

SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD,

JEHOSHAPHAT,

AND OTHER PAPERS.

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Separation from the World.

IN the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, He divided the light from the darkness. That this act had a deeper significance is proved by Eph. v. 8, and 2 Cor. vi. 14, in both which the children of God are called "Light," and the unsaved are called "Darkness."

Again, in Gen. iii. 15, God says, "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed"—that is to say, the enmity would be continued between the two seeds throughout all generations. Put there by God as a safeguard against the more disastrous evil of their amalgamation, any attempt to disguise or modify it is Satan's work, and not God's.

In Gen. iv. this enmity is manifested in the murder of Abel by his brother Cain. It is also here shown that such enmity is compatible with the outward worship of the true God, but that under God's rebuke it issues in open apostasy, and seeks by arts and sciences to constitute for itself a congenial dwelling place WITHOUT GOD upon earth.

The two seeds then seem to range themselves in two lines—the line of Cain in rebellion against God, and the line of Seth, wherein they call upon (or "call themselves by") the name of the Lord, and in which there appear notable instances of faith and piety, such as Enoch and Noah.

Of these it is written that they "walked with God." Short but expressive description of lives that must have been maintained in marked separation from the world, seeing that

God says, "All flesh had corrupted His way on the earth." (Gen. vi. 12.)

But the culmination of evil which resulted in the judgment of the flood was not reached until "the sons of God" were drawn aside from the path of separation and formed alliances by marriage with "the daughters of men."

The effect of this course, so far as concerned God's testimony, was the entire abandonment of the truth, even by the Seth line, until not one witness for God was left except Noah.

And so it has ever been when the children of God form alliance of any kind with the world. The unregenerate cannot possibly rise to the level of the path of faith. The invariable result is, that one truth after another is practically compromised, and then abandoned or ignored, or else perverted to suit the carnal mind.

To maintain the path of separation to God is essential to all true witness-bearing. It brings reproach and the cross, because Satan opposes it with all his power, and devises with consummate subtlety the snares by which he may entangle the child of God, and drag him into hurtful association with the world. But Scripture bears one unvarying testimony, by many figures and many examples, both national and individual, and above all by the life and testimony, of Him who alone is the Faithful Witness, that only as separation to God is maintained can witness-bearing be effectual.

After the flood, the plains of Shinar witnessed another culmination of evil in the Confederacy and Tower of Babel. This evoked anew the judgment of God, equally marked, though much less severe, viz., the confounding of the tongues of the confederated peoples.

Out from it all, its pride and self-will and idolatry, God called Abram; as it is written, "I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him." (Is. li. 2.)

It was a call that separated him from all the world to God Himself. Every trace of association with its godless projects must be broken; one voice alone must be heard, and fashion his life and walk and regulate every step, and that the voice of God. Such is the path of faith. Having obtained one soul-satisfying view of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. iv. 6), the world is seen to be that in which God has no place. His voice is not listened to, His will is not consulted, His word is set aside. . Man is exalted, and now nothing almost is restrained from them which they have imagined to do. (See Genesis xi. 6.) But faith recognises the call of God to separation from it all. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." (1 John ii. 16.) "He gave Himself for our sins that He might deliver us from this present evil world." (Gal. i. 4.) "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (James iv. 4.) "We are of God, and the whole world lieth in the wicked one." (1 John v. 19.)

The Book of Exodus opens with Israel an enslaved people in Egypt groaning under the cruel oppression of Pharaoh. Type of God's elect while yet ignorant of "the blood of sprinkling," and of Him whose power can deliver from the dominion of sin and Satan. But the night of Israel's deliverance from the stroke of Divine judgment through the blood of the Lamb is also the night of their final Exodus from Egypt. The two deliverances are thus combined. So it is written in Gal. i. 4. "He gave Himself for our sins" (as the paschal lamb) "that He might deliver us from this present evil world," that is, as Israel out of Egypt. Again "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, *that He might bring us to God.*" (1 Pet. iii. 18), and again, "the world hath hated them because they are not of the

world, even as I am not of the world." (John xvii. 14.) Thus it is evident that the separation of God's children from the world to Himself was one grand purpose for which the Lord Jesus endured the Cross; for which also He prayed the Father, and which is still the desire of His heart.

It is interesting to trace the various ways by which Pharaoh sought to detain Israel in Egypt, and also the steadfastness of Moses to the purpose of God that not a hoof should be left there.

First he says "go ye; sacrifice to your God *in the land*." But the answer is in effect, if we do so, we shall sacrifice the very animals the Egyptians worship—"will they not stone us"—"we will go three days journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God *as He shall command us*." (Ex. viii. 25-27.)

Pharaoh's next proposal is, "ye may sacrifice to the Lord your God in the wilderness, only *ye shall not go very far away*." To this Moses makes no definite answer, but warns Pharaoh not to deal deceitfully.

Pharaoh's next move is, "Go serve the Lord your God; but who are they that shall go?" And Moses said, "we will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go, for we must hold a feast unto the Lord." "*Not so*," said Pharaoh, "go now ye that are men." (Ex. x. 8-11.)

Yet one more effort he makes (verse 24) "go ye serve the Lord; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed; let your little ones also go with you." But the final answer of Moses claims *all for God*. "Thou must give us also sacrifices and burnt-offerings, that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God. Our cattle also shall go with us; there shall not an hoof be left behind: for thereof must we take to serve the Lord our God; and *we know not with what we*

must serve the Lord until we come thither.” This is truly admirable—this pertinacity with which this meekest of men maintains the right of Jehovah to every hoof they possess as well as to themselves.

But these four proposals of Pharaoh are but specimens of the schemes by which the Arch-enemy ever seeks to hinder the children of God from that separation to Him in which they alone can serve Him acceptably.

How many of the children of God are kept in unhallowed alliance with the world and its ways, by their surrounding circumstances, their natural affections and their worldly interests, let each heart answer.

Israel being delivered from Egypt and from bondage to Pharaoh, was truly a separated people unto Jehovah.

His presence also, rendered visible in the cloud by day and fire by night, marked them as a people “separated from all the people that were on the face of the earth.” (Ex. xxxiii. 16.) So Balaam prophesied, “The people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. (Num. xxiii. 9.)

By circumcision and by the ordinance of the passover, by the Sabbath and the Feasts, by the Sanctuary and all its appointments, they were separated and to be maintained in permanent separation from all other nations.

Herein lay their safety and their glory. Hence, ere they were long in the wilderness, Satan plots their entanglement with the other nations.

Balaam, foiled in his attempts to curse the people of God, counsels Balak the King of the Moabites no longer to oppose, but to seek friendly alliance with Israel. Satan well knew how this stratagem had succeeded in the days before the flood, and how both Adam and the Sons of God in Noah’s day had yielded to the influence of woman. So

again the women of Moab became the snare of Israel. The separated people are entangled with the daughters of Moab. They descend into the darkness, they accept the invitations of the ungodly—the next step is inevitably downward into deeper sin, “the people did eat and bow down to their gods, and Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel.”

These instances of failure in maintaining the separate path always followed by the judgment of the Lord, shew that from the beginning it was the will of God that His people should be a holy, a separated people; as separate as light from darkness, as separate as Christ from Belial.

Nor did this principle apply alone in Old Testament days.

In the Acts of the Apostles at the inauguration of the present dispensation how separate were the Lord's people from both Gentile and Jew. “All that believed were together.” “Of the rest durst no man join himself to them.” The blast of persecution scattered the seed, but wherever they were driven they bore their testimony, the light shone forth in the midst of the surrounding darkness, it refused to amalgamate either with Jewish ordinances or Gentile idolatry. Hence in all places where the Gospel was preached there was found a company of disciples, separated yet gathered together, neither Jew nor Gentile, though gathered out from both and called “the Church of God.”

Perfect and glorious was the separation, at the first; strange that so soon it should have to be written even to that separated company. “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. vi. 14.)

Again, as of old, the enemy had been at work and had succeeded but too well. The ungodly had “crept in

unawares,"—and the church had descended to ally itself with the world. The path of separation to God was being surrendered and hence the sharpness of the Apostolic exhortation.

The culmination of this is seen in the Book of Revelation. Instead of the Bride as a chaste virgin espoused to Christ is seen the "Mystery Babylon the great, the Mother of Harlots, and abominations of the Earth."

The Ox and the Ass yoked together.

DEUTERONOMY XXII. 10.

THE Statutes of the Old Covenant were specially given to and adapted for the people of Israel in the land of Canaan, and if imposed on the Gentile, would have proved to be an intolerable burden.* (See Acts xv. 10 and 28.) Nevertheless, Scripture abundantly shows that even the most apparently trivial enactments of the law have a deep spiritual significance, and therefore are intended to convey to the children of God in all ages an understanding of His thoughts and ways,

Such is the character of the one above referred to:—
“Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.”

The ass was ceremonially an unclean animal. It neither parts the hoof, nor does it chew the cud. (Lev. xi. 3-8.)

It is specially named in connection with the sanctifying of the first-born of man and beast:—“Every firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb, and if thou wilt not redeem it then thou shalt break his neck, and all the first-born of man among thy children thou shalt redeem.” (Ex. xiii. 13.)

* It is not intended here to dispute that even “the letter” of the Levitical precepts contains the purest and wisest of all instruction upon social and even political economy, by taking heed to which, both men and Christians would be gainers as to the affairs of this life beyond what they imagine. See also in this respect the much neglected book of Proverbs.

It could not be offered in sacrifice, neither could it be eaten by the people of Jehovah. If its life was spared from judgment, it was only on such terms as the first-born of guilty man, through being redeemed by a lamb.

It was therefore not fitted to represent either Christ as offered in sacrifice, or His people as cleansed by Him, but rather man in his natural unregenerate condition.

The ox or bullock was, on the contrary, ceremonially clean. It parts the hoof and chews the cud. It has a prominent place among the offerings of Jehovah, and as the food of His people. Therefore it fitly represents Christ as offered to God for us, and also as given to us by God. But the type extends further, and whilst primarily the "clean" animals represent Christ as God's spotless and unblemished offering, they also represent those who, being cleansed in His most precious blood, are "clean every whit"—"accepted in the Beloved."

The prohibition to plow with an ox and an ass together is unmistakably referred to in 2 Cor. vi. 14, and here we have the divine commentary expounding the spiritual application of the command exactly in accordance with the Levitical surroundings of the ordinance.

The command spiritually applied in the New Testament is quite as plain as in the old. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." But with what subtlety and effrontery Satan opposes or seeks to neutralize every precept of the Lord! When pressing this command upon the consciences of God's children, how constantly is it cast aside with the remark—"it is impossible to tell who are believers and who are not," "the tares and the wheat must grow together," "you are commanded not to judge," &c., &c. As if the Apostle would exhort the saints to a separation that is impossible; as if the tares and the wheat being allowed till

the end of the age to *grow together in the world* * implied their being yoked together in the church ; as if the command not to judge implied that the believer was to close his divinely enlightened eyes to the difference between light and darkness, between life and death, between Christ and Belial.

The instruction of this passage is couched in the form of an appeal to the understanding and spiritual instinct of the saints, rather than as a mere arbitrary command. It is not a call to separation merely because God wills it, though that would have been abundant warrant for giving earnest heed ; but in addition to this, the reason is given, viz., the utter incompatibility of the two.

Thus side by side are ranged two lines of opposing elements :—

Righteousness	Unrighteousness
Light	Darkness
Christ	Belial
He that believeth	Infidel (or unbeliever)
Temple of God	Idols

Such is the contrast as seen by God between His saints and the world. Well might the Lord Jesus say in view of so amazing a contrast, “ they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ”

The Christian is, as to his standing before God, judicially *righteous*. He is made “ the righteousness of God in Christ ” (2 Cor. v. 21.) Moreover, he is in character—as to the new man—“ created in righteousness and true holiness ” (Eph. iv. 24.) “ after the image of Him that created him ”. (Col. iii. 10.)

* Note the Lords own interpretation—“ The field is the world ” not “ the church.”

The natural man is before God unrighteous. As a branch of a corrupt and condemned tree he is under the wrath and curse of God ; and as to his character, whatever there may be of natural morality and uprightness in relation to fellow-men, there cannot but be in the sight of God the vilest unrighteousness so long as His word is disbelieved, His grace despised, His Spirit resisted, His Son rejected.

Between such what fellowship can there be ? It is God that asks the question. For the unrighteousness to ascend to the level of the divine fellowship of the righteous is an utter impossibility. Consequently, fellowship can only be obtained by the descent of the righteous to the level of the unrighteous ; by the surrender for the time being of all that is characteristic of the calling of the saint.

The Christian, as to his intelligence, is Light in the Lord, and as such is called to walk as a child of the light. (Eph. v. 8,) "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John i. 5.) He has "called us out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Pet. ii. 9.) As the priests of old walked in the light of the holy oil that burned in the golden candlestick, so in the light of the anointing of the Holy Ghost, the Uncction from the Holy One by which we know all things (1 John ii. 20) is the Christian called to walk. There, in that divine light of God's presence, the evil and the good are truly discerned by the anointed eye ; the world is seen to be "sitting in darkness," content with its chains of ignorance, comprehending not the light that once shined in its midst, but hating and turning from it in unfeigned disgust (John i. 5 ; iii. 19), refusing the proffered deliverance from the power of darkness, and rejecting as utterly undesirable a place in the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. i. 13).

Therefore God asks, "What communion hath light with darkness?" How can he whose eyes have been opened to

behold the light of God, find aught congenial amid the thoughts and desires, the maxims and principles of the world? Surely not otherwise than by closing his eyes to the heavenly light. And sad and solemn though it be, there is a terrible possibility of the child of God descending even to this. The eye that is accustomed to the light, when introduced into comparative darkness, sees nothing at all; but soon the blinded eyeball adapts itself to the gloom, and the dim lamp that seemed at first to yield no light at all, appears almost to shine brightly. Thus it is that the spiritual eyesight of the child of God, who descends to walk in darkness, adapts itself to the surroundings, and soon becomes contented with darkness that would at one time have been midnight and misery to the soul.

Again, "what concord hath Christ with Belial?" The Christian is so perfectly joined to and identified with Christ, that in God's sight he is as a member of His body. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," and "your bodies are the members of Christ." (I. Cor. vi. 15-17.)

Belial, or the Wicked One, is a term expressive of profligacy and licentiousness.

In God's sight all are ranged on either of the two sides; either with Christ or against Him. Christ is the pattern and leader of the one; Belial the pattern and leader of the other. How terrible for a child of God to be found having concord or harmony with Christ's enemy! Found at the same communion table with the drunkard, or participating in the profits of the ungodly schemes of the wicked.

"What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?" To some the meaning here may be obscured by the use of the word infidel as though it applied only to one who professed not to believe in the existence of God. But it is the same Greek word as that in the previous verse translated

“unbeliever.” At the first “all that believed were together.” (Acts ii. 44); again, “believers were the more added to the Lord. (Acts ii. 44). The fact that they were believers in one common Lord and Saviour—believers of the testimony of the one living God—drew them together, and in the one faith and hope they lived and rejoiced. Walking in the power of their faith, “of the rest durst no man join himself to them.” (Acts. v. 15.) There was nothing of importance to them which they had in common with the unbelievers. The truth which they had believed had separated them from the traditions and religion of the Jew, and from the idolatry and philosophy of the Gentile. While men were eagerly looking for peace and liberty and prosperity on earth, their horizon bounded by the things seen and temporal; those that believed were looking for the return of their rejected Lord, and to an inheritance reserved in heaven. What part, therefore, or *share* had the believer with the unbeliever?

Lastly, it is asked, “What agreement hath the temple of God with idols?” Now-a-days, in these lands, idolatry in its grosser form has ceased to exist, but not idolatry in its essence and power. It is written, “Covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Col. iii. 6.) Mammon is the God of the nineteenth century. Gold heads the list of Babylon’s merchandise, and souls of men come last! (Rev. xvii. 12, 13.) It is written, “Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have, for He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” (Heb. xiii. 5.)

Thus God would teach His children to trust in Him as their GREAT SECURITY, and not in the uncertainty of riches. But the world has no faith in the care of a Living God, therefore must it have its faith in that which in its eyes is

most powerful to procure necessities and luxuries, to gratify lust and ambitions, to provide protection and honour; and what so mighty as MONEY?—*Hundreds*, THOUSANDS, MILLIONS! Oh, that the children of God had their eyes opened to see that THE “LOVE OF MONEY” is as incompatible with the worship and service of the temple of God as the most monstrous idol-worship of heathendom.

O, ye of whom as living stones the temple of God is built, see to it for His glory, whose dwelling place ye are, that Mammon usurps not the place in heart and life that belongs to God alone.

Thus it is that in this weighty Scripture the essential difference between the children of God and the world is insisted on, and the command authoritatively given, “Be not unequally yoked together.”

The mere fact that one is not a heathen, but a nominal Christian—a member of some Christian denomination, “having a form of godliness”—affords no ground for regarding them otherwise than simply as unbelievers if their life gives proof that their Christianity is only a form, and not in power.

It is shown in 2 Tim. iii. 1-5 that such would be the special characteristic of the ungodliness of the last days.

“Traitors, heady, high-minded lovers of pleasures *more than** lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;” then comes the separating command as plainly as in reference to Corinthian idolatry—“from such turn away.”

To act thus will surely bring reproach and opposition; bitter words like arrows will privily be shot at the godly—

* “More than” equal to “and not.” See same form of expression John iii. 19—“Rather than” equal to “and not.” And again Luke xviii. 14.

they will be called Pharisaic, and bigoted, and narrow-minded. But notwithstanding this, it is the mind of God, and happy is he who is of one mind with Him.

Even the very apostolic command we have been considering is prefaced by the words, "Be ye also enlarged." Enlarged to embrace all that is divine, but at the same time to leave no space for that which is not according to the will of God.

Only in the Lord.

I COR. VII. 29.

THE doctrine that it is impossible to know who are children of God, and who are not, and that we are not at liberty to form a judgment on the subject, practically obliterates such a passage as this from the page of Scripture.

When the children of Israel were about to enter the Land of Promise, they were warned very specially against forming alliances, or making marriages with the idolatrous nations of the land. The reason given is "for they will turn away thy son from following me." (See Deut. vii. 2-4.) It is sad but unquestionably true, that such is the necessary effect of "evil communications." So it was before the flood as recorded in Gen. vi. ; so again in the wilderness (Num. xxv. 1-3), and, not to multiply instances, of Solomon it is written "Even him did outlandish women cause to sin." (Neh. xiii. 26.)

Among the remnant of Israel that returned to Jerusalem after the Babylonish captivity—many fell into this snare, as it is written "We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land." (Ezra x. 2.) They repented, however, of this sin, having heard and trembled at the Word of the Lord, and the immediate fruit of their repentance was the putting away of the strange wives, and not only of them, but also of the children born of them. whose speech betrayed that they were not true Israelites. (See Neh. xiii. 24.)

Amongst the believers at Corinth the question evidently had arisen, what is to be done in the case of a husband or wife being converted to God, whilst the other remains unsaved? Are they to separate, or are they to remain together? The answer is plain. The believing one was *not* to seek separation, but rather the salvation of the other. The burden of separating, if it should take place was to remain entirely upon the unsaved one.

Then arose the question of the children, was it lawful to retain and acknowledge them? or should they be dealt with as in the days of Ezra? To set at rest all scruples upon this point the Apostle authoritatively declares that both the unbelieving husband or wife, and the children born of them are *relatively* sanctified. That is, they are by the Word of God set apart for the believing one, so that it is no sin, but, on the contrary, the responsibility of the believer to dwell with them, and seek their blessing.*

In the event of separation being desired by the unbelieving one, the wish was to be granted, but in that case, the believer was to remain *unmarried*—blessed earnest of the gracious purpose of God to grant in His own time, in answer to prayer and godliness, the salvation of the other.

The explicit instructions thus given in detail as to those married persons who might be converted is of itself evidence, even if there were no command, that the voluntary union in marriage of a believer with an unbeliever is not even contemplated in Scripture.

* This passage has been lamentably perverted from its obvious meaning in order to favour the human device of "infant baptism." But if the passage warrants the baptism of the unregenerate children, why not also of the unregenerate husband, seeing he also is thus relatively "sanctified." A similar use of the word sanctified is seen, as to food in 1 Tim. iv. 4, 5.

Moreover, there is the express command, "Only in the Lord," and again, "Be not unequally yoked together, believers with unbelievers."

Strange indeed it is, that in the face of so plain a command the children of God should not unfrequently be found marrying those who are unsaved.

Long prior to such a step, there cannot but have been departure in heart from the Lord. The conversation and intercourse that led to such a result could only have been of the carnal mind—"of the earth, earthly." Had heavenly things been the theme, no response would have been found in the heart of the worldling. Had Christ been the subject of conversation, would not the unsaved one have been dumb? Had faithful testimony been borne, the natural pride and enmity of the heart would soon have been manifested. Had the light been shining, it would soon have been found that the darkness had no communion with it.

The motives that led the Christian to such a step, however plausible, could only have been of the flesh. Some have even had the folly to say that "the Lord led them" in such a step, as if the Lord ever led in a path contrary to His own commands. Circumstances may indeed have been favourable—Satan will not fail to smooth the path to sin; but to be led by circumstances apart from the Word of God is to be certainly led wrong. God has given one infallible standard whereby to test every suggestion, whether of our own hearts or from others, and that is His written Word.

To be yoked with an unbeliever in this closest of all earthly ties, seen in the light of God's presence, can only be regarded as a terrible calamity.

It would be difficult indeed to conceive of the spiritually enlightened eye being so fearfully deluded as to perceive

any attractiveness in such a union, were it not that again and again the melancholy spectacle has been witnessed.

But little did such imagine the bitterness that would result. Often has it been experienced. The living yoked to the dead. The home that should have been filled with peace and gladness, darkened with discord and evil passions—a kind of living sepulchre.

The hearts that should have been fused into one, to be an altar of unhindered prayer and praise, alienated, if not at utter enmity, upon all that is dearest and best to the child of God.

The children that should have been a godly seed, brought up under the united vigilance of both parents in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, learning to side with the ungodly against the helpless Christian parent.

Every step of faith and separation to God disputed, opposed, forbidden, untill the crushed and downtrodden child of God succumbs to the pressure, and ceases even to be known as a believer.

Perhaps some reader may regard the picture as too darkly drawn. Satan may whisper, "It won't be so bad as that;" or, again, "Who knows but he may be converted?" Thus with plausible deceits will Satan seek to beguile the unwary. But the Word of God has declared, "The way of transgressors is hard;" "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways;" and many a broken-hearted witness could bear testimony to the truth of these Scriptures, and how fearfully they apply to the child of God who dares to marry an unbeliever.

Jehoshaphat.

PART I.

THE FRIENDSHIP OF THE WORLD.

2 CHRON. XVII.

THE earlier years of Jehoshaphat's reign were marked by much faithfulness to Jehovah, and consequent great prosperity. Herein is to be seen a specimen of the difference between the past and present dispensations. Faithfulness to the Lord *now* will set no one on high in the sight of the nations. On the contrary, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) Faithfulness brought the Lord Jesus to the Cross; nevertheless He had abundant assurance that His Father was with Him at every step, and in resurrection God has publicly set His seal upon that life and death of obedience.

So it is with those who follow in His steps. The world may judge their lives to have been an utter failure, but at the coming of the Lord and at His judgment-seat, it will be found that faithfulness to the Lord was after all the only path of success and prosperity.

That which brought Jehoshaphat riches and honour in abundance in this life, will bring the suffering saint of the present day "riches and honour in abundance" in the age to come.

It is written that Jehoshaphat "walked in the first ways of his father and of David (see margin), and sought not unto Baalim." Reference to the history of his father Asa will explain the allusion to his "first ways." His first ways were those of faith and obedience; latterly unbelief took possession of his heart, and he departed from the Lord, and died under the heavy chastening hand of God. He also walked in the ways of David, who, notwithstanding his many failures, was never at any time found to go after or to countenance another God. Like the needle in the compass, which, though for a time it may be deflected by external forces, yet finds no rest, but trembles back again to the pole, so David, howsoever he might for a time be turned aside, could never rest till with broken and contrite heart he returned to find his rest in God.

Such was Jehoshaphat. "He sought to the Lord God of his father, and walked in His commandments, and not after the doings of Israel: therefore the Lord stablished the kingdom in his hand.

Israel, the name here given throughout to the ten tribes who revolted from the house of David, had utterly apostatized from Jehovah. The godly remnant among them could have no fellowship with their ungodly doings. So it is written: "The Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem; for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priests' office unto the Lord, and he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made; and after them, out of all the tribes of Israel, such as set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel came to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord God of their fathers." (2 Chron. xi. 14-16.) This movement, of course, strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and more so when, in the days of Asa's prosperity,

“they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.” (2 Chron. xv. 9.)

This provoked the indignation of Baasha, King of Israel, so that he came up against Judah and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa, King of Judah. (xvi. 1.)

Thus Israel hardened itself in its apostacy, not only cleaving to its own humanly devised, or devil-devised, order of worship, but raising opposition as insurmountable as possible to all who would seek the Lord according to His own Word.

And such is yet the way of man's religion. Far more serious difficulties and stumbling-blocks are placed in the way of the true-hearted, by self-willed Israel than by Egyptians or Babylonians.

And this was the condition of things when Jehoshaphat began to reign : only as king after king arose in Israel, each was worse than the former, and Ahab who then reigned was worse than any who had preceded him. “And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, King of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal and worshipped him. And Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the Kings of Israel that were before him.” (1 King xvi. 31-33.)

Seeing that such was the character of Israel and of their king, it is not surprising that the godly Jehoshaphat is said to have “strengthened himself against Israel.” (2 Chron. xvii. 1.) Boldly he stood forth as a witness for Jehovah and His truth—strengthening not only the material defences of the nation, but what was far more important and to the glory of God, causing the people to be instructed in the Word of

the Lord. For this work he selected Princes, Levites, and Priests—for it was an honourable and responsible work, and chiefly pertained to the tribe of Levi and to the house of Aaron. (See Lev. x. 11., Deut. xxxiii. 10.) Moreover, “they had the book of the law of the Lord with them, and they went about throughout all the cities of Judah and taught the people.” (xvii. 9.) What a contrast all this presented to the miserable condition of Israel! “Without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law.” (2 Chron. xv. 3.) Hardly would one have supposed that any of the faithful could have remained among the apostate tribes; yet when Elijah stood forth as Jehovah’s witness at the very darkest hour, when he lamented that he alone was left a servant of the Lord, he received the remarkable rebuke: “Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him.” (1 Kings xix. 19.) There they were, indeed, known to the Lord, but alas! in what a miserable condition. Elijah did not even know of their existence. Obadiah, who “feared the Lord greatly,” had in Ahab’s court as little influence for God as Jonathan had in Saul’s, yet as Jonathan loved David, so Obadiah loved the servants of the Lord and hid the prophets by fifties in a cave and fed them with bread and water. God is not unrighteous to forget such work of faith and labour of love, but happier far were they who, in obedience to the Lord’s command, went up to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord and dwelt there.

The eighteenth chapter of 2 Chronicles opens with the startling announcement: “Now Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.”

Also in the short epitome of his life given in 1 Kings xxi. 41-50, after a few words of very high commendation it is written: **NEVERTHELESS** the high places were not taken

away, . . . and Jehoshaphat made peace with the King of Israel."

The great prosperity which Jehoshaphat enjoyed seems to have insensibly undermined his spiritual energies. It was a wise desire of the Apostle John for Gaius: "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." (3 John 2.) It takes a steady hand to carry a full cup, and few there are of the Lord's people who have been able to bear earthly prosperity without spiritual declension. Adversity often proves a blessing in disguise. Many are there of God's children who have had occasion to bless the hand that stripped them of their earthly treasures and led them to rejoice in the love unchangeable of the Mighty Giver rather than in the abundance of His gifts.

Scripture does not record the steps which led to this disastrous intimacy between Jehoshaphat and the house of Ahab. Once he regarded the King of Israel according to his true character, as an enemy against whom he and his kingdom must be strengthened; but now Satan's devices have so far succeeded that he makes peace with him, joins affinity with him, and visits him as his honoured guest on terms of intimate friendship.

Perhaps Jehoshaphat was somewhat influenced by Ahab's repentance at the terrible announcement of judgment which Elijah brought to him?

But whatever may have been the sincerity or duration of Ahab's penitence, he never turned from his false religion, or attempted a reformation in his kingdom. He remained ungodly still, a hater of the Lord, and utterly unfit to be a companion of Jehoshaphat.

But backsliding in heart is subtle in its workings and terrible in its effects. It creeps, by imperceptible degrees, like a chill paralysis over the soul, impairing its spiritual discern-

ment, and predisposing it to the influence of temptation which, would have been powerless to ensnare one who was walking in communion with God.

After the lapse of years this unhallowed friendship had so far developed that Jehoshaphat, doubtless at Ahab's invitation, went down to Samaria to pay what appears to have been a friendly visit. Ahab treated his royal guest with distinguished courtesy, and feasted luxuriously not only himself but his people, the retinue by which, as became his station, he was accompanied. All this was gratifying to the vanity of Jehoshaphat, who, ignorant of Satan's subtle wiles, saw not how he was being step by step ensnared. It is written: "The friendship of the world is enmity with God." (James v. 4.) The world will gladly be friends with the believer if he will consent to hide the light, to maintain silence as to its ungodliness, to treat it on equal terms, as if the mighty questions at issue of life and death eternal, of subjection to God and His Word or rebellion against His authority were only matters of opinion, not of sufficient consequence to stand in the way of friendship.

Alas! such friendship, common as it is, is dearly purchased, and this the history of Jehoshaphat abundantly illustrates.

Jehoshaphat was no less one of God's elect than Elijah; but he is feasted and honoured by the very man who trembled before Elijah, and greeted him with the mutterings of a guilty conscience, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" (1 Kings xxi. 20.)

And such is yet the difference of the reception which the world accords to the children of God. Some are welcomed and honoured. They pass current in respectable society. They can join in the so-called "innocent amusements," take their place at its feasts, appear on its platforms side by side

with the formalist, the sceptic, the Unitarian, the mammon worshipper, the winebibber, or even the man of notoriously impure life. They never speak of Christ, or introduce His word on such occasions. They know it would not be palatable ; it would be " out of season ; " it might " give offence," and they might not be invited again, and thus they might " lose opportunities of doing good."

Others again have sought to reach the consciences of men and to contend for the truth of God wherever they had opportunity, even like their Master, who deemed it no breach of courtesy to rebuke the Pharisee and laud the woman who was a sinner, though He was a guest at the Pharisee's table.

Such are regarded as enemies or fools. In either case the Ahabs of this world seek not their society, and are glad so long as they avoid their path. But whilst Ahab's "*friend*" is sorely rebuked and chastened, his "*enemy*" is translated without tasting death !

Jehoshaphat.

PART II.

THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL.

2 CHRON. XVIII.

THE visit of Jehoshaphat to Ahab afforded an excellent opportunity for the further development of Satan's scheme for ensnaring the servant of Jehovah.

With consummate ability and with experience of the weakness of humanity gathered during thousands of years, the arch enemy plots the overthrow of every faithful witness, the subversion of every true testimony for God that ever appears on the earth.

Scripture is filled with warnings as to his "subtlety," his "snares," his "wiles," his "devices," the "cunning craftiness," of his human instruments whereby they "lie in wait" to deceive, and such an inspired record as this of Jehoshaphat's life is given for the very purpose of forewarning the children of God, so that they may not be ignorant of His devices.

Being Ahab's guest, and receiving at his hands such courteous treatment, how could Jehoshaphat refuse without violating every claim of friendship, to aid him in his proposed expedition against the Syrians? Who does not know how hard it is even to appear unfriendly after having accepted of

kind and even costly hospitality? Moreover, Ahab's proposal was seemingly directed to the obtaining of a right and proper object. Ramoth Gilead, one of the cities of refuge given to Israel by the hand of Joshua, and pertaining to the tribe of Gad (Josh. xx. 8); was now in the hands of the Syrians. Three years had passed without any attempt on the part of Ahab to restore it to Israel, years in which there had been no war between Israel and the Syrians. (1 Kings xxii. 1.)

But now he seizes his opportunity to secure the help of Judah's King and Judah's forces, hoping thereby to obtain a great victory and to restore Ramoth to Israel. Jehoshaphat readily consented; and not only so, he even condescended, so far was he in bondage to the rules of kingly etiquette, to deny any difference that existed between them—between the two tribes that adhered to God's order of worship, and the ten that had apostatized saying, "I am as thou art and my people as thy people: and we will be with thee in the war."

But it was a hasty promise. God had not been consulted, surrounding circumstances determined the answer; to offend his munificent host was an impossibility to the courtly Jehoshaphat, hence truth is compromised, if not sacrificed, and a pledge given which was soon to bear bitter fruit.

And are not such circumstances matters of every day occurrence in the experience of Christians. Like mariners that have drifted far from their course, in vain they consult their chart; it was not contemplated that they should go so far astray, and the region they are sailing in is not marked down. They are "walking in darkness," and know not whither they are going, they seem to be outside the sphere of God's instructions. Scripture gives no directions for the circumstances they are in for it does not contemplate a child of God being there.

Blessed be God, even then He does not desert His own elect, but commonly by the dealings of His providence which ever waits upon the counsels of His grace, He drives the wanderer, weary and broken-hearted back to his starting point, there humbled and self-judged to know the grace that prevents and restores.

Jehoshaphat's pledge of help to Ahab had not long been given until conscience began to work, and the man of God began to feel the deep uneasiness known only to those who have experienced such an awakening from soul-slumber, to find that their feet are already in the net; that they have fallen into the snare laid for them by the Wicked One.

"And Jehoshaphat said unto the King of Israel, 'Inquire I pray thee at the Word of the Lord to-day.'" A strange proposal to make to one who had all his life systematically set aside and violated the Word of the Lord.

Better had it been for Jehoshaphat to have enquired himself ere he gave his consent, but in the haste and energy of his own perverse will, he could not wait on the Lord.

It is not until the heart has learned to say "Lord, what wilt THOU have me to do?" that there can be any real waiting on God for the knowledge of His will.

Often is the prayer uttered "teach me THY way O Lord," when the deceitful heart has purposed, or it may be *pledged itself* to ITS OWN way. Thus is the Spirit grieved and the conscience defiled and "the backslider in heart" goes on to the bitter punishment of being "filled with his own ways."

Ahab readily consented to this most reasonable request. The veriest worldling can be religious when it suits his own purpose. If the child of God will withdraw his testimony to be friends with the world, the world will also assume "a form of godliness" in order not to scandalize the believer.

No less than FOUR HUNDRED PROPHETS speedily respond to the call of Ahab.

Whoever they were, they understood that it was their business to speak that which should gratify the King of Israel. It is significant that in verses 21 and 22 they are called Ahab's prophets. A prophet of Jehovah could never be so named. Moreover, as it became evident, they were "false prophets," incurring the awful curse of those who dare to speak in Jehovah's name that which He has not spoken. (Ezek. xiii., Jer. xxix. 23.) This peculiar form of iniquity may be less conspicuous in modern times. Most men are too keenly alive to the damage their reputation would receive, through the non-fulfilment of a prediction, to hazard anything very definite in this way. But abundantly is there to be found on every hand the species of counterfeit, against which the Scriptures that depict the apostacy of the present age, give special warning. "But there were false prophets also among the people even as there shall be FALSE TEACHERS among you who privily shall bring in damnable heresies." (2 Pet. ii. 1.)

It is written in Eph. iv. that the Lord Jesus as the ascended Head of the body, the church, received and bestowed gifts for the edification of the same amongst which are "pastors and teachers." Such a one was Timothy, a pastor indeed, though comparatively young in years, a teacher well acquainted with the Scriptures, and one who also did the work of an Evangelist. He is exhorted to "*preach the word*" "in season, out of season;"—and why? "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth and shall be turned unto fables." (2 Tim. iv. 1-4.)

And in very truth the doctrines of God's Word are not palatable to carnal minds. Little is it to be wondered at that those who have but the "form of godliness," should turn away from the teaching that is of God, and from the teachers that are Christ's gifts to His church, and find teachers for themselves who will always cater like Ahab's prophets to the itching ears of those whose servants they are, and corrupt and mangle the glorious truth of God and leaven it with lies until it loses all power, over the consciences of men, and leaves them to sleep undisturbed the sleep of death.

For those who can with greatest plausibility explain away the truths of Christianity that are most obnoxious to the carnal mind, the highest premium will be paid. The popular teacher of the Nineteenth century is he who denies the necessity of regeneration, maintaining that human nature is good and requires only to be educated; that "atonement by blood" is a doctrine borrowed from "the bloody shambles of heathendom;" that everlasting punishment is a horror of the dark ages, not for a moment to be named in view of the more modern light as to the mercy of God; that separation from the world, confession of the name of Jesus, and personal effort to awaken and save the ungodly, is "asceticism" and "cant!"

These and a multitude of other soul-deluding doctrines are rapidly becoming the *sine qua non* of popularity, especially among the educated and influential of society. And such damnable heresies are eating like a canker into the minds even of true believers; one after another who for a time ran well is falling before the torrent of error, and making shipwreck of the faith, "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His; and let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." (2 Tim. ii. 19.)

Jehoshaphat did not recognise the "Shepherd of Israel's" voice in the oracular response of Ahab's four hundred. In his inmost soul he knew they were AHAB's prophets and not THE LORD'S. Therefore he asks "is there not a prophet of Jehovah besides that, we might enquire of him?" Alas! for poor Jehoshaphat! How his heart now thirsts for the true testimony of God; yet politeness forbids him to say that these were not Jehovah's prophets, therefore he delicately covers his conviction with the word "*besides*."

To have plainly declared that these were NOT servants of the Lord would have "*given offence*," but to ask for *yet another*, like many another compromise, smoothed the way and hid the truth.

There was indeed another; Michaiah the son of Imla; but as Ahab frankly confessed, "I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil." Evidently Jehoshaphat had some knowledge of Michaiah; hence the faint rebuke, "let not the King say so."

And are there not still those who are hated by the false teachers and rulers of christendom because they testify of this age of boasting and self-sufficiency, that its end is destruction; that schemes for producing a paradise on earth, whether religious or educational, social or scientific, commercial or political, must surely end in "confusion worse confounded." True, they are in a small minority, but having the Word of the Lord for what they testify, they can afford to be bold as lions. Nor was there wanting to Jehovah's faithful servant, the kindly meant though evil advice. "Let thy word therefore, I pray thee be like one of theirs, and speak thou good." As much as to say, "now that you are to have one other opportunity of publicly declaring the Word of the Lord, don't persist in running counter to popular opinion; for once, refrain from marring

the harmony of the august occasion." But Michaiah had no mind to sacrifice faithfulness for popularity, or to forbear declaring the whole counsel of God be it ever so unpalatable. Like the Apostle Paul in later times, his boast was, "I have kept nothing back that was profitable for you." (Acts xx. 20-27.)

Open doors for testimony are indeed to be valued; large audiences and a wide sphere of usefulness are not to be despised by the evangelist and the teacher; but he who obtains these through even an implied, if not an expressed, compact to keep back any part of the testimony of God, be it "baptism," or "the Lord's Supper," or "separation from the world," or "the coming of the Lord," will be tested at the judgment seat of Christ. Then it will be found that not apparent success but FAITHFULNESS wins the prize. "If a man strive for masteries, yet is he *not crowned*, except he strive lawfully." (2 Tim. ii. 5.) 'The door that Christ opens "*no man can shut*." (Rev. iii. 8.) The door that is closed because of His word cannot be one which He has opened.

Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, seems to have been the most prominent amongst Ahab's prophets. Cunningly he simulates the manner of Jehovah's messengers, makes him "horns of iron," and with these declares the prosperity of Ahab and the destruction of Syria. Before the two kings, each on his throne at the gate of Samaria, prophesy the four hundred. At last comes Michaiah, and, probably in a sort of divine irony such as Elijah used towards the prophets of Baal, he at first chimes in with the rest. There must have been something in his manner or tone that told them this was not his real message, and Ahab, with assumed zeal for the knowledge of God's will—assumed for the occasion to secure the confidence of Jehoshaphat—exclaims, "How many times shall I adjure thee that thou speak nothing but the truth in the name of the Lord."

Then broke forth Jehovah's burden from the lips of His faithful servant—a prophecy remarkable in the extreme for the almost unparalleled way in which it withdraws the veil from the courts of heaven, and opens the secrets of the workings of the powers of darkness, and the permission given them by the Lord.

To enter upon the details of such a prophecy is beyond the limits of a paper like this ; but, in passing, it may be well to direct attention to some of the lessons to be learned from it.

1st. How completely Ahab, the apostate, was instigated by Satan to his own destruction, though he doubtless imagined he was entering upon a righteous warfare.

2nd. What apt tools for Satan to work by are the prophets who prophesy lies. He can fill their mouths with lying words at his own pleasure. (Compare 1 Tim. iv. 1-2.)

3rd. How terrible the fact that *God permits* Satan thus to lead captive at his will his own dupes ; nevertheless, comparing this with Job ii. 6, it is comforting to see that his power for mischief is limited by a mightier than he.

The prophecy of Michaiah, as the unvarnished truth always does, drew forth the ire of Ahab, who ordered him at once to prison, and the impudence of Zedekiah, who smote him upon the cheek.

But, well though Jehoshaphat knew that this was the true word of the Lord, he was now so thoroughly in the snare of the devil that he could neither rebuke the king nor the false prophet.

Like "an ox to the slaughter or a fool to the correction of the stocks" (Prov. vii. 22), so poor Jehoshaphat, despite the warning voice of God and the mutterings of a troubled conscience, sets out in league with ungodly Ahab upon his disastrous enterprise.

Jehoshaphat.

PART III.

THE FEET PLUCKED OUT OF THE NET.

THE friendship of Ahab was soon put to a severe test, and proved to be what all else is which is not of God—shallow and worthless.

The prophecy of Micaiah, doubtless had its effect in causing him to use extraordinary caution. What a sop it would have been to his uneasy conscience, could he only return in peace, and falsify the prediction of the prophet! Ahab therefore, disguised himself, but Jehoshaphat went to the battle in his royal robes, and being supposed by the enemy to be the King of Israel, he was singled out for special attack, and soon was surrounded and in jeopardy.

It has been said that "man's extremity is God's opportunity." Often at least it is so, and this occasion proved to be a notable instance. Being "at his wit's end" Jehoshaphat "cried out." It was an appeal to the living God; it was the cry of a convicted yet confiding backslider, it was a cry for help when every refuge failed.

Doubtless, Jehoshaphat was familiar with the sacred songs of his forefather David—and it may be that even in the midst of his alarm he remembered "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Certainly

Jehoshaphat was given in a very remarkable way to prove the truth of the Psalm.

The ear of Jehovah was open to his cry, and His arm was quickly stretched out for his defence. "Jehoshaphat cried out and the Lord helped him, and God moved them to depart from him."

From Psalm cvii. it is evident that the Lord deals oftentimes after this manner with His people. In its main features Jehoshaphat's is no uncommon experience.

God often allows the self-willed backslider to go on till his own backslidings rebuke him. To allow him to prove by bitter experience the folly of his way. But blessed be His name—our faithful God is near at hand, as ready to hear the cry of those who have brought the trouble on themselves by their disobedience and stubbornness, as of those who are sufferers for righteousness' sake.

The self-willed child may insist on walking alone, and refuse the proffered aid of the parent's hand. But where is the parent who would not hasten to relieve, when at length the child has fallen down, and in its suffering cries for help?

And God has a Father's heart—"like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

Therefore, let the child of God be encouraged to seek the Lord at all times. Let not Satan get advantage further still through his lying suggestion so often insinuated—"You need not seek the Lord now, He will not hear or succour, you have only yourself to blame, you must find your own way out of your troubles." Nay, even though one's own heart and conscience be his worst accuser and condemner, still like Jehoshaphat, or David, or Jacob, or multitudes of others who have fallen into Satan's snares, let your cry be to the Lord, for He it is, and He alone who can pluck your entangled feet out of the net. See Ps. xxv. 15.

"O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help." (Hos. xiii. 9.) See also 1 Sam. xii. 20-25.

Ahab's disguise failed to accomplish its end. Vain are the wisdom, foresight, and prudence of man if he is found rushing in opposition to the counsels of God. The arrow shot at a venture finds out the joint of the harness. What a sight is here obtained of the overruling providence of God! To faith there is no such thing as "chance." The Scriptures abundantly shew how the most minute as well as the greatest circumstances are under the immediate disposal of God. "All things are for your sakes." The death of a sparrow, the falling of a hair, the guiding of an arrow from the bow, or a pebble from a sling, these and such like means are used by Almighty God for the working out of His sovereign will.

Hence the importance of seeking and obtaining divine help and guidance in all things, and at all times. Nothing is too trifling to bring to God, for eternal issues may hang upon the smallest circumstance. Some balances are so finely adjusted that less than a hair will turn the scale—such are the turning points in life; a word, a look, may mould a motive, or determine a purpose, the issues of which may never end.

Thus ignominiously ended the life of Ahab; whilst Jehoshaphat humbled, and delivered like a bird from the fowler's snare, returned in peace to Jerusalem.

But, humbling and breaking down, important as they are do not accomplish restoration to the Lord apart from the Word of God. Providence may be used by God as a plough to break up the fallow ground, and prepare the soil for the reception of the seed, but the Word of the Lord must be brought to bear upon the broken heart and quickened conscience, ere the soul that has strayed from Him can be happy in His presence.

So David prayed, "make me to hear joy and gladness that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice." So with Peter, there was the look of the Lord Jesus which broke his heart, so that he "went out and wept bitterly;" but, after that, there was the fire upon the sea shore, and the fish, and the dinner prepared, and the loving invitation come and dine, that Peter's heart being quite at rest, and assured of the unchanged love of his Lord might the better be prepared for the searching and thrice repeated rebuke, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me."

After this manner it was that the Lord dealt with Jehoshaphat. Jehu, the son of Hanani, the seer, went out to meet him, and said to the king "shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate Jehovah?"

The whole of Jehoshaphat's sinful course is thus at a stroke laid bare and exposed to his view. The "friendship of the world" had been his snare, and now that the hand of the Lord had set him free, the voice of the Lord appeals to his conscience and his heart.

That the appeal was not in vain. and that the painful discipline had done its intended work at least for a time, is evident by what is recorded subsequently of the life of Jehoshaphat.

He went forth amongst the people from Beersheba to Mount Ephraim and personally sought to restore them to the Lord God of their fathers. In short he became an itinerant preacher of the truth of God.

His exhortations also to the judges whom he set over the people, show how the fear of the Lord was before his eyes.

Chapter xx. then follows, giving further evidence of the reality of the restoration of soul that had taken place.

A mighty combination of foes had come up against him with forces for which even the armies of Judah were no

match ; but Jehoshaphat has learned now the lesson of the Proverb, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding." He does not now first go forth to the conflict, and then consult the Lord, but with upright heart he first seeks counsel and help of the Lord, and then in assured confidence that Jehovah of Hosts is with him, he goes to the battle.

It was a beautiful sight. There stood the king in the midst of the congregation before the Lord—there were "their little ones, their wives, and their children." Prayer was made to the Lord, and their helplessness, and their ignorance confessed. "O our God wilt thou not judge them ? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us, neither know we what to do ; but our eyes are upon Thee."

Could Jehovah refrain from responding to such an appeal? Verily NO. At once the Spirit of the Lord, chosing His own instrument whereby to speak, declared to them words of comfort and support. "Thus saith the Lord, be not afraid or dismayed because of this great multitude ; for the battle is not yours but God's."

In the morning, according to the word of the Lord, they went forth, but yet again the faithful zealous voice of the king is heard with a further word of exhortation. "Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem. Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established ; believe His prophets so shall ye prosper." It is like the parting exhortation of the Apostle, "I commend you to God and to the word of His grace."

To God, the only source of help and blessing, and to His Word the only means by which His mind is revealed to man.

It is remarkable also that he sent singers in the front of the army to praise the Lord ; this was faith indeed, that

could so count upon God to fulfil His word that it was not deemed rashness, but humility to praise the Lord for victory before the battle had commenced.

Nor was faith like this ever disappointed. The battle was the Lord's, and faith could therefore reckon that victory was sure.

"Then they returned every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehoshaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the Lord had made them to rejoice over their enemies."

They went forth from the House of the Lord, and they returned to the House of the Lord. They began in holy fear, and ended in triumphant praise. It was God first, and God last. He was acknowledged in all their ways, and consequently all their steps were guided.

Oh the blessedness of thus hanging upon God! The holy calm, the peaceful confidence, the assured victory.

May the precious lesson be deeply impressed on the heart of every child of God.

Jehoshaphat.

PART IV.

THE SHIPS BROKEN.

BEING delivered from all his enemies, it is written "So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet; for his God gave him rest round about." (2 Chron. xx. 30.)

Often, the Christian is called to pass through periods of trouble, and conflict and sorrow. These may be the fruit of his own evil ways, or they may be the Father's chastisement on account of disobedience, or they may be the discipline, preventive and salutary, that God only sees to be needful. Such periods may be short, or they may be protracted and severe, but they are not uncommonly followed by a time of deliverance and comparative rest and quiet. It is like the wells and the palm trees of Elam that followed the bitterness of Marah.

But such times, pleasant though they be, are not without their accompanying dangers and snares.

To one who is but slightly acquainted with the deceitfulness of his own heart, it may be surprising in the extreme that the brightest records of zeal and devotedness to the Lord, on the page of Scripture, are so frequently followed by backsliding, disobedience, and sin.

These divine memoirs, though short, are faithful and graphic. The Word of the Lord is in all respects **THE**

TRUTH. Both by its doctrinal and its historical records it exposes the truth as to the character of man, no less than it reveals the truth concerning the character of God. Such is not the way of man.

Sad as it is, nevertheless it is written for our instruction and warning, that even Jehoshaphat entirely forgot the lesson he learned in his time of trouble. "After this did Jehoshaphat, King of Judah join himself with Ahaziah, King of Israel, who did very wickedly, and he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Eziongaber."

The son of Ahab, who reigned in his stead seems to have followed wholly in the evil ways of his father. It does not appear that anything in his character or actions afforded Jehoshaphat ground for resuming the friendship with that ungodly house, which by both His providence and His word the Lord had so signally rebuked.

Nevertheless, the snare is again spread, and again the unwary Jehoshaphat is taken therein.

It was only a commercial speculation; it was only a joint interest in a shipping adventure. What could be more harmless than thus to divide the responsibility, to share the profit or the loss?

Moreover, it was a transaction for which high precedent might be pleaded, for it is written "King Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongaber . . . and Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen, that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon, and they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, &c." (1 Kings ix. 26-28.)

But in the things of God nothing is more necessary than to "try things that differ." (Phil. i. 10. See margin.) Circumstances may at first sight appear very similar, and yet, if closely examined, there may be a difference, which to

spiritual discernment involves the application of totally diverse principles.

When Solomon availed himself of the skill of Hiram's servants, whether for hewing wood or for navigation, he was in no way compromised as the Lord's servant. Hiram, though a Gentile king, was among the many kings who owned the dominion of Solomon, and the Lordship of Solomon's God. Moreover Solomon did not enter into a partnership agreement with Hiram, but dealt with him rather as a tributary king, paying both him and his servants liberally for their work. In connection with this read carefully 1 Kings iv. 29 to v. 12, and it will at once appear how very different was the footing upon which Hiram stood to Solomon from that upon which Ahaziah stood to Jehoshaphat.

To transact business with the ungodly men of this world, without respect to moral character or creed, is an absolute necessity. This the Word of the Lord fully recognises. See 1 Cor. v. 10 where it is clearly allowed that otherwise "ye must needs go out of the world." Such is not God's intention. He would have His people to be "IN" it, though they are manifestly not "OF" it. Yea, the children of God have need to be in close contact with the world, and thus as salt penetrates the meat which it preserves from corruption, so do they if their savour be not lost, even in the closest relationships which have the divine sanction, bring to bear upon the world and its corruption a salutary and preserving influence.

But very different is the principle involved when a business partnership is entered into. A Christian may buy from an ungodly man, and so transact the business that he is not at any point hindered from bearing a faithful testimony, if God so wills it, against the ungodliness of the man who sells to him.

In like manner he may sell to the ungodly, and be in no way answerable for, or privy to, his ungodly ways. Bargains, contracts, agreements of very various kinds may thus be entered into, and fulfilled with clean hands and a good conscience.

But whenever a mutual agreement is entered into of the nature of a partnership, wherein the profit or loss is shared in proportions large or small, at once there is that element introduced which commits the one to the action of the other. It is most aptly expressed by the Scripture figure of the yoke. Two animals yoked together must go in the same direction. The stronger will prevail. The other may resist or kick, but is nevertheless surely committed to the action of his fellow.

If the evil ways of an ungodly partner result in profit, how can the Christian share that profit, and yet be clear in his protest against the evil? If they result in loss, can such loss be regarded otherwise than as the Lord's rebuke and chastisement?

In Jehoshaphat's case the ships were wrecked before they left the port. A faithful God refused to prosper a transaction that would surely have ended in the further backsliding of His child. And many a time has the child of God who so erred, reaped the same bitter fruit. Rarely does such a business partnership prosper; the instances are innumerable in which God has delivered his child from the snare, through the wreck of all his commercial prospects.

But this touches upon the practice of holding shares in any of the world's companies. In principle, what is the difference between holding one share among a thousand, and holding one share of two? or what difference is there in principle between a partnership where liability is limited, and one in which the liability is unlimited?

Some may plead that a shareholder is not responsible for the management of the company in which he invests. This may be true : but is it the business of one of the children of light to become a partner in anything concerning the management of which he is in ignorance, and without the power to control it?

Would the Lord not rather teach His people by the story of Jehoshaphat to maintain their Nazarite separation to Himself with clean hands and a pure conscience.*

But blindness on this subject, among the children of God, is the rule rather than the exception, and it is to be feared, the cause of the blindness is that love of money which is a root of all evil, and prefers a 12 per cent dividend, with eyes closed to the divine instructions, to a 4½ per cent with an enlightened conscience.

The principle of "the yoke," or that which binds one to the action of another, is no less evident in the great and powerful institution of Trades Unions. There the subjection of servants to masters so strongly inculcated in Scripture is totally set aside. The employers may be ever so honourable, or even beloved and respected by some of their servants, but if the "Union" says "strike"—then the unionist tradesman,

* The nation has recently been startled by the failure of the City of Glasgow Bank. Many Christians are among the suffering shareholders. To them and to all, the loss may be a mighty blessing if they be exercised thereby. (See Heb. xii. 11.) It is referred to here only as an illustration of the principle in question. So long as it seemed to prosper, and 12 per cent interest was forthcoming, the Christian shareholder, as well as the ungodly, was content to remain in ignorance as to how the profits were made, happy if only they "sold out" *in time*, and pocketed through fraud, and at the expense of the rest, their principle as well as their interest ! Better surely it is to be one of the losers, than one of the gainers of such truly filthy lucre.

When will the people of God awaken to an understanding of the principle that to be *ignorant* is not to be *innocent*. (See Lev. v. 17.)

even though he be a Christian, must disobey the Lord, set aside His plain command, and though it bring his wife and family to privation and beggary, he must do the will of "the union" rather than the will of God.

Alas, it is an evil age—Satan is indeed its god and its prince, and so terribly are the principles of evil and apostacy developed, that already it seems as if the snare were settling down which shall ripen into that tyranny under which none shall be permitted to buy or sell without the mark of the beast.

Yet again did the persistent adversary attempt to ensnare Jehoshaphat through the house of Ahab. "Then, said Ahaziah, the son of Ahab, unto Jehoshaphat, Let my servants go with thy servants in the ships; but Jehoshaphat would not." (1 Kings xxii. 4-9.)

Oh the wiles of Satan—how subtle, and, when once seen and exposed, how mean and contemptible. If he cannot ensnare Jehoshaphat, he will seek to ensnare his servants! But the chastisement and the rebuke had once more accomplished the restoration of Jehoshaphat's soul, and now he can boldly refuse.

Happy is he who can say NO to Satan's suggestions, even though it be an offence to the world.

Nor even here does the adversary rest. Still he watched his opportunity. Still he sought to work upon the weakness in Jehoshaphat's character. And so, in 2 Kings iii. 7, he is seen again consenting to go against the Moabites in company with Jehoram, King of Israel.

Thus ends the record of Jehoshaphat's life, but solemn and searching is the fact that the fruit of his life-long entanglement with the house of Ahab only developed fully after Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers. "Jehoram, his son, reigned in his stead . . . and he walked in the ways of the Kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab, for he had

the daughter of Ahab to wife, and he wrought that which was evil in the sight of the Lord." (2 Chron. xxi. 1-6.)

Thus Satan gained his point, though Jehoshaphat was delivered. Thus actions may bear bitter fruit though years may pass, and the sowing time be long forgotten. Let Christian parents thus be warned, lest their sowing to the flesh result in a crop of corruption to be reaped and sorrowed over in their offspring, if not in themselves.

What Amusements are Innocent?

IF any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17).

Being "in Christ," the believer has passed out of the old creation, where all is marred through sin, and under the power of Satan, into the new creation, where Christ is "all and in all" (Col. iii. 11), where "all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ."

Once we were alienated and enemies in our minds even as others who know not God; but in the Cross of Christ we have seen that God has loved us even when we were enemies—has put away our sins through the shedding of that precious blood. His presence is no longer a dread to us—we draw near with confidence and find our peace and joy in being consciously near to Him whom formerly we should have shunned. Once like Adam among the trees, we hid FROM God, now we hide IN Him.

Alienated from God, describes the natural condition of our souls. Reconciled to God is the condition into which grace has introduced us.

Being then "risen with Christ," and united to Him as members of His body, partakers of His life, as it is written "for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," we are exhorted to "seek those things which are above,

where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God " (see Col. iii. 1-4). Our place and portion are there where He is, not on the earth. We are called to fellowship with Him (1 Cor. i. 9), both in His sufferings here and in His glory hereafter, being heirs of God and "joint heirs with Christ." His Father is our Father, and His God our God (John xx. 17); His home is our home (John xiv. 2); His glory our glory (John xvii. 22); His joy our joy (John xv. 11); His peace our peace (John xiv. 27); His inheritance our inheritance (Eph. i. 11). We are eternally bound up together—*one* in the councils of God, as the head and the members are one; *one* in the heart of Christ, as the husband and the wife are one (see John xvii. 21-23, and Eph. v. 31, 32).

Oh teach us, Lord, to know and own this wondrous mystery,
That Thou with us art truly one, and we are one with Thee.

To understand this, to know it in our inmost souls, would settle many a question which, looked at from any other stand-point, is open for two opinions. Whatever is inconsistent with this high and holy fellowship of the Son of God is to be at once rejected as beneath the dignity and calling of the Christian.

That such ought to be the habitual character of the Christian's life is evident from such a Scripture as Col. iii. 16, 17,—“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” This is not let a few minutes in the morning be spent over it, and no more heed given to it during the day—rather is it to have the mind continually occupied with the Word, deriving from it our counsel and comfort, our strength and our song. Surely not less ought we to be occupied with the Scriptures than Israel of old, to whom it was commanded—“These words . . . shall be in thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when

thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." (Deut. vi. 6, 7.) But modern infidelity, under the guise of reverence for God, has banished the Word from ordinary intercourse, on the plea of its being too sacred to be the subject of general conversation. Be not deceived; this is only one of the many specious falsehoods of the "father of lies." It is contrary to the express command of Him who said—"thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way."

It is to be the first thing in the morning and the last at night, "when thou liest down and when thou risest up." It is to be the subject after work is done, when sitting in the house, the Christian's "relaxation" and delight, and the subject of the most diligent parental instruction.

One would think now-a-days that there was a special command to parents to teach their children diligently "music and dancing"—so many hours per day are they kept strumming on the piano—and scarce as many minutes devoted to the teaching of the Word of God. Is it to be marvelled at that the youth of the present day grow up vain, self-willed, and lovers of pleasures, if the plain instructions of God have so little place in the arrangements of the household? Is it any wonder the children be "disobedient to parents," when parents are disobedient to God?

Then in Col. iii. 16 we find the sort of songs that befit the Christian. Not comic songs, or love songs, or patriotic songs, but "spiritual songs." We have a "NEW song," which is in harmony with the "NEW creation," where "all is of God," and "Christ is all." Songs are ours which jar not with the conscious presence of God. They are the offspring of "grace in the heart," and are to be sung "to the Lord."

Then passing from the thoughts of the heart, the conversation, and the songs, there is the comprehensive instruction, "and whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him."

I do not suppose this means that a formula of the name of Jesus is to be pronounced over every act, but rather that as we are one with Him, and identified with Him and He with us, we are to be found doing nothing that is inconsistent with the character and honour of that name.

Thus the world's idea of secular and religious, or that which relates to God and that from which God is excluded, has no place in the new creation; to the believer the thought is abolished—Christ to him is "all and in all." Thus, even servants at their ordinary vocation, are exhorted to act "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." (Eph. vi. 5, 6.)

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." This should be the habit of our life—a life spent in the conscious presence of God. The Word to Abraham was "Walk before Me." That is, do nothing that you cannot do in His presence and under His eye. "I have set the Lord always before me, because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." Before, behind, above, within is God. Joy outside of the presence of God is the world's joy. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and sought to make life happy without God, by his inventions, arts, and sciences, music, and pleasures. Such is the way of the world yet.

When Moses was upon the mount with God, Israel forgot both Moses and God. They made a calf of gold and feasted, and danced, and worshipped it. Yet in 1 Cor. x. 7, where this is alluded to as a warning against idolatry, nothing is said of

the calf or the worship of it, but "as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

Here is the very essence of idolatry—feasting and playing, away from the realised presence of God.

And such are all the world's feasts, and balls, and parties; and yet some Christians will go to such, and defend it by saying "Did not Christ go to the marriage of Cana? Did He not go to dine at the house of the Pharisees?"

Truly He did; but wherefore did He go? At the marriage "He manifested His Glory," and at the feasts of the Pharisees, no rules of etiquette prevented Him from speaking faithfully to the consciences of all present. If at a feast, He was there for God—not hiding the light and going in with folly, but shining forth and rebuking hypocrisy and pride.

Young believer, if you have faith to go **THUS**, then go, and God be with you; but if not, then stay away.

No amusement is more common, or more generally indulged in by those who are the Lord's, than what in Eph. v. 4, is termed "foolish talking and jesting." It is the habit of the old man to do so. It is the very element of the carnal mind, and for the unconverted, its charm is, that whilst it is carried on, God is thoroughly forgotten. But for the children of God it is declared to be "not convenient," or "not fit," and is distinctly forbidden by God to the Christian, as lying, or stealing, or any other sin.

Not fit for one whose eye is upon the unseen and the eternal. Not fit for one who is walking amidst a crooked and perverse generation; to whom he is called to be a witness of grace and of judgment. Not fit for one whose body is the temple of God, in whom dwells the Spirit of God.

Often is an address listened to, on the whole instructive and edifying, in the course of which there may have been

some light or satirical remark into which the speaker was betrayed—an excrescence that ought to pass unobserved. But how is it in too many cases? All that was profitable is buried and soon forgotten; but the one obnoxious expression, the fleshly intruder, is on every one's lips—reported, quoted, laughed over, added to, and long remembered.

Ought such things to be among saints? Is there not rather the oft-repeated exhortation to sobriety—a sobriety that is the very opposite of the levity that is so common, especially among the young, and which is therefore specially inculcated upon the young. See the instructions in Titus ii. 4-6 to both “Young women” and “Young men.”

The Greek word most frequently used means literally “right-minded,” in opposition to the erring mind of a fool or insane person.

See Mark v. 15, where it is the direct and immediate result of salvation. 2 Tim. i. 7, where it is an attribute of the Spirit which is given to all who believe; and 1 Peter iv. 7—“But the end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober (or right-minded), and watch unto prayer.”

In several passages, sobriety is inculcated as befitting such as are waiting for the coming of the Lord.

See 1 Peter i. 13—“Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind; be SOBER, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

1 Thes. v. 6, 8—“Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be SOBER.”

2 Peter iii. 11—“Seeing, then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be, in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.”

And again, the same habit of mind is urged in view of the adversary who besets our path—“Be sober, be vigilant,

because your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." (1 Peter v. 8.)

"See then that ye walk circumspectly," that is accurately or strictly, as one crossing a stream on stepping-stones; "not as fools, but as wise redeeming the time, wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. v. 15-17). God here contends for economy of time. Have you a servant, and have you not a will as to what that servant shall do, and how he shall occupy his time most profitably for his master; even so God has His will concerning us for every day, and if you wish to live so as to have good profits at the balance which is to be made up before the judgment-seat of Christ, give diligence to understand what is the will of God, and do it.

Specially, as to games, I would only make a few general observations.

I do not speak at all with reference to the unsaved. They will have their games and their pleasures apart from God. I speak exclusively for those who have been "born again;" who know God as their Father in Christ Jesus and who consequently ought to cherish one desire above all others, viz., to *please* Him. And (1) all games or amusements that bring the Christian into fellowship or companionship with the ungodly are unfit for the child of God. It is written, "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." (Prov. xiii. 20.) But is it possible for a Christian to be destroyed? Yes, indeed it is. "Evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. xv. 33); and a child of God may soon descend so far to the level of the worldly companion as to be brought under the chastisement of the Lord, even to being delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh. Even this by God's grace is in order that "the Spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;" but meantime it is "destruction."

I know at this moment several professedly converted young women, who, through companionship first, have become yoked in marriage to the unsaved. Some are already reaping the fruit of thus sowing to the flesh, and as regards joy and peace, worship and ministry, testimony and usefulness, they are *destroyed*. "I am a companion of all them that fear Thee and of them that keep Thy precepts." (Ps. cxix. 63.)

2. All games of chance are essentially evil. We are introduced by grace into the knowledge of God, not a God far off, who takes no immediate interest in His creatures, but a God who is intimately acquainted with, and wisely disposing by His providence the minutest events of life, to the falling of a sparrow, and the numbering of the hairs of our head. To us, then, there is no such thing as "chance."

The tossing of a penny is either a solemn appeal to God, or it is an act of open infidelity.

Let all such trifling be abolished in the ways of those who are in this world as the witnesses of the living God.

3. All games of emulation are directly opposed to the Spirit of Christ. Their very essence is, who shall be uppermost.

We find emulation mentioned in Gal. v. 20 as one of the works of the flesh, and nearly allied to wrath; and experience surely proves how closely the one often follows upon the other, especially when those indulging in it in any form are the children of God. For, while it lasts, they are consciously away from God; and if the Christian be in this condition, he is more the object of the malice of Satan by far than the worldling. Let us, therefore, watch and be sober, for the adversary ever watches to avail himself of the unguarded moment.

What games there are which would not involve the believer in one or other of these three evils I know not. "No man, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, 'the old is better.'" Young believer, beware of drinking the "old wine," it will spoil your appetite for the new wine of the Kingdom. If ever there arise in your heart the longing for the joys you have left behind—for the pleasures that gratified you when you were "in the flesh"—know that it is the tempter's voice, and if yielded to he will rob you of your joy in the Lord—of your delight in His Word—of your relish for heavenly things.

Be it ours to say with our Lord—"Thou wilt shew me the path of life, in Thy presence there is fulness of joy." "How excellent is Thy loving kindness, O God, therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings, they shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures."

Oh the joy of seeing repenting sinners turning in faith to Christ! This is joy worth having. It is fellowship in the joy of God. It is drinking of the river of His pleasures.

And there is the joy of the communion of saints, and the joy of ministering to the afflicted—spiritual joys that leave no pang behind. Surely, if one be living for God, there will be no room for the empty amusements wherewith the world is seeking to kill the time that is hurrying it to destruction, and to shut out the thought of God and of eternity.

The Christian's Relation to the World's Government.

"**T**HE Powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom. xiii. 1.) Therefore, reasons the Apostle, "he that resisteth the Power, resisteth the ordinance of God."

The character of the government is not here the question, neither is the righteousness or injustice of the laws. The only government at that time existing was the Roman; and of the authority of the Roman Governor our Lord spake when He said, "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." This is in perfect accordance with the lesson God taught Nebuchadnezzar by depriving him of his reason—"that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will" (Dan. iv. 32.) The means by which God works in bestowing this authority—in casting down one kingdom and establishing another—may be the vilest of human passions. To trace the history of a kingdom or dynasty to its origin may discover only that which is devilish. Pride, lust of power, thirst for blood, may have been the motives that chiefly operated in establishing its authority; nevertheless, apart from its moral character, the fact that it has the power is to be referred ultimately to God, and to Him absolutely and alone.

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In this respect the dominion of "the Beast" of Rev. xviii. differs nothing from any of the previous Gentile powers. Of the Ten Kings of the last days it is written, "God hath put in their hearts to fulfil His will, and to agree and give their Kingdom unto the Beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

Here, then, is the Divine establishment of the last great Gentile and anti-Christian government. It is the consummation of Satanic authority in the world, and yet its power is of God in exactly the same sense as the Roman power which Christ owned, and by which He was put to death.

The only people whom God ever recognized nationally was Israel. To them He entrusted His revealed will concerning government in the earth. To administer Divinely given laws, statutes, and judgments was the office of Israel's king. God never withdrew the legislation given in trust to Israel by Moses, and never superseded it in any way. When the dominion was transferred, because of Israel's sin, to the Gentiles, God gave to the Gentile kings no new revelation as to government. He only withdrew, as it were, to a greater distance from the administration of government in the earth, retaining, nevertheless, the supreme and ultimate control.

The calling of the church is heavenly. Its origin, sustenance, administration, and destiny, are all heavenly. Christ alone is Ruler within this divine sphere. He is Lord; and in subjection to Him as such the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts amongst the members of the body of Christ, and through them operates in maintaining divine order and rule.

Within what professes to be the Church, the will of man has indeed risen up in rebellion against the Lordship of Christ—the gifts of the Spirit of God have been rejected, and confusion of the most inextricable character has been

the result. But, nevertheless, it remains true, whether men will own it or not, that, as truly as God revealed His will concerning national government and order to Israel by Moses, so truly has He made known His will concerning church government and order by Paul—chiefly, though partially, also by the Lord Jesus Himself and others of His Apostles.

Thus God's two revelations as to government are before us in the Scriptures in their entirety. All other legislation of kings and parliaments is but a groping about in darkness and unbelief after that which can only be found from God and His Word.

In accordance with this, it is very noticeable that whilst in the New Testament God has spoken concerning the duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants—and also very specially as to the duties of Christians as SUBJECTS under the world's governments, there is not one word to a Christian in the capacity of a ruler or magistrate in the world.

Surely God's omissions are not accidental, but full of instruction. Had God contemplated His heavenly people accepting rule in the world's apostate kingdoms, is it to be for a moment supposed that He would thus have avoided giving to such as well as to others the needed wisdom and counsel?

Subjection to authority is all that is inculcated—this is strongly insisted upon in many passages—but to resist the authority is forbidden, and any attempt to constitute authority or to wield it, is left without a word of guiding counsel, so that he who acts in such matters must act in his own wisdom and strength.

The Christian is a "stranger" in the world because of his heavenly birth, and a "pilgrim" because of his heavenly

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destiny. Like a foreigner in one of our cities, he is passing through, and must be subject to its laws, or else incur its penalties; but his strangership forbids that he should be either a legislator or a ruler there.

Apart from the political as well as the religious parties of His day was the path of the Lord Jesus. When He comes again, it will not be to suffer as a stranger, but to reign as King. For His kingdom we wait, when we shall indeed exercise rule and authority, not as the servants of a worldly power that is symbolized by monstrous and ravenous beasts; but as the servants of Him who is the rightful Heir, and Whose the kingdoms of this world shall then have become.

Perfection in government would result in perfection of liberty to the subject. Anarchy is bondage. The Christian in this land, because of his familiarity with peace and liberty, is too apt to undervalue these great blessings, and to fail in acknowledging God as the Governor Supreme, who so disposes rulers for the blessing of His people.

Hence the almost universal omission in the assemblies of the children of God, to pray for those in authority. A spurious spirituality regards it as inconsistent with the character of the worship of a heavenly people.

But believers ought never to forget that though a heavenly people, they have also earthly relationships, concerning each of which God has spoken, and true spirituality will seek always to act in such relationships according to the Word of the Lord.

Rom. xiii., 1 Tim. ii., 1 Peter ii. 13, &c., demand the special attention of Christians, in order that in their relation to the world's government, they may know and do the will of God. Obedience to the will of God alone is true spirituality and true sanctification.

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