to the praise of Him who has made you one, and called you to walk together as heirs of the grace of life.

15. "J. J.," Topsham. Many have found real profit and enjoyment in those papers to which you refer.

16. "Emma," Brixton. If your conscience is not clear before the Lord, do not move one inch in the matter. Let not the persuasive arguments of a thousand friends induce you to do anything with a doubtful mind. "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." We do not offer any opinion on the abstract question which you have laid before us; but, judging from your own statements, it is perfectly evident that your own heart would condemn you in taking such a step; and, on this ground, we solemnly counsel you not to move in the matter. May we be faithful to Christ! May we give Him an undivided heart!

17. "H. E. D.," Margate. If you write to Mr. Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row, he will send you a tract on the subject of "Eternal Punishment" which may help your friend.

18. "II. W.," Breareton. Accept our warmest thanks for your truly interesting letter. It has indeed refreshed us greatly. May the Lord cheer and comfort you by the consolation of His presence, and set the seal of His rich blessing on your labors! To Him we do earnestly commend you and your work.

Correspondence

19. "S. M.," Stowmarket. It is possible the papers on "Job and his Friends" may yet appear in a separate form. The good Lord will guide.

20. "W. W.," Montrose. We can only praise our God for your truly kind and encouraging communication. May He greatly bless you, beloved friend, and make you a blessing!

21. "Emma," Devonshire. We cannot see the Church in any part of Deut. 33:12. "And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." A most precious verse surely; but it applies

primarily to that favored tribe of Israel, and shall be fully made good in its future history. No doubt, the Christian may prove, in a far higher and more intimate manner, the place of safety and strength here spoken of. May it be so with us!

22. "N. R.," In Luke 23:31, "The green tree" refers to that special time when the Lord was present in their midst. "The dry tree," on the contrary, points to the future. It is as though He had said, "If they can act so now, in my presence, how will it be by and by?" We are truly thankful for your kind and interesting letter. May all needed blessing and grace be ministered to your precious soul! May you be kept in perfect peace, resting on the eternal stability of the grace of God!

23. "B. L.," London. If the Lord has called you to the blessed work of teaching in the Sunday school, you should, by all means, at once enter upon it. You have received the gospel for your own soul's salvation; and hence, however precious it may be to hear the gospel preached, over and over again, we do not think you ought to let this stand in your way in seeking to lead others to the Savior. Were it a question of the Lord's Table, it would be a totally different matter. No line of service ought to be allowed to hinder our attendance at the celebration of that most precious institution. Every rightly taught and spiritually minded Christian will assuredly give the Lord's Table the paramount place.

24. "W. A.," Blackheath. In 1 Cor. 15:21, the word "resurrection" applies to all mankind, for all shall rise. But, in verse 22, the expression "in Christ shall all be made alive," refers, most assuredly, only to believers, for none but such can be spoken of as being "in Christ."

25. "G. H.," Newcastle-on-Tyne. 2 Cor. 5:14, and many other passages of scripture, teach, in the most distinct manner, that Christ died for all. The aspect of the death of Christ, as also of the righteousness of God, is Unto all; but when we come to the practical application, it is "upon all them that believe." All who hear are responsible to believe, for the message is sent into all the world, and to every creature. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." But what stumbles and perplexes so many people is that they are occupied with the dogmas of theology, instead of the love of God, the atonement of Christ, and the record of the Holy Ghost. The moment you take any doctrine of scripture, whether it be election, predestination, final perseverance, or any other doctrine whatsoever, and detach it from the Person of Christ, and the living and eternal reality of what God is, you instantly turn it into a stumbling-block. You may set it down as an absolute truth, dear friend, that our gracious God would never have people to be puzzled about their souls' salvation. Theology often puzzles people, but God never does. As to cailers, it would be far more honest of them to declare plainly that they do not want to have anything to say to God, than to be seeking to find out flimsy objections against His word.

26. "A Constant Reader," South Hornsey. You cannot do better than to procure a copy of a work entitled, "The Irrationalism of Infidelity," and get your friend to read it. It can be had of our publisher, Mr. Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Bow."

27. "C. V. W.," Ramsgate. Rom. 9:18 sets forth God's sovereign right to do as He pleases. Man must bow. It is of no use to reason, or reply, for God must have the upper hand in the end. As to Pharaoh, the hardening of his heart was judicial. He had set himself to resist God's will, and he was given over to blindness and hardness of heart. No one was ever hardened or blinded who had the faintest or feeblest desire after God or His Christ. Theology makes difficulties in this matter:

truth makes none.

Correspondence

28. "S. E. B.," London. 1 Cor. 16:20 simply exhorts Christians to salute one another in holy love. The form of salutation may vary according to our national habits; but holiness and love must ever be the characteristics. What we want is spirit and power, whatever be the form.

29. "A Reader," Cheltenham. 1 Tim. 5:22 refers to the act of laying on of hands in the case of elders. Timothy is exhorted to be cautious, lest by ordaining an unfit person he should be identified with and a partaker of others' sins.

30. "A Sister in Christ," Canada. We are not aware of any rule on the subject, amongst the Christians you name. Each one must act according to his gift. There are three reasons why we could not use the formulary referred to. First, the Holy Ghost was not given; secondly, it is not in the name of Jesus; thirdly, forgiveness of sins was not known according to the fullness and power of accomplished redemption. In Rom. 8:26 we read that, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." How could we be said not to know what to pray for, if the disciples' prayer was to be our model? We say, "The disciples' prayer." As to the Lord's prayer we have it in John 17. Still, we would say, if a person has not got beyond the ground of the disciples previous to the day of Pentecost, then by all means let him use that formulary, which, we need hardly say, was divinely perfect for the time then being, just as the law was perfect for the object for which it was given. There are most precious breathings in the prayer, as there are in the Psalms; but both the one and the other apply to the condition out of which the Christian is brought by accomplished redemption and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost; while, at the same time, he can find in both the most precious instruction. Accept, dear friend, our hearty thanks for your truly kind letter.

31. "B. B.," Westport. The expression to which you call our attention, in the Athanasian Creed, is perfectly sound. It rests on the imperishable foundation of Heb. 2:14.

32. "R. M." Tetbury. We have, in some of our back numbers, explained Luke 16:9. It simply teaches us to use this world's riches, should they fall into our hands, in the Lord's service, and with direct reference to the future. Worldly riches do not properly belong to the Church of God. They did belong to the Jewish people, and shall do so again; but our blessings are spiritual and heavenly, not carnal or earthly. Still, if, in the providence of God, such things should come into our hands, we should turn them to account by using them in the Lord's work, and to help the poor. We always connect Luke 16:9 with 1 Tim. 6:17-19.

33. "W. W." Montrose. We heartily bless the Lord, dear friend, for your truly kind and encouraging communication. May He greatly bless you, and make you a blessing!

34. "T. H.," Plymouth. Your communication has come to hand.

35. "M. T. T.," Southport. We have explained the first two passages to which you refer, in some of our back numbers. See "Answers to Correspondents" (1858-1863) page 55. Also the volume from 1804-1806, page 38. See also vol. 12 of "Things New and Old," page 95. Our friends must not expect us to be continually answering the same question.

36. "E. H.," Norwood. Our answer (30) to "A Sister in Christ" meets your inquiry.

37. "J. O. W.," Polmont. John 14:2 teaches us that until Christ entered heaven, in resurrection, having accomplished redemption, there was—there could be—no "place" for us. But He, having entered there as Head, His place, and nothing less, is ours. Marvelous grace! Magnificent result of accomplished atonement! Accept, dear Mend, our warmest thanks for your very kind letter.

38. "H. H. B.," Bradford. We have no doubt that the Spirit of God is dealing with your soul; and we know from scripture, "He that hath begun the good work will perform it." Salvation is as free to you as the very air you breathe. It is divinely simple, it is not readied by violent struggles or efforts of mind or body. It is all done for us. We can do nothing. Jesus has done all. We are thorough bankrupts—bankrupts in righteousness, bankrupts in holiness, bankrupts in everything good. We have to learn this; and, if we understand your case, you are learning it just now. This is a painful process; but a very salutary one. "No flesh shall glory in his presence." But we should be sure to glory, if we could find anything good in ourselves—good works, good feelings, good frames, good resolutions. And when we can no longer cling to any of these, we get occupied, as a last resource, with our faith, our appropriation, our realization. But it will not do. We must get to the bottom of everything connected with self, and rest only in Christ. This seems very difficult to you from your present standpoint; it seems most perplexing, yea it is involved in deepest obscurity. But remember, we pray you, that the obscurity, the perplexity, and the difficulty are all in yourself, and not in the gospel. They are all on your side, not on God's. Hence, when, by and by, you find your place, as we fondly hope you will, at the feet of Jesus, it will be a matter of astonishment to you how you could have been so long and so deeply perplexed.

39. "W. R.," Twickenham. We have repeatedly gone into the questions contained in your letter. Your difficulties arise from looking at theology instead of at scripture. We believe in man's responsibility upon the same ground as we believe God's sovereignty. To reconcile them is none of our business; they are reconciled, inasmuch as they are taught in the word of God. If man be not responsible to believe the gospel, then on what ground will men be punished with everlasting destruction for not doing so? (2 Thess. 1:8, 9; 2:11, 12.) And what mean those words of our Lord, "How often would I have gathered you.....but ye would not!" The fact is, dear friend, when we look at this subject through the hazy mist of systematic divinity and begin to reason, we are involved in hopeless perplexity; but when we come to scripture, like a little child—when we view the matter in the light of the divine presence, all becomes clear and simple. Furthermore, let us add, we do not believe that it is an evangelist's business to preach election. He should preach Christ. Election is one of the precious family secrets to be unfolded by the teacher, in the bosom of the family. It is a spiritual landmark in the inheritance of the Israel of God, not a stumbling-block in the way of the anxious inquirer, a plea in the mouth of the cavalier, or a damper upon the spirit of the earnest evangelist.

Correspondence

40. "A.," London. We can only render unfeigned thanks to God for the good tidings of your Sunday School. May the blessed work prosper abundantly! The monthly prayer meeting and the conference over the word are of the utmost possible importance. We feel assured that if the superintendent and the teachers were more on their knees together before God—more drawn out in earnest united prayer for the salvation of the children, we should be cheered by more glorious

results. In this—as in so many things beside—may we not apply the pungent words of the inspired apostle James, “Ye have not, because ye ask not?” Oh! for more deep-toned earnestness! May the good Lord stir us all up more and more! With regard to practical details, dear friend, we can, with fullest confidence, leave them in the hands of our gracious Lord. May He graciously bless you, and all your dear fellow-laborers! Language utterly fails us in seeking to express our interest in the precious and interesting work of Sunday School teaching; and we feel deeply thankful for the growing interest among our friends, in that branch of the Lord’s work.

41. “X.,” Montreal. It would be hardly possible for an assembly to act in the case named. Scripture is totally silent on the point. For our own part, we utterly detest the idle habit to which you refer; and as to the extent to which it is carried, and the results produced, as detailed in your letter, we consider it most deplorable. May the Eternal Spirit enable all believers to keep under the body and bring it into subjection! It is sad and humbling to witness the way in which many professing Christians yield to their bodies, in the way of stimulants, narcotics, and their entire regime. In many cases it would seem as though the body were the master instead of the servant. We do not, of course, refer to cases in which really delicate health demands specific medical treatment, but to those in which no such plea can be urged.

42. “H. N. W.,” Harrow. Acts 7:38 refers to the congregation of Israel, and has no more to do with the New Testament doctrine of the Church, than the word “assembly” in Acts 19:41. The glorious mystery of the Church is not to be found in the Old Testament, save in the way of type or shadow.

43. “H.,” London. It must be entirely a matter between your own soul and the Lord. We ought not to do anything with a doubtful mind, or anything on which we cannot, with perfect confidence, ask God’s blessing. This is a great broad moral principle applicable to all Christians, in all their circumstances. As to the special case which you have laid before us, we question how far you are responsible for the use which your customers make of the article you name. There are some things which could not possibly be made a good use of; as, for instance, an infidel or immoral book; and hence we could not sell such; but we can see nothing wrong in the sale of the little flower you name. True, it may be, and is, turned to a superstitious use; but it need not be so, and was not till lately. If people in business are to be held responsible for the use which may be made of their goods, the question would be interminable. Still, dear friend, it is of the very last importance that we should exercise ourselves to have always a conscience void of offense both toward God and man. May the Lord Himself be your teacher and guide! May He keep you walking in His presence, and satisfied with Himself! Then all will be right.

44. “I.,” Dublin. You seem to confound two things which are quite distinct, namely, man speaking by inspiration, and the Holy Ghost telling us what man has said. If Eliphaz and his two friends spoke by inspiration, then what is the meaning of the following words, “The Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job?” We believe in the plenary inspiration of the book of Job. We have every line of it (speaking of the original) by the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost; but we do not believe that men who said wrong things, and thus evoked the wrath of God, were inspired in saying them. The same remark applies in a thousand other cases as well as to the book of Job. There was no need, dear friend, to say you are not a cavalier. If we deemed you such we should not trouble to write a sentence in reply. We are always glad to meet honest

difficulties, even though we may marvel at many that are started.

45. "C," Stratford. John 15:2 teaches us that the Father, in His character as husbandman, removes from the sphere of fruit bearing the unfruitful branch.

46. "E. P.," Pembroke Dock. How could anyone possibly stand in the relationship of a child of God until he is born again? We cannot understand such a question. 1 Tim. 4:1, and John 15:6, have nothing whatever to do with the security of the believer. The former refers mainly to the Romish apostasy. The latter treats of the question of fruit-bearing. It is very necessary, in interpreting any particular passage of scripture, to take in the scope and bearing of the entire context, and to view the context itself in the light of the entire circle of divine revelation. Thus we shall be preserved from one-sided and contracted views of holy scripture, which so tend to hinder our spiritual growth, and to mar our enjoyment of the whole truth of God.

47. "S. D.," Chichester. 1 Pet. 4:6 teaches us that glad tidings—the promises—were announced to those who have since passed away, in order that, by receiving them, they might live according to God in the spirit; or, by rejecting them, they might be judged as men in the flesh. The principle is the same now as then, however the character of the testimony may vary. Hence the apostle says, "For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead." Wherever a divine testimony is delivered, whether in Old Testament times or New—whether in the days of Noah or at this present time—the alternative is, "Life in the Spirit," or "Judgment in the flesh." It is thus we understand the passage.

48. "E. W.," Folkestone. Mark 9:40 sets forth a most solemn truth for all who are out of Christ; and a great practical truth for all Christians. "Everyone shall be salted with fire." This refers to the future judgment of all who die in their sins." "Every sacrifice shall be salted with salt." This refers to present self-judgment exercised by all Christians who will present their bodies a living sacrifice to God. We are delivered, by the death of Christ, from the salting with fire; and we are privileged to know the preservative power of self-judgment.

40. "W. A.," Brooklands. The parable of the laborers, in Matt. 20, does not apply to the salvation of sinners at all. It applies to Christian service, which shall be rewarded, not according to our thoughts of its value, but according to the Master's sovereign will and pleasure. A very wholesome truth!

Correspondence

50. "C. G. M." In Exod. 24 the ciders saw "the God of Israel," who was pleased to take a form in which He could show Himself to man. But John 1:18, and 1 Tim. 6:16 refer to God, in His eternal essence. No mortal could see a spirit. There is no real difficulty in the passages.

51. " M. J. O." We have, in some former number, explained Phil. 2:12. It refers to the difficulties, trials, and temptations which surrounded the Philippian saints: the apostle exhorts them—now that they had not him to lean upon—to work out their own salvation, as a daily practical thing, ever remembering that it was God who wrought in them. We can only praise the Lord, with a full heart, dear friend, for the help you have received from the books.

52. "G." Repentance is an abiding and universal necessity for the sinner. (Acts 17:30.) It has nothing whatever to do with the ground of a sinner's peace, any more than the feelings of a

drowning man have to do with a lifeboat. But man, being a sinner, must be brought to the moral judgment of his nature and state in the sight of God. This judgment may vary in its measure and character; but it must be, sooner or later, in every case. Man must find out that he is lost, that he is a guilty hell-deserving sinner, else what does he want of life, pardon, or salvation at all? No doubt there is an utterly false legal way of handling the question of repentance which must be carefully avoided by all preachers of the gospel; but at the same time we must never forget those words of our risen Lord and Master, "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:46, 47.

53. "A Sunday School Teacher," Cullompton. We must refer you to "A Seventh Letter on the Work of Evangelization" in vol. 13 page 7, of "Things New and Old." Also to a little tract entitled "The Sunday School Teacher Encouraged." May the Lord grant all needed zeal, energy, tact, and spiritual power for the work!

54. "J. S. M.," Abingdon. You will find a reply to your question in our May Correspondence.

55. "M. M." We see no other course open before you but one of plain decision for Christ, cost what it may. You must cease to do evil before you can expect to learn to do well. Trust Christ and act boldly for Him. "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." But if you are looking at circumstances, weighing consequences, or conferring with flesh and blood, your eye is not single, and you must be in darkness and perplexity. The Lord can very speedily provide you with a situation. Only wait on Him. Let your exclusive reference be to Him. He never fails a trusting heart. Do, dear friend, seek to prove the reality of sole dependence upon the living God. There is nothing like it. All human hopes are as a vapor that passeth away. May the Lord undertake for you, in His infinite goodness!

56. "W. D.," Neath. Your letter, not being in any way connected with the Magazine, ought to have been addressed in full, as a personal communication. Through its not having been thus addressed, it was placed unread along with some dozens of letters; and thus it happens that we are reading it exactly a month after date. A good deal of trouble and confusion would be avoided if our correspondents would kindly attend to a suggestion which we ventured to offer some time since; namely, to address all private letters in full; and all letters connected with the Magazine, to "C. H. M." As to the immediate subject of your letter, dear friend, we deem it right to state that we never apply to people, directly or indirectly, for pecuniary aid, in any case whatever; nor could we personally act, in this instance, without a fuller knowledge, of the facts.

57. "W. S.," Newport. 1 Cor. 7:14. does not predicate aught as to salvation of the children of believers. The word "holy" is neuter (ἅγιος) and simply shows that the children were sanctified to the parents. In this we see the grace of the gospel in contrast with the law; for the latter would insist upon putting away the offspring of a mixed marriage. See Ezra 10:8.

58. "W. B.," H. M. S. Forte. The termini of the Church's existence on earth are Pentecost, Acts 2; and the rapture, 1 Thess. 4

59. "X. Y. Z.," Newbury. There must be some feature in the case you name, not yet discovered—some moral depth unreached—some root unjudged. May God manifest His quickening, saving power!

60. "J. II.," Sunderland. Your lines contain much precious truth, and breathe a very sweet spirit; but they are rather too long for insertion.

61. "A.D.," West End. The blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was attributing to Satan those works which our Lord Jesus Christ performed by the Eternal Spirit. This was actually done by the apostate leaders of Israel, and judgment came upon them. We have referred, in a former number, to "the sin unto death." It is not a question of the soul's salvation, but of the death of the body under the governmental dealings of God.

62. "J. S.," Chippenham. We most heartily join you in the desire that the Lord would stir us all up to more love and zeal, and care one for another. If we are living near the Lord, we shall ever be led to confess how short we come in the exhibition of love. Oh! that we may exercise self-judgment and walk humbly.

63. "T. A. L.," Pau. Accept many thanks for your kind and interesting communication. May the Lord bless you very abundantly!

64. "St. A. H." The better way would be to let the "young brother" of whom you speak trust God to enable him to act aright when the time comes.

65. "A. W. M.," Hertfordshire. We do not doubt the fact of your conversion: but we judge it was very shallow; and, if we mistake not, you are now passing through the terrible ordeal which your letter describes, in order to lead your soul into a more profound self-judgment. Your case is not an uncommon one. We have met with many such, particularly since the year 1859. We quite trust that when the Spirit of God has given you a deeper insight into your own utter ruin and perfect helplessness, He will lead you to find your all in Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. It is one thing to behoove in the doctrine of human depravity, and quite another to learn it practically. And, we may add, there are two ways of learning it practically, a higher and a lower way. The higher way is in communion with God; the lower way, by bitter and humiliating experience.

66. "Y. X.," Croydon. Procure a copy of a little volume entitled "Notes on the Book of Numbers," and read the ninth chapter. It can be had of our publisher, Mr. Morrish, 24, Warwick Lane, Paternoster Row; or through any bookseller.

Correspondence

67. "A Young Inquirer," London. Col. 2:9 sets forth the grand foundation truth of the essential Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. We repeat, His Deity, and not merely His divinity. It is worthy of note that this is the only instance in the entire New Testament in which this word occurs. It seems to an English reader that the same word occurs in Rom. 1:20; but it is not so. In this latter, the apostle uses the word $\alpha\epsilon\iota\omicron\tau\eta\varsigma$; whereas in Col. 2:9, he uses the word $\theta\epsilon\omicron\tau\eta\varsigma$. Now, although the two words differ only by a single letter, yet we may be quite sure that the Holy Ghost had His own wise reason for the distinction. What then is the difference? We believe it to be this: In Rom. 1 the apostle is speaking of creation, and showing that the heathen ought to have learned that there was something superhuman, something divine therein. But in Col. 2 the apostle is speaking of the Person of the Son, and for Him he claims essential deity. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." He was "God manifested in the flesh"—"God with us"—"very God and very

man." It is remarkable that the words above referred to, namely, "theotees" and "theiotees" only occur once; the former in Col. 2:9; the latter, in Rom. 1:20. That might be rendered "deity," this, "divinity."

68. "A. G.," London. Accept our warmest thanks for your kind and encouraging letter; also for the valuable little book, "The Sunday School Teacher and his work." We had previously received a copy from the author whom we love and esteem very highly. We most cordially sympathize with your earnest desire to see a copy of this little book in the hands of every Sunday School worker. We trust it may have a wide circulation and be greatly blessed. The writer has practically tested the principles which He sets forth, and is therefore entitled to speak.

69. "W. H.," Surrey. The indwelling of the Holy Ghost was necessarily dependent upon accomplished redemption and the glorification of Christ at the right hand of God. This simple fact answers all questions as to Old Testament saints, and as to the disciples and apostles themselves, previous to the day of Pentecost. See John 7:39; 16:7; Acts 1:4, 8; 19:1-6. The Lord be praised for what you say as to the little book!

70. "A Constant Reader," Chippenham. A more momentous subject could hardly engage the attention of a christian parent than the one you have brought under our notice, namely, that of "books." One of our greatest practical difficulties is to preserve our children from the trashy and demoralizing literature of the present day; and the difficulty is vastly increased by the sad fact to which you refer, that, even in our schools, books are put into the hands of our young people which, as Christians, we cannot possibly tolerate. It is immensely difficult to keep clear in this matter; for, unless the children themselves have, through God's grace, a taste for better and higher things, it is almost impossible for parents to keep them out of the way of bad books. However, in this, as in all beside, we can stay our souls upon that precious word, "My grace is sufficient for thee." And, again, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthened me." We must, therefore, in the strength of such words, brace ourselves up to meet, with firm purpose of heart, our holy responsibility in this matter. We are surely bound to look even more carefully to what books our children read, than to what they eat, or what clothes they wear. We have to watch on all hands. There is a danger of drawing the reins too tight on the one hand, as there is danger from laxity on the other. Still we must resolutely set ourselves to preserve our precious children, so far as in us lies, from bad books; and seeing they must have some books, let us keep them well supplied with such as will lead their young hearts upward and onward. Happily for us, there is no lack of good, sound, solid literature which we may, with perfect safety, place in the hands of our children; and if we can only cultivate in them a taste for this class of reading, they will, of themselves, turn away in utter disgust from all the light, silly rubbish of religious novels and fabulous works of the day, as well as the novels and romances of an older date, the reading of which can only be designated intellectual dram-drinking. But, need we say, dear friend, the grand desideratum for our children is the establishment, in their hearts, of "the kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" This will regulate their reading as well as all beside. May God visit, with His saving power, all the families of His people! May He convert the unconverted, and greatly raise the moral and spiritual tone of all who profess to be His!

71. "An Inquirer," Ipswich. We have already raised a voice of warning against the terrible evil of mixed marriages, and given a most solemn example of the consequences. We believe it to be a

fatal step for anyone to marry an unconverted person, and a melancholy proof that the heart has departed from the Lord, and that the conscience has slipped from beneath the light and authority of God's word. It is amazing how the devil succeeds in casting dust into people's eyes, in this matter. He leads them to believe that they will be made a blessing to the unconverted partner—a lamentable delusion! How can we possibly expect blessing upon a flagrant act of disobedience? How can I, by going wrong, hope to set another right? But it not unfrequently happens that persons, when bent on taking an unconverted partner, deceive themselves into the belief that they are converted. They affect to be satisfied with evidences of conversion which, under other circumstances, would utterly fail to command their confidence. The will is at work. They are determined to have their own way, and then, when too late, they discover their terrible mistake. With regard to the question of how we should deal with persons who transgress in this matter, we are not aware of any direct instruction in the New Testament. Solemn remonstrance and faithful reproof there should be, most surely; but we judge it to be rather a case for pastoral dealing and personal discipline, than for any action of the assembly.

72. "E. F. T.," Halifax. John 10:3 teaches that our Lord Jesus Christ met every righteous requirement, and answered every legal claim, and was therefore perfectly entitled to enter the fold. It does not refer to the opening of hearts to receive Him. John 4:24 sets forth the fact that the Father is now seeking spiritual and true worship. Forms and ceremonies and liturgical services will no longer do. Rev. 14:7 gives you distinctly the substance of "The everlasting gospel." It is a special testimony which shall go forth just before the opening of the kingdom.

73. "Anxious One," Glasgow. You have our deep and hearty sympathy; but we do not feel that we can add anything further just now. May the Eternal Spirit, by His own direct and powerful ministry, enable you to get to the end of yourself, and to find rest for your conscience, and an object for your heart in a full and precious Christ!

Correspondence

74. "A. B. C." Scripture never says that Christ bore the sins of the world. We read, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29.) And again, "He is the propitiation for the whole world." (1 John 2:2.) You will note that the words, "the sins of" are not scripture. Wherever you find the word "sins" it always refers to persons, and then comes in the grand question of the counsels of God, and the work of God's Spirit in the soul producing repentance and faith. Thus we read, in Heb. 9, "But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." (Ver. 26.) And then he adds, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." (Ver. 27, 28.) It is of the utmost importance to distinguish these two aspects of the atonement of Christ. You can announce to the whole world that Christ has put away sin—that God has been glorified, with respect to sin, by the death of Christ—that the veil is rent—the way is open—that all are welcome—all are commanded to repent—invited to come—responsible to believe—that the righteousness of God is unto all—that God willeth not the death of any sinner—He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance—that all who die in their sins shall have to thank themselves for it, and all who are saved will have to thank God for it. This, it seems to us, is the utmost limit to which the evangelist can go in declaring his message. But when, through grace, any one is broken down and brought to true repentance, then

he may be told that his sins were all laid on Jesus—that Christ stood in his stead, bore his judgment, paid his penalty, and settled every question on his behalf, to the glory of God. It is well to give heed to the very words of the Holy Ghost.

75. “A. E. W.,” Dublin. Each one must act before the Lord in the matter to which you refer. As to the broad principle of the unequal yoke, scripture is as plain as possible, and nothing should induce the Christian to link himself with an unbeliever. We need hardly say there is nothing contrary to scripture in a Christian’s being a servant to a worldly company. May the Lord grant all of us real purpose of heart to cleave unto Him, and to walk hi His way’s, cost what it may!

76. “W. G.,” Isle of Man. Matt. 12:43-45 applies, primarily to the Jewish nation. The unclean spirit of idolatry having gone out, for a time, will return at the close, and with it seven other spirits—the perfection of spiritual wickedness. But, thank God, a remnant shall be saved. 2 Pet. 2:20-22 does not refer to true Christians at all, but to wicked professors. “The dog and the sow” are not “sheep.” In neither of these passages is the question as to the believer’s eternal security touched, in the most remote way. The true believer is as safe as Christ Himself; but it is well for all of us to take heed to every note of warning which the Holy Ghost sounds in our ears.

77. “J. O.,” Woolwich. We believe the thief went to heaven with Jesus. John 20:17 has nothing to say to the matter; it merely refers to our Lord’s ascending to heaven in resurrection; but He had said to the thief on the cross, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

78. “J. B.,” Dublin. Thanks for your suggestion. If the Lord will, we may enter upon the subject to which you refer, in our volume for next year. It is, unquestionably, one of the most interesting and practical truths that can possibly engage the Christian’s attention.

79. “J.,” Plymouth. We should deem it right, as a general rule, to address people with whatever style or title they may consider themselves entitled to. “Render therefore to all their dues.....honor to whom honor.”

Rom. 13:7.

80. “W. S.,” Stamford. 2 Cor. 5:1 refers to the glorified body with which we shall be clothed when mortality shall be swallowed up of life.

81. “U. N.,” Hatherleigh. The application of the parable of the ten virgins is, unquestionably, to professing Christians.

82. “L. M.,” London. Your question lies entirely outside our range. We never discuss such subjects in our pages.

83. “D. W.,” Norwich. The two expressions, “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God “ are sometimes interchangeable, but not always. Take Rom. 14:17, for example. You could not use the former expression here. Many other passages might be quoted in which the context will guide you as to the proper application of the terms employed. Accept our sincere thanks for your kind letter.

84. “W. W.,” Kilmarnock. Thanks for the lines.

Correspondence

85. "H. T.," Plymouth. We have replied to a somewhat similar question in our July Correspondence.

86. "R. M.," Linlithgow Bridge. Your kind note and accompanying lines have come to hand.

87. "R. K. H.," Huntingdon. Your letter has come to hand. We earnestly recommend you to give yourself to the calm and prayerful study of the word of God. Wait on Him to lead you into His own appointed path for you; and as He gives you light, walk in it. Beware of trusting to your own feelings, and of acting on mere impulse or passing impressions. There is danger, at times, of mistaking our own impressions and mental tendencies for the leadings of God's Spirit. This must be carefully guarded against. It is well to be governed always by the authority of the word, and led by the Spirit. May the Lord preserve you, dear friend, from all error and evil, and keep your heart and mind stayed on Himself! This is our earnest prayer for you and all the Lord's beloved people.

88. We give the following from our dear friend "W. R. H." He says, " About two years ago, I asked you to intimate on the cover of 'Things New and Old,' my desire to receive any old or odd numbers of this or any similar publication. A most abundant answer has been given to my request; and large parcels have been sent into foreign lands where English is spoken. The desire is still for more. I am sure I have only to mention the facts, and the warm hearts who read your Magazine will again look up their old stores. Some of the parcels sent were very small, hardly worth the postage; but who shall say what the value of them may have been, when the light of that day discloses the results, and the Master's smile of approval says, 'Thou hast been faithful in a very little?' "We heartily commend our dear brother's suggestion to the notice of our kind readers. All parcels to be addressed to "W. R. H. 106, Grosvevor Road, Highbury New Park, London, N."

89. "Inquirer," St. Albans. Peter was converted previous to the scene recorded in Luke 5. But there he became the subject of a much deeper work than ever he had known before; and the narrative may, very properly, be used as illustrating the genuine work of conviction in the soul of any sinner.

90. "G. R. W." It seems very clear from scripture that thanks should be given for the cup as well as for the bread. Why should we depart from the divine order? As to the danger of its involving effort or of dropping into a form, the same may be said in reference to giving thanks at all. If a man is in the power of the Holy Ghost, realizing the love of Christ and the preciousness of His death, there will be neither effort nor formality. And, on the other hand, if he be not, he had better sit still and not intrude upon the worship of the assembly. O, for spiritual power in our souls and in our meetings!

91. "L. S. W." Scripture lays down no rule on the subject; but it seems fitting that when the assembly is convened for "the breaking of bread," that solemn and precious act should be made the great prominent object. We do not gather round the Table of our Lord to hear sermons; but to feed upon Him, to show forth His death, and to have our hearts drawn out "in wonder, love, and praise." No doubt, it is most blessed, when we have sat at His Table to be fed, to sit at His feet and be instructed or edified by the lips of any whom He may choose and fit for that end: but we cannot but feel that when the disciples come together on the first day of the week, the Lord's supper should be made the great prominent object.

92. "Sophia," Brixton. There is a material difference between changing your work and changing your sphere. No doubt, the Lord does constantly change the sphere of His servants. He changed

Philip's sphere, when He called him from the city of Samaria to the desert of Gaza. As to how we are to know our sphere of work, it must be a matter between our own souls and the Lord. Surely He can and will guide. If only we wait on Him with a subject will and a single eye, we shall not be left in doubt. His promise is sure, "I will guide thee with mine eye." And again, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." May these precious words be made good in your experience! Accept our warmest thanks, dear friend, for your kind and interesting letter.

93. "J. C." Acts 19:1-6 answers your question. There you have an account of twelve persons who had been baptized by John, and yet Paul felt it necessary for them to receive christian baptism in connection with the higher truth which it was his province to unfold.

Correspondence

94. "C. C. F. A." The parcel which you so kindly sent has come safely to hand. Accept our best thanks.

95. "W. E.," Wem. We are not surprised at your inability to comprehend the profound mystery of the Trinity. But let us remind you, dear friend, that though you cannot understand it, you are reverently to believe it. The Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Ghost is God. Did you ever hear those last words of a dying idiot? "I see! I see! I see!" "What do you see?" said a bystander. "I see three in One, and One in three, and they are all for me, for me." Think of those words.

96. "R. S.," Swansea. There is no promise made to Adam in Genesis 3:15, nor is he the subject of promise at all.

97. "J. S.," Exeter. Scripture is very plain as to the manner in which christian women should be attired, not only at the Lord's table, but at all times. Surely in this, as in all beside, there is urgent need of the exercise of a tender conscience—a godly subjection to the authority of God's word. If Christians will not give heed to the exhortation of the Holy Ghost, they are not likely to pay much attention to the pages of a magazine. One of the special wants of the moment is thorough submission to the veritable teachings of holy scripture. Where the heart is under the direct government of the word all will be right; where it is not, there will be nothing right.

98. "Enquirer," Bishop Stortford. 1 Cor. 11:30, refers to bodily sickness and death, under the governmental dealings of God. As to books and tracts, your best plan would be to apply to the publishers for a catalog from which you could select. It would be difficult for us to suggest, not knowing what you may already possess. You have our hearty sympathy and prayer. May the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls sustain you both by His own direct and powerful ministry! Keep close to Him. Listen to His voice. Feed in the green pastures which He has thrown open to you in the holy scriptures. May His blessing rest upon you and His peace possess your soul!

99. "G. J. H.," Reading. The blessings connected with the reign of Christ will not be confined to Jerusalem—though it will be the great center—His kingdom will stretch from shore to shore, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

Correspondence

100. "D. H.," Near Stroud. Thanks for your note and lines. You had better apply to Mr. Morrish direct for the desired information. We cannot supply it.

101. "E. B.," Brixton. The solution of your difficulty will be found in the fact of the distinct purpose of the Holy Ghost in each of the gospels. In John 20:17 the Lord is teaching Mary that she is no longer to know Him on Jewish ground as the Messiah of Israel, but in a new and heavenly relationship. On the other hand, in Matt. 28 the disciples represent the godly remnant of Israel, and are permitted to touch the blessed Lord, because He will yet resume as Messiah His relations with the nation of Israel. It is of the utmost importance, in studying the gospels, to bear in mind the distinct object of each. If this be not understood, we shall never be able to appreciate the beauty and harmony of the gospel narratives.

102. "C. M.," Lincolnshire. There is a very material difference between Paul's ministry and that of the twelve. To Paul was committed that precious mystery of the one body, composed of Jew and Gentile, united to the glorified Head in heaven, by the Holy Ghost sent down to earth. "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) 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; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the administration of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." Eph. 3:1-9. Compare also Rom. 16:25, 26, and Gal. 1:11-2:10. The careful study of these passages will open to you, with great clearness, the nature and object of Paul's ministry, and the distinction between it and the ministry of the twelve. It formed no part of the latter to unfold the doctrine of the Church. No doubt, they were called to preach the gospel. Starting from Jerusalem they were to go into all the "world, and preach the gospel to every creature—they were to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. But as to the special place, portion, and prospect of the Church, we must betake ourselves to the writings of the Holy Ghost by the pen of the Apostle Paul.

103. "G. S. M.," Armagh. You are perfectly right, dear friend, not to reason on the solemn subject of eternal punishment, but simply, as you say, to take scripture as it stands. We have given an article on the subject, in our fifth volume, page 81. Perhaps you can lay your hand upon it. As to the statement that the word "everlasting" does not mean "forever" in the Greek, we would merely repeat what we have stated in the article above referred to. There are about seventy passages in the Greek Testament in which the word "aionios" occurs, and it is applied to the "life" which believers possess; to the "habitations" into which they are to be received; to God; to the Spirit; to the kingdom of our Lord; and to the punishment of the wicked in hell. Now on what principle can any one mark off seven or eight of these passages, and say that in them the word does not mean forever; but that in the remaining sixty-two passages it does? Is it not most evident that if we deny the eternity of punishment we must deny the eternity of life, the eternity of God, of the Son, and of

the Holy Ghost? It is a serious thing to tamper with the truth of God, or to mar the integrity of holy scripture. Truth is like a magnificent arch, and if you touch the smallest stone in that arch, you mar the integrity of the whole. We feel persuaded, dear friend, that this question has a moral bearing, as well as a theological. We greatly fear that the denial of eternal punishment argues a wrong condition of soul altogether. The will is at work; reason has not been subjugated; the heart is not broken; there is no real subjection to the authority of the word. It is more "I think," than "Thus saith the Lord." All this is most serious, and should lead us into deep exercise of soul and earnest prayer.

The Father's Training

Be patient, tried one, for thy Jesus knows,
And hath a healing balm for all thy woes,
Appoints what time thy sorrows to remove—
His yoke upon thy neck is only love.
Be patient, sufferer, glory give to God:
'Tis not in anger He applies the rod;
But that the graces He hath wrought in thee
By His own Spirit, all may clearly see.
'Tis thus His sons are made for glory meet;
They taste some nauseous drops before the sweet;
Their Lord hath spared them more—
He drained the cup of bitterness, when He was lifted up!

The Forsaken One

There is an utterance, in the twenty second Psalm, of deep and marvelous import—a sentence to which there is no parallel in the volume of God. It is this, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Never, we may safely say, was there such a question asked before; never has there such an one been asked since; nor shall its like ever be asked again. It stands alone in the annals of eternity.

Reader, let us dwell upon it for a few moments. Who was it that asked this wondrous question? It was the Eternal Son of God, the One who had lain in the bosom of the Father before the foundation of the world. The object of the Father’s infinite delight. Moreover, He was Himself God over all, blessed forever. The Creator of all things, the Almighty Sustainer of the wide universe. Finally, He was a man—a spotless, holy, perfect man—one who had never sinned, nor could sin, because He knew no sin. And yet, withal, a man, a real man, born of a woman, like unto us, in every possible respect, with one solitary exception—sin. “He did no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth.” He did ever those things that pleased God. From the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, His whole life was in perfect accord with the will of God. He lived but to glorify God. His every thought, His every word, His every look, His every movement, emitted an odor of ineffable sweetness which ascended to the throne and refreshed the heart of God. Again and again, the heavens were opened upon this blessed One; and the voice of the Eternal Father bore witness to Him in such accents as these, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

This, then, was the One who asked the question. He it was who said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” And is it really true that such an One was forsaken of God? Did God, in very deed, forsake His only begotten, well-beloved Son? Did He actually hide His face from the only sinless, spotless, perfect man that ever lived in this sinful world? Did He close His ear to the cry of One who had lived but to do His will, and glorify His name? Yes; marvelous to declare, God did this. God—who withdraweth not His eyes from the righteous; whose ear is ever open to the cry of the needy; whose hand is ever stretched forth for the defense of the weak and the helpless—He, even He, turned away His face from His own beloved Son, and refused, for the moment, to hear His cry.

Here we have a profound mystery on which we cannot dwell too deeply. It contains in it the very marrow and substance of the gospel—the grand basis-truth of Christianity. The more we ponder the glories of the One who asked the question—who He was, what He was, what He was in Himself, and what He was to God, the more we see the marvelous depths of the question. And further, the more we consider the One to whom the question was put, the more we know of His character and ways, the more we shall see the force and value of the answer.

Why, then, did God forsake His Son? Oh! reader, dost thou know why? Dost thou know it in its bearing upon thyself personally? Canst thou say, from thine inmost soul, “I know why God forsook that blessed One. It was because He had taken my place, stood in my stead, and taken all my guilt

upon Himself. He was made sin for me. All that I was, all that I had done, all that was due to me, was laid on Him. God dealt with me in the Person of my substitute. All the sin of my nature, and all the sins of my life—all that I am, and all I have ever done, was imputed to Him. He represented me and was treated accordingly.”

Say, beloved reader, has God’s Spirit taught you this? Have you received this, in simple faith, on the authority of God’s word? If so, you must have solid peace—a peace which no power of earth or hell, men or devils, can ever disturb. This is the true and only foundation of the soul’s peace. It is utterly impossible for any soul to have real peace with God until He knows that God Himself has settled the whole question of sin and sins, in the cross of His Son. God knew what was needed, and He provided it. He laid on Christ the full weight of our iniquities. God and sin met at the cross. There the whole question was divinely gone into and settled once and forever. Sin was judged and abolished. The sin-bearer went down under the billows and waves of divine wrath. God brought Him into the dust of death. Sin was dealt with according to the infinite claims of the nature, the character, and the throne of God; and now the One who was made sin for us, and judged in our stead, is at the right hand of God, exalted, crowned with glory and honor; and the very crown which adorns His blessed brow is the proof that sin is forever put away; so that ere ever a single sin can be laid to the believer’s charge, that crown must be torn from the risen Savior’s head.

But there is another element of ineffable preciousness and sweetness that enters into the answer to the mysterious “Why?” of the forsaken One. It is this, the amazing love of God toward its poor sinners—a love which led Him not only to give His Son from His bosom, but to bruise and forsake Him on the cross. Why did He do this? Because there was no other way possible in which we could escape. It was either a question of an eternal hell for us, or of infinite wrath for the sin-bearer. God be praised, He chose the latter, and hence the place, which Christ now occupies is the place of all who simply believe in Him.

‘Tis the treasure I’ve found in His love
That has made me a pilgrim below,
And ‘tis there, when I reach Him above,
As I’m known, all His fullness I’ll know.

Gideon and His Companions: Part 1

(Judg. 6-8.)

In studying the history of the nation of Israel, we notice two distinct eras, namely, the era of unity, and the era of individuality—the period in the which the twelve tribes acted as one man, and the period in the which one man was called to act for the twelve tribes. We may take the book of Joshua as illustrating the former; and the book of Judges as a sample of the latter. The most cursory reader cannot fail to discern the difference between these two books. The one is characterized by external power and glory; the other by weakness and failure. Power is stamped on the former, ruin on the latter. In that, Jehovah gives the land to Israel; in this, Israel fails to take the land from Jehovah.

Now, all this is expressed in the two words which may be regarded as the motto of the two books, namely, “Gilgal” and “Bochim.” In the book of Joshua, we find the congregation always starting from Gilgal to prosecute the war, and returning thither to celebrate their victory. Gilgal was their center, because there they were circumcised; and there the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. See Josh. 5:9, 10.

But no sooner have we opened the book of Judges than the eye rests upon the sad record, “An angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal to Bochim, and said, I made you to go up out of Egypt, and have brought you unto the land which I swore unto your fathers; and I said, I will never break my covenant with you. And ye shall make no league with the inhabitants of this land; ye shall throw down their altars; but ye have not obeyed my voice; why have ye done this? Wherefore I also said, I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you. And it came to pass, when the angel of the Lord spake these words unto all the children of Israel, that the people lifted up their voice, and wept. And they called the name of that place Bochim [i.e. weepers]; and they sacrificed there unto the Lord.” Judg. 2:1-5.

Here, then, we have, very remarkably, the contrast between the two books of Joshua and Judges—the book of unity and the book of individuality—the book of external power and glory, and the book of internal weakness, failure, and ruin. Alas! alas! the glory speedily departed. Israel’s national greatness soon faded away. “The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old.....And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim.....And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth. And the anger of the Lord was hot against Israel, and he delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, and he sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, so that they could not any longer stand before their enemies. Whithersoever they went out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had said, and as the Lord had sworn unto them: and they were greatly distressed.”

This, truly, is a gloomy and humiliating record. Joshua's sword was sheathed. Those palmy days in the which he had led Israel's compact host to splendid victories over the kings of Canaan, were passed and gone. The moral influence of Joshua and of the elders that survived him had passed away, and the whole nation had rushed, with terrible avidity, into the gross moral evils and abominable idolatries of those nations whom they ought to have driven out from before them. In a word, the ruin was complete, so far as Israel was concerned. Like Adam, in the garden; and Noah, in the restored earth; so Israel, in the land of Canaan, utterly failed. Adam ate the forbidden fruit; Noah got drunk; and Israel bowed before the altars of Baal.

Thus much as to man. But, thank God, there is another side of the picture. There is what we may call a bright and beautiful "Nevertheless for God will be God, no matter what man may prove himself to be. This is an unspeakable relief and consolation to the heart. God abideth faithful. Here is faith's stronghold, come what may. God is always to be counted upon, spite of all man's failure and shortcoming. His goodness and faithfulness form the resource and the refuge of the soul amid the darkest scenes of human history.

This soul-sustaining truth shines out with remarkable luster in the very passage from which we have just given such a depressing quotation. "Nevertheless, the Lord raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them." But mark the following words, so illustrative of the individuality of the book of Judges. "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge: for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." Judg. 2:10, 18.

In these last quoted words, we have the great root principle of the book of Judges—the divine secret of the ministry of the Baraks, the Gideons, the Jephthas, and the Samsons, the record of whose ministry occupies so large a portion of this most interesting section of inspiration. Israel had failed—sadly, shamefully, inexcusably failed. They had forfeited all claims to the protection of Jehovah's shield. They were justly given over into the ruthless hands of the kings of Canaan. As to all this there could be no possible question. "Nevertheless" Jehovah's heart could feel for His poor, oppressed, and groaning Israel. True, they had proved themselves naughty and unworthy, yet His ear was ever ready to catch their very earliest groan; yea, we are even told, in chapter 10, that "his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel."

What touching words! What exquisite tenderness! What deep compassion! How such a statement lets us into the profound depths of the heart of God! The misery of His people moved the loving heart of Jehovah. The very faintest and earliest symptoms of brokenness and contrition, on the part of Israel, met with a ready and gracious response, on the part of Israel's God. It mattered not how far they had wandered, how deeply they had sunk, or how grievously they had sinned; God was ever ready to welcome the feeblest breathings of a broken heart. The springs of divine mercy and compassion are absolutely inexhaustible. The ocean of His love is boundless and unfathomable; and hence, the very moment His people take the place of confession. He enters the place of forgiveness. He delights to pardon, according to the largeness of His heart, and according to the glory of His own Name. He finds His peculiar joy in blotting out transgressions, in healing, restoring, and blessing, in a manner worthy of Himself. This glorious truth shines in the history of Israel; it shines in the history of the Church; and it shines in the history of every individual believer.

But it is high time we should turn to our immediate subject, namely, "Gideon and his companions," as presented in that portion of the book of Judges given at the head of this paper. May the eternal Spirit unfold and apply its precious contents to our souls!

Chapter 6 opens with a very sad and depressing record—a record only too characteristic of Israel's entire history. "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel; and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds." What a humiliating picture! What a reverse for the Israel of God! What a contrast to the conquering host that had crossed the Jordan and walked across the ruins of Jericho! How sad, how humbling, to think of Israel crouching and hiding in the dens and caves of the mountains, through terror of the uncircumcised Midianites!

It is well for us to gaze upon this picture, and ponder its salutary lesson. Israel's power and glory consisted simply in having the presence of God with them. Without that, they were as water spilled upon the ground. They were as the autumn leaf before the blast. But the divine presence could not be enjoyed in connection with allowed evil: and therefore, when Israel forgot their Lord, and wandered away from Him into the forbidden paths of idolatry, He had to recall them to their senses by stretching out His governmental rod, and causing them to feel the crushing power of one or another of the nations around.

Now all this has a voice and a lesson for us. So long as God's people walk with him in holy obedience, they have nothing to fear. They are perfectly safe from the snares and assaults of all their spiritual foes. Naught can, by any means, harm them while they abide in the shelter of God's own presence. But, clearly, that presence demands and secures holiness. Unjudged evil cannot dwell there. To live in sin and talk of security—to attempt to connect the presence of God with sanctioned evil—is wickedness of the very deepest dye. No, it must not be! "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him." "Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, forever." If God's people forget these wholesome truths, He knows how to recall them to their remembrance by the rod of discipline; and, blessed forever be His name, He loves them too well to spare that rod, however reluctant He may be to use it. "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees." Heb. 12:11-12.

These are encouraging words for the people of God, at all times. The discipline may be—and no doubt is—painful; but when we know that a Father's hand is in it, and when we realize what His object is, we can pass through the trial with exercised hearts, and thus reap the peaceable fruits of righteousness. On the other hand, if we meet the discipline with an impatient spirit, a rebellious

will, an unsubdued mind, we only render it necessary for the pressure to be continued and augmented, for our loving Father will never let us alone. He will have us in holy subjection to Himself, cost what it may. He graciously takes our part against ourselves, subdues the proud risings of our will, and crushes all that in us which hinders our growth in holiness, grace, and divine knowledge.

Oh! what infinite grace shines in the fact that our God occupies Himself with our very failures and follies, our waywardness and willfulness, our sins and shortcomings, in order to deliver us from them! He knows all about us. He understands and takes into account all our surroundings and all our inward tendencies, and He deals with us in infinite wisdom and perfect patience, keeping ever before Him that one gracious object, to make us partakers of His holiness, and—wondrous thought! —to bring out in us the expression of His own nature and character. Surely, then, in the presence of such abounding grace and mercy, we may well “lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees.”

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Gideon and His Companions: Part 2

There is one truth which shines out, with uncommon luster, in the Book of Judges, and that is, that God is ever to be counted upon, even amid the darkest scenes of human history; and, moreover, faith can always count upon God. God never fails a trusting heart—No, never. He never has failed, never will, never can fail the individual soul that confides in Him, that takes hold of His precious word, in the artless simplicity of a faith that trusts Him in the face of man's deepest and most humiliating failure and short coming.

This is most consolatory and encouraging, at all times, and under all circumstances. True it is—alas! how true! —man fails in everything. Trace him where you will; mark him in whatever sphere of action or responsibility he occupies, and it is the same sad tale, over and over again, of unfaithfulness, failure, and ruin. Let man be set up in business, as often as he may, with the largest capital and the fairest prospects, and he is sure to become a bankrupt. It has ever been so, from the days of Eden down to the present moment. We may assert, without fear of contradiction, that there has not been one solitary exception to the dismal rule, in the history of Adam's fallen race. We must never forget this. True faith never forgets it, in its highest flights and brightest visions. It would be the blindest folly to attempt to ignore the fact that ruin is stamped, in characters deep and broad, upon the entire of man's story, from first to last.

But, in the face of all this, God abideth faithful. He cannot deny Himself. Here is the resource and the resting place of faith. It recognizes and owns the ruin; but it counts on God. Faith is not blind to human failure; but it fixes its gaze on divine faithfulness. It confesses the ruin of man; but it counts on the resources of God. Now, all this comes strikingly out in the interesting and instructive story of Gideon. He, truly, was made to realize, in his own person and experience, the fact of Israel's fallen condition. The contrast between Joshua and Gideon is as striking as anything can be, so far as regards the question of their condition and circumstances. Joshua could place his foot on the necks of the kings of Canaan. Gideon had to thrash his wheat in a corner to hide it from the Midianites. The day of Joshua was marked by splendid victories; the day of Gideon was a day of small things. But the day of small things for man is the day of great things for God. So Gideon found it. True, it was not permitted him to witness the sun and moon arrested in their course, or the cities of the uncircumcised leveled with the ground. His was a day of barley cakes and broken pitchers, not of astounding miracles and brilliant achievements. But God was with him; and this was enough. "There came an angel of the Lord, and sat under an oak which was in Ophrah, that pertained unto Joash the Abi-ezrite; and his son Gideon threshed wheat by the winepress, to hide it from the Midianites. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, the Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." Judg. 6:11, 12.

What words were these to fall upon the ear of Gideon, cowering in the winepress, through fear of the enemy! They were words from heaven to lift his soul above the trials, and sorrows, and humiliations of earth—words of divine power and virtue to infuse vigor into his depressed and sorrowing heart. "Thou mighty man of valor!" How hard was it for Gideon to take such wondrous

accents in! How difficult to apply them to himself! Where was the might or where was the valor? Most surely not in himself or in his surroundings. Where then? In the living God; precisely where Joshua found his might and his valor. Indeed there is a striking similarity in the terms in which both these eminent servants of God were addressed. The similarity of the terms is quite as marked as is the contrast in their circumstances. Here are the terms to Joshua: "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not thou afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." And what were the terms to Gideon? Even the very same—"The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor."

Precious words! Soul-stirring, heart-strengthening accents! Words of light, life, and power! And yet Gideon was slow to make his own of them—slow to grasp them, in the lovely appropriating power of faith, which so delights the heart of God, and glorifies His name. How often is it thus with us! How constantly we fail to rise to the height of God's gracious thoughts and purposes towards us! We are prone to reason about ourselves and our surroundings, instead of believing God, and resting, in sweet tranquility in His perfect love and infallible faithfulness.

Thus it was with that dear man of God on whose history we are dwelling. The divine statement was clear, full, absolute, and unconditional: "The Lord is with thee." There was no ground, in these words, for any question, doubt, or difficulty whatsoever; and yet mark Gideon's reply. "And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? And where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? but now the Lord hath forsaken us, and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites." Verse 13.

Here, as is evident, Gideon reasons from his surroundings. Hence the "if"—that little monosyllable of unbelief. It is a familiar remark amongst us, "If you want to be miserable, look within; if you want to be distracted, look around; if you want to be peaceful and happy, look up— 'look up unto Jesus.'" This is most true. So surely as we become occupied with self, or with men and things, the circumstances which surround us, we must be unhinged and unhappy. Our only strength, our only comfort, our only light, is to keep the eye of faith fixed on Jesus, and the heart firmly centered in Him. Most certainly Gideon's surroundings were of the gloomiest character. His "sensible horizon" was overhung with dark and heavy clouds. But there was one bright and blessed ray which shone in upon his depressed spirit—a ray emanating from the very heart of God, and conveyed in that one brief but comprehensive sentence, "The Lord is with thee," There was no "if" in this—no doubt, no difficulty, no reserve, no condition. It was distinct and unqualified, and needed only one thing to make it a spring of joy, strength, and victory in Gideon's soul, and that was to mix it with faith. But then "if" is not faith. True faith never answers God with ifs, for the simplest of all reasons, that it looks only at God, and there are no ifs with Him. Faith reasons from God downwards; not from man upwards. Faith has only one difficulty, and that difficulty is embodied in the question, "How shall he not?" It never says, "How shall he?" This is the language of sheer unbelief.

But, it may be asked by some, was there not some foundation for Gideon's "if" and "why?" Certainly not in God or in His word, whatever there had been in Israel and their actings. No doubt, if Gideon had only cast his eye back over the pages of his national history, he might have discovered ample reason for the sad and humiliating condition in which he found himself. Those blotted pages would have furnished an abundant answer to his question, "Why then is all this befallen us?" But bad Israel's actings dimmed the luster of Jehovah's mighty "miracles?" Not in the

vision of faith, most surely. God had done great and glorious things for His people; and the record of those doings lay ever under the eye of faith, in all its soul sustaining virtue. No doubt Israel had failed—shamefully failed; and the record of that failure lay also under the eye of faith, and furnished a solemn answer to Gideon's inquiry, "Why is all this befallen us?" Faith recognizes God's government as well as His grace, and moreover it bows, in solemn awe, before each stroke of His governmental rod.

It is well to keep all this in mind. We are apt to forget it. God has, at times, to stretch forth his hand and lift the rod of authority. He cannot own what is contrary to His name and His nature. Now, Gideon needed to remember this. Israel had sinned, and this was the reason why they were under the rod, of which the power of the Midianites was the expression in Gideon's day.

Gideon, we repeat, was called to enter practically into the meaning of all this; and not only so, but to taste the reality of identification with his people in all their pressure and affliction. This latter, as we know, was the portion and experience of every true servant of God in Israel. All had to pass through those deep exercises of soul consequent upon their association with the people of God. It mattered not whether it were a judge, a prophet, a priest, or a king; all had to participate in the sorrow and trials of the nation of Israel; nor could any true heart—any genuine lover of God or His people—desire exemption from such deep and holy exercises. This was preeminently true of the only perfect servant that ever stood upon this earth. He, though personally exempt from all the consequences of Israel's sin and failure—though pure and spotless, divinely holy in nature and in life—did nevertheless, in perfect grace, voluntarily identify Himself with the people in all their sorrow and humiliation. "In all their affliction he was afflicted." Thus it was with our blessed Lord Jesus Christ; and all who, in any degree, partook of His Spirit, had, according to their measure, to taste of the same cup, though none could ever come up to Him in this or in aught else.

But when we come to compare closely the angel's words to Gideon, with his reply, we notice a point of deep interest, and one which illustrates the individual character of the Book of Judges. The angel says, "The Lord is with thee." Gideon replies, "If the Lord be with us." This is very interesting and instructive; moreover it is in full keeping with a passage already referred to, in chapter 2:18 "And when the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge"—it does not say "with the people," but adds, with touching grace—"and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for it repented the Lord because of their groanings by reason of them that oppressed them and vexed them." Verse 18.

There is peculiar sweetness and beauty in this. If Jehovah had to hide His face from His people, and give them over, for the time, into the hand of the uncircumcised, yet His loving heart was ever turned towards them, and ever ready to mark and recognize the faintest traces of a repentant spirit. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy. He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea. Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old." Mic. 7:18-20.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Gideon and His Companions: Part 3

Nothing can be more encouraging to the heart than the mode in which the Lord deals with the soul of Gideon—the way in which He prepares him for the course of action to which He was calling him. Gideon, like ourselves, was full of “ifs” and “whys,” those little words so big with unbelief. The poor human heart is ever slow to take in the magnificence of divine grace—our feeble vision is dazzled by the brilliancy of divine revelation. It is only artless faith which can cause the soul to feel perfectly at home in the presence of the richest unfoldings of the goodness and loving kindness of God. Faith never says “if” or “why?” It believes what God says, because He says it. It rests, in sweet tranquility, upon every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. Unbelief looks at circumstances, and reasons from them. Faith looks at God, and reasons from Him. Hence the vast difference in their conclusions. Gideon, judging from his surroundings, concluded that Jehovah had forsaken His people. A simple faith would have led him to the very opposite conclusion; it would have enabled him to see and know and remember that Jehovah would ever be true to His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, however He might, in His governmental dealings, have to hide His face from their rebellious and sinful offspring. Faith always counts on God; and God, blessed be His name, ever honors faith. He first creates it, and then owns it.

But, not only does God graciously honor faith; He rebukes our fears. He rises above our unbelief, and hushes all our silly reasonings. Thus, in His dealings with His chosen servant Gideon, it would seem as though He heard not the “if” or the “why?” He goes on to unfold His own thoughts, to display His own resources, and to fill the soul of His servant with a confidence and a courage which was to lift him above all the depressing influences with which he was surrounded.

“And the Lord looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel out of the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?” Here we have the true secret of strength: “The Lord looked upon him.” There was divine power in this look, if Gideon could only have taken it in. But alas! he was still full of questions. “And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”

Thus it is ever. Unbelief turns the eye in upon self, or out upon our surroundings. It leads us to compare our visible resources with the work to which God is calling us. Jehovah had said, “Go in this thy might.” What was the “might?” In what did it consist? Was it great wealth, lofty position, or great physical power? Nothing of the kind. “Jehovah looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel.” This was absolute and unqualified. It left no room for Gideon’s “wherewith?” It made it very plain that the might with which he was to deliver Israel was not in himself or in his father’s house, but in the God of Israel. It mattered little whether his family was rich or poor; whether he was little or great. It was God who was about to use him. What was wealth or greatness to Him? He could use a barley cake or a broken pitcher. Indeed we may observe this special feature in the varied instruments taken up in the book of Judges, namely, that “no flesh shall glory in God’s presence.” How does human glory fade away before the humiliating fact that Israel’s hosts were called forth to battle under the leadership of a woman! What a stain on human

pride in the fact of deliverance coming through the agency of a “left-handed man!”

But, on the other hand, we find that, just in proportion as man’s glory fades away, the divine glory shines out.

The humbler the instrument, the more we see the power of God. What difference does it make to the Almighty God whether His instrument be left-handed or right-handed—a man or a woman—a dwarf or a giant? The instrument is nothing. God is all in all. True, He deigns to use instruments; but all the power is His, and His shall be the eternal and universal praise. Gideon: had to learn this; and so had Moses; and so have we all. It is an invaluable lesson. We are all so prone to think of our competency for any work or service which may lie before us, when we ought to remember that the works that are done upon the earth, God is the doer of them. Our sufficiency is of Him. We can do nothing; and if we could do aught it would be badly done. The human finger can only leave a soil behind. The works of men perish like their thoughts. The work of God abideth forever. Let us remember these things, that we may walk humbly and lean ever and only on the mighty arm of the living God. Thus the soul is kept in a well-balanced condition, free from self-confidence and fleshly excitement, on the one hand; and from gloom and depression, on the other. If we can do nothing, self-confidence is the height of presumption. If God can do everything, despondency is the height of folly.

But in the case of Gideon, as in that of all God’s servants, we observe two things worthy of our deepest attention. In the first place, we have the divine commission, as embodied in those weighty words, “Have not I sent thee? And, in the second place, we have the assurance of the divine presence, as set forth in these encouraging words, “Surely I will be with thee.”

These are the two grand points for all who will serve God in their day and generation. They must know that the path they tread has been marked out distinctly by the hand of God; and, furthermore, they must have the sense of His presence with them along the path. These things are absolutely essential. Without them we shall waver and vacillate. “We shall be running from one line of work to another. We shall take up certain work, go on with it for a while, and then abandon it for something else. We shall work by fits and starts; our course will be faltering, our light flickering: “Unstable as water, we shall not excel.” We shall never succeed at anything. There will be no certainty, no stability, no progress.

These are weighty matters for all of us. It is of immense importance for every servant of Christ, every child of God, to know that he is at his divinely appointed post, and at his divinely given work. This will give fixedness of purpose, moral elevation, and holy independence. It will preserve us from being tossed about by human thoughts and opinions—being influenced by the judgment of one or another. It is our happy privilege to be so sure that we are doing the very work which the Master has given us to do, that the thoughts of our fellows respecting us shall have no more weight with us than the pattering of rain on the window.

Not—be it carefully observed—that we should, for a moment, countenance, much less cultivate, a spirit of haughty independence. Far away be the thought! We, as Christians, can never, in one sense, be independent one of another. How can we, seeing we are members one of another? We are united to one another and to our risen Head in glory, by the one Spirit who is with us and in us. The most intense individuality—and our individuality should be as intense as our unity is

indissoluble—can never touch the precious truth of the one body and one Spirit.

All this is divinely true, and most fully and thankfully owned. But, at the same time, we must insist upon the truth of our individuality, and of our personal responsibility. This must be maintained with all possible energy and decision. Each servant has to do with his Lord, in that particular sphere of work to which he has been called.

And, moreover, each should know his work, and give himself to it diligently and constantly. He should possess the holy certainty and authority imparted to the soul by that divine and powerful sentence, “Have not I sent thee?”

It will, perhaps, be said, “We are not all Gideons or Joshuas. We are not all called to occupy such a prominent place or tread such a brilliant path as those illustrious servants.” True; but we are called to serve; and it is essential to every servant to know his commission, to understand his work, and to be fully assured in his own soul that he is doing the very work which the Lord has given him to do, and treading the very path which the hand of God has marked out for him. If there be any uncertainty as to this, we do not see how there can be any progress.

But there is more than this. It is not enough to know that we are treading the divinely appointed path. We want to realize the divine presence. We want to have the precious words made good in our experience, “Surely I will be with thee.” This completes the servant’s equipment. The divine commission and the divine presence are all we want; but we must have these in order to get on. With these priceless realities it matters not who we are, what we are, or where we are. The Lord can use a feeble woman, a left-handed man, a cake of barley meal, or a broken pitcher. The instrument is nothing. God is the workman. Unbelief may cry out, “Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.” Faith can cry out, in reply, “What of all this if God be for us? Does He want the rich or the noble? What are riches or greatness to Him? Nothing.” “Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.” 1 Cor. 1:26-29.

These are wholesome words for all of us. It is an unspeakable mercy for every clear servant of Christ to be kept in the abiding sense of his own utter nothingness—to be taught to realize, in some measure, the depth, fullness, and power of that one brief but most comprehensive statement, “Apart from me ye can do nothing.” There is not a single branch in all the vine, however imposing or wide-spreading it may seem to be, which, if separated from the parent stem by the thickness of a gold leaf, can produce the very smallest atom of fruit. There must be the abiding realization of our vital union with Christ—the practical, living, abiding in Him, by faith, day by day, hour by hour, moment by moment, in order to bring forth any fruit that God can accept. It is as we abide in Christ that the living sap circulates freely through us, and gives forth the healthy bud, the green leaf, and the seasonable fruit.

Here lies the grand secret of power. It is abiding in the living vine. “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is; for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that

spreadeth out her roots by the river; and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." Jer. 17:7, 8.

All this is intensely personal. We must each, for himself and herself, cling, by faith, to Christ. It is of the very last possible importance for Christians to bear in mind that Christianity is a thoroughly individual thing. We are individual in our repentance, in our faith, in our salvation, in our communion, in our service, and in our reward. Look at the addresses to the seven churches in Rev. 2 and 3. Hearken to those pointed words, "He that hath an ear"—"To him that overcometh." What do they mean? Do they not set forth, in the most distinct and forcible manner, that blessed individuality of which we speak? Unquestionably. But do they touch unity? Not in the smallest degree. They leave its sacred domain wholly untouched. "There is one body and one Spirit." This must ever hold good, spite of all the ruin and failure of the professing church. Nevertheless, the writings of John are pre-eminently individual. From the opening lines of his Gospel to the closing sentence of his Apocalypse, we trace this feature. He shows us the Philips, the Simons, the Andrews, and the Nathanaels coming, in their individuality, to Jesus. He tells us of a Jewish ruler here, and a Samaritan sinner there, who were drawn by the Father to Jesus. He tells us of the good Shepherd who calleth His sheep by name. He tells us of the branches clinging to the living vine. Thus it is in John's Gospel; and when we turn to his Epistles, we find the same principle running through them all. He writes to an elect lady, and to his beloved Gaius; and if he once speaks of "the Church," it is but to weep over its departed glory, and to raise amid its ruins that warning note for individual ears, "Look to yourselves." And as to the Revelation, it ends as it begins, with a solemn appeal "to him that heareth."

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Gideon and His Companions: Part 4

The more closely we study the narrative of the Lord's dealings with Gideon, the more we must be struck with the marvelous way in which He prepares him for his after course. Like all God's servants, in all ages, Gideon had to undergo a course of secret training and discipline, ere he was fit to appear in public. The space of time occupied in this training may vary, as may also the character of the discipline; but of this we may rest assured that all who will be used of God in public must be taught of God in private. It is a fatal mistake for anyone to rush into prominence without proper equipment, and that equipment can only be attained in the secret of the divine presence. It is in profound and hallowed retirement with God that vessels are filled and instruments fitted for His work.

Let us never forget this. Moses had to spend forty years at "the backside of the desert" ere he was fit to enter upon his public career. David had to feed his father's flock, ere he was called to rule the nation of Israel. He slew a lion and a bear in secret, ere he was called to slay Goliath in public. The great apostle of the Gentiles spent three years in Arabia, notwithstanding his very remarkable conversion and call. The apostles spent three years and a half in companionship with their Master, and then had to tarry until they were endued with power from on high. Thus it has been with all those who have ever been called to occupy a prominent place in the Lord's work; and even the blessed Master Himself—though surely needing no training or discipline, inasmuch as He was ever perfect—to set us an example, spent thirty years in retirement ere He came forth in public.

All this is full of most wholesome instruction for our souls. Let us seek to take it in and profit by it. No one can ever get on in public work without this private teaching in the school of Christ. It is this which gives depth, solidity, and mellowness to the character. It imparts a tone of reality and a fixedness of purpose most desirable in all who engage in any department of the Lord's work. It will invariably be found that where any one goes to work without this divine preparation, there is shallowness and instability. There may perhaps, for a time, be more flash and show in those superficial characters than in those who have been educated in the school of Christ; but it never lasts. It may create a momentary sensation, but it soon passes away like the morning cloud or the early dew. Nothing will stand but that which is the direct result of private communion with God—secret training in His presence—the excellent discipline of the school of God.

Let us see how all this is exemplified in Gideon's case. It is very evident that this honored servant was called to pass through deep exercises of soul before ever he took a single step in public action, yea before he ever unfurled the standard of testimony in his father's house. He had to begin with himself, with his own personal condition, with his own heart. Those who will be used for others must begin with themselves. So Gideon found it. Let us pursue his history.

"And the Lord said unto Gideon, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. And he said unto him, If now I have found grace in thy sight, then show me a sign that thou talkest with me. Depart not hence, I pray thee, until I come unto thee, and bring forth my present, and set it before thee. And he said, I will tarry till thou come again. And Gideon went in

and made ready a kid, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour; the flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out unto him under the oak, and presented it. And the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes, and lay them upon this rock, and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there rose up fire out of the rock and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face. And the Lord said unto him, Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." Judg. 6:16-23.

Here we reach a profoundly interesting stage of Gideon's preparatory course. He is called to enter practically and experimentally into the great and universal law for the servants of God, namely, "When I am weak, then I am strong." This is a most precious law, and one which forms an indispensable element in the education of all Christ's servants. Let no one imagine that he can ever be used in the Lord's work, or ever make progress in the divine life, without some measure of real entrance into this invaluable principle. We hold it to be absolutely essential in forming the character of the true servant of Christ. Where it is not known, where it has not been felt, where it has not been, to some extent, realized, there is sure to be unsubduedness, unbrokenness, self-occupation, in some form or another. There will be more or less of self-confidence, and various points and angles turning up, here and there, and acting as a sad hindrance to all that is good, useful, and holy.

On the other hand, when one has learned that great family motto quoted above—when one has learned, in the divine presence to say, "When I am weak, then I am strong"—when nature has been weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, there you will always find a measure of brokenness, softness, and tenderness of spirit; and not only so, but also largeness of heart, and readiness for every good work, and that lovely elasticity of mind which enables one to rise above all those petty selfish considerations which so sadly hinder the work of God. In short, the heart must first be broken, then made whole; and, being made whole, be undividedly given to Christ and to His blessed service. It is impossible to run the eye along the brilliant array of Christ's workmen, and not see the truth of this. Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, in Old Testament times; and Peter, Paul, and John, in those of the New, all stand before us as vivid illustrations of the value of broken material. All those beloved and honored servants had to be broken in order to be made whole—to be emptied in order to be filled—to learn that, of themselves, they could do nothing, in order to be ready, in Christ's strength, for anything and everything.

Such is the law of the household—the law of the vineyard—the law of the kingdom. So Gideon found it in his day. His "alas!" was followed by Jehovah's "Peace; fear not," and then he was ready to begin. He had been brought face to face with the angel of God, and there he learned not only that his family was poor in Manasseh, and he the least in his father's house, but that in himself he was perfectly powerless, and that all his springs must be found in the living God. Priceless lesson this, for the son of Joash, and for us all! a lesson not to be learned in the schools and colleges of this world, but only in the deep and holy retirement of the sanctuary of God.

And now let us see what was Gideon's first act after his fears were hushed, and his soul filled with divine peace. His very first act was to build an altar. "Then Gideon built an altar there unto the Lord, and called it Jehovah-shalom: unto this day it is yet in Ophrah of the Abiezrites." He takes the happy place of a worshipper, and his worship is characterized by the revelation of the divine character. He calls his altar by that precious title, "The Lord send peace." He had gone through many and deep exercises of soul—exercises which none can know save those who are called out into a prominent place amongst God's people. He felt the ruin and the weakness of all around him. He felt the fallen and humiliating condition of his beloved people. He felt his own littleness, yea his own emptiness and nothingness. How could he come forward? How could he smite the Midianites? How could he save Israel? Who was sufficient for these things? It is all very well for those persons who live an easy, irresponsible kind of life; who know not the toils, the cares, and the anxieties connected with the public service of Christ and the testimony for His name in an evil day. These know nothing of Gideon's painful exercises of soul—nothing of the pressure upon his spirit as he looked forth from beneath the shade of his father's oak tree, and contemplated the dangers and responsibilities of the battle-field. They can enter but feebly into the meaning of those words of one high up in the school of Christ, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead."

These are weighty words for all Christ's servants; but we must be His servants in reality, in order to enter into their deep significance. If we are content to live a life of indolence and ease, a life of self-seeking and self-pleasing, it is impossible for us to understand such words, or indeed to enter into any of these intense exercises of soul through which Christ's true hearted servants and faithful witnesses, in all ages, have been called to pass. We invariably find that all those who have been most used of God in public have gone through deep waters in secret. It is as the sentence of death is written practically upon self, that the power of resurrection life in Christ shines out. Thus Paul could say to the Corinthians, "Death worketh in us; but life in you." Marvelous words! Words which let us into the profound depths of the apostle's ministry. What a ministry must that have been which was carried on upon such a principle as this! "What power! what energy! Death working in the poor earthen vessel, but streams of life, heavenly grace, and spiritual power flowing into those to whom he ministered.

This, reader, we may depend upon it, is the true secret of all effective ministry. It is an easy matter to talk about ministry; to set up to be ministers of Christ; but oh! how has the professing church departed from the divine reality of ministry! Alas! the heart sinks at the bare thought of it. Where are the Pauls, the Gideons, and the Joshuas? Where are the deep heart-searchings and profound soul exercises which have characterized Christ's servants in other days? We are flippant and wordy, shallow and empty, self-sufficient and self-indulgent. Need we wonder at the little results? How can we expect to see life working in others when we know so little about death working in us?

May the Eternal Spirit stir us all up, and work in us a more powerful sense of what it is to be the true-hearted, single-eyed, devoted servants of Jesus Christ!

Gideon and His Companions: Part 5

We are now to contemplate Gideon called forth into action. He has received his commission from Jehovah. His questions have been answered, his fears hushed, his heart tranquillized, and he is enabled to build an altar. All this had reference to his own personal condition, to the state of his own soul, to the attitude of his own heart as in the sight of God.

Thus it must ever be. We must all begin in this way, if we are ever to be used of God to act on others. We must have to do with God in the secret of our own souls, else we shall prove to be but sorry workmen in the sequel. All who go forth in public work, without this secret training, are sure to prove flimsy and shallow. Self must be measured in the divine presence. We must learn that nature is of no account in the Lord's work. "Not by might, nor by power, but my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." Zech. 4:6.

It was not until Gideon had gone through somewhat of this holy discipline in secret that he was led out into service. And let us carefully note where he had to commence. "It came to pass the same night, that the Lord said unto him, Take thy father's young bullock, even the second bullock of seven years old"—for Jehovah knew how many bullocks Joash had, and the age of each—"and throw down the altar of Baal that thy father hath, and cut down the grove that is by it. And build an altar unto the Lord thy God upon the top of this rock, in the ordered place, and take the second bullock, and offer a burnt sacrifice with the wood of the grove which thou shalt cut down."

Here we see that Gideon had to begin at home. He was called to unfurl the standard of testimony in the very bosom of his family—in the very center of his father's house.

This is intensely interesting, and deeply practical. It teaches a lesson to which we should all bend our ears and apply our hearts. Testimony must begin at home. It will never do to rush forth into public work while our private and domestic ways are anything but what they ought to be. It is useless to set about throwing down the altar of Baal in public, while the selfsame altar remains standing at home.

This is of the very last possible importance. We are all of us imperatively called upon to show piety at home. Nothing is more sorrowful than to meet with persons who, abroad amongst their fellow men or their fellow Christians, are marked by a high tone of spirituality—a style of speaking which would lead one to suppose them far beyond the ordinary level of Christians, and yet when you come to close quarters with them—when you become acquainted with their private life and ways—their actual history from day to day, you find them very far indeed from bearing testimony for Christ to those with whom they come in contact. This is most deplorable. It dishonors the Lord Jesus, grieves the Spirit, stumbles and repulses young believers, gives occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully, and to our brethren to speak doubtfully of us.

Surely these things ought not to be. There ought to be a testimony yielded at home. Those who see most of us should see most of Christ in us. Those who know us best ought best to know that we are Christ's. But alas! how often is it otherwise! How often does it happen that the home circle

is just the place where we least exhibit the lovely traits of christian character! The wife or the husband, the parent or the child, the brother or the sister, the master or the servant, the fellow servant or some other companion in daily life, is just the one in whose sight we least display the beauteous fruits of divine life. It is in private life that all our weak points come out—our oddities and peculiarities, our silly tendencies and sinful tempers; instead of which it ought to be in that very sphere that the grace of Jesus is most faithfully manifested.

Christian reader, let us not turn away from the word of reproof, of admonition, or exhortation. It may not be pleasant; but, we may rest assured it is salutary. It may not be agreeable to the flesh; but it is wholesome to the soul. We are called, like Gideon, to begin at home, if we would prove helpful to our brethren, or act effectively against the common foe.

No doubt, there are difficulties involved in this home testimony. It is often very hard, for example, for a child to bear witness against the worldliness of a parent, or of the whole family; but where there is humility of mind and simple dependence upon God, He maintains and carries us through marvelously. One thing is certain, there is nothing like decision. "The first blow is half the battle," yea, the whole battle is often gained by a single blow, when that blow is dealt in full communion with the mind of Christ.

On the other hand, where there is weakness and vacillation—playing fast and loose with the truth of God—trifling with divine principles and one's own conscience—a looking at consequences and a weighing of probable results—there the enemy is sure to have the upper hand, and the testimony altogether fails. God acts with those who act for Him. This is the grand secret of their success; but where the eye is not single, there is no real progress, no divine result.

Here is where so many of us signally fail. We are not whole hearted, not decided, not thoroughly out-and-out for Christ. Hence there is no result for God, no action on others. We have no idea of what may be accomplished by a single devoted heart—one earnest and energetic soul. Such an one may be used to raise up a standard round which thousands will flock who might never have had the courage or energy to unfurl the standard themselves.

Look at Gideon. See how he wrought for God, and how God wrought with him. "Then Gideon took ten men of his servants, and did as the Lord had said unto him; and so it was, because he feared his father's household, and the men of the city, that he could not do it by day, that he did it by night. And when the men of the city rose early in the morning, behold, the altar of Baal was cast down, and the grove was cut down that was by it, and the second bullock was offered upon the altar that was built. And they said one to another, Who hath done this thing? And when they inquired and asked, they said, Gideon the son of Joash hath done this thing. Then the men of the city said unto Joash, Bring out thy son, that he may die; because he hath cast down the altar of Baal, and because he hath cut down the grove that was by it."

This is what we may call striking at the very root of the matter. The worship of Baal is completely overturned. This was no trifle. We have little idea of what it cost the son of Joash to do this thing; but, by the grace of God, he did it. True it may have been with fear and trembling, still he did it. He dealt one vigorous blow at the entire system of Baal, and it crumbled into dust beneath his feet. No half measures would have availed. It would have been of no possible use to pick a stone, here and there, out of the idol's altar; the whole fabric had to be overturned from its very foundation, and the

idol itself degraded in the very presence of its deluded worshippers. A bold decisive stroke was needed, and that stroke was given by the hand of Gideon the son of Joash, God's "mighty man of valor."

There is nothing, we repeat, like plain decision—bold, uncompromising faithfulness for Christ, cost what it may. Had Gideon been less decided, had his line of action been less thorough, his father Joash would not have been so perfectly won over. It needed just such a method of dealing with Baal to convince a rational person that the worship of such a god was a sham and a falsehood. "And Joash said unto all that stood against him, Will ye plead for Baal? will ye save him? he that will plead for him, let him be put to death whilst it is yet morning: if he be a god, let him plead for himself, because one hath cast down his altar. Therefore on that day he called him Jerubbaal, saying, Let Baal plead against him, because he hath thrown down his altar."

This was very simple reasoning, "If he be a god, let him plead for himself." Gideon's decided course had brought matters to a point. Baal was either a reality or a most complete delusion. If the former, let him plead for himself. If the latter, who would think of pleading for him? Nothing could be simpler. Gideon's action was a complete success. The worship of Baal was overturned; and the worship of Jehovah Elohim set up instead.

Thus we see that the divine work in the soul of Gideon is making very rapid but very real progress. He is conducted from strength to strength. How little idea had he, when first the divine voice fell on his ear, that, in so short a time, he would take so bold a step. If anyone had said to him, then, "In a few hours you will overturn the worship of Baal in the very midst of your father's house," he would not have believed it. But the Lord led him along, step by step, gently yet firmly; and as the heavenly light broke in upon his soul, his confidence and courage grew.

Thus it is the Lord ever deals with His servants. He does not expect them to run before they have learned to walk; but where the heart is true, and the purpose honest and firm, He graciously supplies the needed strength, moment by moment. He causes mountains of difficulty to remove, rolls away many a dark and heavy cloud, fortifies the heart, and girds up the loins of the mind, so that the very feeblest are armed with giant strength, and the coward heart filled with wonder, love, and praise at the triumph of divine grace.

All this is illustrated with great vividness in Gideon's interesting story. No sooner had he leveled Baal's altar, then he was called to encounter Midian's hosts. "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east were gathered together, and went over, and pitched in the valley of Jezreel. But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon, and he blew a trumpet, and Abiezer was gathered after him. And he sent messengers throughout all Manasseh; who also was gathered after him; and he sent messengers unto Asher, and unto Zebulun, and unto Naphtali; and they came up to meet them."

In short there was a thorough awakening. The tide of spiritual energy rose majestically, and bore hundreds and thousands upon its bosom. The work which had begun in Gideon's heart was extending itself far and wide, throughout the length and breadth of the land. The Spirit of the Lord was displaying His mighty energy, and multitudes were stirred up to gather round the standard which the hand of faith had unfurled.

But just at this point, it would seem that Gideon's faith needed fresh confirmation. It may be his spirit was overawed when he saw the mighty host of the uncircumcised mustering before him; and then, for a moment, his courage failed, and his heart craved a fresh sign from the Lord. "And Gideon said unto God, If thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said"—alas! the poor heart can place its unbelieving "if" right in front of the word of God who cannot lie—"behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know that thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said."

How marvelous! And yet we need not marvel if we know aught of our own hearts. Anything for the poor human heart but the naked word of the living God. A sign, a token, something that the eye can see. The word of God is not enough for unbelieving nature.

But oh! the matchless grace of God! His unupbraiding love! His tender considerateness! He graciously meets the weakness of His poor servant, for "It was so: for he rose up early on the morrow, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water." What condescending grace! Instead of severely rebuking Gideon's unbelieving "if," He graciously confirms his wavering faith by super abounding evidence.

And yet all this sufficed not. Gideon seeks still further confirmation. "And he said unto God, Let not thine anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once. Let me prove, I pray thee, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night: for it was dry upon the fleece only, and there was dew upon all the ground." Such is the abounding grace and exhaust-less patience of the God with whom we have to do. Forever adored be His holy name! Who would not trust Him, and love Him, and serve Him?

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Gideon and His Companions: Part 6

We shall now ask the reader to open his Bible at the seventh chapter of the book of Judges. Here Gideon's companions are brought before us; and their history, as well as that of their leader, is full of interest and profit for us. They had to be trained and tested as well as he. Let us ponder the narrative.

“Then Jerubbaal, who is Gideon, and all the people that were with him, rose up early, and pitched beside the well of Harod: so that the host of the Midianites were on the north side of them, by the hill of Moreh, in the valley. And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me.”

The clear and soul-stirring blast of Gideon's trumpet had drawn around him a very large and imposing company; but this company had to be tested. It is one thing to be moved by the zeal and energy of some earnest servant of Christ, and it is quite another thing to possess those moral qualities which alone can fit a man to be an earnest servant himself. There is a vast difference between following in the wake of some devoted man of God, and walking with God ourselves—being propped up and led on by the faith and energy of another, and leaning upon God in the power of individual faith for ourselves.

This is a serious consideration for all of us. There is always great danger of our being mere imitators of other people's faith—of copying their example without their spiritual power—of adopting their peculiar line of things without their personal communion. All this must be carefully guarded against. We specially warn the young christian reader against it. Let us be simple, and humble, and real. We may be very small, our sphere very narrow, our path very retired; but it does not matter in the least, provided we are precisely what grace has made us, and occupying the sphere in which our blessed Master has set us, and treading the path which He has opened before us. It is by no means absolutely necessary that we should be great, or prominent, or showy, or noisy in the world; but it is absolutely necessary that we should be real and humble, obedient and dependent. Thus our God can use us, without fear of our vaunting ourselves; and then, too, we are safe, peaceful, and happy. There is nothing more delightful to the true Christian—the genuine servant of Christ—than to find himself in that quiet, humble, shady path where self is lost sight of, and the precious light of God's countenance enjoyed—where the thoughts of men are of small account, and the sweet approval of Christ is everything to the soul.

Flesh cannot be trusted. It will turn the very service of Christ into an occasion of self-exaltation. It will use the very name of Him who made Himself nothing in order to make itself something. It will build up its own reputation by seeming to further the cause of Him who made Himself of none. Such is flesh! Such are we in ourselves! Silly, self-exalting creatures, ever ready to vaunt ourselves, while professing to be nothing in ourselves, and to deserve nothing but the flames of an everlasting hell.

Need we marvel at the testing and proving of Gideon's companions? All must be tested and proved. The service of Christ is a very solemn and a very holy thing; and all who take part therein must be self-judged, self-distrusting, and self-emptied; and not only so, but they must lean, with unshaken confidence, upon the living God. These are the grand qualities that go to make up the character of the true servant of Christ, and they are strikingly illustrated on the page of inspiration which now lies open before us.

Let us proceed with the narrative.

“The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands.....Now, therefore, go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand.”

Here the first grand test is applied to Gideon's host—a test designed to bring out the measure of the heart's simple confidence in Jehovah. A coward heart will not do for the day of battle—a doubting spirit will not stand in the conflict. The same principle is set forth in Deut. 20:8: “And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.”

Faint-heartedness is terribly contagious. It spreads rapidly. It withers the arm that should bear the shield, and paralyzes the hand that should wield the sword. The only cure for this malady is simple confidence in God, a firm grasp of His faithfulness, a child-like trust in His word, true personal acquaintance with Himself. We must know God for ourselves, in such a way that His word is everything to us, and that we can walk alone with Him, and stand alone with Him in the darkest hour.

Reader, is it thus with thee? Hast thou this blessed confidence in God—this solid hold of His word? Hast thou, deep down in thy heart, such an experimental knowledge—of God and His Christ as shall sustain thee even though thou hadst not the support or sympathy of another believer under the sun? Art thou prepared to walk alone in the world?

These are weighty questions, and we feel the need of pressing them upon the Church of God at the present moment. There is a wide diffusion of the precious truth of God, and numbers are getting hold of it. Like the blast of Gideon's trumpet, so the clear testimony which has gone forth within the last few years has attracted many; and while we quite feel that there is real ground for thankfulness in this, we also feel that there is ground for very serious reflection indeed. Truth is a most precious thing, if it be truthfully found and truthfully held: but let us remember that in exact proportion to the preciousness of the truth of God is the moral danger of trafficking therein without a self-judged heart and an exercised conscience. What we really need is faith—unfeigned, earnest, simple faith, which connects the soul, in living power, with God, and enables us to overcome all the difficulties and discouragements of the way. Of this faith there can be no imitation. We must either possess it in reality or not at all. A sham faith will speedily come to the ground. The man who attempts to walk by faith, if he have it not, must speedily totter and fall. We cannot face the hosts of Midian unless we have full confidence in the living God. “Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return.” Thus it must ever be. None can go to battle save those who are

braced up by a faith that grasps the unseen realities of eternity, and endures as seeing Him who is invisible. May this faith be ours, in larger measure, beloved reader.

It is full of instruction for the heart to notice the effect of this first test upon the host of Gideon. It thinned his ranks amazingly. "There returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand." This was a serious reduction. But it is far better to have ten thousand that can trust God than ten thousand times ten thousand who cannot. What avails a vast mass of unbelieving flesh? Nothing. Of what use are numbers, if they be not energized by a living faith? None whatever. It is comparatively easy to flock around a standard raised by a vigorous hand; but it is a totally different thing to stand, in personal energy, in the actual battle. Naught but genuine faith can do this; and hence when the searching question is put, "Who can trust God?" the showy ranks of profession are speedily thinned.

But there was yet another test for Gideon's companions. "And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go. So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Every one that lapped of the water with his tongue, as a dog lapped, him shalt thou set by himself; likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink. And the number of them that lapped, putting their hand to their mouth, were three hundred men: but all the rest of the people bowed down upon their knees to drink water. And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place." Judg. 7:4-7.

Here then we have another great moral quality which must ever characterize those who will act for God and for His people, in an evil day. They must not only have confidence in God, but they must also be prepared to surrender self. This is a universal law in the service of Christ. If we want to swim in God's current, we must sink self; and we can only sink self in proportion as we trust Christ. Thus it stands ever. It is not—need we say—a question of salvation; it is a question of service. It is not a question of being a child of God, but of being a proper servant of Christ. The thirty-one thousand seven hundred that were dismissed from Gideon's army, were just as much Israelites as the three hundred that remained; but they were not fitted for the moment of conflict; they were not the right men for the crisis. And why? Was that they were not circumcised? Nay. What then? They could not trust God and surrender self. They were full of fear when they ought to have been full of faith. They made refreshment their object instead of conflict.

Here, reader, lay the true and only secret of their moral unfitness. God cannot trust those who do not trust Him and sink self. This is pre-eminently solemn and practical. We live in a day of easy profession and self-indulgence. Knowledge can, now-a-days, be picked up at very small cost. Scraps of truth can be gathered, second hand, in all directions. Truth which cost some of God's dear servants years of deep soul-plowing and heart-searching exercise, is now in free circulation and can be intellectually seized, and flippantly professed, by many who know not what soul-plowing or heart-exercise means.

But let us never forget—yea, let us constantly remember, that the life of faith is a reality; service is a reality; testimony for Christ, a reality. And further let us bear in mind that if we want to stand for

Christ in an evil day—if we would be men for the crisis—genuine servants—true witnesses, then verily we must learn the true meaning of those two qualities, namely, confidence in God, and self-surrender.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

In the power of His might!

In the power of His might!

Who was made through weakness strong,

Ye shall overcome in the fearful fight!

And sing His victory song!

But count ye the cost; yea, count ye the cost—

The forsaking all ye have!

Then take up your cross and follow your Lord,

Not thinking your life to save.”

Gideon and His Companions: Part 7

There is something peculiarly striking in the fact that out of the many thousands of Israel, in the days of Gideon, there were only three hundred men who were really fit for conflict with the Midianites—only this small band fit for the occasion. This truly is a suggestive and admonitory fact. There were hundreds of thousands of true Israelites—truly circumcised sons of Abraham—members of the congregation of the Lord, who were by no means up to the mark, when it was a question of war to the knife with Midian—a question of genuine confidence in God and self-surrender. We are safe in saying that the men who were morally fitted for the grand crisis in the day of battle were not one in a thousand. How solemn! Not one in a thousand who could trust God and deny self.

Christian reader, is not this something worthy of deep and serious thought? Does it not, very naturally, suggest the inquiry as to whether it is otherwise at this moment? Is it not painfully evident that we live in a day in the which little is known of the blessed secret of confidence in God, and still less of the exercise of self-surrender? In point of fact, these things can never be rightly separated. If we attempt to divorce self-surrender from confidence in God, it will land us in the deep and dark delusions of monasticism, asceticism, or ritualism. It will issue in nature trying to subdue nature. This, we need hardly say, is the direct opposite of Christianity. This latter starts with the glorious fact that the old self has been condemned and set aside by the cross of Christ, and therefore it can be practically surrendered, every day, by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the meaning of those fine words in Col. 3, “Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” He does not say, “Ye ought to be dead.” No; but “ye are dead.” What then? “Mortify your members which are on the earth.” So also in the profound and precious teaching in Rom. 6, “How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” What then? “Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Here then lies the secret of all true self-surrender. If this be not understood and practically entered into, it will simply be self in one form trying to subdue self in another. This is a fatal delusion. It is a snare of the devil into which earnest souls are in imminent danger of falling, who sigh after holiness of life, but do not know the power of accomplished redemption, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost—are not built upon the solid foundation of Christianity.

We specially warn the reader against this deadly error. It distinctly savors of monasticism or asceticism. It clothes itself in the garb of pietism and sanctimoniousness, and is peculiarly attractive to a certain class of ardent spirits who long for victory over the lusts, passions, and tendencies of nature; but, not knowing how to attain it, are turning their back upon Christ and His cross, and betaking themselves to the resources of a spurious religion.

It is against this most mischievous and soul-destroying system that the apostle warns us, in such glowing words in Col. 2 “Let no man,” he says, “beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by

his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances”—such as, “touch not; taste not; handle not; which all are to perish with the using—after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honor to the satisfying of the flesh.” Col. 2:18-23.

We deem it needful to say thus much lest any of our readers should at all mistake us on the subject of self-surrender. We desire it to be distinctly understood that the only possible ground of self-surrender is the knowledge of accomplished redemption, and our union with Christ through the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the essential basis of all christian conduct. In short, a known salvation is the basis; the Holy Ghost indwelling, the power; and the word of God, the directory of all true self-surrender.

But what did Gideon and his companions know of these things? Nothing, as Christians now know them. But they had confidence in God, and further, they did not make their own refreshment their object, but simply took it up by the way as a means to an end. Herein they teach a fine lesson even to those whose privilege it is to walk in the full orb'd light of New Testament Christianity. If they, in the dim twilight in which they lived, could trust God, and surrender self for the moment, even in measure; then what shall we say for ourselves who, with all our light and privileges, are so ready to doubt God and seek our own things?

Is it not too painfully evident that, in this our day of light and privilege, there is but little moral preparedness for the path of service and conflict which we are called to tread? Alas! alas! we cannot deny it. There is a deplorable lack of genuine trust in the living God, and of the true spirit of self-surrender. Here, we may rest assured, is the deep secret of the whole matter. God is not practically known and habitually trusted; self is exalted and indulged. Hence our unfitness for the warfare, our failure in the day of battle. It is one thing to be saved, and quite another thing to be a soldier. It is one thing to have our sins forgiven, and quite another to have our swords sharpened and our shields well up. There is a vast difference between talking about conflict and taking part therein; and we cannot shake off the painful conviction that, in this day of widely extended profession, the proportion of workmen and warriors would not be found a whit greater than it was in the days of Gideon and his companions. The fact is, we want men of faith, and men of one idea—men whose hearts are fixed and their eyes single—men so absorbed with Christ and His cause that they have no time for aught beside. We greatly fear that, if the double test which was applied to Israel in the days of Gideon, were to be applied now to those who stand on the very highest platform of profession, the practical result would not differ very materially.

But we must draw this paper, and with it this entire series, to a close. We are approaching the end of the year; and much as we should like to linger over the remainder of Gideon's interesting story, we cannot extend the series of articles into next year's volume. We shall therefore rapidly touch on the two leading points, and then leave our readers to meditate closely upon the whole subject for themselves.

The close of Judg. 7 shows us Gideon and his companions completely victorious, “The cake of barley bread,” and “the broken pitchers,” proved a match for all the power of the Midianites and the

Amalekites, although the latter “lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude, and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea side for multitude.” God was with the cake of barley bread and the pitchers, as He will ever be with those who are prepared to take the low place—prepared to be nothing, but to make Him their all in all—prepared to trust Him and sink self. This—let it never be forgotten—is the great root principle in all service and in all conflict. Without it, we can never succeed; with it, we can never fail. It matters not what the difficulties, or what the numbers and power of our enemies, all must give way before the presence of the living God; and that presence will ever accompany those who trust Him and sink self.

Nor is this all. Not only is firm trust in God and self-surrender the secret of victory over external enemies; it is also the secret of overcoming, disarming, and melting down jealous and envious brethren, though these latter are often far more difficult to deal with than open enemies. Thus no sooner had Gideon reached the point of victory over the uncircumcised, than he was called to encounter the petty and contemptible jealousy of his brethren. “And the men of Ephraim said unto him, Why hast thou served us thus, that thou calledst us not when thou wentest to fight with the Midianites? And they did chide with him sharply.” Chapter 8:1.

All this was most uncalled for and unworthy. Had they not heard the sound of the trumpet calling Israel to the battle field? Had they not heard that the standard was unfurled? Why had they not rushed to the battle at the first? It was an easy matter to come in at the close and reap the spoil, and then find fault with the one who had been God’s real instrument on the occasion.

However, we shall not dwell upon the unlovely conduct of the men of Ephraim; but turn for a moment, to the exquisite way in which Gideon was enabled to meet them. “And he said unto them, What have I done now in comparison of you? God hath delivered into your hands the princes, Midian, Oreb and Zeeb; and what was I able to do in comparison of you? Then their anger abated toward him when he had said that.”

Here, christian reader, is the true way to vanquish jealous and envious brethren. The cake of barley bread and the empty pitcher can vanquish jealous Ephraimites as well as hostile Midianites. A self-hiding spirit is the grand secret of victory over envy and jealousy, in all their odious forms. It is difficult, if not impossible, to quarrel with a man who is down in the dust, in true self-abasement. “What have I done now in comparison of you?” This is the language of one who had learned something of the real meaning of self-surrender; and we may safely assert that such language must ever disarm the envy and jealousy of the self-occupied and self-sufficient. May we know more and more of the truth of this. But we must now contemplate the closing scene of Gideon’s remarkable history—a scene full of admonition for every servant of Christ. From it we learn that it is far easier to gain a victory than to make a good use of it—far easier to reach a position than to occupy it aright. We shall quote the passage. “Then the men of Israel said unto Gideon, Rule thou over us, both thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son also: for thou hast delivered us from the hand of Midian. And Gideon said unto them, I will not rule over you, neither shall my son rule over you: the Lord shall rule over you.”

So far, this was very fine. It was in full keeping with the self-surrender of Gideon’s previous course. Every true servant of Christ will ever seek to connect souls with his Master, and not with himself. Gideon would not, for worlds, displace Jehovah as the ruler of Israel. But alas! what he shrank from, in one form, he fell into, in another; and this too, simply because his self-surrender was not

complete. There has been but One whose self-surrender was, and that One must, in all things, have the preeminence. "And Gideon said unto them, I would desire a request of you, that ye would give me every man the earrings of his prey. (For they had golden earrings, because they were Ishmaelites.) And they answered, We will willingly give them. And they spread a garment, and did cast therein every man the earrings of his prey.....And Gideon made an ephod thereof, and put it in his city, even in Ophrah: and all Israel went thither a whoring after it: which thing became a snare unto Gideon, and to his house." Chapter 8:22-27.

Such is man, even the best of men, when left to himself. Here we see the very man who had led his brethren on to victory over Midian, now leading them into dark and abominable idolatry. The earrings of the Ishmaelites did what their swords could not do; and the love-tokens of the men of Israel proved far more dangerous than the sharp chidings of the men of Ephraim. The latter drew out a lovely spirit of self-emptiness; the former proved a snare to Gideon and to the whole house of Israel.

Reader, let us remember all this. If Gideon had refused the earrings as well as the throne, it would have been well for him and for his brethren; but the devil laid a snare for him into which he fell and carried all his brethren with him. May we all take warning from Gideon's fall, and draw encouragement from Gideon's victories. May we remember that it is one thing to gain a victory, and another to make a good use of it; it is easier to reach a position than to occupy it aright. May God grant to the reader and writer of these lines, more simple confidence in Himself, and more of the true spirit of self-surrender! May such be the result of our meditations upon Gideon and his companions.

"Take thou our hearts, and let them be

Forever closed to all but thee;

Thy willing servants, let us wear

The seal of love forever there."

Give the Christian to the Lion

Lines on the Martyrdom of a Roman Centurion.

“Give the Christian to the lion!”

Wildly cry the Roman throng;

“Yes, to Afric’ tawny lion!”

Shout the warriors bold and strong.

“Let the hungry lion tear him!”

Echoed glad the laughing crowd;

“Fling him—fling him to the lion!”

Shriek’d the noble matron loud.

“Give the christian to the lion.”

“Give the Christian to the lion!”

Spake in accents grave and slow,

From their curule seats of honor,

Senators in goodly row.

Then from flight to flight, redouble

Shout, and cheer, and laughter peal

Till the giant Colosseum,

Neath the tumult seemed to reel;

And the clamors of the people

Through the Arch of Titus roll,

All adown the Roman forum,

To the towering capitol.

Then a pause—but hush, and listen,

Whence that wild and savage yell?

Tis the lion of Sahara,

Raging in his grated cell!

Fierce with famine and with fetter,
Shaketh he his tawny mane!
For his living prey impatient,
Struggling 'gainst his bar and chain.
But a voice is stealing faintly
From the next cell, chill and dim;
'Tis the death-doom'd Christian, chanting
Soft and low his dying hymn!
With uplifted hands he prayeth
For the men that ask his blood!
With a holy faith he pleadeth
For that shouting multitude.
They are waiting! Lift the grating—
Comes he forth, serene, to die:
With a radiance round his forehead,
And a luster in his eye.
Never! when 'midst Roman legions,
With the helmet on his brow,
Press'd he to the front of battle
With a firmer step than now.
Lift the grating! He is waiting.
Let the savage lion come!
He can only rend a passage
For the soul to reach her home?

The Glory of His Grace

I see a Man at God's right hand,
Upon the throne of God,
And there in seven-fold light I see
The seven-fold sprinkled blood;
I look upon that glorious Man,
On that blood-sprinkled throne;
I know that He sits there for me,
That glory is my own.
The heart of God flows forth in love,
A deep eternal stream;
Through that beloved Son it flows
To me as unto Him.
And looking on His face I know—
Weak, worthless, though I be—
How deep, how measureless, how sweet,
That love of God to me.
How deep, how full, the joy of Him
Who sits upon the throne!
The joy, the gladness of His heart,
In calling me His own.
And He has sent me forth to tell
Of all that joy above,
The glories where in Him I dwell,
The greatness of His love.
Not of the joy His ransomed know
Within that bright abode,

But, all His heart's desire fulfilled,
The endless joy of God.
The joy with which the righteous One
Can call, with hands outspread,
And welcome to His heart of love,
The lost, the vile, the dead.
"Today with me in Paradise,"
He needs that wondrous span
To show the love that could not rest
Short of His heaven for man.
And when in glory of His own
He shows the spotless Bride,
Aloud the songs of heaven declare
God's heart is satisfied.

The Glory of That Light

I was journeying in the noontide,
When His light shone o'er my road—
And I saw Him in that glory—
Saw Him—Jesus, Son of God.
All around, in noonday splendor,
Earthly scenes lay fair and bright—
But my eyes no longer see them
For the glory of that light.
Others, in the summer sunshine,
Wearily may journey on—
I have seen a light from heaven,
Past the brightness of the sun;
Light that knows no cloud, no waning,
Light wherein I see His face—
All His love's uncounted treasures,
All the riches of His grace.
All the wonders of His glory,
Deeper wonders of His love;
How for me He won, He keepeth.
That high place in heaven above.
Not a glimpse—the veil uplifted—
But within the veil to dwell,
Gazing on His face forever,
Hearing words unspeakable.
I have seen the face of Jesus—
Tell me not of aught beside;

I have heard the voice of Jesus—
All my soul is satisfied.
In the radiance of the glory,
First I saw His blessed face,
And forever shall that glory
Be my home, my dwelling-place.
Sinners, it was not to angels
All this wondrous love was given,
But to one who scorned, despised Him,
Scorned and hated Christ in heaven.
From the lowest depths of evil,
To the throne in heaven above,
Thus in me He told the measure
Of His free, unbounded love.

God Did It

In our last month's issue we gave the substance of a conversation between "little Theodore," and his brother, on the subject of the Lord's coming; we shall now furnish our readers with a striking reply given by the same dear child to his mamma, on the subject of the atonement. He had been repeating that hymn, "I lay my sins on Jesus," and his mother said to him, "Darling, have you laid your sins on Jesus?" "No," said the child, with great emphasis and decision, "I have not laid my sins on Jesus; but God did it."

Such an answer, coming from the lips of a child only two years and four months old, may teach a valuable lesson to many older heads. There is a vast difference between my laying my sins on Jesus, and God's doing it. Little T. spoke in perfect accordance with the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which declares that "Jehovah laid on him [Jesus] the iniquity of us all." And we find the same precious truth stated by the apostle in 2 Cor. 5 where he tells us that, God hath made Christ "to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

This is a point of immense value and importance in the atonement of Christ. It presents God to the soul in a most blessed manner. It shows him acting for us, not only in giving His only begotten Son from His bosom, but also in bruising Him on the cursed tree for us. "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him." And again, in the twenty-second Psalm, we hear the blessed One saying to His God, "Thou hast brought me into the dust of death."

Thus, as dear little T. expressed it, "God did it," blessed forever be His holy Name. He knew what was needed, and He provided it. He knew the demand, and He met it. He knew what was to be done, and He did it. This is the only true foundation of peace. It is not enough to be able to say that "I lay my sins on Jesus." True enough, no doubt, so far as it goes; but then I do not know the ten thousandth part of my sins. My conscience has never seized the full amount of my liability, the depth of my guilt. Human conscience is one thing, divine righteousness, quite another. God's estimate of sin is very different from ours. There are thousands of sins that have never come within the range of my conscience—thousands more that have passed clean off the tablet of my memory. What of these? And then the root of all these; what of it? What of the mighty claims of the throne of God—the claims of His nature, the demands of His holiness? Was it not most evident that before ever a divinely awakened soul can find settled peace he must be led into the depth, fullness, and power of that one brief sentence—"God did it?" Such an one must know and believe that God Himself has taken the whole matter into His own hands, and settled it in such a manner as to glorify Himself throughout all ages. He has been glorified with respect to sin, by the infinitely precious sacrifice of Christ. It is He Himself who says, "I have found a ransom."

Reader, what sayest thou to the answer of "little T.?" Could you give the same answer, if asked the same question? That dear child was called away very suddenly at the age of two years and seven months; but he knew and declared he was going to Jesus. Can you say this? Say, dear friend, art thou ready? Dost thou now heartily believe that God Himself has found a remedy for thy ruin, an atonement for thy guilt—a perfect righteousness in which thou mayest stand before Him? This is

the solid foundation of the soul's peace. Nothing else will do. It is not our works, our alms, our prayers, our religious duties, our church-going or chapel-going, our frames, feelings, or experiences. Not any of these things, nor all of them put together, can give the soul peace. We must know that God has met our case by His own work; that He is perfectly satisfied as to our sins; that He Himself has laid all our sins on Jesus, who bore them and put them away forever, and is gone into heaven without them. This, we repeat, is the true and only foundation of a sinner's peace, and it is fully and forcibly set forth in those three words of little Theodore: "God did it."

Himself hath done it—precious, precious words

Himself, my blessed Jesus, Savior, Friend

Whose faithfulness no variation knows;

Who, having loved me, loves me to the end.

And when in His eternal presence blest,

I at His feet my crown immortal cast,

I'll gladly own, with all His ransomed saints,

Himself hath done it all, from first to last.

God Preaching Peace

“The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: he is Lord of all.” Acts 10:36.

One of the most momentous questions which can be put to a human being is this, “Have you peace with God?” It is a question of the deepest solemnity, and it claims a direct and immediate answer from every heart. There is no reason why any truly anxious soul should continue for one hour, yea, for one moment, without settled peace with God. Christ has made peace by the blood of His cross. God is preaching peace by Jesus Christ; and here we have the solid foundation of the believer’s peace—Christ’s finished work received on the authority of God’s word by the power of the Holy Ghost.

This is the divine basis of peace; and the more simply we build thereon, the more solid our peace will be. The reason why so many are in a state of miserable uncertainty is because they do not rest, in artless faith, on God’s foundation. They are occupied with themselves, instead of building exclusively on Christ. They are looking to experience, in place of to a risen Savior. Frames, feelings, and attainments engage them, instead of Christ. They are vainly hoping to find some sort of improvement in themselves, and not finding it, to their satisfaction—for what honest soul ever does? —they are filled with gloomy doubts; the heart is oppressed with anxious fear; the spirit overcast with heavy clouds. They have no divine certainty; and they are trying to find comfort in the exercises of a religious life, and inasmuch as imperfection attaches to their very best and most pious exercises, they are ever kept in a condition of spiritual darkness and bondage. Neither in our inward frames and experiences, nor in our outward exercises—of what kind soever these may be—have we the true ground of our peace in the divine presence. God did not send to the children of Israel, nor does He now send to us Gentiles, preaching peace by spiritual experiences or by religious exercises, but simply by Jesus Christ.

The reader cannot be too simple in laying hold of this great truth. He may rest assured that it is God’s gracious desire that his soul should find peace. If not, why should God send, preaching—proclaiming—announcing peace. If God sends us a message of peace, He surely means that we should have it. He has provided it for us, by the precious atoning death of His Son, and He declares it unto us by His Spirit, in the holy scriptures. Thus it is all of God, from first to last; and hence it is called the peace of God. It comes forth from His heart. It bears the impress of His hand; and it is to the praise of His own eternal Name. We have nothing to do but to receive, with all thankfulness, this precious peace, and let it flow, like an even river, through our souls.

And here we would turn directly to the reader and press home upon his soul this grand question, “Hast thou peace with God?” Do not, we beseech thee, put it aside. It is a question of eternal importance—a question, in comparison with which all mere earthly questions dwindle into utter insignificance.

But it may be that someone whose eye scans these lines feels really anxious about this grand question, and would give worlds, if he possessed them, for a full, clear, and satisfactory answer. Such an one may feel disposed to ask, "What is the ground of this peace, and how may I have it for myself?" Two deeply important questions, most surely; and questions which we shall seek, by the grace of God, to answer.

And first, as to the real ground of the soul's peace; if the reader will turn to the last verse of Rom. 4 he will find it set forth in two brief but weighty sentences. In this passage the inspired apostle, in speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, declares that "He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification."

Here, we have the solid and imperishable foundation of the sinner's peace—the divine ground on which God can preach peace. Jesus Christ was delivered for our offenses. Let this be carefully noted. Let us mark particularly who was delivered; who delivered Him; and for what He was delivered. All these are essential to our enjoyment of peace.

Who, then, was delivered? The Holy One, the spotless One, the Lamb, the Christ, the Son of God, that blessed One who lay in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, the object of the Father's supreme delight from everlasting, the Eternal Son. This blessed One, who lay in the bosom, from before all worlds, lay in the womb of the virgin, in the manger of Bethlehem, was baptized in Jordan, was tempted in the wilderness, was transfigured on the Mount, was bowed down in the garden, was nailed to a tree, buried in the grave, raised from the dead, and is now seated on the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

This is He who was "delivered." He stood charged with our offenses. He represented us on the cross. He stood in our stead, and received from the hand of Eternal Justice all that we deserved. There was a regular transfer of all our guilt, all our offenses, all our iniquities, all our transgressions to Him who knew no sin, who had no more to do with sin than we had to do with righteousness. He died in our stead. The One whose whole human life was a sweet odor ever ascending to the throne of God, was delivered up to death, charged with all our offenses.

But who delivered Him? This is a cardinal question. Who delivered Jesus up to the death of the cross? Isa. 53 and 2 Cor. 5 furnish the answer: "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him." "Jehovah hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." Such is the language of the inspired prophet. And now hear the apostle: "God hath made him (Christ) to be sin for us." God has done it. It will not do to say that "we lay our sins on Jesus." We want much more than this. If it were merely a question of our laying our sins on Jesus, we could never have peace with God, seeing that we do not know the extent of our sin, the depth of our guilt, the true amount of our liabilities, as God knows it. In order to have peace with God, I must know that He is satisfied. God was the offended party, the aggrieved One, and He must be satisfied, Well, blessed be His name, He is satisfied, for He Himself has found the ransom. He has laid our sins, according to His estimate of them, on the head of the divine Sin-bearer. All that was needful, not merely to meet our condition, but to satisfy His claims, vindicate His majesty, and glorify His name, He Himself has provided in the atoning death of His own Son. Thus He is satisfied, and hence He can preach to us—peace by Jesus Christ, Lord of all. The spotless Christ was judged on the cross, in our stead. God hid His face from that blessed One—turned away His countenance—closed His ear—forsook Him for the moment. And why? Because He was delivered for our offenses. God forsook Him that He might receive us. He treated

Him as we deserved, in order that He might treat us as He deserved. Jesus took our place in death and judgment, that we might take His place in life, righteousness, and everlasting glory.

And, now, let us ask—though we have in measure anticipated the question—for what was the precious Savior delivered? “For our offenses.” For how many? For all, most surely. When Jesus hung on the cross, all the believer’s offenses were laid upon and imputed to Him. Yes, all; for, albeit they were future, so far as he is concerned, when Christ bore them on the cross, yet is there no such distinction as past, present, or future with Him who spans eternity as a moment. All our sins were laid on Jesus; He answered for them and put them away forever, so that they are gone out of God’s sight, and instead of our sins, there is nothing before God save the Christ who bore them and blotted them forever, and was raised for our justification. Who raised Him? Even the same that delivered Him. And why did He raise Him? Because all was settled for which He had been delivered. Christ glorified God in the putting away of our sins; and God glorified Christ, by raising Him from the dead and crowning Him with glory and honor. Most marvelous, most precious truth! Christ forsaken on the cross, because our sins were laid on Him. Christ crowned on the throne, because our sins are put away. “He was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification.” Such is the true, the solid, the everlasting ground of a sinner’s peace in the presence of God.

And now one word as to the question of how the sinner can have this peace for himself. The answer is as simple as God can make it. What is it? Has the sinner to do aught? Has he to be anything but what he is—a poor, lost, worthless, guilty creature? No. He has simply to believe God’s word—to receive into his heart, not merely into his head, the blessed message which God sends to him—to rest in Christ—to be satisfied with that which has satisfied God. God is satisfied with Christ, without anything else whatever. Is the reader satisfied? or is he waiting for something more—something of his own—his vows and resolutions—his frames, feelings, and experiences? If so, he cannot get peace. To be satisfied with Christ, is to have peace with God.

The Lord of Life in death hath lain,
To clear me from all charge of sin;
And, Lord, from guilt of crimson stain
Thy precious blood hath made me clean.

Going Home

“Going home,” there’s nothing dearer
To the pilgrim’s heart than home;
Drawing nearer still and nearer
To the place where pilgrims come:
Much he thinks of what will be,
Much of what he hopes to see;
Thinks of kindred, friends, and brothers,
But of Christ above all others.
‘Tis the blessed hope of seeing
Him he loves in glory there!
Blessed hope of ever being
With the Lord His joys to share:
Tis this hope that lightens toil
And in sorrow makes him smile,
Cheers him in the midst of strangers,
Keeps him when beset with dangers.
“Going home,” then it behooves us
Here to live as pilgrims do:
When the trial comes it proves us—
Proves if we have faith or no.
Let us make our calling sure,
Let us to the end endure;
In the Savior’s love abiding,
In the Savior’s strength confiding!
C. F.

He Is a Path, If Any Be Misled

He is a path, if any be misled;

He is a robe, if any naked be.

If any chance to hunger, He is bread;

If any be a bondman, He is free.

If any be but weak, how strong is He!

To dead men life is He. To sick men health.

To blind men sight, and to the needy wealth.

A pleasure without loss,

A treasure without stealth!

Anon.

John the Baptist

It is not our object, in the following pages, to dwell upon the ministry of the Baptist; nor yet upon the place which he filled in the history of God's dealings with Israel, deeply interesting as all this might be, and profitable too, inasmuch as his ministry was at once solemn and powerful, and his dispensational position full of the very deepest interest. But we must, for the present, confine ourselves to two or three of his utterances as recorded by the Holy Ghost in the Gospel of John, in which we shall find two things very strikingly presented to our view, namely, his estimate of himself, and his estimate of his Lord.

Now these are, assuredly, points worthy of our attention. John the Baptist was, according to the testimony of his blessed Master, the greatest "among them that are born of women." This is the very highest testimony that could be borne to any one, whether we consider the source from which it emanated, or the terms in which it is couched. He was not only a prophet, but the greatest of prophets—the forerunner of the Messiah—the harbinger of the King—the great preacher of righteousness.

Such was John, officially; and hence it must be of the deepest interest to know what such a one thought of himself, and what he thought of Christ—to hearken to his fervent utterances on both these points, as given on the page of inspiration. Indeed we shall find herein a mine of most precious practical instruction.

Let us turn to the first chapter of John's Gospel, and read at the nineteenth verse.

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

They were determined to have an answer; and he gives them one. They would compel him to speak of himself; and he does so. But mark his answer—mark his words! Who or what was he? Nobody. He was only "a voice." This is morally lovely. The self-emptiness of this most honored servant is perfectly beautiful. It does the heart good to be brought in contact with such practical grace as this. Here was a man of real power and dignity, one of Christ's most illustrious servants, occupying the very highest position, whose preaching had stirred the hearts of thousands, whose birth had been announced by angels, whose ministry had been foretold by prophets, the herald of the kingdom, the friend of the King—and yet this remarkable man, when forced to speak of himself, can merely be induced to say, "I am a voice." Not even a man; but only a voice.

What a lesson is here for us! What a wholesome corrective for our lamentable self-occupation, self-complacency, and self-exaltation. It is truly wonderful to think of the Baptist's brilliant career, of his powerful ministry, of his widespread influence, extending even to the heart of Herod the king, of the place he occupied, and the work he did, and yet, notwithstanding all this, when forced to give

out what he had to say of himself, he sums it all up in that one self-emptied word, "A voice."

This, we must confess, contains, in its brief compass, a volume of deep practical instruction for the heart. It is precisely what is needed, in this day of busy self-importance—needed by each—needed by all; for have we not, each and all, to judge ourselves on the ground of our inordinate tendency to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think? Are we not all prone to attach importance to any little work with which we ourselves happen to stand connected? Alas! it is even so, and hence it is that we so deeply need the wholesome teaching furnished by the lovely self-emptiness of John the Baptist, who, when challenged to speak of himself, could retire into the shade and say, "I am only a voice."

Now this was a very remarkable answer to fall on the ears of Pharisees, of whom were the messengers that were sent to question the Baptist, as we read, "They which were sent were of the Pharisees." Surely it is not without meaning that this fact is stated. Pharisees know but little of self-hiding or self-emptiness. Such rare and exquisite fruits do not thrive beneath the withering atmosphere of Pharisaism. They only grow in the new creation, and there is no Pharisaism there. Pharisaism, in all its phases and in all its grades, is the moral antipodes, the direct opposite of self-abnegation, and therefore John's reply must have sounded strange in the ears of the questioners.

"And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but 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."

Thus, the more this dear servant of Christ is forced to speak of himself, or of his work, the more he retires into the shade. When asked about himself, he says "I am a voice." When asked about his work, he says, "I am not worthy to unloose my Master's shoe-latchet." There is no puffing off or exalting of self; no making much ado of his service, no parading of his work. The greatest of prophets was, in his own eyes, merely a voice—the most honored of servants deemed himself unworthy to touch his Master's shoe.

All this is truly refreshing and edifying. It is most healthful for the soul to breathe such an atmosphere as this in a day like the present of so much contemptible egotism and empty pretension, John was a man of real power, real worth, real gift and grace; and therefore he was a lowly unpretending man. It is generally thus. The really great men are fond of the shade, and, if they must speak of themselves, they make short work of it. David never spoke of his wonderful feat with the lion and the bear until compelled to do so by Saul's unbelief. Paul never spoke of his rapture to paradise till it was drawn forth by the folly of the Corinthians; and when forced to speak of himself or his work, he apologizes, and says, again and again, "I speak as a fool."

Thus it is ever. True worth is modest and retiring. The Davids, the Johns, and the Pauls have delighted to retire behind their Master, and lose sight of themselves in the blaze of His moral glory. This was their joy. Here they found and ever shall find their deepest, fullest, richest blessing. The very highest and purest enjoyment which the creature can taste is to lose sight of self in the immediate presence of God. Oh! to know more of it! It is what we want. It would effectually deliver us from the tendency to be occupied with, and influenced by, the thoughts and opinions of men;

and it would impart a moral elevation to the character, and a holy stability to the course which, assuredly, are for the glory of God and our souls' true peace and blessing.

But we must gather up further instruction from the history of John the Baptist. Let the reader turn to John 3:25: "Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying." There were questions then, as there are, alas! questions now, for our hearts are full of questions. "And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."

Here was something calculated to test the heart of the Baptist. Could he bear to lose all his disciples? Was he prepared for desertion? Was he really up to the height of his own words? Was he merely a voice, a nothing, and a nobody? These were pertinent questions; for we all know it is one thing to talk humbly, and another thing to be humble. It is one thing to speak about self-emptiness, and quite another to be self-emptied.

Was the Baptist, then, up to the mark? Was he prepared to be superseded and set aside? Was it of any moment to him who did the work provided the work was done? Hearken to his reply: "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." This is a great practical truth. Let us seize it and hold it fast. It is an effectual remedy for self-confidence and self-exaltation. If a man can "take unto himself" nothing—if he can do nothing—if he is nothing, it ill becomes him to be boastful, pretentious, or self-occupied. The abiding sense of our own nothingness would ever keep us humble. The abiding sense of God's goodness would ever keep us happy. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." The remembrance of this would ever keep us looking up. Whatever good there is in us, or around us, comes from heaven—comes from God—the living and ever flowing source of all goodness and blessedness. To be near Him, to have Him before the heart, to serve in His holy presence, is the true secret of peace, the unfailing safeguard against envy and jealousy.

The Baptist knew something of this, and hence he had an answer ready for his disciples. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

Here lay the deep and precious secret of John's happiness and peace. His joy was not in his own work, not in gathering a number of disciples round himself, not in the success or acceptableness of his ministry, not in his personal influence or popularity, not in any or all of these things put together. His pure and holy joy was to stand and hear the voice of the Bridegroom, and to see others, to see his own disciples, to see all, flocking to that blessed One, and finding all their springs in Him.

"This is my joy, which ne'er can fail, To see my Savior's arm prevail, And mark His steps of grace; Now new-born souls convinced of sin, His blood revealed to them within, Extol the Lamb in every place."

Such, then, was the Baptist's estimate of himself and of his Lord. As to himself, he was but a voice, and must decrease. As to his Lord, He was the Bridegroom; He was from heaven; he was above all; the center of all; whose glory must increase and fill with its blessed beams the whole

universe of God, when all other glory shall have faded away forever.

But we have further testimony from the lips of this beloved and honored servant of God—testimony, moreover, drawn forth, not by any “question” about purifying—or any appeal to his personal feelings on the subject of his minister; but simply by his intense admiration of Christ as an object for his own heart. “The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.” John 1:29-36.

Here was what occupied John’s heart. The Lamb of God. Peerless, precious object! Satisfying portion! Christ Himself—His work—His Person. In verse 29 we have one great branch of His work; “He taketh away the sin of the world.” His atoning death is the foundation of everything. It is the propitiation for His people’s sins; and for the whole world. In virtue of this precious sacrifice, every stain is removed from the believer’s conscience; and in virtue thereof every stain shall yet be obliterated from the whole creation. The cross is the divine pedestal on which the glory of God and the blessedness of man shall rest forever.

Then in verse 33 we have another branch of Christ’s work. “He baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” This was made good on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down from the risen and glorified Head to baptize believers into one body. We do not attempt to enter upon these weighty subjects here, inasmuch as our object is to present to the heart of the reader the great practical effect of occupation with Christ Himself—the only true object of all believers. This effect comes very strikingly out in the following verses. “Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God.” Verses 35, 36.

Here the Baptist is wholly engrossed with the Person of his Lord, and hence we have no reference to His work. This is a point of the deepest possible interest and moment.

“John stood”—fixed—riveted—gazing upon the most glorious object that had ever fixed the gaze of men or angels—the object of the Father’s delight and of heaven’s adoration—“the Lamb of God.” And mark the effect. “The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” They felt, no doubt, that there must be something peculiarly attractive in One who could so command their master’s heart, and therefore, leaving him, they attached themselves to that glorious Person of whom he spoke.

This is full of instruction for us. There is immense moral power in true occupation of heart with Christ, and in the testimony which flows from thence. The positive enjoyment of Christ; feeding upon, and delighting in Him; the heart going out, in holy adoration, after Him; the affections centered in Him; these are the things that tell powerfully upon the hearts of others, because they

tell upon our own hearts and ways. A man who is finding his delight in Christ is lifted out of himself, and lifted above the circumstances and influences which surround him. Such an one is morally elevated above the thoughts and opinions of men; he enjoys a holy calmness and independence; he is not thinking about himself, or seeking a name or a place for himself. He has found a satisfying portion, and is therefore able to tell the world that he is wholly independent of it. Was John troubled by the loss of his disciples? Nay, it was the joy of his heart to see them finding their center and their object where he had found his own. He had not sought to make a party, or to gather disciples around himself. He had borne witness to another, and that other was “the Lamb of God,” in whom he himself delighted, not only because of His work, but because of His worth—His moral glory—His intrinsic, peerless, divine excellence. He heard the Bridegroom’s voice and saw His face, and his joy was full.

Now we may well inquire, What can the world offer to a man whose joy is full? What can circumstances, what can the creature do for him? If men slight and desert him; if they wound and insult him—what then? Why, he can say, “My joy is full. I have found all I want in that blessed One who not only has taken away my sins and filled me with the Holy Ghost, but who has drawn me to Himself and filled me with His own divine preciousness and eternal excellency.”

Reader, let us earnestly seek to know more of this deep blessedness. Rest assured we shall find therein an effectual cure for the thousand and one ills that afflict us in the scene through which we are passing. How is it that professors so often exhibit a morose and unlovely temper? Why are they peevish, fretful, and irritable in the domestic life? Why so ruffled and put about by the petty annoyances of their daily history? Why so easily upset by the most contemptible trifles? Why put out of temper if the dinner be not properly and punctually served up? Why so touchy and tenacious? Why so ready to take offense if self be touched or its interests intruded upon? Ah! the answer is easily given. The poor heart is not finding its center, its satisfying portion, in “the Lamb of God.” Here lies the secret of our failure. The moment we take our eye off Christ—the moment we cease to abide in Him by a living faith, that moment we get under the power of every passing current of circumstances and influences; we become feeble and lose our balance; self and its surroundings rise into prominence and fill the heart’s vision; and thus, instead of exhibiting the beautiful features of the image of Christ, we exhibit the very reverse, even the odious and humiliating tempers and dispositions of unsubdued nature.

May God enable us to lay these things seriously to heart, for we may depend upon it that serious damage is clone to the cause of Christ, and grievous dishonor brought upon His holy name by the uncomely manners, tempers, and ways of those who profess to belong to Him.

Lines Occasioned by Heavy Domestic Troubles

LORD! give me grace to look to thee,
While toss'd on life's tempestuous sea—
While lightnings flash and thunders roll:
Thy word can still the tempest's rage,
Though earth and hell united wage
Their ceaseless war against my soul.
My bark, though fragile, is thy care,
And shall outride the storm, and bear
Its treasures to the heavenly shore,
Where storms no more shall rend the skies,
Nor waves tumultuous ever rise—
Beyond the reach of thunder's roar.
Lord! thou hast cross'd this life's rough sea,
And biddest me to look to thee,
And ever on thy care depend;
I will not doubt thy faithful love,
Though all below unfaithful prove;
Through grace I'll trust thee to the end.
Thou watchest o'er me in thy love,
And faithful to thy word wilt prove—
Thy precious word's my guide and stay:
The trials thou art pleased to send
Work but for good, while I depend
Upon thy love, and mark thy way.
Let me not murmur, though I smart,
And bear the burden on my heart

Of dear ones who reject thy love;
Who will not heed the warnings given—
Preferring earth—despising heaven,
And will not seek the things above.
Oh God! work in thy sovereign grace,
The love of earth and sin displace,
By thy supreme, all-conquering love;
I have no hope but in thy power;
O, bend, and break, and then restore,
And fit them for thy courts above.
My hope is in thee, blessed Lord!
I hang upon thy precious word,
To bear me up, and bring me through:
I cry to thee—O hear my prayer!
My loved ones, in thy mercy spare,
And save them from the pit of woe!
Lord! make them thy rich grace to know,
Thy power to save in them now show,
And bid my troubled heart rejoice:
Thyself to them in love reveal,
And stamp them with thy Spirit's seal,
And make them hear and know thy voice.

The Magnet

We remember once hearing a very interesting account of a conversation between two little boys, on the subject of the Lord's coming. They had just been put to bed, and ere their kind attendant had left the room, she overheard the conversation which, in substance, we now relate.

A. "I do not understand, H., how the Lord will catch up His people. How will it be? Can you tell me about it?"

H. Yes, A., I can tell you. Did you ever see brother R. playing with his magnet? Did you ever see him holding the magnet over the needle, and bringing it nearer and nearer until the needle was drawn up to meet it? That's how it will be when the Lord comes. He will descend into the heavens and draw up His own people to Him, just as the magnet attracts the needle."

The little brother understood the simple illustration. As the needle springs up to meet the magnet, so will all who belong to Christ, however weak, however ignorant, however failing, spring up to meet Him when He comes. There is an affinity between the needle and the magnet, as there is between Christ and His people; and hence the moment He comes, the dead saints shall be raised, and the living saints shall be changed, and all shall spring up to meet the time magnet—Christ.

But we may apply the illustration of our dear little boy H. in another way, Take a number of steel filings and mix them with a quantity of sand in a bowl or saucer, then introduce a powerful magnet, and what follows? Why all the steel filings immediately fly to the magnet and adhere to it, while all the sand is left behind.

Thus will it be when the Lord comes for His people. They may be found here and there mingled with the people of the world—sitting in the same drawing-room, standing behind the same counter, traveling in the same railway carriage, sailing in the same boat, writing at the same desk, walking in the same street. But the very moment that Christ, the true magnet, descends into the air, all who belong to Him, all who believe in His name, all who partake of His resurrection life, will rise, in the twinkling of an eye, to meet Him. They will be drawn up by the powerful attraction of His Person, and in virtue of the moral affinity subsisting between Him and them; while, on the other hand, all those who belong not to Him, who know Him not, trust Him not, love Him not, serve Him not, will, like the grains of sand, be left behind.

Dear reader, how would it be with you, if the Lord were to come, while you are reading these lines? He may come at any moment. His promise is sure. He has said, "I will come again." And, "Behold, I come quickly." His people are taught to look out for His coming daily and hourly. There is no intervening event. They wait for no sign. They wait for the Son from heaven. Their hope is not affected by any prophetic announcement; indeed prophecy has nothing to do with the Church's hope. Prophecy has to do with Israel and the nations, with events that are to transpire on the earth; but the Church is called to wait for "the morning star." Her hope is heavenly. She looks for the Savior from heaven, and the moment He comes, all true believers will rise to meet Him, while all false professors will be left behind for judgment.

This is deeply solemn for all who are out of Christ. "We would seek to press it home upon all such. We would earnestly entreat the reader to weigh it seriously. Christ is coming for His people. That event stands out, in its own divine clearness, before the heart of the Christian who bows to the authority of scripture. He looks not for the conversion of the world by a preached gospel. He does not believe in any such thing. He believes that the world will grow worse and worse, its night grow darker and darker. He believes that superstition and infidelity will yet bear sway throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, and that judgment will close this present scene, and clear the earth for millennial glory.

How important to be ready! Ready in title, ready in state—ready in conscience, ready in heart.

Oh! dear reader, art thou thus ready? Art thou washed in the precious blood of Christ? Dost thou know what it is to be saved and sealed? —saved in Christ, and sealed by the Holy Ghost? If so, see that thou art cherishing the blessed hope of seeing your Lord, and of being like Him and with Him forever. All who know the grace of Jesus are imperatively called to stand apart from everything that bears not the stamp of God's truth. The present is a moment which calls loudly for plain decision of heart for Christ—for fixedness of purpose in following Him. He looks for this on the part of all His people, and nothing but this is worthy of those who have tasted His most precious grace. He has given us a whole heart, and we ought not to give Him a half one. He, blessed be His name, is for us above, and we ought to be for Him below. May it be so, through the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost! May we be marked as those who have, in reality, "turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven!" God in mercy grant it, for Jesus' sake!

The Closing Scenes of Malachi and Jude

In comparing these two inspired writings, we find many points of similarity, and many points of contrast. Both the prophet and apostle portray scenes of ruin, corruption, and apostasy. The former is occupied with the ruin of Judaism; the latter with the ruin of Christendom. The prophet Malachi, in his very opening sentences, gives, with uncommon vividness, the source of Israel's blessing, and the secret of their fall. "I have loved you, saith the Lord." Here was the grand source of all their blessedness, all their glory, all their dignity. Jehovah's love accounts for all the bright glory of Israel's past, and all the brighter glories of Israel's future. While, on the other hand, their bold and infidel challenge, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" accounts for the deepest depths of Israel's present degradation. To put such a question, after all that Jehovah had done for them, from the days of Moses to the days of Solomon, proved a condition of heart insensible to the very last degree. Those who, with the marvelous history of Jehovah's actings before their eyes, could say, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" were beyond the reach of all moral appeal. Hence, therefore, we need not be surprised at the prophet's burning words. We are prepared for such sentences as the following: "If then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name. And ye say, "Wherein have we despised thy name?" There was the most thorough insensibility both as to the Lord's love, and as to their own evil ways. There was the hardness of heart that could say, "Wherein hast thou loved us?" and "Wherein have we wronged thee?" And all this with the history of a thousand years before their eyes—a history overlapped by the unexampled grace, mercy, and patience of God—a history stained, from first to last, with the record of their unfaithfulness, folly, and sin.

But let us hearken to the prophet's further utterances, or rather to the touching remonstrances of the aggrieved and offended God of Israel. "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the Lord of hosts... who is there even among you that would shut the doors for naught? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for naught. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat, is contemptible. Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the Lord of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hand? saith the Lord."

Here then we have a sad and dreary picture of Israel's moral condition. The public worship of God had fallen into utter contempt. His altar was insulted; His service despised. As to the priests, it was a mere question of filthy lucre; and as to the people, the whole thing had become a perfect weariness—an empty formality—a dull and heartless routine. There was no heart for God. There

was plenty of heart for gain. Any sacrifice, however maimed and torn, was deemed good enough for the altar of God.

The lame, the blind, and the sick, the very worst that could be had, such as they would not dare to offer to a human governor, was laid on the altar of God. And if a door was to be opened, or a fire kindled, it must be paid for. No pay, no work. Such was the lamentable condition of things in the days of Malachi. It makes the heart sick to contemplate it.

But, thanks and praise be to God, there is another side of the picture. There were some rare and lovely exceptions to the gloomy rule—some striking and beautiful forms standing out in relief from the dark background. It is truly refreshing, in the midst of all this venality and corruption, coldness and hollowness, barrenness and heartlessness, pride and stoutness of heart, to read such words as these: “Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.”

How precious is this brief record! How delightful to contemplate this remnant in the midst of the moral ruin! There is no pretension, or assumption; no attempt to set up anything; no effort to reconstruct the fallen economy; no affected display of power. There is felt weakness, and looking to Jehovah; and this—be it observed and ever remembered—is the true secret of all real power. We need never be afraid of conscious weakness. It is affected strength that we have to dread and shrink from. “When I am weak, then am I strong” is ever the rule for the people of God—a blessed rule, most surely. God is to be counted upon always; and we may lay it down as a great root principle, that, no matter what may be the actual state of the professing body, individual faith can enjoy communion with God according to the very highest truth of the dispensation.

This is a grand principle to grasp and hold fast. Let the ostensible people of God be ever so sunk, individuals who judge and humble themselves before God can enjoy His presence and blessing, without let or limit. Witness the Daniels, the Mordecais, the Ezras, the Nehemiahs, the Josiahs, and Hezekiahs, and scores of others who walked with God, carried out the highest principles and enjoyed the rarest privileges of the dispensation, when all lay in hopeless ruin around them. There was a passover celebrated in the days of Josiah such as had not been known from the days of Samuel the prophet. (2 Chron. 35:18.) The feeble remnant, on their return from Babylon, celebrated the feast of tabernacles, a privilege which had not been tasted since the days of Joshua the son of Nun. (Neh. 8:17.) Mordecai, without ever striking a blow, gained as splendid a victory over Amalek as that achieved by Joshua in the days of Exod. 17 (Esther 6:11, 12.) In the book of Daniel we see earth’s proudest monarch prostrate at the feet of a captive Jew.

What do all these cases teach us? What lesson do they tell out in our ears? Simply that the humble, believing, and obedient soul is permitted to enjoy the very deepest and richest communion with God, spite of the failure and ruin of God’s professing people, and the departed glory of the dispensation in which his lot is cast.

Thus it was, as we may see, in the closing scenes of Malachi. All was in hopeless ruin; but that did not hinder those who loved and feared the Lord getting together to speak about Him and to muse upon His precious name. True, that feeble remnant was not like the great congregation which assembled in the days of Solomon, from Dan to Beersheba; but it had a glory peculiar to itself. It

had the divine presence in a way no less marvelous though not striking. We are not told of any "book of remembrance" in the days of Solomon. We are not told of Jehovah's hearkening and hearing. Perhaps it may be said, there was no need. Be it so; but that does not dim the luster of the grace that shone upon the little band in the days of Malachi. We may boldly affirm that Jehovah's heart was as refreshed by the loving breathings of that little band as by the splendid sacrifice in the days of Solomon's dedication. Their love shines out all the brighter in contrast with the heartless formalism of the professing body, and the venal corruption of the priests.

"And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not. For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the Lord of hosts."

We shall now give a hasty glance at the epistle of Jude. Here we have a still more appalling picture of apostasy and corruption. It is a familiar saying amongst us, that the corruption of the best tiling is the worst corruption; and hence it is that the Apostle Jude spreads before us a page so very much darker and more awful than that presented by the prophet Malachi. It is the record of man's utter failure and ruin under the very highest and richest privileges which could be conferred upon him.

In the opening of his solemn address, the apostle lets us know that it was laid upon His heart "to write unto us of the common salvation." This would have been his far more delightful task. It would have been his joy and his refreshment to expatiate upon the present privileges and future glories wrapped up in the comprehensive folds of that precious word "salvation." But he felt it "needful" to turn from this more congenial work in order to fortify our souls against the rising tide of error and evil which threatened the very foundations of Christianity. "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." All that was vital and fundamental was at stake. It was a question of earnestly contending for the faith itself. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation; ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

This is for worse than anything we have in Malachi. There it was a question of the law; as we read, "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments." But in Jude it is not a question of forgetting the law, but of actually turning into lasciviousness the pure and precious grace of God, and denying the Lordship of Christ. Hence, therefore, instead of dwelling upon the salvation of God, the apostle seeks to fortify us against the wickedness and lawlessness of men. "I will therefore," he says, "put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. And the angels which kept not their first

estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.”

All this is most solemn; but we cannot dwell upon the dark features of this scene, space does not admit of our so doing; and besides, we rather desire to present to the christian reader the charming picture of the christian remnant given in the closing lines of this most searching scripture. As in Malachi we have, amid the helpless ruin of Judaism, a devoted band of Jewish worshippers who loved and feared the Lord and took sweet counsel together, so in the epistle of Jude, amid the more appalling ruins of christian profession, the Holy Ghost introduces to our notice a company whom He addresses as “Beloved.” These are “sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called.” These He solemnly warns against the varied forms of error and evil which were already beginning to make their appearance, but have since assumed such awfully formidable proportions. To these He turns, with the most exquisite grace, and addresses the following exhortation, “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.”

Here, then, we have divine security against all the dark and terrible forms of apostasy—“the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, the gainsaying of Core”—“the murmurers and complainers”—“the great swelling words”—“the raging waves”—“the wandering stars”—“having men’s persons in admiration because of advantage.” The “beloved” are to “build themselves up on their most holy faith.”

Let the reader note this. There is not a syllable here about an order of men to succeed the apostles; not a word about gifted men of any sort. It is well to see this, and to bear it ever in mind. We hear a great deal of our lack of gift and power, of our not having pastors and teachers. How could we expect to have much gift and power? Do we deserve them? Alas! we have failed, and sinned, and come short. Let us own this, and cast ourselves upon the living God who never fails a trusting heart.

Look at Paul’s touching address to the elders of Ephesus, in Acts 20. To whom does he there commend us, in view of the passing away of apostolic ministry? Is there a word about successors to the apostles? Not one, unless indeed it be the “grievous wolves” of which he speaks, or those men who were to arise in the very bosom of the Church, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them. What then is the resource of the faithful? “I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.”

What a precious resource! Not a word about gifted men, valuable as such may be in their right place. God forbid we should, in any way, depreciate the gifts which, spite of all the failure and sin, our gracious Lord may see fit to bestow upon His Church. But still it holds good that the blessed apostle, in taking leave of the Church, commends us not to gifted men, but to God Himself and the word of His grace. And hence it follows that, let our weakness be ever so great, we have God to look to and to lean upon. He never fails those who trust Him; and there is no limit whatsoever to the blessing which our souls may taste, if only we look to God, in humility of mind and childlike confidence.

Here lies the secret of all true blessedness and spiritual power—humility of mind, and simple confidence. There must, on the one hand, be no assumption of power; and on the other, we must not, in the unbelief of our hearts, limit the goodness and faithfulness of our God. He can and does bestow gifts for the edification of His people. He would bestow much more if we were not so ready to manage for ourselves. If the Church would but look more to Christ her living Head and loving Lord, instead of to the arrangements of men, and the appliances of this world, she would have a very different tale to tell. But if we, by our unbelieving plans, and our restless efforts to provide a machinery for ourselves, quench, and hinder, and grieve the Holy Ghost, need we marvel if we are left to prove the barrenness and emptiness, the desolation and confusion of all such things? Christ is sufficient: but He must be proved; He must be trusted; He must be allowed to act. The platform must be left perfectly clear for the Holy Ghost to display thereon the preciousness, the fullness, the all-sufficiency of Christ.

But it is precisely in this very thing we so signally fail. “We try to hide our weakness instead of owning it. We seek to cover our nakedness by a drapery of our own providing, instead of confiding simply and entirely in Christ for all we need. We grow weary of the attitude of humble patient waiting, and we are in haste to put on an appearance of strength. This is our folly and our grievous loss. If we could only be induced to believe it, our real strength is to know our weakness, and cling to Christ, in artless faith, from day to day.

It is to this most excellent way that the apostle Jude exhorts the christian remnant in his closing lines. “Ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith.” These words evidently set forth the responsibility of all true Christians to be found together instead of being divided and scattered. We are to help one another in love, according to the measure of grace bestowed, and the nature of the gift communicated. It is a mutual thing—“building up yourselves.” It is not looking to an order of men; nor is it complaining of our lack of gifts; but simply doing each what we can to promote the common blessing and profit of all.

The reader will notice the four things which we are exhorted to do, namely, “Building”—“Praying”—“Keeping”—“Looking.” What blessed work is here! Yes, and it is work for all. There is not one true Christian on the face of the earth who cannot fulfill any or all of these branches of ministry; indeed everyone is responsible so to do. We can build ourselves up on our most holy faith; we can pray in the Holy Ghost; we can keep ourselves in the love of God; and, while doing these things, we can look out for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But, it maybe asked, “Who are the ‘beloved?’ to whom does the term apply?” Our answer is, “To whomsoever it may concern.” Let us see to it that we are on the ground of those to whom the precious title applies. It is not assuming the title, but occupying the true moral ground. It is not empty profession, but real possession. It is not affecting the name, but being the thing.

Nor does the responsibility of the christian remnant end here. It is not merely of themselves they have to think. They are to cast a loving look and stretch forth a helping hand beyond the circumference of their own circle. “And of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.” Who are the “some?” and who are the “others?” Is there not the same beautiful undefinedness about these as there is about the “Beloved?” These latter will be at no loss to find out the former. There are precious souls scattered up and down amid the appalling ruins of Christendom, “some” of them to

be looked upon with tender compassion, “others” to be saved with godly fear, lest the “beloved” should become involved in the defilement.

It is a fatal mistake to suppose that, in order to pluck people out of the fire, we must go into the fire ourselves. This would never do. The best way to deliver people from an evil position is to be thoroughly out of that position myself. How can I best pull a man out of a morass? Surely not by going into the morass, but by standing on firm ground and from thence lending him a helping hand. I cannot pull a man out of anything unless I am out myself. If we want to help the people of God who are mixed up with the surrounding ruin, the first thing for ourselves is to be in thorough and decided separation; and the next thing is to have our hearts brimful and flowing over with tender and fervent love to all who bear the precious name of Jesus.

Here we must close; and in doing so we shall quote for the reader that blessed doxology with which the apostle sums up his solemn and weighty address. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” We have a great deal about “falling” in this epistle—Israel, falling—angels, falling—cities, falling; but, blessed be God, there is One who is able to keep us from falling, and it is to His holy keeping we are committed.

March!

March! March! March! Earth groans as they tread;

Each carries a skull, going down to the dead.

Every stride, every stamp, every footfall is bolder:

'Tis a skeleton's tramp with a skull on its shoulder.

But oh! how he steps, with high tossing head,

That clay-covered bone, going down to the dead.

March! March! March! How lightly they tread

Looking up to that One who rose from the dead.

Every stride, every step, every footfall is bolder:

'Tis a sinner draws nigh, with a load off his shoulder.

And oh! how he steps, looking up to his Head,

Who triumphantly rose from the midst of the dead.

J. WILLAMS.

My Beloved Is Mine and I Am His

Long did I toil and knew no earthly rest;
Far did I rove, and found no certain home;
At last I sought them in His sheltering breast,
Who opens His arms, and bids the weary come.
With Him I found a home, a rest divine;
And I since then am His, and He is mine.
Yes, He is mine! and naught of earthly things,
Not all the charms of pleasure, wealth, or power,
The fame of heroes, or the pomp of kings,
Could tempt me to forego His love an hour.
Go, worthless world, I cry, with all that's thine!
Go! I my Savior's am and He is mine.
The good I have is from His stores supplied;
The ill is only what He deems the best;
Him for my friend, I'm rich with naught beside,
And poor without Him, though of all possessed.
Changes may come—I take, or I resign—
Content while I am His, while He is mine.
Whate'er my change, in Him no change is seen,
A glorious sun, that wanes not, nor declines;
Above the clouds and storms He walks serene,
And sweetly on His people's darkness shines.
All may depart—I fret not, nor repine,
While I my Savior's am, while He is mine.
He stays me falling, lifts me up when down;
Reclaims me wandering, guards from every foe;

Plants on my worthless brow the victor's crown,
Which, in return, before His feet I throw,
Grieved that I cannot better grace His shrine,
Who deigns to own me His, as He is mine.
While here, alas! I know but half His love,
But half discern Him, and but half adore;
But when I meet Him in the realms above;
I hope to love Him better, praise Him more,
And feel and tell, amid the choir divine,
How fully I am His and He is mine.

Peter on the Water

(Read Matt. 14:22-33.)

There are two ways in which we may view the interesting portion of scripture given above. In the first place, we may read it from a dispensational stand-point, as bearing upon the subject of God's dealings with Israel. And, secondly, we may read it as a portion bearing, very directly, on the subject of our own practical walk with God, from day to day.

Our Lord, having fed the multitude, and dismissed them, "went up into a mountain apart to pray, and when the evening was come, he was there alone." This answers precisely to His present position with reference to the nation of Israel. He has left them, and gone on high to enter upon the blessed work of intercession. Meanwhile, the disciples—a type of the pious remnant—were tossed on the stormy sea, during the dark watches of the night, deeply tried and exercised, in the absence of their Lord, who however, never, for one moment, lost sight of them—never withdrew His eyes from them; and, when they were brought, as it were, to their wits' end, He appears for their relief, hushes the wind, calms the sea, and brings them to their desired haven.

Thus much as to the dispensational bearing of this passage of scripture, which, though of the deepest interest, we shall not further pursue, inasmuch as our object, in this brief article, is to present to the heart of the reader the precious truth unfolded in the narrative of Peter on the water—truth, as we have said, bearing directly upon our own individual path, whatever the nature of that path may be.

It demands no stretch of imagination, no effort of fancy, to see, in the case of Peter, a striking figure of the Church of God collectively, or of the individual Christian. Peter left the ship, at the call of Christ. He abandoned all that to which the heart would so fondly cling, find came forth to walk on the stormy water—to pursue a path entirely beyond and above nature—a path of faith—a path in which naught but simple faith could live for a single hour. To all who are called to tread that path it must be either Christ or nothing. Our only spring of power is in keeping the eye of faith firmly fixed on Jesus—"Looking off unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of faith." (Heb. 12) The moment We take the eye off Him, we begin to sink.

It is not—need we say?—a question of salvation—of reaching the shore in safety. By no means; we are speaking now of the walk of the Christian in this world—of the practical career of one who is called to abandon this world, to give up all that mere nature would lean upon and trust in, to relinquish earthly things, human resources and natural appliances, in order to walk with Jesus above the power and influence of things seen and temporal.

Such is the high calling of the Christian and of the whole Church of God, in contrast with Israel, God's earthly people. We are called to live by faith; to walk, in calm confidence, above the circumstances of this world altogether; to move, in holy companionship, with Jesus. It was after this that Peter's soul was breathing when he uttered those words, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Here was the point: "If it be thou." If it were not He, the wildest mistake

that Peter could possibly make would be to leave the ship. But, on the other hand, if indeed it was His own very self—that blessed One; that most glorious, most gracious One who was there moving peacefully over the surface of the troubled deep—then, assuredly, the very highest, the very happiest, the very best thing he could do was to abandon every earthly and natural resource, in order to come forth to Jesus, and taste the ineffable blessedness of companionship with Him.

There is immense force, depth, and significance in these three clauses—“If it be thou”—“Bid me come unto thee”—“On the water.” Mark, it is “unto thee, on the water.” It was not Jesus coming to Peter, in the ship—blessed and precious as that is—but Peter coming to Jesus, on the water. It is one thing to have Jesus coming into the midst of our circumstances, hushing our fears, allaying our anxieties, tranquillizing our hearts; and it is quite another thing for us to push out from the shore of circumstances, or from the ship of nature’s appliances, to walk in calm victory over the circumstances, in order to be with Jesus where He is. The former reminds us somewhat of the Sareptan, in 1 Kings 17. The latter, of the Shunammite, in 2 Kings 4.

Is it that we do not appreciate the excellent grace that breathes in those words, “Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid?” Far be the thought. These words are most precious. And, moreover, Peter might have tasted, yea reveled in their sweetness, even though he had never left the ship at all. It is well to distinguish between these two things. They are very often confounded. We are all prone to rest in the thought of having the Lord with us, and His mercies around us, in our daily path. We linger amid the relationships of nature, the joys of earth, such as they are, the blessings which our gracious God pours so liberally upon us. We cling to circumstances, instead of breathing after more intimate companionship with a rejected Christ. In this way we suffer immense loss.

Yes, we say it advisedly, “immense loss.” It is not that we should prize God’s blessings and mercies less, but we should prize Himself more. We believe that Peter would have been a loser had he remained in the ship. Some may deem it restlessness and forwardness; we believe it was the fruit of earnest longing after his much loved Lord—an intense desire to be near Him, cost what it might. He beheld his Lord walking on the water and he longed to walk with Him, and his longing was right. It was grateful to the heart of Jesus.

And, besides, had he not the authority of his Lord for leaving the ship? Truly so. That word “come”—a word of mighty moral force—fell on his heart, and drew him forth from the ship to go to Jesus. Christ’s word was the authority for entering on that strange mysterious path; and Christ’s realized presence was the power to pursue it. Without that word he dare not start; without that presence he could not proceed. It was strange, it was unearthly, it was above and beyond nature, to walk on the sea; but Jesus was walking there, and faith could walk with Him. So Peter thought, and therefore “he came down out of the ship, and walked on the water to go to Jesus.”

Now this is a striking figure of the true path of a christian—the path of faith. The warrant for that path is Christ’s word. The power to pursue it is to keep the eye fixed on Himself. It is not a question of right or wrong. There was nothing wrong in remaining in the ship. But the question is, “At what do we aim?” Is it the fixed purpose of the soul to get as near as we can to Jesus? Do we desire to taste a deeper, closer, fuller communion with Him? Is He enough for us? Can we give up all that to which mere nature clings, and loan on Jesus only? He beckons us forth to Himself, in His infinite and condescending love. He says, “Come.” Shall we refuse? Shall we hesitate and hang back? Shall we cling to the ship, while the voice of Jesus bids us “come?”

It may, perhaps, be said that Peter broke down, and therefore it is better, safer, and wiser to remain in the ship, than to sink in the water. It is better not to take a prominent place, than having taken it, to fail therein. Well, it is quite true that Peter failed; but why? Was it because he left the ship? No, but because he ceased to look to Jesus. "When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me." Thus it was with poor Peter. His mistake was, not in leaving the ship, but in looking at the waves and the winds—looking at his surroundings, in place of looking off unto Jesus. He had entered upon a path which could only be trodden by faith—a path in the which, if he had not Jesus, he had nothing at all—no ship, no boat, not a spar or a plank to cling to. In a word, it was either Christ or nothing. It was either walking with Jesus on the water, or sinking beneath it without Him. Nothing but faith could sustain the heart in such a course. But faith could sustain; for faith can live amid the roughest waves and the stormiest skies. Faith can walk on the roughest waters; unbelief cannot walk on the smoothest.

But Peter failed. Yes; and what then? Does that prove that he was wrong in obeying the call of his Lord? Did Jesus reprove him for leaving the ship? Ah! no; that would not have been like Him. He could not tell His poor servant to come, and then rebuke him for coming. He knew and could feel for Peter's weakness, and hence we read, that "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" He does not say, "O thou restless forward one, why didst thou leave the ship?" No; but "wherefore didst thou doubt?" Such was the tender reproof. And where was Peter when he heard it? In the arms of his Lord! What a place! What an experience! Was it not well worth leaving the ship to taste such blessedness? No doubt it was. Peter was right in leaving the ship; and although he broke down in that lofty path on which he had entered, it only led him into a deeper sense of his own weakness and nothingness, and of the grace and love of his Lord.

Christian reader, what is the moral of all this to us? Simply this. Jesus calls us forth from the things of time and sense, to walk with Him. He summons us to **LINES OCCASIONED BY HEAVY DOMESTIC TROUBLES**. Go abandon all our earthly hopes and creature confidences—the props and resources on which our poor hearts lean. His voice may be heard far above the din of waves and storms, and that voice says, "Come!" Oh! let us obey. Let us heartily yield ourselves to His call. "Let us go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." He wants to have us near Himself, walking with and leaning on Him, not looking at circumstances, but looking only and always unto Him.

Philadelphians

Blessed are their eyes that see Him,
Him the holy and the true;
Gather'd round Him, He amongst them,
His despised, rejected few;
He who hath the key of David,
God of resurrection power;
He hath opened heaven before them,
Shut them in for evermore.
Feeblest worms, yet dear to Jesus,
Weary hearts that wait for Him,
Eyes that look upon the glory,
Till all else is dark and dim;
Midst the wreck, the desolation,
Where the glorious city stood,
Call'd to raise the lonely altar,
One last witness for their God.
He the golden door has open'd
Of His temple holiest place,
Midst these latter days of darkness
Call'd them in to see His face:
None can shut where He has open'd,
None that "little strength" withstand,
Which He gave amidst their weakness,
By the touch of His right hand.
Precious to the heart of Jesus,
Love that keeps the word he spake,

Knowing somewhat of the sweetness
Of rejection for His sake;
Yet so little of the glory
Of His scorn, and cross, and shame,
That His love can witness only,
“Thou hast not denied my name.”
He their names will tell in triumph,
Rest not till the scorers own
All the love wherewith He loved them,
Till they see them on His throne.
He for that bright day is waiting,
They are waiting till He come;
Ere the judgment thunder pealeth,
He will take them to His home.
He their Lord is coming quickly—
Brethren, yet awhile hold fast;
In His God’s eternal temple
They as pillars stand at last.
Here to be cast out, rejected,
Here to bear the brand of shame;
There go out no more forever,
Bear in light His God’s own name.
He will write that name upon them,
His God evermore their own,
And the name of His bright city,
Of the bride who shares His throne;
And His own new name of triumph
Then shall shine upon their brow—
Shall they not rejoice in bearing

His reproach, rejection now?

1869. S. D.

The Place of Danger and the Place of Peace

We remember meeting somewhere a very striking incident which occurred on one of those vast and trackless prairies which abound on the continent of America. A party of travelers were making their journey under the conduct of an experienced guide, when suddenly they perceived him halting and looking very anxiously behind him. He stooped down and put his ear to the ground that he might assure himself of the true state of the case. That practiced ear soon caught the dreadful sound of fire. The prairie was in flames behind them; and, what was most appalling, the wind was rapidly driving the flame after them, so that in a few minutes they must be consumed.

Quick as thought, the intelligent guide struck a light, and set fire to the prairie in front of his party, thus clearing a space on which he placed every one of them. There they were perfectly safe from the devouring flame, for the simplest of all reasons, that they were standing on ground already cleared by fire. They had been transferred, in a moment, from a place of imminent danger to a place of safety—from a place in the which they were, of necessity, filled with anxiety and terror, to a place in which they might lie down and sleep in perfect repose and perfect security. It was impossible that the lire could touch them inasmuch as it had already done its work. The very flame which they once dreaded had cleared for them a place of safety. The once dreaded enemy had become their best friend. The danger was past and gone.

Now, in all this, we have a beautiful illustration of that true place of safety in which the believer stands. He too, like the travelers on the prairie, has been in a place of danger. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment. (Heb. 9:27.) " Everyone shall be salted with tire." (Mark 9:49.) There is judgment coming. The flames of divine wrath are rolling on in terrible volume, and must, ere long, overtake all who are in their sins. Men may not believe this: but it is true. They may seek to forget all about it; but that in no wise alters the weighty fact. They may try to put off the solemn moment, but it is of no use. Every throb of the pulse brings them nearer and nearer to that terrible hour in which "the dead, small and great, shall stand before God." The great day of reckoning is at hand—the day of vengeance must come. It is only a question of time. The acceptable year, the day of salvation, will soon close. The door of mercy will be shut and shut forever, and the devouring flame of God's righteous indignation shall roll over all who die in their sins.

Header, where art thou? On what ground? Art thou on the ground of judgment, or on the ground of safety? Art thou in thy sins or in Christ? Do not turn aside the question. Look it full in the face, just now. It must be met; meet it now. Do not put it off for a single hour. You know not the moment you may be summoned away into eternity, and if you die in your sins, the flames of hell must be your everlasting portion. Escape for thy life!

Dost thou inquire as to the way of escape? Hast thou been brought to ask, from the very depths of a broken and repentant heart, "What must I do to be saved?" If so, we have good news to tell thee—balmy tidings to bring to thine ear and to thine heart. Jesus has cleared the ground for His people. He has met the tire of divine wrath, and quenched, on their behalf, the flames of divine

judgment. He took the sinner's place, died the sinner's death, bore the sinner's judgment, paid the sinner's penalty. He was made sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. All who simply and heartily believe in Him are as safe as He is. There is no judgment for them because the judgment has done its work on Him in their stead.

Thus it stands. Here is the place of safety—the only place. “There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” How can there be, seeing that He was condemned in their stead? He went down under the full weight of their sins, and has taken them clean off the ground of judgment, and placed them on the ground of divine and eternal security. He has settled every question that could possibly be raised between God and the believing soul, and, having done so, He has become our subsisting righteousness before God. It is as impossible that any charge of guilt could be made good against the believer, as against the risen Savior. He did once stand charged with guilt; but He has put it away forever; and now all who believe in Him are in a place of perfect safety, where judgment can never overtake them, because the judgment is past and gone forever.

“I travel through a desert wide,
Where many round me blindly stray;
But He vouchsafes to be my guide,
And will not let me miss my way.
Though snares and dangers throng my path,
And earth and hell my course withstand,
I triumph over all by faith,
Guarded by His almighty hand.”

Stephen

(Acts 7:55-60.)

There are two grand facts which characterize Christianity, and mark it off from all that had gone before; and these are, first, man glorified in heaven; and secondly, God dwelling in man on the earth. These are, unquestionably, stupendous facts, divinely glorious, and fitted to produce the most powerful effect upon the heart and life of the Christian.

But they are peculiar to Christianity. They were never known until redemption was fully accomplished, and the Redeemer took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. Then was seen, for the first time in the annals of eternity, a Man on the throne of God. “Wondrous sight! Magnificent result of accomplished redemption! The enemy seemed to have triumphed when the first man was expelled from Eden; but oh! the second Man has made His victorious way into heaven, and taken His seat on the eternal throne of God.

This, we repeat, is a fact of transcendent glory, and the counterpart—the companion fact thereof is God the Holy Ghost dwelling with and in man on the earth. These things were unknown in Old Testament times. What did Abraham know of a glorified man in heaven? What did any of the ancient worthies know of it? Nothing; how could they? There was no man on the throne of heaven until Jesus took His seat there; and, until He was glorified in heaven, the Holy Ghost could not take up His abode in man on the earth. “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; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:38, 39.) “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” John 16:7.

Here we have our two facts linked together in the most direct and positive manner: Christ glorified above; and the Holy Ghost dwelling in man below. The two are inseparably connected; the latter is entirely dependent upon the former; and both together form the two great distinguishing features of that glorious Christianity revealed in the gospel of God.

It is not by any means our purpose to enter upon any elaborate proof of these truths. We assume them as established; and, moreover, we assume that the christian reader cordially receives and holds them as eternal verities, and that he is prepared to appreciate the illustration of their practical power and formative influence presented in the history of Stephen, as recorded in Acts 7:55-60. Let us draw near and gaze on the marvelous picture—the picture of a true Christian.

The principal part of this chapter is occupied with a most powerful unfolding of the history of the nation of Israel—a history stretching from the call of Abraham to the death of Christ. At the close of his address, Stephen made a pungent application to the consciences of his hearers, which drew forth all their most bitter animosity and deadly rage. “When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth.” Here we see the effect of religiousness without Christ. These men were the professed guardians of religion, and the guides of the people;

but it proved to be religion versus Christianity. In them we have the terrible exponent of a godless, Christless religion; just as in Stephen, we have the lovely exhibition of true Christianity. They were full of religious animosity and rage: he was full of the Holy Ghost. They gnashed their teeth: his face was like that of an angel. What a contrast!

But we must quote the passage for the reader.

“But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”

Here are our two great facts, again, displayed in a man of like passions with ourselves. Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost, and his earnest gaze was fixed on a glorified Man in heaven. This is Christianity. This is the true, the normal idea of a Christian. He is a man full of the Holy Ghost, looking up, with the steady gaze of faith, into heaven, and occupied with a glorified Christ. We cannot accept any lower standard than this, short as we may come of it practically. No doubt it is very high and very holy; and, moreover, we have to confess how very little we are up to it. Still it is the divine standard, and every devoted heart will aspire to it and nothing less. It is the happy privilege of every Christian to be full of the Holy Ghost, and to have the eye of faith fixed on the glorified Man in heaven. There is no divine reason why it should not be so. Redemption is accomplished; sin is put away; grace reigns through righteousness; there is a Man on the throne of God; the Holy Ghost has come down to this earth and taken up His abode in the believer individually, and in the Church corporately.

Thus it stands. And, be it carefully noted, that these things are not mere speculations, or cold, unimportant theories. Alas! they may be held as such, but in themselves they are not such; but, on the contrary, immensely practical, divinely formative, powerfully influential, as we can distinctly see in the case of the blessed martyr Stephen. It is impossible to read the closing verses of Acts 7 and not see the powerful effect produced upon Stephen by the object which filled the vision of his soul. There we behold a man surrounded by the most terrible circumstances, malignant enemies rushing upon him, death staring him in the face; but, instead of being in any wise affected or governed by those circumstances, he is entirely governed by heavenly objects. He looked up steadfastly into heaven, and there he saw Jesus. Earth was rejecting him, as it had already rejected his Lord; but heaven was opened to him, and, looking up into that open heaven, he caught some of the rays of glory shining in the face of his risen Lord; and, not only caught them, but reflected them back upon the moral gloom which surrounded him.

Now, is not all this most deeply practical? Assuredly it is. Stephen was not only lifted above his surroundings in the most wonderful manner, but he was enabled to exhibit to his persecutors the meekness and grace of Christ. In him we see a most striking illustration of 2 Cor. 3:18—a passage of singular depth and fullness. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Lord the Spirit.”

Only see how all this is livingly unfolded in the scene before us. The very highest expression of heavenly Christianity is met by the deepest, darkest, and most deadly display of religious rancor. You can see the two culminating in the death of the first Christian martyr. “Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the

city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit! And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this he fell asleep."

Here, then, is genuine practical Christianity—living conformity to the image of Christ. Here we see a man so lifted above circumstances, so lifted out of himself, as to be able—after the pattern of his Lord—to pray for his murderers. Instead of being occupied with himself, or thinking of his own sufferings, he thinks of others and pleads for them. So far as he was concerned all was settled. His eye was fixed on the glory—so fixed as to catch its concentrated beams, and reflect them back upon the very faces of his murderers. His countenance was radiant with the light of that glory into which he was about to enter, and he was enabled, by the power of the Holy Ghost, to imitate his blessed Master, and to spend his last breath in praying for his murderers: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge." And what then? Why then he had nothing more to do but fall asleep—to close his eyes upon a scene of death, and open them upon a scene of deathless glory—or rather to enter upon that scene which already filled the vision of his enraptured soul.

Reader, let us remember that this is true Christianity. It is the happy privilege of a Christian to be full of the Holy Ghost, looking off from himself and up from his surroundings, whatever they may be, gazing steadfastly into heaven, and occupied with the glorified man Christ Jesus. The necessary result of being thus occupied is practical living conformity to that blessed One on whom the eye is fixed. We become like Him in spirit, in ways, in our entire character. It must be so. "We all, with open face mirroring the glory, are changed into the same image."

It is of the very last possible importance to see and know that nothing short of this is up to the mark of the Christianity presented in the New Testament. This is the divine standard; nor should we be satisfied with anything less. We see in Stephen a man reflecting the glory of Christ, in a very positive practical way. He was not merely talking about glory, but actually reflecting it. We may talk largely about heavenly glory, while our practical ways are anything but heavenly. It was not so with Stephen. He was a living mirror, in which men could see the glory reflected. And should it not be so with us? Unquestionably. But is it so? Are we so absorbed with our risen Lord—so fixed on Him, so centered in Him—as that our fellow men—those with whom we meet, from day to day, can see the traits, the features, the lineaments of His image reflected in our character, our habits, our spirit, our style? Alas! alas! we cannot say much on this score. But then, dearly beloved christian reader, can we not, at least, say, "It is our heart's deep and earnest desire to be so occupied and filled with Christ as that His lovely grace may shine out in us to the praise of His name?" God, in his rich mercy, grant that our eye may be so fixed on Jesus as that we too may, in some degree, mirror the glory, and thus shed some tiny ray of that glory upon the darkness around!

When the pangs of trial seize us,

When the waves of sorrow roll,

I will lay my head on Jesus—

Pillow of the troubled soul:

Surely none can feel like thee,

Weeping One of Bethany!

“Jesus wept!”—that tear of sorrow

Is a legacy of love.

Yesterday, today, tomorrow,

He the same doth ever prove.

Thou art all in all to me,

Living One of Bethany!

The Suretyship of Jesus

O Christ, what burdens how'd thy head!
Our load was laid on thee;
Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead—
Barest all my ill for me:
A victim led, thy blood was shed:
Now there's no load for me.
Death and the curse were in our cup—
O Christ, 'twas full for thee!
But thou hast drain'd the last dark drop—
Tis empty now for me.
That bitter cup—love drank it up;
Now blessings' draft for me.
Jehovah lifted up His rod—
O Christ, it fell on thee!
Thou wast sore stricken of thy God;
There's not one stroke for me.
Thy tears, thy blood beneath it flow'd;
Thy bruising healeth me.
The tempest's awful voice was heard—
O Christ, it broke on Thee!
Thy open bosom was my ward;
It braved the storm for me.
Thy form was scarr'd—thy visage marr'd;
Now cloudless peace for me.
A flame was kindled in God's ire—
O Christ, it burned on thee!

It was a fierce, consuming fire,
Ev'n in the fair green tree;
There did that fire feed and expire;
Now it is quench'd for me.
Jehovah bade His sword awake—
O Christ, it woke 'gainst thee!
Thy blood the flaming blade must slake;
Thy heart its sheath must be—
All for my sake, my peace to make:
Now sleeps that sword for me.
The Holy One did hide His face—
O Christ, 'twas hid from thee!
Dumb darkness wrapt thy soul a space—
The darkness due to me.
But now that face of radiant grace
Shines forth in light on me.
For me, Lord Jesus, thou hast died,
And I have died in thee;
Thou'rt risen: my bands are all untied;
And now thou livest in me.
When purified, made white, and tried,
Thy glory then for me!
A. R. C.

Thou Art Home at Last

Thou art home at last, each waymark past,
Thou hast sped to the goal before me;
And oh, my tears fall thick and fast,
Like the hopes that had blossomed o'er thee.
My lips refuse to say, Farewell,
For our life-link naught can sever;
Thou'rt early gone with Christ to dwell,
Where we both shall be forever.
Thou wilt weep no more where storms are o'er,
Where the glory is gleaming yonder,
Oh the parting wrench my heart that tore
It hath made the love-grasp fonder!
'Twas vain, 'twas vain to bid thee stay,
For thy tent's frail cords were riven;
I watched thee wing thy joyful way
Through the pearly gates of heaven.
Thou hast entered now, thy victor brow,
Mid the amaranth crowns is shining;
Love made thee strong, and faith can bow
E'en in nature's sore repining.
No more, beloved, would I be sad,
Though the grief-clouds linger o'er me;
Our life is one, and thou art glad
In the Golden Land before me!

Three Good Things to Learn

We lately met with an old man, in the West of England, whose case interested us not a little. For forty-five years he had never entered any place of religious instruction. He was, however, induced by a friend to come under the sound of the gospel; and, on the very first occasion, his soul was arrested. He continued to attend regularly, and divine light shone in gradually upon his soul. After attending, for some weeks, on the preaching, he was speaking to a christian friend, and telling him, in his own simple style, his spiritual experience. "Sir," said he, "the first thing I learned was that I had never done a right thing, all my life. The next thing I learned was that I could not do a right thing, my nature was that bad. And, then, sir, I learned that Christ had done all, and met all."

Now, these are what we may call, "three good things to learn;" and, if the reader has not already learned them, we would earnestly entreat him to apply his heart to them now. Let us briefly glance at these three points of christian knowledge. They lie at the very foundation of true Christianity.

1. And, first, then, our poor old friend discovered that he had never done a right thing, all his days. This is a serious discovery for a soul to make. It marks an interesting epoch in the history of a soul when the eyes are first opened and thrown back upon the entire career, from the earliest moment, and the whole thing is found to have been one tissue of sin from beginning to end—every page of the volume blotted, from margin to margin. This, we repeat, is very serious. It marks the earliest stage of spiritual conviction, and is intensely interesting to all who watch for souls, and take an interest in the precious mysteries of God's new creation.

2. But there is more than this. Our old friend not only learned that his acts—all his acts—the acts of his whole life had been bad; but also that his nature was bad; and not only bad, but utterly unmendable. This is a grand point to get hold of. It is an essential element in all true repentance. It will invariably be found that whenever the Spirit of God works in convicting power, in the soul of the sinner, He produces the sense of sin in the nature, as well as of sins in the life.

It is well to learn this thoroughly, at the first. Many souls, when first converted, are more occupied with the forgiveness of their sins, than with the judgment of their sinful nature. They see that the blood of Christ has canceled the sins of their life; but they do not see that the death of Christ has condemned sin in their nature. Hence it is that when the early bloom of their joy passes away, and they begin to feel the workings of indwelling sin, they are cast down, and almost driven to despair. They begin to think that they never were converted at all, and are in great danger of making shipwreck.

It is of all importance, therefore, for the reader to give attention to the second point learned by our dear old friend in the West. He will have to learn, not only that the acts of his life have been all bad, but that his nature is incurable. No doubt, people differ as to their acts and their ways; but the nature is the same. A crab tree is a crab tree, whether it bear but one crab in ten years, or ten thousand crabs in one year. Nothing but a crab tree could produce even a solitary crab; and hence the nature of the tree is as clearly proved by one crab as by ten thousand. And further, we may say

that all the art of man; all his cultivation; all his digging and pruning, cannot change the nature of a crab tree. There must be a new nature, a new life, ere any acceptable fruit can be produced. "Ye must be born again."

3. But this leads us to look at what our old friend learned, as the third point, namely, that Christ had done all and met all. Precious fact! Blessed knowledge for every convicted soul! The Lord Jesus Christ—all praise to His precious Name! —has met the sins of my life and the sin of my nature. He has canceled the former, and condemned the latter. My sinful acts are all forgiven, and my sinful nature is judged. The former are washed away from my conscience, the latter is forever set aside from God's presence. It is one thing to know the forgiveness of sins, and another to know the condemnation of sin. We read, at the opening of Rom. 8, that "God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." It does not speak of the forgiveness of sin. This could not be. Sins are forgiven—the sinner is pardoned; but sin is condemned—an immensely important distinction for every earnest soul. The reign of sin is ended forever, as to the believer; and the reign of grace is begun. The knowledge of this is peace and liberty, victory and strength to the Christian.

This glorious doctrine is unfolded in the sixth chapter of Romans, a chapter which we earnestly recommend to the young disciple. In it he will notice the interesting fact that the apostle is not speaking of sins, but of sin. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.....

For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace."

This is a most precious emancipating truth for the soul. It forms the true basis of victory over indwelling sin. To know that the dominion of sin is broken by the cross, and that grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ, is the divine secret of all progress in personal holiness.

Wait on the Lord

“Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick.”—John 11:3.

One touch from thee—the healer of diseases,
One little touch, would make our brother whole;
And yet thou comest not: O blessed Jesus,
Send a swift answer to our waiting soul!
Full many a message have we sent, and pleaded
That thou wouldst haste thy coming, gracious Lord;
Each message was received, and heard, and heeded,
And yet we welcome no responsive word!
We know that thou art, blessing, whilst withholding;
We know that thou art near us, though apart;
And though we list no answer, thou art folding
Our soul’s petitions to thy smitten heart.
A bright and glorious answer is preparing,
Hid in the heights of love—the depths of grace;
We know that thou, the risen, still art bearing
Our cause as thine within the holy place.
And so we trust our pleadings to thy keeping;
So at thy feet we lay our burden down;
Content to bear the earthly cross, with weeping,
Till at thy feet we cast the heavenly crown.

The Watchers

Not yet the dawn—the things around
No human eye sees as they are;
But still on earth are watchers found,
Absorbed with Christ, the Morning Star.
There's nothing left to fix the gaze,
But this one blessed orb of light;
And oh, how purely beam its rays
Athwart the dark and wintry night!
What though the darkness reign below?
God and the Lamb, to us, are light;
Thyself, O God of hope, we know.
The day is thine, and thine the night.
A little while! and ere the day
In all its splendor shall be shown,
The vigil-keepers, rapt away.
Shall find thy glory, Lord, their own.

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