

# WRITINGS OF E L BEVIR

by E.L. Bevir

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*A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by E.L. Bevir, compiled for study and devotional reading.*

57 Chapters

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## S. 1Jn\_2:3-11

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### 1 John 2:3-11

We find three times in this passage the words, "He that saith." In 1 John 2:4, "He that saith, I know Him"; in 1 John 2:6, "He that saith he abideth in Him"; and in 1 John 2:9, "He that saith he is in the light." In each case a proof is given as to the real nature of Christianity.

Obedience is the first thing that is noted here, and it is obvious that if anyone pretend to know Him without keeping His commandments, he is a liar. For suppose the case of one who should pretend to be in the service of some earthly monarch, and yet never go to his court, nor know anything about the rules of it, the fact would be manifest enough that he was not telling the truth. But in contrast with this there is something far more intimate - "But whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." The distinction between the commandments and the word has often been made, and we here again find the two expressions, as in John 14:21; John 14:23. The word no doubt implies far more than the commandments; for keeping the word is not merely obeying in detail, keeping the commandments that direct the children of God upon earth, but means a full entering into His thoughts, and the full expression of a dependent nature. An illustration, though not adequate, might be taken from a servant who is obedient, but who needs to have all the detail of his duties repeated to him. I now suppose another servant, attached to his master and to his master's household, who carries out his daily duty, and more beside, through intelligent attachment to his master's interests, without there being any necessity to repeat it to him. In this latter case there is true devotedness to his master's welfare, and this, I think, though the figure be imperfect, would correspond with keeping the word.

Then he that saith he abideth in Him ought to walk as He walked. The fruit of true communion with Him in another place, which is entirely outside this world, will be seen in the walk here, which will be separate from all that is not according to the Father. What a measure is this for the Christian's walk!

Now come two very important verses. First of all, it is not a new commandment the apostle wrote, but an old one, the word which they had heard from the beginning. There would be no innovation, or addition to that which had been fully expressed in the Son of God Himself when He was upon earth; there had been seen perfect obedience to the Father's will and perfect dependence. But in the eighth verse there is a new commandment, that which is true in Him and in us; this could only be after the death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord, for before this the corn of wheat abode alone, and it could not be said "true in Him and in you." This new aspect of Christ and Christians gives a peculiar character to the whole epistle. The Lord is no longer on earth, but glorified; and we have been brought into this new and happy position through His death and resurrection, and we live because He lives. It is true in Him and in us; and notice that the darkness is not yet passed away, but is passing away. The true light now shines, and the time is not far distant when all darkness shall be past, and when Christ shall be displayed in all His glory. Darkness shall completely vanish before Him; but what a wonderful place is this which we occupy, in being here,

in the midst of the darkness, in order to shine (morally) in contrast to it! May we feel more and more what this means, and what the shining of the true light implies. The natural mind of man which the Scripture calls darkness, is really devoid of all that is according to God's thoughts.

Now comes a test, for anyone can say that he is in the light. He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in the darkness even until now. Light and love are inseparable, and the nature that we have is composed of them. Darkness and hatred go together, and it is no use saying that one is in the light if there be hatred to one's brother. A true Christian loves his brother and dwells in the light, and there is no occasion of stumbling in him.

Hatred is the very opposite of the divine nature, and he that hates his brother is in the darkness; but there is more than this - he walks in the darkness because the darkness hath blinded his eyes; it is a terrible state. To sum up - the child of God is characterized by obedience, by walking as Christ walked, and by loving his brother; and all this in the midst of a world where there is neither godliness, light, nor love.

1 John 2:12-13 The whole family is comprised in 1 John 2:12, where the apostle writes to the "children"; that is, to all the children of God. It might be well to notice the expression, "His name's sake"; for we have in it all the value of the name. It is not merely that we are forgiven, but in such a way that the glory of the Person, by whom forgiveness came to us, is enhanced.

We might make a simple illustration, and suppose the case of a man who comes into some financial establishment, where he owes a considerable debt. He presents a bond, I suppose, signed by some one whose name is everything in the banking world - such as the name of "Rothschild." Whatever the man's looks may be, and however little the banker might be inclined to trust him from his threadbare appearance, the moment he sees the signature and the name of Rothschild, he is more than satisfied. In making this feeble illustration, let us think of the priceless value of the name of Him through whom our sins have been forgiven! This blessed privilege applies to all believers. But now comes the threefold division of God's family upon earth, and it is well to notice the preliminary verse (the thirteenth) before the apostle commences to develop the special features of each class. The grand features are found in the thirteenth verse. The fathers are mature; they have learned what the world is worth, and they have known Him that is from the beginning the whole of their way. I recollect, some years ago, showing to an aged servant of Christ one of the planets through a telescope, and after expressing his wonder and admiration at the huge moving globe, he said that the day would come, he hoped, when I should find Christ enough. If Christ be enough, one does not need playthings in this world. The heart is calm and satisfied; the blessed grace of Him who is from the beginning fills it, and not even the riches of Solomon, nor his philosophy (for, surely, his was of a better kind than the nonsense which goes by that name now) would ever be desired to fill any empty space. The fathers are mature, and will tell you that they have known (and still know) the blessed Lord as Him that is from the beginning. It will be said that this class is rare, and that one may travel far without meeting a father. This is true, but God would have His children matured here, and growing really in the knowledge of the Lord in such a way that He becomes everything to them, and that all the rest is felt to be worth nothing. The young men have overcome the wicked one. It is well to know that the enemy is less strong than the men of the family of God. It is never a wise thing to underrate the power of the enemy, and I recollect its being said that the secret of Napoleon's success consisted in his estimating aright the

force opposed to him. The wicked one is strong, no doubt, and there is no force that is stronger, save that of the "mightier armed man" who despoiled him in the very first encounter. The devil could not stand against Christ, nor can he stand against those in whom Christ has been formed by the Holy Ghost. There is a certain development in the young men, who have the consciousness of having overcome (and of still over-coming) the wicked one. The enemy cannot stand before them.

We shall say no more of them until we consider the detail of their character in what follows. The little children (or babes) have known the Father. It is very important to see that the very first thing that characterises a babe is that he knows the Father. In 1 Thessalonians 1:1, the first thing realised by these simple and bright Christians was the knowledge of the Father. It is the Christian revelation, and these young believers (newly converted) had much to learn, no doubt; but they were "in God the Father," in the sense of being surrounded by His care on all sides. A young child begins to distinguish his father from other men (probably the first great abstraction that he makes), and to call him by a name implying paternity, and it is so in the case of the babes - they know the Father, and this is the true beginning of the Christian position upon earth.

They have much to learn; they are not yet mature, they are just beginning, but the knowledge of the Father characterises the very beginning of their course, and our Lord's blessed words to His own, before He ascended unto His Father and their Father, apply as much to the babes as to the rest of the family of God.

Having briefly noticed these three grand divisions, we may leave the further explanation of the apostle till another time.

1 John 2:14-17

Nothing further is said of the fathers but that they have known\* Him that is from the beginning. Christ is all for them, and they have arrived at that state of maturity where the world's true worth is known, that is, as being equal to zero, and their hearts have known, and still know, the all-sufficiency of Christ. The young men are strong, and the word of God abides in them, and they have overcome\* the wicked one. The world is still the same as when Cain built his city without God, and the danger in this case is being seduced by it; for though the evil one has been overcome, and the power of God's word has thus made itself felt, yet the attractions of the great system remain, and may turn aside the heart from the Lord.

\*It has often been explained that the state produced continues: the fathers have known, and they know still. They do not cease to know Him who is from the beginning. It is so with the young men; they have overcome, and still are overcoming, the wicked one. The world is not unlike some huge co-operative store, where you may buy anything you please; the "Vanity Fair" of John Bunyan, a kind of standing fair, where the prince of this world displays his wares, taking care to make the whole thing as pleasing as possible to the senses. (I have heard that in the great gambling centres, such as Monte Carlo, music is provided gratis.) The danger would be for the young men to be led astray by the beauties of this "cosmos," or ornate system. The Holy Ghost, however, shows here its true moral character, hidden under its blaze of glittering products - "the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." There are snakes hidden beneath the grass; and where all appears to be so bright and flourishing, the lust and pride of man's heart are developed and encouraged by the Tempter. What could there be in common with the Father in all

this? Nay, there is nothing but antagonism to His will. His love is known to His children; and notice, again, that obedience goes with it. The world and its lust pass away, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

What a contrast between the whole history of this world, which passes away like the colours in a dissolving view, as deep eternal realities take their place, and the abiding portion of God's obedient children becomes more defined. In that which is transitory, let us learn the value of that which is eternal! The little children, or babes, have a much longer portion of the letter addressed to them than the fathers and the young men. It is well to notice that they have all that which properly characterizes a Christian, that is the knowledge of the Father, and the unction (the Holy Ghost) from the Holy One, and thus they have no need to go to any worldly sources of knowledge. It does not mean, when it is said that they know all things, that they have no progress to make, but that God has given them His Spirit, who shall certainly lead them into all the truth. The "last hour," of 1 John 2:18, has very often been explained, and it is a great mercy for us that the Apostle John was allowed to remain upon earth until all the characteristics of the last apostacy (to be matured in time) had begun to show themselves. No doubt the Antichrist will be revealed in his time, but there are already many antichrists, that is to say, many who are imbued with the spirit of exalting man (the first man), and deifying him. I have seen such sentiments as the following by those who are supposed to be the "leaders of thought" in this enlightened century, that is, that man's great object should be to get all he can out of this planet where he is living (without God, of course): and further still, that the God so long sought for, is man himself! This will all end with the pretentious man of sin who will exalt himself against all that is called God, or is an object of veneration; but in the meantime the spirit of Antichrist is here, and is really the spirit of the age. The babes, however, have nothing to fear; no multiplicity of antichrists need astonish them, and the safeguard given to them is that no lie is of the truth. The Antichrist will deny the Father and the Son, and that Jesus is the Christ. Now these are atrocious falsehoods, and the faithful in the last days will be kept from believing them. In the meantime, as evil ripens and the spirit of falsehood becomes more general, the sure refuge of the babes is that what they had heard from the beginning should abide in them; so should they abide, in the true communion, in the Son and in the Father. They will not be deceived by any one speaking of the "universal fatherhood" of God, or anything of the kind; for they will not be satisfied at anything short of the true confession of the Son: "whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." The path of the babes is simple, for God has given them an unction by which their spiritual sense has been quickened, so as to discern the truth as to the person of the Son, and in Him to know the Father. The three persons of the blessed Trinity are thus known, even to the babes; and as they thus know the one true God fully revealed, they are taught by the unction abiding in them to distinguish between truth and all the wicked assertions of the father of lies. They are taught, too, to abide in the Son and in the Father in bright and happy communion. With this they need not go to the Antichrist's school to learn any new theology; they are happy and quiet in the truth.

1 John 2:28-29; 1 John 3:1-3

1 John 2:28 applies to all Christians. The "children" compose the whole family of God upon earth. The earnest desire of the apostle was that the full effect of his ministry might be known in their abiding in Christ, so that those who had taught them (the apostles) should not be driven out of the Master's presence, as bad workmen,\* at His coming. It has been remarked that we have a very

striking instance, in what follows, of the manner in which John writes by the Holy Ghost, that is, of the abstract view taken of the divine nature. The twenty-eighth verse alludes clearly to Christ's coming, whereas the twenty-ninth speaks of being begotten of God; one runs into another. No Christian need fear the word abstraction. I recollect one, no longer with us, saying that to understand the New Testament, this faculty was necessary. It is a divinely-given faculty in the things of God; so that the simplest may contemplate the moral beauties of the nature, whether in Christ, or in His own, quite separately from anything else.

\*The expression bears this meaning; that is, of bad workmen, driven out of their employer's presence as inefficient. There is the thought of being driven from before the Master's face - not merely the confusion of the workmen, but His disapprobation of their bad work. And now comes a very precious part of the Epistle, where attention is called to the greatness of the Father's love, that we should be called the children of God. We are invited to contemplate it. The world knows nothing of this, nor can it know the children of God. It did not know the Son of the Father, when He was here, and there could be no greater antagonism than that which exists between the Father's heart and the spirit of the world. It knew Him not, and to say that our Lord's blessed communion with the Father was manifested to the world, would be to make an egregious mistake. The children of God have nothing in common with the world; they are unknown. I have often experienced the lonely feeling peculiar to being in some little foreign village, where I had nothing whatever in common with the inhabitants; and this, on a small scale, gives us an illustration of Christians living in the midst of those who do not know them. They are known, of course, as men, as neighbours, as employed in one way or another, but they cannot be known as children of God; and though it be blessedly true that they should be known as being very different to their neighbours, yet the world can never know them as loved of the Father, in their true character as new creatures, and in all the blessed relationship to the Father, and position of children of God. We belong to an order of things that is quite outside the world.

Now are we the children of God, and though we feel all the pressure of the world, and the need of constant dependence upon Him who has called us, as we follow our rejected Lord, yet we have already the blessed liberty of children, knowing the Father's love, which more than repays us for the isolation we feel in the midst of this ungodly world, where our Lord was crucified. We are immensely happier than the world, and a hundred times repaid, even now, for the scorn and reproach (the little we meet of it) of those who know us not because they knew Him not. May we feel more and more our place of rejection here, and our absolute dependence.

It has not been yet manifested what we shall be. I recollect, in Switzerland, some worldly people coarsely deriding a Christian who was a cripple, and the poor man's reply, as they said to him, "A fine son of God art thou!" "Wait," said the child of God; "ere long I shall come forth in power and splendour, wearing the image of the glorious Christ. I shall be glorious in that day, when the sons of God shall be revealed; and you will not mock then! Beware, lest that day overtake you in your scoffing!"

Notice that here (in 1 John 3:1-24) it is the children of God; a term expressing the Father's love, and our dependent position in a world where Christ was rejected.

If He be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. This is our most blessed hope, and the full accomplishment of our Lord's prayer in John 17:1-26. Everything might fail us

here; but the blessed prospect of being like Him, and of seeing Him as He is, can never fail; and the more we have this hope before us, this hope in Him, the more do we practically purify ourselves from all that is not according to Him. In the sense of having much more to learn of His purity, whose robes are whiter than snow, we have still to purify ourselves; and the more we see the beauty of His absolute holiness, the more do we feel that we have much to do in the work of practical purification.

Soon we shall walk with Him in white, in those courts of the Father's house where no shade can enter, and no spot defile our robes. In the meantime, may this bright and blessed hope be so before us that we may judge everything that is not according to Him!

1 John 3:4-12 And now comes the absolutely righteous character of that which is born of God.

It is a great mercy for us to have the reciprocal sentence at the end of the fourth verse, "Sin is lawlessness." It may be said in this case, too, "Lawlessness is sin." It is not, as translated, "Sin is the transgression of the law"; but it is the unbridled will which is not subject to any restraint.

I suppose that there can be no doubt that the lawless and ambitious will of the "anointed cherub" in Ezekiel 28:14, et seq., was sin, nor that he, after his fall, brought it into this world. This contrast between this, and Him who was manifested to take away our sins, is complete. It might be well to compare the eighth chapter of the gospel of John, where the Son, perfect and always absolutely the same, is presented in all the moral glory of His obedience in contrast with Satan, who abode not in the truth.

Notice the use of the perfect at the end of 1 John 3:6.\*

\*"Perfect; but 'has not seen nor known Him' implies the continuously present state of not seeing nor knowing: so that with these words the English gives the sense of the Greek perfect."

Righteousness characterises those who have been begotten of God, and it is very remarkable and blessed, in that which follows, that righteousness and, love are so connected, I might say blended, that there can be no separating them in the children of God.

We shall be obliged, I think, to look again at Ezekiel 28:1-26 in order to understand the expression, "from the beginning the devil sins."

He that practises righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. Practising righteousness is answering to all the different relations and responsibilities in which we are found.\*

\*Notice that this goes much further than barely paying taxes, tradesmen, and using just weights, etc.; it is the responding to all moral relationships and duties.

He that practises sin is of the devil; I suppose that the beginning here in the eighth verse refers to the first occurrence of iniquity, "till iniquity was found in thee." (Ezekiel 28:15.) Again, in John 8:44, our Lord says to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it." I think that this will suffice to show what is meant here by the beginning. Sin, which is lawlessness, began at a certain moment; it is not for us to go beyond what the word of God says of it, and the

passage in Ezekiel is enough. The Eastern Church (as it is called) wasted much time and blood in disputing about the entry of evil into the universe. Milton has some very highly imaginative allusions to it. I believe that all this would lead us astray, and that we have the Scriptures to keep us aright in this, as in everything else. Sin (lawlessness) has entered into the world; its votaries are of the devil, who sins from the beginning. "Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom because of thy brightness." But now comes the clearest possible distinction between the children of God and the children of the devil. 1 John 3:9 speaks, as indeed does the whole epistle, abstractly of the nature received from God. God's seed abides in him who has been begotten of him, and He cannot sin. This must not be confounded with 1 John 1:8-10. In this are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil; righteousness and love on the one hand, unrighteousness and hatred on the other.

I recollect, some time ago, in a small town in France, some one telling me that it was not easy for any one to distinguish between true believers and mere professors in the place. It was a bright day in July, and the deep black shade of the roofs was well-defined along the middle of the street. "Tell me," said I, "is it necessary to attempt to draw a line here, along the edge of the shadow?" "Oh, no!" "Then, if this line of demarcation be so clear, assuredly that one which divides saints from sinners should be clearer." The children of God and the children of the devil are manifest in this; that is, the question of righteousness and love draws the distinct line. All is shadow on the one side, and all is sunshine on the other (to follow my illustration).

Righteousness and love go together, and when the "beginning" is referred to in 1 John 3:11, we understand at once that it is a very different beginning from that of 1 John 3:8. It is rather the "beginning" mentioned in the first chapter of this epistle.

Righteousness and love cannot be separated, and we have a very remarkable instance of the contrast of the two classes just mentioned, seen in the very beginning of history. Here is an ancient story, full of meaning - that of Cain and Abel.

Cain was of the wicked one, and slew his brother. Hatred came out, in this first-born of Adam's race, against the one who was of God. It would be very interesting to compare other accounts of this atrocious murder, and what led to it, with the brief one given to us here. It is evident, from the fourth of Genesis and eleventh of Hebrews, that Abel had God's mind as to the gift he should offer, and approached Him in a right way, through the death of a victim. We learn something more here, for in John's epistle it is a question of the nature that is of God. Cain killed his brother, because his own works were wicked, and Abel's righteous.

It is a very striking example, occurring at the very beginning of all history, and brings vividly before our minds two grand classes, the children of God and the children of the devil. If we remember that righteousness and love characterize the first of these, we may leave the rest of the passage for another time. It will be seen that righteousness, love, and the presence of the Holy Spirit are the three great facts that are seen in the family of God here on earth. May it be given to us to pursue this blessed study with hearts subject to the Lord, and desirous of knowing the true value of this part of His Word.

1 John 3:13-24

We must not be astonished if the world hate us. Righteousness and love go together in this remarkable passage, and Cain, unrighteous and hating his brother, is the moral representative of the world; he really founded the world, and gave its true character to it.\* The passage from death to life implies an immense transition; love in the place of hatred and murder, righteousness in the place of injustice. Hatred and murder go together, and no murderer has eternal life abiding in him; what could there be in common with the Father and Son, in the heart of a murderer? Notice the line of demarcation drawn here between the "brethren" and the world.

\*The great feature of Cain's town is that God was carefully excluded; one remembers, with a shudder, the speech made by a leading man in France, not long ago, . . . "That they had driven God over the Rhine," 1:e. out of the country. This is the world. But now the active character of divine love is presented to us, and we have an objective knowledge of it. We have known (and know) love, because He has laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. The proof of His love was seen in His laying down His life (as in John 15:1-27); and the proof of our love to the brethren will be seen in our conduct towards them. We ought to lay down our lives for them.

Then a very simple example is given; of helping a poor brother. It is a bond fide case of need, and some one who has means to help; love makes itself known by giving material help to the needy man. "Let us not love with word, nor with tongue"; it would not be divine love to dismiss the poor brother with a blessing (I mean a verbal one, so well known) and the latest improved tract, but there is real giving, material help. This introduces the interesting question of the state of heart. A Christian's heart could not be at rest if he had sent away a needy brother, as in the above example. There are two things which compose the moral nature of man, conscience and heart; and I think that in this case the heart is alluded to as being, in a certain sense, higher than the conscience. I mean that it might be said in this case that one was not bound to help the man, that one must be careful of one's money and so on; but although the conscience might not be reached, yet the heart would accuse, and the image of the forlorn brother, sent away without help, would constantly appear before it. The divine affections are very precious, and the exhortation here is to the end that they may be in exercise. It is a question of free and happy communion; if our heart condemn us, we cannot possibly be in the full enjoyment of happy intercourse with God, who is greater than our heart, and knows all things.

It is in the practice of righteousness and love, that true communion is known; and if our heart does not condemn us, we have boldness \* towards God. There is that sense of His approval, that one goes forward without any hesitation. Then there is the answer given to prayer; whatsoever we ask we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments and do that which pleases Him. (Compare John 8:29; John 15:10.) It has been well said that all true prayer comes down from above before it goes up again; that is, that all true requests for the glory of God will have been formed in communion with Him. Obedience and a happy walk in pleasing Him accompany such petitions as go up, and are granted at once. There will be no prayer when we shall have arrived in the glory; but we pray now as we meet with countless obstacles, and with the power of the enemy, and our prayers are heard as we walk in obedience and true Christian liberty.

\*This is a remarkable word, and I think is always associated with true Christian liberty; I mean happy freedom in God's presence, the very opposite to legality. See, for instance, Hebrews 10:19;

Hebrews 3:6; 1 John 2:28; 1 John 5:14. And now we will very briefly notice the fact of the gift of the Holy Spirit; for there are three things which characterize the Christian in this passage - righteousness, love, and the Holy Spirit. In 1 John 3:23-24 we have two views of the Christian state: one external - the commandment, "that we believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and that we love one another, even as He gave us commandment." I mean, by external, that we have here the true faith and love of the children of God; the two things (faith and love) can never be separated. The second fact is internal, in the sense of the inner operation of the Spirit given to us; the intimate condition of the man is seen. "He that keeps His commandment abides in Him, and He in him: and hereby we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given to us." In speaking of what is internal, I mean that we have not here merely the outward dependent conduct, faith and love of a believer, blessed though this subject be, but we see the inner state, the Holy Spirit given, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and the sense of His presence by the blessed indwelling of the Spirit Himself. This completes the picture of the family of God on the earth; and the three things which are here brought into prominence (and which we have studied in these two last papers) are righteousness, love, and the Holy Ghost. We may well take heed to what the Spirit teaches us as to the divine nature of the children of God.

1 John 4:1-6

"Prove the spirits!" is now the exhortation; for since the Holy Spirit was given, the enemy has tried in many ways to imitate His power and action, and it is necessary to put everything to the proof. One must not believe every spirit; and, as we have often noticed, the false prophets are always more popular than the true ones. There were many prophets of Baal in the time of Elijah, and many are now gone out into the world. The test is very simple; every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus Christ come in flesh is not of God. There is one thing that will manifest the true character of every spirit, and that is the blessed person of the Lord Jesus Christ come in flesh. The real and perfect manhood of the Saviour, when the Word had become flesh, is brought before us here: there had been a new beginning in the ways of God when the Eternal Son became flesh, and this perfectly obedient Man, who fully accomplished the Father's will, is a test for the evil spirits. Their very system depends upon their not recognizing Jesus Christ come in flesh; for were they to do this, they must recognize Him to whom all authority has been confided, and their own independent position must fall.

Happy they who study with reverence the perfect manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ; who have received by the Holy Spirit, the wonderful, unfathomable glory of the incarnation, and confess Him, the perfect Man full of divine grace. We must not be astonished if He be the point of attack; nor must we be dismayed at hearing that to ignore Jesus Christ come in flesh is the power of the antichrist, which is already in the world. The power of the antichrist would deny the fall of man, and the necessity of a "beginning" that is the manifestation of light and love in a Man quite different to all the sons of Adam. The antichrist's principle is to exalt unregenerate man, and to place him on such a pinnacle that the vertigo must cause him ignominiously to fall;\* it was already in the world in John's time, and now as we draw near to the end of the history of the age, it becomes more and more manifest to us that the enemy has succeeded in leading away the mass of Christendom in this direction - that is, where the first man is indulged, and the blessed Jesus ignored. Judgment swift and sure shall fall on the antichrist; how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the

morning! But the important thing for us is to be able to discern and to keep clear of the spirit of the age, wherever it may appear; and for this we have a sure and simple test, the blessed Lord Himself, Jesus Christ come in flesh.

\*I recollect seeing in a Review, that men would soon find out that the god they had been looking for so long was man himself! So they will, no doubt, and in a very terrible way. The "children" are stronger than they who are of the world, because He that is in them is greater than he that is in the world; the power of God is there by the Holy Ghost's presence, and is superior to that of the restless, remorseless spirit who is in the world. It is very interesting to compare the end of John's gospel with that of the first epistle, and to notice the immense consequences flowing from the presence of the Holy Spirit - what a true remedy for worldliness (that is, the spirit of this age)! These poor, weak creatures (as the world would say) are yet superior to all the world's power.

"We are of God!" God sent out His apostles, and with so definite a message that the reception or rejection of it would at once stamp those that heard it as being in the truth or in error. God has been pleased to use men to carry forth His missive in such a way that there is the positive character "of God" or "not of God" brought out in their simply delivering it.

Before John says "we are of God" he gives us to understand that the world will listen to those who speak according to its own (antichristian) principles. The finest discourses on philanthropy, morals, and political economy are probably going on at this very moment; they would not be bad in themselves were not God and Christ carefully excluded from them. St. John himself would be classed amongst the exclusive and narrow-minded by many a philanthropist, not because he hated men (for he loved them), but because he insisted upon there being no blessing but in Christ. Certainly the world will not listen to you if you insist upon the excellency of Jesus, and the utter ruin and evil of Cain and his company; and I believe that many philanthropists would still be glad of John's being sent to Patmos. "It is the best place for him," they would say. May we listen to God's inspired apostles, and be kept from antichristian snares by knowing more and more of the divine virtues and excellence of Jesus Christ come in flesh!

1 John 4:7-19 The great subject of all John's writings now comes before us; I mean, Divine love. The Divine nature is known in its exercise; and here again it has been manifested, as to us, in the gift of the Son. It has been well said that God's love is absolute, but has been shown forth, with regard to us, in the sending of the Son. There was no love in us toward God when the Son was sent; the love was His, and the manifestation of it made by the sending of the only begotten Son into the world.

There are two things as to us:

1. We were dead;

2. We were guilty; and there is the Divine answer to all our need, for the first thing we read is that the Son was sent that we might live through Him. We were dead until then; and the passage from death to life was accomplished in this way - through Him. Many passages in the Gospel of John come to our minds, no doubt, in speaking of life. God's thought of love, His intention with regard to us, was that we, who had no life in us, should live; that we should pass from the frigid zone of death into that one where all is peace, joy, light in the warmth of the Divine Presence. This was accomplished through the gift of the Son.

But, secondly, we were guilty; we had many sins to our account, and we felt when awakened, not as a mere formula, "the burden of them is intolerable." God, who loved us before ever we loved Him, gave His Son a propitiation for our sins; the precious blood has met all our guilt, and all our faults and transgressions have been put away for ever.

We ought to love one another; it is a debt that we should constantly be paying. If God has so loved us, we owe to one another to love, as being born of God. The debt will never be paid off, but we owe this (though no other kind of debt should be contracted) to love one another. In the next verses another aspect of Divine love is to be noticed; that is, as perfected in us. The similarity between the first clause of John 1:12 and John 1:18 of John 1:1-51 has been spoken of. The two verses, however, end differently, and we should compare them. There it is - "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him"; here it is - "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." In a word, the meaning is this - that if Divine love is now to be seen, it is in the family of God upon earth that it can be known. It is perfectly true that here we have sadly failed, but the truth is none the less important.

Notice that, in John 1:13, the expression is not the same as that in John 3:24; there it is - "We know that He abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us"; whilst here it is said that we know that we abide in Him; and in connection with this knowledge, it is also said that He has given to us of His Spirit. That is, what we have here is partitive, and implies full communion; we have not only a Divine nature, but we partake of one communion, having the same blessed objects, the Father and Son, and it is thus in God's family that His love is perfected. I would call especial attention to this expression "of His Spirit" as implying communion; we know that we abide in Him. Then there is the active and blessed testimony that goes out to all around us: we have seen, and testify, that the Father has sent the Son as Saviour of the world. I think that the first time we find the words, "Saviour of the world," is in John 4:42, and it is very interesting to look at this, for it expresses the love of God in so general and evangelic a way that we take courage, as we feel it and announce it, in our words and ways, to all those who surround us. But there is a third aspect of divine love. It has been perfected with us (1 John 4:17), and this should not be confounded with what has preceded.

Notice in 1 John 4:15-16 that the blessings of "life" do not belong merely to apostles or advanced Christians, but to whomsoever "shall confess," etc. These two verses are very important, as expressing God's presence in us, and our communion. The third aspect of God's love is that in which it is seen as accompanying us the whole length of our course of testimony; it is with us the whole time, from our first acquaintance with it until the end of our service. It has been perfected with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; we are as He is in this world. There can be no fear or doubt, when we know that we are fully accepted in Him who shall judge both quick and dead, and that the One who shall sit supreme at His tribunal is our own blessed Saviour, whose goodness has followed us all the way of our life. There can be no room for fear; perfect love casts out fear, and we go on in simple trust in the God who loved us, when there was nothing in us to draw out His love. We are living, and living in communion with Him; bearing testimony, at the same time, in an ungrateful world, but with the sense of His love perfected with us, surrounding us until the judgment seat of Christ. Blessed and holy liberty! His service is perfect freedom.

Notice that God's righteousness is not in any way set aside; there shall be a just judgment of all and everything; only we have full assurance (boldness) in the day of judgment. May we walk as those who have been made perfect in love, as serving the God of love! We love Him, because He first loved us.

1 John 4:20; 1 John 5:1-5.

There is another test applied at the beginning of this passage, for it is an easy thing to say that one loves God; but the proof of it will be seen in the love shown to one's brother.

It is a happy thing in the present day, when so much is said about loving God, to have the simple tests given to us in John's Epistle. John, by the Holy Spirit, will be satisfied with nothing but the real, true divine life; no mere profession or declaration will suffice, the genuine metal only will stand the test. Thus John's Epistle, if it be the most abstract, is at the same time the most practical; there must be the testing of all that claims to be the divine life. In this case it is very simple, it is divine love showing itself in action to visible brethren here. One need not be astonished that this heartless world sent such a teacher to Patmos.

Again, I think we should notice the importance of the commandment (1 John 4:21) amongst Christians, for another apostle found in practice that the more he loved, the less he was loved. And now comes a very important part of the epistle; we may notice two things, not to be confounded, in the first part of the fifth chapter (that is, in 1 John 5:1-5).

1. What "begotten of God" means.

2. The victory over the world.

1. 1 John 5:1 begins with the well-known characteristic phrase in John's writings - "Every one that believes, etc.," "Every one that loves, etc." There has been a work of God in the soul of the believer; it is hard, no doubt, for man to admit that all good comes from God, and that He alone begins the good work in us. Yet, so it is; and when there is a simple faith in the person of Jesus (believing that Jesus is the Christ), there has been a profound operation in the soul. One begotten of God loves Him who has begotten him; and loves, too, all those who are thus born of God.

I suppose we can all remember the first feelings of love to those who are born of God; I can recollect a distinct feeling of hatred to Christians, and the change when the very ones that I had disliked became dear to me. But how do we know that we love God's children? Here again we have one of the tests, which make everything plain. It is by obedience that we know that we love the children of God: "When we love God and keep His commandments." This, again, is of great importance, for we often hear that love is wanting (it is too true), and that we ought to have wider principles, and seek to go with all who profess themselves Christians, in a broad and liberal way. All this specious liberality is worth nothing, for there can be no real love but in obedience; and it would be no love to identify ourselves with what is not according to God's commandments, on the plea of large-heartedness.

Painful as it may be, we may be obliged sometimes, out of very love, to steer clear of what may seem very plausible, and of many enterprises in which Christians are engaged. This may seem very narrow, but obedience is better than sacrifices. Again, please to observe that these plausible theories of love (or, rather, indulgence) will not stand the test of God's word, any more than the

enterprises to which I have alluded will receive His approval. This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not grievous. It is not a heavy yoke lying upon a stiff unsubject neck, but a new nature that obeys from an inner principle of joyful submission to the divine will; His commandments are not heavy and arbitrary; it is not service of the kind of brick-making under the Pharaohs, but a delightful path to one born of God, the path trodden by Jesus Himself, the path of obedience to Him whom we love because He first loved us. May we know it more and more!

2. But now comes the second part of our subject; the victory over the world by the supreme Object of faith, Jesus, the Son of God.

Notice now, in 1 John 5:5, that it is not said of the victor merely that he believes that Jesus is the Christ, but that he believes that He is the Son of God. The victory over the world is a moral victory, but to be really superior to all the influences of this huge Vanity Fair, we need to be walking by faith in One who is supreme, whose glory eclipses all that the world can offer, and whose power is at our disposal. Our faith must be in exercise, if we are really to overcome the world, and so the fourth verse teaches us.

We might notice, I think, as an illustration of this passage, the well-known account of Peter's walking on the water, in Matthew 14:1-36. All depended upon the supreme power of Him who walked upon the water, and when at length the disciples received Him into the ship, they said, as they worshipped Him, "Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!" To overcome all the contrary influences of the world - to walk upon the water - all this required faith in the Son of God.

Another passage, too, might help us here; John 9:1-41, where the blind man was given to see the glory of the Son of God, and to worship Him and follow Him outside the power of the hostile Sanhedrim. I wish to notice that, on both of these occasions, our Lord is presented to us as Son of God; and it is in this aspect that He is presented to us here as being the supreme Object of our faith.

It is very interesting, thus to compare the first verse with the fifth of this chapter: in the first instance, we have the fact of being begotten of God, and love towards all those who form part of the divine family; in the second, a further development of the Christian position and superiority over the world. A believer sees and knows by faith the Son of God, who has overcome the world, and whose power and glory are infinitely above all that is visible; neither the menaces of Satan on the one hand, nor his attractions on the other, can turn him aside from the straight path.

If the eye be truly fixed upon Jesus, one can walk upon a boisterous sea; or walk between heaps of treasure, without looking either to the right hand or to the left.

1 John 5:6-12.

"This is He that came by water and blood, Jesus the Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood." (1 John 5:6)

We must be careful to notice that "He that came" is characteristic, involving our blessed Lord's entire mission and His present position in heaven. It evidently does not refer merely to His birth into the world, but to the entire character of His coming and work. The reference to John 19:1-42 is very clear: it was from the side of a dead Christ that the blood and water flowed. The difference of

the order in the gospel and epistle has often been noticed, and is no doubt well understood. In the gospel, the blood precedes the water, expiation being set forth first. It was when the last act of spite had been performed, when the spear had pierced the side, that the full answer of grace came out (expiation and purification) to man.\* But in the epistle, the water is mentioned first; and it will be helpful to us to examine this more closely.

\*Do we not see in John's gospel man's desperate need more than in any other? In the world even ruffians do not, as a rule, insult their victim's dead body. Henry III. of France, kicked the corpse of the assassinated Guise, but he (Henry) was a very bad man.

There can be no purification for man, but by the death of Christ. There must be an end made to the history of Adam and his sons (the first man), before ever the water can be applied; and the very application of it judges and sets aside all that is of the flesh. To use a bold figure, as the flood washed away the antediluvians (the end of all flesh having come before God), so does the water here answer to man's need, not by any modification of his nature, but by setting him aside in order to bring in a new thing.

But, then, it is perfectly true that we had committed many sins, and that there was need of expiation; and this we find in the blood. He did not come by water only, but by water and blood. Here is a perfect answer to the whole state of a child of Adam, and the introduction into that order of things in heaven, where the ascended Christ is now gone; thus we have (through His blessed mission, coming by water and blood), the way by which we are brought into the supreme blessing described in this epistle.

There are three witnesses to the judgment of the first man, and to the fact of life being given to us in the Son. The Spirit is the third witness, and immediately takes the first rank, though His descent from heaven came later than the event alluded to in John 19:1-42. The Spirit is the truth; and the meaning of this reciprocal proposition is that the Holy Ghost descended from a glorified Christ, revealing all that is in Him, setting everything in its true place. The infallible Vicar of Christ has come down to take His place, who said that He was the truth when He was here, and thus everything is fully declared; the world and its prince, man's true state, God's own nature, all is now known by the Holy Spirit. The witness borne by the Spirit, the water, and the blood, all tends to one point, to that which God testifies concerning His Son; and that no blessing, or life, is to be found in the whole human race that began with Adam and Eve.

We receive the witness of men of "average veracity" in this world; and when two or three independent witnesses concur in any statement, the fact is established. And should we not believe three infallible witnesses, which constitute the "witness of God" here? God hath borne witness concerning His Son, and we are happy to have received it, and to have God's verdict pronounced upon the first man, and to know that all that is ours, as believers, is in the Son now risen and glorified. If the history of the first man is closed, there is infinite blessing in the One who is now at the head of this new family, Himself, the source of all good. The believer has the witness in himself, for all is made good to him by the Spirit; he who believes not has had the audacity to refuse God's testimony. To make God "a liar" is a terrible thing, and there can be no excuse for those who reject His testimony, whatever may be His work of grace in the believer. This is the witness, that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son; it is very blessed to know that it is in Him, and no such expression could be applied to us, nor is there ever any thought of life

independently of Him. He that has the Son has life; we enjoy already heavenly things, and not merely security in Him. We shall eat of the tree of life\* in the glory, but we have already the power of entering into these privileges and joys, and all is in the Son. He that has not the Son of God has not life; he has no part at all in the happiness and divine realities that are the believer's part. Of course security is implied, and life being in Christ is secure indeed; but we should not make "life" merely a synonym for "security," for while it implies this, it is far more.

\*The leaves of the tree shall be for healing of the nations: but we shall eat the fruit of it.

These things were written that we may know (have the consciousness) that we have eternal life. The epistle was written that believers might know and experience the joy and blessedness of the children of God as a present thing; all had been put to the test, and the true character of the divine nature maintained by the inspired writer. The great end of the whole teaching was that the joy of the saints might be full in the knowledge of the Father and the Son, by the Holy Ghost. May it be so for us; and may we enter more and more into the conscious delight of having life in the Son. May He be the true Object of our hearts and lives, and may we not hinder the blessed work of God in us, by His Spirit, of leading us into all truth!

1 John 5:13-21.

There is boldness in the presence of the God who has given us eternal life in His Son. This follows at once upon the statement that the epistle had been written that believers might know that they had eternal life; and it is clear that it is not any mere dogma, but that those who have it, have liberty and confidence in the presence of the God who is love.

"Boldness," or full confidence, is an expression to be remarked. If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us; and then we know that we have the petitions we have asked, if we know that He hears us. It is not said that the answer will be given quite as we expected; but we know that the petition has gone in, and will certainly be answered. It has been well said that all true prayer comes down first from above, because the desire to see Christ glorified is formed in His presence, and goes up again in the form of a true petition.

I suppose that it was according to God's mind that Paul should go to Rome; he had often prayed for it (Romans 1:10), if it were God's will, and I have no doubt that the request was granted, though not quite in the way that the apostle had anticipated it. He probably had no idea, when he was praying (Romans 1:10-12) that he might get to the saints at Rome, and impart to them some spiritual gift, that he would go there bound in chains; but so it was, and at the same time his prayers were answered, and more than answered. It is the same for us, and we feel the need of constant exercise, in the liberty of God's presence, so that we may ask that which is according to His will. A kind of challenge is then given; a test as to whether we have God's thoughts as to what to ask for. "If any man see his brother sin a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and He shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." It is a question of spiritual discernment; that is, to be able to distinguish whether the person in question has sinned "unto death" or not.

Some sins are such, from their circumstances, as to oblige God to take away the one sinning from the earth, in His righteous government. If the testimony to His name be compromised, so that His glory demands it, He may be obliged to remove such an one from the earth, where it is his privilege to serve the Lord. Of this kind, no doubt, was the case of Ananias and Sapphira; the

circumstances of their falsehood aggravated the crime; they lied to the Holy Ghost. Many who bear the name of Christians have, alas! lied since, though not in such a way that demanded the immediate judgment of God. The conduct of the Corinthians at the Lord's Table also called for extreme discipline on His part.

Now in the case where a brother sins "not unto death," a request may be made for him, and it should be answered by his being spared to live, as a privilege, in order to glorify God upon this earth. It is evidently a question of spiritual discernment, for there were cases (of sin unto death) where it would not be according to God's mind to make a request. "All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death." I do not think that any particular sin is alluded to, but there are some sins that call for the judgment in question, and others that do not, and we need to have God's mind as to what to pray for. It has struck me sometimes that the prayer (when an example of prayer is given) is for some one else, not for ourselves.

Then comes the divine nature in 1 John 5:18; everyone that is begotten of God does not sin, "but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

It is interesting to notice that three times it is repeated - "we know."

1. We know that every one, etc. (1 John 5:18) 2. We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one.

3. And we know that the Son of God has come, etc. (1 John 5:20) The first knowledge (and it is conscious, Christian knowledge) is concerning the absolute holiness of the divine nature. The second is, that we are of God, and as far as things are at present, the whole world (that ornate system we have so often spoken of) lies in the wicked one. The third is, "that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true" (this time "know" is objective, we know Him as fully revealed); and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. The deep, abstract character of the epistle has often been remarked - the change from God to Christ, and the presentation of the divine nature in its absolute character.

"He is the true God and eternal life." He is the true God, as in contrast with all idols,\* and then there is a further description of the same Person - He is eternal life.

\*I have a good note from a student of the Word as to this. "The word *alethinos* would necessitate the use of the article in this case, "the true God" as opposed to *eidoka* (see 1 John 5:21) as always. Compare J. N. Darby. on the Greek article, page 14: "The true light, in contrast to other false lights." Our blessed Lord's absolute deity is thus insisted upon; and He is also eternal life, as being Himself the source of all blessing and joy to us. We have all in Him, once dead, now risen, the life-giving, last Adam.

Then comes the exhortation to keep ourselves from the idols. There are many false gods and imitations in this world; many are the attempts of the enemy to lead us astray. I recollect hearing of traders in Mexico deluding the country people, and inducing them to change real gold and precious stones for cut glass and Birmingham jewellery; and surely the enemy with whom we have to do is seeking more than ever to lead God's people astray. But idols are detected when the saint is walking with God. May the blessed Lord Himself fill our hearts and minds. He is the true God and eternal life. E. L. Bevir.

## S. A Bishop.

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A Bishop.

Titus 1:5-16.

It may be well, as we are come to the passage, to understand clearly what a bishop is according to scripture. Timothy, as an apostolic delegate, was to ordain elders in every city.

Things have been perverted to such an extraordinary degree that the first idea that presents itself to many, when a bishop is in question, is that of a mitred prelate in lawn sleeves; but this is not at all the New Testament meaning. I suppose that no one will question the fact that the elder of 1 Timothy 1:5 is the same thing as the bishop (more properly overseer) of 1 Timothy 1:7, and that the very first point to be noticed about him is that he has a faithful household, brought up in good order - a thing not easily found in Crete, nor indeed in some other islands.

Much has been said to clear up the main differences between the gifts given by Christ to the Church (Ephesians 4:1-32) and the local charge of a man morally qualified to watch over the order of the church. It is well to be subject to scripture in these things, for to confound them is one of the chief causes of the present state of Christendom.

Let us notice that these overseers were appointed by apostles or by apostolic delegates (see Acts 14:23; 1 Timothy 3:1-16), and if any in our day were to say, "Show me an official bishop," the answer would be, "Show me an apostle to appoint such." That there may be men, not officially established, who may answer by their moral character and position to the functions we may well admit.

Note, in passing, that there are no such things as archbishops in the New Testament. They are as mythical as archangels. There is one archangel (Michael), but there are no archbishops.

Having said so much, we may look at the character here presented of one who should be appointed to watch over the saints. He must be unblameable, having a family well brought up according to God's mind\*; the same ruling of the household as in 1 Timothy, for this must precede care of the church. The expression "steward of God" is a remarkable one, for even in this world a wise man of property will not employ a steward unless he has an irreproachable character, the charge being one of great responsibility and honour. The rest of 1 Timothy 1:7 denotes a true command of himself, not carried away by the senses, not hot-tempered, not given to wine, to fighting, or to gain: a man who is not all these things is a steady person.

\*Of course it is understood that "the husband of one wife" refers to the man being free of Gentile polygamy. A polygamist might be converted, but he was disqualified as to overseership. But then comes that which is positively good - hospitality, love of good, wisdom, justice, godliness, continence. These virtues are far more than the mere absence of evil passions. The house door is open (hospitality), and the house itself is full of good things. But there is more, 1 Timothy 1:9 insists upon tenacity as to the faithful word, according to the received teaching, so that he may

exhort by sound doctrine and refute gainsayers. This character should be noticed, for it is not every one that holds fast true teaching (having himself received it). Then comes the exhortation of others, and the answering of those who oppose and contradict the truth. It is the crowning virtue of the overseer's list. His moral worth and weight had been spoken of, and, to make the whole complete, there is the retaining of the faithful word, to be used both for help to the saints in stimulating them to good, and as a means of stopping evil. No doubt in Crete Judaizing teachers had found a fine field, for the Cretan disposition ("liars, evil beasts," etc.) was naturally such as to receive wrong doctrine; and the position of an overseer in a Cretan city was no sinecure. It implied active care for the sheep, and the use of the Word to check wrong teaching for filthy lucre. (1 Timothy 1:11) The fact is, that such a charge always involves patient work and suffering, whether in Crete or elsewhere; and whilst the privilege is great (if any man desire "overseership," he desires a good work), the responsibility and care are great also. To sum up then, an overseer is here presented to us as being one whose moral weight inspires confidence as to supervision, the house in order, passions excluded, good things cultivated, and the faithful word held fast.

Although no such man may be now officially appointed, yet we may well look to the Lord to raise up such for the local care of His beloved sheep. E. L. Bevir.

## S. A Contrast.

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A Contrast.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 14, 1887, p. 128.

I. THE glory of the kingdom spread  
Over the Tabor's lofty head, Lighting the mountain steeps; And  
Jesu's robes were glistening white, His face - the Sun in all its might, And - Peter sleeps!

II.

'Tis night, and in Gethsemane A prostrate Form in agony, With bitter crying, weeps; The darkness  
deepens at His groan (The darkest night this world hath known), And - Peter sleeps!

\* \* \*

III.

He lies upon the dungeon floor, A guard, quadrupled round the door, Its midnight vigil keeps;

Two chains of iron bind him fast;

Tomorrow's morn shall be his last And - Peter sleeps! E. L. B.

Confession.

C. H. Mackintosh.

Christian Friend vol. 14, 1887, p. 135.

God has been perfectly satisfied, as to all the believer's sins, in the cross of Christ. On that cross a full atonement was presented for every jot and tittle of sin, in the believer's nature, and on his conscience. Hence, therefore, God does not need any further propitiation. He does not need aught to draw his heart toward the believer. We do not require to supplicate Him to be "faithful and just," when His faithfulness and justice have been so gloriously displayed, vindicated, and answered in the death of Christ. Our sins can never come into God's presence, inasmuch as Christ, who bore them all, and put them away, is there instead. But if we sin, conscience will feel it, must feel it; yea, the Holy Ghost will make us feel it. He cannot allow so much as a single light thought to pass unjudged. What then? Has our sin made its way into the presence of God? Has it found its place in the unsullied light of the inner sanctuary? God forbid! The "Advocate" is there - "Jesus Christ the righteous" - to maintain, in unbroken integrity, the relationship in which we stand. But though sin cannot affect God's thoughts in reference to us, it can and does affect our thoughts in reference to Him. Though it cannot make its way into God's presence, it can make its way into ours, in a most distressing and humiliating manner. Though it cannot hide the Advocate from God's view, it can hide Him from ours. It gathers like a thick, dark cloud on our spiritual horizon, so that our souls

cannot bask in the blessed beams of our Father's countenance. It cannot affect our relationship with God; but it can very seriously affect our enjoyment thereof. What therefore are we to do? The word answers, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." By confession we get our conscience cleared, the sweet sense of our relationship restored, the dark cloud dispersed, the chilling, withering influence removed; our thoughts of God set straight. Such is the divine method, and we may truly say, that the heart that knows what it is to have ever been in the place of confession, will feel the divine power of the apostle's words, "My little children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not." (1 John 2:1.) C. H. M. From Revealed Glories by E. L. Bevir.

There sages sit in cloistered halls, And nature's depth explore, And poets, too, within those walls  
Dream, lost in tragic lore. But never has the heart of man Conceived the bright display  
Of Wisdom's long concerted plan, The triumph of that Day.

Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, Nor can man's spirit frame The wondrous things of God,  
prepared For those who love His Name;

Revealed now, they form our part, Then why such joys delay? May Christ's own glory fill our heart,  
In this, the Spirit's Day!

## S. A Sound Mind.

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A Sound Mind. The ending of the second Epistle to Timothy is full of interest, in that we discover the character of a sound mind in the apostle where an unbeliever would see nothing but commonplace remarks. "Would the Holy Spirit," says the infidel, "record Paul's request to have his cloak brought to him?" Yes, indeed; for it shows care and order; even in worldly affairs it is no sign of power to ignore little things whilst one is occupied with great ones; and in God's ways nothing is too great or too small. It is a wonderful thing that after the miracle of feeding the thousands the fact of gathering the remains is recorded; wonderful, but very blessed, for God does not squander, though He gives to all richly to enjoy. Can a man, whose life was employed in teaching the highest truth and God's deepest counsels, think of a cloak and books? Certainly. Paul was not a fanatic, whatever Festus and others might say.

It is a very important passage for us; for if God in His grace has given us the highest and most blessed truths, and a spirit of power and love, there is the ballast - the spirit of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7.) This character is seen all through the passage, 2 Timothy 4:9-22 Demas had abandoned Paul, having loved this present age. The two things could not go on together; that is, following Paul and loving the world; and Paul was given up. The apostle's judgment is simple and clear as to this. His appreciation of the change in Mark (who had given up and left Paul many years before) is also to be noticed.

Now come the cloak and the books. A cloak is not to be thrown away; and I have no doubt it was as cold in a Roman prison then as it is cold in Rome now in winter; and the man of God can call for the useful covering. Many have thought that the "parchments" may include some of the inspired epistles; it is very likely, and the care taken should be a lesson to us in any work where writing is in question. The discrimination of the apostle is a further proof of the sound mind. In that which follows we have an example of this; that is, in the distinguishing between the guilt of Alexander, who opposed the truth, and that of the poor Romans, who had not sufficient courage to stand with Paul. Alexander is an enemy of the truth, and there is nothing to be said but, "The Lord reward him according to his works!" The Roman converts were afraid to stand by the champion for the truth, and, at his first answer, left him standing alone. I recollect a sergeant, who had been in the Crimea, telling me of a battery composed of young soldiers who all ran away from the guns when the first Russian shot roared over their heads, and left only the captain and one or two old soldiers at the embrasures. The case here is similar; but there is a great difference between the coppersmith (the enemy) and the Romans, who were rather cowardly recruits. "May this be not laid to their charge!" says the apostle, very different to that which he had said in the other case. It is an important thing to distinguish between those who are opposed to the truth, and those who are afraid to stand for it; and this is what Paul does in this case. It would be well today to bear this in mind.

It has often been remarked that the epistles to Timothy do not treat of the mystery or of the church as the body of Christ; but this second epistle begins, as we noticed with God's resources, "the

promise of life which is in Christ Jesus," and the Lord's faithfulness to those who are standing for Him, when many have given up the true testimony. Whilst suffering patiently the faithful apostle is an example of the calm spirit and sober judgment which should characterize the man of God; there is no exaggeration here, but true discrimination. With those who oppose and withstand the truth we have no authority to use violence; the Lord will reward them according to their works. When courage is needed mercy can be looked for from the Lord for the weak. The simple confidence in the Lord, and the sense of His presence, are very blessed. "The Lord stood with me and strengthened me." There must have been a striking answer to Nero - "that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear." It is no stretch of imagination to see Paul standing before the scowling emperor, and giving a full account of the gospel confided to him from heaven. The Lord was with His servant, and the lion was tamed for the moment: He can subdue the most terrible. May we so walk in our little service, that He may stand by us in all trial! This was not all; there was a confidence in Paul that carried him on in spirit to the heavenly kingdom; that is, to the time when, far from Roman prisons and praetorian injustice, he should be crowned and acknowledged by the Lord - by Him who, unjustly condemned Himself and rejected upon earth, is waiting for us in His heavenly kingdom. He should deliver His servant from every evil work, and preserve him, as He delivers and preserves us, and shall keep us to the end. The preserving [saving] is the very essence of this epistle; it is a question of our serving the Lord amidst all the influences of evil, and of His protecting care all through the course.

"Guarding us through the deadly fight."

We can join in the apostle's tribute of praise: To Him "be glory for ever and ever!" It is a wonderful and blessed thing to find saints upon earth of sound mind (no fanatical enthusiasts) calmly counting upon the Lord's presence and the intervention of His divine power, knowing His full protection whilst they are in the very territory of the enemy. Praise be to the Saviour God! The apostle's wish for Timothy, "The Lord Jesus Christ be with thy spirit," is very blessed. May it be so too for us, that there may be more simple and full communion with our blessed Lord, as we discern His way in the present evil time.

E. L. Bevir.

## S. A Spirit of Power.

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A Spirit of Power.

2 Timothy 1:1-18.

Great blessing may be derived at the present time by the consideration of certain truths in 2 Timothy, and the words of the inspired apostle come to us with as much power and reality as in the time of Timothy himself.

It has very often been noticed that things were going wrong amongst the mass of Christians and professors at the time when Paul wrote the second epistle. Outward order in the church was lost, and many were openly giving up the special heavenly testimony of Christianity: there was a general turning away from him who preached the gospel of the glory.

Two things at the very beginning of 2 Timothy 1:1-18 are worthy of all our attention. First of all, the promise of life in Christ Jesus, the endless resources of the God of glory, when everything apparently seemed to be lost; and, secondly, a certain character of godliness - true God-fearing piety which should be found in those standing in the breach under the enemy's fire.

It is not scientific knowledge or theological exactitude that is required (it is good to be exact in the truth), but a pure conscience and unfeigned faith (such as had characterized the two men in the breach before us, Paul and Timothy); and I have no doubt of the design of the Holy Spirit in bringing forward this moral character at the very beginning of the epistle. What is needed, in order to occupy so critical a place as that to which Timothy was called, is not a bold, reckless courage (Timothy was naturally timid), but "faith, prayers, tears," the true signs of dependence upon God in an evil day. Boldness and profanity very often go together; but here is a broken will and true godliness, an habitual walk with the Lord.

We recollect, as an illustration, the true story of an officer in the Crimea rebuking a corporal for ordering a sapper to stand in an exposed position in the trenches, in which he dared not stand himself. Paul did not act thus; he exhorted his beloved son Timothy to stand well in the breach, setting first of all the glorious example.

Now comes a part of the passage which applies to us all (it might be said that the sixth verse applies especially to Timothy, though surely the word to him to stir up the gift of God is a word to all who have received such); I allude to the seventh and following verses. God has not given us a spirit of fear; that is, one might almost render it, of cowardice; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. The godly dependence being there, the tears for the church of God, the deep, true exercise in the sense of the utter inability to meet the storm, this character being in the man of God, there follows that "God hath not given us a spirit of cowardice." Our minds go back to poor, trembling Jeremiah, who had to meet the haughty faces of the pretentious Jews, and we compare with this the difficult position of such an one as Timothy (nothing is harder to bear than the scorn of those who oppose on religious grounds), and the assurance rejoices our hearts. Be not afraid of

their faces! There is nothing to fear! The position is a difficult one, impossible to hold but in dependence; but, being in it, there is not one single enemy to be dreaded. This is true liberty and confidence - being in the breach for the Lord, a peculiar service, but none the less secure. But there is that which is positive. God has given us a spirit of power; we know the victorious Christ and His might: and whilst all strength resides in Him, we are given so to know Him that, by the Holy Ghost, His power is ours. Oh, wonderful gift! How many of those who sing - "Lord of all power and might!" have any real understanding of it? There is with this, love, and a sound mind - that love which works without seeking a recompense or worthy objects, and the sober sense, wise and godly, which is the very reverse of rash fanaticism. Thus equipped, we may be able to stand in the most difficult position in the whole line, though the breach be wide and the fire well sustained, and though many, who ought to be defending the rampart against the enemy, be principally occupied in trying to throw down their friends into the ditch. That which follows will help us to understand our subject. The spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind being there, the exhortation follows, not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of the apostle who was in prison for His sake. It needed divinely given courage not to be ashamed of a man who was in prison; we shall not be tested perhaps in this way, we shall not probably have the privilege of going to visit in prison some faithful witness to the Lord; but it is nevertheless true that there will always be more opprobrium to bear as we go on, and I do not think that there can be true faithfulness even today without the faithful ones being traduced and thoroughly despised. We are called upon not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, at the very time when opprobrium is connected with it. I once heard of a routed army destroying or hiding the regimental colours for shame; but however much the enemy may seem to have triumphed, this is never to be our case.

It is here that I wish to call attention to the power of God, and the context will lead us into a deeper sense of the "spirit of power" in connection with the present struggle between good and evil.

"Be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God." This needs our attention; for again it is not here a rude and bold spirit that can go into the fray without feeling the blows, but one, dependent upon God, which meets afflictions according to His power. This is developed with great precision: "According to the power of God; who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel." The power of God is connected here with His purpose and grace, and the accomplishment of His counsels by the death and resurrection of Christ. His own purpose and grace! This is entirely outside of anything in man, and the manner in which this was accomplished is worthy of all our attention. Apparently the enemy had triumphed; as we sing - "By weakness and defeat He won the meed and crown, Trod all our foes beneath our feet, By being trodden down."

So, in a small measure, the principle is true for us, that it is just where defeat and weakness are felt that God intervenes in His power to deliver and bless. Of course, all will understand that I am not comparing our blessed Lord's expiatory sacrifice with our difficulty or suffering, but merely noticing the fact that where apparently the enemy gains the victory, and the cause is lost, there the power of God shows itself superior to all. His mighty power shone out in the resurrection of Jesus; and there, when death had done its utmost, the Victor rose, who hath abolished death (destroyed

its power), and brought to light life and incorruptibility through the gospel. It is here that God's power is known, for we are already brought spiritually into that place where life and incorruptibility are fully known. It is an order of things where all is light and vigour, and where no serpent can enter with corrupting poison. Once in the realization of such glorious truths, we begin to see the true force of the "spirit of power." It is connected with a risen, glorified Christ in an incorruptible sphere of splendour, and is known and manifested in the deepest experiences of sorrow and weakness here. In speaking of sorrow, I do not mean our own private difficulties, but such sorrow as called forth the tears of Paul and Timothy, the heart-felt grief at the state of things in the church of God, and true desire that the saints might retain, in dependence on the Lord, the true Christian calling.

If we feel more and more the weight of the state of things in Christendom, and our own utter inability to meet the need, or to open doors, the more shall we understand the apostle's words in this passage, where the spirit of power, and the participating in the afflictions of the gospel by the power of God, are brought before us. May we know daily more and more of His might, who hath abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel. E. L. Bevir.

## S. Antagonism

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### Antagonism

John 8:1-59. In the eighth chapter of John, amongst other things, two figures are seen standing out in prominent relief - the Son, and Satan. The antagonism between them is maintained all through the Scriptures, from the day when the announcement was made, "I will put enmity . . . between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel." From that day till the end of time we find the Son of God on the one side, and the great enemy on the other, directly opposed to one another.

I wish merely to notice some very striking points of contrast between our Lord and His terrible antagonist, as we find them in the latter half of this chapter; for terrible as the adversary is, we have in Jesus one who is infinitely superior to him. We have, too, in this contrast light thrown upon the present state of things upon earth, and great help for our souls.

Jesus, in the twenty-fifth verse, is asked by the Jews who He is. The force of the answer is lost, I think, in some versions, and perhaps the best interpretation of our blessed Lord's answer is simply, Absolutely\* that which I also say to you."

\*"In the principle and universality of what I am." See note in J.N.D.'s Translation of N. T.

There was a Person upon earth whose words described what He who spoke them was in Himself. There was not a word too much nor too little, there was no change nor variation in Him who was, and is always, the Ancient of days, and yet could come down a true Man amongst men to speak truth (John 8:46) in a world of deceit and imposture. We shall never have sounded the depths of the immense truth of the incarnation, nor explored the glories of the One in whom there is no change, and who at the end of the chapter, as it has been said, when forced, by a godless world, to declare who He is, stands there in changeless majesty as the great I AM. May He enlarge our hearts to apprehend His glory. And now the contrast to this is to be seen in John 8:44, where it is said of the great enemy that he "has not stood in the truth."\*

\*I borrow again from the New Translation, for it is very important to observe the force of the perfect tense. The great cherub stepped off the ground upon which he was placed, and he still continues on the ground of falsehood and opposition to God. The terrible step taken by the "anointed cherub" is described in Ezekiel 28:11-19. There had been a great moral fall in one who occupied one of the highest places in the universe; his heart was lifted up because of his own beauty, and he was cast to the ground. To have one's own self as the object of the heart, to become enamoured of one's own beauty, is the certain precursor of apostasy; and in the case of the bright and exalted creature before us, the fall was terrible, and the consequences, which still endure, are even more terrible. For what is all the opposition of the enemy but that work which is founded upon an independent position outside the truth? He abode not in the truth.

Let us look well at these two prominent figures in the passage before us - the unchangeable, obedient Son, and the apostate head of the revolt against God.

We need not torture our minds with Byzantine questions as to the origin of evil; we have enough in that which is revealed in Scripture, which presents to us the Son of God manifested that He might undo the works of the devil. It is blessed to think of the end of the controversy.

Two things, I think, are especially presented to us in our Lord's conversation with the Jews here, and in them the contrast may be pursued. The adversary is a murderer from the beginning; the opponents of the blessed, dependent Jesus were seeking to kill Him. They should know more as to Him (John 8:28), when they should have lifted Him up as the Son of man: the carrying out of their murderous policy should establish life and blessing on a firm basis, and a humble believer, keeping Christ's words, should never taste death.

Then, again, we have in Satan a liar and the father of lies. There is no truth in him; he is off the ground of truth himself, and is a constant source of lies and falsehood. There is a peculiar deliverance offered to the believer in the midst of all the importance of this world, and that is knowing the truth and being made free by it.

Knowing the Son, and being made free indeed, is the bright side of this last contrast. The whole question of sin, misery, and condemnation has been met and settled for ever; and then we know Him who lives for ever, the same unchangeable Jesus. No matter what impostures may surround us, what lies may be circulating in this world of deceit, we have the truth; we have the Son Himself; and His words - that cannot be added to nor diminished - in the very passage before us, give us to know exactly the true character of the Father, the Son, the world, Satan, and everything else.

Happy they who, not content with being delivered from the cruel enemy (the murderer and liar from the beginning), seek to know more and more of the changeless Son of God. If we have been delivered from the dire apostate, let us give all diligence to learn ever more and more of Him who has made us free, the blessed Son, Revealer of the Father's heart to our souls

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the wicked one. And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us an understanding that we should know Him that is true; and we are in Him that is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life." (New Translation.) E. L. Bevir.

## S. Association with Christ in Death and Resurrection.

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Association with Christ in Death and Resurrection.

Colossians 2:20-23; Colossians 3:1-17.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 18, 1891, p. 323. In the Epistle to the Colossians we have death and resurrection with Christ, and these two truths are insisted upon in Colossians 2:20-23, Colossians 3:1-4.

It is not merely an exhortation to avoid worldliness, but the fact of being in an entirely new position by death with Christ, so that the apostle can say, "Why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?" It is an immense thing for a saint to understand what death with Christ is, as this epistle presents it. I think some one has said, that in this part of the word of God the saint is looked at as being just on the Canaan brink of the Jordan - dead and risen with Christ, and having the country before him, so that he can already seek the things that are above. The ark (Christ) remained in the bed of the Jordan whilst Israel passed over to the right bank. Here we must stop, for the Epistle to the Colossians does not look upon us as seated in the heavenly places.

"If ye be dead with Christ . . . why are ye subject to ordinances?" etc. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." It is very evident that there is nothing here on earth that can nourish our souls, not one single thing. Christ is hidden in God. He is our life, and the day shall come when He (and we with Him) shall be manifested in glory. But till then He is hidden, and no one upon earth can see Him who is our life, though men will soon see the fruits of communion with Him in our walk. Seek the things that are above, and think of these things, not of the things on the earth. It is not merely the world in its gross form here, but "the things on the earth." There is a difference. In evangelical Christendom you are told to give up the world in the form of balls, billiards, theatres, etc., and the conception of what the world is has been falsified; but here it is the earth; the heart and thoughts are outside of the whole thing. We have a fairer vista than the world can present - the affections set on Christ in glory.

I wish especially to notice the exhortations that follow, from Colossians 3:5-17. Let us note that they are founded upon our death and resurrection with Christ.

"Mortify therefore," etc., is the practical work in the soul of one who is dead with Christ. It has nothing to do with monkish maceration. I read once, in the life of Ignatius Loyola, that towards the end of his time he regretted having destroyed his health in early rude penances, and that he confessed that it had not changed his heart. Poor Ignatius! He is not the only one that has gone off on a wrong tack. You cannot reduce the old man any more than you can compress water. God has made an end of him at the cross; but the members are in us, those deep roots of evil that are to be mortified, and can be mortified because we are dead with Christ. A man who is delivered will have

much exercise, but of a very different kind to that of one who is trying by monastic process to bring down the old man. I recollect an old saint once saying that he did not object to blows being given, provided they were interior; that is, true exercise in communion with the Lord.

It has been remarked that, from Colossians 3:5-17, there is an ascending order, beginning with the practical mortification of the members that are upon the earth, the judgment of very bad things, and ending with the practice of very good things, doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks by Him to God the Father. Nothing could be higher than this, in our conduct as risen men upon earth.

Colossians 3:8 goes rather higher than the gross iniquity of Colossians 3:5, and in Colossians 3:9-10 we have the putting off of the old man, and putting on of the new man, who is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him. Notice the expression new in this epistle; it is neos, fresh, young. In the Epistle to the Ephesians it is kainos, that which has not existed before. This distinction is very important, because in the Epistle to the Ephesians the great point is the new creation in speaking of the new man; whilst here, in the Epistle to the Colossians, it is the freshness of the life - Christ our life. The difference too as to image and likeness (it is rather likeness in Ephesians 4:24) has been already pointed out by another. It is always Christ before us in the Colossians. (Compare Colossians 1:13.)

"Christ is all, and in all"; may we ever be learning what this means. One sole blessed object before us, and one life (Christ) in all. There can be no Teutonic or Celtic modes of thought, etc., in the Church of God. Germans, Italians, French, English vanish here. Oh, that we entered into it a little more!

Colossians 3:12, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God," etc. Notice the manner of wearing the new garments - these beautiful graces of the following verses: "As the elect of God, holy and beloved." God has given us to know our full blessing and position in His unchanging favour, and we are to put on the new robes in a becoming manner. God has given us this most blessed position; we are His chosen ones, His beloved ones, separated from the world, and now to put on the robes in a manner worthy of Him. These blessed graces are not what the quarrelsome and fighting world admires - mercies, kindness, humbleness, etc., but it is Christ that is seen here, as all through the epistle, and we are to forgive as Christ forgave. Shall we ever forget the manner in which Christ forgave us when He first met us, laden as we were with sins? Never, throughout eternity! But this should influence our conduct now.

Then love, the bond of perfectness, above all; and the peace of Christ is to preside in our hearts. It is blessed to think that we are called to this in one body. It is not merely a question of our individual difficulties, but being called to know Christ's own peace, which nothing can trouble, in one body. For a moment we see this in the prayer offered up from the upper chamber in Jerusalem, where with one voice the newly-born assembly expressed full confidence in the Lord, and His peace presided in the hearts of the saints in the face of all the tumult in Jerusalem: the thankfulness flows naturally from this.

Then comes the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, and the teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom with a spirit of worship, singing with grace in the heart to God. This is very blessed, the Holy Spirit depicts the state of the saints when there is healthy action, and then

comes the service, for as the Levites were given to Aaron after redemption, so we have been given to Christ, so as to do and say everything in His name to the glory of God the Father. May death and resurrection not be mere dogma for us; but may we thus answer to the exhortations of this most blessed portion of the Word! E. L. B.

## S. Babylon

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Babylon.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 106.

Much has been said about Babylon, and the subject fully treated. A few practical remarks as to her present state may however be not altogether useless.

It may be well to go back to the book of Joshua for an illustration of the capital of the world becoming vanquished; but in the illustration we shall find that God's commands were carried out fully, whilst in the application they were neglected. In Joshua 11:1-23 we find the taking of Hazor, which was the head of all the kingdoms of Canaan, and the utter destruction of the whole city by fire. It has been well said that the church (and we are speaking of the church here as the outward professing body upon earth "the professing church," as people say) made its greatest mistake in taking possession of pagan Rome, and in appropriating, instead of destroying or refusing, the riches of the great "head of all those kingdoms," and in embellishing herself and her pontiff with imperial gold and purple. This is what has formed Babylon - that is, the appropriation of the world's glory to the so-called church - and as we see her in her actual state, we may well wonder with great amazement as we trace the transformation of "the church" from the day of Pentecost up to the present time. The change was not effected in one day, any more than pagan Rome was built in one day; but the change was made, and if we compare things present with things past, we shall perceive it with striking clearness. To go no further than the first meeting-place of the assembly as contrasted with the so-called central temple of Christendom, we shall find, on the one hand, a company thoroughly unworldly, formed by the Holy Ghost, looking up, from a simple upper-room, to the risen Christ in heaven, having nothing upon earth but the opposition of men; and, on the other hand, the finest architecture, the glory of the world, the triple crown, the sculptured throne, and a large dove to represent the Holy Ghost in world-renowned stained glass.\*

\*In St. Peter's the great eastern window represents thus the Holy Spirit in a picture - a poor substitute for the original, who is not to be found there at all,

Everything then has been changed and reduced to material form - the glory of the world is there, the glory of the humble Christ not known. Living reality has given place to cold sculpture, the blessed Spirit of God ignored. One language, but it is that of the Roman earth, the language of the Latin world - not understood by the poor souls that use it. And then behind the malachite and the marble, the cornices and the painting, death itself is seen to lurk by those who have eyes to see, and the enemy of our souls detected as the prime mover in an arch-impotence. It was once well said, that the presence of Jesus as the rejected Saviour in the midst of all these things would expose at once the whole system.

It will be thought by many that this is an exaggerated picture. Let such compare Acts 1:1-26 with Revelation 17:1-18; Revelation 18:1-24, and it will be admitted that the comparison that has gone no further than two localities (the meeting-room at Jerusalem and the great Roman temple) is just and right. Babylon is become the habitation of devils, the hold of every unclean spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. But why speak of these things? Because the danger of falling into the depths of the deceit of Babylon is imminent for thousands of souls in England. We were speaking, some little time ago, of the evil of a sacramental system taking the place of perfect redemption in Christ. This is one of the effects of the blinding teaching of Babylon, and is pleasing to men who will never believe that that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and who willingly receive the teaching of sanctifying it in this way, though the flesh can never be sanctified. What we now wish to point out, is the utterly false position taken by the church as being queen of the world, and reigning, not by the power of the Holy Ghost, but by human power and wisdom, sustained by false teaching from the enemy.

Some few distinguishing marks of Babylon may be noticed; and in speaking of this, may God preserve all true believers from falling into her snares.

She is addicted to bright colours - purple, scarlet, and gold; that is, she has all the world's glory, and at the present time is making many efforts to attract souls by a display of such treasures. People seem never to tire of speaking of the good the church is doing with her resources and influence in the world. There has been, they say, quite an aesthetic revival during the last fifty years.

She talks much of the Lord Jesus, but in a carnal way, and as the Son of Mary. The Lord in the message to Thyatira in Revelation 2:1-29 presents Himself as Son of God. An impression may doubtless be made on the feelings in a "dim religious light" by such a hymn as "Jesus, Son of Mary, hear!" and by similar invocations; but all this leads away the soul from the true knowledge of the blessed Jesus, dead and risen, not known according to the flesh. (See 2 Corinthians 5:16.)

She will try to persecute and silence those who preach a simple, pure gospel that shows the ruin of man and the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ. She will insist that she alone has a right to dispense blessings, and that salvation is obtained through partaking of sacraments. She will speak of mysteries, having herself obscured and mystified what was blessedly plain and clear.

She will not recognise the mediation of Christ. "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The Lord Jesus has brought the believer to God in such a manner by His work, that he has perfect liberty in His presence, and knows that Jesus ever represents him in that presence. But we have, in the system we are speaking of, the priest taking the place of mediator, and coming between the conscience and God. Babylon's pontiff, with all his prestige and grandeur, is from the beginning an imposture; for the word of God shows us clearly that there is no priesthood of this kind now upon earth in Christianity (see Hebrews 7:1-28; Hebrews 8:1-13), and our blessed Lord Himself only became a priest after He was risen and ascended, having fully accomplished His work and purified our souls for ever. Babylon utterly ignores the priesthood of Christ, and has set up a worldly sanctuary of her own, forbidding true access to God.

Many more marks might be noticed, but we will leave these few preceding ones to the prayerful consideration of all readers; and should any be tempted to follow the attractions of Babylon, we pray the Lord in His mercy to open their eyes, that they may understand the full, perfect value of His work and His present care for His scattered sheep; and thus knowing Him, they may be proof against the wiles of Babylon. "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." E. L. B.

## S. Christ as Son over the House of God.

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Christ as Son over the House of God.

Hebrews 3:1-6.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 146.

It has often been pointed out to us that there is a peculiar glory and position of our Lord in Hebrews 3:6 of this passage of Scripture - that of Son over the house of God. The Holy Spirit, in Hebrews 3:1, calls attention to two offices of Christ which depend upon the glories of Hebrews 1:1-14 and Hebrews 2:1-18, the apostleship upon His divine words spoken on earth (Hebrews 1:1-14), and the high priesthood upon His perfect humanity (for the Word became flesh), so wonderfully presented to us in Hebrews 2:1-18.

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." It may be said that this is for converted and professing Jews, and that this is the force of "our." This is true, but the passage has its full force for us, and it is well for us to pause and consider these two glories of our Lord. In the day in which we live, it is a lamentable fact that Christendom is settled down as a vast earthly system; it is no longer the Holy Ghost calling to converted Jews to come out of the camp (Judaism), but rather awakening Christians to the true meaning of Christianity, and to that of the heavenly calling; hence the passage has a peculiar interest to all those who call themselves Christians. What is Christianity? Partakers of a heavenly calling are exhorted to consider the Apostle and High Priest in heaven. How many sincere souls repeat the "Apostles" Creed, and firmly believe in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, without knowing the import of His present position! And how many mere professors admit that He is ascended above all heavens and seated on high, and fervently wish that He may remain there and leave them to enjoy this world! They hope that the day "when He shall come, to be their judge," may be far distant! But God is awakening souls, and the grand fact of the heavenly calling is not a mere theory with every one, through God's grace. He has awakened, and is awakening His saints to the great truth of their vocation, and to the presence of the Lord at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and to the significance of this. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession." The glories of the heavenly Christ throw completely into the shade those of an earthly religion, and it was by contemplating by faith the Apostle and High Priest in heaven that the Jews who had believed were brought out from the tangible and visible things of a worldly sanctuary, so difficult to leave.

It is a most important exhortation in the present day, for one cannot really consider the Lord in these two characters without giving up the form of earthly religion into which, alas! Christendom has subsided. An earthly authority, a priesthood with its source down here, are two immense facts in that which calls itself the "Church," and the whole of this is set aside when our blessed Lord is known as the Apostle, now in heaven, but having the authority of His own divine Person (God has spoken in the Son) and as the High Priest, perfect Man in the presence of God in the highest

heaven, to sustain our souls there as we cross the wilderness. This when truly understood will bring a believer out of all earthly ritual; he will come out of the whole region of altars made after a worldly pattern, and of priestly vestments of whatever shape, to own the sole authority of Christ and His priesthood as pertaining to heaven. This brings us to the third glory of our blessed Lord, as Son over the house of God.

Moses is brought forward as a faithful servant, and in the interesting character of servant in the house of God. It is difficult to find a faithful servant, and Moses had a peculiar place and was faithful in it. But there is One whose glory is infinitely superior, and who occupies the place, not of servant in the house, but of Son over the house of God. And what is the house of God? No doubt in a general sense it is the universe itself, and we have the Son, by whose energy the universe was created (Hebrews 3:3-4), over the whole structure which He Himself built. "He who built all things is God." In a certain sense God deigns to dwell in the universe, and this has been clearly and well stated by another. But the house of God has another and more intimate signification: "Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." The believing Jews are called out of Judaism, and coming forth as a godly remnant, from earthly to heavenly things (with a Messiah no longer down here, but in the highest glory above) form the house of God. It is needless to say that the passage has its full application to us who were Gentiles; we are brought into these same blessed privileges, and we consider Christ Jesus as Apostle and High Priest, and have to do with Him as Son over the house of God.

It becomes a real practical question for us, for it is a question of obedience to the Son whilst we are here upon earth. If we have understood that the glorious Person of the chapter has made the purification of sins by Himself, that He alone has divine authority, and at the same time full compassion for us as the perfect Man of Hebrews 2:1-18, we can enter with joy and adoration into the meaning of His position as Son over the house of God. "He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses." Is it not perfectly beautiful - that is, the manner in which the Holy Ghost draws our attention to the divine and human glory of this one all-glorious Person? We are truly encouraged to hold fast the confidence and the joy of the hope to the end; for if we have been taught not to believe in human infallibility, and to reject an earthly priesthood, we have the infallible authority of the Son's word, His heavenly, untiring Priesthood, and with joy and thanksgiving we look up to Him - who created all things as God, and who became man and was made perfect through sufferings - who is Son over God's house. May we shew, in all our difficulties, that our trust is in Him, and may we own His authority in everything. E. L. B.

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

## S. Christ in the Midst of the Golden Lamps

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Christ in the Midst of the Golden Lamps Revelation 1:12-20. The symbolical description of our Lord's person in this passage has often been considered, but we shall not fail to find edification in it again.

It is of actual importance, for by faith we have to do with a living Christ, supreme in power and wisdom; with Him, that is, who became dead, and is living to the ages of the ages. He beholds everything that is passing in Christendom, and nothing that takes place can ever escape His eye. This is a precious resource for us, for the Lord would have us to place all confidence in Himself - "Fear not, I am the first and the last."

Surely divine wisdom and glory are seen here in the Son of man. The Ancient of days of Daniel 7:1-28 is identified in this passage with the Man who became dead and is alive for ever; the hair like white wool, and supreme authority vested in Him, both declare His majesty and right to judge.

He is clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and the golden girdle round the breast is as a zone to confine the affections. The love of Christ is there, as we well know by His messages to the churches, but He is here presented as Judge, and the golden belt of divine righteousness stands out in relief upon the long robe. Looking at the responsible body of Christendom, it is clear that it is not the time for the full and free exercise of the affections (though the Lord speaks of His love to some), but divine justice circumscribes the region of the heart, for there is much to be judged.

What a consolation to know this, and to confide in Him who judges aright. Nothing is more terrible than the history of the seven churches in a certain aspect, because the very worst forms of evil have come in there where the name of Christ is professed. How shocking the iniquities, both of Christianized Constantinople and Rome, to say nothing of other places. Nor is there less injustice at the present time than in earlier phases of history, though it be under the cloak of liberality in religious views. The golden girdle shines brightly to the eye of faith, and the symbol is received by those who wait on the Lord and love His appearing, as one of happiest augury. Justice is found in the Son of man supreme. His eyes as a flame of fire denote acute perception, unsparing of evil. How many hidden actions, ecclesiastical plots, concealed sin, simony, cruelty, have those eyes seen in church history? And we must not forget that the penetrating glance of Christ has always seen through that which is outward, down to the very motives and counsels of the hearts, and state of the consciences of all who come under the scope of His far-seeing view. Through the thick walls of inquisition prisons, through the robes of cardinals, through many specious pretexts, the eyes, like a flame of fire, have seen all, and are seeing all at this present moment, detecting the inmost thoughts of our souls. The feet, like fine brass as burning in the furnace, denote judgment. There is stability as well as the heat of the fire; and again we can by faith understand a symbol which without it would be incomprehensible. (To understand divine symbols we must be taught of God. When artists, men of genius, try to depict them they fall into lamentable mistakes.) The glowing brass of the feet corresponds to the golden zone above. Divine justice in the girdle, and execution in divine wrath upon earth in the fine brass. One may well tremble for those countries

which have received so many privileges, and made such a bad use of them. The voice was as the sound of many waters. When He speaks all must listen and obey, as we find further on in the Apocalypse. He is to be heard above all the noise and Babel of voices that rise from the field about to be judged. What a sight would be a bird's-eye view of Christendom, from Mexico and South America to solemn northern hypocrisy! But only One can see it, and see through it as we remarked, and He alone can make His voice heard - all shall obey Him. The seven stars are explained by the divine voice itself, the symbolic angels of the assemblies. The two-edged sword, which goes forth from His mouth, is clearly the word employed in judgment. As His glance detects, so His word reaches and deals unsparingly with evil, and those who allow it. I suppose that "making war against them with the sword of my mouth" is to be understood as the word applied in judgment.

Supreme authority is seen in the sun shining "in his strength." It is a well-known symbol, as when our Lord, upon the mountain of transfiguration, was seen for a moment in the sovereign place in the kingdom. His will is paramount, as when a bright eastern sun reigns over the whole landscape; everything feels its power, and his light and heat go to the very border of the circle of his rays.

We are not surprised that John fell at His feet as dead, for who would not be overcome in beholding the judicial majesty of Christ, and perceiving at the same time, to some extent, the state of Christendom? The Lord raises him, and reassures him, and together with the encouraging word, "Fear not," says that He is the First and the Last, and the Living One. We need to enter into the force of these expressions - there is the characteristic glory of Him who is here presented as Son of man, but how truly a Divine Person at the same time.

Notice too the peculiar expression, "I became dead."\* And now as living to the eternal ages the risen Jesus speaks of the keys of Hades and of death. They belong to Him. The whole invisible world is entirely in His power, in His keeping, and we have here a truth which reassures our souls. To Him, the Resurrection and the Life, the keys of death too are committed, and we may place unmeasured confidence in Him who tasted death for everything, and to whom all power is given. May we take fresh courage as we look towards Him who can and will sustain the faith of all those who seek to serve Him amidst the field over which judgment is impending. May He be in full view to each one who has ears to hear. E. L. Bevir.

\*The note in the New Translation is a valuable one.

## S. Consolation

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Consolation 2 Corinthians 1:1-24.

What a happy thing it is to be encouraged and strengthened by the God of resurrection at the very moment when the sentence of death is felt!

It was at a time of deep tribulation in the apostle's history that the consolation\* of the God who raises the dead made itself felt in his soul. God was present in His own blessed character of "Him who encourages those that are brought low" (2 Corinthians 7:6); and it is a good thing to pass through deep sorrow (as Paul and his companions here) where death makes itself felt, in order to be cheered by the living God, and, instead of fainting, to go on with fresh vigour. God's power - the power of resurrection - is felt in this path, and His compassion known.

\*The word in the fourth verse, "the God of consolation," is not merely expressive of tranquilizing comfort, but of cheering and encouragement, so that the afflicted ones felt fresh force and bravery to go on. And is it not to be desired in our day that each one of us may know more of the living God, each in his own proper path? We have been allowed to enter into the most wonderful truths in connection with God's glorious counsels. What we have before us now is the knowledge of God Himself in our present path, where we have to learn each day what death really is, and where we learn, at the same time, the true character of the Father of compassions and God of all encouragement.

It will be said, perhaps, that in 2 Corinthians 1:1-24 it is especially apostolic service that is in view, and, no doubt, that is the case; but there is no doubt either that we all - believers - in our life of service here have to learn the same lesson. Without having to go through the extreme persecution and trial which happened to the apostle and his companions in Asia, we have to learn not to trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead.

I shall never forget, many years ago, hearing an old servant of the Lord say about someone who was acting with great energy and driving forward in the cause of the gospel with a zeal worthy of Jehu himself: "It is magnificent, but it is not death and resurrection!" There is something analogous to this in this beautiful passage, for how different was all the service, the demeanour, and the perseverance of this broken man, who despaired even of living, from that which he had once been when he was Saul of Tarsus! . What a change! Here is one fully identified with God's interests on earth; the sufferings of the Christ abounded towards him; he was literally exposed to death every day; there was nothing but tribulation; the proud spirit of the Pharisee had disappeared, and in the midst of the crushing events that happened to him he went forward in no self-confidence, by a power that was not natural, cheered by the very God whose power kept him. I have often thought that no insurance company would ever have cared to insure the life of Paul; it was really worth nothing as the world sees things.

He affirms that all other Christians are partakers of the sufferings. And in our day, though there be no outward persecution, we have each one to learn daily, and not without deep sorrow, what trial,

suffering, and death mean to us who are identified with Christ; and it is in this path that the God who encouraged Paul the apostle in all his tribulation will cheer and fortify our souls. The thought of entering the glory and of meeting "no stranger-God" is very blessed.

"There no stranger-God shall meet thee (Stranger thou in courts above)."

It is now that we learn to know Him whose heart is made known to His own in the very valley of the shadow of death. But there is another thing. The apostle was encouraged in all the tribulation so as to learn to encourage all those who were passing through trial.

We have to learn by the very means used by God to cheer us how to lend a helping hand to those in deep trouble. And is there anything more beautiful than to see a hand stretched out in real sympathy to those who are ready to perish? Of all the pictures I have seen it is this that I think the fairest: a hand stretched out to help the afflicted.

Whether in tribulation, it was for their encouragement and salvation; or whether they were encouraged, it was to the same end. And the end of the long struggle was not doubtful. He who had raised the Lord Jesus should raise them also with Jesus, and present them with the Corinthians.

All should end in triumph and resurrection glory; and He who should bring in this final victory was leading them on with resurrection power. It was in this path that the depths of His compassions were known; and He who shall bring in eternal blessing in divine power could cheer and strengthen His afflicted servants by the coming of Titus. So He cheers, so He strengthens us each day, beloved brethren, on our way to eternal glory. May we know more and more of His consolation! E. L. Bevir.

We have the privilege of forgetting self and living to Christ. Living to God inwardly, is the only possible means of living to Him outwardly. All outward activity not moved and governed by this is fleshly, and even a danger to the soul. . . . I dread great activity without great communion. J. N. Darby. When Christ went up to heaven, was He not competent to keep a people here separate from the world, in spite of all that Satan would do? But how are they kept? By what is earthly? No, but by the Spirit of God using truth connected with Christ in heaven. It is heavenly truth that keeps His people. G. V. Wigram.

## S. Do ye now believe?

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"Do ye now believe?"

John 16:1-33.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 17, 1890, p. 258.

It has often been remarked, that the disciples in this passage were wrong in saying that they had understood the Lord's words, and that "they were sure," etc. (5: 30.) The difference between their state before and after the coming of the Holy Ghost has been also fully insisted upon. Bearing this in mind, it may be useful to meditate, for a few moments, on the deep lesson conveyed in the blessed Lord's words at the end of this chapter. (John 16:1-33.) He was speaking to eleven persons who had believed that He had come forth from God, had seen, heard, and loved Him (John 16:27); and this fact constituted the grand difference between them and the world who (John 15:22-25) had seen, heard, and hated both Him and the Father. They (the eleven to whom He was speaking) had tastes widely different from those of the world; they had a new nature. Love and hate are two extremes. But the point I wish to dwell upon is this, that the true knowledge of the Son's deity, and of His coming forth from the Father, and going to the Father, is a divine gift. It will be said that this is nothing new. Granted; but it is difficult to admit that all is of God, and not allow the mind to work - to be subject to divine action. The disciples had believed that Jesus had come forth from God. In receiving Him, they had received infinitely more than they had supposed, and this reception was not of the natural man. Then the Lord says (John 16:28) that He had come forth, not merely from God, but from the Father into the world; and that now He is about to leave the world to go to the Father. This the disciples understood not.

It has been often remarked that the only begotten Son did not leave the Father's bosom "who is in the bosom of the Father"); but He came forth from the Father, and in the exercise of divine and infinite power laid aside the majesty of the glory to appear in this world at Bethlehem. What was the distance between that glory and Bethlehem? Oh, subject infinitely beyond us, and yet open to our hearts for eternity! And now, rejected by the world, He was going to the Father. It is at this wonderful point that the disciples show the ignorance that they were so disposed at all times to display. (John 16:29-30) "Thou speakest openly . . . now we are sure that thou knowest all things." They were treading on dangerous ground in saying, "We are sure." The only infallible Person present in this world at the present time is the Holy Ghost. Others have pretended to infallibility, and miserably failed; a Christian as subject to the Spirit and the revealed Word may say "we know," but no one else. The eleven had not yet received the Holy Ghost, and show by their expression, "we believe that Thou art come forth from God," that they had understood nothing of what the Lord had said of having come forth from the Father. Our blessed Lord's answer is worthy of all remark. He does not allude to their pretended knowledge, but says, "Do ye now believe?" The divine perception by faith of His Person as Son of the Father was wanting. They had believed

sincerely in Him as come forth from God, but faith in the Son, by whom the world is overcome, was unknown to them with all their boasting. Their tastes, we have noticed, were widely different from those of the world, but on that very night it would be shown (John 16:32) that they knew not, by faith, the glory and divine Sonship of the One they loved, and the world should overcome them. "Do ye now believe?" They should be scattered, and every one go to his own house, and leave Jesus alone. The scattering and going to one's own house should display all their weakness and selfishness; no human power could keep them together, and then each one thought of his own personal safety; the Lord abandoned, though not alone. So much for man's wisdom and pretension! In "that day" all should be changed.

We, beloved brethren, have received the Holy Ghost, and (1 John 5:4-5) divinely given faith in the Son of God, who has overcome the world. Are we, in practice and in truth, walking so that our peace is in Him? I mean the peace of a heart truly dependent upon Him in the midst of tribulation. (John 16:33) We are living in days when man's knowledge is at a premium, Laodicea has grown rich, and even faith is looked upon as a kind of human accomplishment. Do we believe, dear brethren, in the Son of God? Victory over the world is attached to this true faith; all else must end in utter confusion. E. L. B.

## S. Faint yet pursuing

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"Faint yet pursuing."

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 162. WITH each countenance turned to the orient side, Come on the Three Hundred to Jordan's swift tide;

Jehovah has called them, and onward they go, So weary and faint, yet pursuing the foe. The Lord drew His sword in His glory and might, When the lamps shone like stars in the dead of the night; When the Midianite hosts turned and fled in dismay From a cake of baked barley and pitchers of clay. The Angel had come to the chief's lowly home, And appeared in the fire as Jehovah-Shalom Now deep be thy peace, and profound thy repose, 'Tis He that appoints thee to scatter His foes.

O Lord, give us hearts to reply to the call, To make a surrender of self - nay, of all! Not pausing to stoop or to kneel at the brink, But lapping, like dogs, without stopping to drink.

O Lord, give us hearts to pursue without fear, Though Succoth may slander and Penuel sneer; For yet a few hours, by the power of our God, And Satan himself 'neath our feet shall be trod.

Wouldst be seeking for solace, or turn from the fray, When the Lord of the battle is leading the way?

'Tis Jesus that calls us, and forward we go, So weary and faint, yet pursuing the foe.

E. L. Bevir.

## S. Faith and Patience.

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Faith and Patience.

Hebrews 11:32-40; Hebrews 12:1-3.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 18, 1891, p. 258. At the end of the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews we are associated with those who walked by faith in old times, though it be blessedly true that some better thing is provided of God for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

Those who walk by faith in the midst of a world where all is conducted on the principle of sight (as I once saw in a book of political economy, "with a view to make the best possible use of the resources of this planet"), must not expect to be understood or appreciated here, but the reverse. If it be true that our treasure is in heaven, that we belong to a heavenly ascended Christ, and that we have our part in the heavenly city, all our resources are in quite a different sphere to that of sight. Yes, we belong to another world, and not to this infidel system in which we are but as pilgrims, and which believes more in man and man's resources than in Christ. The better thing provided for us, and which distinguishes us from the Old Testament saints, is fully brought out in the Hebrews, for the first chapter shows us at once the heavens opened, and the divine glory of Him who is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and the second chapter, the wondrous perfect humanity of Him now risen from the dead, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, and the stupendous fact that He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one! We belong to a heavenly Christ; we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour: well may we sing, Gloria in excelsis! (Glory in the highest!) No doubt the illustrious band of witnesses were not in the Christian position, but they could not come to perfection without us, more favoured as we are. They could not see what we see; they could not understand John 20:1-31, for they were not in it; but I wish to insist upon the principle of faith, common to them and to us. Perfection refers to the glorified Christ and the state of things connected with Him (compare John 6:1); there is no perfectibility of the human race by any human or earthly means. This is important, for people are boasting now in the world of bringing man to perfection, and I saw a statement not long ago that the human race had accomplished two-sevenths of a perfection. Even were this true (and nothing could be more false), the remaining five-sevenths are very far off indeed!

No; perfection is alone to be found now in the glorified Man at God's right hand. May God give us to enter into His thoughts about it. But let us just notice the path of faith. I say that the Holy Spirit, whilst insisting on the better thing for us, identifies us with the noble army of believers, and it is a good thing to study their walk. At the end of the eleventh chapter a company of poor, weak, despised people triumphed over all the powers and forces of the world - lions, fire, sword, and the rest; and overcame by faith all the obstacles along the path that led to a city that hath foundations. Faith is not imagination. A poet may imagine heaven, as may be seen, for example, in many a poem; but this is mere fiction, has no existence. Faith knows what is real. A real glorified Jesus; a

real city, whose builder and maker is God. Faith puts us in living connection with a real, living Lord, who has triumphed over death. The Old Testament saints saw afar off the celestial city; they knew the living God, and what was the effect? Do we enter into this? Oh, how ill this world used them! (I have thought sometimes that Pharaoh was a student of political economy, from his theory of suppression of the Hebrew population.) If we had to be wandering, clad in goatskins and sheepskins, instead of broadcloth; and to sleep in caves and dens of the earth, instead of going quietly to bed - should we appreciate the honour? "Of whom the world was not worthy." Well, we belong to the company of faith. I have sometimes thought that a little persecution might do us no harm, though it be not the time for it now. We see the things that are invisible, we belong to Christ in heaven, and there is not one single thing here to help us in the walk of faith; all must come from above.

John 12:1-50 begins with practical exhortation for us, and here patience comes in. Laying aside every weight is one thing; sin is another. Many things that are not sin are weights; this has often been spoken of. The prize is too glorious, the race too serious, to be carrying weight. Far be it from me to speak against any family ties, and duties, and daily work, but weight is rather taking upon oneself what is a hindrance to the race to the heavenly goal, to the glory. I once knew a Christian who built a house in such massive style that he was asked by another, "Have you built that domicile for the millennium?" His heart was but too evidently in the bricks and mortar; and this, or any other thing that impedes us in the race, is weight.

"Let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Christian patience is not a mere natural phlegmatic quality, it must not be confounded with this. Some people naturally have not enough spirit to be impatient, but when a naturally ardent, impatient man shows all patience, as the converted Saul of Tarsus, we may be sure that he has learnt of Him who is meek and lowly of heart. We can afford to wait; we shall soon be with Jesus, and like Him for ever.

"Looking off unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith"; what a blessed thing to contemplate, the One perfect model! Many had walked by faith, but the blessed Lord is the author and finisher of it. He fulfilled the perfect career of faith in lowly grace, from the beginning to the end. In this epistle it has been remarked that our blessed Lord throws everything and every one else far into the shade. May we look off from everything else unto Him! "For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself." I think that in the gospels the Pharisees were the great opponents of Christ, attacking Him on religious grounds, seeking to entangle Him in His words, in order to crush Him by gainsaying and contradiction. Perhaps, in the present state of Christendom, if we are faithful, in our little measure, to an unseen heavenly Christ, we may taste a little of similar opposition. It is not the day for Smithfield fires and dungeons; but it is impossible that there be not opposition if we are faithful to Christ and to our calling. We have need of faith and patience; and may we consider Him, lest we be weary and faint in our minds! E. L. B.

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We want the heavenly calling to give power to take up the cross; and it is in proportion as we are dead to things here, that the heavenly things are realised.

## S. Galilee and Jerusalem

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### Galilee and Jerusalem

Mark 16:1-20.

It has very often been remarked that we have two terminations to the gospel history of our blessed Lord one being in a scene laid in Galilee, the other in Jerusalem and Bethany. The first aspect of the gathering of the disciples in Galilee corresponds to the assembling of the earthly tribes in the last days, as fully shown to us in Isaiah (see Mark 9:1-7, etc.); whereas the second is rather that of the Jewish remnant which becomes the Church, and is in connection with a heavenly calling and testimony. At the end of Mark's gospel, we find the two terminations. The first eight verses correspond with our first aspect; then the remainder of the passage goes with the second.\*

\*Though this is not a paper on critical questions, yet it may be well to state that I suppose that none of our readers reject the Mark 16:9-20; surely there is abundant evidence that they form part of Scripture, whatever Tischendorf may say.

I would very briefly note one or two things in these two passages in Mark; calling attention, first of all, to the well known character of this gospel, that of our blessed Lord's service.

1. The sun has risen in this first part, and the declaration of the angel is that they (the women) shall see Jesus in Galilee, where He is gone before them. The aromatic spices were useless, like many other things that have cost much and are of no use for the present time; the stone was rolled away; Jesus was risen, and the glory of the risen Messiah should be known in His splendid kingdom. The whole earth should be full of His glory, as the risen sun was filling it physically with light and warmth. The Sun of righteousness, with healing in his wings, should arise (Malachi 4:1-6); Israel and the whole earth should be brought into blessing. Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified, was risen, and should precede the faithful into Galilee; full earthly blessing is assured.

2. The second part is of the greatest importance to us, and I merely wish to notice the mission given here to the apostle, the services of Christ in connection with His heavenly position, and the heavenly calling of the Church.

It is evident that the ninth verse begins a fresh subject, and Mary of Magdala is mentioned, as we find in John 20:1-31, to whom the risen Saviour declared the blessed and heavenly relationship of His own with His Father and God, and whom He sent with the glorious message to the disciples. This would seem to be emphatically stated (notice the pronoun) in John 20:10. This is distinctly connected with a new and heavenly order of things.

Then in Luke 24:12, we have the journey to Emmaus, which is given us in detail in Luke 24:1-53, which surely is an introduction to our blessed Lord's new position in glory; and again notice the emphasis on the pronoun in Luke 24:13, "They went and told it unto the residue."

Then comes the mission to which I have alluded, and which no doubt is given to us in Luke. The point I wish to dwell upon is the complete victory of the Lord over the powers of evil, and His sending out the gospel to the whole creation. Happy they who enter into the thought at the end of the passage, where the Lord, from the glory, carries on His ministry, working with them whom He has sent out in this glorious labour, and strengthening them to the end.

It may be well to notice that Mary Magdalene and the two going to Emmaus are spoken of before the commission is given to His servants; for I presume that, as we have noticed, the relationship and full heavenly position are made known - fully announced - before true Christian service begins. Then the service is given. The good news is to be preached in all the creation; and the signs of the complete victory over evil are announced. Demons should be cast out: the first source of evil to man was their coming in.

Then the Babel was counteracted; the terrible confusion of tongues, so justly merited by mankind, should be overcome through perfect grace. They should speak with new tongues. Serpents should be taken up, and poison have no effect. Although, no doubt, these wonderful gifts were not permanent (see, for instance, Acts 28:1-31), yet they form a wonderful picture of victory over evil, and of the superiority of the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ over all the adversary's power.

Then they should lay hands on the sick, and they should be healed. We must not wonder at the amount of sickness and number of invalids in this serpent-bitten earth, where so much poison is freely circulated, and so readily bought and consumed. Sickness is very general; but the sick should be healed.

Jesus is still seated at the right hand of God in heaven; and is still from the glory directing the service of those whom He has sent forth. The mission is glorious indeed, for we are sent out into the domain of death, suffering, sickness, and confusion of tongues, to announce the good news of the God of glory; and to bring into this afflicted earth life, joy, healing, and peace.

I speak of the principles of Christian service, and of the present place of our exalted Lord; taking the symbolic gifts to His first servants as a moral encouragement to us all till He comes. May we fulfil our mission! E. L. Bevir.

"That which hinders" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-17) is in general only an instrument, a means, which prevents the manifestation of the man of sin - the wicked one. So long as the assembly is on earth, the pretension to be God in His temple cannot take place, or at least would have no influence. Satan has his sphere, and must needs have it, in the mystery of iniquity; but there is no longer a mystery when the place of God in His temple is openly taken. That which hinders is, therefore, still present. But there is a person active in maintaining this hindrance. Here I think indeed that it is God in the Person of the Holy Ghost, who, during the time called "the things that are," restrains the evil and guards divine authority in the world. As long as that subsists, the unrestrained exaltation of wickedness cannot take place. Consequently I do not doubt but that the rapture of the saints is the occasion of the hindrance being removed. J. N. Darby.

## S. Grace

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Grace Numbers 17:1-13; Numbers 20:1-29.

Take the green rod of Aaron, Near the Shekinah kept, That blossom'd in the night-time While selfish Israel slept; The flowers and fruit in clusters Miraculously grew O branch of grace and mercy To lead the people through! The fountain of fresh waters Ever and ever flows. The service in the highest No interruption knows; The great High Priest, untiring Presents us to His God: For ever bright and vernal Buds the fair almond rod. The rod which budded and brought forth flowers and fruit in Numbers 17:1-13 represents grace in the priesthood in the power of resurrection. Moses' rod was death and judgment; the Red Sea had been divided with it. E. L. Bevir.

## S. I Will Come Again

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### "I Will Come Again"

Nothing is more prominently brought forward in the New Testament than the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the first comfort of the angels to the sorrowing disciples: "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11.) And if you turn to 1 Thessalonians you will find it presented in the end of every chapter as a common doctrine. It was not at all a strange thing - immediately after conversion to the living God - "to wait for His Son from heaven, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." Again, in Hebrews 9:1-28, we read that "once in the end of the world He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself . . . and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." In 1 Thessalonians it is presented in the way of warning as well as the object of the blessed hope of saints: "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." From this we see the amazing difference between the coming of Christ for this world, and for those who trust in Him. To the world He comes as a Judge of both quick and dead (see Malachi), but in this, John 14:1-31, we find a wonderful difference in the whole principle and spirit of a believer's expectation of Christ.

"Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (Revelation 1:7.) "But who may abide the day of His coming? and who shall stand when He appeareth?" (Malachi 3:2.) Dear reader, let me ask you, Can you stand before Him at that day? Do you think that you would have confidence before Him at His coming? Could you say, "Lo, this is our God, we have waited for Him"? This is He whom I have loved and longed for? Men always judge according to what is suited to themselves. In 1 Thessalonians 4:1-18 it is said, "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Now, are you suited to be ever with the Lord? Have you this confidence? If it is founded on anything good in yourself, it is a vain ground of confidence. Peter, as soon as he found himself in the presence of the Lord, felt that he was not suited for the Lord. I am too corrupt, he said. This was a true judgment of Peter; and love for the dignity of the Lord, and for holiness. If you are content that holiness should be lowered that you may get off, you do not care for holiness, though you do for getting off. The moment I have seen the holiness of the Lord, and that happiness is in holiness, there is the immediate feeling of my unfitness for that holiness, though there may be the longing for it, which the Lord will doubtless in mercy answer.

Two things are needed thus to meet the Lord. First, the conscience must be right. I may have the kindest father, yet, if my conscience is not right, I cannot be glad to meet him; and, secondly, affections must be there - the Lord must be my portion. If my heart is on literature, or on anything else here, I shall not like to be where Jesus is. I shall rather be here for a time. If you like the world, you are fit for the world. Heaven is just the contrary, and you know it; and, therefore, you do not

want to go there, because it would take you from being here in the world. There is the comfort of the gospel. It did bring down to men's consciences all that would attract God. But, alas! men no more desired the Lord's company here than they do there. The coming and rejection of Christ here is the plain proof that the world is not fit for Him, and He is not fit for them. But now to turn to John 14:1-31. We find persons here the opposite of all that is in the world. "Let not your heart be troubled." About what? His leaving them. Their happiness, comfort, and joy was in having Christ with them. But now, He says, I am going, but I am not going to be happy without you. There is plenty of room for you. The thing with which He at once comforts their hearts is this, "I will come again." I cannot stay down here in this vile place, I am going to prepare a place for you; but I will come again, and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also. The Lord reckons on this satisfying their hearts; and their consciences did not hinder. "The Father's house"! Oh, they could go there! "I will receive you unto Myself." He knew the chord that rang in their hearts: to be with Himself - the source of all blessing. Thus we get the character of these disciples; they were persons whom the absence of Jesus distressed, and whom the presence of Jesus would comfort, not here, but with Himself.

There we find what begot this character. It was all founded on His own word. We do not care for what does not concern us. But as soon as we see a thing that concerns us, it becomes important, and then we want certainty. Now it is very blessed to have God's own word for the basis of our certainty. For instance, I am a sinner. How, then, can I get into the Father's house? Because God has said, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more." Well, God is true, and He will not remember them. Do you say I am presumptuous to say so? I do not say so; God says so; and again in John 5:24, "He that heareth My word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation"; and John 3:33, "He that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." Thus, when the power of the Spirit brings home the word, I have certainty. Faith is in the word, but it is about something. Christ is presented, and man is brought to the test. People always judge by their inclination, and not by their reasoning. Now the effect of the testimony of the Spirit of God, when Christ is revealed, is that men are not fit for Him, and their hearts do not like to be with Him.

These disciples had loved the Lord. Christ had attraction for their hearts. There at once we see the object of their heart's affections. Christ had fixed their hearts. Take Mary Magdalene, for instance; she was all wrong in her intelligence, yet Christ had attraction for her heart. So with the rest of the disciples. They all ran away for fear, but it was love to Christ that brought them into the place of fear. Thus we see that Christ Himself was the object of their hearts. They were the companions of Christ - all fear being gone - according to His love and grace. "Ye are they," He said, "who have continued with Me in My temptations." Why, He had continued with them, but He speaks as if indebted to them for this fellowship. And being in companionship with Christ in heart, He brings them into all the joy into which He is going - nothing less than the Father's house. What attracts is found in Christ, and then it gets from Him the certain assurance that He is coming, and coming for me. Now, when the heart is on Christ, what a thing it is to know that He is coming. Am I afraid? No, I am looking for Him. And it is to His Father's house He is to bring me. All that makes heaven a home to Christ will make it a home to me. O, come, Lord Jesus! If I have learnt to love Christ, I have learnt to love holiness, to love God. God, in Christ, has brought down to my soul all that God is. What shall I get in heaven? Another Christ? 'Another God? No. It is the One we have seen and

known. "Whither I go ye know"; I am going to the Father, and you have seen the Father in me.

Ah! but He has not given up His holiness, perhaps you reply. No, indeed He has not. But Jesus knew all that is needed for me to be with Him. And if He will make the heart to love, He will put the conscience perfectly at rest, that I may love Him. Will He do that by dulling it? No. He will do something that will enable me to stand in the presence of God, in whose presence I am to find my joy. He reveals fully God in His holiness, and takes away the sin that would hinder my being in the presence of that holiness. And not only does He put sin away, but He purges the conscience here, so that I am enabled to enjoy God in full and free affection.

Nothing is more attractive than the death of Christ: but, besides that, it puts away the sin of which I was guilty; an act in which I had no part; an act the proof of perfect love, while it meets perfect righteousness. I had done the sins, and I could not undo them. Jesus said to Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me." This touched Peter's heart. If you are not cleansed according to My cleansing - according to what suits God's presence - you have no part with Me. Oh, what a comfort! Instead of saying, "Depart from Me," Jesus said, "Now you are clean." And in Peter we see the proof of a good conscience. He said to the Jews, "Ye denied the Holy One and the Just"; the very thing he himself had done fifty days before. Now a man will talk of every sin but what he is guilty of; he will shirk that. But here Peter was in perfect peace about the very sin he was guilty of; his conscience was perfectly purged. The happiness of the heart that is touched is to be with Christ; and conscience is purged for being in His presence. Between the Lord's saying this, and coming for them, He had put away sin from God's sight, and from their conscience. "I will come again, and take you unto Myself," &c., and "Whither I go ye know." There is no uncertainty. We know where we are going. The soul has found fully the object that has set it at rest, and that will satisfy it up there without fear. Could the Lord thus address you? Could you say, "Oh, that is what I am wanting"? Or are you saying, "I've got here what I would like to enjoy"? Is that being a Christian? A Christian may vary in strength of affection; never in object. I am sure I do not love the Lord enough; but I am sure it is the Lord I love. I have no confidence in my own heart; but all confidence in Him. He has died for me; that is what I count on. He has put away my sins; that is what I need. He is coming again; that is what I am longing for.

Dear reader, let me ask you, Was it ever a trouble to you that you had not Christ? Do you know where you are going? It may be you have hope; but have you present certainty? Now we Christians have; for Christ is known, and when He is known there is perfect rest in His word. "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." J. N. Darby.

## S. In Christ Jesus

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### In Christ Jesus Romans, 1 Corinthians

There is much valuable instruction in considering how the Apostle Paul uses "in Christ" and "in Christ Jesus", for these terms are widely used, sometimes in relation to the Person of Christ, to the blessings or resources that we have in Christ, to our standing before God in divine righteousness, to the new creation work of God in His saints, to the service of Christ, and to other aspects of the truths of Christianity. While on earth the Lord Jesus spoke of the believer being in Him, as in John 6:56, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me" and in John 14:20, "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me". The same precious truth is taught in John's 1st Epistle, for we not only know that we abide in the Son as having the Holy Spirit in us (1 John 4:13), but "we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:20). It is a most wonderful privilege to have our part and place before God in His Son, being where we share all the blessing secured for us through the death of Jesus, in His place of relationship, affection and communion. The Epistle to the Romans In Romans 3:24 believers in the Lord Jesus are "justified freely by His (God's) grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus", our being free from every charge of guilt founded on the efficacy of the work done by the Lord Jesus on the cross, and abiding in Him as risen from the dead. Our standing in grace and redemption before God is also seen in Romans 8:1, for there is "now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus". The Christian is therefore viewed as being in Him in whom the redemption is, and as having divine life in Christ, for the Apostle adds in Romans 8:2, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death". So that the believer, his redemption and the divine life imparted are all viewed as in Christ Jesus. At the end of Romans 8:1-39 we learn of "the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord", from which nothing can separate us, for, as has been said, if we are in Christ Jesus, and the love of God is in Christ Jesus, how could it be possible to separate us from God's love? We are not only viewed in Romans as being individually in Christ, but also collectively or corporately, for "we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another" (Romans 12:5). Then, in Romans 16:1-27, those who help in the service of Christ are spoken of as "helpers in Christ" (Romans 16:3; Romans 16:9); those who were Christians before Paul "were in Christ before me" (Romans 16:7) and a faithful Christian was viewed as "approved in Christ" (Romans 16:10). The First Epistle to the Corinthians Our standing before God in Christ Jesus is not what we are in the Christian profession, but what God has done for us, even as it is written in 1 Corinthians 1:30, "of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption". It is as being in Christ that we have all these rich blessings. We may be but "babes in Christ", spiritually weak, but Christ is our wisdom to whom we can go for wisdom at all times: He is our righteousness, for we have none of our own: He is the One in whom we are set apart for God's will: and He is our redemption, both as having redeemed us from the consequences of our sins, and who, at His coming to redeem the acquired possession, will redeem us from this world through which we pass through the redemption of the body".

Many servants of the Lord are "instructors in Christ", making known God's will to His saints, and there were such at Corinth, but the saints there owed their God-given place in Christ to Paul, as the instrument used of God, to bring them divine life through the Gospel (1 Corinthians 4:15). On account of this there was a real bond of affection between those who were blessed and the servant of God who was the means of their blessing, and it was this that gave Paul the desire that the saints at Corinth might walk in the truth of Christianity; and to secure this Paul sent Timothy to them to bring them into remembrance of his ways "in Christ", that they might walk as Christians, as they had seen him walk (1 Corinthians 4:17). When true believers in the Lord Jesus die, they have "fallen asleep in Christ" 1 Corinthians 15:18, for their body sleeps while they, having been set free from their body of humiliation, are present with the Lord in the heavenly paradise. Such have died with their "hope in Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:19), the hope of having their bodies changed into the likeness of Christ's body of glory at His coming again. If "in Christ" in 1 Corinthians 15:22 covers the whole human race, as coming under Christ as the "Head of every man" (1 Corinthians 11:3), then it would mean in the power of Christ shall all men be raised from death again, true believers at the rapture of the saints to heaven, and the rest of the dead to stand before the great white throne. The Christians' boast, in the midst of trials and suffering, is "in Christ", who will raise them from among the dead (1 Corinthians 15:31). At the very close of the epistle, Paul sent his love to the Corinthian saints because they were "in Christ" as believers in Him who was coming again (1 Corinthians 16:24). The Second Epistle to the Corinthians

God has called us by His grace that we might be here as witnesses for Him, established "in Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:21), mature Christians, knowing in truth that we have been anointed with the Spirit of God for His service, that we have been claimed for God by the divine seal of His Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit gives us the blessed foretaste in spiritual blessing and joy of all that we are to share with Christ in the coming day, according to the promises of God that are affirmed and confirmed in Christ. At the close of 2 Corinthians 2:1-17, Paul views his service to the Lord as a triumphal procession, saying, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place" (2 Corinthians 2:14). The Gospel gave character to those who made it known, so that they were "unto God a sweet savour of Christ", whether in those who accepted the testimony, or in those who rejected it. The message of Christ to those who refused it was a savour of death that brought death to them, but it was a savour of life bringing divine life to those who believed the preaching. How great, how solemn the issues raised in the preaching, so that Paul might well say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Yet he counted on God and His grace, presenting, as God's servant, the word in its purity, speaking "in Christ" the truth of Christ in the sight of God. In 2 Corinthians 3:1-18 the Apostle reminds the saints of the veil that was upon the face of Moses that hid the glory of the old covenant from the people of Israel; then he tells them that God's glory is still hidden from Israel through the rejection of Christ, but for the believer the veil is "done away in Christ" (2 Corinthians 3:14). It is in Christ in heaven that we see the divine glory shining without a veil, and occupation with Christ in glory has a trans-forming effect on the believer as he passes through this world. The new creation is an entirely new work of God in the hearts of His saints, even as it is written in 2 Corinthians 5:17, "So if any one be in Christ (there is) a new creation: The old things have passed away; behold all things have become new". We have an entirely new state as being "in Christ", for God has formed us in a new creation order of things that belongs to heaven and to eternity. The time is coming when God will bring into being "a new heaven and a new earth", when the first heaven and the first

earth, which we see today, will have passed away, and then God will make "all things new" (Revelation 21:1; Revelation 21:5). Already we belong to that new eternal scene as being in Christ, as being God's workmanship, and we can even now enjoy that which belongs to the heavenly and eternal scene.

All who belong to Christ should be marked by "the simplicity that is in Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:3). This simplicity is the antithesis of the subtlety with which "the serpent beguiled Eve" and which is one of the characteristics of a world away from God. The Lord Jesus spoke of the simplicity which should mark His own, when He said, "The lamp of the body is thine eye: when thine eye is simple, thy whole body also is light" (Luke 11:34). A single eye to the interests of Christ will keep us free from the world and its spirit, while the mind will be engaged with Christ and His things.

We have seen in 2 Corinthians 5:1-21 that the Christian is viewed as a new creation, a man in Christ, and the Apostle views himself in this way in 2 Corinthians 12:1-21, saying, "I know a man in Christ", then writes of his wonderful experience in being caught up into the third heaven, into paradise, where he heard "unspeakable things said which it is not allowed to man to utter" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Paul views himself as God saw him, in Christ, apart from all that gave character to him as living in this world in flesh and blood condition, and it is our privilege to take account of ourselves, and of our brethren, in this way. How blessed it is to view ourselves and our brethren in Christ, as having no other features than the features of Christ, features that are ours in new creation, where there is nothing that we have received from Adam, the first man. Then, in protesting to the saints his sincerity in his work for Christ towards them, the Apostle writes, "We speak before God in Christ: but we do all things, dearly beloved, for your edifying" (2 Corinthians 12:19). The Epistle to the Galatians When Paul went up to Jerusalem the first time after his conversion, he was "unknown personally to the assemblies of Judea which (are) in Christ" (Galatians 1:22). Paul had been well known to the gatherings of the Jews in Jerusalem when he was a persecutor, but he was not known to the Christian assemblies, for they had not as yet seen him. After fourteen years Paul went again to Jerusalem, very much aware that there were "false brethren . . . who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 2:4). How blessed it was for the godly Jew to be set free from the system of bondage and to be brought into Christian liberty. The professed Christian has "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27), and the profession may be real or may not be real, but in the new creation circle all distinctions have been done away, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). In the Christian circle it is of no importance whether a man has been circumcised or not; what is of all importance is that faith in Christ and divine love mark us all (Galatians 5:6). The Apostle again stresses, in Galatians 6:15, that circumcision is of no importance to the Christian, "but new creation", and we are to walk through this world in the light and power of this great truth. The Epistle to the Ephesians

Writing from his prison in Rome, the Apostle Paul addressed "the saints which are at Ephesus, and . . . the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1:1). The saints at Ephesus were true Christians, faithful in their testimony for Christ and holding fast the truth in which they had been instructed. The Apostle was thus able to open up to them the wonderful counsels of God for the blessing of His own. In doing so, Paul blesses the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, "who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Israel's blessings were material blessings on earth, but the Christian's blessings are heavenly, spiritual

and in Christ. We look up to Christ in heaven, knowing that we have no blessing outside of Him. In Him our blessings are eternal and of the richest and most wonderful kind. They are in association with Christ, and can never be lost, for we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, before we had any being. By nature we were sinners, far from God, but God, in the riches of His grace, has forgiven our sins on the ground of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, secured by the shedding of His precious blood (Ephesians 1:7). According to the counsels of God, God will "gather together in one all things in Christ" in the administration of the fulness of times, when all things in heaven and all things on earth will come under Christ the Head over all (Ephesians 1:10). When Christ takes possession of all things, we shall share the inheritance with Him, but we already have an inheritance in Him, according to the purpose of God. Faith in Him, with whom we shall share all, has even now given us the Holy Spirit as the seal of God and as the earnest of the inheritance we shall possess with Christ in the day of His millennial glory (Ephesians 1:11-13). To secure all that lay in God's eternal purpose, the Son of God lay in death, having passed through all the judgment of the cross; but to give effect to all that God had purposed in a risen Christ, God intervened and raised Him from the dead. It was according "to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ" that God stepped in to defeat Satan and to secure all He had purposed in eternity. There had never been such a manifestation of God's power as this, for all the hosts of spiritual darkness would have kept, had they been able, God's Christ in death. Not only did God take Christ out from the realm of death, but He put Him on the very highest place in heaven, above all the great names of this and the coming ages. In His place of exaltation, Christ has the church as His companion, His body and His bride, for the display of the coming day.

If, in 1 Corinthians 1:3, we are viewed as blessed in Christ, in Ephesians 2:6 we are seen as sitting down, converted Jew and Gentile together, "in heavenly places in Christ". This is how God views His own, and it is our privilege to take account of ourselves as being there. We who were once dead in sins God has quickened together with Christ, giving us His life, and, in raising us up, has given us Christ's place before Him. Soon, for the ages to come, God will display the exceeding riches of His grace to the universe in the kindness shown to His saints "in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). Nothing less than our sharing Christ's place in the coming display of His glory would serve to show how exceeding kind God is, and how wonderful is His rich grace to those who once were sinners. Our place before God "in Christ" is one of nearness to Him, and this has been secured by the blood of Christ. The preciousness of Christ's Person makes known the blessedness of the place of affection that we have in nearness to God, and only the infinite value of His precious blood could have procured this for us. We have been made suitable for this near place by Christ's precious blood (Ephesians 2:13), but also as being God's workmanship, "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10). If we are to display God's kindness in the coming day, He has given us the new creation state in Christ to manifest what He is, in testimony for Him now. In Christ, Jew and Gentile have been formed together into one new man (Ephesians 2:15), and in Christ we are growing "unto an holy temple in the Lord" (Ephesians 2:21), a wonderful shrine from which Christ's glory will shine forth in the coming day, in the day when He Will be acknowledged Lord of all. In Ephesians 3:11 we learn that God's eternal purpose is "in Christ Jesus our Lord", for it was not only through Christ and His finished work, but in Christ personally, that God's purpose was to be secured. Moreover, it is in those who are in Christ that God is even now making "known by the church" His manifold wisdom "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places". The men of

this world, blinded by Satan, are unable to see anything of God's wisdom in the church, but the great intelligences of heaven see a wisdom of a far greater character than ever they saw before. In the old creation there was a rich display of the power and wisdom of God; but the all-varied character of God's wisdom is seen in relation to the new creation work of God, in that which He has formed to express the character of Christ down here and to be the vessel of His glory in the coming day. The Epistle to the Philippians The opening verse of this epistle speaks of "all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi", for this is the place of privilege of every saint of God, to be graced in Christ, accepted in all His perfections before God and the Father. In Php 1:13, the Apostle writes of his bonds as being "in Christ", for it was on account of the testimony of Christ that the world accounted him as an evildoer, even as the Jews crucified Christ between two thieves, treating the holy, spotless Son of God as a common malefactor. All around knew however that Paul was suffering as a Christian even if treated as an evildoer. In the beginning of the second chapter, Paul appeals to the consolation that is "in Christ" for the unity of the saints in likemindedness, as having "the same love", with nothing being done "through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind", esteeming others better than themselves (Php 2:1-3). The consolation that is in Christ personally, and the Christian consolation ministered by His own, comforts the people of God in times of trouble and sorrow, and was specially realised by Paul in his imprisonment. This precious comfort from the saints would be ministered if they sought to have the lowly mind, "which was also in Christ Jesus" (Php 2:5), and this the Apostle exhorts the saints to have.

Whatever the Jew, or the man of the world, might pretend in the way of righteousness, Paul claimed to have none of his own. His desire was to be found in Christ, having God's righteousness by faith (Php 3:9); and he pressed on in the race of faith, "toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Php 3:14). Paul had nothing outside of Christ, nor has any true Christian, but with Paul it was realised in his soul, and evident in his life, and it should be the same with each one who truly knows Jesus as Saviour.

Epaphroditus had brought a gift from the saints in Philippi to the Apostle in prison, which he viewed as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God", and as he thought of the needs of the saints at Philippi, he wrote, "But my God shall abundantly supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:18-19). All the resources of God, His riches in glory, are in Christ Jesus, and from those infinite stores God is able to meet our every need, whether spiritual or material. As in Php 1:1, so at the close of the Epistle the saints are again viewed as "in Christ Jesus" (Php 4:21). It was a delight for Paul to view the saints as in Christ, where they are seen in all that He is, in His perfections and as the Beloved of the Father. This is how we too should take account of the saints of God. The Epistle to the Colossians

How good it is when the saints can be spoken of as "faithful brethren in Christ", for they are then not only viewed as in Christ before God, but as walking faithfully for God in this world (Colossians 2:1-23). Their "faith in Christ Jesus" was known to Paul, and because of this he was able to give thanks to God for them (Colossians 1:3-4). It was in Christ, the Son of the Father's love, that they had redemption, even the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14). Paul was not content to see believers remain immature in the things of Christ; his aim ever was to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28). It was a real encouragement for him to behold the order of the saints at Colosse and to know of the steadfastness of their "faith in Christ" (Colossians 2:5). The

First Epistle to the Thessalonians Not only are individual believers viewed as in Christ, but Paul writes "of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 2:14). Although in Judea, they were not Jewish assemblies but Christian assemblies, assemblies of God. In 1 Thessalonians 4:16 we read of the dead in Christ who shall rise first at the rapture of the saints to heaven. There is a very great difference between those who have died in their sins and those "which sleep in Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 4:14). Having died "in Christ", in the faith of Christ, they will be the first to receive the quickening touch of Christ when He comes to claim His own to take them to heaven. While waiting for the coming of Christ, we are to heed the many exhortations that have been given to us, among which are, "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5:18). God desires that His own, true believers in His Son, should be marked by constant thankfulness of heart, expressed in thanksgiving. The Epistle to Philemon

There may be some difficulty as to the actual translation of Philemon 1:6, but "every good thing . . . in Christ Jesus", whether in the Apostle or in Philemon, brings before us the fruits of Christ's grace manifest in His own. The Lord said in Matthew 7:20, "by their fruits ye shall know them", and how good it is when we can recognise and acknowledge what is seen of Christ in those who are His. It may be difficult for a simple Christian to distinguish between natural grace and that which is the fruit of Christ's grace, but one who is living near the Lord will know the difference. In Philemon 1:8 Paul writes of being "bold in Christ" to enjoin what was convenient in relation to Onesimus, the slave of Philemon, who had run away from his master, but who had been converted through the Apostle in Rome. What Paul was about to ask for, he was asking with Christian boldness, because he was asking for Christ's sake and not for any personal favour for himself. How good it is when we ask for Christ's sake, whether from the Father, the source of all, or from any of His own who have been enriched of Him. The Epistles to Timothy In most of Paul's epistles the term "in Christ Jesus" is found, the exceptions being 2 Thessalonians and Titus. Many aspects of the truth are embraced in this term. Sometimes it refers to what is in Christ personally, sometimes to what we have in Him as believers, or simply that we are believers, but each mention must be examined in its context to discover the truth it contains. There are two mentions in First Timothy, and seven in Second Timothy, but the two in the former are to be found in the latter, so that by looking into those in Second Timothy we shall find something of the truth contained in the expression in both epistles. The Promise of Life

It has often been pointed out that in 2nd Timothy we see the failure of the church, and have the instruction for the direction of the faithful in the last days. Although man fails, and the outward testimony of the church is in ruin, there can be no failure in the carrying out of God's promise, for it depends, not on the fidelity of man, but on the faithfulness of God. This is what the Apostle begins with in his second epistle to Timothy, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:1).

God's promise of life is also mentioned in Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began", so that God's promise tells us what He determined to do in regard to the communication of eternal life to His own, to those He had chosen to be the companions of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. God's promise, His eternal purpose, cannot be frustrated by anyone, nor can the failure of man hinder what He is determined to do; and with the failure of the church before his eyes, Paul, by the Spirit of God, falls back upon the eternal purpose

of God. This life that God has promised is the eternal life that is in Christ Jesus. It is in Christ Jesus now where He is in heaven; it was in Him essentially before time began, and ever remains in Him in this way (John 1:4); and when He came into Manhood to carry out the Father's will, the Father gave to Him as Man "to have life in Himself" (John 5:26). This eternal life is in God's Son, and true believers have it in Him now, and shall have it in Him and with Him for all eternity (1 John 5:11). The Spirit of God presents through John eternal life as even now possessed by the saints in Christ, but Paul is used by the Holy Spirit to present it as connected with our glorified condition with Christ in a coming day, so that it is a "blessed hope", the "hope of eternal life" (Titus 1:2; Titus 2:13; Titus 3:7).

### God's Purpose and Grace

How very comforting it was for Paul, in seeing the departure of many from much that they had been taught, to consider God's purpose, and this is evidently before him as he writes to Timothy "of God, Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Timothy 1:9). God's purpose is "in Christ Jesus" in Whom there can be no failure. When on earth the Son of God was proved to the utmost in all the sorrows and sufferings through which He passed, and was shown to be absolutely reliable. The sufferings and judgment of the cross but proved the perfections of God's Christ, in whom His purpose centred. The fulfilling of God's purpose does not rest on the fidelity of the believer, but on Christ, Who has passed through death, and Who now lives in the presence of God, having laid in redemption the basis for all that was in God's eternal purpose.

God's grace that has brought us such infinite blessing also resides in Christ, and is given to those who were chosen in Christ before the ages of time. What God had for us in eternity has been "made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). These are wonderful revelations! Death has been set aside by the death and resurrection of God's Son, our Saviour, and the life promised by God, and the incorruptibility of the bodies of glory we shall receive, have been presented to us in the truth of the gospel.

Faith and Love In 1 Timothy 1:1-20 Paul writes of what he was before the Lord called him, then speaks of the grace of our Lord to him being "exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 1:13-14). As in Ephesians 2:1-22 the Apostle takes account of faith as not being of our selves, but the gift of God. Christ is the object of faith, whether for salvation, or to live for God's will here below. So also is it with love; we love because He first loved us, shedding abroad His love in our hearts so that there might be a response to Him and to His Son. This love was manifested in Christ in this world, but is also seen in Him where He sits in God's presence.

Paul knew for himself the faith and love that were in Christ Jesus, so was able to write to Timothy, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). It was most important for Timothy to have the truth of God ministered by Paul ever before him, but this precious outline of Paul's ministry was to be held in relation to Christ, not simply as abstract doctrine, but truth as to a living Christ in glory with Whom he was to be occupied, and from which love to Him could not be separated. Faith in Christ and love to Christ are so indissolubly united that they are spoken of as if they were one, "faith and love

which is in Christ Jesus." Be Strong in the Grace At the close of 2 Timothy 1:1-18 the Apostle had written, "all they which are in Asia be turned away from me", but Onesiphorus had remained faithful to him, "and was not ashamed of his chain as the prisoner of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 1:15-18). If we cannot rely on the support of saints in times of difficulty and crisis, we can always rely on the Lord to be sustained with the grace that abides in Him, and that was given to us by God in Him before the ages of time. We are not to be strong in ourselves, else we shall certainly fail, but we are to draw upon God's resources in Christ. This exhortation has the last days specially in view, for the epistle was written to tell us of the conditions of these last days, and of the divine resources that are available in Christ to enable us to be faithful to the Lord, and to follow the divine directions given for those who desire to be faithful amidst the departure from the truth that had been ministered by Paul. Only as we are strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus shall we be able to separate from the iniquity that abounds in the professing church, and "follow righteousness, faith, love, peace with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:19-22).

### Salvation

Many are the aspects of the salvation that God has given us, but here our salvation is presented as in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:10), a salvation that is linked with eternal glory. Paul had already said that God "hath saved us" (2 Timothy 1:9), for we do know salvation from the guilt of our sins, from the judgment of God, from the power of Satan, and from the fear of death as presently enjoyed. Again, we need salvation for every step of the journey home, and for this we have a risen, glorified Christ on the throne of God, a great High Priest, Who saves to the uttermost them that come to God by Him (Hebrews 7:25). Then we look for salvation out of this world with all that is against us as God's saints, and this we shall have at the coming of the Lord to take us to Himself (Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5).

Whichever aspect of salvation we may take, it is in Christ Jesus. He is the Author of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9), and the Captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10), having secured the salvation for us by His death upon the cross, and there overcoming all our foes, and is leading us through the wilderness to where salvation will be found in its completeness. Indeed, He is Himself viewed as salvation, even as the aged Simeon declared, "mine eyes have seen Thy salvation" (Luke 2:30).

Paul endured all his privations and tribulations not only for Christ, but for those who belonged to Christ, the elect of God, that the salvation in Christ Jesus might be brought to them in his testimony, and that they might obtain it in its fullest sense when they entered into the eternal glory with Christ. The salvation is not exactly the eternal glory, but it leads us into it. When Christ changes our bodies of humiliation and conforms them to His own body, we shall have been saved from all that we have had to face in this world where all is opposed to God and to all who are His; and the glory that we shall then have is not only that of the millennial display of Christ, but the eternal glory of God that is found "in the assembly in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 3:21).

### All that Live Godly

There were many saints of God in a past day who lived by faith, but all were not marked by the features of Christ, for Christ had not yet come to give the example of the life that was altogether

pleasing to God. In the hand of the Lord was no sword to deal with His enemies as David did, yea, and even Abraham to rescue Lot from the hand of the kings. He did not hate His enemies, as they did of old (Matthew 5:43), but in compassion offered them divine blessing. His, as Man, was an altogether different kind of life that was pleasing to God, but that brought out the dreadful evil of the heart of man, even the religious man that professed to serve God. When on earth the Lord said to His disciples, "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20), for to be a follower of Jesus was to take up the cross (Luke 14:27). Paul, in 2 Timothy 3:12, tells us the same thing, "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." Having suffered so much for Christ, Paul was a suited instrument to speak of this. We may not suffer in the same way in these western lands of Christendom, but suffer we shall if faithful to Christ, following in His steps. Alas! we know little of it, and we have to confess it is because of our lack of fidelity to our absent Master.

Faith In 1 Timothy 3:13 the Apostle writes, "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus." This was exemplified in Stephen, one of the seven deacons chosen to serve in the daily ministration in Jerusalem, who, having served well, was used of the Spirit of God to bring home to the rulers of Israel their guilt in slaying Jesus; and how bold he was in faith in doing so, sealing his testimony with his blood (Acts vii). Boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus comes by serving God under the control of the Spirit of God, as filled with the Spirit.

Timothy had known the Old Testament Scriptures, an inestimable privilege; but the knowledge of the Scriptures was not enough to bring salvation to the soul. The Old Testament Scriptures are full of Christ, and it is when the soul rests on Christ, of Whom the Scriptures speak, that the salvation of God is obtained. Many of the Jews had a good knowledge of the Scriptures, yet they persecuted Christ, for they had not the faith in Christ Jesus that alone could bring them salvation. It is the same in Christendom. How good it is to know the Scriptures; but faith in Christ is necessary for the divine blessing.

Come! cries the waiting Church, the prize is won, The waning stars grow pale, the moments fleet.

Come! cries the voice of Him who leads her on. The desert Guide, the holy Paraclete.

Come. Jesus Lord! the bride repeats the call.

Merged in His glory, veiled, for Christ is all!

E. L. Bevir.

## S. Jannes and Jambres.

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Jannes and Jambres.

We are now come to a part of the epistle which needs great attention, for "perilous times" are precisely those in which we are living; the danger is that of treating things as though we were not living in times of great difficulty, that is, of walking as though there was nothing particularly diabolical in the atmosphere. The last days are the very last in the story of Christendom, and the expression is a different one to that in 1 Timothy 4:1. Here all the darkest passions of men are indulged under a name of Christian civilization, the love of self and of pleasure being at the root of every action. It is what is commonly called utilitarianism, for in these last days people call evil things by fine names. "This is aesthetic," they say.

What a terrible picture of man, unchanged by the outward varnish of Christianity - of that same incorrigible man whose lusts and crimes were developed under Gentile mythology and paganism, and who now appears again in his true colours, though outwardly "Christianized!" What, the same passions and vices in Europe now as when men were said to be under the influence of Pan, Bacchus, or Venus? The same; man has changed his collection of idols, but he is the same! Lost, degraded, a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God, the terrible features are here set before us, beginning with "lovers of self" and "lovers of money." It is a terrible and divinely-drawn picture of the age, and we all feel, alas! how deeply we are influenced by it. But we are called to bear witness to a power that has brought us out of it, and however much we have failed let us not sacrifice the position. There is a call to turn away from those who, in the state mentioned in the first verses, have a form of piety but deny its power; and now comes a peculiar operation of evil, and a special snare to those who shall have dared to make a stand for the Lord and for His truth in the midst of modern Christendom. The enemy has tried, is trying, and will try to imitate that power of God which he cannot withstand, and to lead away souls by what may seem to be the truth.

1 Timothy 4:6-7 show us the material which he has to work upon, and his mode of working; it is a faithful picture of the state of things. The "silly women" are not necessarily female in a literal sense, but signify those persons who are bereft of true manly vigour and judgment in the things of God; they are morally feminine, deficient in the virtue indicated by Paul when he says to the Corinthians, "Quit you like men." (1 Corinthians 16:13.) I said that the picture here is, alas! a faithful one; for these non-masculine men abound in the present day. Insidious teachers, "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" describes the situation. Never was there such a day for religious books, sermons, and teaching; but "the truth" is unknown, and the Lord Jesus is outside knocking still at the door, unheard by the mass. The truth of Christianity, and of the present position of Christ in glory, is refused, and though many "truths" may be taught, and novelties sought after, yet the learners are as far from it as ever.

Having this clearly before us, it is well to see how the enemy is acting, and how his work shall end. The Holy Spirit takes up the two Egyptian professors of magic as examples of those who are now misleading souls; and the great point is that they withstood Moses, the man of God, who was

standing for Him before Pharaoh and the whole array of Egyptian gods. These two men represented the power of darkness at a very critical period, and their system was that of imitating divine power. Cheating, trying to make black appear white, crafty play of words,\* have always been the method of Satan; but here we have him boldly imitating the power of God, and making a decided stand against divine might and intervention as seen in Moses. Thus the truth is resisted in Christendom, the enemy is making his last efforts to counteract and destroy the feeble but true testimony to the blessed Lord and to the power of His name. It is an opposition of a very peculiar kind, and any one who has met with it must confess that he has been met by a power and ingenuity that are superhuman, and which can come but from one source.

\*Notice Ephesians 4:14, the dice-playing method of cheating souls. Sleight of hand is in vogue, though people pretend not to believe in Mercury, etc.

What then should a faithful Christian do? - one who has turned away from what we saw in Ephesians 4:5, and who begins to feel the great power of the arch-impostor. Give up? Never! but persevere with steady purpose and constant prayer, holding to the word of God and to the blessed Lord in glory. Thus did Paul, as we shall see (D.V.) in examining the power by which he acted and was kept through all his perilous service. Thus he desired for Timothy, and we may well say for us too, weak though we be. A moment shall come when the representatives of this audacious imitation shall be suddenly checked and stopped, and their folly manifested to all, as was that of Jannes and Jambres. They were allowed by God to keep pace with each step of Moses, till the very simplest fact showed that their power had come to the full length of its tether, and they could not go on. They could no more acquire life-giving power than Simon Magus could buy that of the blessed Spirit. So it shall be in the present struggle - the enemy will be stopped. God may allow him to go up to the line which He has drawn, but no further.

It cheers and consoles the heart of every faithful saint to think that the power of Christ by the Spirit is infinitely above that of Satan, and that this very power is for the feeblest believer. The limit is fast approaching, and opposition to God shall end in certain exposure; in the meantime may the God of all grace give to His own to be walking with Him, and persevering, in patience and dependence, in that path which shall end in glory and honour to the blessed Lord who protects and strengthens them all through the conflict. E. L. Bevir.

## S. Letters on Worldliness.

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Letters on Worldliness.

(From the Italian.)

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend, vol. 13, 1886, p. 230.

II.

Dear brother in the Lord, It has been on my heart for some time to add to my first letter on worldliness, and more especially because several brethren have communicated with me on the subject. To some of these I appear hard and narrow-minded. Others, on the contrary, believe that such exhortations in these days are both useful and necessary, and have pointed out certain things which, with the Lord's help, I hope to notice. With the first class I have little to do, for if my first letter was stigmatized by them as severe and narrow, they will have occasion to do so still more with the second, since the greater our knowledge of the world, the less possible shall we find it to make a truce with it.

Two points in particular have been put before me - the politics of this world, and the way in which the families of believers are so often a means of opening the door to the world. On the first subject - 1:e., the world's politics - I think two observations will not be out of place. Many Christians, whose conversion no one doubts, have hitherto failed to comprehend that the calling of the church is purely heavenly; that is to say, they have not grasped this sufficiently clearly to deliver them from an interest in politics. It is not theory that is lacking. What we want is to put in practice the marvellous truth that we are fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God, and are consequently entirely strangers to the ways of the inhabitants of the earth. But some will object: "Ought we then to take no interest in events which warn us that the end of all things is at hand? We admit that the world is to be judged, and we approve in no wise its principles; but we have always felt free to follow the course of politics in order to see what things have come to." To such I would say, "If you must study politics, study Daniel and Revelation for a few days, and you will learn God's thoughts thereon." I think this is the only satisfactory way of quenching the thirst for tracing the progress of events; and I have often said that the most simple Christian is better acquainted with this world's fate - with the Eastern question, and with the last phase which the European Powers will assume - than the cleverest politician of this world. "Seal not the words of the prophecy of this book," says the Revelation. (Revelation 22:10.) That is to say, that the Church can always know the thoughts of God on such questions, without the need of consulting newspapers to see if God has told us the truth. After all, this shows a want of faith in the Creator of all things, and a lack of reverence for the authority of His eternal Word. Newspapers only confuse the mind of the reader, because they alter their standpoint with every new aspect of the political world, and know no other basis than the vacillating ideas of men. It has been rightly said, that from a mountain-top the course of a river is better seen than in the plain, where the river-fogs impede

the view. In like manner we Christians, who by grace occupy a higher place than the world, can peacefully speak with God, as did Abraham on the mountain-top, and study His thoughts on prophecy without consulting the mists of the valley. Had there been newspapers in Abraham's time, I do not think he would have read them. Lot perhaps might have been betrayed into so doing, because he had accustomed himself to living in the atmosphere of Sodom. But it is evident that he had not a very clear insight into true politics, or he would not have lost all his goods by staying in a town about to be destroyed. How indeed could he see clearly in Sodom?

Here then is my answer to those who, under pretext of seeing how far things have gone, interest themselves in the world. Although prophecy ought not to be our chief study, it would nevertheless be well that all the saints should understand the books of Daniel and Revelation, wherein is presented the judgment of all human power; and Christ, in His great majesty, is seen taking possession of the whole world, to the praise and glory of God. This would, it seems to me, be the best preservative against the tendency which there is amongst Christians to the study of this world's politics. And now, dear brother, I want to touch on the second subject which I mentioned at the beginning of my letter; viz., worldliness in the children of believers. And I hope, at the same time, you will understand that I do not allude exclusively to "they of Italy," but also to those who live where Christianity is supposed to be carried out better.

Alas! how many sincere Christians allow in their children that which they themselves have given up for ever! I do not say this in a critical spirit, but simply by way of drawing attention to several called-for remarks which have been made to me of late. The subject is a delicate one, because we know what difficulties there are in bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, but we ought to be acquainted with the means which Satan has at his disposal for alluring the saints of God into the world. Godly fathers of families are to be found, who are weak enough to permit their children to be dressed in a manner not in keeping with their godliness. It may seem a very small thing that the children of Christians should be dressed like those of the world; but the fact is forgotten perhaps, that as they grow older something more must be allowed, and something more again - things, it may be, innocent in themselves, but which insensibly bring the world into the house; and once within, it is not easy to turn it out. I would not have it thought that I mean in anywise to make hard-and-fast rules for Christian fathers; but I desire to press the fact, that the houses of such ought to be wholly for the Lord, and that if they have His glory at heart, they must not allow for their children what they do not allow for themselves. The history of the sons of Eli ought to be a salutary warning to every Christian father. (1 Samuel 2:1-36) I do not think that they became so wicked all at once - probably the starting-point was the over-indulgent heart of their father; then they went further and further into the world, until the whole house was swamped by it. How much grief would have been spared to poor Eli, had he known how to bring up his children in the fear of the Lord! And are not Elis to be found in our day? May God grant grace to His saints, to keep their families set apart for Him, and free from the spirit of this world. The days are evil; false principles easily take possession of youthful minds, and if fathers are not watchful, they will have, later on, to mourn over the infidelity of their children.

Before closing my letter, I must reply to one more observation which has been made to me. It is said that circumstances vary with different countries, and that in my first letter I referred only to music, novels, etc., while I ought also to have specified the worldly attractions peculiar to countries differently placed. I am sure it is useless to do so, because one would never have done signaling

the examples and the dangers. Every true Christian will easily discern the spirit at work in the world, and will avoid whatever seeks to come between him and the Father. An old servant of the Lord being asked one day by a banker's clerk if shovelling gold all day was likely to make him worldly, replied, "I don't see any more harm in a shovelful of sovereigns than in one full of sand, provided my heart be not in it." This example might serve, I think, for all the circumstances in which the saints of God may find themselves. So long as our hearts are not engrossed with our employments, our workshops, our fields, or any other means of subsistence, each one of us may use what God has put before him, and administer it with the knowledge that all belongs to our God and Father. My desire is, that each may search his own heart, to find out the worldly element which has a hiding-place there, and, when discovered, that he may judge it, and dethrone the idol that contaminates him. Your affectionate companion in service, E. L. B.

## S. Light

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Light.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 64.

Light is in itself invisible,\* but it illuminates everything. What we see around us in the physical world is not the light, but matter lighted up by it. The very canopy of heaven (that is, the air) is made visible by the light shining upon and through it, and if we could be transported into empty space, traversed as it is by the light, we should not see the light itself, although it would shine upon and manifest ourselves or any substance that might come in its way.

\*It is a mere figure of speech to talk of the visible and invisible rays of the spectrum. This does not strictly mean that the rays themselves are visible, but that [to our eyes] they have the power of illuminating surfaces, or not. The word of God uses this as a beautiful illustration or rather image. "God is light" is the message that we have received of Him, "and in Him is no darkness at all." "God is light," it is His nature, and He was eternally light before ever there was a universe to be illuminated (just as He was eternally love before ever there was ever a creature to be loved). "Light," to quote the words of one no longer amongst us, "is perfect purity, invisible in itself, and manifesting everything as it is before God." It is likewise said that God dwells in light that no man can "approach unto," and this is light inaccessible in itself. But the light came into the world, into the midst of the darkness, when the Son of God appeared upon earth in the form of a servant, as man. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." And nothing is more interesting, though at the same time nothing more humiliating, than what is recorded in John's gospel of the presence of the light in this world of moral darkness, and the effect of that presence upon men. Nothing could escape manifestation, and though eyes to see were wanting, though the general blindness of man perceived naught, yet the light shone, and showed so clearly the state of man, that no one was able to pass before it without intercepting its rays. Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, proud blasphemers, or Israelites indeed in whom there was no guile, no matter what the character might be, all was lighted up and manifested before God. "The light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."\* The blessed Lord left a world of dark, blind souls, insisting that they could see, and that they loved darkness rather than light. See the wonderful termination of the twelfth chapter of John's Gospel.

\*Notice the change of tense in John 1:4-5 of John 1:1-51. Space does not allow us to go further with so interesting a passage: "The light shines in the midst of the darkness" is in the present as an abstract, existing fact; but then it is said "the darkness comprehended it not" - a past tense. The true light was that which, coming into the world, shines upon every man. This has nothing to do with the conversion of men, but refers to our subject; that is, the outward lighting up of men. Do not talk of "inner light," or any such thing, but rather contemplate with wonder the presence of the Son

of God upon earth, in the midst of the prevailing darkness, and see everything illuminated by that presence, though the darkness comprehended not the light. What a field for study are the eighth and ninth chapters of John, and indeed the whole book!

Thus far we have noticed briefly the effect of the presence of the light in this world when Jesus was here. But it is said, as to the present time, in Ephesians 5:1-33, that we believers are light. "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8); and we might compare this wonderful passage with 1 John 2:8, where we are said to possess the divine life in virtue of our union with Christ. "True in Him and in you" (this could not have been said before His death and resurrection): "the darkness is passing away [not passed] and the true light now shineth." In Ephesians 5:1-33 the truth is most clearly stated; we were darkness, but now are light in the Lord. How wonderful, and at the same time how blessed, that the divine life in us should be so presented! The exhortation to walk as children of the light is founded upon this; for the fruit of the light (not "Spirit," as in our translation) consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth, proving that which is acceptable to the Lord. The essential difference between the darkness and the light is here clearly presented, and practical separation from the unfruitful works of darkness insisted upon. In Ephesians 5:13 we find again the true character of light stated, as we have noticed in other passages, "That which manifests everything is light;"\* and, notwithstanding all the feebleness of the present testimony, it has often been noticed that the true characters of people come out when they take their place with those who are endeavouring (with all their failure) to walk as children of the light. How many, if the bare truth were known, have retired because the light exposed their motives - their selfishness, ambition, etc. - till then concealed in a world of darkness! Ye are light in the Lord, says the Word; and the fruit of the light is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Righteousness and truth have never been popular, any more than the light itself. May we enter more fully into the fact of possessing the divine nature in the midst of a dark world, judging in ourselves all that is not practically consistent with it. We might compare 2 Corinthians 4:6 with this interesting passage, praying the Lord to give us to understand these great truths.

\*This is the true sense of this passage.

Thus, during the present period of grace, the saints are the light of the world, and make manifest by their walk the sad moral state of things around them. So much has been said of the future, that one hesitates to proceed; but it may be noticed that the darkness is now passing away, that the true light shines already; and when our blessed Lord shall be revealed in glory, the perfect day will have come. The night is far spent, and the day is at hand, and we are called children of the day, as well as children of light; for we belong to Christ, and that glory shall be ours. During the reign of Christ, the light will be displayed in a far different manner to that which we have been noticing. It is a solemn but blessed thought, that we, the redeemed heavenly saints, shall see the Lamb as the luminary of the interior of the holy Jerusalem,\* and be in the very presence of uncreated light (there is no need of sun or moon) undazzled, seeing Him as He is. Blessed are they who understand our present position in the light as God is in the light; but what will it be then? It has been pointed out that the light will be shed in a modified form upon the millennial earth and nations. They shall walk in the light of the holy city, where all the glories of redeemed creation, the precious stones, shall separate and modify the rays that no creature not glorified could bear for a moment, so that the earth itself shall be illuminated by that most glorious though subdued light.

\*The exact words are, "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light (the 'lampstand') thereof." (Revelation 21:23.)

It will be said that even this display will not change the heart of man, and to this we fully agree. Our subject is the light, and we have very briefly noticed its display under different circumstances. May we be found walking in a path of true separation from all that is of the darkness, and ever remember that we are (now) light in the Lord. E. L. B.

## S. Light

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Light. A Sequel.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 191.

We have noticed briefly, in a former number, the exterior effect of the light, if we may use such an expression; that is, its effect in illuminating surfaces; the presence of the Lord Jesus as Light upon earth, the actual presence of the saints as light now, and the future millennial day, when the nations shall walk by the light of the heavenly Jerusalem. But there is another aspect of the effect of light; that is, not merely the outward illumination of persons and things, but the inward lighting up of the heart, and its results, as we shall find in 2 Corinthians 3:4. And first of all let us look at 2 Corinthians 4:6, where we find the following: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to cause to shine forth the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The same God who first caused the light to shine out of the midst of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, and if we turn to the first chapter of Genesis we shall find the illustration here employed by the Holy Spirit. In the second verse of Genesis 1:1-31 we find the state to which things had been brought upon this earth a long time after the creation; and it has been rightly pointed out that things were not created so, and that there is a long interval between Genesis 1:1-2. Darkness and desolation were there, and in Genesis 3:5 God caused the light suddenly to shine, and "separated the light from the darkness." Some one asked the other day how God had separated the two; a question which may well be reverently left with the almighty Creator of the glorious wonders of creation. The light shone forth at the word of God: "Let there be light: and there was light;" and the Holy Spirit refers no doubt to this passage in 2 Corinthians 4:10. It is with this shining in our hearts that we are now occupied; these hearts were black and desolate enough before the light shone in them, and we bow with reverence and adoration before the God who caused the light to shine in by His sovereign power, where all before was dark. But we have here several expressions in connection with this that claim our attention. The light shines in a certain definite manner, so that in verse 4 of 2 Corinthians 4:1-18 it is called the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, and this leads us back to the third chapter, where the apostle Paul speaks of the glorious Christ with great liberty, and of our perfect and blessed liberty in the very presence of His glory, as having been justified through His work, as having received the Holy Ghost, and as being able to gaze upon the glory of Christ with uncovered face, and as being changed from glory to glory by the Lord the Spirit.

Volumes have been written about this, and our great fault has been to have talked much of light and of glory, when our testimony as an existing fact upon earth has been anything but glorious; but the blessed truth of God cannot be changed, and the God who has shined into our hearts has illuminated them in order that the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ may shine out of their into this world. This was carried out in so wonderful and simple a manner in the apostle Paul that he could say, in preaching the gospel, that if it was hid, it was by a special Satanic action,

the god of this world having blinded men's thoughts, so that the light of this glory should not shine for them. But this wonderful subject - that is, the light shining now in our hearts; light proceeding from a definite and well-known luminary, the face of Jesus Christ - must not be neglected because we have failed; the luminary itself has not grown paler than when it shone around Saul of Tarsus, and shone into the dark heart of the misguided Pharisee, disclosing to him the glory of God. The career of this wonderful vessel of God's grace and power is that of a man whose heart is filled with the light that had shined in. Those who accompanied him (Acts 22:9) may have been dazzled for a moment by that flash that was brighter than the sun; but with Saul of Tarsus there were two things to be noticed, that is, his being blinded by the light that shone about him, his being blinded by that light in which no mortal can stand, and at the same time illuminated as to his heart by the shining in of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This inner effect of the light (and this is our subject) may be observed all through his life, from Damascus, where he begins by praying, to the last thing that we hear of him, where, still looking up confidently to the Lord and counting upon Him, he speaks of Him and His glory to Timothy, as having Him in full view. Surely we may say that the light of the glory of God shone as steadily as ever in him there in the midst of the increasing gloom; and if we follow his history between these two extreme points, 1:e., its wonderful beginning and end, we find a man changed from glory to glory. We find a heart fixed upon the Lord Jesus by grace, and shining forth from that heart the glory of God; and that in a life of true patience, meekness, self-denial, where the moral glory of the Lord Jesus may be seen in His apostle. That which is thus true for the great apostle in his immense service and labour, is true for each one of us in our little measure. Poor and feeble as these words are, they will not be lost if any be led to enquire prayerfully what is the meaning of the light shining in our hearts (and not merely on men, as we noticed in John 1:1-51), so that they may be led to a deeper communion with our blessed Lord, to a truer knowledge of the glory of God, and to a fuller manifestation of it in a patient life of self-denial in this world. May God graciously lead us all in this same direction! E. L. B.

## S. Moses in Num\_11:1-35.

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Moses in Numbers 11:1-35.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 36.

It has often been noticed, that the mixed multitude were the immediate cause of Israel's murmuring; but it should be remarked at the same time, that it is always a more ordinary thing to follow a bad example than a good one. In a similar case, Paul exhorts the saints to follow those who were walking at the head of the procession, and not to be looking back at the rear, to those who might very well be compared to the heterogeneous mixed multitude of Numbers 11:1-35. (See Php 3:17, etc.)

Moses in this chapter feels that the burden is too much for him, and ends his first discourse in Numbers 11:15 with a petition to be "killed out of hand." He appears, all through the passage, to great advantage as a noble and disinterested soul, but, occupied with himself and his own resources, he felt himself unable to accomplish the task of leading the people through the wilderness. It is a very remarkable thing that the two grand figures of the Old Testament, Moses and Elijah, both begged to be allowed to die in peace. Death is a sovereign remedy for an energetic person, whose task is too hard for him; and surely neither Moses nor Elijah were wanting in energy; but they had to learn that it was not their power or energy that could accomplish their tasks, though they never could have known what the great Apostle to the Gentiles speaks of in 2 Corinthians; that is, the power of the resurrection, and the full and perfect mistrust of all that is of the natural man. The word "I" is found very frequently in Moses' speeches in this chapter, and when this (I, me) becomes the object of our thoughts we generally find words to express them. Moses had said (Exodus 4:10,) "I am not eloquent . . . I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue;" but he becomes eloquent when "Moses" is the theme of his discourse (see Numbers 11:21-22 of the chapter before us), he finds the use of his tongue in describing his own difficulty; and that is natural to all men. But the great and blessed lesson to be learnt in this remarkable passage is the faithfulness of God whilst chastening His rebellious and lusting people, and the boundless resources of Jehovah in the wilderness when, to all appearance, everything had come to a dead stop, and the mere energy of man is proved to be nothing worth. Nothing could be more interesting to us at the present time, when the enlightened leaders of the nineteenth century, leaving God out of their calculations, assure us that it was physically impossible for Israel to cross the desert, and when not a few may be found following the mixed multitude in all manner of worldliness and self-seeking.

Moses lost a great privilege, but the same power was exercised by Jehovah though he employed seventy other men; the power of the Spirit was distributed, but not increased. The answer to the question, "Have I conceived all this people?" is fully given by the Lord in His untiring patience in this wonderful passage. But the application must be made to ourselves. It has often been shown

that in the first chapters of this book a full and perfect provision is made by the Lord for the march of the whole camp across the wilderness, and that the most terrible failure occurs the moment the camp begins actually to move. The oft-repeated story of failure after having been established in blessing by God is seen here, and may serve as an illustration of what has occurred in the church of God upon earth from Pentecost up to the present time.

We may consider for a moment, without going back further in history, the actual state of things in the present day - the state of utter failure and weakness, and the unchanging grace and power of our God and Father in Jesus Christ, whose goodness will never fail us to the end of the journey. "Is the hand of the Lord shortened?" It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings; and this blessed Leader never complains, as Moses did, of the weight of the charge He bears. The wilderness journey, for us, is drawing to its close; but we are still in the wilderness, and need to look up to Him at every moment, and He will not fail us. The contrast between Moses and Paul has often been presented. Moses in Numbers 11:12 of this chapter asks if he has brought forth the people, that he should be charged with the burden until the promised land be reached. Paul, on the contrary, in the epistle to the Galatians, was willing to suffer pangs afresh, in order that the saints might receive blessing and Christ be formed in them. We may well notice the perfect trust in the Lord in the apostle, and the perfect mistrust of everything that is of man; and it is not going too far to assert, that Moses had not understood the end of man, of his efforts, his excellence, and his energy, in Numbers 11:1-35. He could not, as we have already noticed, say with Paul, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not have our trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead." A more striking passage than this, where we must be careful not to confound an energetic, noble nature (see Numbers 11:29) with the power of God, is perhaps not to be found in Scripture.

If ever there were a day in which we need to look entirely to the Lord, and to Him alone, it is the day in which we live; and by faith we look up to Him, the Leader of our salvation, to Him whose arms were once extended upon the cross as He bare our sins, and who ever liveth to lead us through every difficulty to the eternal glory. It may be said that the people of God are so dispersed, the century in which we live is so wicked, the power of the enemy so strong, and many other things, but we know that His arm is not shortened. It may be a severe lesson to learn, that of mistrusting man, and our own selves most of all, but a blessed lesson after all, and we look towards Him in the excellent glory, and to the God of glory who has placed Him at His right hand, praying that we may glorify Him for the rest of the journey in the desert. May we be found walking in true dependence, prayerfully, and with true confidence in Him. E. L. B.

## S. Our Saviour God.

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Our Saviour God.

Titus 3:1-15.

We have now a blessed subject before us in the kindness and love toward man\* of our Saviour God.

\*The word is philanthropy; that is, in this case, God's love to man. We use the word philanthropy generally in a different, and alas! far inferior sense.

We were no better than the Cretans (observe the state of democratic socialism and its fruits in the first three verses); but the kindness and love of God have appeared, and we have been saved according to His thoughts, and in His own blessed way.

We may well consider the passage before us: the Holy Spirit begins by excluding all works of righteousness of our own, for these could not change the nature of a Cretan, nor of any other son of Adam. "According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Mercy would come down to us where we were; there was divine pity and compassion for such wretches; and now we have a very important truth in that which follows.

First of all "the washing of regeneration." The word here, "regeneration," is a peculiar one, and is only found in Matthew 19:28, besides this passage; it implies a new order of things. Many philosophers and so-called philanthropists of that day would have spoken of improved culture in Crete, and of elevating the tone of that unhappy island, but it is not this.

There must be a thorough cleansing, a real work in the soul of man alienated from God. For what is there in common with God in those who were foolish, disobedient, etc.? (Titus 3:3) The cleansing is not an outward change, as a Pharisee might cover the blackest of hearts with a white robe and blue fringe; but an interior work, by which evil is truly judged, and new desires are formed. The man must be born again; it is not a polished philosopher that God would form, but a new foundation is laid in the soul by the Holy Ghost's power, and that in connection with a new order of things.

It is a very interesting aspect of the new birth, and may, with great profit, be compared with John 3:1-36. I merely wish to point out the grand truth, and repeat that the washing implies the judgment of man's evil nature. But this is not all; there is the renewing of the Holy Ghost, for there can be no power to enjoy the things of the new creation without the Holy Spirit, nor can there be true communion with God.

Notice the word "renewing," for it implies that which had not existed before; it accompanies the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit, a real new power in a new man. The thoughts supplied by Him take us up to the highest point (God's heart), and the energy for good cannot be imitated by man; it is divine.

Thus we have a new nature, and then a new power, by which we live in a new order of things, from which evil is excluded, and where God's grace and glory are known. This is God's way of bringing poor, lost Cretans and others out of the ruin; His way of saving us. Blessed be His name! But we must look at the sixth verse, which is a kind of parenthesis; the Holy Spirit has been poured richly upon us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. We have the very fulness of blessing, and who shall limit our joy?

Titus 3:7 terminates the passage, and implies both present and future blessing; justified by grace, we are made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Sure, unfailing hope of the full enjoyment in glory of that which is already made good in our hearts by the Holy Ghost!

How different is all this from any attempt at outward reformation; how wonderful is the love of God toward man, philanthropy in its true and divine sense! May we be led to look into these blessed truths, and live in the power of them by the Holy Spirit! A few practical things follow. Those who have believed God\* are to be careful to maintain good works; and when good is being followed in a practical way the foolish questions which troubled the Cretans will be avoided. I think we should not despise Dr. Watts' lines:

"For Satan finds for idle hands Some mischief still to do;" and the remedy for mischief in Crete was the being engaged in good works. It is the same in other places.

\*Notice the perfect participle. A sectary was to be rejected after due admonition; it is always God's own way, in dealing with men, to warn offenders before judging them, and this should be carried out in the assembly. The last words evidently show that Titus was a delegate, acting under the orders of the apostle; and the care evinced is very blessed. The converted Cretans, so false and lazy before, were now to be the very first to help and provide necessaries; Zenas and Apollos deserved the care of true devotedness, and the habit of serving such was to be acquired.

It is a very beautiful ending to the epistle, for nothing could be more convincing of the power of Christianity than to see self-denial and care for others in these converted islanders. May they be seen in ourselves, being the true fruit of our entering into the thoughts, by the Holy Spirit, of our Saviour God! E. L. Bevir.

## S. Philemon.

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Philemon. In looking into Philemon's house (and we may do so without prying, for there is a divine insight given to us) we see an admirable picture of grace amongst men. When grace becomes a true motive and rule to the conduct in this graceless world, when it is not only a splendid theory - oh, then we may indeed admire its wonderful fruits - there is nothing like it! One of the surest signs that the true grace of God has been understood is that peculiar and delicate care for others (in a world where each one naturally cares for himself) which we see in the case of Philemon.

It may be said that the manner is nothing, and that one must not judge of a Christian by his ways; but to such a sentiment I should oppose the whole spirit of the Epistle to Philemon, and remark also that often small things (expressions, acts, etc.) show the true characters of persons. If one wishes to know from which quarter the wind blows, it is not necessary to set up a large and expensive weathercock; a straw will be sufficient.

Philemon 1:6 should be rendered, "That thy communion in the faith may work powerfully in the full knowledge of all the good which is in us, as to Christ Jesus." The readers will excuse this bald translation, which gives the true sense, and this gives us to understand the real drift of the epistle, that is, grace acting in the midst of the circumstances of everyday life. What I mean is that the sixth verse shows us the divine principle and motive in Philemon, and in all the saints to which Paul could make appeal: he could exhort to a noble line of action, showing himself that delicacy which proceeded from a divine source.

Some will say that the world has changed, and that we have no more runaway slaves to receive back now; the laws of society are different. To which it may be replied that the world's principles are always the same, and, no matter what particular form of manners and customs one may have to do with, there will always be exercise and trial in one's life here, and it is exactly in this that grace is to act.

I should like to notice briefly the character of Paul's action in the affair of the converted fugitive; and then the character of Philemon as painted by the apostle in his beautiful letter. Divinely beautiful, and nonetheless inspired because it treats of the question of the conduct of a Christian master. The first thing that strikes us in Paul is his unwillingness to use that authority which was rightly his. He had the liberty in Christ to command (see the 8th verse), but preferred to appeal in grace to the one who had suffered wrong. This is very beautiful, for there is none of the presumption of "Man, proud man, Dressed in a little brief authority," in Paul. He is truly humble and unpretentious. And then again, in the 13th verse, there is the very opposite of selfishness. Paul would have liked to have retained Onesimus to have served, in Philemon's stead, with himself in the bonds of the gospel; but he sends back the slave, now become a brother in the Lord, with a message of grace which cannot fail to reach Philemon's heart. There is true Christian affection; and surely never such a recommendation to manumission as this (Philemon 1:16).

Then again, in the following verses, whilst the apostle counts fully upon Philemon's receiving Onesimus as himself (Paul), yet he is very careful that all should be rightly and justly settled; surely no one was ever more anxious than Paul "to be true and just in all his dealing." If there were any debt to be met it should certainly be paid, to say nothing of Philemon owing himself to the apostle.

All this is extremely beautiful, and much more might be said; but we may content ourselves, in a short paper, to notice the humility, unselfishness, and justice in the great apostle of the Gentiles, in a question where the grace of God had come in to bless, in an extraordinary way, a fugitive slave. What a wonderful thing is grace! And now we may look a little at Philemon, whose house is opened to us in this epistle; there is enough in Paul's language to show us the true character of the man.

Philemon 1:5 speaks of his love and faith toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints; Philemon 1:7 of his love in activity, for he had been an instrument of refreshing others. Philemon 1:16, I think, shows the kindness of Philemon's heart, for no doubt the apostle had good reason for saying, "But how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" It is not going too far, perhaps, in comparing it with Philemon 1:11, to suppose that the master had thought much about his (once) useless slave, who now would be welcomed back - doubly welcome. This is what I meant in speaking of Paul's recommendation for Onesimus' liberty; we can well imagine how freely it was given and with what joy!

Then, in Philemon 1:21, his obedience was well known to Paul; not only a mechanical obedience, but one which proceeded from a heart ready and anxious to please the Lord, and to do more than what was required. And again, in Philemon 1:22, there is a free invitation made by himself, on the apostle's part, and this of itself says much for Philemon; he evidently received the saints as he would have received the Lord. It is more than "lodging," it is rather "hospitality"; and the man in whose house the little assembly met received freely the Lord's servants.

All these things are very beautiful, for if we sum up the short remarks made upon Philemon, we have faith and love, kindness showing itself to a slave become a brother, obedience, and hospitality.

It is a blessed thing that the Holy Ghost has thus given us to see within a Christian house, where the assembly met and where Paul had laboured; and to notice the terms upon which he, the great apostle, lived with the head of a Christian household.

It has often been noticed that Christianity does not pretend to change the state of society in this world (though Christian truths have had an immense influence outwardly upon society); the highest and most blessed truths, the full knowledge of God's grace and of His eternal counsels, instead of making the believer hard, or careless, in the relations of everyday life, make him wonderfully kind and considerate in all his ways.

Paul recognizes the master's right to have the slave back, and at the same time, with a delicacy which only grace can teach, sends him back as a brother - doubly blessed.

How blessed to find, in the midst of a pretentious and selfish world, the humility, self-denial, obedience, generosity, and other virtues which are the true fruits of grace! Surely the Lord would

have us to show these things in our lives, and to be actuated by these same principles.

It is significant that the apostle says at the end, by the Holy Spirit, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit!" May that same grace characterize the households of all the saints! In conclusion I would say, Was ever a more beautiful picture painted of an "interior"? May we admire and copy! E. L. Bevir.

## S. Sight and Light.

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Sight and Light.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 14, 1887, p. 267. The man came back from the pool of Siloam seeing, and the world that had tolerated his presence in Jerusalem as a blind beggar could never forgive his having received his sight. Some said, "It is he;" others, "No, but it is like him;" but he said, "It is I myself." The circumstances of the miracle have often been remarked, but perhaps few have really understood the Lord's teaching in it. The clay made with the spittle no doubt represents the blessed Lord's incarnation - Jesus Christ come in the flesh; and the sightless eyes were blind more than ever until the washing in Siloam. It is a solemn fact, that the "human understanding" (compare it to an eye, if you like) can comprehend nothing at all of the mystery of godliness: solemn beyond measure, and the more important, in that we live in days when Christians themselves seem to be led away to reason upon subjects that are only understood by reverent submission to the Word. Man's mind looking at Jesus is compared by the Holy Ghost to blind eyes covered with clay. But to return to the subject. The blessed Lord, who did the works of Him who had sent Him while it was day, had healed the man after His own divine way, showing us what man's mind is worth in the things of God, and giving sight in connection with the sent One, and the world becomes at once hostile. We may ask ourselves by the way, Do we really understand that we are sent into the world with a divine perception of what it is worth, and of the glory of Jesus? Let us look at the examination or trial the poor man had to undergo, and the religious world's verdict, and then the manner in which the Son of God met him. In John 9:13 they bring him to the Pharisees to be judged by them. That is, we have a seeing man brought before a company of stone-blind judges to pronounce upon his sight. What should you say if a committee composed entirely of persons born blind were called together to decide upon some question as to the rainbow? It has been proved, by those who have studied the question, that if a sense be wanting, no other senses can supply what is deficient. Morally speaking, all is wanting in the natural man; he is as deaf to the words of Jesus as he is blind to His beauty. But notice one or two things in the man's replies, in the face of the pretended religious zeal in the blind Pharisees. "What sayest thou?" etc. (John 9:17), "He is a prophet." A prophet is one who brings the soul into God's presence, and such a ministry is rarely well received. The prophets (beaten, stoned, sawn asunder) were not exactly popular preachers.\* It is a solemn thing to be brought into the presence of God, and, as we see here, this always accompanies the reception of sight. The man had been brought before God as under the power of His word; and one can never have been really brought to this without having smaller thoughts of self and greater thoughts of God. To quote one no longer amongst us: "The word judges the vanity of all mere human thoughts, and leaves the spirit tranquil and unpretending." Oh, blessed portion, though one's very friends may disown one (see John 9:18-23), to be brought to hear God's Word, and to learn "the stability of His unchangeable perfection," in the midst of a blind, pretentious world!

\*How little was Noah appreciated - a preacher of righteousness for 120 years. Very few entered the ark, and Ham seems to have profited very little by his father's preaching. But the poor man has to undergo a second examination. (John 9:24 et seq.). Called the second time before a tribunal, or select committee of blind Jews (as we see ever in this world, men seem never to be discouraged in consulting the blind on the question of optics), he gives a fuller proof of the capacity conferred on him by grace; and with touching simplicity, and language learned in no human school of logic, he gives to his judges the most convincing proof of the divine mission of the sent One. (See John 9:30-33) It is not for me to dwell on this beautiful passage, so often explained; but notice the steps of proof in these verses - proof that must have been undeniable, though resisted by the wilfully blind.

There can be but one course for such judges, and the sentence of excommunication is pronounced by them upon the one whose only crime was to have received his sight, and to have insisted that he possessed it, notwithstanding all their efforts to make him contradict his senses. Do we, dear brethren, esteem sufficiently this gift of sight, and enter into the Lord's words, "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent"? But if one is excommunicated from the synagogue, one is no longer a Jew. "What religion have you now?" would be the question. And, indeed, we may well ask, "What is our religion?" "You are no longer a Jew, because the Jews have excommunicated you. What are you?"

We come now to the second part of this wonderful story; that is, the revelation made by the Son of God to the excommunicated beggar, blind no longer. In John 9:35, Jesus, having found him, says, "Believest thou on the Son of God?" What a preparation there had already been in the man's soul before this moment came when the Son of God drew nigh to him! The Son, whose infinite glory is presented to us in John 1:1-18, was now before a poor man excommunicated by the "religion" of the day, but who had eyes to see. (Compare John 1:18 of this gospel.) "Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him? . . . Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with Thee." The eternal Son was there, not in that dazzling glory that would have destroyed all men by one single ray, but there, seen and heard, seen by eyes given expressly to see the Light, seen thus in all His grace and power. The man worshipped; that is, he had now a divine religion. May the Lord give to us, in the present day, to understand these things. It is written, in 1 John 5:4-5 : "And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?" Notice that in this passage Jesus Christ is presented as the Son of God. It is not merely the fact of being born of God, as in the preceding verses, but it speaks of overcoming the world. To overcome the world is far more than is generally supposed, and for this we must know the Son of God, Jesus in His supreme power and might, in such a way that, walking by faith in true communion with Him, we, the weakest of beggars, once blind, but now seeing, may adore Him and glorify His name in true dependence upon Him. Not merely be good and exemplary in our duties, and diligent in meetings, but overcomers of the world through faith of the Son of God. Thus we also have a divine religion, and may we be found walking thus in the midst of this blind world, that every day grows more pretentious; may we know more of the power and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and learn to adore with more and more reverence the Son of God. E. L. B.

## S. The Blind Beggar.

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The Blind Beggar.

E. L. Bevir. p. 55. THE Servant's lowly pathway lies Through cursed Jericho; A vale of drought, of sightless eyes, And ill-concealed woe.

Oh! what might change a valley sad, And sight and healing bring?

What Trav'ler can make Baca glad, And like a fountain spring?

What Power can change a valley sad To life and joy serene?

Glory Divine, so humbly clad, Jesus, the Nazarene.

"He stops and calls, and summons me;

Say, do I hear aright?"

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"What precious gift have I for thee?"

"Lord, to receive my sight."

He spoke, and straight in those blank eyes The deep dark pupils roll;

Instinct with sense and meaning rise The windows of the soul. The soul perceives the Servant then In the full light of day The fairest sight to God or men, And follows in His way.

## S. The Contrast.

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The Contrast. The glory of the kingdom spread Over the mountain's lofty head Lighting the rocky steeps; And Jesu's robes were glittering white, His face — the sun in all its might — And Peter sleeps!

'Tis night, and in Gethsemane A prostrate form in agony With bitter crying, weeps: The darkness deepens at His groan, The darkest night this earth has known — And Peter sleeps!

He lies upon the dungeon floor; The guard, quadrupled, round the door Its midnight vigil keeps;

Two chains of iron bind him fast, Tomorrow's morn shall be his last And Peter sleeps!

E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Day

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The Day Behold a streak of ruddy tinge Along those eastern hills!

It crowns them with a glowing fringe, And the horizon fills; And through the higher gloom, from far  
Descends a cheering ray, It is the bright and Morning Star, The herald of the day!

O come, Thou long-expected King, Lord of all power and might;

Thou surely wilt salvation bring, The reign of Peace and Right! The weary nations in distress Await  
Thy gracious sway;

O come, thou Sun of Righteousness. To usher in the day!

E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Faith of God's Elect.

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### The Faith of God's Elect.

It has been well said of the epistle to Titus that it contains directions to an apostolic delegate, as to outward order rather than doctrine.

Yet we have some very important truths in it; the manifestation of the Word through preaching (by which God's full grace and promise before the world began are made known) should produce a wonderful effect upon the Cretans, and change the laziest, the most degraded of the Mediterranean islanders, into active and devoted servants of God with a heavenly hope.

Perhaps in no place could the ruined state of man be more conspicuous than in Crete. Liars sometimes tell the truth, and this is the case, for once at least, with Epimenides (himself a Cretan), when he described his fellow-countrymen as being liars, evil beasts, and slow-bellies.

"What bad material!" man would say, and indeed it is too true. The law could do nothing with it; and this is one of the chief reasons why the apostle speaks so severely in this epistle of those who were attempting to judaize. But what the law could not do, through the utter badness of the material, grace has accomplished, setting aside the flesh for ever. The epistle begins in a very remarkable manner. Paul's mission is according to the faith of God's elect, and the knowledge of the truth that is after godliness, in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. The sovereignty of God comes before us here. Long before Adam was created, or the degenerate sons of Japhet disgraced the island of Crete, God had chosen His own. He has elected certain men unto life, and this in His own absolute and inscrutable counsel. The faith of the elect of God is the first characteristic of the apostleship of Paul here, and before looking a little at the epistle it may be well to notice this expression with those which accompany it. It is divinely in keeping with the subject; that is, with the mission confided to Titus - the task was a great one, putting things in order and establishing elders in each town (Titus 1:5); and I have no doubt that the Cretans were not very pleasant people to deal with.

Paul, then, speaks as an apostle according to the faith of God's elect; God has made known to believers the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand unto glory. We are upon ground at once lofty and clear, for we believe that the sovereign God has been pleased to choose us in pure mercy, so that we may inherit eternal glory. A whole world of light opens up before our eyes, our faith sees Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and we know that our portion is with Him for ever. Sovereign grace and mercy! There is nothing of the natural man here, nor of any religious system by which man can be improved, it is the grand truth of God's own choice, and the faith of those who are the subjects of it.

There is then a faith in the midst of this world of conflicting creeds which is the true one. The elect of God, by their very position, bow with adoration to His sovereign will, and receive His revelation without reasoning. Of course I do not mean that there are no Christians who reason (we are all, alas! naturally apt to ask "Why?") but the faith of God's elect is the simple and full belief in the

whole Christian revelation. It is orthodoxy in the true sense, it is Christianity.

It is the faith of God's elect, and not a partial faith or persuasion, such as Calvinism, Armenian views, or any other "faith" where man has succeeded in narrowing the truth and forming a system. The Athanasian creed itself is not an adequate expression of the "faith of God's elect," for we need the whole revelation given to us in scripture of Christ's glory. Sovereignty on God's side, dependence on that of the chosen believer, and divine grace and glory known in Christ. The knowledge of the truth which is "after godliness" goes with this faith (it should not be translated "acknowledging," but rather "full knowledge") and makes the preceding phrase more clear, for this truth, whilst putting everything in its place, brings the soul into contact with God. When God is thus known there is true piety, which is very different from sanctimonious attempts to be good. Thus Paul maintained a godly walk in his arduous work, and he can encourage Titus to work amongst the Cretans (no sinecure) upon the principles which we have just considered. Paul gives to God His full place, and it would be a happy thing indeed were all Christians to follow his example in this.

Then the following sentence goes along with divine sovereignty. "In hope\* of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." The end of the course is looked forward to, as always in such passages in Paul's writings; and we have the exclusion of all that is false as to God's word. He cannot lie, it is absolute. All that is not true is shut out, and this (blessed be His name) accompanies His sovereign choice.

\*This is a peculiar term, expressing the condition upon which his apostleship was based.

We may consider later on, if God will, the effect of the manifestation of God's word in due time. There was a certain time chosen of God for making known His mind - when all man's failure had been exposed, his history run out, and his utter ruin proved. Crete, no doubt, was a notorious example of this. Paul had the great work of preaching the word committed to him by our Saviour-God. We considered lately the manner in which he fulfilled His service.

We have now had especially before us the faith of God's elect as characterising the mission. May we know more of what this means. It is a great thing in the present day to be free of imagination and fanciful views, and to hold to the grand truths of Christianity. The soul that enters into this will not be frozen up in some narrow system where nothing but "election" is discussed, but will give His true place and honour to the sovereign Saviour-God. E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Fountain of the Water of Life.

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The Fountain of the Water of Life.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 18, 1891, p. 173.

"I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Proverbs 21:6.

It is blessed to know that every desire produced to us by the Holy Ghost will be eternally satisfied. I do not mean that our hearts are not satisfied already, for through grace we are called to full joy already in communion with the Father and Son; but I should wish if possible to consider this passage, comparing it with one or two other parts of the Word, for the encouragement of our souls. The subject has been already spoken of, but being so full of blessing, may well be considered again and again.

I suppose that few will doubt that the Lord is awakening us to learn and enter into the moral value of the truths of Christianity at this time. He would have our hearts in the conscious enjoyment of eternal things. The things which are unseen are eternal. In this part of the Word the eternal state is brought before us by the Holy Ghost, and the stability of a new and eternal order of things clearly taught. There shall be no more sea, no fluctuating instability, and God Himself shall wipe away all tears, and there shall be no more death nor sorrow.

I do not wish to dilate upon this, but merely to call attention to the fact that the eternal state is here depicted by the Holy Ghost. Alas! how many people have looked upon heaven as a kind of ultimate haven after a stormy life, and nothing more. What vague and almost pagan dreams of a future Paradise in Christendom, as some old heathen might imagine the happy isles of the bleat. A celebrated picture of the "Plains of Heaven" is a kind of specimen of the idea of what celestial blessing is in man's imagination. But many true believers do not go very much further; and we have all looked too much at heaven as a kind of terminal refuge where all trouble shall have ended. I do not mean that it is not so, but I wish to call attention to this most wonderful promise as to the fountain of the water of life in connection with eternity.

There is not one single desire or thought about Christ in us that shall not be satisfied throughout eternity, and our eternal joy shall be to drink at this fountain. He Himself is the eternal source of our joy and happiness. You will say that we drink of the water of life already. Yes, most certainly, and of that I hope to say a word. But perhaps it would be well to think of the expression fountain,, and I might be able to give an illustration from natural thins.

I recollect many years ago a very hot summer at Malta, and the water becoming very scarce and bad. There are very few springs in the island, and the rainwater has to be collected in tanks, and becomes putrid and worthless in the hot months. I remember having walked along way with a friend, and, being parched with thirst, coming to a place in the north of the island called Ayin Tofficha, where to our surprise and delight we found a spring of water bubbling up from the rocks.

We drank without interruption till all our thirst was quenched, and remarked that this (drinking at a source) was a very different thing from buying glasses of water in Valetta.

If my illustration serves my present purpose I shall be satisfied. We shall drink for ever at the source of the water of life. Oh, beloved brethren, do we enter into this a little? Is not God Himself awakening us, so that we might not be content to know that we are on the way to His rest, blessed though that be, but that all the new desires of the new creature shall be eternally satisfied in Christ Himself, and that we shall drink throughout eternity of that ever-flowing Source? But to notice for a moment that of which I said I would speak-that we drink already of the water of life. I should like very briefly to turn to two well-known scriptures. I freely confess that they are so blessedly profound that I almost fear to say anything upon them, but through the Lord's mercy I would call attention to them. The first is in John 4:10-14, where the giving God in His grace bestows the living water. The blessed Son of God would give the living water, nay, gave it, to the poor Samaritan woman. He has given it to us also, and there is in us a source of water springing up into everlasting life. Our hearts have been satisfied no doubt. We shall not thirst again as those of the world do (oh, may it be practically true!), and the new desires of the new creature spring up towards Him, the new blessed Object of our souls, and are satisfied in Him and nowhere else. You will say that one must not separate the Holy Spirit's action in us from this active springing up to everlasting life. No, my dear friends, it is just exactly what I do not wish to do. Wonderful and blessed thing-a well (source) of water springing up in the power of the Holy Ghost This is then clear, that we have drunk already of the water of life, and that we drink of it, and that our joy is full already, if we walk with God. "We write unto you these things that your joy may be full." Our attention has been called lately to what communion with the Father and Son means. May we be truly in the enjoyment of it! But this does not in any way lessen the force of the word fountain (source) in Revelation 21:6. If we have tasted already of the water of life, if the truth of John 4:1-54 is not merely a doctrine but a living reality, if the new desires are felt, new affections produced in the heart by the Holy Ghost, and flowing forth towards the Son who has revealed to us the Father - if, I say, these things be realised, the promise to drink eternally of the fountain of the water of life becomes increasingly precious, for we shall drink of that eternal source beyond all time and dispensation, and never shall there be any distance between us and the Father's heart, fully known in the Son. Eternal bliss! The other passage to which I wish to allude is John 7:37-39. It has been much spoken of. There is the coming to Christ and drinking, and then the flowing forth of testimony in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a question here of the glorifying of Jesus, and of the coming of the Holy Ghost consequent upon this.

I once read a very striking account of the Dead Sea by an Asiatic traveller, in which he mentioned the fact that in that scene of desolation, where all verdure is destroyed by the salt and bitumen of asphaltites, in that dreary waste a rivulet runs down front Callirshoë on the side of Bashan, a fresh, bright spring in the midst of the salt desert; and where this brook runs there is a belt of green-palms, oleanders, and other plants - a picture of what the Christian should be in the desert of this world. But my object now is not to dwell on the fact of testimony, blessed though it be, but to notice that here too we find the drinking mentioned first of all, the reception of the glorious Jesus, as the Holy Ghost revealed Him at Pentecost, before the Feast of Tabernacles be celebrated.

We know then the glorified Lord. Our life is hid with Christ in God, and when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory.

Beloved brethren, are our hearts really seeking the things that are above? our eyes really fixed on the things (invisible but to faith) that are eternal? We shall have no other source of joy during eternity than Him, who has declared the Father's name to us, and is the glorious centre of His eternal counsels. E. L. B.

## S. The Grace that is in Christ Jesus.

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The Grace that is in Christ Jesus. As a sequel to the gift of a spirit of power, we may look at the peculiar encouragement given to Timothy in the part of the epistle immediately following.

We noticed that Paul would not have exhorted another to stand in a place of danger in which he dared not himself remain; and in looking a little into this part of the Word of God, we may consider the character of the encouragement given to us in an evil day, rather than the especial and official position of Timothy. We understand that we are in no such position, but we are called to stand for God in a time of trouble; and hence it is that the special instructions to Timothy will be of use and blessing to our souls.

It is easier to lead a victorious army than to conduct a retreat; and I once heard it remarked of Napoleon (to use an illustration), that when the fatal epoch of the retreat from Moscow had come, the man who had been more than successful with victorious troops showed a sad lack of generalship in deserting the great army at the time of its need and peril. Which is the greater general, the one who is glorious in victories, or the one who can lead out of danger a broken and suffering army? Paul was not one to desert his post when all they of Asia had abandoned him, and in great suffering could speak in simplicity of his personal and intimate knowledge of the Lord, as the One who thoroughly understood His servant's life, work, and present attitude, when so many had turned away from him.

It might be well, in passing, to remark the exhortation as to the "form of sound words," for had we been more familiar with the scope of Scripture teaching, and its form, we should have been kept from many a deceit of the enemy where a lack of familiarity with Scripture expressions exposed the soul to trouble.

"Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus."

There had been men of God in the Old Testament who had been faithful in evil days - they had known the patience and the goodness of God to sustain them. Men such as Moses, David, Elijah, Jeremiah, had learnt in much sorrow the true character of the heart of God; but they could not know grace in its peculiar expression as we find it here - "the grace which is in Christ Jesus." To be strong, and to be able to take one's share of the suffering, worse than the disastrous retreat from Moscow (for moral suffering is more severe than physical), Timothy must know more and more of the grace which is in Christ Jesus. It is no slight thing to know the resources of the grace of God, and that in Him who (Himself God for ever blessed) enters divinely, and yet with a human heart, into every difficulty of His poor feeble servants in a time of great trial. The true secret of all service is to be strong in the unfailing grace which is in Christ Jesus, whatever shape things may assume in Christendom; and however disheartening the desertion and turning away of the many, there is the infinite grace of the heart of God, known in the glorified Christ at His right hand.

There is no difficulty, no sorrow, in which we cannot directly have to do with Him; who, Himself the perfect servant, knew what sorrow and ingratitude were as no one else could know it, and who

could say, "I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought and in vain; yet surely my judgment is with the Lord, and my work with my God." The very fact of the difficulties with which our path bristles calls forth energy of soul in an upward direction - the strengthening oneself in the grace (the unwearied, unchangeable, and active love) that is in Christ Jesus. Our talent may be small (according to the Giver's will), but to use it and to make it productive we need the knowledge of the Master's heart, and to be kept in full communion with Him, who surely is acting in grace until the very end of the Christian testimony.

It is a severe school to be in - I mean that of Christendom in its present state; and we need to be strong in grace; that is, to have the heart and mind so stayed upon Him who endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself, that one may act by Him in grace to all, whilst not relinquishing the truth. "Yet in Thy love such depths I see." It is a great thing to act so as to turn the left cheek to the aggressor when one has received a blow upon the right. And surely the life of Paul had been characterised by the grace which is in Christ Jesus. He had known what it was to labour on, suffering at every step of the immense work of laying the foundation - often going forth from one town, beaten or stoned, to go cheerfully into another to begin there the work of God. At the very end of his active career, before his captivity, going up to Jerusalem with intense love to his nation, cast out and condemned (more than forty Jews, with a zeal worthy of a better cause, binding themselves with an oath to kill him); and then being able before Agrippa and a mocking Roman proconsul to say, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." The patient, laborious life, spending and being spent for ungrateful Corinthians, or exasperated Jews; the absence of self-seeking, the carrying out of the Lord Jesus' own words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; all this bears witness to the strength of the grace that is in Christ Jesus.

Oh! beloved brethren, we are not called to the sufferings of Paul or Timothy; we have never known stripes or stoning; but we are called, in our measure, to be strong in this grace, in a day of many tears and sorrow, when the Lord has called out a few to be faithful to His word and name.

There are principles connected with this which, though they have a special application to Timothy, are very important for us. There is care in the work, and sound teaching; then the taking one's part or share of suffering (2 Timothy 2:3), enduring as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. There is, I suppose, a special word to one in such a position as Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:4; then the striving lawfully, keeping between the ropes of the race course, so that the whole course may be owned by the just Judge at the end.

Then the patience in work; for the sixth verse should be read thus: "The husbandman must labour first, before partaking of the fruits." It is steady labour, and we cannot, by any human effort, hasten on the harvest. Souls must be exercised, and a real work carried on in them, even as Paul laboured night and day with tears in Ephesus. We are naturally impatient, and I recollect, as a child, having planted some little orange trees, pulling the leaves to make them grow more quickly, and spoiling the plants. A patient work with souls, looking to the Lord to give the increase, even in a day such as this, will certainly bear fruit to the Lord's glory, and the faithful labourer rejoices, and shall rejoice still more, in that which has been produced by the power of God in the souls amongst whom he has worked.

We are stimulated to more active and careful service as the days grow darker, and the ingratitude of the soil only causes us to be more and more strengthened in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. May it suffice us to be approved of Him, looking to Him at every step of the way for grace to continue our course and to finish it with joy!

E. L. Bevir.

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

## S. The Great House.

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The Great House.

It would be well, before looking at the subject at the head of this paper, to notice the two things that Timothy was to call to remembrance in 2 Timothy 2:8; for without these there can be no perseverance in that which is (apparently to men) a losing game, but which shall end in victory.

"Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, of the seed of David, according to my gospel," says the apostle; and here we have the two grand truths mentioned in Romans 1:3-4. God has acted in resurrection power in raising up Jesus; and those who in the early morning visited the tomb in Joseph's garden, beheld the terrible sepulchre - that sealed stronghold of death - broken open, and its power gone! The only epitaph that could have been put upon that gravestone would have been, "He is not here, but is risen." It is good for us to remember Jesus Christ raised from the dead, for God is acting by that very same power which resuscitates the dead, in all that He is now doing for the glory of His Son. We need to know this power, and to depend upon Him who is using it amidst all the present confusion.

There is the second point; that is, that Jesus Christ came of the seed of David; and we know that this refers to the faithfulness of God, who, if He makes promises - as He did to David and to his seed - will most surely accomplish them. He does not make promises, as we do, and then break them, but performs what He has said. So that we have these two great facts to rest upon even in the present day:

1. The power of the resurrection;
2. The faithfulness of God; and they form a wonderful ground of action.

Remember thus Jesus Christ! This is necessary, for the Holy Spirit speaks in what follows of patient work for Him, and of identification with Him in His death and life, in His sufferings and glory. There is this most blessed service and personal knowledge of Him with whom we have to do; the present confession of His name and hearty service, or the reverse; and disputes about words to be judged. This is a very solemn passage. And now our subject is introduced. Timothy was to study to present himself to God, a workman not ashamed, expounding rightly the Word of God; one must be in God's presence to be able to cut in a straight line. Evil was developing, and error coming in rapidly, but nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure; and much has been said of the two sides of the seal attached to this.

"The Lord knoweth them that are His" is the upper side, and this assurance gives great rest to the spirit of a workman: it will keep him from hiding under a juniper-bush, and from complaining that he alone is left.\* The other, or lower side of the seal, must govern all our conduct; it is the first step to be taken by the faithful on to the ground of true testimony at the present time, and must characterise the walk up to the end. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

\*See the description of Elijah's flight in the Christian Friend, January, 1893.

Now comes the illustration of the great house, and I conceive that no one who reads this has any doubt as to the meaning of the figure. All Christendom is taken in here; all that professes to own the lordship of Christ, the Master alluded to in 2 Timothy 2:21. The house is His; that is, His name is owned in it, and the vessels belong to Him, at least nominally. (The most ignorant bigot in the Neapolitan States will at once recognise Christ as the Master and Judge of all, at least as an outward profession.) There are vessels of gold and silver - vessels to honour, and these the Master uses, when they are in a fit state for use. There are vessels of wood and earth - vessels to dishonour; it is not said that such are used of the Master. The great point is the being fit for His use, and this can only be by a true separation from the vessels to dishonour. Here it is that exercise must come, for one cannot by any means get outside of the great house. It is not merely a question of having a different religion to Jews, Turks, and pagans, but of being morally separate from that which is dishonouring to Christ in Christendom. This is of the very highest importance, for the question will really come to this: Is it possible to be separate from evil, and, without being a Pharisee, to be standing apart from what is not of the Lord in the great house? Again: Can such a testimony be sustained? Is there such a thing now, or has everything come to such a point, that there is positively no real testimony to Christ in Christendom? The first question is answered at once by 2 Timothy 2:21 : "if a man therefore purge himself from these [vessels to dishonour], he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work." There is no pharisaism here, but true separation from evil, and a consequent moral fitness for that which is good; the vessel can he now employed by the Master as being useful, prepared for what He is doing in the midst of all that goes on in the great house. A testimony such as I have spoken of cannot be carried out without the Lord's own sustaining power and intervention, and here we find an answer to the other questions; the next verse speaks clearly of this. There is the recognition of the Lord's authority as the One who alone is Son over the house of God; there is the pursuit of justice, faith, love, and peace with those who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.

There is no attempt on the part of the faithful to rearrange the great house (many have tried this and utterly failed), but real individual exercise and purifying oneself from evil, then identification with those who are subject to the Lord, and the pursuing of what is good, beginning with righteousness and ending with peace.

Notice that it is not "peace at any price," but that justice, faith, and love come first.

It will be said that there has been terrible failure, and this we may well confess, to our shame; but the question is whether there be any true testimony to Christ and any true Christianity in the midst of the great house, and I am bold to say that I believe that the Lord will sustain a few to the very end, in the position described in 2 Timothy 2:22. Though the failure may have been great in the pursuit of justice, faith, love, and peace, yet the Lord has not given up the feeble few who sincerely call upon His name, and who acknowledge His lordship in the midst of all that is foreign to His thoughts in the great house. May the thought of His faithfulness sustain us! May we be kept from every attempt at building or forming things anew! But, understanding our place, as subject to the Lord, in the midst of the pretentious edifice that shall soon be judged and end in ruin, may we be found morally fit for His service, and pursuing that which is good. All that is not of Him in

Christendom must be judged, and He alone can sustain a feeble and broken remnant which trusts in His name, and calls upon it still. E. L. Bevir.

After we have learnt the blessedness of having the Lord with us in our circumstances, He leads us on to the higher joy of fellowship with Himself in His interests. He first sups with us, and then we with Him.

## S. The Holy Spirit in the Assembly.

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The Holy Spirit in the Assembly.

1 Corinthians 12:1-31.

One must not be surprised at the diabolical attempt of the enemy to counterfeit the action of the Holy Ghost at the beginning of this chapter; it could hardly be expected that the adversary would allow the Church of God upon earth to rest in peace.

There are three things that I should like to notice.

1. The Sovereignty of the Holy Spirit;

2. The baptism into one body; and then we may ask, 3. Is it possible to acknowledge these truths in the day in which we are living? The first blessed truth is clearly taught all through this passage, and the eleventh verse alone would suffice to establish it: "But all these worketh . . . the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will." It is a great thing to know that the Holy Ghost, a true divine Person, is here upon earth and is acting in a sovereign way, in the distribution of gifts, in the body; that is, in the church. The Lordship of Christ is insisted upon by the apostle as being the test of the Holy Spirit's manifestation. No one can say "Lord Jesus" but by the Holy Spirit; the enemy, of course, refuses to acknowledge the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the test is crucial. The Lordship of Christ is of the very highest importance; for if all Christians were truly subject to Him, there would be no difficulty in receiving the blessed truths in connection with the assembly upon earth. The Holy Ghost is Sovereign, but does not act in any one member independently of all the others. I suppose that no two gifts are alike, there are diversities of gifts, but one Spirit, and He alone has distributed them. It would be well for us to pay attention to this, and, to the fact of the differences of services, but one Lord; for man cannot make gifts, they are divinely given; and then again the differences of services, and the responsibility of each to the Lord, if understood, would keep us from imitating others, or criticizing them. The distinctions of operations, but the same God who operates, should be noted also, for there is a danger of prescribing a certain line of operation which may be according to our thoughts: it is very important to allow full scope for divine action. The gifts that are spoken of here have often been noticed, and the Corinthians failed to use them under the Spirit's guidance. They attached more importance to those gifts where supernatural power was wonderfully displayed, than to the higher ones; and, acting as children (as they really were spiritually), they made a wrong use of what had been given for edification. The point is that there is the sovereign Spirit of God present in the assembly, and that the Corinthians ignored Him in His corporate action. Alas! into what a state things have fallen in Christendom since then. Surely the great sin has been that of ignoring the Holy Ghost's presence, and though in a superstitious way He is represented as a dove\* in the so-called churches, yet no true recognition of His presence exists. The very fact of singing *Veni Creator Spiritus!*

"Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, And fill us with celestial fire," shows that people do not believe that He is come. No, the Holy Spirit's presence and sovereignty have been ignored, and we need to be brought back to own it. When His blessed and sovereign action is confessed, and His presence known, then can we enter into the truth of His acting in each member of the body, in view of the profit of the whole body itself. (See 1 Corinthians 12:7-12) Surely we should pray that these immense truths may be received by believers and maintained in the Spirit's power; God would have us to know this power to the exclusion of what is merely of man. And this brings us to the second part of our subject.

\*The whole thing is a dire mistake. The Holy Spirit descended on Christ in the form of a dove, and the symbol is comprehensible at once in its beauty. But the Spirit could not descend on men (redeemed though they be) on earth as a dove; nor did He so descend. There was leaven in the two Pentecostal loaves. (Leviticus 23:17.)

2. 1 Corinthians 12:12 alludes to the Head and members, the Christ;\* and then comes the baptism by one Spirit into one body.

\*I recollect a priest in France saying to me that Christ is the Head of the Church in heaven, and the Pope its head on earth. In such a case you would have a monstrous thing - a body with two heads! The first part of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is of great interest; for up to the point of having Christ as Head, baptized, as we are, whether Jew or Gentile, into one body, we love our own identity. Of course I am speaking now of our place as members of the body; we have a new Head, it is a grand and unchanging fact. We had nothing to do with this; I mean that it was no act of our own, but the Holy Ghost's act, and we have been formed into one body by it. It is a very blessed thing when believers learn that Christ is their Head, the Head of the one body, and when they see that all true saints have been baptized into it. If there were literally several "bodies," as some seem to believe, there would be several heads; but no, there is one body, and one Head. The second part of the verse is different: "And have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Many readers know that there is no preposition before "one Spirit," which makes the passage all the more remarkable; it is a question of true spiritual enjoyment and communion, and we need to pray to the Lord that He may give us to know the Spirit's power upon earth in connection with the wonderful truths of the one body. Here the blessed Spirit's action is identified with us, that is, with all the members of the body; in the former part of the verse we are identified with His action. May we know more of what the unity of the Spirit means - though it has been so little known, or seen, through the dreary pages of Church history!

3. It will be seen that I have assumed that we can acknowledge these truths even in our day of ruin, and thus have anticipated the answer to the question in the third part of our short study.

If we be truly subject to Christ, we shall acknowledge the truths that concern Him and the Church. If all believers in London (or elsewhere) were subject to the Head, they would all be together - a wonderful proof of the Holy Ghost's power, and of the unity of the Spirit. For one moment five thousand Jews were seen in Jerusalem (Acts 4:32) with one heart and one soul; instead of five thousand ways of thinking, they had but one. Blessed display of the unity of the Spirit! But it will be said that we are no longer living in Pentecostal times. No, indeed; but to faith these blessed truths are real, and we can be upon the ground of the assembly of God, ardently desiring that all true members may find their way to it.

4. The difference between the fifteenth and following verses, and the twenty-first and following, has been noticed. In the case of a lesser gift, the possessor of it must not be discouraged in comparing it with a greater one; in the case of a greater, as compared with a lesser, it cannot be said "I have no need of thee!" We are dependent upon one another, nor could the smallest member be missing without the body being incomplete. The hidden members are as necessary as the more conspicuous ones; and I recollect a physician once saying to me, in speaking of exposure to cold, that the face and hands may be exposed to snow, or rain, or cold, but that great care should be taken to cover the chest and other vital organs, the officina of the human body. This very illustration is used here by the apostle, and the twenty-fifth verse is very important.

If there be subjection to Christ as Head, and a true desire to serve Him, and all the members of the body to which each one of us belongs; if, I say, there be this, and the "more excellent way," that is, love in activity, true unselfish service, there may be surely the answering to God's mind as to our place in the assembly in this day of confusion. Though indeed we may feel that the whole body is in a state of partial paralysis as compared with the twenty-sixth verse, yet we may own the great truth of the unity of the Spirit, and so far as possible walk in it.

Paul, by the Holy Ghost, shows the true order of the gifts, and then in what follows speaks of love. May we too be characterized by obedience and love, and thus walk according to God's mind as to the assembly upon earth! E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Last Words of Jacob

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The Last Words of Jacob Genesis 49:1-33.

Jacob, purified by discipline, ended his days like a true pilgrim father. The blessing and prophetic history given by Israel to his sons is full of the very highest interest. I do not propose now to look at the detail of the blessings to the twelve tribes, but to consider especially two immense truths clearly marked out in this prophecy.

1. Man's responsibility and his ignominious failure.
2. The purpose of God. The first part is in connection with "the first man," the second in connection with "the second Man"; both are of great importance.

Reuben, Simeon, and Levi are the first-mentioned sons of Israel; and here we see failure in the responsibility of the first-born, and violence with corruption - the old, old story of the first man.

Reuben, the first-born, the strength and dignity of his father, was unstable\* as water; and with the instability there was the wanton conduct in his father's house. If Reuben is a specimen of the corruption of man, Simeon and Levi follow close after, as using nature's force (violence) with instruments of cruelty; their fierce anger was not according to God.

\*The word "unstable" means the boiling and swilling of water; the ebullition of the passion and force of nature which cannot be depended upon in the things of God. It ends here in positive evil.

I believe that we need not say much more as to this part of our prophecy. There is a complete downfall of the heads and hope of the family; it may be summed up in a few words - nature's irrepressible energy, immorality and cruelty, failure. "Cursed be their anger!" The remaining part of Jacob's speech gives us an historical insight into all that shall take place, consequent upon the exaltation of Christ (the Man of God's counsels), after His death and resurrection. But first of all Christ Himself is introduced typically in Judah.\* God's purpose is in Him, and Judah is the one whom his brethren shall praise. This could not be said of Reuben; there was nothing praiseworthy in him, whatever his position at the head of the family might have been. Judah is here mentioned in connection with Messiah's first coming (Genesis 49:10); and Messiah Himself is the Lion of the tribe of Judah. God's purpose is in Judah (Psalms 78:68), and here the Christ is brought before us as the One to be praised. Let us praise Him from our very hearts!

\* Judah, Joseph, and Benjamin are all three of them types of Christ here: Joseph and Benjamin especially in His exaltation and reign. But He has been rejected! And now this wonderful prophecy unfolds itself, giving us the present history of Israel. What is it?

Commercial prosperity and submission to the Gentiles, ending in apostasy!

Zebulun and Issachar represent the long period of Israel's patiently bearing the Gentile yoke, during which time the riches of the earth get into their hands; they are heavy-laden with wealth. But this leads us to Dan, the apostate tribe.\* As a serpent by the way, he shall bite the horse's

heels and everything fall backwards; this is the tendency of the present age, ending with Israel's apostasy. (It is a sad thing to think that Christendom's apostasy shall precede it.)

\*I am told that any orthodox Israelite will affirm that the Antichrist is to come out of the tribe of Dan; this is remarkable. But at the very time when this gross evil shall be developed, the remnant shall be formed, that well-known remnant in the Psalms, whose prophetic cry is here given to us in the form of an interjection: "I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah!" Compare the well-known voice of faith, "How long?" in Psalms 10:1-18; Psalms 13:1-6; Psalms 94:1-23, as well as in other parts of Scripture.

Apostasy shall terminate the present state of things, and then, the faithful having been delivered by judgment, blessing and joy shall follow. This we may briefly notice in Gad, Asher, and Naphtali.

Gad is overcome by a troop, but overcomes at last. The prophet Daniel informs us what the final trooping together against Israel shall be (and read, too, Psalms 83:1-18), but the earthly people of God shall be brought out of the trouble. Then Asher is blessed with abundance and good cheer; and Naphtali, like a hind that has been freed, shall give glory to Jehovah. Deliverance, consolation, and liberty. And this brings us to Joseph, type of Him who shall dispense all blessings, from His supreme position in glory, to His restored people. The branches run over the wall, for the Gentiles shall receive of the riches of the exalted Christ. If Joseph had been shot at by the archers and sorely grieved (compare Psalms 105:17-18), yet his bow abode in strength, and he was made strong by the mighty One of Jacob (from thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel). The power and might are not those of unstable Reuben, or cruel Simeon and Levi, but the strength of Jehovah Himself, the excellent force of God manifested in the Man of His counsels. Our hearts long for that day when the glorious Anti-type of Joseph shall reign over the universe, and when every knee shall bow before Him. If we delight now to have part in His rejection and sufferings we shall rejoice above measure in the day of His glory; we desire to see Him honoured who went down into the pit for us!

Benjamin (Genesis 49:27) represents the power of the great King who shall break all the hostile nations to pieces like a potter's vessel. In this short but I trust suggestive and pregnant sketch we have then Israel, as the responsible earthly man, set aside; then God's purpose in Christ seen in Judah, Joseph, and Benjamin. At the same time a wonderful sketch of the history of God's ways, in view of His bringing the first-Begotten into the world. May we, who are not Israelites, but the co-heirs of the true Joseph called out from the Gentiles, be faithful to Him and love His appearing!

E. L. Bevir.

"In Joseph and Benjamin we have the crowning of all blessing in the double character of Christ, the heavenly Heir of all, and power and strength upon the earth that subdues all."

## S. The New Man and the Holy Ghost.

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The New Man and the Holy Ghost.

Ephesians 4:17-32; Ephesians 5:1-2.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 53. This exhortation is upon the basis of the new creation. We find in it the new man created after God in righteousness and truth of holiness (new in the sense of never having existed before), and it also takes account of the possession of the Holy Spirit. It is full of energy and power; and this can be understood by the fact of the Holy Spirit of God being in the saints, and in an unrieved state. They are exhorted (Ephesians 4:30) not to grieve Him. The state of the Gentiles at the beginning of the passage is very terrible. It is not merely their horrible practices, as in Romans 1:1-32, but the moral state of their heart and mind. It has very often been pointed out that the blindness of the heart is the cause of the darkening of the understanding. Some of the brightest and most powerful Gentile intellects give sad proof of being thus darkened. Strangers to the life of God - that life which we see in Jesus, God manifest in the flesh - they have nothing in common with it. Here it is the state of the Gentile walk generally - the understanding clouded because of the affections being utterly wrong, and the result in Ephesians 4:19. But the saints are on an entirely new footing; the ye is emphatic in Ephesians 4:20. There is the putting off of the old man, and putting on of the new. It is not merely a change of practice (that we shall see in what follows), but there is a thorough setting aside of the old corrupt man; the fresh spirit of the mind, and putting on of the new man (new kainon) created after God in righteousness and holiness of truth. It is no modification or "better ways," as people say, but a new creation; and we have taken this place.

Now comes out the character of righteousness and holiness in all the excellent energy of the Holy Ghost, and that not only in the putting away of evil, but in the production of positive good. It requires the power of the Spirit to speak truth one to another, on the ground of being members one of another; the present power of the Holy Ghost for entering into and answering to the truths of the one body is but little understood. This is really the unity of the Spirit, not merely the bare fact that there is one Spirit, but His power known in the one body.

Ephesians 4:26 refers to righteous anger. The new man rebukes iniquity; but again, what power is needed here! It is the reverse of indifference to evil; righteous wrath is called out by certain expressions of evil. One cannot be silent; but what danger of going too far! How often it has ended in sin, through our not being under the full control of the Holy Spirit! The Christian ends his day with an unchafed mind! I recollect once asking an aged Christian how he had been able to live so long, having been so frequently unjustly attacked; and his reply was that for forty-five years he had been able daily to leave everything with the Lord in deep repose of mind, notwithstanding the indignation often called forth by so much iniquity. Occasion is thus taken away from the enemy, who has often taken advantage of a chafed spirit. We find in all this part of the Word the Holy

Ghost in the saints, and Satan in the children of disobedience.

Ephesians 4:28 has often been spoken of as showing the true energy of Christianity. The thief becomes a giver; and not only a giver who gives of his abundance, but one who labours to acquire the means of giving to others. What a wonderful transformation! It required spiritual energy in Paul to sit up making tents for his own needs and for those of others; and he had not been a thief before his conversion. The Holy Ghost alone can produce positive virtues, and true devotedness, the very contrary of what had preceded.

Then (Ephesians 4:29) it is not only that corrupt communication is stopped, but positive good, edification according to the need. Not only good language, but good for the occasion; and this evidently supposes the Holy Spirit's power. We have often said things, in themselves good, that were not needed for the occasion; as I recollect to have seen a philanthropist giving away food and medicines (excellent in themselves) without regard to the state of the recipients.

"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed for the day of redemption." This is fully in keeping with our subject, and may we walk thus till the end of our course on earth!

Ephesians 4:31-32, and Ephesians 5:1-2 go together, and as we have had righteousness, holiness, and truth, so now we find love and grace. It is not merely that bitterness and wrath, etc., are to be put away, with all malice (there is nothing malicious in the new man), but love practically shown, with the imitation of two divine models, in the power of the Holy Ghost. It is a most wonderful passage. To be kind and compassionate to one another, even as God hath forgiven us in Christ! The manner in which the prodigal was received has been much spoken of, and, with the memory of His forgiveness ever fresh, we are exhorted to imitate God. (It is no sign of progress to have forgotten the forgiveness of one's sins, but quite the contrary.) To be imitators of God, as dear children, is the very highest aspect of grace, and can anything be more surprising than this company of beloved children walking thus, with such a model, in the midst of a world like ours? "And walk in love, as Christ hath loved us," etc. There is another aspect of a divine model. Our blessed Lord in all His life down here showed the same untiring interest, the same love, to His own to the very end, when He gave Himself for us, a perfect Holocaust, to God. If we really have Him before us, and His patient ways with His disciples, though they often showed so little interest in Him (John 16:5-6), we shall walk in love, seeking to maintain our happy relations with the beloved children of God. This is the real imitation of Jesus Christ.

We have thus the new man, and the Holy Ghost a new power - righteousness, truth, holiness, and love made good in a walk conspicuous for its beauty, "not as the other Gentiles"; a new man, divine strength, and a divine model. May the Lord give us to walk thus! E. L. B.

\* \* \* The more intimately we know the Scriptures, the more simple and distinct is the truth that, though Son of Man, Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament.

## S. The Remnant in Jude.

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The Remnant in Jude.

Jude 1:20-23. No one can deny the conservative character of Jude's epistle; I mean by "conservative" the keeping of that which is good. Notice, for instance, the expression in the first verse, "Preserved in Christ Jesus;" and that in the twenty-first, "Keep yourselves in the love of God." It is the same word in both cases. The apostasy is not far off, and, morally speaking, Christendom has left its first estate since many a long year. It is a serious thing to be living in an age when men are ready to throw off the very form of Christianity. Surely we cannot be blind to the fact that soon the mantle shall be discarded, seeing, as we can, to follow the illustration of the fable, the wolf's ear above the shepherd's cloak.

Departure from original estate, and utter contempt for all authority are the two great things which characterize this epistle; there is a kind of gradation, no doubt in the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying of Core; for self-will and murder are followed by corrupt practice, and finally by open rebellion against God.

We are living, beloved brethren, in these last and evil days - days in which a "railing judgment" is lightly passed upon all established authorities, and when mockery is applied to true godliness.\* Judgment must fall upon the whole scene; and Enoch, the seventh from Adam, had so foreseen the crisis, that he had said, "The Lord has come amidst His holy myriads," anticipating the terrible issue of this world's history. We are not to be astonished at the state of things, for all has been foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; and their prophecy has come to pass.

\*A few years ago a shocking parody of the book of Job was published in Italy, and was crowned with immense success: a significant mark of the times.

Let us look at the final exhortation, and notice the peculiar position and service of the little remnant amidst all the desolation around. There is one bright spot, as one may sometimes see one bright ray coming through the clouds in a dark and lowering evening landscape.

Building up yourselves on your most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Spirit, characterize the state, that is the state of keeping yourselves in the love of God,\* awaiting the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. There is true edification and true prayer, not merely an assent to certain doctrines; and thus we are kept in the love of God, in His unchanging, infinite love, whilst we wait the day in which we shall enter into His glory, and be in our home for ever. Children of the day, we wait that moment when we shall be glorified, and shall be in the proper sphere of that life which we already have in the power of the Holy Ghost.

\*See the note in the New Translation; it is the state they were to be in.

Notice that "mercy" characterizes this epistle; it is displayed to us every day, and every hour, and shall crown our whole history upon earth, when the Lord shall come to take us out of this dark world, before Enoch's vision be accomplished.

It is very blessed when there is true building up and true prayer; it is not merely "by" or "through" the Holy Ghost, but it implies also a spiritual state, so that the prayers are truly for Christ's glory, even in the midst of all the evil of the last days. (Compare John 16:23-24.) Then comes a special service, needing spirituality - the service of separating the precious from the vile.

Jeremiah, in the fifteenth chapter of his prophecy, was separate from the assembly of the mockers when Jehovah sent him to take forth the precious from the vile; and so, in Jude's epistle, there must be a state of spiritual vigour and communion (may we have more of it!), before we attempt to help others. I well remember many years ago trying to pull a lad out of the water, and falling into it myself.

Spiritual discernment is needed so as to be able to pluck out of the fire some who are in it; fear too, lest, in accomplishing this difficult work, one's own garment be stained. It is a wonderful and blessed service amidst all the corruption; and the conservation of a spiritual state, of the consciousness of God's infinite love to us, and of a sense of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, are needed every moment of our lives, otherwise we should be overcome with evil.

Then the service shall end gloriously. The last two verses bring before us the power of the only God our Saviour, who is able to keep us and sustain us in a critical time, and a difficult service. We have been ourselves delivered, and He will use us, to the very end of our course, for the deliverance of others. May we have faith in Him. There will be loud shouts of joy when the victory shall be proclaimed before the universe; in the meantime may we depend upon our Saviour-God. To Him that is able to keep you from falling (that is, without stumbling), and to present you faultless before His glory with exceeding joy (with exultation), to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, might and authority, both now and to all the ages. Amen. E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Rest of God.

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The Rest of God.

Hebrews 4:1-16; Revelation 21:22-27; Revelation 22:1-5.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 245.

It is a happy thing for the saints when they begin to understand what is meant by entering into God's rest.

We are in a world of sin and misery, and whichever way we look we behold the sad effects of the work of the enemy. For nearly six thousand years - ever since Eve, the mother of us all, ate the fatal fruit - disease and death have been destroying everything upon earth; nor is the moral effect of sin less conspicuous. Violence and corruption have been irrepressible, and no panacea has been found for either temporal or spiritual disorder.

I well remember standing in a chemist's shop in France, and the owner of it saying to me: "There is no preparation amidst the numerous bottles and phials that you see, which is not a reflection of some grievous malady!" The point before us is this - that we, believers, are on our way to the rest of God. In the Epistle to the Hebrews it is no question of the relief of the conscience, and of assured pardon and justification (these things are understood), but of a people called with a heavenly calling (many sons being led to glory), who are upon their way to God's rest. God shall rest when all trace of evil shall have been done away, and His saints shall enter into this repose.

I say this, beloved friends, because we are apt to think merely of our own escape from a world of sin and sorrow (and who would not rather be in glory than at B- ?), and to limit the passage to our deliverance from the present state of things, whereas the important subject of which we are speaking is the rest of God. I recollect a brother, a weaver by trade, who sincerely wished for rest, because the silk was so bad and the pay so scarce. He is not the only example, but the passage before us treats of quite a different matter.

It is not merely that sin has brought with it temporal distress, disease, and suffering, but we are in a world where there is no rest. We recollect the words of one, now with the Lord, who spoke of the fretting nature of sin; and the sad, restless condition of man without God becomes every day more evident to any one who lives for some time in this world. God cannot rest in the midst of such a state of things, and we find in John 5:1-47, when the Pharisees accused our blessed Lord of working upon the Sabbath-day, that He asserts that His Father worketh hitherto, and that He worketh. (See John 5:17.) Neither the Father nor the Son could be inactive, where there was sorrow to be taken away, or the effects of sin to be alleviated; and - oh, blessed assurance! - neither demons nor men can prevent the blessed work of God! But it shall not be always thus. The time shall come when God Himself shall rest; when He shall have gathered all His own, in housed security, into His presence (one single speck of sin would destroy the rest of God), and when He

shall rest in His love.

There remaineth a rest (sabbatism) for the people of God; and if this be blessedly true for Israel in the millennium, it is true in a far brighter and higher way for Christians, who are called to heavenly glory, and whose citizenship is on high. For we, who have believed, do enter (that is, we are entering) into His rest. We are not there yet, but are on our way to it; there is no uncertainty as to arriving, but we are not yet in it. We might compare it to a number of persons, bidden to a feast in a splendid upper chamber, and ascending the staircase to it: they are entering in. The rest after creation had been destroyed by the serpent's deceit in Paradise; Israel's rest in Palestine has never really taken place, and there remains a rest for the people of God - that rest where He Himself shall repose in the midst of the redeemed. This takes us at once further than any such selfish thought as wishing to escape from present evil; for we are called to use all diligence in working now in communion with the God who cannot be inactive where there is evil to be met, and where we ourselves are found - pilgrims travelling on to glory - as working, bringing into this troubled scene the resources and grace of the glorified Jesus. Thus a Christian, instead of taking his colour from the circumstances around him, brings into them blessing and power from quite another scene, and is thus found to be answering to the thoughts of God, who is actively working for the blessing of men in this poor world. In this sense we have not yet rested from our works, but we are encouraged to give all diligence to them, as seeing before us the certain and glorious repose of the people of God, when they shall have entered into His rest. There is nothing in our labour in common with modern philanthropy (true philanthropy is from God to man, Titus 3:4) which seeks to make use of all the means it can find in this planet; but it is the active service of love in a scene of misery where God cannot be inactive, and in this we are certain to find opposition from the enemy, and severe labour. The two things at the end of the chapter are so connected with the passage by the Holy Spirit that we must notice them. The word of God (Hebrews 4:12-13) is applied so as to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. No humanly-fashioned blade of steel could divide the "joints and marrow," nor could any human word judge between that which is natural and that which is spiritual; we are thus brought into God's very presence, and motives are laid bare; we have to do with Him. Again, the priesthood of Christ, who is Himself above the heavens, sustains us and keeps us in the power of the things above, so that we are prevented from giving way to temptation, having full and free access to the throne of grace.

How serious and glorious a thing then our service and our work becomes, as we go on to the rest of God!

I have read a few verses in the Revelation in order to make the contrast between the present state of things, and the rest to come, the more striking. Now, all our service is accompanied by labour and effort; for we have to resist the enemy outside, and to walk under the power of the word of God (knowing the priesthood of Christ) as to our own souls. But then! each time we read this passage our heart glows with anticipated liberty and joy in unrestrained service, yet perfect repose - no painful labour. "His servants shall serve Him: and they shall see His face" etc. No doubt we have here a description of the heavenly city during the millennium, but the point before us of the absence of evil, and of free hearts in the presence God and the Lamb, will be readily understood. The street of transparent glass has been much spoken of; that is, we shall walk upon that which is absolutely pure. Now we have to be very careful where we place our feet, and to be diligent in walk, so as not to become defiled. All is worship (Revelation 21:22) there; now there must be

diligence, for the enemy endeavours to rob us of sustained worship. The glory of God lightens the city, and the Lamb is its light, and there is no night there; we cannot in our present state bear continuous light. I recollect whilst in Norway a long time ago, being annoyed at there being "no night," for it was near the time of the summer solstice. All this helps us to understand the difference between the condition of things during our pilgrimage, whilst we are labouring in this scene of sorrow, and the state of the holy Jerusalem, where all toil shall be at an end, where shall be uninterrupted light, joy, and peace, and where no sin can enter to defile. The water of life, and the tree whose fruits are constantly renewed, (how much more blessed to eat of the fruit, as the heavenly company will, than merely to have the benign influence of the healing leaves!) speak to us of the unhindered power of the Spirit, and of the fulness of joy and blessing. For now we must be diligent, so that our souls be fed upon Christ and strengthened, and the enemy will constantly seek to prevent our joy and progress; but then, though surely all delight shall be found in Christ and nowhere else, there shall be that peaceful enjoyment of Him, that partaking of the ever-ripening fruit, with no evil to disturb. The curse taken away, there shall be such nearness to the Lord in serving Him, that the very anticipation of it fills our hearts with joy; for at the present all our service is accomplished with difficulty, and, indeed, no true service can now be done for the Lord without suffering; but then we shall serve according to our heart's desire, and blessed it is to think of the activity of that day, when He shall be served without any hindrance. I have briefly noticed these things, as contrasting with the present labour, and diligent working to enter into God's rest. As to our consciences, they are purified for ever, and our hearts are satisfied, but we are still on our way to the glory, and there can be no resting in the sense of Hebrews 4:9, until we have entered into the rest of God.

Blessed, unspeakable privilege to have been called to serve such a God, and to enter into His rest! May He give us to understand this more fully! E. L. B.

## S. The Sacred Letters.

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The Sacred Letters. The contrast between Paul and those who deny the power of godliness, whilst retaining its form, is very striking.

"Thou hast thoroughly known my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith," wrote the apostle, and his whole life showed the power of his doctrine. His teaching was that of the present position of Christ in glory, and the grand truths which are connected with it; and his conduct, purpose, faith, corresponded with it. His life bore witness to his doctrine, and the power of godliness was shown in enduring persecution and suffering to the end. The Lord had said, at the call and conversion of Saul of Tarsus, "I will show to him how much he must suffer for My name"; and it is in suffering that true power is manifested. It is so in its far smaller measure for us. All who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, and it is always more difficult to bear pressure than to labour actively. We shall refer to this again. And now we come to a most important part - where the Holy Ghost insists upon the value of Scripture - of the sacred letters given by God to men. The character of the day in which we are living makes this exhortation more than ever important, for the true value of the inspired Word is denied by most of the teachers in Christendom. It will be said that this is too sweeping a statement, but, without going out of England, I believe that any sober-minded and well-informed person will admit that it is not merely Rationalism and Materialism that deny plenary inspiration, but that the so-called Church herself is sadly in doubt as to how far she can admit the blessed truth that every scripture is divinely inspired. Unbelief in the perfect canon of the Word has got into the very seat of the Pharisees; and they have added this to their sins, that they have listened lately to the Sadducees.

Let us look at the passage. Paul foresaw by the Spirit that things would get worse instead of better. Wicked men and impostors\* shall go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Jannes deceives Jambres, and Jambres deludes Jannes with nefarious arts; and all this is going on. What safeguard has the man of God? Now comes the answer, and the unspeakable value of the written Word - the Book given to us of God, by which, in the very darkest times, we shall be guided to His glory. Praise be to His name for ever!

\*The word means wizards, professional cheats. What a terrible thing that such should have their field in Christendom!

Timothy was to abide in those things which he had learned, and of which he had been fully persuaded, knowing of whom he had learned them; there was the revelation of the gospel of the glory of the blessed God committed to a chosen instrument; he had not learned these things from any doubtful source. Then, from a child, he had known the sacred letters. It is what God has caused to be written here upon earth that is before us. There are a number of written books, forming one complete whole, able to make one wise unto salvation, through faith, which is in Christ Jesus.

It is this very Book that is attacked in the present day, and of whose integral fulness we are called upon to be jealous. "Every scripture is divinely inspired." Timothy, no doubt, as a child, knew only the sacred writings of the Old Testament; but the point here is the whole written revelation of God. It is not possible, in a brief article, to study the wonderful way in which the New Testament scriptures set their stamp upon those of the Old, and upon one another; but the point before us is, "Every scripture is divinely inspired." Overwhelming proof as to the authenticity of the various parts of the Word has been given over and over again; but what is needed, in order to recognise and understand God's blessed word, is faith.

I should recommend every Christian to look into the blessed subject of revelation, but exhort him at the same time not to stop at any mere outward recognition of the divine oracles.\* The simplest saint, walking by faith, will at once know the difference between God's inspired dictation and man's writings; it will not be necessary to point out to such that "Bel and the Dragon" is not scripture, or that the false gospels are not worth reading.

\*The excellent little work, "Have we a Revelation from God?" (J. N. D.), is worthy of all study.

God speaks to us in His blessed Book, making known to us all the glories of His grace in Christ Jesus; and we find in the sacred letters - that is, in the Bible (the Christian's library) - that which answers to every difficulty, no matter how trying the times may be; and we are made wise unto salvation by faith which is in Christ Jesus.

"Every scripture is divinely inspired, and profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, fully fitted to every good work."

Much has been said as to the effect of the Word according to this passage. I only wish to notice that we have here an action on the conscience, heart, and understanding of the saint, which no human writing will ever produce. The word of God is quick and powerful, and alone can divide soul and spirit, and reveal God's thoughts. A word as to the man of God, who is thus formed by the sacred letters. A man of God is one who represents God's interests in an evil day. Thus, when Eli, the high priest, was allowing evil in his house (as many indulgent fathers do) and in Israel, he received a visit from a man of God, who proclaimed the judgment which should follow the violation of Jehovah's rights in Israel. (1 Samuel 2:27-36.) Such visits are not always well received. The man of God is placed here in the midst of all the ecclesiastical evil of the present age, in the midst of the growing infidelity and materialism; and he is called of God to stand for Him, bearing witness to the truth when error flourishes. For this he needs the inspired writings. It is the want of spiritual study of, and submission to, the sacred letters that explains why so many of us are not complete,\* and are not fitted to every good work.

\*Well developed, as we say physically of one whose articulations are perfect.

It is a question here of knowing for oneself the written word of God, and surely we cannot read the passage without feeling how much we have failed in this. May we pay full attention to it, so that the knowledge of the Scriptures - as necessary to us as it was to Timothy himself - may be found in us in our measure!

God has called us to bear a remarkable testimony in these days of infidelity; we are to be developed and fitted for every good work, and for this we need to be formed, taught, convinced,

and corrected by the sacred letters. E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Same

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"The Same." At the bush glowed the fire, Rustling around;  
Barefoot and veiled, the sire On holy ground!  
Then came the voice divine Out of the flame:  
Carry this word of Mine;  
'I am' 'The Same!' (Exodus 3:1-22).

E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Sanctuary

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The Sanctuary Psalms 73:17-24. As a dream when we wake At the dawn of the day, So fled all the phantoms And spectres away: The light of Thy countenance Shining in grace, Illumined the gold Of the most holy place. In my questions how stupid And brutish was I!

How great was the mercy That deigned to reply!

How mighty the hand That, extended to save, Held him who was sinking In Galilee's wave!  
(Matthew 14:31.) Possessed by Thy love That expels every fear;

Led on by Thy counsel So deep, yet so clear —

O wonderful prospect, To stand at Thy side, When the rays of Thy glory Shall stream far and wide!  
E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Spirit of Service

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The Spirit of Service The service of God in this world has always been attended with difficulty and opposition. In Old Testament times the servants sent to the Lord's vineyard all came back disappointed, beaten, or stoned; some never got back at all, but were put to death by those from whom they sought fruit for Jehovah. In the New Testament service, the one who was chiefly used in carrying the gospel of God's glory to the Jew first, and then to the Gentile, had to feel not only the cruel opposition of the world at large - the scourge, stones, and bonds - but to lament, at the end of his course, the desertion and neglect of the greater part of those who had received the truth from him.

There would be enough to deter even an active and zealous man in such a course; and I well remember the words of an old servant of the Lord to one who was discouraged by the ingratitude of those he had endeavoured to serve: "Christianity is not shown forth in seeking anything upon earth, not even the gratitude of Christians, but in bringing into the earth power from another sphere." The spirit of service in Christianity is love, and love that is willing to spend and be spent for others (as we see in the apostle quoted above), with no reward, but even ready to love the Corinthians all the more the less they loved him. (2 Corinthians 12:15 :)

It must have been very trying to carry on this service to the Corinthians. There is indeed a pleasure in working for others who show a little gratitude and interest in return for the service; but what must it have been to the heart of the devoted apostle to receive nothing but unkindness and ingratitude from those for whom he had suffered and laboured so much? If in natural things it is so much more painful to have a thankless child than to feel the serpent's tooth, what is it in spiritual things where the active care and service, the fruit of true Christian affection, is slighted? The motive and reason for continuing thus to serve the ungrateful is found in the love itself, and not in its objects. This is exactly the character of love, the divine nature; there is nothing self-seeking in it, and if the eye be single, the most gifted servant will be quite content to be misunderstood and ill-requited in carrying out the service towards the Church of God.

We should notice the self-denying way in which the apostle met the needs of the weakest; being free from all, he made himself the servant of all, that he might gain the more: "To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." The spirit of service in Paul was evidently the spirit of love; there was that true seeking the good of others, though at his own expense, and the perseverance in it that is peculiar to love. In 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 love is insisted upon by the apostle. The gifts are found in 1 Corinthians 12:1-31, the use of them in 1 Corinthians 14:1-40, and 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 comes between as being the preparation for their use.

I suppose, to make a very simple illustration, a number of tools of steel; before using them they must be tempered in oil. Gifts must be tempered in love to be used in the assembly of God; and at this point I would ask my reader to go through 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 before proceeding with this paper.

\* \* \* \* \* The sedulous care, as that of a nurse with her children, the watching and praying, the warning every man with tears - all these things flow from the true spirit of service. Paul would never have used his superior knowledge to startle the weak and poor (though I have no doubt his spiritual and vigorous ministry often startled the careless), but have condescended to the youngest, most uninterested saint - as he would have borne with the most ignorant heathen who showed any sign of seeking after God. But we have a far more glorious and touching impression of love than that which was seen in Paul. We have the perfect love of God shown forth in the service of Jesus Himself, and we must not close these few remarks without looking at Him of whom it is said: "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon Him: He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth." (Isaiah 42:1-3.) No doubt this service is not yet fully accomplished, but I wish to keep to the aspect of self-denying perseverance in a path where nothing but ingratitude from man was found, and the condescension that could come down to the feeblest objects. This is divine love.

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned."\* (Isaiah 1:4.) \*Some prefer to read here "as those who are taught," "as the learners."

We shall never have fully understood what that love was, and is, that could descend from supreme glory to the place of the dependent man, who learned obedience by the things which He suffered, so as to be able to help and serve the weary and heavy laden. But it is a happy thing for us that we have the Lord Himself as the pattern and model of service.

"I am among you as He that serveth," He said, at a time when all the sufferings of the cross were before Him, and when there was but little response from those who were the objects of His care. If we wish really to fulfil our mission we must be near Him whose blessed life here on earth was spent in perfect service to God and man, who never sought anything for Himself, but always the good of others.

I recollect it being said of one whose life was spent in serving the Church of God, that he had worked "behind the world"; that is, not as a prominent popular teacher, but rather keeping in the background whilst seeking the good of souls. And I think that love would produce this. This might form a kind of sequel to the question of the use of gifts in our day; for the gift and responsibility of using it being ascertained, I think that the true spirit of service must be known, and it is known in the persevering love of the perfect Servant who is Himself the resource, the object, the beginning and the end of all true work.

It is an interesting thing for those who desire to serve the Church of God through grace to examine all the passages in Scripture where "serve," "servant," occur; and I think that, numerous as they are, the sum of them all will be contained in love. I am speaking of course of true service to the Lord and to His own. With this there need be no fear of coming short. Difficulties disappear before love, distances are spanned, obstacles vanish. If it be true that your resources are in the Lord Himself - no matter what your gift or service may be - you shall accomplish it with a heart happy in Him, sustained by Him, in what is otherwise impossible, to the very end. Sustained, I will say, until that day when His servants shall serve Him in His own glorious sphere; when they shall see His

face, and bear His name in their foreheads - for love shall never fail; no, never, through the endless ages of eternity. E. L. Bevir.

"All that belonged to the Father belonged to the Son, and all that belonged to the Son belonged to the Father. What a bond between the Father, the Son, and the disciples! They belonged to the Father, the Father had given them to the Son, and it was in: them that the Son was to be glorified."

## S. The Threshing-Floor Of Ornan

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The Threshing-Floor Of Ornan 1 Chronicles 21:1-30.

It is blessed to know that when Satan stands up against Israel, against Job, or against anyone else, he will certainly end by defeating his own object, and by causing the grace of God to abound through His blessed intervention. Such was the case in 1 Chronicles 21:1-30, where the arch-enemy instigated David to number the people, and thus to commit the gross sin of independent action, of counting upon physical strength rather than upon the Lord.

We have sometimes seen analogous presumption, attended always by fatal consequences, when the number and apparent flourishing state of Christians have been boasted of. Even Joab (who was a shrewd man, and could apprehend clearly the outward interests of Israel) endeavoured to dissuade David from this step; but, alas! a worse person than Joab had got possession of David's mind for the moment, and the numbering took place. The king, however, acted rightly in falling into the hand of Jehovah; and the prompt judgment that fell on the people was checked by the Lord's mercy. We seem to see David in his anxiety, and the terrible form of the angel with the sword stretched out over Jerusalem. There was a pause in the progress of God's wrath, and the king seemed at once to understand that the moment had come for supplication. With all his failures, David had the heart of a shepherd of Israel, and his prayer is very touching: let the sword's point be turned towards him and his father's house, but averted from the poor sheep of the holy city. And now comes the wonderful part of the narrative. The true confession is accepted, and the command given to go up and erect an altar to Jehovah in the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. This altar now forms our subject, and we should study its place and import. It became the very site of the centre of God's house; for Solomon, when he built the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, began there, where the Lord had appeared to David, his father, in the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite. The ground had to be bought at full price; and I have no doubt that the great sum mentioned in Chronicles, instead of clashing with the account given in 2 Samuel, is a beautiful figure of that grace which could give all. The ground was given, indeed, by Ornan, but may we not see, in the immense price paid for the standing ground of the altar, a shadow of the infinite price paid that justice might be satisfied, and an immutable basis be established for worship and blessing? The first grand act of the returned remnant from Babylon, was to get the altar upon its bases. (Ezra 3:3.) Six hundred shekels of gold may seem a heavy price; but burnt offerings are not to be offered for nothing. What a question, too, might we ask in passing: "How much did it cost to get our altar into its right place before God?"

Then come two immense facts. First of all, the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings are fully accepted by Jehovah, who answers by fire from heaven; and secondly, the sword of the minister of justice is sheathed. (1 Chronicles 21:26-27)

Surely now we are come unto Mount Zion. We can stand with sure feet upon the threshing-floor of Ornan, which is now become a solid platform of grace. Approving fire from heaven consumes the offerings, and all judicial terrors are at an end. The terrible symbolic sword has disappeared, put

up into its sheath, and all is joy and happy worship on the threshing-floor of Ornan. What a change from the 20th verse, where those who were on that very floor hid themselves in fear before the messenger of death But this is not all; David sacrificed there. (1 Chronicles 21:28) It is in this very spot that relationship is renewed between Jehovah and Israel. The house of the Lord should be built there; that house that should be "exceeding magnificent," of fame and glory throughout all countries. Sovereign grace had acted, had chosen Mount Zion (see Psalms 78:1-72), but this grace had been made good through righteousness, through the full satisfaction of all God's dues; and in the very spot where the enemy would have delighted to see the carnage of God's people, the terrible glaive was sheathed, and access opened to Jehovah, in His own courts, in perfect blessing. The high place in Gibeon, where the tabernacle of the Lord was, must now disappear. Fear was still connected with the tabernacle (see 1 Chronicles 21:29-30); and may we not see here the passing away of that which was a legal institution, to make way for that full grace which should establish the altar of burnt-offering on a divine and permanent basis? David says (1 Chronicles 22:1): "This is the house of the Lord God, and this is the altar of the burnt offering for Israel."

It becomes the very centre of the work for the construction of Jehovah's house (see the following verses); and here we may stop, only to praise Him, who could reveal Himself in the magnificence of grace.

Happy are they who have known the true value of the threshing-floor of Ornan, the Jebusite! E. L. Bevir.

## S. The Way of God.

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The Way of God.

"O God, Thy way is in the sanctuary . . . . Thy way is in the sea." Psalms 77:13; Psalms 77:19.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 18, 1891, p. 297. The end of Psalms 77:1-20 is full of interest to our souls, for we find there the way of God in two different aspects. It is a happy thing when one finds out where God's way lies, for it is one of rest and peace amidst so much to perplex and trouble the saint as he goes on through the world to glory.

Indeed the writer of this psalm had gone through great exercise and perplexity, and had found no good in looking into his own heart (Psalms 77:6); but a great change had taken place in his soul in Psalms 77:10 in looking up to the Most High, and remembering the works of Jah. Now, the Christian does not merely enjoy the revelation of the millennial titles of God, or of His absolute deity (Jah), blessed though they be, but the full and intimate relationship with the Father. Bearing this in mind - that is, that we are Christians and not Jews - we may look at the principles which follow, as to God's way. May we, first of all, be truly in the enjoyment of the Father's love. (John 17:5.) The first thing to notice is in the thirteenth verse, where we find that God's way is in the sanctuary. A perplexed saint (if he remain too long in his perplexity) is sure to look too low, and to become more troubled. The similarity between this verse and the seventeenth of the seventy-third psalm has been already pointed out; then again, there was great perplexity until the soul went into the sanctuary of God. Who can understand why God should allow the wicked to prosper, or the state of things around us in this world? Job's three friends made elaborate and erroneous speeches on the ways of God, till finally Job himself (who was not in the sanctuary) lost patience; and many philosophers of the same type have moralized since upon good and evil, and providential dealings, getting further away from the mark each time they moralize.

"O God, thy way is in the sanctuary": our hearts must be above the earth to understand God's way, and our minds also. It is when we freely enter into the sanctuary, and make known our requests with supplication and thanksgiving, that the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. The sanctuary is high above all trouble. I once received a letter from an old servant of Christ, now with Him, in which he spoke of the bad weather in a springtime in North Germany, saying that "the swallows had all gone away in despair; but higher up the weather is fine and bright, and it is there that our hearts should be!" A little true prayer, and waiting upon God in the holiest, is infinitely better than any attempt at explaining His way.

"God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform."

God has given us more light than poor Cowper had, although we have not made very good use of it; and the free entrance by faith into the sanctuary makes everything clear. We can wait God's time, whilst we depend upon Him. But there is another side to this. God's way (Psalms 77:19) is in

the sea, and His paths in the great waters. Thunder, lightning, storm, and rain precede this verse, and the earth itself shakes. We should very much like to go quietly on to glory without foul weather, but this can never be; it is in the very midst of the storm and pathless sea that the way of God lies. This was once literally accomplished when the disciples, toiling in rowing, were making but little headway upon the lake of Gennesareth, and beheld the Son of God walking upon the waves in the midst of the darkness. It is in the very midst of the great waters now that the way of God is known, there where no footprints are left, and faith knows this way. It is not by Moses and Aaron (Psalms 77:20) that God is now leading His people, but by the Holy Spirit Himself (Romans 8:14); and if we are thus led, we can go on quietly through the storm, walking in that way which is impracticable but to faith, but in which God is with us.

Thus if we are walking in God's way, our very path is a succession of miracles; we go on through the storm, through the deep waters, as sure-footed as though we were walking over a lawn. I suppose always that faith is truly in exercise.

There is something exceedingly beautiful in these two things, and our hearts are cheered as we think of the glory of Jesus in the Father's presence, and we enter there by faith. Doubt and perplexity vanish in the calm splendour of the sanctuary, and everything becomes plain. Then with renewed confidence we can go on through the winds and waves, finding in the very violence of the storm the way of God - of Him who has brought us to Himself, and made Himself known to us in such a way that we can implicitly trust Him amid the roaring of the tempest. May He give us to walk thus to His glory! E. L. B.

## S. The night is far spent

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"The night is far spent."

I wish, if possible, to awaken the thoughts of all readers to the force of the apostle's words at the end of Romans 13:1-14 - "It is high time to awake out of sleep."

Perhaps a short retrospect up to apostolic times would be of service to our souls, for the night has advanced still since the Holy Ghost aroused the Roman saints. The hands have moved on upon the dial-plate, and are now pointing very nearly to that hour when dials shall vanish and be no more. The day is at hand, the day when the glory of the rejected Christ shall shine through the universe, and when those who have been faithful to Him through the long night, shall reign with Him in splendour.

Let us understand clearly the force of the expression, 'the night,' for I believe it to be important in this pretentious age for Christians to get back to the simple expressions of the early times (I mean early in the true sense, the times of Peter and Paul), and to understand what the Holy Spirit says of the present testimony. In the simplest language, then, we may say that at Rome, when Paul wrote, there was an assembly of justified saints called to live a holy life here by the Holy Ghost, and to await the day when they should reign with Christ; the present time was called the night. And it is night still, whatever may be said as to progress. The Roman believers were surrounded by the glories of Rome in her splendour; they were in the very centre of the world, but they had nothing in common with it. Its works were the works of darkness, and they were called upon to put on the armour of light.

How many changes have taken place since then! The huge iron empire has fallen, the whole face of Europe has changed, the middle ages have run out, and the immense activities of man's mind, discoveries, inventions, have brought in the so-called enlightened state of the nineteenth century. All this is a part of the long night. The history of Christendom too is most interesting, for God has worked both in restoring souls and in recovering truth, and that whilst the enemy was sowing tares, and carrying out his nefarious schemes. Much might be said about Arianism, the Eastern schism, the apparition of Mahomet, the history of the popes, the reformation, modern heresy\* and unbelief; but the point is, that the whole of the world's history up to the appearing of Christ in glory is summed up in one short word - the night.

\* Jerome said that the ancient philosophers were the patriarchs of heresy, and I think he was right in this, though he made many mistakes.

More than 1850 years ago Jesus died upon the cross between two thieves, and surely from that time, that is when the world crucified the Son of God, the very blackest darkness settled down upon this earth, and enveloped the whole system where man cultivates the arts and sciences without God. It is night. Is there not one ray of hope then for the world? Not one!

It is very likely that this paper may fall into the hands of some one who has not yet really understood what the night means. I think many true Christians have not the true sense of it. It might be said, "But we are not in pagan Rome, nor in the dark middle ages; the world has become civilized, Christianized, and there is good everywhere!" Many have spoken to me thus; and I should always reply, "Yes, there are churches everywhere with the sign of the cross, just as there are mosques with the crescent, but how much real Christianity is there in Christendom?" And again, "Is it not too true that we are living in days when rampant infidelity is ready to throw off all restraint and the very name of Christ?" It is night.

Oh, beloved brethren, are we really awake? Much has happened lately to shake the slumber of the most sleepy. Our salvation is nearer than when we believed, and we are called upon to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light.

"Are we to be fanatics, neglecting work and duties?" No, the very contrary. There is an honest walk, as in day time; that is, morally enlightened and proof against the evil of the present age, protected by the armour of light. As the morning approaches (and oh how near it is!) the Lord would awaken His saints to be living lives which, are a standing witness to the God who has justified and supremely blessed believers - the light bearing witness against the darkness. The enemy has succeeded in making black appear white on various occasions, but God is above all his power and deceit, and there is nothing which so much confounds him and his whole system as the walk of Christians clad in the armour of the light in the midst of the darkness. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."

E. L. Bevir.

## S. Thou art the same!

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"Thou art the same!"

Hebrews 1:1-14.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 95.

There can be no change in a divine Person. Though all creatures are liable to change, and there be variation in everything around us, there is One who is the same,\* the Eternal Self-existing One, and He is presented to us in a most wonderful manner in this passage.

\*Compare Deuteronomy 32:39 : "I am He." This is a true title of the self-existent God.

I wish briefly to trace the glory of our Lord, as presented to us in this chapter; by no means to pretend to unfold this part of the word, but to call attention to the unchanging nature of Him who alone can say, "I am," the eternal Jehovah, our blessed Lord Jesus. The passage begins with eternity (that is, begins by speaking of the past ages), passes right through time, and ends with eternity again, when the created firmament shall have been folded up as a vesture by Him who created it; but He remains the same.

We cannot imagine eternity; and He who never had a beginning, and who dwells in inaccessible light, is far beyond our ken. Though He has been pleased to reveal Himself to us as Father, as to the Deity itself it is far beyond us. God is God, whatever people may say, and we receive by faith the revelation of His eternal being. We remember the answer given by a poor preacher at Cambridge, at the beginning of this century, to some young mathematicians who asked him for a definition of eternity. He replied that he did not feel able to give one; but in return asked them, What would be the length of a pendulum which, instead of marking seconds, should vibrate only once in a century? This of course could be calculated, but we should be as far from apprehending eternity as ever.

Much has been said of the divine glory shining in the first four verses of Hebrews 1:1-14. The Son has appeared, has spoken, and has set Himself down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having made by Himself the purification of sins. The Creator and Sustainer\* of the universe has appeared and spoken, and gone up on high.

\*"Upholding all things by the word of His power." I believe it is important, and has been carefully insisted upon, that there is as constant an exercise of force needed in what people call general laws (gravitation, etc.) as in the calling forth of the worlds out of nothing.

Let us briefly follow the wonderful order of the passages quoted by the Holy Spirit, in which the Son's glory is traced through time; that is, through scenes which vary and differ from one another as far as possible, but through which the glory of the divine Person, who is ever the Same, shines with unchanging lustre. In Psalms 2:5 is quoted, and we have our blessed Lord's entry into this

world; and I believe that the second quotation in Psalms 2:5 (1 Chronicles 17:13) refers to His most blessed path upon earth. The subject of the Epistle to the Hebrews differs no doubt from that of the Gospel of John, but we may compare with adoration the account given to us of Jesus in this world, unknown to the world that He had made, misunderstood even by His own, and often alone; then we may enter with reverence into the meaning of the words, "I will be to Him for Father, and He shall be to me for Son." It is the character here of His most holy obedient walk, and I believe we may compare for the spirit of it 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, where Jehovah-Shaddai promises to be for Father to those who are separate from evil, and that they shall be to Him for sons and daughters.

Thus we see the blessed Lord, in His humble path upon earth, always the same, surrounded by infidelity, selfishness, and false religion, walking thus with Him who said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Psalms 2:6 carries us further; for none can doubt that, as to its full accomplishment, it is still future. No doubt in Luke 2:1-52 the whole heavenly host adored the babe in Bethlehem, but Psalms 97:1-12 and following Psalms speak of the introduction of the First-born into the world, when the kingdom shall be set up: it is the habitable world (the oikoumene). I would in passing ask my readers if they study the Psalms. Nothing could be more glorious than the manner in which the majesty of the Lord is presented from Psalms 97:1-12, Psalms 98:1-9 Psalms 99:1-9, Psalms 100:1-5, Psalms 101:1-8, Psalms 102:1-28, Psalms 103:1-22, the circle of His glory becoming wider and wider as He advances (the First-born brought into the habitable earth). To use a feeble illustration, I have seen the whole range of the Alps illuminated by the rising sun. First, the central peaks catching the deep crimson light, then mountain after mountain receiving the glow, and finally the whole country crowned with splendour. So in these Psalms the Jews are called, then the Gentiles, then the whole earth is brought into blessing; all the angels of God adore Him. How different the scene to that in which He walked in deep humility, taking the lowest place of all! Yes, indeed; but He is the same.

Psalms 2:8-9 bring us into the kingdom itself, and the millennial reign. Psalms 45:1-17 reveals to us the King reigning in righteousness and peace, Jerusalem blessed and clothed in regal splendour, and the faithful associated with Him who is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows. Oh, wondrous grace that could bring men into such an association! But is there any change here in Him? None. "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." The same divine glory, which faith saw when He was humbled upon earth, is seen in Him when He reigns in peace and power - when the King's daughter, all glorious within, stands at the head of the rejoicing earth. And now we come to the end of the millennium; and the quotation from Psalms 102:1-28 needs to be carefully considered. It is well known that in this magnificent passage there is a dialogue, and that Jehovah answers to Him who descended even to the sufferings of the cross. In Psalms 102:24, the answer is given to Him who could speak as He did from the midst of His sufferings, and here we have the divine testimony to His deity: "Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." Here then again we look into eternity; the course of time shall run out, the kingdom be delivered up, the very heavens folded up by the Almighty hand that spread them out, and it is said of Him who shall change them, "Thou art the same." The Holy Spirit directs us to Him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, in Psalms 102:13; and may our hearts be kept in true stability by the One who

changes not; the Same here in rejection, the Same in millennial glory; the Same upon the cross, the Same in the folding up of the firmament; Jesus Christ, the Same yesterday, and today, and for ever!

E. L. B.

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Let us beware in ordinary things of the first step that would separate us from inward holiness. Devotedness is inward. It is a secret between His servant and Himself, though the external effects are seen by others. The believer may be called upon to deny himself for the service of his Saviour in things that are not bad in themselves, but this act is accomplished inwardly.

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We must drink for ourselves that rivers may flow. Indeed all else dries up the soul. "That thy profiting may appear" says the apostle. Ministry is only fresh, good, and powerful, when it is the soul's own portion first with God.

## S. Thoughts on the Second and Third Epistles of John.

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Thoughts on the Second and Third Epistles of John.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 14, 1887, p. 201. The second and third epistles of John give us some examples of children of God walking in the truth upon earth, and one example of self-exaltation and self-will, the contrast to all that was seen in Jesus. It might be said that the first epistle is so full of abstractions that you cannot expect it to be carried out in practice; but here we see real living persons walking in such a manner that the divine life in them shines out clearly in their conduct, in the incidents of their lives here upon earth. One may presume that the elect lady's children were not brought up without trouble, and that Gaius met with all the ordinary difficulties of life.

"Whom I love in the truth" is not a light expression. The truth can never be popular in this world, for the world's very existence depends upon a denial of the truth. How often did they pick up stones to throw at Jesus, Himself the Truth! How little was Paul (who spoke the truth) a popular preacher! Then we must reject that so-called and spurious "love" that will not allow an appeal to the Word. How much we hear of this "love" in a day when everything is spoiled and adulterated! "Love in the truth" is a very different thing, and we may well ask ourselves how far we understand this. It is easy to talk of loving the brethren; but suppose we had lived at the time of Paul's imprisonment, should we have gone to see him? Many were more prudent in Paul's day, and kept away from the gaol where the apostle lay. Should we really, if it came to the point, be ready to lay down our lives for the brethren? Then how do we know that we love the brethren? "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments; that is, in the blessed liberty of the children of God upon earth, obedient to Him. How searching this word as to what bears the name of "love!" I recollect seeing a touchstone upon which an amalgam of gold and other metals was tried. The metal was rubbed against the dark stone, producing a bright streak; nitric acid then being applied, the brilliant streak diminished, leaving only the gold upon the touchstone. How much then of the "love" current in Christendom is the true genuine love? "This is love, that we walk according to His commandments." Each child of God may well ask, "Do I allow anything that is not according to Him?" "The truth has never been popular since the serpent deceived Eve, and to announce the truth would break up many a company formed professedly on the ground of "love."

We must watch. The apostle says, "Take heed unto yourselves" (2 John 1:8); for he wished to enjoy the full amount of his work. Many seducers are gone out into the world (and many false prophets in 1 John 4:1), and their teaching tends to exalt man and deny Christianity. "To confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh" is not merely to be orthodox, but to have received and to confess the great blessed truth of Christianity, that the Son of God became man, and died for us; and we confess His glorious Person, both divine and human, and at the same time the utter ruin of man, of all the sons of Adam. The teaching of the seducers would deny this, and indeed it is hard to admit that the heart of man is in a desperate case, that there is nothing good in us. The perfectibility of man is the doctrine of the antichrist, and this has wonderfully developed in this enlightened

century. The wise, the advanced thinkers of our time, deny Jesus Christ come in flesh (the least thing that you take either from His divinity or from His perfect humanity denies the Christian truth), and tell us that the time is near when man shall be fully developed. I recollect, after a disastrous European war, having seen advertised in a city, "We want a man for the age!" And I thought, "Alas! he is not far off." Take heed to yourselves. What a word for us, dear brethren! "Whoever leads you forward" (this is the true meaning of 2 John 1:9), "and abides not in the doctrine, has not God." "Leading forward" means leading on beyond what God has fully revealed, and always in an evil sense; for we have the full manifestation of the divine life in Jesus. From the very beginning the enemy tried to "lead forward," and, alas! succeeded with Eve. "Yea, hath God said?" and deceived the mistrusting soul. The old prophet in 1 Kings 13:1-34 led astray the too credulous man of God, pretending to have a divine communication beyond the revelation explicitly given to the latter. I saw in a book yesterday, professing to be "scientific," the following words: "Religious thought has taken great steps in advance lately." Yes, and where will this "religious thought" lead you? Have you ever followed an ignis fatuus in marshy ground? Where did it lead you? So with religious thought in the nineteenth century.

How blessed the contrast - "He that leads you forward, and abides not in the doctrine of the Christ, has not God. He that abideth in the doctrine has the Father and the Son." May we know what it is to "abide" in true dependence, and taste this full joy of communion with the Father and the Son. The elect lady is responsible to keep her doors shut against false teachers. The world says, "Oh, how exclusive and narrow!" Many professing Christians say the same. But we may ask, "Is the new Jerusalem too exclusive?" No dog, no magician, no liar shall ever pass her doors. "Without are dogs." Oh, how exclusive!

It has been pointed out that the third epistle presents to us the same blessed love in the truth in Gaius, who kept his doors open to Christ in the persons of the poor wandering preachers, who went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. The witness borne to Gaius' truth, and his walk in the truth, must be noticed; and how blessed and wonderful the association with poor wandering, despised preachers! They had gone out for the Name (an aged servant of Christ once said that, of all employments, to go across a country with the love of God in the heart, and a Bible in the pocket, was the most blessed), not merely "gone out to preach," but gone out for the Name - that Name that carries everything with it, and which we can bless with adoration, notwithstanding that so many seducers have "gone out" too. And Gaius had received them, thus cooperating with the truth. It would be often said, "You must not encourage this kind of people," and "that the thing will become abused." It may be abused, like every good thing, but that is only a further proof that there is such a thing as being employed (the highest of employments) as a wandering preacher of the truth of God. Gaius manifests the divine life in recognizing and receiving such; the Lord had sent them forth.

Demetrius too (3 John 1:12) has the testimony of the truth itself; for if we examine a man's work, and find that wherever he has taught the truth is maintained, and that there is a desire to walk in it, the truth itself bears witness to him. But one word more, and that is, the terrible contrast with the expression of the divine life seen in Diotrephes. "He likes to be the first." This is the principle that governs the hearts of the sons of Adam. "I would rather be the first in that little village," said the great Julius, "than second in Rome." The blessed Jesus loved to be last, and explained that this should be our portion. In each of us there is the germ of a little antichrist, who would exalt himself,

from Julius Caesar down to the smallest. What a contrast with our blessed Lord! And then? "He receives us not." To receive one another, as the blessed Lord has received us, is the very spirit of Christianity. Jesus receives every one who comes to Him. Then, "evil words" and "hindering others to receive." Jesus never spoke a wrong nor harsh word, and would not allow others to hinder those they brought to Him. Here then is the dark background to this wonderful picture; the selfishness of man then exalts himself, and has nothing but injustice and harsh treatment for others. Whilst the divine life shines in the elect lady, Gaius, and Demetrius, the sad "darkness" of the human heart is seen in Diotrephes.

Beloved, imitate not the evil, but the good. "He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God." May we be able to follow this blessed exhortation. E. L. Bevir.

## S. Two Aspects

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Two Aspects Part 1. John 14:15-31.

There are two aspects of the sending of the Holy Spirit in these two passages - 1. As sent by the Father;

2. As sent by the Lord Jesus Christ; and it may be useful to notice a few important truths connected with each.\*

\*We all remember the dispute, still existing, between the Eastern and Western Churches as to this subject. How much better it would have been to have read the Scriptures, and to have gathered from them the true signification of these immense facts! In John 14:1-31 of John our Lord promises the sending of another Comforter by the Father; and I should like to call attention to communion with the Father and with the Son by the Holy Spirit; and also to the unbelieving, materialistic character of the world, in this part of the word of God. In the other portion the Lord Jesus speaks of sending the Holy Spirit; He, the glorified Saviour, would Himself send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father. Here we have rather the Lord's glory in the Father's presence, and the opposition of the world to believers. If the true nature of the world in these two passages be considered, we shall find its blind unbelief in the first, and its persecution in the second.

Let us look first of all at John 14:1-31. When our Lord announces that the Father shall send another Comforter, He says that the world cannot receive Him because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. The world is like a huge city with an inscription over the principal gate: "No admittance to God!" We are living in a time when materialism has been fully developed, when men assure us that they have analysed everything, and that nothing but matter is visible; we must not be surprised if they cannot see, or know, the Holy Ghost. But we know Him; we are not left as orphans in the world; we are brought, by the precious gift of the Holy Spirit, into a knowledge of the divine person of the Son, of the full position of the whole family of God, and of our happy privilege of being here to represent the Lord Himself, He being in us by the Holy Ghost. (John 14:20)

Then we come to John 14:21, where Jesus no longer speaks collectively, but to individuals: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Here is Christian obedience, and love to the Lord shown in keeping His commandments. How important the preceding verses, where we are brought into the very place in which He was when upon earth; and given to know the full joy of communion with the Father, by the Holy Spirit: "Because I live, ye shall live also."

Now comes the question, for each one, of true obedience - not of submission to an imposed rule, which was impossible to man in the flesh - of a new nature which delights to obey. Here is one who keeps the Lord's commandments in the very midst of the world that surrounds him; he has full and blessed direction, and the Father makes His love known to him as to an obedient child; the

Lord too manifests Himself to him. I shall never forget an old and experienced believer saying to one who had to walk amongst his own relations who understood nothing of these things, "Take care that they see that you have a high principle!" They would not understand the Father's love, or Jesus' manifestation to a faithful soul, but the effect of this obedience of the very highest order would surely be seen. The point, though, here is the manifestation made to the obedient one, that true and deep knowledge of the blessed Lord, without which there can be no true Christianity; and this leads to the question: "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" Keeping His word involves, more than keeping His commandments; for the word includes all His blessed will as expressed here, and our Lord's reply to Judas announces very high blessing to him who shall keep it.

Even in ordinary life we cannot take up our abode with those with whom we are not on very good terms; and a small thing may be an impediment to staying anywhere. I have often used as an illustration the case of those who, in the French Alps, take their flocks during summer to the higher parts of the mountains. There are certain thus and small houses in the heights which can be inhabited in summer, but which are left during the winter, when the flocks are brought down. During this time foxes and other animals sometimes choose to install themselves in the mountain dwellings; and a proprietor going up after the winter to take possession of his house, might see a fox or two looking through the window, which he would have to drive out before being able to live there. The illustration is a poor one, but may help us to understand John 14:22, where the word is kept, and the Father and the Son come to dwell by the Holy Spirit with him who keeps it. It is that full perfecting of the love of God in the keeper of the word (1 John 2:5), where the affections are wholly right in the power of the Spirit, and there is the true inward delight to do His will.

It is not merely said that the Lord will manifest Himself to such an one, but that the Father and Son will make their abode with him, and truly nothing could be more blessed. It has often been remarked that such a privilege is a very high one; and so it is, but it is the privilege of every Christian, and we are called to it. Christian privileges are high, and the Holy Spirit has been given to us so that we may go on in the full enjoyment of even the highest of these most precious blessings. The Holy Spirit, whom the Father would send in Jesus' name, would teach them all things, and bring to their remembrance all things which the Lord had spoken. His peace, too, is given; and we may in these days of unbelief, trouble, and excitement in which we are living, possess a peace in communion with Him who is gone to the Father, which the world can neither know, nor understand.

Thus then in the midst of an infidel world we have the living power of the Holy Spirit as sent by the Father, and the deepest joy in an obedient walk. It may be well to leave the second part of our subject (the sending of the Holy Spirit by Christ) for another time.

Part 2. John 15:26-27; John 16:1-15.

We come now to the second aspect of the sending of the Comforter; that is, the one of which our Lord Himself speaks in the first of these scriptures. Here He says that He\* would send the Holy Spirit from the Father, and we shall find that this gives the character to the whole passage.

\*Notice the emphasis on the pronouns in this passage, especially upon the one referring to the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus, as the ascended and glorified Man in the Father's presence, should

send the Spirit who should bear witness concerning Him; the apostles too, who had been with Him from the beginning, should bear witness. The opposition of the world would be aroused, and as we noticed before the Sadducean or materialistic character of its infidelity, so now we shall see its antagonism to Him who is in the Father's presence, whence He has sent the Holy Ghost. The persecuting character of the world thus comes out in the first verses of the sixteenth chapter; and when the Lord speaks of its being profitable for the apostles that He should go away, He begins by shewing what the Spirit's testimony towards the world would be.

Let us remember that the subject before us is the glory of the risen and ascended Jesus in the Father's presence, and the character of the Spirit's testimony.

1st, in face of the world:

2ndly, in believers.

Keeping this in view, we may look a little more closely into these two testimonies; and, first of all, let us notice that in speaking of the world it is not meant here that it should be convinced and converted by the presence of the Spirit, but that the fact of His being here should demonstrate its true state. The state of sin is announced by the fact of the Holy Ghost's having taken the place of the Christ, whom the world rejected. It is not here a question of sins in the plural (acts of sin), but of the state of sin in which the world chose to remain in rejecting Jesus: there was now no excuse to be found (compare John 15:22-24), and the Spirit's presence demonstrated it.

Again, righteousness towards the world is proved by the Lord's presence with the Father in heaven. This shows that whilst Jesus' work and testimony have been rightly appreciated in the very highest place, the world, too, has been justly punished so far, by His going up to the Father. And thirdly, morally speaking, the prince of this world is judged. It does not mean that the enemy is yet cast into the abyss, but that his sentence is pronounced, and that no further trial is necessary. Thus, to use an illustration (I trust not too familiar for the subject), I recollect hearing of a brigand who got loose from confinement in Italy, and who then committed various depredations. When he was ultimately caught, it was not necessary to have a second trial, for he was already condemned. The illustration fails of course; for God may, in His infinite wisdom, and for His own purposes, allow the enemy to be at large for the time being, and to occupy that bad eminence of "ruler of this world," but he is not the less morally judged. So far, then, for the world; and now we may look a little upon what the Comforter can announce to believers. The Lord had many things to say which the apostles could not then bear, but the infallible Spirit should come, the Spirit of truth, putting everything into its right place in their souls, and guiding them into all the truth. He should not speak from Himself, that is, independently of Jesus, who should send Him from the Father, but He would speak what He should hear, and announce what is coming.

Let us ask first of all, "What is coming? What is there in the future?" The answer is at once grand and simple. The future belongs to our glorified Lord, and everything must give place to the introduction of the Firstborn into the habitable world. Many people will talk to you of prophecy, of the Roman earth, of Gog and Magog, and of the confederation of Latin nations against Russia, and yet fall short of an adequate idea of the future. I quite admit that the feeblest Christian has a far clearer insight into political questions than the most practised statesman, for the Christian has the true key to all that shall happen on the earth; but we have a far wider subject here; that is, the

full glory of Christ when He shall reign over the universe.

We all recollect, as an illustration, Pharaoh's dream when the famine was predicted, and the subsequent exaltation of Joseph; so we foresee the day when all things shall be put under the feet of Joseph's glorious Antitype, when the splendour of His reign shall fill the universe. The future is a very glorious prospect, and what constitutes its beauty for us is the certainty that He, who was dishonoured and crucified here, shall be universally exalted and worshipped. But then there is an actual knowledge of the Lord in glory in the Father's presence. We know now already, by the Holy Spirit, the things that belong to Jesus where He is. "He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." We do not wait to be glorified to know the present position of Christ, the things that are His, and our part in them. May we know more and more of the resources of Him who is the Antitype of Joseph, for, by the Spirit, all the riches of God's glory are available to faith! The Father's name is then brought in, and adds, in the most blessed way, to the preceding truths. "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He (the Comforter) shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." This gives a peculiar charm to the whole passage.

It is not merely the grandeur of the official glory of the Son of man, but the full and blessed acceptance of Christ risen and gone up to the Father. The intimate character of this part of John's gospel has often been before us, and here the Holy Spirit, sent from the glory, where all the Father's heart is known, receives of Christ's and announces it to us. Thrice happy shall we be if we allow nothing to hinder the Spirit's action, for His very mission to us is to announce what belongs to our blessed Lord in the Father's presence.

Thus we can understand what Jesus says, "Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father," and find in these words, as unfolded by the Comforter, the very highest blessing and encouragement. May we know more and more of it! E. L. Bevir.

## S. Two Aspects of the Meat-offering.

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Two Aspects of the Meat-offering.

Leviticus 2:1-16, and Leviticus 23:16-21.

It has often been remarked that the meat offering is of the order of Cain's offering. Of that order, but how different in nature! Cain brought the fruits and flowers of a cursed earth to God, whilst in the meat offering of Leviticus 2:1-16 perfect manhood is offered to God in the person of our blessed Lord. Another aspect of the meat offering (that of the Pentecostal loaves) shows us redeemed man presented to God in the power of the Holy Ghost, the leaven in this case being baked in the loaves. There is no leaven in Leviticus 2:1-16.

Let us briefly consider the two aspects of this offering as they are found in the two passages, taking care not to confound them. In Leviticus 2:1-16 our Lord is seen as the perfect Man - that holy Man of Luke's gospel - born of the Virgin Mary. The fine flour, oil, and incense are the first things to be noticed. The Word became flesh. A real Man was born at Bethlehem by the Holy Ghost's power. One walked upon earth, different from all the sons of Adam, in His blessed person the Second Man, and all His life was full of fragrance to God. All the incense was burned with the memorial in verse 2, and went up in a sweet savour. The offering was most holy amongst sacrifices burned by fire to Jehovah. In the following part (Leviticus 2:4-10) it is well to notice the anointing with oil of each portion of the cake. I suppose that the breaking in pieces (verse 6) may represent our blessed Lord's life looked upon in detail; and every action, every word, bore the character of the oil - the blessed, dependent Man of Luke's gospel. The more we read His life the more do we see its divine beauty. The memorial was burnt on the altar, and the rest of the offering eaten by the priests; and indeed we need, in this (sacerdotal) character, to feed upon the meat offering.

Leaven and honey were excluded from the meat offering in Luke 2:1-52, and it may be well to look at this. Leaven represents evil, and could have no place in the perfect Man. Jesus was absolutely holy. Honey is rather the figure of natural affections, which are good in themselves, but form no part of the offering upon the altar. So our Lord could say to Mary, in John 2:1-25, "What have I to do with thee?" We have no doubt as to our Lord's care and love for her from other passages.

There is a danger, let us note in passing, of what is merely natural coming into the things of God, and causing trouble; and so, in Proverbs 25:16, there is a caution against using too much "honey." As an illustration, we all recollect the trouble caused by eating too much honey in Xenophon's time, in the retreat of the ten thousand.\*

\*They found a quantity of honey in a village, and partook of it without moderation. It caused great illness in the army.

Leviticus 2:12 alludes to the offering at Pentecost, as we shall shortly see.

Then the salt of the covenant was not to be wanting in the meat offering. Salt is that peculiar power of the Holy Spirit that preserves what is good from corruption. In Christ there was no leaven, but salt was to be found in all His ways and words for the good of others. I should say that His words, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's," are an example of this. For us we need to be kept by the Spirit's power, so that our inmost thoughts may be for God. This will produce the conservative effect of salt in our walk. Every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. The difference between the salt and the fire here has often been noticed. May we have salt in ourselves. Salt cannot be restored if once it has lost its savour.\* The exhortation in Colossians 4:6 is very important - the speech to be seasoned with salt. If there be too much, it becomes rather judgment than seasoning, as in the case of Lot's wife (who must needs look back to see that clear Sodom once more) who became a pillar of salt, receiving in judgment - in her death - that which she had refused during her life. A striking monument.

\*I recollect hearing an account of the effect of the sun upon parts of the shores of the Dead Sea, where one may find salt which has literally "lost its savour" in places where strong evaporation has taken place. Good for nothing but to be trodden under foot. The last few verses of Leviticus 2:1-16 are very blessed, and shew us another way in which the meat offering was presented to God. The full-grained ears of corn are crushed, and the memorial burnt. Notice that in every meat offering the fire has to be gone through, and the accomplishment of this we find in the gospels, where the perfect offering was made. Especially in the one already noticed (Luke) do we find the perfect manhood of our blessed Lord exposed to the fire. But let us now briefly look at the second aspect of the meat offering; I mean that of Leviticus 23:16, et seq. In the 15th verse seven weeks were counted from that day when the sheaf of firstfruits had been presented, and this presentation no doubt represents our Lord's resurrection. There could be no change as to His person morally, for He is Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever; but what a change as to condition, on that morning of the resurrection, when Jesus, no longer the man of sorrows, but triumphant over the grave, gave life in abundance to the disciples! The last Adam is a quickening spirit, and so we find, in the sheaf of first-fruits, the figure of the risen Christ.

Then, seven weeks afterwards, came the day of Pentecost, the day on which the Holy Spirit was sent to form the church of God upon earth. The assembly is here represented by the two loaves baked with leaven; there is an adequate testimony to the grace of God by which the redeemed company is presented to Him on the ground of perfect redemption in Christ. No such thing had been known before this, and it has been well said, that before the Holy Spirit came to dwell in men the dwelling-place must be prepared; and His very presence in the assembly testifies to the perfect work on the cross of Him who rose seven weeks before the day of Pentecost. Blessed are they who understand the true connection between the risen Lord and the favoured company united to Him by the Holy Ghost! It is very important in the present day to see the new order of things brought in by Christ's resurrection, and to know that the Spirit is upon earth, as sent from the glorified Head of the church. But let us notice that there was leaven in these two loaves (compare Leviticus 2:12), although it was baked in them. That is to say, there is a very different offering here to that which we considered as the figure of our Lord's perfect humanity; in this one, representing the church, the leaven is found, for there is evil in us.

I think that the passage in Galatians where the flesh is said to lust against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, would help us here; for the meaning of the end of the verse Galatians 5:17 is that we should not do that which naturally, according to the flesh, we should wish. That is, although the flesh be there, the Spirit is superior to it; and we may see this in the loaves presented at Pentecost with the leaven baked in them. Redeemed man is presented to God in the power of the Spirit.

Notice, too, that in the passage before us (Leviticus 23:18-19) burnt offerings and a sin offering accompanied the presentation of the two loaves; that is, nothing can counteract sin but the work of Christ, and this is brought to memory by the goat offered at the Feast of Weeks. (Leviticus 23:19)

Hoping that these brief remarks may be useful, I can only say that the blessed subject is most imperfectly considered; perhaps we may look into it further on another occasion, if the Lord will. E. L. Bevir.

## S. Two Letters on Worldliness.

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Two Letters on Worldliness.

E. L. Bevir.

(From the Italian.) Christian Friend, vol. 13, 1886, p. 206.

I.

Dear brother, I should like to say a few words on the tendency which there is in these days to worldliness, and more especially on the means employed by the enemy to divert Christians from the path which leads to the glory. (Php 3:1-21.) The subject is of so much importance that many will immediately say: "While we are down here we have occupations which bring us into direct contact with the world, either in our daily avocations, or in our individual relationships, and consequently it is impossible to fulfil our duties without more or less participating in the principles which govern it." This I totally deny, and I think the Word shows us clearly that there is in us a power great enough to keep us unspotted from the world, and capable of resisting it unto the end. The Word does not admit the possibility of our living out of the world; on the contrary, it teaches us that we are left in it, but that we are kept from the evil (John 17:15; 1 Corinthians 5:10), and in order to encourage us in our warfare with the prince of this world, it tells us that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:4.) What then is lacking? God has put at our disposal all the weapons necessary to meet the assaults of the enemy, and if, instead of defending, we allow ourselves to be beaten, it is either that we fail to employ the weapons with which God has furnished us, or that we misuse them. A true Christian pursues his trade honestly to gain his bread, but his real aim is to obtain everlasting glory with Christ; and this is a normal Christian according to the Word.

I come now to the means employed by Satan for turning us aside, if the heart be not truly attached to the person of Christ. It is astonishing how many Christians, while avoiding serious falls and flagrant sins, allow themselves to be overcome, little by little, by worldly ways, by the claims of society, by old friends; while they fail to see that the divine life in them loses its energy, that it is choked and enfeebled, and that gradually "old things" take possession of their hearts. At first they suffer, and make almost a sacrifice to please the world in things that are not evil in themselves; but they end by having a taste for the "old wine" (Luke 5:39), and forget that the new is much better.

We have a picture of these Christians in the history of Solomon. He never had such a serious fall as David, he never committed so great a sin as his father; but an attentive examination of the conduct of this illustrious man will reveal to us a gradual return, to the world. His reign opened amidst the glory of a little millennium, his golden sceptre was resplendent at the dedication of the temple, around him all was joy and peace; but unhappily it was of short duration. As we advance in the examination of his conduct, it is easy to see that his pristine glory fades, the monarch's heart turns to the world, the world becomes his master; and the reign which had been inaugurated by peace and glory, and the knowledge of God, is terminated amidst idols and strange women. What

a difference between the beginning and the end! And how had this decadence begun? Note, dear brother, it did not happen all at once, but gradually; insensibly the things of the world gained access to his heart, and he went from bad to worse till he became an idolater. This may be a wholesome warning to us, dear brother, and certainly shows us with what reason John said to the young men who were already strong in Christian life, "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world." (1 John 2:15.) We are in the truth, but we are not out of danger, and the Lord alone can keep us faithful.

Amongst Satan's many fruitful devices for lowering the saints is that of subtly introducing the world without their being aware of it; on this account it is well not to be ignorant of his weapons, so as to be able to turn them aside. I will try and indicate some of them, with the hope that we may profit by the experience of other Christians who have preceded us on this difficult road. In the foremost rank may be placed old acquaintances, just because we have been on intimate terms with them, and to them our weaknesses are known. There are but two ways of avoiding this danger - either to break off all connection with them, or to proclaim the truth to them, by showing them that we have found an object worthy of our affections - an object which has taken possession of our heart, which has given a new direction to our life, and which is jealous of any friendship which is not based on the work of redemption. I admit à priori the difficulty of turning our back on an old friend, who has perhaps been of service to us, and the enemy takes occasion by all this to keep us in slavery, and to allure us into an atmosphere very unhealthy for those whose senses are fitted for a heavenly one. It may happen, for instance, that a worldly acquaintance of former days comes in and expresses a wish to pass an evening with us. What should be done under such circumstances? If we are not careful, it may become the means of making us miss a meeting, or a projected study of the Word with others; so what is the right path? I think the best service we can render to a worldly friend, who persists in seeking our friendship, is to speak to him faithfully of the Saviour's work, and the result will be generally one of two - if he listen, so much the better, the Lord can work and help us to win a soul; if he do not listen, he will probably complain that we are changed, have new ideas, and are less amiable than formerly, but meanwhile we shall be left free to follow the Lord. This may appear a hard thing, as truly it is to the flesh, and it would be an ignoble action if the motive were not the Lord's; but we ought not to forget what Peter said to his contemporaries - "Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin." (1 Peter 4:1.) And then there is the exhortation which Paul addressed to the Corinthians - "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Corinthians 6:17-18.)

Next to former friends, our greatest danger lies in old habits, tastes of the first Adam, which are so easily re-awakened in us. What a sad thing to be a Christian, and yet to go on with the ways that we allowed before knowing the Lord! The Creteans by nature were liars, and they remained so although converted (Titus 1:12-13); but they were to be rebuked sharply, because they were not walking according to the new man, or in dependence on the Spirit of God.

There are many of our brethren who, without falling into open sin, allow old things, already judged as hurtful, to take possession of the heart, and here is a principal cause of the weakness they often lament. I admit that our characters are different, and that tastes differ according to

temperaments; but these are the things inherent in the first man, and if we follow our individual tastes, we shall get out of the sphere of Christian communion, where a taste for the Lord Jesus is the only thing. If, for instance, an amateur of music take up his old flute or violin to please the flesh for a few hours, if the reader of novels hunt up some old story to pass the time, and thus if each of us turn back to some occupation which we loved in days before the light reached us, who will be occupied with Jesus of Nazareth? who will proclaim His virtues? who will exalt Him in a song of praise? Remember Elisha, who, before putting on Elijah's mantle, rent his own garments.

I must not omit to mention another weapon which Satan uses successfully in his ceaseless work of drawing back into the world those whom God has set apart for Himself; it is, present things - the very air which surrounds us. It is quite true that the majority of Christians do not care for the world in its most ostensible forms; they do not go to balls, do not play cards, etc., but is that enough? The Word says to us, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world;" and it is patent that many, without loving the world in its most popular garb, love certain things which are in the world. It is very easy to be led away by an object which in itself is not evil; but if our hearts be ensnared by things which are seen, we lose the taste for things which are not seen, and thus unwittingly we find ourselves in a worldly atmosphere. The other day I received a letter from a brother which I hoped might contain some word of edification; on the contrary, I found it full of a great industrial and artistic exhibition which was on hand in a European city. You can conceive, dear brother, my astonishment. But that is what we have come to. In the meetings we say we are heavenly, we read and print good books, we publish excellent periodicals, and then, from the practices of many amongst us, we see that hearts are full of worldly things, and insensible to the glory of Jesus, which we shall so soon inherit. I do not say that art and science are bad things, but I would remind you, nevertheless, that Adam made a very wrong use of the trees in the garden of Eden, which in themselves were not bad things, when he used them to hide from God.

Farewell, dear brother, I have perhaps written sufficiently; but if the Lord permit, I will on a future occasion add a few more thoughts to my letter. Your affectionate fellow-labourer, E. L. B.

There are no circumstances in which the Lord is not enough for us.

## **S. What is Eating the Flesh and Drinking the Blood of the Son of Man?**

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What is Eating the Flesh and Drinking the Blood of the Son of Man?

John 6:53-58.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 15, 1888, p. 19.

There can be no doubt that in the English part of Christendom around us men are taking two great directions - one, that of positive unbelief or infidelity of a materialistic kind; the other, the adoption of a sacramental system, whose fundamental doctrines are bringing back souls to the bondage of popery. Leaving aside the first question, that of positively professed atheism (where, let us remark, it is not science that has brought man to it, but his own wicked heart with false "scientific" objections), let us briefly look upon the second, and especially in connection with the verses in John 6:1-71 referred to above, and which are so often misapplied in the present day to a false sacramental perversion of true Christianity.

It may be well to notice the true force of this wonderful passage before speaking of its misuse. The Lord Jesus in John 6:1-71 is presented to our hearts as the Son of man, the Bread of God come down from heaven, giving life unto the world. At the beginning of the chapter the Jews had wished to make Jesus a King by force, after that He had performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes; it was what is called the people's choice, and was thoroughly disapproved by the Lord. The people would have liked a king who would give them bread and fishes every day, but they strongly disliked the word of His mouth that spoke to their consciences. They had understood well enough when He commanded them to sit down upon the grass, but they could understand nothing when He spake of His death, implying their own lost state. The Lord will not accept the place of King, nor will He be revealed as Prophet, until this present time be run out, when He shall appear to the whole earth in these wonderful characters; but now He is rejected, despised on the earth, hidden in heaven, alone upon the mountain, whilst the whole world ripens fast for judgment.

What then is the meaning of this portion of the Word, where Jesus is presented to us as the Bread of God come down from heaven? In the first part of the verses referred to the Jews had asked, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?" And the Lord replies, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." The living Bread that came down from heaven, the Lord Jesus Christ, must die, and there can be no real possession of life unless a dead Christ be eaten; that is, unless He be truly received and known as the living One who died; and here we have an immense truth that marks out clearly the present position of believers. It is not only the stupendous fact that the Lord Jesus Christ died for us, but that we obtain life by feeding on a dead Christ. We have our present portion with Him who died. The Christian believer has received this, and although here death with Christ is not presented as in Romans 6:1-23, yet we

have the solemn fact of our receiving, eating, being identified with the Christ that died. The blessed Lord in dying left this state of things for ever; that is, the state of things upon this earth in the midst of which He was pleased to walk; and we in receiving Him learn that we too have our part with Him. How little is such a truth understood! and how surely will the flesh resist the thought of dying and of death! and yet what deliverance to a true saint! The sacramental system that would apply this to the eucharist falls to the ground as soon as the true import of the passage is understood; for the fact of the utter ruin of man implied here is fatal to it. What indeed must the state of all the fallen sons of Adam be that the Lord Jesus Christ must die (and this is why His flesh and blood are spoken of separately) before that any one can have life? And so far from man being ultimately saved by partaking in outward means of grace that confer benefits upon his soul, John 6:53 shows his utterly lost state, and the necessity (solemn thought!) of the death of Christ and its reception in order to have life. The whole teaching of the gradual change of man through partaking of the sacraments is a fatal delusion, and a denial of his ruin, and of the infinite value of the death of Christ to save him; and it is sad indeed to see this superstitious doctrine making so much progress in the present day. The Lord's Supper is not here spoken of at all; but it is very true that no one can enter at all into the blessed enjoyment of it (see 1 Corinthians 10:11) until he has understood the blessed Lord's love in going down into death to save us poor lost ones; then with grateful and adoring hearts, and in perfect liberty through His death and resurrection, we can celebrate His love, and remember Him as the One who died for us. We remember a dead Christ. But is it true for us, beloved brethren, that we enter into these things? The Lord goes on to say, in John 6:56 "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." That is, not only must a Christ who died be received in order that we may have life, but we are fed in true communion thus - by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. There will be no sense in talking to one who is eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ (that is, whose part as a known, enjoyed reality is with the Christ who died) of religious rules and restrictions. Such a person is feeding spiritually upon that blessed Saviour with whom he is for ever associated, and knowing Him thus, as the One that died, he finds a blessed deliverance from this present evil world, and from all the wrong and ambitious desires of the heart. Truly we must be thus fed to be able in practice to deny ourselves, and to enjoy full communion with the blessed Jesus. May our hearts know it more and more. His flesh is meat indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. In John 6:57 we have another thing. It is not eating His flesh and drinking His blood, but "as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." It is another part of this most blessed subject; it is the dependence of the life that we now possess (for Christ liveth in us), upon Him who is its glorious object. It is a living Christ here, and we live by Him (in true dependence, and having Him ever before us), even as He when on earth walked as a truly dependent Man, and lived by the Father. Oh, wonderful grace! Thus the apostle in Php 3:1-21 went straight on in a straight path, and could say, in Galatians 2:1-21, that the life he now lived in the flesh he lived by faith of the Son of God. If feeding upon a dead Christ delivers from this life and world of sin, feeding upon a living Christ enables us to draw from Him at every moment the strength to finish our course to His glory, so as to make each of our lives a testimony to Him and His power. "One thing I do."

Thus instead of a false religious system, which would ever try to give some place to fallen man, we find in these wonderful verses the utter ruin of all men; the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the believer's part in it with Him, where all that is of the old man is judged; and then the believer with a new life living by Him who is its object. May we know more and more the power of this to the glory

of His name! E. L. B.

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Death was the end of life to sinful man. Resurrection is the end of death, which has thus no longer anything in us. It is our advantage that, having done all it could do, it is finished. We live in the life that destroyed it. We come out from all that could be connected with a life that no longer exists. What a deliverance! Christ is this power. He became this for us in His resurrection.

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Death is the means of sanctification, the Holy Ghost its power. Christ died to sin; we are counted as having died with Him, and so dead to sin. Thus in a dead, risen, and ascended Christ we get everything.

## S. What is Man?

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What is Man?

Hebrews 2:5-18.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 122.

We need to be subject to the Word to understand in any measure what the counsels of God and their fulfilment really are. If the first chapter of the Hebrews gives us our blessed Lord's eternal Godhead, and His divine glory manifested here upon earth, and hereafter in the kingdom and in the endless ages, the second chapter presents to us that of the Son of man. This is not intended to be an exposition of the passage, but merely a few brief remarks. The question here is: "What is man?" and it is answered in so striking a manner that we at once perceive that the one who asks the question is the only one who can answer it. (See Hebrews 2:6-8) If we listen to anything, but a divine answer to this question, we shall be in danger of being led astray, even by such men as Job; worse still if we listen to such an answer as that of the accomplished deist, who could say that the proper study of mankind is man. The answer here bursts upon us with extraordinary beauty: "Crowned with glory and honour . . . all things put under his feet." God's counsels have been fulfilled so far that the Son of man is crowned with glory and honour, and occupies the place of holding universal sway, although we see not yet all things put under Him.

I have been much in countries where angels are looked upon as the highest and brightest of beings, next to God; but we shall find here that they must give place to the glory of man, according to God's counsels. In the first chapter, our Lord's divine glory is seen to be infinitely superior to that of angels; but here it is as man that we see Him, and He is not alone, for associated with Him are many sons whom God is bringing to glory, redeemed men, who are to share with Him all that He has, as man, according to God's counsels. Do we really believe, beloved brethren, that our place and calling is far higher than that of angels? All the poetic dreams of seraphs and of an imagined heavenly hierarchy disappear, and we receive by faith the revelation that the world to come is put under man, that is, under the most glorious Son of man, and those who are with Him.

If we have a calling and hope superior to that of angels, we shall not be debasing ourselves in the meantime with the things of this world. He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one. It has often been remarked that there are in this passage four reasons for our blessed Lord's suffering, and that the first is that of the glory of God. (Hebrews 2:10) He has been made perfect as the Captain of our salvation by sufferings, for He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one.

"All of one what?" I recollect this question being asked of an old servant of God, who replied: "You must not add anything to this profound and abstract expression; to add anything would weaken it,

just as (to make an illustration) if you added anything to a pure argent escutcheon in heraldry, you would diminish its value."\* It is manhood according to God's counsels; He that sanctifieth (Christ), and we that are sanctified, set aside entirely from this world, are all of one. The Holy Ghost sometimes gives us immense statements of the kind, that we may apprehend the extent of the position that we occupy according to God's counsels.

\*He quoted the phrase: *Additio probat minorem*; that is, any addition will show less value. But our hearts are lifted up in praise to Him who did not take up (take by the hand to help) angels, but the seed of Abraham. He suffered to bring us out of the degradation in which we were - the three other reasons for His suffering, besides that for God's glory, are to destroy Satan's power (Hebrews 2:14); to atone for sins (Hebrews 2:17); and to succour those tempted (Hebrews 2:18) and to bring us through everything as men redeemed, and all "of one" with Him. The very start of the race for us is glorious, for the Lord is not ashamed to call us brethren (Hebrews 2:12), and surely the next passage quoted, (Hebrews 2:13) refers to His own blessed place of dependence when He was here, and in which we are now, and I have no doubt that we shall know the full blessed force of "Behold Me, and the children which God hath given me," when Jesus shall present us, with our very bodies changed and made like unto His glorious body, to God, in heaven itself.

We are able thus to understand the answer to the question: "What is man?" for although we see not yet all things put under Him, yet we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; we are associated with Him; He is not ashamed to call us brethren, and the foundation upon which we stand is that of the redemption accomplished by Him at the cost of His infinite sufferings. Death has been tasted for everything, and Satan's power destroyed, and the Captain of our salvation leads us through the wilderness in a manner worthy of the God who formed these glorious counsels as to the Son of man, and those associated with Him.

We cannot plead weakness or difficulties of the way as an excuse for not entering into God's thoughts about the Glorious Man of His counsels. The very difficulties become an occasion of calling forth the active intercession of the Lord as High Priest, and this not only (as we selfishly imagine) to help us, as a present thing, out of our difficulties, but to keep us in the sense of our place in the presence of the God of glory, the Author of the deep and wondrous counsel of setting man at the head of the universe - the answer to the question, "What is man?" In Psalms 8:1-9, the glory of Jehovah, our Lord, is set above the heavens. In the New Testament the heavenly places are filled with glorified men, and the blank left is filled up (seen only in a glimpse in the Old Testament, in Daniel's nocturnal vision, where the saints of the heavenly places come with the supremely glorious Son of man to take the kingdom); the blank, I mean, that is left in the eighth Psalm where Jesus' glory as the Son of man is set above the heavens. The danger for us is to forget that it became Him (the God of these wondrous counsels) thus to carry out His stupendous plan. It is not merely that we are men redeemed and being led to heaven, but being led according to the glory of God. Even in this world a man of great power and means would carry out a vast design in a manner worthy of himself. Thus Solomon, in bringing Jerusalem up to its state of beauty and earthly glory, accomplished it in a manner worthy of the powerful and wise king. This is a mere illustration; silver was quite a base metal in Solomon's time, and, alas! the gold soon got changed into brass in Rehoboam's time. But if Solomon carried out his plans in a regal way, what must be the accomplishment of the counsels of the God of glory? This is the true answer to the

question. It became Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, to make the leader of the salvation of the sanctified ones, perfect through sufferings. God is thus leading us to glory in a manner worthy of His own stupendous counsels, and we can make no excuse for not entering into them, for the very One who has laid the foundation, at the cost of infinite suffering, for their accomplishment, is leading us on, redeemed as we are, to the highest heaven, the climax of all our hopes. The Eternal Son became Man in order that God's counsels should thus be accomplished; the enemy's power is broken, and Jesus himself is at the right hand of the Majesty on high to keep our hearts and minds in the full sense and enjoyment of our nearness to God.

"What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the Son of man, that thou visitest Him? Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honour. . . O, Jehovah, our Lord, how great is Thy name in all the earth!" Surely we, the saints of the heavenly places, can break into still higher praise, in extolling the glory of His grace wherein He has made us accepted in the Beloved! E. L. B.

\* \* \*

If the ascended Christ is to fill all things with redemption glory, the whole universe will be an eternal witness to His exaltation as the answer of God to His work on the cross.

\* \* \*

If Christ is to be everything practically to us, we must be nothing. It is only therefore when we accept death upon all that we are, and are thus free from ourselves and the world, that He becomes the absorbing object of our souls.

## S. Why Weepest Thou?

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"Why Weepest Thou?"

John 20:13.

Why weepest thou? The breeze blows warm and soft,  
The winter frost is past this vernal morning;  
The buds expand below, and high aloft  
The glowing sun is all the heavens adorning;  
The rising larks are singing freely now:

Why weepest thou?

Why weepest thou? Has the foe rapt away  
Thy Saviour from the tomb where He was lying?

Nay! foes are vanquish'd - He is risen - say,  
Is this a time for tears and weary sighing?

Soon shalt thou see Him, glory on His brow:

Why weepest thou?

Why weepest thou? Dost thou not know thy Lord  
On this new day, the resurrection morn? The  
heav'nly Gard'ner, faithful to His word,  
Hath not forgotten thee, thou flower forlorn,  
And in the garden comes to seek thee now:

Why weepest thou?

Why weepest thou? A balm for aching eyes,  
A golden message shalt thou, Mary, bear;

He to His God and Father soon shall rise,  
"Your God and Father" shall His brethren hear.  
No grief, on this eighth day, can God allow:

Why weepest thou?

Why weepest thou? Bearing the bread and wine,  
The mighty Victor shall come forth in blessing  
(Gathered in one all ransom'd hearts like thine);

He first shall praise, the Father's love confessing,  
And all the Church in adoration bow:

Why weepest thou? E. L. Bevir.

## S. Wisdom, Not of this world.

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Wisdom, Not of this world.

1 Corinthians 2:6.

E. L. Bevir.

Christian Friend vol. 19, 1892, p. 289.

There are two great lines of truth in the Bible:

1. The fall of Adam and ruin of all his family; and the way Christ has met this ruin.
2. The counsels of God in the last Adam, in Christ, before ever the first Adam was formed out of clay and set in Eden.

Many believers have some understanding of the first of these two subjects, though in many cases it be but imperfect. To enter into the second is more rare, though it be the simple and blessed privilege of every child of God.

We find in the first chapters of the first Epistle to the Corinthians, in the very clearest language, a distinction made between Christians who are described as carnal and as children (1 Corinthians 3:1), and those who are walking in the power of the Holy Spirit, no longer children, but perfect (1 Corinthians 2:6) in the sense of being grown up, and apprehending the second thing of which I have spoken, with which indeed perfection is always connected in Scripture. The Corinthians were carnal, and their conduct but too plainly showed it. I believe that we but little enter into the state of things at Corinth - lawsuits, boisterous feasting and impropriety at the Lord's table, not to speak of worse disorders; and should any proof be needed of their childishness, I think that their very way of employing the gifts which God had given so richly to them would prove it. They were using gifts of tongues, prophecy, etc., merely to make a display in the assembly; for it is but too evident that show rather than edification was their object. (1 Corinthians 14:1-40.) The apostle, in dealing with all this, could only treat it in one way, and that is expressed in the beginning of 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 : he did not judge it well to know anything amongst the Corinthians but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. This is very emphatic, and signifies the judgment and end of the first man at the cross, so that should any pretension to wisdom or glory be made upon his part, Christ crucified is preached to shew the utter vanity of such boasting. All was ended at the cross.

It is a serious thing to be living at a time when all that man, as a child of Adam, can do, and has done, is made so much of. What the world calls "light" (1:e., the natural powers and intellect of man) God calls "darkness," and if we are to understand God's word we must take His expressions as He uses them. His categories are quite different to man's. We are all eminently Corinthian naturally, and as fond of applause, of the world, and of good living, etc., as were the Greeks of the sensual town of the Isthmus. But in 1 Corinthians 2:6 the apostle is speaking of wisdom, not of this world, nor of its rulers, who come to nought; and he himself speaks it among the perfect. I trust

that all who read this understand what perfection means. It is no perfecting of the race of Adam, of which we have just been speaking, but the perfection of the glorified Christ, the centre of all God's glorious and eternal counsels; that is perfection, and there is no other. I saw, about three years ago, a book supposed to be very wise (what the world calls wise God calls foolish), in which it was stated that the human race had made progress to perfection, and, taking unity to represent perfection, supposed that mankind had progressed two-sevenths of the way to it. But the other five-sevenths? Ah! the whole theory is utterly wrong and false, and in keeping with the erroneous and arrogant spirit of the age, which supposes man to be perfectible, instead of hopelessly lost, and away from God.

Perfection then is connected with the glorious Christ, and nothing can be added to His glory; and the wisdom which is preached amongst the perfect is not of this world, but that hidden wisdom which God had predetermined before the ages for our glory. All the combined wisdom of the chiefs of this world is worth nothing before God; and the chiefs themselves, after turning the world upside down, and doing more harm than good, disappear from the scene and come to naught. Napoleon himself regretted that one day his exploits would but fill half a page of general history; and where are Julius Caesar and Alexander now? But this hidden wisdom of God, no longer hidden to us, to whom He has revealed it by His word, these glorious counsels are now known in the Lord of glory, in whom we are chosen according to God's sovereign will. If there be no more wisdom upon this planet (and indeed the world fully demonstrated the absence of it in crucifying Jesus) we can look up to the third heaven, where He is displayed in all His glory, and humbly thank God that He has made Him unto us wisdom. As God's scheme of glory unrolls itself before our eyes, and we are led by the Spirit to know the thoughts of His heart, so do we see the infinite difference between His wisdom as displayed in the all-glorious Christ, and that which is called wisdom by men upon earth. The things which are outside of the five senses, and which belong to an entirely different sphere to that which the world calls beautiful, are revealed to us who have received the Holy Ghost, who never tires of leading our souls into the enjoyment and reality of the glory of Christ; and it is here that we learn God's wisdom, as we see the fruit of the divine plan. His counsels are so far accomplished in that Christ is glorified, and we ourselves are in Him; and, as we wait for the glorification of our bodies, enabled by the Holy Ghost to enter in spirit into the glorious heavenly scene, we can be independent of all that the world may call beautiful. The princes of this age know nothing of the wisdom of God, and never has their folly been so fully displayed as when they crucified Jesus, the only One who could have established the kingdom. I recollect an example of secular folly in the way in which it was proposed to dispose of Palestine in an European council. The wise of the earth make their plans, but the Lord has made His beforehand. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." (Psalms 2:1-12.) And this, when the time comes, will not a little disconcert the profound combinations of the worldly wise. But the wisdom, which is now revealed to us, belongs to a heavenly order of things, and has nothing in common with the present age; and the great desire of the apostle was, that the beloved saints of God should enter into and enjoy that which God has given them in Christ. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. We have received the Spirit which is of God, not the spirit of the world, and we are capacitated to receive and to know the things that are freely given to us of God.

There is nothing of the natural man in all this. It is distinctly said of him that he receiveth not the things of God; there must be a work of God before anything can be received, and then the very

words for communicating God's thoughts, the wisdom that is not of this world, are chosen by the Holy Ghost; spiritual things are communicated by spiritual means.

Nothing could be more important at the present moment; for the views on inspiration in Christendom are daily becoming more loose just as man is growing louder in his pretensions as to progress, science, and intelligence. We have received and receive those things which are far beyond the ken of man's mind, and God has been pleased to communicate them to us in His own way, choosing the very words by which to make known His thoughts to us; and it behoves us to give all attention to the language of His inspired word, at this present epoch of the world's history, when man's right to dictate and to explain is so strongly insisted upon. May we, then, be not only free from the gross evil of the world in a negative way, but so truly happy in the positive enjoyment of the "things of the Spirit of God," where the glorious Christ is all, according to God's wisdom, that we may be formed by the Holy Ghost, spiritual, and thus above the highest pleasures that time and sense can offer. May the judgment and end of the first man at the cross be, not a mere theory for us, but a blessed 'fact', and may our hearts and minds rest satisfied in that wisdom of God which is not of this world - satisfied with His Christ, and growing in the knowledge of Him! E. L. B.

## The World and the Love of God.

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### The World and the Love of God.

1 John 4:1-21. At the end of 1 John 3:1-24 the Holy Spirit is mentioned as having been given to believers, and by this we know that God dwelleth in us. Immediately afterwards we find the work of the enemy in sending forth many false prophets into the world, and the necessity of trying the spirits; for ever since the descent of the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, the tactics of the enemy have been those of spiritual imposture. The world's true character comes out here, and note that it is a world into whose bosom many false prophets have been received: no one is more likely to receive a ready welcome from the world than a false prophet. Such have been popular in all times. But a certain test is given whereby the spirits may be proved - that is, Jesus Christ come in flesh - and every spirit that would take away in the least degree anything from the divine or human glory of our Lord, is not of God. The presence of the blessed Son of God - truly incarnate, as John's gospel presents Him - is the test, and the spirit of antichrist is detected where Jesus Christ is not confessed. This then is the character of the world in which we live. It has rejected Jesus, and has received with open arms a host of false prophets, and it will end with the acceptance of Antichrist. The age will end in the development of man's independence to such a degree, that he will exalt himself to the very highest point of pretension, and revolt against God; and, as one who has climbed recklessly to the top of a high steeple, suddenly smitten with vertigo, falls and is broken to pieces, so shall the pride of the antichrist come to an end, judged as he shall be of the Lord when once he shall have attained the bad eminence to which he is ascending. The point is that the spirit of the antichrist is already in the world, and we have to meet it on all sides. It is the spirit which denies man's ruin, and which would exalt him to the skies. But we have a very blessed statement as to all believers, "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." The presence of the Holy Ghost in the family of God (for here the "children" takes in all Christians) is a most wonderful fact, and He is infinitely superior to the terrible and restless spirit which is in the world.

They are of the world, and speak according to its principles, and are listened to readily; the false prophets have very often a philanthropic doctrine to propound, the amelioration of the whole human race, universal brotherhood, and other very grand schemes, but all these things are of the world, that is, according to its principles.

These men will be listened to, and I recollect once seeing an immense crowd round a preacher in London, and saying to a friend, "Let us go to listen; I am perfectly certain that it is not the gospel he is preaching, for if so he would not have so large an audience." And indeed it was not the gospel, but exhortations to abstain from alcohol, and to practise civic virtues, and thus to prosper on earth, with a hope of Paradise hereafter. All such teaching will be readily received, provided that man's fall and ruin and God's claims be ignored. The world studies political economy, in which there is not one thought of God or of His Christ, but how to make the best use of the resources of this planet without Him. The world listens to the false prophets; but those who are of God listen to the

apostles as having the divine message from the Lord Himself, who came into this world, the Son of God incarnate, the Truth. Blessed be all they who receive His message! The manner in which the love of God is presented to us in the following verses makes a very blessed contrast to this dark world and the Antichrist. The whole family of children are characterized by love, and the nearer we are morally to God the more will this be known. I recollect in reading of Mahomet's supposed journey to the seventh heaven (the whole thing an impudent imposture), that the false prophet said that when he approached within a bow-shot of the deity, a mortal chill froze the very blood in his veins; and this, I thought, condemns the whole system of Islam, for the nearer we are to God the less are we chilled. It is the very contrary. The three blessed aspects of the love of God have often been insisted upon, and I merely wish to call attention to the subject.

1. The love of God manifested. (1 John 5:9) 2. Perfected in us. (1 John 5:12) 3. Perfected with us.\* (1 John 5:17) \*This is the true sense of the passage thus, "Herein has love been perfected with us," etc.

We are called upon to love one another because love is of God, and the character and nature of one born of God is to love. God's love was manifested in the gift of His Son when we had no love for Him, and now, in the midst of a heartless world, we are exhorted to love one another. This has often been spoken of; may we show it in true self-denial and devotedness! In 2 Timothy 4:12 the beginning is the same as in John 1:18; the ending different. It is no longer a question of the presence of Jesus in the world, the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father declaring Him; Jesus is in heaven glorified, and the children of God upon earth are to express God's love. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us." And the blessed communion of saints follows; for when the apostle says that we know we abide in Him, he adds not merely that the Holy Spirit has been given, but that He hath given us of His Spirit; there is communion, participation. We form one family and have by the Holy Spirit the same blessed objects, the Father and Son. To give a simple illustration, I recollect that when brothers in different regiments met sometimes at a station on the high road in India, at the change of troops, all their conversation was of their own family - their father, mother, etc.; they were of one family, and had the same joys in common. Only for us it is by the Holy Ghost. The third aspect of the love of God carries us right on to the end - love perfected with us; all fear has been driven out, and it is not said "As He is, so shall we be in heaven"; but "as He is, so are we in this world." That is, we are perfect in Him who shall eventually judge the quick and the dead, and knowing the Judge 'as our blessed Saviour we have no fear of any kind, but the assurance that the same love which was manifested in the gift of the Son to be the propitiation for our sins; that this same love, I say, shall accompany us to the very end of our course. May our souls be confiding in the God of love, so that we may be kept in the midst of this benighted age, in the full enjoyment of our highest privileges, and be showing in all our conduct that we love one another. E. L. Bevir.

## Things Which Become Sound Doctrine.

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Things Which Become Sound Doctrine.

Nothing could be a stronger proof of sound doctrine in Crete than the good and sober conduct of all Christians, whatever their position in life; indeed right teaching is always accompanied by certain fruits, and this is true both in Crete and everywhere else. Titus was to announce these things. The instruction given in the second chapter to the different classes is clear and simple, and we should take heed to it. When slaves are mentioned at the end, a wonderful little compendium of Christianity (as seen by its fruits), and its highest motives, is given to us, and we may look into this more fully. The character of the more aged saints speaks for itself. It is well to notice the expression "false accusers" of the third verse, for it is the very word used in Scripture to characterize the accuser, the slanderer of God and men. The quiet, well-ordered interior of a Christian household, activity\* and love in the wives, is a testimony that cannot be spoken against.

\*It is not merely "keepers at home" in Titus 2:5. The real word is, "occupied with household work," and supposes diligence.

It is well, too, to note the expressions "discreet" and "sober-minded" of Titus 2:5-6, for it is the same sense in either case, and implies moderation.

Titus, in preaching these excellent virtues, was to show them in his own life - purity of doctrine, gravity and sound speech, to the shame of opposers, who should thus find no pretext for speaking against Christians.

All this is beautifully simple, and needs to be practised in our day, when social order is being overturned by the enemy: quiet family duties despised, women going about lecturing, men generally not given to moderation, the word of God neglected and despised. I speak of the general state of Christendom; but these things infect true Christians, and we may well go to Scripture for the things which become sound doctrine. When the apostle comes to slaves, he exalts at once their calling to that of adorning the doctrine of our Saviour God in all things. A slave in Crete was a person at the very base of the social ladder, and the ladder itself was low. (Titus 1:12) There is not, however, a word of Emancipation here; and this is important, for Christianity is not a scheme for the improvement of Cretans or of negroes. It is degrading Christianity to drag it down to this level; and the Holy Spirit, in this passage, after prescribing to Christian slaves what their conduct should be, gives us in a few words a comprehensive view of the subject. Christianity is not a partial remedy for misery, nor a philanthropic institution for improving the world; but it calls out of the world an acquired people, expectant of eternal and heavenly glory. New life, new motives, an unfailling object, zeal for good works in the very midst of Cretan degradation! And this blessed truth applies to us all.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." The full, free grace of God, which finds man utterly ruined and lost, and upon that very ground saves him without money and without price, cleanses him from all defilement, and gives him everlasting life. Now come the

things which are befitting to sound doctrine, the teaching\* us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts first of all. It may be said that we are not in so gross an atmosphere as that of Crete; but we are in a world which is as ungodly as ever, and which is intent upon its own affairs ("the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life"), and there are many things to which we must say that difficult word "No!"

\*Notice the force of this expression; there is positive discipline, by the word of God in our souls.

Then "soberly" is not merely the avoiding of gross material evil, but implies also moral moderation, as we have already noticed, and we may compare with it the "sound mind" of 2 Timothy 1:7.\* \*The word has the same derivation. See the apostle's character in the Christian Friend for August, 1893.

"Righteously" goes further, of course, than a mere worldly code of justice. The Christian's conscience has been first purified, and then enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and is a delicate instrument; and it is a very happy thing when the balance is in equilibrium.

"Godly"; these three things form the practical life of the Christian (as to himself, as to others, and as to God) in this present age. It is the period of man's independence, and of the rule of the god whom the world has chosen. We are now living at the close of it, and, alas! we must confess that the nineteenth century is characterised neither by moderation, justice, nor piety. The testimony of the Christian will be that of a man actuated by principles that are not of this world. "You are behind the age!" they say. "Or before it!" might be replied. May our conduct truly show this! The course will soon be ended; and there is the earnest outlook into the coming age, which shall be ushered in by the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Looking for that blessed hope," etc. How this most splendid perspective must have alleviated and ennobled the life of a Cretan slave! And does it not indeed shine right along our path, whatever may be our service here? The poor humble slave, suffering often, no doubt, injustice at the hands of men, could go on in a path pleasing to the Saviour God, and look forward with the same certainty as Paul himself to the day when the just Judge should reward his patient work. It is no vague hope of better days to come, such as this benighted world may dream of, but the full and bright epiphany of the glory of our great God and Saviour. The Titus 2:14 is very beautiful, for we have His own proper claim upon us, as a present motive. He gave Himself for us! The redeeming from all iniquity includes the wilful, unbridled condition of the natural man. It is well to notice this, for thus the contrast is all the more striking; we have been redeemed from lawlessness, to be under the blessed yoke of the Lord Jesus, and to be purified unto Himself

He has an acquired people, bought with an infinite price; and whilst free spiritually and morally, we belong to Him, and to Him alone. As the Levites in Numbers 3:1-51, representing the redeemed firstborn of Israel, were given to Aaron for Jehovah's service, so do we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ; we are His own acquired people. The zeal for good works too belongs to His most excellent school; they will not always be appreciated by those who surround us, but it is a sufficient consolation to know, as we await the glory, that we have the Master's approval in our service.

Whilst owning our failure, we feel the importance of the subject (the things which become sound doctrine), and wish to be more in subjection to Him to whom we belong both now and for ever.

Happy they who adorn the doctrine of the Saviour God in all things! And this is the very point in question - the precious fruits that accompany Christian teaching, all through the course till the Lord's appearing. E. L. Bevir.

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