THE

CHRISTIAN FRIEND

And Instructor.

PAPERS FOR THE COMFORT AND EDIFICATION
OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

JUDE 20.

LONDON:
W. H. BROOM, 25, PATERNOSTER SQUARE.
1882.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
GOD'S SALVATION	1
THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER	8
THE COMING OF THE LORD	16
THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS	22, 72
"AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD"	29
THE CONDITIONS OF GUIDANCE	33
REBEKAH AND ABIGAIL	42
ON MINISTERING CHRIST	50, 101
"WHERE I AM"	57
"EMPTY VESSELS"	61
NEHEMIAH AND JUDE	66
THE NEED OF HOLINESS	67
WAITING FOR CHRIST	83
CAIN AND ABEL	85
"WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR"	88
THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST-BORN	93
THE GOOD SHEPHERD	113
"WIDOWS INDEED"	123
THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS BY THE CHURCH	130
THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS	136, 161, 193
THE GRACE THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS	141
REALITY	145
"TRAINED" AND "ARMED"	151
TRUE MINISTRY	158
DEPARTED LEADERS	167
CHRIST DEPARTING TO THE FATHER	169
"ONE THING I KNOW"	180

PAGE

CHRIST IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCH . . . 183
THE ADMINISTRATIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS . . . 184
HAS CHRIST DESTROYED THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL? . . 189
THE FEAST AND THE SABBATH 197
EXPOSITORY JOTTINGS . . . 205, 268, 295
A READING 212
THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON 218
GOD'S ORDER 225
THE NIGHT OF THIS WORLD 231
THE TABERNACLE AND THE ALTAR 235
THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS . . . 244, 275
THE COMFORTER 253
"THE PEOPLE OF GOD" 261
THE HOUSE IN FAILURE, AND THE RESOURCE OF FAITH . 281
HOW CAN I HAVE PEACE? 287
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS . . . 303, 323
"ALL SAINTS" 309
THE THREEFOLD WITNESS 314
GOD'S ESTIMATE OF THE BLOOD 332

FRAGMENTS—

28, 60, 84, 100, 111, 157, 160, 179, 224, 232, 252.

POETRY—

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS . . . 21
SATISFIED WITH THEE 40
SLEEP ON, BELOVED 112
THE CHURCH AS WIDOW AND BRIDE . . . 129
MOUNT OLIVET 191
THE CHIEF CORNER STONE 233
INFINITUDE 280
ACHOR 293
THE WELL IS DEEP 332

THE CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

GOD'S SALVATION.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND DELIVERANCE FROM SIN.

Romans iv. v. vi.

GOD'S salvation, and the full deliverance which it brings from all the power of Satan, which, being won by the death of Christ, should be the present enjoyed portion of every Christian, is only known to him who has accepted by faith two distinct statements of the word of God concerning it; namely, that as God's salvation surely deals with, and settles the question of, my *sins*, so surely does it also deal with, and settle the question of, *myself*. "Who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification," indicates the way of the settlement of the one (Rom. iv.), that is, our sins; for the Holy Ghost now present (Acts ii.) is now testifying to us (as He will testify to Israel, founded on the work of Christ, in the day of the new covenant), "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." But while this is true, it is His voice also saying we "are dead to sin," "buried with Him by baptism unto death" (Rom. vi.) (and therefore are we exhorted to reckon ourselves to *be* "dead indeed unto sin"); these and similar passages give us the other part of this "*great*" salvation; *i.e.* the end too of *ourselves* in that death of Christ in God's sight. Both are to be accepted and enjoyed only by faith.

Let us remember that doubts and fears, and a joy often followed by darkness and despair, form no part of God's provision for the poor sinner who comes to Christ. Long enough indeed has he known these, and deeply enough has he proved them, in the long and weary years of unbelief that have passed. Yet in how many cases do we find, alas, that these things are perpetuated, even looked upon as right, and too often encouraged as a proof of humility in the children of God! Some sad misunderstanding of the word "salvation," then, must surely exist in our own day, to produce such fruits, and such Christians, and such teachers, as these. The fault is not in God, nor in the Word—this cannot be; it is alone in ourselves. We have to learn, and often through deep sorrow, what we refuse to accept from God by faith. The exercises of Romans vii. teach us this. The soul there is wholly occupied with self as alive.

When God is first dealing with the soul, I find the Holy Ghost brings home to it, through the conscience, the burden of its sins. The cry is wrung from it, as from the prodigal, "I have sinned." It was thus when Peter was preaching (Acts ii.) to the multitude, and three thousand were pricked in their heart; and Peter's answering word is, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, for the remission of *sins*." And so again in chapter iii., "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your *sins* may be blotted out." In the necessity for real heart work I agree with Bunyan that the soul must feel its burden, though I reject the necessity of passing long years in the Doubting Castle of Giant Despair, wherein he immures Christian for a time, even when far advanced on his journey. And what is it which introduces the

soul into liberty as to its sins when feeling the weight of this burden? It is this statement, accepted by faith, that another, even Jesus Christ, has been "delivered for our offences;" One who has also been accepted of God, proved in that He is "raised again for our justification." Very well, then, says the apostle in his simple argument, if this cannot be denied, and it is all of God, we *are* justified. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Here then I pass at once into unclouded peace with God as to the whole question of my sins, and "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. v. 1.)

But with how many souls is this blessed condition but transient as to their realization of it! How many we meet who look *back* to the time when they knew this peace, and passed for the first time into the blessed realization of it by faith! But since that time the brightness has become dim, and the clouds have returned again, for they have not gone on to accept with the same unhesitating, unqualified faith the statement of this sixth chapter; namely, that in the same work of Christ, wherein was obtained the forgiveness of my sins, I was "baptized unto His death." "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death." The death and burial of me, the man, is as clearly taught, and as implicitly to be received as a matter of faith,* as that Christ was delivered for my sins.

Alas, that souls should stop short of this their full and blessed deliverance, a deliverance perfect because of God,

* This is of the first importance; for until this truth is received by faith, it will never be known experimentally, and souls never enter upon the blessedness of deliverance until they have learnt for themselves what the flesh is, that they are helpless, and that deliverance is found outside of themselves in Christ, according to Romans vii.—[Ed.]

and which He delights to give as the present and enjoyed portion of the believer in Christ! You find many who know and rejoice in the forgiveness of their sins, who do not, and will not, accept the truth that they are "dead" (Col. iii. 3), for it is here the cross comes in, and it, alas! weighs too heavily upon them. The forgiveness of their sins they will have; that is all privilege, all blessing; but the rejection of *themselves*, this involves the giving up of everything that ministers to man on the earth, and they may live as very good Christians (as the world speaks) without going quite so far as this. And this word death *is* a solemn word to those who accept it. It is the end of *the man who was living in his sins*, the end of his affections, of his desires, of his present world-life, and of all his future worldly hopes. What is left for faith is the new man alone, the man "in Christ," a new creation, where "all things are of God." And what does not *this* involve, as to the way in which that man should henceforth live upon the earth, no longer to himself, but "unto Him who died for him and rose again"? And why is it refused, but because the occupation of the daily life of many will not bear such an examination, and they have no thought that Christianity contains such a self-ignoring standard as this? But is not this the Christianity of the Bible, the Christianity of these three chapters? And can you have the joy of it if you refuse it?

My brethren, have *you* accepted it as God's truth that *you* are "dead"? Are you following no longer that course of things which once controlled and attracted you when you were alive in the world? "Having food and raiment" here, are you therewith "content"? and still content when you have *not* these, if it be His

blessed will to deprive you of them? Like the apostle Paul, who could say, "I know how to abound, and I know how to suffer loss, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need"—"in hunger and thirst, in cold and nakedness." A fool indeed was the world's estimation of such a man; but is there not in him a picture of the Christianity of the Bible before you? And do we not covet to be such men? dead surely, and useless, if "society" and man's day be the subject; but we live in a new life—waiting for the dawning of a new day, the day of Christ, a "morning without clouds." Do not misunderstand my meaning; a Christian may, and ought to, minister to man in his misery and in his sins; for out of his belly should flow "rivers of living water" (John vii. 38); but as to what *he* can minister to me, what would he add to a dead man? or what *can* he add to an "heir of God, a joint-heir with Christ"? For as to the world, I am dead—"whereby (the cross of Christ) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." (Gal. vi. 14; iv. 12.)

Now God in this epistle presents to us the forgiveness of sins, and also the death of the sinner in the person of the One who satisfies God as to the question of his sins. This is Paul's gospel (chapter i.), wherein, he says, the "righteousness of God" is revealed on the principle of faith. God's righteousness "upon all who believe" (chapter iii.) when we had none to offer Him (see chapter iii.), and Christ now before God instead of myself, in whom I am, according to Romans viii. 1. This is how the power and grace of God have triumphed. "It" (the gospel) "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." And this word *salvation*, thus brought out in the first chapter, is

no mean measure; it is what God's heart desires to be proclaimed to every poor sinner "for the obedience of faith." As it was in the synagogue of Nazareth (Luke iv.) so it is now, "deliverance to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." To accept it is to be "free indeed," no longer a servant, but a son; "and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." (Gal. iv.) How appropriate the exhortation of the apostle to these law-keeping Galatians: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." Yet though we are not Jews, and so not under the law of Moses, how often we make laws for ourselves, not reckoning ourselves dead, not accepting the truth, and thus are landed again under a yoke of bondage, in which case the true Christian liberty is not known. How common is the thought, in respect of worldliness for example, (though the principle applies to other things), "I ought not to be so worldly, nor to do what the world does." This is admitted; but it is the old man you are addressing as if alive; you have allowed yourself to "be" what is inconsistent with a dead man. Had you met the enemy at the outposts with the truth, "I am dead," because you have accepted it by faith, you had not been betrayed into a path and conduct you now sorrow over, a path of servitude, and not of liberty, in which you find yourselves in Rom. vii., and do not know the truth of Romans viii. as your abiding portion and joy.

We have been looking then at the two parts of this "great" salvation, deliverance from sins and deliverance from self, both of which are contained in it, and to be received by faith. There is one verse in connection with faith in this epistle, and faith both as to my

sins and as to myself, which I cannot but bring before you, as bearing on this subject: "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv. 23.) If there is faith, it will manifest itself by works. If a soul knows that it has forgiveness of sins, and knows also as to the old man, that he was crucified, dead and buried "with Him," will it not manifest these truths in its life on earth? Let it be, then, in this connection (as it surely is) God's solemn word to us, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin" —sin from the bondage of which Christ died to deliver us; for "he that is dead is freed from sin."

Let us remember, then, what Paul's gospel contained; let us remember too the blessed deliverance it brings to all who accept it. Have you faith in God about your sins? and also about yourself? A soul is *not* established who has not bowed in faith to both these truths which we have had before us. But the apostle prayed for these Romans that they might be thus established, and his concluding words sound to us to-day as fresh as when he uttered them first: "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you *according to my gospel.*" They come home to *us;* for we see all around that souls are *not* established according to this blessed gospel. Its deliverance is not accepted and acted on, and so its joy cannot be known. May we listen then to his words afresh, and may they be fulfilled in us all: "Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations *for the obedience of faith;* to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen." H. C. A.

THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER.

It is most important for us to remember, that all that which is the power of death in the unbeliever is the hindrance and blight of the fruit-bearing power of the believer's life, to which the energies afforded us in the divine Persons apply themselves. This is brought out into full light, with its specific remedy, in the graciousness of God in this parable. There is the case of the fowls of the air, the stony ground, the sowing among thorns, and in the good ground, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold. The first of these we know is the power of Satan—the power of death. There is no life in the soul. When the word of it is sown in the unbroken heart, the devil takes it away as soon as it is sown; he holds it in unremoved death. The Word is the power of life. "Of His own will begat He us by the Word of truth, that we might be the firstfruits of His creatures." It is indeed *the lie* of the devil, by which he brought in death, and holds men in it—in which he is a murderer; so, on the other hand, by the truth of God are we made alive.

But there is One (Himself indeed *the* Word) who is specifically the quickening power, even the Son of God. "The second Adam is the quickening Spirit." He then who vindicates from this state of death, and makes alive, is the Son of God. The Son of man sows the seed, but it is the Son of God which quickens. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil." It is the special distinctive character of His Sonship, that He quickens

with divine power, as indeed none else could. (Compare John v. 21, 24, 26.) This is most explicit; and no one acquainted with Scripture can have failed to recognize this power of life in the Son of God as distinctly representing His power and character. He declares Himself, "I am the resurrection and the life;" and this by His word, "Lazarus, come forth." The results of this we shall not follow; but we have the Son of God, by the Word, destroying the works of the devil in the state and power of death. This is the first case of the parable. That which is in Him is the opposite power, which overcomes the evil case mentioned; and a man brings forth thirtyfold, for being really alive he must increase and bring forth fruit.

But there is another case put, not apparently desperate, but equally destructive—the receiving the word into shallow ground. There was no root. It was received superficially; it speedily "sprang up *because* it had no deepness of earth;" it had no searching process of power in which it entered into the conscience and quickened the inner man. It rested in the natural affections and understanding, which are after all *the flesh;* it is received merely by the natural feelings, and therefore immediately acts, and with joy, since it reaches not the conscience; and the same natural feelings were of course as speedily acted on by trouble and persecution, and "immediately they are offended." (Compare Mark iv.) This, then, is all merely the flesh, and comes to nothing. To this we know how uniformly the Spirit is opposed. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other." "They that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the

Spirit, the things of the Spirit." "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds," &c. It needs not to multiply passages of Scripture to show the opposition of these two; but we must observe we have *here* in the Spirit the antagonistic power which overcomes the flesh; and assuming a man to be alive, still does so. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit;" hence we know that this case is still the natural man, and that the things of the Spirit are what he has never received, though affections or intellect may have been moved or delighted with the marvellous plan of redemption. But the same point holds good in a believer; that is, we find when men do not walk in the Spirit, of course they are profitless and low in their state. It is in mortifying the flesh by the Spirit that the fruits of the Spirit find comparatively free growth —it produces sixtyfold. This, then, is the contrast here —the flesh and the Spirit; and we find in it that the fairest form of the flesh, the apparently joyful reception of the Word of the kingdom, whether it be in affection or intellect, comes to nothing; whatever it be occupied on, it is but "the desires of the flesh and of the mind."

The third case, compared with other Scriptures, is equally clear, I think. The hindering power is declared directly: "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lust of other things." (Compare Mark iv.; Luke viii.) Now the world, and the love of it, we continually find opposed to the Father. "All that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." "Love not the world, neither the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not

in him." The hatred of the world to the Son showed that *it* was not of the Father; and the children were not of this world any more than the Father, as allied to Him, even as Christ the Son was not of the world.

Every one familiarly and spiritually acquainted with the Gospel of John must have noticed the opposition between the world and the Sonship of Christ; one being associated with the Father, and the other directly opposed to the glory of the Father, in the great question of that Sonship in which it alone was known. Our Lord thus concludes the whole presenting of His work and His people to the Father: "O righteous Father, the *world* hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me." The whole chapter illustrates the question. Now we shall hence well understand the opposition between the two, and how "He who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us out of this present evil world," closes that statement by saying, "And I have declared unto them thy name, and I will declare it, that the love," &c. But in the believer, even when not only quickened, but *in* the Spirit exercising himself to mortify the deeds of the body, who recognizes at once the evil of the flesh (though we are little aware how subtlely and widely its beguiling and deceiving influence is spread, how fair a form inbred selfishness may assume), and in whom, in an ordinary sense, the flesh is habitually in a measure mortified, how often do we find the world holding a prevailing power and recognized title over the judgment or habit, and the fruitfulness, comparatively speaking, utterly marred!

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit, so shall ye be my disciples." Let us then recog-

nize, *à priori*, that is, from Scripture (excluding the consideration of the circumstances in which *the lie* of this world has power over our mind), that the world is a positive hinderer of fruitfulness, the much fruit in which the Father is glorified; and for this plain reason, that our sonship, our inheritance, the kingdom is not recognized. The devil, as he acts on us by the flesh, "the lust of the flesh," "good for food," or "of the eyes," and the like, is the god and prince of this world; and the Spirit in them that are quickened, where not dimmed and darkened by the spirit of this world, is not only the power of the difference of the carnal and spiritual nature, but bears witness that we are sons and heirs. Thus at liberty, we cry by it, Abba, Father; and the fruits are an hundredfold, where we are free from the system in which we are fettered. The energy of the kingdom is there, the Saviour of the kingdom is there, the stamp of the Father of glory, and hence, in deadness to the world, power over it. The whole stamp of nature is different; we are not of the world as Christ is not of the world. Accordingly, as we find the Lord the true vine, so we find the Father the husbandman, purging the branches, that they may bring forth more fruit. We may be isolated indeed, but isolated *sons*, upon whom the glory of the Father shines in hope and the power of inward association; the sons of God, though in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. In a word, the children of God (the God who hath called us to "His own kingdom and glory," the living God) is our distinguishing title; and, as the Jews were affianced to Jehovah, we are called to be "perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect."

I cannot pursue this subject farther here, though I

may touch on it, with the Lord's permission, at a future time. As regards the explanation of the parable, I would say a very few words more. The inseparableness of the evils, as well as of the gracious agents of covenant remedy, is not in question; the devil, the world, and the flesh are too intimately associated to need explanation of our distinct consideration of them, and I believe more intimately than people are commonly aware of. Of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit I need not speak; but while we have spoken of them in operation as to profit, we must not forget their unity in every act, whether of creation or anything else; they invariably act in one, and as invariably, as far as I see, in the same order; that is, by the Son, through the energy of the Spirit.

Another remark is necessary. Although we have looked at the love of the world as hindering the full characteristic fruitfulness of the children of God, and the knowledge and love of the Father as the contrasted character, we must remember that this knowledge in principle is the position of every believer. "I write unto you, little children, because you have known the Father," nor could we otherwise put all believers under this responsibility. But I believe it will be found, that the measure of the fruitfulness of the life that is in them much depends on their exercise in the truths here noticed and dwelt upon, and that the character of their fruitfulness also much depends on their fuller and deeper apprehension of the one or the other, and that the apprehension of the Father in the full development of the Sonship glory attaches quite a new character on the whole course of the Christian's life. This is our proper calling; and while we must

watch against the neglect of distinct reference to the Son, as administering the power of the kingdom "against the wicked one," to the Spirit, as overcoming or detecting the workings and deceitful power of the flesh, to the Father in contrast with the love of the world, a defective apprehension of the principle of heavenly glory will somewhere or other break down the efficiency of Christian service. The fulness of all was in our Lord; the fulness of all help in them is our practical responsibility; the enjoyment of fellowship with them our privilege.

Ill-proportioned Christianity, I believe, continually springs from the power of Satan, through neglect of or hindering the special power of one or another of the divine Persons, while indulgence of any of the evils is apt to throw us into the hands of Satan; and here is the wisdom of ministering to sick souls, for the source of the evil may be one, its manifestation may be another. How blessed to be able to refer to covenant assurance of a threefold Almighty help for the several difficulties one evil may bring. A believer will be healthful and strong against the enemy, as he has just reverence to all. I do not say that the believer's progress is, from knowing the Son, to the Spirit and the Father—far from it; but I believe the manifestation of the power and glory of their work will gradually unfold itself, even as the quickening by the Son will make the believer discern well the operations of the Spirit against the flesh, and both of these find their full development in the manifestation of the Father's glory, in the consciousness (if he grow healthfully) that His kingdom is not of this world. In some cases of unusual energy of divine life, we see by God's calling all these

apprehensions promptly developed, and the man consequently abundantly exercised, and his service great, corresponding to the knowledge received of the Son in the kingdom, as in the apostles Peter and Paul; but I must not outstep the practical part of the subject.

I am quite conscious, indeed particularly so, of the imperfection of these remarks; but I feel the importance of the subject deeply, and the basis of the view has been given: they are open to the correction or fuller application of those more versed in divine life. The wondrous and blessed grace of a developed covenant, the bright witness of the Son, and of the Father, and of the glory: the grace in which they minister to the necessities of those who have no help in themselves, while they are growingly understood and adored objects alike of communion and worship, separating from all that is not of themselves. I feel too, in speaking this, I am treading on holy ground, but ground which our God in His mercy has opened to us, and on which we are set to walk; freed from every fear, unless of not justly estimating it, by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; cleansed from all that could offend them by His blood, and acquainted with the boundless love which has brought these by it, while never reaching it, never able to be filled with it, knowing that it has reached even to us and filled us into its own fulness.

Let us also remember, that the indulgence in one of these seemingly remote evils brings in the power of the others; for God is not there. Thus Solomon's indulgence of the world brought in the indulgence of the flesh, and the consequence was the direct power of Satan in the idolatrous worship of his wives. We might mention similar instances, but I close for the pre-

sent. Only one thing it is important to remark. It is not either by speculation or knowledge these things are obtained, though they be ministered. "We are sanctified unto obedience." The Spirit of obedience is the great secret of all the present and practical blessings of the believer; for the Spirit is not grieved, and so becomes the minister of the grace and knowledge both of the Father and of the Son; and the poorest, simplest believer, walking thus, enjoys the blessings of the pledged faithfulness both of the Father, and the Lord, and the Spirit, to the blessed purposes of love in which we stand, and of divine glory. J. N. D.

THE COMING OF THE LORD.

Acts i.

There is much to remark in the way the coming of the Lord is presented to the disciples after the resurrection. They, poor things, after the Lord was risen, were still running on Jewish things, and looked for the kingdom to be restored. But God has His plan. He says, "No, the time is come for a testimony of grace to go forth, beginning at Jerusalem." There is another thing. They see Jesus go up; they gaze after Him. Their hearts are up with their Lord. So ought our hearts to be looking after Him; nothing ought to satisfy the believer's heart but the Lord Himself. Then the promise comes to them, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go

into heaven." This is the first putting forth of the coming of the Lord Jesus as the hope of the believer's heart;* and the security of it is in the absolute manner God presents it as His plan.

The mystery is the very essence of the Church. The Jews are waiting for a Messiah—the Church is on quite a different basis. We have pre-trusted in Christ. We know Him as One who has come, who has everything and yet nothing. What has a Christian here? Literally nothing. The infidel may say, "Show me something." I know what I have got—Christ in heaven. He is my anchor, my whole soul is resting there; my heart is in heaven with this Lord Jesus. The heavenly bride's place is that which Christ took below. He had nothing here. He could not turn to this or that person and say, "I can trust in him." His spring was in God. He could trust Him and Him only, and so with ourselves. If I have the Son's heart on the Father's throne, the Father's heart and house are opened to me. We find daily His sympathies can flow down to His people. While passing through the sand of the wilderness, our feet cut and bruised, Jesus has a heart that can sympathize, and make all "work together for good." What Polar star have you to guide you? None but the coming of Christ Himself. What hope have I apart from the coming of Christ? Literally none. The bride of Christ has nothing as a future save the coming of her Lord.

One thing very touching to the heart is the way in which Christ conforms our removal to His own. Because He loves His bride, no one can be trusted to

* It is the appearing rather than the coming of our Lord in this passage. But the principle abides.—Ed.

fetch her save Himself—not a power in heaven, not if legions of angels volunteered it. He will so arrange it, that all shall recall His own removal. He will present her to Himself. It is part of His special privilege as Son, to arrange all for His Father, as well as for the Church. He will purge the heavenlies; He will come down with the same chariot of cloud as that in which He ascended to fetch her up and present her to the Father. Every little thing in which we can be conformed to Him is sweet; but when it is something put on her by His own hand, it is sweeter still. Like the disciples, we too should want our Master back, want to see Himself. Personal love is the answer to that love which proved stronger than death. He proved His love and the fountain of His love to be entirely independent of them. He settled the matter with Peter, went through it with Thomas—proofs enough of love. Their hearts could not rest satisfied without being with "this same Jesus."

It is very sweet to have the Lord looking down on us here, but nothing like being with Him. What is the force of my saying, "This is a wretched, howling wilderness"? What is it but "Nothing can satisfy my renewed nature except to see Himself"? He set His heart upon His bride. He loved her, and gave Himself for her. The heart that gets the simple thought of the personal love of Christ to the Church, will be strengthened to encounter the perils of the wilderness. We have to be where He puts us, because the great thing is to taste His love, and I can taste it down here. There is no question but that I should taste it much more with Him; but if it is His will for me to stay, that makes me happy to stay. When

Christ is displaying power, there is Satan to oppose Him; it does not suit him to be in opposition where Christ is not.

Have you ever said, "Come, Lord Jesus"? Why do you say it? He is waiting; not satisfied till He presents His Church. Have you felt nothing will satisfy you but seeing Him and being like Him? Have you felt in the quick of your soul, that if God were to give you heaven without Christ, it would be a blank place to your hearts? Why do you say "Come"? Because God has not forgotten His own plan. God would have some associated with Him up there in the desire of the Holy Ghost: that is why you say "Come." It is part of God's plan about Christ. If God says, "I have chosen you, and am working part of my plan for my Son in you," I do not understand people saying, "Oh, I am not this or that!" You would be far more humble, if you thought more about God, and less about yourself. Why do the sympathies of Christ flow forth to you? Dare you say, "Because I was so faithful to the sympathy He showed me yesterday"? Yet it does flow forth to you; and unless you are blind, you can lift up one stone after another, and find water flowing under all. Why? Because of what you are? No; He looked out for such bad clay, that no other potter could make anything of it. There is only one way God can keep such vessels full, and that is by keeping you close to the gushing fountain.

Do His sympathies depend upon you? Not a bit. We cannot be trusted with the full amount of joy. We should be puffed up. Peter must have his hands tied, or they would be busy to take off the crown of martyrdom. Are you better than Peter? Nay, but worse.

You are looking for Christ from heaven. Your looking will not bring Him, but you will be happy if you are looking. The only spring of living waters Christ knows is in God. It is not the will which Christ sets in movement in your heart that is the power, but Christ's love. I am ashamed when I think of Christ's patient waiting to fetch us. Do you think Christ, in the glory of the Father, has a heart large enough to have a care to come and fetch us, and are you not ashamed? He says, "There is that poor thing stumbling through its duties, but I will soon go and pick it up." The Father's house is higher up than the manifestation of glory, the New Jerusalem, the court of the kingdom, but Christ will delight for the world to see the Father's glory in a way it can admire. But there are sweeter things than that—home-ties, relationships. The name of the Father hardly comports with the pageantry of rule, but it meets our hearts when He says, "Surely I come quickly." (Rev. xxii. 20.) Here is the answer to the call of the Bride. God's thought when man had forgotten the hope is, "I will trim the lamp again." I believe God is moving, and that it is impossible in the riches of His grace that there should be none to meet His testimony. Even in Malachi some were looking for Him. He could not have come three hundred years ago, when all was in gross darkness; but now, were He to rise up from the throne this night, there are many who through grace from the depths of their hearts have cried, "Come, Lord Jesus." "Does your heart answer, "I am one"? May it be our desire that He would revive the testimony in the hearts of His children!

G. V. W.

THOU SHALT CALL HIS NAME JESUS.

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good pleasure in men."—LUKE ii. 13, 14.

WHAT melody is this,
  That wakes at Jesus' name
Ten thousand thousand chords of bliss,
  And everlasting fame!

What rapture fills my soul,
  Immanuel here to find!
What symphonies around me roll,
  From God's eternal mind!

Oh, dearest, best of names,
  Harmonious mystery;
Each sweet vibrating thought inflames,
  Each whisper tells of Thee.

Creation's sole desire,
  Her Lord and Morning Light;
Responsive soon she'll join the choir,
  And in His praise unite.

Fulfil, O Lord, Thy vow,
  And quickly come again;
The whole creation groaneth now,
  And travaileth in pain.

Lord Jesus, burst her chain,
  Bring in Thy jubilee;
And let all Nature's loud Amen
  Proclaim her liberty.

C. F. C.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

In looking into the epistle to the Ephesians, we come to the first of those canonical and inspired letters, which were written by Paul during, or about the time of, his imprisonment at Rome. During the time of his detention at Cæsarea he was apparently quiet. When at Rome he resumed his apostolic service, not by visiting churches, but by writing to certain assemblies. The letters written at that time are five in number, and called respectively an epistle to the Ephesians, to the Philippians, to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Hebrews. A special feature in four of these is the ministry of Christ in a way not previously set forth in writing. He had treated of the gospel of God when addressing the Romans, his latest letter ere he went to Rome. He treats of the counsels of God, which concern Christ and the saints, in that to the Ephesians, which very possibly was his first letter from his prison in the metropolis of the habitable world. Addressing the Philippians, he tells them what Christ was to him, and what He should be to every saint of God. Writing to the Colossians, he expatiates on the fulness in Christ the Head for every member of His Body; and in that to the Hebrews he sets forth how the Lord Jesus Christ surpasses both Moses and Aaron, and how by His death blessings everlasting in duration are enjoyed, which never could be procured by the keeping of the law and the observance of the Mosaic ritual.

The epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to those who were of the race of Israel. This to the Ephesians

was written to those who had been Gentiles, so it developes God's counsels which concern those once far off, as much as those once nigh. But whether, as some have thought, and the supposition is no modern one, it was really intended as a circular letter for assemblies chiefly composed of converts from among the Gentiles, as that to the Hebrews was designedly for those who had been Jews, is a question which, though raised, is perhaps incapable of definite solution. Those who advocate this view have supposed that, sent to different assemblies, the name of the assembly to which a copy was forwarded was inserted at the commencement; hence, though circular in character, it became in that way local in application. The omission of the words "in Ephesus" by the two oldest uncial MSS., the Vatican and the Sinaitic, favours this view; and internal evidence, derived from the pointed way in which St. Paul addresses those who had been Gentiles (i. 13; ii. 11, 17; iii. 1) as well as writes of them (i. 15; iii. 2), and the absence of any local reference to the church in Ephesus, with which Paul was well acquainted, in no way, to say the least, militates against this view. Without, however, pronouncing an opinion definitely on this point, all will agree that, whether addressed really only to the saints in Ephesus, or to all those who had been formerly Gentiles, this epistle contains something like a charter of the privileges, in which they shared equally with their brethren called out from among the Jews; and this is connected with the unfolding to us of God's counsels about His Son. Now these counsels have reference to the inheritance which He will possess; the Body, which is His fulness, or complement; and the Bride, for which He died, and which He will present to

Himself; viz., the Church glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.

These counsels being dwelt on, the mystery first made known to Paul by revelation, and now, as he writes (Eph. iii.), made known to God's apostles and prophets in the power of the Spirit, is necessarily treated of. The suitability of the vessel selected for this purpose we can readily perceive. Paul was the apostle of the Gentiles, and at the time of his inditing this letter he was a prisoner of Christ Jesus on their behalf. It was fitting, then, that by the apostle of the Gentiles these counsels, which related to the mystery, should be set forth. It was equally fitting that when a prisoner for the Gentiles he should place on record by divine guidance the unchanging counsels of God, in which they were so deeply concerned. By Daniel, a courtier at Babylon, and one of the seed royal of Judah, God made known the order, progress, and destruction by the Lord Jesus Christ of the four monarchies, which were to precede the establishment of God's kingdom in power over the earth. By John in Patmos, when experiencing in his own person the hostility of the fourth empire to the interests of God and of Christ, there was foretold the rise and complete destruction of that empire, in its last and apostate condition, by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ out of heaven. Paul and Peter had both fallen victims to its persecuting spirit. John, the last of the apostles, was then suffering from it. To outward eyes its power seemed irresistible. But to John was made known in a vision its crushing destruction at the hands of Him whose disciples and apostles it dealt with just as it chose. God selects fitting instruments by which to make known His will.

But before touching on the divine counsels about the Lord Jesus Christ, the saints are taught God's counsels in grace towards them; and Paul's heart, evidently filled with a sense of the grace thus displayed, overflows in praise at the outset of his letter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." (i. 3.) Now who are the *us* here spoken of? He tells us, as he unfolds God's counsels in grace which concern them. They were chosen by God in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before him in love, and predestinated as well to sonship according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which* He fully bestowed on them in the Beloved One, "in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of offences, according to the riches of His grace." In such a manner those are described who share in that fulness of blessing in the heavenlies in Christ. And that grace has abounded toward its recipients in all wisdom and prudence, God having made known to them the mystery of His will, which He has purposed in Himself for the administration of the fulness of times (*i.e.* the coming age), to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth, in Him, in whom believers from the Jews, like Paul and others, here called *we* (12), and believers from the Gentiles, here called *ye* (13), have their inheritance, to the praise of His glory. Further, all these have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of their inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to which Christians as yet look forward.

* This is the better attested reading, ἧς, instead of ἐν ᾗ.

Into what a range of truth does Paul here conduct us! divine counsels about the saints, divine counsels about Christ. Nothing for us apart from Christ. All here for us in Him, and more than what angels have, has God purposed on our behalf. (4, 5.) Further, He has communicated to us counsels concerning His Son, which concern us most closely, since we are to share in that which God has thought of for Him. Pre-eminence and supremacy are appointed for Him as man. In that, of course, He must stand alone. All things in heaven and earth are to be headed up in Him. In that inheritance we have part with Him, and have received the Holy Spirit, being sealed by it, which is also the earnest of the inheritance. And all this redounds to the praise of God's glory.

Do we ask what motive moved Him to act in grace toward us? The answer furnished us is simply the good pleasure of His will. Do we ask what is the measure of this grace? We read of the riches of it (i. 7), of the exceeding riches of it (ii. 7); and how it has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, through His making known to us the mystery of His will. Would any inquire what moved Him to head up all in heaven and on earth in Christ? We learn that He purposed this in Himself, who works all things after the counsel of His own will. It is to God, acting in the sovereignty of His will, that we are here turned. Sinners by nature, deserving only His wrath, we read of the exercise of His sovereign will, the carrying out of which none can effectually resist; and we learn how that will is active towards us in the fulness, the riches of His grace.

The divine counsels stated, the apostle next tells the

saints for what he makes supplication on their behalf, of whose faith in the Lord Jesus Christ he had heard, and of whose love to all saints there was manifest proof, evidences these of their conversion, and of the dwelling of the Holy Ghost within them. With Paul the knowledge of God's truth was to have a formative power over the soul. The Greeks sought after wisdom, and might engage their intellectual powers in discussions of theories and of dogmas. Christians however, instructed divinely in truths of which the learned Greeks were ignorant, were to remember that these revelations of the divine mind should have practical power over their hearts. So Paul prays that the eyes of their heart (not understanding) should be enlightened, their affections engaged in the truth revealed, that they might know: (*a*) The hope of God's calling. Of this calling he had written in verses 3–5. (*b*) The riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints. On the subject of the inheritance he had already touched in verses 8–14. He calls it God's, because, as with the land of Canaan (Josh. xxii. 19; 2 Chron. xx. 11), so with the things in the heavens and the things upon earth, God will take possession of them in and through the Lord Jesus Christ and the saints. (*c*) He desires that they should know the exceeding greatness of God's power to usward who believe, that power as displayed in raising up Christ from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principalities and powers, putting all under His feet, whom He has given to be Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body, the fulness, or complement of Him that filleth all in all. The Lord Jesus, here viewed as a man, is seen as raised, exalted, and in

accordance with Ps. viii. is to have everything put under Him. Further, and this the Old Testament does not mention, He has a Body, the Church, and that Body is His complement as the Christ who fills all in all.

This, the third subject of his prayer, is connected with that which follows. To this he now turns. The exceeding greatness of God's power, of which he has made mention—exemplified in the raising and exaltation of Christ above all created intelligences and powers—has been put forth on behalf of the saints, who have been quickened with Christ, and raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ. This power he wants them to know; and the mention of it necessarily gives the opportunity for dwelling on God's ways in grace, especially with those who had been Gentiles. This forms the subject of the second chapter of the epistle, and divides itself into two parts—connected first with their moral condition, and next with their former dispensational position. C. E. S.

(*To be continued, D. V.*)

THERE is the greatest difference possible between the ministry of Christ and the ministry of truth. The former makes nothing, but the latter makes everything, of man. As a consequence, the ministry of truth appeals to a wider circle; for the natural man can delight in the knowledge which increases his own importance; but the spiritual alone will respond to the ministry of Christ. It should never be forgotten, that while Christ is the truth, the truth is not Christ.

"AS HE IS, SO ARE WE IN THIS WORLD."

1 JOHN iv. 17.

THERE are few things in the divine record of deeper significance to the child of God than the statement that "as He is" (the Lord Jesus Christ in glory), "so are we in this world." On referring to it you will find that the Spirit of God gives this as the reason, and the only reason, for our having boldness in the day of judgment. Every soul then that has, or seeks to have, this assured confidence in view of that impending day, will necessarily receive with interest any unfolding from God's word of that concerning which the apostle speaks. Be it observed, then, that the Holy Ghost refers to a positive and absolute standing in the sight of God, not to a practical condition; and, further, that it is a present, everyday standing before Him of believers while in the world. It is true that the apostle does speak in the same verse of what is future, the day of judgment, and of the suited attitude of our souls in relation to it—boldness, of which more presently.

But now let us observe that there are two absolute things before us here. I. The positive *perfection* of divine love toward us—thrice blessed source of all our blessing—love with us is made PERFECT. Here is the primary and incomparable fact meeting us in all its priceless value for the deep and constant joy of our hearts, that God has not given us merely an earnest of His love, an instalment however handsome, but He has *perfected* His love toward us. The Spirit of God knew full well the tendency of souls to subjective truth,

which, all right in its subordinate place, is never right when made paramount. He therefore puts the objective before us in its divine precedence. What is then the objective thing here? Note it well, dear reader, for your soul's supreme solace. (1) Divine love, (2) Occupied *with you*, (3) *Made perfect* towards you. In the next verse (condescending to our weakness) He comes down to the level of what is purely subjective. Love begets love, and accordingly our love, that which His love has evolved, is here touched on. But does the love which is perfect in Him who is divine produce perfection of love in us who are human? Alas! no. Notice then three uses of the word "perfect." (1) His love *towards us* is perfect, (2) His love is perfect *in itself* (see verses 17, 18, where in each case the love is in divine connection), (3) There is a change. It is not said, however, that *our love* is not perfect (true enough, and hopelessly true), but that if we have fear we are not perfected in love; that is, in *His*. This, however, if true, is not hopelessly so; for our normal state is, that *we* are perfected in *His love*. Love and fear are incompatible, being essentially contrary in character. So long as both dwell in the heart there is distress of spirit or torment; for contending forces strive for mastery. The apostle seeks to strengthen our souls in the one that the other may be expelled. In other words, the Spirit of God educates our souls into so perfect a sense of the divine love that fear shall lose its place, being cast out.

II. The other absolute thing in verse 17 is, that *as* Christ is, so are we in this world. The former was an absolute *fact; viz.*, that love has its aspect towards us in its infinite, divine perfection. God is love, and His love to us-ward is absolutely and essentially perfect.

Love us less than He does He will not, and more than He does He could not. Nor is this love merely a quality, or even the essence of His nature only, but an active principle. Accordingly we have next an absolute *result.* The blood of Christ, the cross of Christ, the work of Christ, speak of it as you will, has its results here focussed in their relation to the believer. Do we think of ourselves naturally? Born in sin, conceived in iniquity, by nature lost! Or as living in sins, practising evil? Every soul guilty before God! Or even as believers, as to our practical state? "If we say that *we* have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." And "in many things we offend all." But, oh, the wondrous character of divine love! God, looking upon the face of our shield and His anointed, the glorified Man at the right hand of His throne, who is over all God blessed for ever, spite of all He has ever seen or now sees in us, and the tremendous disparity between Him and ourselves, so effectually have sin and guilt, death and judgment, been for the believer judiciously disposed of once for all, that He says, "As HE IS, so are we in this world."

III. Having looked at the result of divine love, we may notice further that the *effect* of His love in the present becomes the *cause* of our boldness in the future. For we read, "That we may have boldness in the day of judgment, *because* as He is, so are we in this world." Who would have the temerity to count upon boldness in the day of judgment because of his practical state now? But when it is seen that our positive standing before God, that eternal favour in which we are in Christ, is such that God makes no difference between the Son and the many sons, but declares that while

down here in this world we are before Him as Christ in glory, though not a particle of that glory be yet ours, what solid comfort, what established peace have we who have believed, even in view of that tremendous day! This word "boldness" is met with in two other places in the epistles, but uniformly as the effect of God's activity in His love toward us, and not as a result of any attainment of ours. In the first of these (Eph. iii. 11, 12) it is "according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have *boldness* and access with confidence by the faith of Him." In the other (Heb. x. 19, 20) it is the direct effect of the blood of Christ. "Having therefore, brethren, *boldness* to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," &c. Thus (1) His eternal purpose in Christ Jesus when He first brought me to Himself gave me boldness through faith in coming *to Him*, which was an entirely changed standing. (2) The efficacy of the blood, the new and living way opened, and the presence of God's high Priest, afforded to my soul the boldness of a worshipper in entering through the rent veil into the holiest of all, which is nothing short of *the very place where He dwells*, an entirely new *place*. (3) If my standing answers as to acceptance, to what Christ is before God, and His very place is mine now by faith, surely we may not refuse the sequence of this in God's eternity—boldness even yet again in the day of judgment; for "he that feareth is not made perfect in love."

May the grace that has set us in such cloudless, divine favour deepen in our souls so full and happy a sense of it that, His love with us being made perfect, we also may be made perfect in it. W. R.

THE CONDITIONS OF GUIDANCE.

It is remarkable that in the gospel of John, which presents Christ to us as the eternal Son, we see Him everywhere, and constantly, taking the place of the Servant. In accordance with this position we find Him asserting three things; first, that He did not come of Himself, but that He was sent by the Father; secondly, that He did not speak His own words; and, thirdly, that He did not do His own works. (See John v. 19, 36, 43; vi. 38–40; vii. 16, 28; viii. 28, 29; ix. 4; x. 36–38; xiv. 10, &c.) In a word, He came, as He tells us, not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. We call attention to this only for the purpose of showing that it was the maintenance of this subject and dependent position, which secured for Him at all times the perfect knowledge of His Father's will. This principle indeed is affirmed by His own words: "*The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth.*" (John v. 19, 20.) A careful consideration of the several points involved in this statement will furnish us with instruction as to the conditions of guidance for ourselves in all circumstances, and in whatever perplexities.

The first thing is that He could do nothing of (or rather *from*) Himself—that is, in the lowly place which He voluntarily assumed. His whole mission being to

accomplish the will of Another, He could not, while engaged in it, originate a single action. His will was perfect as He Himself was perfect, and yet He never allowed His will to govern Him in what He did. His meat was to do the Father's will, and on this very account He could do nothing of Himself.

And in this respect He is our perfect example. Unlike Him, our wills are utterly evil; and if they come into activity for one single moment, sin is the result. We cannot will that which is good. But God in His grace has associated us with the death of Christ, and as a consequence we ourselves, and therefore our wills as well as our sins, are gone in the cross. We have been crucified with Christ, and now it is not we who live, but Christ that liveth in us. This is the blessed place in which God has put us, and accordingly our true position before Him is that of having no will. We start with this, and hence should always take the ground of being unable to do anything of (or *from*) ourselves. Our own promptings, inclinations, suggestions, must be habitually refused, always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus; for if Christ is in us the body is dead because of sin. It would save us from many a snare, and many a mistake, and, we may add, many a sin, to maintain this place—this denying ourselves, and this taking up the cross in order to follow our Lord. It is, in a word, the fundamental condition for any knowledge of the mind and will of God. Hence it may be truly said, that when our own wills are in action it is impossible to ascertain the Lord's mind. (See John vii. 17.)

The second point is, that our Lord could only do what He saw the Father do; "for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise." This

involved two things. First, His eye was always on the Father, and then there was a constant response to everything the Father was doing. If it may be so said, the Lord was ever on the watch for the slightest indication of His Father's will, and His feet were swift to run in the way of His commandments. He was therefore, in all that He did, the perfect expression of the Father's mind; and thus it was that His every act was a revelation, and consequently a presentation, of the Father to those around. (See John xiv. 7–11.) This also may be applied to ourselves. As He was in relation to the Father we are in relation to Himself. (John xvii. 18.) To know therefore what to do at any given juncture, it is essential that we should have the "single eye." When Gideon was about to attack the Midianites, he said to his followers, "Look on me, and do likewise: and, behold, when I come to the outside of the camp, it shall be that, as I do, so shall ye do." (Judges vii. 17.) So it must be now with the Christian; he must look on Christ that he may do what he sees Him doing. As already said, his eye must be single; *i.e.* his eye must be on Christ alone, seeing nothing but Christ, desiring nothing but His mind and His glory. If the eye be diverted from Christ to self, to saints, to relatives, or to any other object for a single moment, it ceases to be single, and perplexity will ensue. But if the eye be single the whole body will be full of light; the mind of Christ will be known and enjoyed; the light of His own presence and counsel will fill the soul, and even the body will become a vessel of light.

But then, as with our blessed Lord, there must be the doing as well as the knowledge of the Father's will: "What things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth

the Son likewise." The activity of the Father found a full and perfect response in that of the Son. With us, alas! it is often far otherwise. Our light, our knowledge, far exceeds our answer to it, and thus the very truth we delight to hold searches and humbles us in the dust before God. Without, however, pursuing this aspect now, we desire rather to press that our responsibility in any given circumstances, the moment we know His mind, is to follow the Lord. Our danger is often in going before Him; but if our eye is steadfastly fixed on Him to discern what He is doing, then the whole of our responsibility lies in following in His steps. As with the Israelites in the wilderness, who remained in their camp when the cloud rested, and commenced their journey when it moved forward, so with ourselves. If the Lord wait we must also wait, and if He advance we must likewise advance, so that, whether in inaction or action, whether in forbearance or in conflict, we may be simply the reflex of His own mind. To-day it may be, according to His will, that we should rest or rather endure; but to-morrow that same will might direct us to activity. Bearing this in mind, our only exercise will lie in detecting the Lord's path, and in seeking grace and strength to be found walking it. "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me." (John xii. 26.)

There is a third thing. The Lord adds, "For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth." This addition is of the greatest importance. It might have been felt, from what has been already said, that the whole onus of discerning the Lord's mind had been thrown upon the believer himself. In a sense this is true; but this truth is now supplemented by another. And it is this, That the Son is the object

of the Father's heart, and that consequently the Father delights to communicate His mind to Him. This is also true of the believer in relation to Christ. "As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you." And in this very connection He says to His disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what His lord doeth: but I have called you friends: for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you." (John xv. 15.) If therefore the Father found His joy in unfolding His mind to the Son, the Son had likewise His delight in imparting what He received to His own. And this is as true now as it was then; for "when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He will not speak of (or *from*) Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you." (John xvi. 13, 14.) To acquire the knowledge therefore of the Lord's mind for us is not an effort on our parts, but it is the result of being in a position to receive the communications, which He both desires and delights to make to His people.

This leads to another important observation. The Lord Himself was always in a position to hear and understand the Father's communication; but we, alas! are too often either deaf to His voice, or slow to apprehend it when heard. Everything depends therefore upon our state of soul; that is, upon our being in a condition to hear and to receive what the Lord may communicate. Two illustrations of this may be cited from the Scriptures. When the Lord was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He said, "Shall I hide

from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him," &c. (Genesis xviii. 17–19.) This is a striking instance of the truth we have named, and the whole chapter testifies also that the Lord's secrets—secrets of manifestation as well as of instruction—are only confided to those who fear Him—to those who are walking apart from the world in communion with Himself. Lot was left, until the very eve of the visitation of the judgment, in utter ignorance of Sodom's coming doom. It was Abraham, who maintained the walk of faith and the pilgrim character, who was admitted into the intimacies of the Lord's purposes and ways. The second illustration, while teaching the same truth, is of another kind. The Lord was seated with His disciples on the passover night, and while with them "He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." The disciples were concerned, as they looked one upon another, to know of whom He spake. And it is very noteworthy that Simon Peter, who was seldom lacking in forward energy, does not on this occasion venture to put the question which they all desired to ask. No; he was not near enough to his Lord, and he instinctively felt it, and hence he beckoned to the disciple whom Jesus loved, and who was leaning on Jesus' bosom, to do so for them. This disciple—John, without doubt—immediately responded, and enquires, "Lord, who is it?" And the Spirit of God, as if to call attention to the fact that no other but he could put the question, repeats that this disciple

was "lying on Jesus' breast." From this scene, in addition to the teaching gleaned from the case of Abraham, we learn, not only that the Lord delights to impart His secrets to those who are in a condition to receive them, but also that those who occupy a place of special nearness can ask the Lord to reveal to them His mind—a thing impossible to do if at a distance from Him. It is really this principle which the Lord Himself affirms when He says, "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him." (John xiv. 21; compare Col. i. 9.)

It will follow therefore that the knowledge of God's mind in any difficulties will never be wanting if, like John, we are living in the habitual enjoyment of the Lord's presence and love, if we know what it is, amid all the confusion and darkness of this evil day, and with the power of Satan present in the midst of the Lord's people, to repose upon that unwearied heart —a heart that remains ever the same, spite of the evil and declension within and around. Absorbed in His love we shall hear His faintest whisper, and His path will be plain before our face. On the other hand, if we are unspiritual or worldly, acting from our own desires or predilections, discernment of the Lord's way, what He is doing, will be impossible. It is quite true that in His tender mercy He may drive us, even when in such a state, by circumstances, control us with the bit and bridle, but that is a far different thing from discerning what "He Himself doeth." In the former case we shall be walking in communion with Himself; in the latter sorrows and chastenings, if not stumblings and

falls, may be His chosen instrumentalities to instruct us in the way we should go.

May we learn ever more fully the meaning of His own words, "If ye abide in Me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you!" E. D.

SATISFIED WITH THEE.

SATISFIED with Thee, Lord Jesus,
I am blest;
Peace which passeth understanding,
On Thy breast:
No more doubting,
No more trembling,
Oh, what rest!

Occupied with me, Lord Jesus,
In Thy grace;
All Thy ways and thoughts about me,
Only trace
Deeper stories
Of the glories
Of Thy grace.

Taken up with Thee, Lord Jesus,
I would be;
Finding joy and satisfaction,
All in Thee:
Thou the nearest,
And the dearest,
Unto me.

Listening for Thy shout, Lord Jesus,*
In the air;

* It would seem from John v. that the shout is for the dead, and not for the living.—ED.

When Thy saints shall rise with joy, to
Meet Thee there,
Oh, what gladness!
No more sadness,
Sin, nor care!

Longing for the Bride, Lord Jesus,
Of Thy heart;
To be with Thee in the glory,
Where Thou art.
Love *so* groundless,
Grace *so* boundless,
Wins my heart.

When Thy blood-bought church, Lord Jesus,
Is complete;
When each soul is safely landed
At Thy feet;
What a story,
In the glory
She 'll repeat!

Oh, to praise Thee there, Lord Jesus,
Evermore!
Oh, to grieve and wander from Thee,
Nevermore!
Earth's sad story
Closed in glory,
On yon shore!

Then Thy Church will be, Lord Jesus,
The display
Of Thy richest grace and kindness,
In that day:
Marking pages,
Wondrous stages,
O'er earth's way."

REBEKAH AND ABIGAIL.

WE adore God's grace and condescension in presenting to us what most intimately concerns our interests, as well as His own glory, portion by portion, "here a little, and there a little," so that notwithstanding our lowliness, yea, *in* our lowliness, we may enjoy communion with Him. "We know in part." The lamb in Egypt, the Red Sea, and the Jordan, combinedly illustrate in type His blessed salvation. The shepherd, the diligent woman, and the father of Luke xv., give us the seal of the Godhead, that this salvation should be the portion of the lost, and His joy when it becomes so. The sacrifices also unfold to us even now the manifold glories of the cross of the Son of God. No one thing could serve as a perfect illustration of the truth, and no one person could manifest it, however devoted to God, save the One in whom all foreshadowings blend, and on whom the most attenuated rays of divine light converge, even Jesus, who is the Truth. Whatever of true zeal, love, devotedness to God, or glory according to God, is manifest in man down here, it is but the feeble reflection of what is in Him. Wherever there has been acquiescence in God's evident arrangements, it but pointed forward to Him who lived "by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God." We have two beautiful examples of such acquiescence in the subjects of this paper—Rebekah's acceptance of God's arrangements for Abraham's son through his aged servant, as well as Abigail's determined acknowledg-

ment of David's royalty, then seen only by faith. This enhances the circumstances recorded in Gen. xxiv. and 1 Sam. xxv., and throws a beam of divine light upon both cases, enabling us to perceive in each a precious type of the Church.

It is our joy to own that when God would form a Bride for His Son, His love to *Him* is the pledge that she will worthily occupy the marvellous position to which she is called. We read of her "*prepared* as a bride, *adorned* for her husband," as "having the glory of God;" and we are instructed that "He who hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God." (2 Cor. v.) Even now "the body" on earth reflects the glory of the Head above. He says, "I am glorified in them." (Compare 1 John iv. 17.) When therefore we consider an Isaac, or a David, typically, not only do we read in a Rebekah or an Abigail his natural complement, even as the Church is "the fulness of Christ" (Eph. i. 23); but we may justly expect to find something premonitory of the grace of Christ in themselves also, which we have seen to be the case. This makes a study of our subjects directly profitable to our souls. In a consideration of the moral features displayed in Rebekah's history we find those doubtless which link her case with Abigail's; but the former presents more the ardent zeal manifested at the opening of the wilderness journey; the latter, the intelligent apprehension of the supreme worth of the bride's object, gained amid the vicissitudes of the journey, in immediate view of the close.

Abraham will not seek a wife for his son among the nations around him, upon whom the judgment of God rested because of their iniquity (Gen. xv. 16–21), and whose destruction would be concurrent with the estab-

lishment of his seed in the glory which God had promised. God moreover had called him into a pilgrimship, away from country, kindred, and father's house, which, as *he* realized the call, extended to "his household after him." When therefore Abraham's servant suggested the compromise, by which Isaac's true place on earth would be ignored, to meet the contingency of the woman's hesitation or dislike, to leave country, kindred, and father's house, and to become a pilgrim with him, the servant receives reiterated caution that Isaac's place on earth should be maintained at all cost. The standard should not be lowered *under any circumstances.* How many adopt the suggestion just referred to, and lower the gospel standard, to make grace palatable to those who naturally shrink from the claims of such glory as God offers, involving identification with the lowly Jesus in the scene of His rejection! How few work from the apostolic point of view, in which Christ's glory is supreme, and the gospel the means of gathering "from among the nations a people for His name!" (Acts xv. 14.)

The servant goes forth, the bearer of glad tidings, and proves the truth of the scripture: "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." He "rolls his way upon the Lord, and He brings it to pass." (Psalm xxxvii. 5, marg.) Forth comes Rebekah *before he had done speaking,* who brings him to her father's house. He *will not eat* until he has told his errand, in which the glories of the heir, his separate place in the scene of his pilgrimage, and the uncompromising character of that pilgrimage, are set forth. He dwells upon the tokens by which the Lord God authenticated His servant Abraham's messenger.

This being accepted, Rebekah receives from the

messenger's treasures (Matt. xiii. 52), tokens of Isaac's glory—a foretaste of what she is called to share. Her relations also profit through the overflowing abundance of the source which is henceforth to be at her command. It is worthy of notice that as yet she knows nothing of Isaac *himself*. She has not even heard his name. The parents see the advantage offered, but though appealed to, on the ground of God's hand being so manifest in the whole matter, to let Rebekah go at once away, they hesitate, saying, "Let the damsel abide with us * a few days" (a full year, marg.). She however, like Paul in other days, "immediately, conferring not with flesh and blood," says, "I will go." She yields herself implicitly to that in which God's hand is so plainly seen, and enters upon the vicissitudes of a dreary journey, leaving country, kindred, and father's house for a land and circumstances yet unknown, except through belief in the message. Arrived at Gerah, though she has met Isaac, and learned *his name* from himself, she has not reached the termination of her pilgrimage. It now assumes a new and characteristic phase, in which Rebekah learns how much is still to be endured in fellowship with Isaac, and how much he is to her in the midst of it all. Thus we have typified in her the commencement of the Church's wilderness journey, the start for and with Christ of a new-born soul. Such zeal! Everything laid aside and counted dead weight in the ardour of first love. It was so with early Christians. They "took joyfully the spoiling of their

* Thus it ever is with "flesh and blood." (Gal. i. 16.) Abraham could leave country and kindred; but not until his *father's death* set him free from the influences of flesh and blood, did he leave his "father's house" at Charran.

goods, knowing that in heaven they had a better and an enduring substance."

"All *for Him* content to leave."

Turning now to 1 Sam. xxv., Rebekah's pilgrimage passed on to her children in a manner too truly sorrowful, and they had not as yet entered into rest, God saying in David, "To-day . . . for if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day." But in David, a man after His own heart, God offers rest to His people. Abigail owns David as God's anointed, whose soul should be "bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord God," realizes what God was offering to Israel, if they would hear his voice, and thus morally reaches the end of the journey upon which Rebekah entered. Historically, we know, Israel did not then attain to God's rest. The rest remains, and will be secured through mercy to Israel in the blessed antetype. Meantime God's king is in rejection. Dark times have fallen upon David since the women of Israel sang, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands." Hunted as a partridge on the mountains, with but few followers, those whom distress, poverty, and bitterness of soul (xxii. 2, marg.) had gathered around him, God takes occasion by these circumstances to test Israel, and to gather out a company, who should receive a distinguished place in the coming glory with their leader, and amongst these we find Abigail. Wherever faith exists, the trials which test it but manifest its character to the glory of God. (Compare Deut. xxxiii. 8, 9.) Abigail's faith is equal to the test. Nabal, though her husband, fails altogether. His heart is set upon present advantage, and this blinds him alike to David's

glory, and Saul's already twice-revealed rejection. (xiii. 14; xv. 23–31.) To him accordingly Saul, who heads *his* line of things, is supreme, and David perhaps a servant broken away from his master! David's place tests everything, as indeed one might expect in so striking a type of the Blessed One whom Simeon (Luke ii.) speaks of as a "sign that shall be *spoken against*, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed," the sword piercing through even Mary's own soul, according to Heb. iv. 12, 13. Not alone is faith manifested; it is measured also in all who come in contact with the rejected David — God's standard. Hence we find, intermediate, as it were, between the Nabals and the Abigails, the Jonathans, who, though loving David as their own soul, fall short of the mark. David had wrought a great deliverance in Israel, in which God's hand was evident, and Jonathan so appreciates it that he strips himself to do David honour, brings Saul's wrath upon himself by shielding David according to the dictates of the love which bound them together, holds sweet counsel with him in the wood (xxiii. 16), but returns from that friendly conference to Saul's house, and David to the hold in the wilderness! Why? The answer is unmistakable. "I know," he says, "that thou shalt be king over Israel," but adds, "And *I shall be next unto thee.*" Here is Jonathan's weak point—*self* is there. To argue his humility from the circumstances would doubtless be easy; but the *character* of the humility is what is now in question; for God's king is in rejection. Love he certainly had, but not that which bid him to count all things but rubbish for the object of God's choice; faith too, but not that which closed his eye upon the things that were seen and tem-

poral. There was just enough self-love left to make him seek a *place* by-and-by, just enough of it to make him value the same now. He went back and died in company with Saul on mount Gilboa, losing both the future and the present! "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it." (Luke ix. 24.) "O Jonathan, thou wast slain *in thine high places!*"

It is interesting to observe that in the poor, crippled Mephibosheth we discover the moral condition one would have looked for in the devoted Jonathan. Before the king he is but a "dead dog" confessed; and when David returns to Jerusalem upon the death of Absalom, he can say concerning the scheming Ziba, in respect of what might have been gain to him, "*Let him take all,* since my lord, the king, has returned again in peace." Utterly devoid of self, his heart is a vacuum which nought but David can fill. But what it has cost the son of Jonathan to be brought to this—shorn of his patrimony, an exile, and helplessly crippled!

Abigail attained morally the level upon which Mephibosheth stood before David, but surpassed him even in this, that David was not then in power; he was still in rejection, yet her faith and devotedness shine out brilliantly in a day of persistent darkness for the object of her esteem. Abigail ministers to David; but more, she saw the divinely imparted dignity which rested upon him amid the sorrows of his outcast place, and meets him becomingly. To her Saul is but "a man" (*v.* 29), and so zealous is she for the reputation of David that she pleads with him on *this* ground in behalf of her unworthy husband, identifying herself with his iniquity; and she merely begs to be remembered of David "when he

cometh into his kingdom." This a crucified thief could do acceptably, and the becoming nature of his request from a despised and rejected Lord, manifests by contrast the ill savour of that which earned for James and John His just rebuke, and in which they morally stood alongside Jonathan. How different is the tenor of Psalm cxxxi.! David received Abigail's offering, hearkened to her voice, and accepted her person (*v.* 35); and when, in the Lord's judgment, ten days subsequently, Nabal dies, David sent and communed with Abigail to take her to be his wife. She bows herself to the earth before his messengers, and utters the most perfect expression of a truly humble heart—"Let thine handmaid be a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my Lord." (Compare John xiii. 5, 14.) She took Ham's place (see Gal. iii. 13), a consciously unworthy, self-emptied thing, in more than mere words too; for she manifests her unfeigned humility by submitting unhesitatingly to the word of David; "she hasted . . . and went after the messengers of David, and became his wife."

Jezreel yielded David a second wife, according to verse 43, which evidently typifies the connection of Israel (the Jezreel or "seed of God," sown to Him on the earth, Hosea ii. 19–23) with Christ in a future day; also "betrothed" to Him "for ever . . . in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies . . . even in faithfulness." *She* shall be brought unto *the king* in a raiment of needlework, wonderfully wrought doubtless, just as she, typified by Abigail, will be presented to *the Lamb* (Rev. xix. 7, 8) in a raiment suited to His eye. "To *her was granted* that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white . . . the righteousness of saints." As the world will see her, it will

be purely as an object of grace, "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . having *the glory of God.*" But the blessed Lamb of God will delight to present *unto Himself* His Church, clad in a robe which bespeaks his own zealous and gracious care for her as she passes along through a defiling scene. He "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it *with the washing of water by the word, that He might* present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." How zealous we might be in this also, were our eye filled with the scene which terminates our present course—the marriage of the Lamb! Clad in righteousness then, and in view of that, walking as He walked now, aiming at present likeness to Him, knowing that we shall be like Him when He shall appear. What need hinder us adding, as it were, to the beauties of the bridal robe now, seeing that we find such a precious grouping of righteousnesses in Abigail—unfeigned humility, ready obedience, zeal for her lord's reputation, becoming service rendered him, thorough contempt for Saul's line of things, worthy prudence, and readiness to attribute to herself the shortcomings of others? J. K.

ON MINISTERING CHRIST.

THE Scriptures testify of Christ. Our Lord said, "They are they which testify of me." Whatever else they may set forth, it is clear that the great subject of God's revelation to man is Christ Jesus the Lord. In various ways, by many instruments, at different times, and under manifold circumstances, the divine glory of

His person, His perfect manhood, His moral excellencies, His infinite perfections, His finished work, His fulness, and His offices are blessedly presented to us in the Scriptures of eternal truth.

In our Lord's personal ministry, wherever He was, He declared the Father, and so perfectly showed in His ways and words the characteristics of Him who sent Him, that He could truly say at the close, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father;" and His dealings with those around manifested that He was "full of grace and truth." Instead of casting out any sinner who came to Him, He opened wide His arms, and said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He plainly declared that He was the only Saviour of sinners, and the Refuge and resource for His own loved disciples.

While constantly insisting on the divine authenticity of Scripture, and declaring that "the Scripture cannot be broken," He was Himself the living expression of it. The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us. In the sacred writings, as the fitting occasions came, He was presented as the woman's Seed that should bruise the serpent's head, the Seed of Abraham; and yet He could most truly say, "Before Abraham was I am;" the virgin's Child, and yet Emmanuel; the Son given, and yet the perfect Man. Scripture spake of Him as David's son, and yet being David's Lord; the offspring of David, and yet the root; Son of man, yet Son of God. There we read of Him as the Prophet that was to be raised up, the Priest after Melchisedec's order, and the King who shall yet sit on the throne of His father David, and reign over the house of Jacob for ever, of whose kingdom there shall be no end. Songs of triumph

and of joy referred to Him; prophets testified by the Spirit of His sufferings, and the glories which should follow; and we know that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Scripture also teaches us that in the man Christ Jesus eternal life has been manifested, divine love has been manifested, and God has been manifested. By Him God's ways have been vindicated, His counsels and purposes have been and will be carried out, His word fulfilled, His truth established, His righteousness perfectly met, the holy demands of His throne fully answered. There we behold Jesus, when in the path of deepest suffering, even when forsaken of God, glorifying Him with perfect obedience, perfect love and perfect faith. There on the cross was the entire surrender of Himself, and a complete answer to every claim of divine justice on account of our sins. All was divinely perfect, so that at the end of the solitary way He could say, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do."

Again, when in company with the evangelists who were inspired to mark out for our comfort the footprints of His blessed path, He is sometimes brought before us as compassionately satisfying hungry thousands with a few loaves and fishes, with abundance of broken food left; and yet He deigned to accept the ministry to Himself of certain women of their substance. We look with wonder at Him at one moment, as the One who carried our griefs, weeping with the sorrowful and bereaved; and at another, raising the dead as "the resurrection and the life." Again we see Him weary and asleep on a pillow in the hinder part of the ship, and when awakened by His distressed dis-

ciples, commanding the stormy wind to cease, and the raging waves to be still. Yea, in every page of the inspired narrative enough is recorded to fill our worshipping hearts with wonder, love, and praise.

Again and again the written Word speaks of this spotless One, who was "separate from sinners," as having once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, to bring us to God; who came into the world to save sinners, and died for our sins according to the Scriptures. In life we see Him resisting Satan, overcoming him in every temptation, casting out devils with His omnipotent word, and through death destroying him that had the power of death. Mighty Conqueror! In His life the repeated testimony from heaven was, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And God's righteous estimate of His death was, that it entitled Him to the highest glory and honour; while the rent veil, the raising Him up from among the dead for our justification, and the gift to us of the Holy Ghost, most unquestionably show God's entire satisfaction with His atoning work on the cross for us. If we look at Jesus in His life, there is everything to win our hearts; and in His death, there is everything to meet our consciences. The perfection and glory of Himself fills our souls with joy; the value of His finished work gives us rest and peace. It is to Him, as Son of man, all judgment is committed, and to His name every knee must bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord; for He will yet, according to the working of His mighty power, subdue all things unto Himself.

Thus, whether we look at the typical days of olden times, at the many shadowy illustrations of a former dispensation, or at the Lord's own ways and ministry

in the days of His flesh—whether we view Him in His life or in His death, it is Himself of whom the Scriptures testify, it is Himself who engages our hearts, it is Himself that is ministered to our souls; and though some parts of Scripture appear to the natural man to be only dry records of history, or details of long-forgotten ordinances, they are often found to the soul under divine teaching to be rich in comforting or in instructive ministrations of Christ to the heart.

If in life our Lord emphatically endorsed the writings of Moses as concerning Himself, if He quoted the Psalms of David as the Holy Ghost's testimony of Himself, and referred to the prophets as also having reference to Himself, the same was equally characteristic of His ministry to His disciples after He rose from the dead. He assured some that their mistake and folly arose from not believing all that the prophets had spoken, and He showed them that He Himself was the great subject of Old Testament revelation and ministry; for "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them *in all the Scriptures* the things concerning Himself." On another occasion He also said unto His disciples, "that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me." (Luke xxiv.) Thus He not only authenticates the Old Testament writings as a whole, but assures us that their ministry is concerning Himself.

And after our Lord had ascended, and the Holy Ghost had come down at Pentecost, and formed the Church—the body of Christ—though there was greater power with the Word, the ministry had the same characteristics—

the divine authority of Scripture, and their testimony concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. The books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets were quoted by the apostles as a divine revelation and a divine ministration of Christ, so that those who heard their preaching, or read their writings, must have known that it was not merely something about Christ, but the ministry of Christ Himself to the heart by a power which brings home the blessedness of Christ, that takes of the things of Christ, and shows them unto us. To their hearers they set forth His person, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification; they spake of the gift of the Holy Ghost, His Godhead, personality, indwelling, and operations as the glorifier of Christ, as well as the abundant love of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort; while our Lord's coming again, His kingdom and reign, were constantly proclaimed. It was Christ they so presented to those to whom they ministered, that we are told that "they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ." If Peter's line of things was the kingdom and Paul's the Church, they both enforced the divine authority of the word of God over the heart and conscience; and both set forth Christ. If Peter in his early sermons quoted from Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets, we find Paul reasoning "out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus," he says, "whom I preach unto you is Christ." He quotes from the Psalms when preaching at Antioch; and again we are told that he persuaded others "out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening." (Acts xvii. 3; xxviii. 23.)

It is scarcely necessary to refer to the epistles to trace how often the books of Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets are cited by the apostles in their inspired writings, and that too as positively ministering Christ to souls. Even a careless observer of these writings could scarcely fail to see that the great subject they present, whether occupied with the past, present, or future, is the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only is He to be seen as the light and glory of every page, but He is the all-attractive, all-sufficient Object set before us to meet us in every state, and to satisfy every need of our souls. Whether Peter, Paul, John, James, or Jude be the instrument, it is the blessed Lord of whom they write.

Nor is Christ less prominently set forth in the Apocalypse; for not only is the Lamb, and the value of His precious blood, often made to pass before our spiritual vision; but Christ as Son of man is seen judging the assemblies, and presented to each assembly according to its state, circumstances, and need. Though the book be a revelation for the most part of what had not been known before, yet the golden threads are so interwoven with the testimony of Moses and the prophets that the spiritual eye fails not to perceive that the many books of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, form a marvellous whole, which, though written by many instruments, must have emanated from an Omniscient and Almighty mind. How truly then do the Scriptures testify of Christ, and tell us that which is concerning Himself! and how clearly too it is manifest that the Holy Ghost, who moved men to write them, has therein been the glorifier and testifier of Christ! H. H. S.

(*To be continued, D.V.*)

"WHERE I AM."

"TELL me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon: for why should I be as one that turneth aside by the flocks of thy companions? If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents." (Song of Solomon i. 7, 8.)

The language of the earthly bride in this passage is free from all obscurity. She has Himself, the object of her heart's delight, and she converses with Him. But because He is known to her, and is the joy and delight of her heart, the One whom her soul loveth, she covets to learn what she can only learn from Himself, the place of His habitual resort; for there would she abide with Him. This is fitting and beautiful; for it is the quality of true affection to seek out the environment of its object, the scene in which it moves, and responsive love delights to answer to so clear an evidence of the affection it has inspired. Hence we find the two disciples, who had been attracted to the person of the Lord by the overflowing appreciation of Him by the Baptist, when he exclaimed "Behold the Lamb of God," being asked by the Lord "What seek ye?" with unaffected simplicity made answer, "Master, where abidest thou?" the beauty of which is only excelled by His equally simple reply, "Come and see. They came then and saw where He abode, and they abode with Him that day." Surely it was the quintessence of the Christianity that should be according to God; the divine drama re-

hearsed. For there is (1) Himself, known in His sacrificial character as God's Lamb; (2) He is followed; and (3) dwelt with where He dwells. His work, His person, and His place all ours. If I have, through grace, a valid claim to one, I have equally so to all. The title and the estate go together. The more then I value Himself, the more I seek to be where He is; and if that be in its full character denied me for a time, yet I cannot be denied an interest in the scene where He abides, nor be prevented in spirit abiding with Him; for I have an undeniable title, in the plenitude of His grace, to His own portion for ever.

It would be easy to trace this principle through Scripture. The innocent man had his Eden; lawless man, a cursed earth. The typically redeemed nation, a land flowing with milk and with honey; the really redeemed of Old Testament times had heaven. And the Church has the prepared place in the Father's house, in a word, "Where I am." The Lord not only taught this to His beloved disciples in distinct terms, but He fortified and comforted their hearts with it, in view of His being about to leave them. "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and *where I am*, there shall also my servant be." Again, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that *where I am*, there ye may be also." And finally, in that wonderful John xvii., "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me *where I am;* that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." The deep significance of

this is most precious, and for us is full of joy. As He said, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." We have not to wait for Him to take His place; He fills that place already. "Being by the right hand of God exalted," as the glorified Man in the presence of God, He but waits now the word of the Father to come forth and fetch His beloved saints to where He Himself is. The greater result of His divine work is already wrought—this taking His place as man in the scene which His own presence fills and illuminates. The lesser result only is what remains—the bringing us there also, which is but the complement of that glorious act of divinely surpassing power which the God of our Lord Jesus Christ wrought "when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. i. 20, 21.)

The very fact that He as Son of man has passed through death and resurrection, and now occupies a place in the Father's house as our "forerunner," assures that place to us, according to the counsel of His will who has predestinated that He and we shall be glorified together. The deep significance of this is most precious, being full association with Himself in His own acquired place, both now and eternally.

Nor are we left till the day of glory for an apprehension of what such blessedness will be. Its present enjoyment in character and quality, though by no means in its adequate degree, is assured to us in the words, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Accord-

ingly we have when so gathered the "where I am" made good to us even now, in a way incomparably blessed for saints while on earth. This side the glory no scene can rival the blessedness to us, and the unique joy to Him, of the gathering together of Himself and His saints; and at such a time the Spirit of God loves to conduct our hearts right onward to that still fairer scene, and that still happier occasion, when we shall walk with Him in white, and when the "where I am" shall be peopled with His blood-washed ones, His companions in unfading glory, Himself in their midst in His many-phased beauty and supremacy, the centre and the spring of their exceeding joy for ever.

May our hearts, under His exquisite touch, be moved by the Spirit of God to cherish and to cultivate a joyous and hallowing anticipation of the approaching blessedness of His unclouded presence, which is "fulness of joy." W. R.

THE consequence of Christ's priesthood is that He makes us priests. He has entered in once into the holy place. That relates to Himself; and He makes us children with the Father and priests to God. He has, of course, the preëminence. The moment the least thought of a priesthood comes in between us and God, the truth of Christianity is gone. There is only now the priesthood of all believers. We are priests by virtue of the competency to enter the holiest of all. There is as much liberty for us to enter into the holiest as Christ Himself. To deny the priesthood of all believers is to say that all saints cannot enter into the holiest by virtue of that blood.

"EMPTY VESSELS."

A GOOD deal has been said and written, especially in poetry, about the need of our being empty vessels, ready for the use of the Master. The thought is, that our being kept empty is the qualification for immediate use, that when in that condition the Lord can take us up, fill us, and send us forth on any service to which He calls. Is this a scriptural thought?

We will consider, first of all, the scriptures in which the term vessels or vessel is found. In 2 Cor. iv. the apostle says, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels." (*v.* 7.) There is little doubt that this passage contains an allusion to Gideon and his men. We read that "he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet into every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers." (Judges vii. 16.) The pitchers had been empty, it will be observed, but Gideon put the lights—the brands or torches—inside. This will help us to understand the meaning of the treasure in the earthen vessels of which St. Paul speaks. It is evidently, from the context, the knowledge of the glory of God, that glory which, displayed in the face of the glorified Christ, God had caused to shine in our hearts. But this once received, by the operation of sovereign power and grace (for it was the God who had commanded the light to shine out of darkness who hath shined in our hearts), does not come and go, but remains as an abiding possession. The condition of its display is another thing, involving the constantly bearing about

in the body the dying of Jesus (*v.* 10); but the treasure remains in the vessel.

In 2 Timothy ii. the term vessels is also found. "In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, prepared unto every good work." (*vv.* 20, 21.) The question here, as will be readily seen, is not of empty or full vessels, but entirely one of association. To be a vessel ready to the Master's hand, "a man" must be in separation from the vessels of dishonour, thus affirming the principle of defilement through our associations and consequent disqualification for service. Only as purged from the vessels of dishonour can one become a vessel unto honour, one which the Master will delight to take up and employ. But passing on to the next chapter, we learn that if the man of God is to be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works, he must be well instructed from the Scriptures. (See *vv.* 14–17.) With this agrees the exhortation in Colossians—"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another," &c. In other words, the vessel must be filled, and not there and then for the immediate service, but it must be in that state habitually; the word must *dwell* in the vessel, and then it will flow out in teaching as the Master may require.

If we now refer to the truth involved more generally, the same result will be obtained. When our Lord was speaking to the woman of Samaria, He said, "Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be

in him a well" (fountain) "of water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv. 14.) Here again the water once received—a symbol doubtless of life in the power of the Holy Ghost—remains as a permanent possession. Hence if we turn to John vii. we discover that the water is not only received, but that it also flows out: "He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (*v.* 38.) The vessel is thus filled, and filled in the first place for its own eternal satisfaction, and then it overflows in blessing to others. It is freely conceded that there must be the constant reception, but even so the vessel is never to be empty. Nay, the well or fountain is within, because it is connected with the gift of the indwelling Spirit; for John expressly says, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive." (*v.* 39.) Possessing therefore the Holy Ghost, the normal state of the believer is to be filled even to overflowing with His power—power of life—so that "rivers of living water" might flow out for the refreshment and blessing of those around. There could not, in this view of the case, be an empty vessel, and it is equally clear that to be prepared for service is to be full to overflowing. Even more might be said. Living in the power of the Holy Ghost, as so possessed, these streams of living water would ever be flowing forth as from a perennial fountain. On the other hand, if these streams should, through the grieving of the Holy Spirit of God, not be flowing out, and the vessel in a sense become empty, such an one would not, it is needless to say, be in a condition for the Master's use.

If we now refer to another class of scriptures the same conclusion will be reached. Two will suffice.

"Let your loins be girded about, *and your lights burning*," &c. (Luke xii. 35.) "Among whom ye shine as lights in the world." (Phil. ii. 15.) Now the "lights" in these and other scriptures always signify Christ—Christ as shining out, in the power of the Holy Ghost, through the life of the believer. When in this scene Christ was the light of the world; and, in His absence, believers occupy this same place; but they only answer to it in so far as Christ is practically expressed in their walk and ways. There is therefore a correspondency between these scriptures and that already considered, which tells us that "we have this treasure in earthen vessels." For Christ must be possessed before He can be expressed; the light must be within before it can shine forth in the midst of the darkness by which we are surrounded. An empty vessel would thus be one without Christ, and it is not the way of our Lord to take up such, and kindle the light, and send him forth to shine in special missions of service. No; the more the vessel is filled with Christ—and the condition of being filled is to be constantly occupied with beholding the glory that radiates from His unveiled face at the right hand of God—the brighter will be the illumination that will stream forth, and the more distinctly will it be ready to the Master's hand for disposal at His will. It was the foolish virgins, and not the wise, who had the empty vessels; they had no oil in them, significant of the fact that they were not born again, and consequently had not the indwelling Spirit. The wise had failed in not trimming their lamps; but inasmuch as their vessels were not empty they were aroused in time to meet the Bridegroom, and went by His grace in with Him to the marriage. The others—

the foolish virgins with the empty vessels—were shut out for ever.

The question may then be put, Is it possible for the Christian to be an empty vessel? One of two things will always follow. Either he will be filled with Christ, or with himself and the things which centre in himself. Thus, if not filled with Christ, he is always in danger. It was so with the Jewish nation. The unclean spirit of idolatry had gone out, but finding no rest, in the language of our blessed Lord, the unclean spirit saith, "I will return to my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first." (Matt. xii. 43–45.) If now that nation had received Christ, He would have filled up the void, and they would have been secure from this awful intrusion of wicked spirits. In like manner, unless the believer is filled with Christ, he is ever exposed to be occupied and possessed with what is opposed to Christ. An empty vessel he should not, and indeed cannot, be.

It is quite true that, if the Lord sends any of His own on special service, everything—power, wisdom, grace, and the message, if this be the kind of service—must all be received from Him. Nothing of our own, nothing that springs from self, can be used for Him. But the point is, that the believer will not be in a condition to be employed unless he is already filled. And the more filled he is, the more Christ practically possesses his soul, the more consciously dependent he will be, and the more certain therefore, when the privilege of any service is conferred, to look up to receive

all he needs for it from the Lord. So in the primitive church, it was when they were all filled with the Holy Ghost that they spake the word of God with boldness. (See Acts iv. 31; also ii. 4, &c.) It is therefore, we again repeat, not empty, but filled vessels, that the Lord requires for His sovereign disposal in service.

E. D.

NEHEMIAH AND JUDE.

THERE is one striking correspondency between the book of Nehemiah and the epistle of Jude. In the former we read, that "every one with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other held a weapon. For the builders, every one, had his sword girded by his side, and so builded." In the latter, Jude, at the commencement of his epistle, exhorts us "earnestly to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints;" and, at the end, "to build up ourselves on our most holy faith." He would have us, in a word, like Nehemiah's builders, with the sword in one hand, and the trowel in the other. The reason is found in the character of the times. Certain men had crept in unawares, and apostates abounded. It was no time for peace, therefore, when the foundations were being assailed. In the face of such dangers God would have His people valiant for the truth. The sword, it should be observed, is rather for defence than for attack; but conflict must not be shrunk from when the faith once delivered to the saints is in question. But while prepared for, and even in the midst of, conflict, we must also be diligently occupied with the edification of ourselves, and of one another, that we may be the better prepared to resist the attacks of the enemy.

* *

THE NEED OF HOLINESS.

In Genesis iii. we see that it was by the Fall that man *got* a conscience, and the first effect of the acting of that conscience was to make him seek to cover the nakedness of which his disobedience had given him the knowledge, and then, as soon as he heard the voice of God, to seek to hide himself from His presence. This was the necessary consequence of the knowledge of evil, mingled with the feeling that he had committed this evil, and that consequently he was unfit to appear before a God, who could not be other than a Judge who must needs condemn the sinner.

Conscience tells us this, and makes us feel it; but human intelligence, blinded by Satan, seeks to excuse the evil, and to account for everything by setting God entirely aside. In principle this is morally, in fact, only the repetition of what our first parents did—it is seeking to cover oneself, and hide from God. All these efforts result in weakening the thought of holiness in the soul. Man, when he is only led by his reason, is irrational, and gets further and further from the truth. He is in darkness; but being also blind, he cannot discern between light and darkness. Therefore it is written, "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts." (Ps. x. 4.) And in this respect the philosopher is no better than others. (Rom. ii. 1–11.) If the foundation of his reasonings be false, how can the building which he rears upon it abide? Hence the truth of this oft-

epeated statement, that there is no morality apart from revelation. Let those who deny God tell us, if they can, what the moral principles are which they pretend to possess, apart from that which God has revealed to us in the Scriptures.

But the word of God does not simply offer us a moral code; that is to say, a system of principles of action so framed that men may be able to live together in peace, and that society should be upheld and kept together. It also shows that the only source of true happiness for man is in that very presence from which he flees, and which he ever tries to avoid. God has not desired to be only the *Judge* of the sinner. In His grace He comes to seek man; albeit, on the principle of righteousness, He reveals Himself as a *just* God and a SAVIOUR. By drawing to Himself, in grace and in peace, His fallen creature, that sin had set at a distance, God manifests His glory even there where the enemy has triumphed. But God cannot thus bring a sinful creature into His blessed presence without giving him the perception and the consciousness of divine holiness; for it is evident that God cannot change His character, nor lower the standard of His holiness, in order to bring man into relationship with Himself. Morality may suffice between man and man, but there must be *holiness* for relationship with God. Scripture insists on this throughout.

But this great lesson of holiness supposes another, without which it could not be learnt by a sinner at a distance from God. We refer to the revelation of the grace and faithfulness of God. I must know God as a Saviour-God before my soul can be in a condition to understand what His holiness requires; therefore the

first lines of Scripture declare His infinite goodness, thus preparing the way for the equally important revelation of His holiness. God is Love, and God is Light. The cross of Christ is the explanation of these two great truths, and is also their highest expression, while at the same time they reach on side by side to the resurrection of Christ (particularly so as regards holiness); for He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from among the dead." (Rom. i. 4.)

In connection with what we have said, we see that the first book of the Bible—Genesis—displays different phases of the faithful goodness of God, His purposes of grace towards man; but ever, of course, on the ground of holiness,* yet so presented as to attract the heart of him who knows not God, and to produce confidence in one whom sin has rendered distrustful of God. The two following books, on the contrary, are especially occupied with holiness. Exodus lays the groundwork, and Leviticus, with a few chapters in Numbers, developes the details in connection with the national and priestly order of the children of Israel.

With one exception, and that is in reference to the institution of the Sabbath (chap. ii. 3), the word "holiness," or to "hallow," does not occur in Genesis. In truth this book does not treat of redemption nor of the habitation of God amongst men. God comes forth to seek man, He calls him, and keeps him in faithful grace; He justifies him, and accomplishes all His purposes towards him; He produces faith in his soul, nourishes it, and tests it, and thereby makes His servants to walk

* The history of the Deluge shows most clearly what God thinks of man, and manifests that He neither can nor will tolerate sin.

in communion with Him. Such are some of the precious truths as to the ways of God which are to be found in this first book, and which are characteristic of it; but it is nowhere intimated that God's thought is to come down and dwell among men. The first twenty-two verses of Heb. xi. give a review of the teachings of this book as regards faith. In Genesis there are two great divisions. The first closes with chapter xi., and developes the great principles of the government of God; the second, which begins with the history of Abraham, speaks of God's call and His sovereign grace towards His elected ones. Holy men of God were maintained in communion with Him, their faith was fed by the communications He made to them. And they, confessing that they were "strangers and pilgrims" on the earth, sought a "better country," a "heavenly city," so that God was not ashamed of being called "their God." (Heb. xi. 16.) Even in the first part of the book we find one of these, Enoch, who received witness during his lifetime that he walked with God, and he was not found; for God had translated him.

Exodus enters upon the great subject of redemption. God will have a people for *Himself* that He may dwell amongst them; consequently this nation must be *holy*, for God is holy. (See Exod. xix. 4–6; xxix. 43–46.) Hence the state in which God's grace formed this people is given in detail, as well as their moral condition, and the attitude of their heart toward God. Their deliverance from Egypt, and the power of Pharaoh, occupies a large portion of the book, and this prepares the way morally for the establishment of the *sanctuary* in which God deigned to dwell in their

midst, and of which we have the first mention in chap. xv. 17. (See also chap. xxv. 8.)

Moses was the chosen vessel raised and prepared by God for the deliverance of His people Israel. To him God revealed the only ground on which He could bring man into relationship with Himself—that of absolute holiness. He showed it to him before He sent him to the Israelites. The flame of fire out of the midst of the bush in the wilderness was the suited figure for enabling Moses to grasp the great lesson God had to teach him, and to cause the words which were said to him to sink deep into his soul: "Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Exod. iii. 5.) The God who was here revealing Himself to Moses was the same who had led the fathers in His perfect grace, and could therefore say to him, "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob;" so that his affections might be drawn to God by the remembrance of His goodness to the patriarchs. Thus was Moses prepared for the reception of all the teaching expressed in the burning bush. We also see through the whole of his subsequent history how deeply this lesson was engraven on his heart, and how it formed the basis of all his relations with God. (Comp. Exod. xxxiii.; Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3, &c.) God said to him, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people . . . and *I am come down* to deliver them." This involved the near relationship of the people with God, a relationship which could only exist on the ground of HOLINESS. God is LOVE, and HE IS LIGHT.

W. J. L.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

(*Continued from page 28.*)

DWELLING on the former of these subjects, Paul reminds them of what they had been morally; viz., dead in offences and sins, walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience. That was the condition of the Gentile; and the Jew was really no better, though he had the knowledge of God. Dead in offences he too was, and had his conversation among the sons of disobedience in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and was by nature a child of wrath even as the rest. All these found on one common platform, as dead in offences and active in evil, God, rich in mercy, had quickened with Christ, had raised them up together (believers from Jews and from Gentiles), and made them both to sit in the heavenlies in Christ. How closely are believers here connected with Christ! If the Holy Ghost dwells on the exaltation of Christ, it is to tell us how God has put us in Him in the heavenlies, bringing out the motive which thus actuated Him—His great love wherewith He loved us—and the purpose of it, to show in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. Saved then by grace through faith, and all this of God, not of works, lest any man should boast, we are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before prepared, that we should

walk in them. Thus we learn of the depth of ruin in which we were, and of the height to which we have been raised in grace. Dead in sins, needing too a nature in which we could serve God, we are saved, and created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and are in Him now in the heavenlies, waiting for that hour to arrive when we shall be in person with Him there for ever.

But divine grace has worked for those once Gentiles in another way. Dispensational distance characterised them; for God had made a difference between His earthly people and all others. What a Gentile's position was dispensationally we read in ii. 11–12. How that has been changed the apostle goes on to point out: "Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." In His death, as making atonement for sins, those once Jews have a common interest with those once Gentiles. In His death, by which the middle wall of partition has been broken down, which separated dispensationally, by God's appointment, the Jews from the Gentiles, we have a special interest. Once far off, we are made nigh by His blood, and through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Hence all special privileges of the one class over the other are annulled, not by reducing the Jew to the level dispensationally of the Gentile; nor by raising the Gentile to the privileged platform on which the Jew had been put; but by forming in Christ of twain one new man, and by reconciling both unto God in one body through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby. Wherefore, as citizens of God's kingdom, as forming part of God's household, and as built on the foundation of the apostles and pro-

phets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone, those once Gentiles are brought nigh in Christ to God, to be stones in that temple, at present building, in which He will dwell for ever, and are now builded together for God's habitation on earth in the Spirit. Such are God's displays of grace, in which we share who believe on His Son.

The necessary consequence of the unfolding of all this grace has to be pressed on the recipients of it. But before doing that, the apostle, in a parenthetic way, as it has been pointed out, dwells more at length on the mystery, or secret, kept close from every intelligent creature until revealed to him. "For this cause," he writes, "I Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the Gentiles"—a most touching appeal to them and to us. For the Lord Jesus Christ, as he elsewhere writes (Phil. iii. 7, 8), he suffered the loss of all things. For the Gentiles, as he here reminds them, he was a prisoner at that time. Evidently Paul thought the special grace in which they shared was of great value, and to maintain the truth in connection with it he was willing to endure imprisonment and bonds. Could any one who had been a Gentile have visited Paul in his prison at Rome, and have come away satisfied for himself simply to know Christ as his Saviour, without valuing the privileges and the grace which God bestowed on those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? One could scarcely fancy that there had been such a man; one could not envy such an one if he had existed. Onesiphorus surely, as he wended his way from Paul's prison, did not think lightly of the grace and privileges in which, formerly a Gentile, he now shared, and for the maintenance of which Paul was suffering. To have the

courage to stand by him was one thing; to have seen him in prison, and to have thought lightly of the privileges, to maintain which for them he was suffering, was another. Remembering that he did thus suffer, should any Christian in our day be contented to have no interest in that especial revelation of God's mind, because of which the apostle endured so much? This appeal might well challenge each one who reads it even now.

"I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God given me for you-ward." This calls us to hearken to that which, in the goodness and wisdom of God, was made known to Paul for us; viz., the revelation of the mystery. What that is he briefly tells us; viz., that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel. Nothing that God had given to His saints from among the Jews were those formerly Gentiles now to be without. Of the heirship, and of the promise in Christ through the gospel, we have already heard in chap. i. 3–14. The truth of the Body, too, was just touched on (23), practical teaching in connection with which we shall meet with lower down.

Charged then with the communication to others of this revelation, the ministry of the apostle Paul had a double character. He announced the good news among the Gentiles of the unsearchable riches of the Christ, and enlightened all (not Gentiles only) as to the dispensation of that mystery, hidden from the ages in God, who created all things,* and which is now revealed not only for the joy of saints, but also for the mani-

* "By Jesus Christ" should be omitted.

festation of the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies by the Church. What is revealed on this earth, so small a part of creation, as concerning the saints, is a subject of interest, as redounding to God's glory, to all the angelic host; and this was planned by God according to His eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him.

The mystery stated, and the double character of Paul's ministry defined, he now prays for the saints to the Father,* of whom every family in the heaven and on earth is named, that He would give the saints according to the wealth of His glory to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that the Christ, the centre of all God's ways, might dwell in their hearts by faith; that they, rooted and grounded in love, might be thoroughly able to apprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length, and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge; that they might be filled unto all the fulness of God. His desires thus expressed, he closes the subject with a doxology: "To Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus, unto all the generations of the age of ages; *i.e.* for ever and ever. Amen."

Exhortations now follow: first, with reference to ecclesiastical relationships (iv. 1–16); secondly, as to that which became them as saints (17–v. 20); and thirdly, as to their relations to one another in the family and in the household. (v. 21–vi. 9.)

* "Of our Lord Jesus Christ" should be omitted.

Called, as they were, with a calling which gave special privileges to the subjects of it, Paul exhorts them to walk worthy of it. And brought, as the saints were, into such closeness with each other, being God's habitation by the Spirit, and members together of the body of Christ, Christian graces would be needed to walk worthy of their calling. So Paul characterises the *spirit* in which they were to walk, and the *end* they were steadily to keep in view. On the *spirit* he dwells in verse 2. It was to be with all lowliness and meekness; these are characteristic of Christ, who is our life. Next the apostle mentions long-suffering, for the full exhibition of which we must turn to God's ways with man. As God's children the saints were to comport themselves in their ecclesiastical relations one with another. Then he impresses on them mutual forbearance in love; for this we need the Holy Ghost really working in us. Thus the manifestation of Christ as our life, the proof that we are partakers of the divine nature, and that the Holy Ghost is really working in us—all this would be required for saints to walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called. Then the *end* to be kept in view is stated; (3) viz., to endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, maintaining practically and in peace if possible, the unity formed by the baptism of the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. xii. 13.) Now unity is seen to be in harmony with the divine mind, whether we look at the Church, the Body of Christ, or whether we contemplate the whole range of profession on earth, or lift up our eyes to survey the universe. "There is one Body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father

of all, who is above all, and through all, and in all." (iv. 4–6.)

But in this unity, which comprises all real Christians, there is seen diversity in the gifts or graces given to each one in the Body of Christ, and in the service looked for from those who compose it. On this Paul next dwells. To every one is given grace or gift according to the measure of the gift of Christ; *i.e.* as He gives it. And from Him, the ascended One, gifts as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers, have been given, for (πρὸς) the perfecting of the saints unto (εἰς) a work of ministry, unto (εἰς) the edifying of the Body of Christ. The perfecting of the saints is the special end in view, and is effected through the gifts by the work of the ministry and the edifying of the Body of Christ. Thus, whilst saintship and church calling are quite distinct lines of truth, no saint could be now perfected without being part of the Body of Christ, nor fully instructed if he stopped short of teaching about the Church of God. So this ministry by the gifts will go on "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. In order that we should be no more babes, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men in unprincipled cunning, with a view to systematised error; but holding the truth in love, may grow up unto Him in all things who is the Head; the Christ, from whom the whole Body, fitted together and connected by every joint of supply, according to the working in the measure of each one part, works for itself the increase of the Body to itself, building up in love." (8–16.) Such is God's desire and

provision for the saints in Christ Jesus. Their perfecting is the end in view, to be effected by the gifts mentioned, the need for which is detailed in verses 13–15; whilst verse 16 has reference to the corporate condition, the Body increasing by the right acting of every joint of supply, according to the working in its measure of each part.

From this he passes on to exhortations with reference to their daily walk as saints; and here nothing is too small to be noticed. The most ordinary morality the Spirit insists on, and that in an epistle which dwells on the highest truths. The moral condition of Gentiles has been described, as well as their former dispensational distance when compared with the privileged place of those once Jews. (ii.) Now the apostle reminds his readers of the practices of Gentiles in daily life, which these converts were henceforth to avoid. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye walk not as the Gentiles walk."* Such walked in the vanity of their mind, in darkness and in ignorance. On these points he dwells in iv. 22–v. 2; v. 3–14, 15–21, writing to those who had learned the Christ, having heard Him, and being instructed by Him as the truth is in Jesus. What that is Paul explains in verses 22–24.

Coming to details, the first thing insisted on is to put away lying, and to speak every man truth with his neighbour. The reason assigned for this is in perfect character with the doctrine dwelt on in the previous chapters, "For we are members one of another." Thus church truth is to be brought into practice in daily life.

* The best authorities leave out '*other*.' For those written to were Gentiles no longer; they formed part of the Church of God. (See 1 Cor. x. 32.)

Further the apostle warns us against the desires of the mind, and comes down to the mention of stealing, and of watchfulness as to speech. Against both of these the saints are warned in connection with the special teaching of the epistle. The thief is to steal no more, but to labour, that he may have to give to him that needeth. Nothing should proceed from the lips, but that which may minister grace to the hearers. The activity of grace is to characterise him who once plundered others. The profit of his hearers is to be kept in view by him who had previously given licence to his tongue. And who were these people to whom he thus writes? They were sealed by the Spirit to the day of redemption. (iv. 30.) They were God's children, so were to imitate Him. (iv. 32–v. 1.) They had Christ as their life, and He was to be their example. (v. 2.)

Warnings against the workings of the flesh now follow. (v. 3–14.) None practising such filthiness have any inheritance in the kingdom of the Christ and God (5), and because of these things the wrath of God comes on the sons of disobedience. With such they were not to be partakers; for they were formerly "darkness, but now light in the Lord; hence as children of light they should walk: (for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) proving what is acceptable unto the Lord." Further, they were to walk not as fools, but as wise. (15–21.) Ignorance characterized Gentiles; understanding what the will of the Lord is, was to characterize them. Nor were they to seek for fleshly stimulants, but to be filled with the Holy Ghost, which would manifest itself in the joy they would possess, and the spirit of subjection which would mark them.

This introduces the injunctions concerning relative duties in the family and in the household; wives and husbands, children and fathers, slaves and masters, each receiving their appropriate word. For wives and husbands the example of the Church's subjection to Christ, and His service and care for it are respectively set forth, the closest of earthly ties being a figure of the relation of Christ with the Church. One sees at a glance the propriety of this being dwelt upon in this epistle. It would lead us, however, beyond the limits of our space to dwell at any length on that wonderful display of love, in which, as part of the Church, we share, a love which moved Christ to give Himself for her, and which moves Him to minister to her, that He may at length present her to Himself, a Church glorious, without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing; but that she should be holy and without blame, thus answering to that which He Himself was, and is. No wonder then, if that is His desire for the Church, that such pains are taken with the different classes who compose it, exhorting them in their different positions and relationships how to walk and to act.

Relative duties in the family and the household having been dwelt on, the apostle turns back to that which concerns them all equally, and exhorts all to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, and to take each one for himself, or herself, the whole armour of God to stand against the wiles of the devil. The unceasing service of Christ to the Church we read of in chapter v. The unceasing watchfulness of the enemy to ensnare or trip up the saints we are reminded of in chapter vi. If the saints are seated in the heavenlies in Christ, the devil is still in the heavenlies

likewise. We cannot drive him out as Israel, under Joshua, were to have expelled the Canaanites and the Amorites, &c. But we are to be armed with the panoply of God to maintain our footing where God has placed us. The armour put on, and the one offensive weapon in the hand, the word of God, the sword of the Spirit, used by the Lord in the wilderness, and found sufficient, the constant spirit of dependence which is to characterize each saint is kept before us, and of the interest which all should take in the welfare of the saints, and in the spreading abroad of God's work by His word, the apostle reminds us; exhorting all to prayer at all times, and to be watching unto it with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, and for him, the prisoner as he was, that he might make known the mystery of the gospel for which he was an ambassador in chains. Who should take a deeper and a more general interest in the work of God on earth than those who are the greatest subjects of divine grace?

Now he closes. Counting on their interest in all that concerns him, Tychicus, the bearer of the epistle, was charged to acquaint them with it, and to encourage their hearts. He had inculcated a spirit of love and interest in all the saints. He would himself exemplify it with his concluding words: "Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in incorruptness."

C. E. S.

WAITING FOR CHRIST.

WE see thus what a strengthening thing is the waiting for Christ. It is not spoken of here in the highest way, but it is the same general principle. I am waiting. I do not think much of an uncomfortable inn if I know that I am only there for two or three days on the way. I might perhaps wish it were better; but I do not trouble myself much about it, because I am not living there. I am not living in this world, I am dying here; if there is a bit of the old life, it has to be put to death. My life is hid with Christ in God. I am waiting for the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ—waiting for God's Son from heaven, who is going to take us there, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that fadeth not away; and all that we pass through here is merely this exercise of heart, which God sees to be needed to bring us there, where the Lord Himself will have us with Himself, and that for ever. And there is nothing more practically important for every-day work and service than our waiting for God's Son from heaven. If you want to know what this world is, and if you want to get comfort for your soul, you will be waiting for God's Son from heaven. If I am belonging to the world, I cannot have comfort. The apostle says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And if we are getting into ease in it, we shall find His discipline. But the moment I am waiting for God's Son from heaven, my life is but the dealings of God with me as an object, and that

object that it should be to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

Let me ask you all to search and see what would be the effect of Christ's coming on your souls? Would it be this? Here I am passing through in heaviness because of manifold temptations; but He will come and take me out of it to Himself? Or would it surprise you? Would it find you with a number of things which you would have to leave behind? As to your heart, where is your heart with respect to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ? Young or old (there may be more to learn if we are young; but), would the coming of the Lord Jesus find you with plenty of things to throw overboard? or with this feeling, Here is an end of all the exercise of heart? He for whom I have been waiting is coming to take me to Himself. There is the difference between Christians. If my whole life is founded upon this, that His will is the motive and spring of it, I shall find the exercises and the needed trial; but the coming of the Lord would be simply this to my soul, He is coming to take me away to Himself. J. N. D.

One danger for Christians, at the present moment, is the desire for stimulants in teaching. This also characterized Israel. (Amos ii. 11.) But stimulants are not only not food, but, in the end, they create a distaste for it. They serve only to excite the imagination, intellect, or nature, and never reach the conscience or the heart. The evidence of this desire is the itching ear. (2 Tim. iv. 3.) Christ, and Christ alone, is the food of His people.

CAIN AND ABEL.

LET us look a little at the religious characters of Cain and Abel. They were both alike as to outward character and circumstance. They were both under the sentence of banishment from the presence of God. They both had employment, and both seemed to have been outwardly decent characters. They both came to worship, too, and Cain brought that which cost him most—that for which he had worked. God had sent him forth to till the ground, and he tilled it. That was all right, and it was right for him to bring an offering. The difference between them was not in all that. In outward character, too, Cain was just like Abel: nothing came out amiss until he killed his brother. What was the mistake in Cain? There was no sense upon his heart that he was driven out of paradise because he deserved it; he might not have known that he was driven out even; for he thought he had nothing to do but to go to God as if it was all right with Him. This is just what men are doing now. They are driven from God's presence and favour, going on with their occupations, tilling the ground and the like, and, when the time comes round, thinking to come and worship. What would a father feel about his child who had been disobedient to him one day, and coming the next, just as if nothing had happened, expecting to be received as though all was right between him and his father? This is just what men are doing with God. But, dear friends, you are out of paradise, and can you think to come and worship God as if nothing had happened? Are you

expecting to get into heaven just the same as (not one whit better than) Adam was when he got out of paradise? If you get into heaven you would spoil it; but the truth is, you are making your own heaven down here.

Abel was not a bit better than Cain as to his position and nature; but there is one great difference—he owns it all, and obtained testimony that he was righteous. "By faith he offered to God a more excellent sacrifice," &c. It might have been said he was not so right as Cain in a natural sense, as to his calling; for God had not set men to keep sheep, and he had to till the ground; but he brought a sacrifice from the flock, a bloody sacrifice. He had a sense of being out of paradise; but, more than that, he had a sense of being an outcast for sin. He felt he was a sinner. He had a sense of having broken with God, and God with him, and he knew Him to be of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. He owned that God had not done wrong in turning man out, and that it would be wrong to let him in. He owned that death hung over him as his proper desert. "It is God's sentence upon me, and my ruin is my desert." These things had such a reality to his soul that he would have known it would have been presumption for him to have gone to God as though nothing had happened. Then he had something more still; for he had learnt through the grace of God that there was something needed between him and God, and that this something was there. Sacrifice was the only way. God says, "I cannot look at sin; but there is one thing I can look at—an offering about sin, and that is my Son as a sin-offering." Faith apprehends this, and there was no thought of coming in any other way. "There will I meet with thee," God said to Moses. And what did he

put at the door of the tabernacle? The altar of burnt-offering, the sacrifice for sin, God had there; and faith rests on this as the only possible way of approach.

There was no climbing up some other way. There is but this one door by which to enter, and it is through that sacrifice by which the holiness of God is fully maintained, as well as His love manifested in the highest way. I want to see my sin put away in His sight, just as I see it brought out first in His sight; and here is the perfect sin-offering, and there is no place where this wonderful question of good and evil has been judged as at the cross of Christ. The sacrifice is fully accepted. He has borne all the wrath, and put it away. Hear Him saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" There was perfect obedience and perfect love. He was a perfect sin-offering; and there He is now at the right hand of the Father. "Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him." His offering for sin has for ever settled the question of sin. He has made peace about my sin, and for my sin; and has He done it in part? Would that be like God? No; it was complete. "When He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." When I see that, I cannot go to God as Cain did, just as I am; and yet I must go to Him if I am to have happiness or blessing. But I also see that God has provided Himself with a burnt-offering. It is taken out of our hands, as it were; it is God's own perfect work; it is His settling of sin, and I can rest in the result of what He has offered. This is faith. Now we go to God by Him. This is, as it were, offering Christ. God gives me the resting-place, and the convinced sinner cannot come to Christ without finding

all his sins put away for ever. The sacrifice of the burnt-offering is there, and the moment I am there I come with the sacrifice, and can be happy in His presence, though with a perfect knowledge of His holiness.

"Abel obtained witness that he was righteous;" not merely that the sacrifice was perfect, but he had the witness that he was righteous. It was not only true that he was righteous, but that he also had the witness of it, and this gave him peace. The gospel is God's witness to His acceptance of Christ. See how this is "God testifying of His gifts." "If you bring the lamb, I accept you according to all its value in my sight."

J. N. D.

"WHEN HE SHALL APPEAR."

LITTLE can the heart love Christ that does not long to see Him. And thus we find that He counts all throughout upon that which is the legitimate effect of love to His person. Because He expects us to wait for Him, He exhorts us to be *like unto men* that do; because He expects us to watch for Him, He pronounces a blessing upon those who watch. That He also exhorts us to watch for Him I admit; but this is not because we have not the hope of His coming, but because we have. We are to watch because we "know *neither the day nor the hour* wherein the Son of man cometh." The fact of His coming is assumed, and assumed to be the hope of the heart; but there is danger, because of the fulfilment being deferred, that we should cast off the outward character of men who wait for their Lord. Characteristic of that Christianity which is *worthy of the name* that we have gone out to meet the Bridegroom, alas!

it is still more characteristic of its *failure* that all the virgins—not only the wise who had the oil, but the foolish who had not—alike slumbered and slept. The arousing cry broke their slumbers, "Behold the Bridegroom!" and the hearts of many leaped up, only, alas! in some cases, to fall back into a deeper sleep. The foolish had lamps no less than the wise; and had, as they, gone out to meet the Bridegroom, teaching us that, as a matter of profession, a matter of doctrine, the unconverted may be holding it as correctly as others. But by the Spirit of God alone, as the holy anointing oil, can the Lord's coming assume its true character in our hearts and to the heart of Christ, in testimony to Him.

Scripture then makes no attempt, as we sometimes do, to prove that He will come. The Lord *announces* it, and that is enough as to *fact*. He *promises* it, and that is enough as to its *character*. Henceforth it is assumed as a real desire of the heart, "that blessed hope" in which we are privileged to indulge, rejoicing therein "with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Let me remark here that there never has been, nor ever can be, any uncertainty whatever as to the Lord's coming. It is either a lamentable mistake of ours, or a gigantic lie of Satan's, that there is a particle of uncertainty about it. Nothing from everlasting to everlasting was ever more certain—as certain—as that God's character must be vindicated, and the Son of His love be glorified, before all worlds. The day and the hour are concealed from us, and even from Christ as man, but the certainty thereof stands unimpaired. They *are* known to God, and from all eternity, without mutability and without uncertainty; and when the stars in their courses, "for ever singing as they shine," have meted out to man the

appointed duration of his day of grace, the word of the Father to the Son will bring Him on love's delightful errand to receive His bride in His own likeness, to Himself for ever. Can you, my reader, estimate the untold joy that will then flood His blessed heart? or how much even now He is cheered by its bright anticipation? How blessedly then, if we are to share that joy, ought our hearts to be anticipating the blissful moment when He shall appear, and by His appearing shall swallow up death in victory, and shall close our path of tears and toil and testimony, that He may present us before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!

In two foregoing papers we looked a little at the fact, that "as He is so are we in this world," and "where I am there shall also my servant be." The first is our divine standing, the second our heavenly place and portion. We now glance at that incomparable event which shall bring into full display the two former things, to the deep delight of our hearts, and, above all, to the immeasurable glory and joy of our beloved Lord. In Col. iii. is a scripture which appears to bring before us all three of these. "If ye then be risen with Christ" (our standing), "seek those things which are *above,* where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things *above,* not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid *with Christ* in God" (our heavenly place and portion). "When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (the consummation which we await). Observe how in each of these what gives character to the thing is, *with Christ.* (1) He is risen, and we are risen *with Him.* (2) He has gone above, and our portion is where He is; our life is hid *with Christ* in God.

(3) He is going to be manifested in glory, and we are going to be manifested *with Him.* How it enhances all our blessing that we enter upon it with Him, and shall enjoy it with Him, and shall be manifested in it with Him. Thus what we are, and have, and shall be, are all closely and indissolubly associated with Christ; and no heart that values Him but will acknowledge how it adds thereto a spiritual zest that nothing else could impart.

He who appeared once here below, manifested on the earth, and in whom God was manifest in the flesh, has now gone to appear before the face of God for us; and yet again will He appear or be manifested to them who look for Him. (Heb. ix. 24–28.) How characteristically does the apostle here speak of believers as "them that look for Him." He accounts it to be the moral mark of a Christian that he looks for Christ, as in Thessalonica the young believers to whom he wrote were marked by waiting for God's Son from heaven. But we have also a more striking word in Paul's memorable valediction to his dear son in the faith (2 Tim. iv. 8), "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that *love His appearing.*" This surely goes beyond the waiting, and the watching, and the looking for Him; it appeals more closely to the feelings. If I *love* His appearing, it is evident that my heart is set upon it, my affections are engaged by it. It is that deep desire of love which is expressed in that divine unity in which "the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Let us challenge our hearts, dear reader. Do we indeed "*love* His appearing"? Is it really a matter of heart exercise with us, a desire far deeper than any words can express? The bride in the

Canticles (chap. ii. 17) gives us the expression of her desire, saying, "Be thou like to a roe, or a young hart, on the mountains of Bether" (division or separation); *i.e.* passing over all that divides or separates from her the object of her longing heart. Peter commends His appearing to the elders of the flock as the consummation to be looked for: "When the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." And, lastly, John, in his first epistle, exhorts the children to abide in Him, "that when He shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." Again he says, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Our being with Him, our being like Him, and our being an adequate testimony of the magnificence of His grace, all wait for that day of glory so soon to break upon us, "when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe." May He so powerfully captivate our hearts and occupy our affections that, having so blessed a hope in Him, we may purify ourselves, even as He is pure, looking for that crown of righteousness which He will surely give to all them that love His appearing. Because He lives we live also; as He is, so are we in this world; where He is, there we shall be also; and when He shall appear we shall be like Him, and appear with Him in glory! What can we say to such a magnificent chain of associated blessedness, but anticipate the language we shall adopt when all this is accomplished, falling down at the marriage supper of the Lamb, and worshipping Him who sits upon the throne, saying, "Amen, Alleluia"? (Rev. xix. 4.)

W. R.

THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST-BORN.

THE words that Moses heard out of the midst of the fire in the bush must not only have awakened in his heart the remembrance of God's goodness towards the fathers, but also have shown him that he had a personal link with the God of Abraham; for God had said to him, "I am the God *of thy father*." (The faith of Moses' parents is made mention of in Heb. xi.) But "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." Such was necessarily the effect produced on the heart by the presence of God when He was not known as the Justifier. The instant it becomes a question of appearing before God, conscience makes itself heard bearing witness that we are *sinners*.

When Jacob had seen in his dream the magnificent vision of the ladder, whose top reached heaven, he awoke to the consciousness of the presence of God, and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." Surely God had only spoken to him in words of grace and goodness; but his conscience in the presence of a holy God condemned him, and his soul was filled with fear.

We find the same thing in the case of Isaiah the prophet. (See Isa. vi.) He saw "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims. . . . And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory."

Then the prophet cries, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." God's answer to the prophet's cry, though it brought fully into light the real secret of his distress, applied to him the needed remedy at the same moment. One of the seraphims touched his lips with a live coal from off the altar of burnt-offering, and said, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged."

God knows what we need. He acts by His Spirit to produce "truth in the inward parts," bringing us into His own presence, that there we may be made aware of our true state; but there too He makes known to us the fulness of that redemption by virtue of which He is righteous in "justifying him who believes in Jesus." (Rom. iii. 26.) Before Christ had suffered for our sins, God, knowing what He was going to do in order to put them away righteously, "forbore" with sins; that is to say, He did not impute them to those who believed on Him, although He could not yet direct their hearts to an already accomplished redemption. Psalm xxxii., which is quoted in Rom. iv., speaks of the blessedness of this forgiveness, though still looking on, in the spirit of prophecy, to its complete fulfilment; but after the death of Christ, God could make known to all that He had been righteous in granting it in anticipation of the work of redemption. (Rom. iii. 25.) In the various offerings God set forth by means of types, which all pointed to the one great sacrifice, the principle on which alone the righteousness of God could be satisfied with respect to sin; for "without shedding of blood

there is no remission." (Heb. ix. 22.) God was revealing Himself as "the God that taketh away iniquity, transgression, and sin;" and although only in figure, still He made it clear that for the putting away of sin there must be shed the blood of a spotless victim. But if we are thus delivered from judgment, we are at the same time sanctified, or set apart in holiness to God. Therefore we read (Heb. ix. 13, 14): "For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" This is precisely what Isaiah found through grace at the seraph's hand; and we shall see the same principle presented in figure in the history of Moses, at the time when "the deliverance," of which God had spoken to him in the bush, was about to be accomplished.

God had said to Moses, "The cry of the children of Israel is come up unto me: and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them. Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." (Ex. iii. 9, 10.) In accomplishing the work of deliverance God brought nine plagues upon the Egyptians. At the moment when He was about to send upon them the last, which was to smite all the first-born of the land of Egypt, He instituted the passover as the means of sheltering His people from the sword of the destroying angel, who was to execute His judgment. The blood of the paschal lamb, sprinkled on the two side-posts and on the upper

door-post, put the house and all who were in it beyond the reach of the sword of judgment: "For," it is said, "I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the *Lord.* And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." (Ex. xii. 12, 13.) At the same time the Lord says to Moses: "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine." (Ex. xiii. 1, 2.) Similarly in Num. iii. 12, 13 we find it stated of the children of Israel: "All the first-born are mine; for on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto me all the first-born in Israel." God comes down to deliver His people; that is the first truth set before us, and the immediate result of it is that His people are set apart for Him. This great moral principle is thus clearly established, the destruction of the first-born being an intimation of God's thoughts as to this world, shadowing forth beforehand the judgment reserved for it.

The deliverance corresponds in extent to the judgment, and expresses at the same time the measure of personal sanctification, which is intimately linked up with the deliverance itself. "Fear not," it is said: "for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; THOU *art* MINE." And again, "*This people have I formed for myself;* they shall shew forth my praise." (Isa. xliii. 1, 21.) So too, after the complete deliverance of the people of Israel from the land of Egypt, God

sends them this message by Moses: "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you UNTO MYSELF. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, *and* AN HOLY NATION." (Ex. xix. 4–6.)

But the consecration to God of all the first-born in Israel supplies us with other unfoldings as to the character of personal holiness; it shows us in what it consists, as well as the extent of its practical application. In an especial manner God said of every first-born, "It is MINE." This implied that it was to be offered in sacrifice; and with every clean animal this was the case. "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me. Likewise shalt thou do with thine oxen and with thy sheep: seven days it shall be with his dam; on the eighth day thou shalt give it me." (Exod. xxii. 29, 30.) Unclean domestic animals were to be redeemed: "But the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb." And this same principle is applied to man: "All the first-born of thy sons thou shalt redeem." (Exod. xxxiv. 20.)

Now this redemption of the first-born sons in Israel was accomplished in a remarkable manner. (The details are given at the beginning of the book of Numbers.) They were replaced by the Levites. "Behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel instead of all the first-born that openeth the matrix among the children of Israel: therefore the Levites shall be MINE." (Num. iii. 12.) The Levites were thenceforth consecrated to the service of God, for the

charge of the tabernacle, for the service of the priests, and afterwards for the instruction of the people in the law of God. They had no inheritance as a separate tribe amongst the children of Israel, but were to live on the tithes of the produce of the land, brought regularly by the people. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord." (Lev. xxvii. 30; Num. xviii. 21–24; Deut. xxvi. 12, 13.)

We see, therefore, that the consecration that flowed from redemption was *entire and personal.* As the sacrifice was wholly consumed upon the altar, thus the redeemed person is considered as belonging wholly to the Lord, soul and body, and in every respect set apart for His service.

The Lord said of His sheep, "I know *my* sheep;" to His Father He says of them, "The men which *thou gavest me* out of the world." (John x. xvii.) Consequently the exhortation addressed by the Spirit to the believer is, that "ye present your bodies a *living sacrifice,* holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom. xii. 1); and again, "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. vi. 13, 14.) The Christian, brought to God, and already delivered from death and judgment and Satan's power, is to live in dependence upon God and in communion with Him; so that the fulness of the redemption wrought for him may be reflected in the details of his daily walk. He has been delivered from the world, and from the judgment that is to come upon it; his daily life is therefore to express that he is

dead to the world, and alive unto God, and that, recognizing that he is a pilgrim and stranger upon the earth, he is seeking the country and the city which God has prepared for him; for he already possesses, by faith, his inheritance in the heavenly Jerusalem. There is seen "the assembly of *the first-born,* which are written in heaven;" there are enjoyed the presence and communion of God the Judge of all, surrounded as He is "by the spirits of just men made perfect;" there is found the climax of eternal joy and blessing in Jesus, the First-born from among the dead, the Mediator of a new covenant. There too the soul finds the ground of all confidence before God, in "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than Abel." There also we are surrounded by myriads of angels, the universal gathering, and learn that they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. (Heb. xi. 13, 16; xii. 22, 24; i. 14.) Redemption brings us into the immediate presence of God, setting us there with a good conscience to learn that every need of the soul is met, and full provision made to meet all our spiritual enemies, and all the difficulties we have to encounter in this present life. Faith simply accepts what God has said, and takes freely and joyfully the place He has given. He has set us *in Christ;* and we have to learn in the path of obedience what it is to count on God in everything. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He has chosen us in Christ "before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of

His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved. In whom we have redemption through the blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace." (Eph. i. 4–7.)

We have only been able to glance at the truths contained in the sanctification of the first-born. But what a field of study is opened to us in the Word in connection with the service of the Levites! Our present purpose is, however, to confine ourselves to the great principles involved, and which we have sought to lay before our readers: first, what it is to have a "good conscience" in the presence of God, by means of the blood, under the shelter of which God has set us in sovereign grace; then that the completeness of personal consecration must correspond with the extent and perfection of the deliverance. Of course we do need God with us, as well as God for us, in order that this practical consecration may be carried out in practice. And He can never fail us. Moses went on in obedience, learning step by step from God the marvellous lessons of His grace. "Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them." (Heb. xi. 28.) Is he not in this a precious example for us—one of those witnesses of faith by whom we are "compassed about"?

W. J. L.

All right experience ends in forgetting self and thinking of Christ.

If the believer is full of Christ, he does not even see the things around.

ON MINISTERING CHRIST.

(*Continued from page 56.*)

THE apostle Paul informs us that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.) He therefore charges the faithful servant to "preach the word;" not traditions of men, but "the word;" not deductions from the word, however interesting, but "the word;" not opinions about it, but "the word;" the divine authority of the word of God which is for ever settled in heaven, and liveth and abideth for ever. That which is to be proclaimed (and especially because of the false teaching and fables which abound) is the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. It is in fact the only basis for faith—the incorruptible seed by which we have been born again, and the sincere milk by which those who have tasted that the Lord is gracious can be fed and grow thereby. Can there be, then, the ministry of Christ, if the divine authority of Scripture be not enforced? May the Lord graciously enable us so to love the word of God, understand it by the teaching of the Holy Ghost, mix faith with it, treasure it up in our hearts, and so prove it as to be able to help others effectually by it!

It is most interesting to observe that one result of our Lord's ministry after His resurrection from the dead, when their understandings were opened to understand

the Scriptures concerning Himself, was that it made them all happy. Whatever their mistakes, or state of soul had been, all were set right, and all were filled with joy in having to do with the Lord Himself. Not only did those who had been depressed and sorrowful exclaim, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" but it is said of the timid ones, who had been fearing the Jews, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." When affrighted ones were told by Him that He was not a spirit, and He said, "It is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have . . . and He showed them His hands and His feet," then we are told that "they believed not for joy, and wondered." So happy did their precious Saviour leave them when "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven," that we are told "they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy." (Luke xxiv.) John too writes his first epistle to the saints that their joy might be full. Peter speaks of those who, though "in heaviness through manifold temptations," were so believing in Him whom having not seen they loved, as to "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Paul enjoins the saints to "rejoice in the Lord always," and prays that the God of peace might fill them with all joy and peace in believing." Is it not clear, then, that one result to be looked for, when Christ is ministered, is that souls are made happy in Him? But how can we expect to be instrumental in filling others with joy, if we are not rejoicing in the Lord ourselves? A glance at some of the epistles is enough to show how fully and pointedly Christ was ministered in apostolic times, whatever

might be the state or circumstances of the saints addressed.

John wrote at a time when the person of our Lord was blasphemously assailed, when there were many antichrists, many false prophets gone out into the world; and of others he had to say, "They went out from us because they were not of us." And how does he begin his inspired letter? He begins by setting forth the divine and eternal excellence of the Son—"that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Who was the eternal life with the *Father* but the *Son?* He then asserts the precious truth, that true Christian fellowship is "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." He repeatedly speaks of the Father, and of His love in bringing us into new relationships, and giving us eternal life in the Son, all founded on the work of the cross. He declares that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin," and that if we sin, the Righteous One (Christ) is our Advocate with the Father, who is also the propitiation for our sins. He shows that those who are born of God do not practise sin; but, having eternal life, this life will be manifested in obedience, righteousness, and love.

Now it is easily seen that by this ministry of Christ, brought home by the power of the Holy Ghost, they would be delivered from a false Christ, by knowing the true One, of whom He speaks at the end of his letter as "the true God, and eternal life." By being established in their new and eternal relationships with the Father and the Son, and therefore with each other, they would be separated from false people and untrue associations; and by knowing they had eternal life in Christ, and

that the Spirit was given to abide with them, they would be encouraged in the life of obedience, righteousness, and love. They would see that "he that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself so to walk, even as He walked." It was certainly a most trying state of things, but the blessed and effectual remedy of the Holy Ghost was the suited and pointed ministry of Christ.

Look also at the epistle to the Hebrews. A very different state is here seen. They were in such a low condition as to be in danger of giving up Christianity and returning to the Jews' religion. And how were they met? By the ministry of Christ; and remarkably so out of their own Scriptures—the books of Moses, Psalms, and prophets. The Son in His deity, as well as true humanity, was most blessedly brought before them in the first two chapters. He is seen to be greater than angels, worthy of more glory than Moses and Aaron, Joshua, David, and even Abraham, so that all retire when the glory of His person is introduced, like the brightest stars cease to shine before the rising of the sun. The eternal Son—the heir of all things—who made all things, upholds all things, and is to have all things put under His feet, is here brought out. He is looked at before time, in time, and after time shall have passed away. His incarnation, life of sufferings and temptation, death, resurrection, glorification, and reign, when everything will be put under His feet, all pass before us. We see Him as the Purger of sins, the Captain of our salvation, the Destroyer of the devil, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, the Son over His own house, the Forerunner who is for us entered, an unchangeable Priest after the order of Melchisedec, the Leader and Completer of faith, the Mediator of the

new covenant, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, who was brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and we are assured that "yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry."

We cannot fail to notice in what a variety of aspects the Lord Jesus is brought before the readers of this epistle, which no doubt is intended to teach us that we need the full revelation which God has given us of His own Son, and not merely to know Him as the Purger of our sins. Why the glory of His person is so clearly and richly unfolded in the beginning is because the prominent point in this epistle is the perfection of the one sacrifice and unchangeable priesthood of Christ, as contrasted with the oft-repeated sacrifices and many priests of a former dispensation, which was a time of types and shadows of the substantial realities in Christ. When one grasps the truth of the infinite perfections and glory of His person, it then becomes clear that an everlasting value is stamped on His work and offices. Thus the Hebrew believers were entitled to know that their sins were purged, and that God would remember them no more; that by that one offering they were purged worshippers, should have no more conscience of sins, and were perfected for ever. They had, as to God, liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; and as regards men, their place was with Christ outside the camp of formal religiousness, bearing His reproach, and, before the Lord comes, to be unning the race of faith with patience, and looking to Him, at God's right hand, for all the sustainment and encouragement they need. Can we conceive anything more calculated to deliver souls from Judaism, and to set them right with

God than this full and clear ministry of Christ? Well might the writer end his letter by enjoining them "to offer by Him (Christ) the sacrifice of praise to God continually," and not to forget "to do good, and to communicate;" "for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

In the first epistle to the Corinthians a state very different from those we have considered meets us. We here see the assembly in the greatest disorder, with rich gifts, flagrant sins, and erroneous doctrine. A brief look into the inspired letter is enough to show how simply and—as we learn from the second epistle—how effectually it was met by the suited ministry of Christ. But first let us observe that the three things which marked the Lord's epistles to the seven churches in the Revelation were also carried out by the apostle here: 1st., He approves in them everything he can; 2nd., He brings before them their evil ways and doctrines; and 3rd., He presents the remedy, which is always found in having to do with Christ Himself, as set forth in Scripture. And will not these points always characterize a divinely-given ministry to saints? The apostle knew well that "Christ is all," and that all our blessings are in Him, and through Him, and not at all after the flesh. He therefore addresses the Corinthians as "sanctified in Christ Jesus," where divine grace has set the feeblest believer. After having acknowledged with thankfulness to God the grace given them by Christ Jesus, their utterance, knowledge, and gifts, and their waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, he reminds them of God's faithfulness, and of His having called them unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which is also true of every believer.

Having thus shown them that they are set apart for God in Christ, and called to have partnership with Christ in His thoughts, love, joy, service, &c., he now turns to their faults. Having exposed the divisions among them, he meets all by bringing in Christ and His cross. He says, "Is Christ divided?" Are not all believers joined to the Lord one body? Then how can divisions be right? Can the human body be divided into parts, and still be in connection with the Head? "Was Paul crucified for you?" Then why take up his name? Then he refers to their boasted wisdom: "The Greeks seek after wisdom." The Corinthians were not free from this. But the world by wisdom knew not God, and Christ crucified is the wisdom of God. The apostle says, "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." A crucified Christ, and a message of salvation to every one that believeth on Him, are counted by the wise Gentiles to be "foolishness;" and yet that cross shows man to be so ignorant that he did not know God, and so bad that he hated Him without a cause. Moreover, in the death of Christ not only were sins judged, but our old man was crucified with Him, which shows that man has now no place in the flesh before God, either as to righteousness or wisdom, but that He has given us a new life and standing in Christ Jesus, "who of God is made unto us wisdom." The cross put an end to man's boasted wisdom; this is why Paul would know nothing among them, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Next he touches their consciences about a flagrant

sin; and how does he meet it? By ministering Christ. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." At the passover all leaven was to be put out of their houses; therefore this manifest uncleanness—leaven—must be purged out of their midst. Again, when gathered together in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is in the midst, and where the Holy Spirit is the power, how could such wickedness be associated with the Lord's name? And further, how can you eat and have fellowship with one who has so openly dishonoured the Lord who is holy? Therefore do not eat with such, but "put away from among yourselves that wicked person." They were to put away not only from the Lord's table, but also from among themselves, and were with such not even to eat. (1 Cor. v.) The sin of fornication is further met in two ways: 1st. Being joined to the Lord, one spirit, and our bodies being the members of Christ, shall we "take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot"? 2nd. Being bought with a price, we are not our own, but are to glorify God in our bodies, especially remembering that our "body is the temple of the Holy Ghost." (Chap. vi. 15–20.)

Why should not a Christian be a bondman of men? Because he is the Lord's freeman; he has been bought with a price, and is Christ's bondman. (Chap. vii. 22, 23.) As to not partaking at an idol's temple, not having communion there, not partaking of the table of demons, he shows that the communion God has graciously brought us into is the communion at the Lord's table of those who have a common ground of fellowship in the blood of Christ, and a common expression of it as members of one body in breaking and eating the same loaf. Thus being identified with Christ in His death,

we are necessarily separated from every false fellowship, and every table not the Lord's. (Chap. x.)

In the next chapter, where we find that the Lord's Supper had been mixed up with such carnality as to have lost its proper character among them, he brings in the Lord again to set all right. He shows that they had missed the Lord in it—had not discerned the Lord's body. He instructs them that it is the time for remembering the Lord, and showing the Lord's death till He come, who said, "Do this in remembrance of me." He shows them that here the Lord was everything; that the supper was in respect of the body and blood of the Lord, and that the chastening of the Lord had come in because they had not discerned the Lord's body. (1 Cor. xi.)

As to the doctrine which denied the resurrection of the body, the apostle at once brings in the Lord. He says, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen . . . and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished," &c. He asserts the fact that "He rose again the third day," that He did so "according to the Scriptures," and that His resurrection had been verified by the most ample, and competent, and incontrovertible testimony. He teaches that "Christ" has risen as "the first-fruits," and the next in order to rise are "they that are Christ's at His coming." He concludes by showing that Christ in His abounding grace has thus triumphed over death and the grave for us; so that we are now entitled to say, "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." How manifold, then, are the ways in which Christ is ministered to us in the

word of God, and how dear it is that the ministry of the Holy Ghost is that which ministers Christ to souls!

In the Lord's epistles to the seven churches, the various aspects in which He presents Himself to each assembly, according to its need and condition, is most striking. We would only now direct attention to one point. Looking at the seven epistles as giving the seven phases of the Church's course on earth in the place of corporate responsibility to the Lord, and considering that the last four have reference to the Lord's coming, and will go on together to the end, as Popery, Protestantism, Philadelphianism, and Laodiceanism, it is interesting to observe how the Lord presents Himself to them; for it is clear, if this be the fourfold state of Christendom to the end, that these presentations of the Lord must be the last kinds of His ministry till He come. And, briefly, what are they? His Person—"the Son of God." The Giver of the Holy Ghost, and source of gift—"He that hath the seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." The holiness and truth suited to those gathered together in His name—"The Holy and the True." And the truth of the new creation—"the beginning of the creation of God." It becomes then a serious question whether, from the ministry that has gone forth in these last days, it is not Christ presenting Himself to Christendom in His last aspects? If so, how soon His word may be fulfilled: "Behold, I come quickly!"

It would be highly interesting to trace in other epistles the various ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ was presented to the saints, did our limits admit of it. We trust, however, that enough has been advanced to show that ministering Christ according to

God will carry with it the authority of Scripture—"preach the Word," and therefore present Him to souls of whom the Scripture testifies; it will thus have a positive and definite character—"we preach Christ Jesus the Lord." Surely the *wisdom* and *guidance* of *the Holy Ghost* alone can direct the servant of the Lord as to the kind of pasture the sheep and lambs of Christ need, and the *power of the Holy Ghost* alone can carry it home to the heart. How otherwise can the flock of God be fed? How can any one be fitted for this holy yet happy service, unless he is living in the enjoyment of the Lord and His truth in his own soul? Unless he is waiting on the Lord, how will he be able to give his household meat in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing.

H. H. S.

THERE is no middle path; for there is nothing good in this world. It is either Christ or flesh. Man is fallen and out of paradise, and there is nothing owned at all of man now. God made paradise, and man is out of it; and He made heaven, and man is not in it. But between the two there is nothing that God owns. God never made the world as it is, nor man as he is; that is, the moral state that man and the world are in. It grew up when God had driven man out of His presence. Then Cain went and built a city, and established himself and his seed outside God. It must therefore be, either "Ye are from beneath," or, "I am from above;" either "Ye are of this world," or, "I am not of this world." (John viii. 23.)

SLEEP ON, BELOVED.

[The early Christians were accustomed to wish their dying friends "Good night," assured of their awakening at the resurrection.]

SLEEP on, beloved, sleep and take thy rest,
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast;
We love thee much, but Jesus loves thee best:
Good night!

Calm is thy slumber as an infant's sleep,
But thou shalt wake, no more to toil and weep;
Thine is a perfect rest, secure and deep:
Good night!

Until the shadows from this earth be cast,
Until He gathers in His sheaves at last,
Until the twilight gloom be overpast:
Good night!

Until the Eastern glory decks the skies,
And they that sleep in Jesus shall arise;
And He shall come, but not in lowly guise:
Good night!

Until made beautiful by love divine,
Thou in the likeness of thy Lord shalt shine;
And He shall bring that golden crown of thine:
Good night!

Only "Good night," beloved, *not* farewell;
"A little while," and all His saints shall dwell
In hallowed union indivisible:
Good night!

Until we meet again before His throne,
Clothed in the spotless robe He gives His own;
Until we know Him e'en as we are known:
Good night!

ANON.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

JOHN X.

THIS chapter gives us the love of Christ so wonderfully displayed as the Good Shepherd—but it is exceedingly necessary to get a clear apprehension of the striking contrast between Judaism and Christianity, and this distinction has been greatly lost sight of. The way Christianity is unfolded in the word of God is an immense help to the child of God, because when it is acted on, it separates from that which is contrary to it.

"Verily, verily, I say unto *you*" connects it with the preceding chapter; for these Pharisees who said, "*We see*," taking the ground of seeing and knowing, had no sense of need, and so the Lord utters that solemn word, "Therefore your sin remaineth." (John ix. 41.) Then He takes the occasion given Him by their pride to give a short history of His ways with the children of Israel. Judaism is spoken of in the first six verses; then in verse 7, He comes to Christianity.

"He that entereth in *by the door* is the shepherd of the sheep." Everything that was foretold of the Lord Jesus He answered to; every rightful ordinance for Him to pass through He recognized and fulfilled, and He passes into the sheepfold by the door, and "to Him the porter openeth." The people of Israel were shut off from all other people, still the sheepfold was only Judaism, and into this sheepfold the true Shepherd of Israel comes. He enters into this system, which God had organized, answering to every claim of Scripture. Then "*to Him* the porter openeth"—the porter,

Jehovah acting by the Spirit of God in Israel, the one who had the care of Israel opened to the Messiah; and the moment He entered the sheep recognized His voice, "the sheep hear His voice" as the promised One, such as Simeon and Anna in Luke ii. There was the full, distinct recognition of Christ when He entered in.

All this has not to do with us Gentiles, but it is an immense thing to contemplate something that has nothing to do with us. We were Gentiles entirely outside it; we never were in it, or shall be. Then it goes on, "He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them *out*." It was not to be a continuation of this system, for "His own received Him not," and it is about to be set aside as no longer God's system on the earth. The Lord Jesus calls out *from* Israel, and in chap. ix. a man is found *outside* in the company of Christ. "He calleth His own sheep by *name*." After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, what a moment of recognition there was between Him and Mary! "Jesus saith unto her, Mary." There should be such personal acquaintance between Christ and His sheep; and if there is anything necessary in this day it is individual acquaintance with Christ. He leads His sheep outside the recognized systems of earth. It is not at all a question of what they are coming *to*, but *He* calls them by name, and leads them out. That word "leadeth" is beautiful; it is not, *drive* them out. He never drives anybody out. If we are stubborn He deals with us, and chastens us; but He delights to *lead* His people, only there must be on our side real confidence in Him to confide ourselves to His guidance—no resistance, but a beautiful spirit of subjection.

"And when He putteth forth His own sheep, *He*

goeth before them," and that is one thing that ever marks Christ, whether in Judaism or in Christianity. He loved His sheep in that day, and He loves them in this day, and He never allows them to face a difficulty alone. *He* faces the difficulty. We never shall find ourselves in circumstances where *He* has not been before us. "He goeth *before* them" all the way. We travel no uncertain path, not groping in darkness, but walking in the light of heaven, where He has gone before us. There may be difficulties, cares, and exercises, but the fact is that Christ has gone before, and "marked out the path that we tread." It was true in Judaism too, as in Christianity; but the one great thing for our souls now is acquaintance with Christ. You and I know the Lord Jesus Christ better than the disciples on earth knew Him: it seems much to say, but it is true. When Jesus said to the disciples, "Will ye also go away?" Peter replied, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." It was as much as saying, "We have no shelter without Thee." They knew the Lord, but not in the full measure we can know Him now. The Holy Ghost had not been given as in this day. The Holy Ghost has come down to dwell in all those that believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have by Him a more wonderful knowledge of the perfectness of the work of Christ and His love. He said when here, 'You will be better off when I go away; "for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you."' (John xvi. 7.) We are gainers by the absence of Christ, because of the Holy Ghost. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John xiv. 20.) He spoke of a day that was future then. There is then a character of blessing in this day which the disciples

had not, but they knew the voice of Christ. There is nothing that so blinds the understanding as self-sufficiency. There is one bright, beautiful avenue to our understanding, and that is the moment we are down in the sense of our own weakness and in dependence. Then there is no opposition; but when we say, "We see," that is the greatest barrier. By taking the place of ignorance and of dependence on Him, then we understand.

The Lord does not go on now to *explain* the parable, but He tells something perfectly new, which had never been known before. And it is a serious question for the consideration of our hearts; for in Christendom at large the immense distinction between Judaism, on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, is lost sight of. In Judaism it was a ceremonial religion, the observing of ordinances, &c.; everything to touch the natural man was done; but you get nothing of the kind in Christianity. This new system—and I say *system* because we cannot do what is right in our *own* eyes; and the way to find our place in the Church of God is to get our places as individual sheep, hearing His voice and guided by Him. There must be individual association with Christ, the knowledge of His own person.

"Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep." Think for a moment what a wonderful thing that is. You are shut up to something, or rather to *Someone;* and what a moment, never to be forgotten by the soul, when I find out that I am for time and for eternity shut up to *Christ*, nothing but Christ! And He stands and says, "*I* am the door of the sheep." You ask, "What does Christianity begin with?" It begins with the "I" of

this verse. And what does it go on with? With the "I" of this verse. And it *ends* with the "I" of this verse. What *is* Christianity to us? The "I" of this verse. "*I* set everything else aside, *I* have called my sheep out from this fold, and *I* announce and declare to you that *I* am the only door into everlasting blessing." I know that this is the gospel in its simplest character. The door *into* what? and *out of* what? What do we leave? and what do we enter? I pass out of a standing where there is nothing but ruin, and I pass into a sphere of everlasting joy and blessing. But oh, what a door to pass through! what a threshold to cross! Judaism and ordinances over for ever; no longer a question of Jew or Gentile, but from the queen on her throne to the poorest peasant in the land, there is no other way *in* but by the Lord Jesus Christ. The door is open wide at this hour, and you may enter in. If you pass inside what joy there! Don't tell me what you have *outside.* It is death, sorrow, misery, and unsatisfying things; but oh, if you were *inside* for one single hour, in all the joy of His presence, you would know the wonderful difference between inside and outside! What do you leave outside? All your sins put away by the death of Christ. And what *are* you inside? A "saved" person. And you "shall go in and out and find pasture." That is a beautiful figure of liberty. It is not that you can do as you like, but there *is* nothing but liberty in Christianity and pasture. Oh, it is a real thing this salvation! But the only liberty is in subjection; no joy apart from subjection to Christ. Pasture and food are found for us. No person is practically found in Ps. xxiii. who is not in a state of subjection to Christ. You can say, "The Lord is my Shepherd," and stop there; but can you say,

"I shall not want"? That is subjection. There may be trouble, want, and difficulty; but do you know "*I* walk beside still waters"? "He *leadeth* me beside still waters." If He *leads* you, you have no will; it is a question of what the *Lord* wants and wills, not you. Do you think *He* cares more for your happiness in this world, or you yourself? Which do you think cares most? Does not He know best? Oh, that is the work to go through in your soul! There is nothing gloomy in Christianity; there is nothing but the radiance of the light of heaven. You must be alone with Christ, and know Him in heavenly light and glory, and the radiance of the Father's house; and if you know Him, and "go in and out," and know the green pastures and the still waters, it is a *real* thing. You are independent of everything, because you are dependent only on Christ.

"The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy." A dark background, but He draws only the brighter contrast. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." Eternal life is a thing that is possessed in this world, and it is Christ Himself. "Everlastingly secure," people say it means, and it is true; but it is Christ. There are three things about eternal life. "He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life." And then there is such a thing as "Lay hold of eternal life;" and I believe that means a person so set upon God that he is enabled to *lay hold* of eternal life; it is the soul's embrace of Christ. I apprehend the person of Christ in heaven, who is the eternal life, and that's "laying hold." The more you are in faith and "following after faith"—that principle which we have within—viewing things as God

sees them (that's faith), and then these things that cramp and deaden us, the soul rises above them and lays hold on eternal life. You must go in for *something;* not spending your life in ordinary visits, &c.; but you must have an *object* in your life, and this is it—"Lay hold on eternal life." And the third thing is in Romans vi.: "And the end everlasting life." There is the end to it all, to my path, and journey, and service. We get into a sphere marked and characterized by all that belongs to Christ, and *that's "the end."*

"That they might have it more *abundantly.*" If you study Scripture as to "abundance," you will see that God delights in abundance. "Abundance of grace" (Rom. v. 17), "Life more abundantly" (John x. 10), "The Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly." (Titus iii. 6.) And He delights to look on the servant passing along through this world, and looking at everything in relation to the kingdom, where its counterpart will be produced. I say the *kingdom,* not heaven, for we get into heaven on one common title—the blood of Christ; but when it becomes a question of the Lord Jesus Christ coming out from heaven, and bringing His saints with Him to reign, He looks that not only may you have "abundance of grace," and "life more abundantly" (His own victorious life), but He says, 'I want you to have an "abundant entrance"' (2 Peter i. 11); "for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Enter that kingdom with flying colours; the fight well fought; the race well run. *Here* rejection and scorn may be, but the kingdom is *there;* and if you have ever known a sorrow because of faithfulness to Christ, there will be a most abundant answer

to it all *there*. If you have ever stood aside, and said, "I can't go here and there," He will own it abundantly. And I am not surprised, nor are you surprised, at anything that the Lord Jesus can do for us after *dying* for us. You are not surprised at any character of blessing He does for you after dying for you. If He wants to bless you He must have His own way, and do it after His own heart. If He calls us out of our hiding-places in this world, and gives us eternal life, it is according to His own everlasting grace.

"I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." You will notice, of course, how the Lord calls attention to what *He* is so much. We are shut up to *Christ*, and that is God's thought for us, and the Holy Ghost's object in coming. The hireling flees when he sees the wolf coming; the sheep are not his. The Good Shepherd does not flee; the sheep *belong* to Him. So the Lord Jesus stays by us because we belong to Him.

Verses 14, 15, should be read as one verse: "I am the Good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father." There is a character of knowledge between the Father and the Son—"*so* I know my sheep, and my sheep know me." It is not a question of whether you are *up* to it, but it is an abstract truth, because you have the life of the Son of God, and a nature in which the Spirit of God acts. You are brought into this place of blessing, so that all the character of blessing that exists between the Father and the Son is what exists between the Shepherd and His sheep. How much have we learnt of Christ? Is it not only just this—that we all stand on the shore of the ocean, and we *stoop* (as we

must if we want blessing) and take of the water; but it is only a taste, though it is an infinite, unknown depth from which we shall drink for ever? Rev. vii. 13–17 comes in in connection with it. It is the day of blessing which awaits His earthly people, and there is something for us which exceeds it. The mind of man never could have wrapt together blessings so marvellous as verse 17—they will be *wonderful*—"shall feed them and shall *lead* them." You will never get anything without being *led*. They are led *unto* living fountains of waters. Do you say there *could* be nothing more wonderful? In *this* day we have fountains of waters *inside* us. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John iv. 14), rising up to its own level in heaven. You may say this Rev. vii. is a marvellous picture, but we have something in this day that transcends it altogether, because we *have* the Spirit of God, we *are* the children of God, we have the Good Shepherd, and are the sheep; and there is not a single thing that He can bestow upon us that He has not given us, and it would be casting a question on the perfectness of His love, if we thought He could do something more for us than He has done.

"And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." The Lord refers to *us* "*must* bring." Don't you delight in that word *must?* It is a strong word of power, but it is a strong word of divine affection too. "Bring" them from *where?* From wherever their hiding-places are "I must bring them out," and He *has* "brought us to God." Think of it! Brought from the lowest depths of misery to those everlasting heights of blessing, from "beggars

from the dunghill" to "inherit the throne of glory." He has brought us to His own elevation. "As *He is*, so are we in this world." He says, 'I take no refusal. Do not ask to stay in the world any longer; *I want you.* "And they shall hear my voice," and my voice shall hush other things that charmed them.' Have *you* heard His voice?

"And there shall be one flock, and one shepherd." A company of sheep passing through every possible danger, with no outward fold, or wall, or organization of man to protect them. There is but one flock. You cannot divide it *before God*, though before man you may. In 1 Peter v. 2 we are told to "feed the flock of God which is among you." Look over them, and take care of them; don't disturb the sheep, but *feed* them, and "when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." I believe this is within the reach of all, if we seek to take care of one another, and help one another. An unfading crown of glory! *Think* of *such* an end! To go on through this world feeding the flock, giving them the food with heavenly freshness, building them up. Danger everywhere, and what do you want? You want the almighty, sheltering, watchful care of our Shepherd in heaven. Carry away with you this one thought—I have Someone in heaven who cares for me; my Saviour, my Lord, my Master in heaven *cares* for me. Oh that we may know more what it is to confide in His love! Every real Christian belongs to that one church, flock, and Shepherd. We are not to be looking one at another, but all looking to the Shepherd—looking for the eye of the Shepherd in heaven; and He says at the close, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall

any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all." Whatever difficulties may await you, or exercises, this we *do* know, that we have a Shepherd in heaven never failing us, ever ministering to us; and remember these three words, "*Greater than all.*" No man or power of the devil can take us out of the hand of Him that holds us for ever, and He is "greater than all." The Lord give us to treasure His word in our souls.

E. P. C.

"WIDOWS INDEED."

1 Tim. v.

The widow is often seen in Scripture as the object of the thoughts of God. But it is not until we come to the epistle to Timothy that we have the different kinds specified, with the indication of those who are widows according to the divine mind, those, in a word, who are really widows. Such the apostle directs Timothy, and us through Timothy, to honour, showing by the exhortation the place which they should ever occupy among the saints of God.

Three characteristics are given of the "widow indeed." She is "desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day." (*v.* 5.) A true widow, then, before God will exemplify these characters; and it is not a little remarkable that three widows are found in the gospel of Luke who exactly answer to the particulars of this description. The widow of Nain, whose son, "the only son of his mother," was being carried out for burial when met by our blessed Lord, as the Prince of Life, was truly the desolate one. (Chap.

vii.) The poor widow who cast in her two mites into the treasury, who "of her penury cast in all her living," was surely one who trusted in God. (Chap. xxi.) And in Anna we find the last characteristic; for it is said of her that "she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served [God] with fastings and prayers night and day." (Chap. ii. 37.) It is possible that each of these widows might have been a "widow indeed"—Anna certainly was—but in the way in which they are presented by the evangelist, it is the three together that answer to this character.

Spiritually, nothing could be more beautiful than the widow as so portrayed, though naturally the heart would shrink from it. But it must be remembered that the desolation, which is her essential feature, is only on the side of earth; nay, it might be added with perfect truth, that her very bereft condition has been the means, in the dealings of the God of all comfort, of her choicest blessing. It is precisely here where the application to the Church may be seen. It is when the Church realizes her widowhood, as far as earth is concerned, and in this aspect her desolation, as being without a single visible resource, that she enters most fully upon the enjoyment of the boundless affections of her Lord; and not only so, but thereby her entire dependence on Him would be consciously intensified, and out of this again would grow her continual supplications and prayers night and day. In the "widow indeed" we have a perfect picture (ideal because perfect) of the Church on earth. The characteristics given are moreover seen in our blessed Lord Himself. He was alone, had not where to lay His head, and none on earth had fellowship with Him; He trusted in God, and He was constantly occupied in

prayer. (Luke v. 12, 16, &c.) Every believer therefore should be thus distinguished, and will be in proportion as he is like his Lord.

The apostle having portrayed the true widow, supplies the contrast in the one "that liveth in pleasure," who "is dead while she liveth." Such an one is false to her character, denying that she is a widow, and using her lonely condition as an opportunity to gratify her inclinations and worldly desires, instead of hearing the voice of Him who speaks to her through her sorrows, as to Israel of old, "I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably to her." (Hosea ii. 13.) So living she is dead—dead toward God, in the midst of her pleasures. We have the counterpart of such a widow in the Apocalypse, together with the certainty of her coming doom. "How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, *I sit a queen, and am no widow,* and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." (Rev. xviii. 7, 8.) Such is the doom of Babylon, which, while claiming to be the spouse of Christ, was nothing but an apostate harlot, who "was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornications." (Rev. xvii. 4.)

Further, the apostle gives directions as to the action of the assembly in relation to widows. It is very noteworthy that the first difficulty in the Church sprung up in connection with such. (See Acts vi. 1.) It shows

that they were a numerous class even in the Pentecostal Church; and it would seem, from the instruction given to Timothy, that a large number will always be found in fellowship with the saints of God. This is a blessed thought, revealing the beauty of God's ways, even as one of old has said, "God often dims the brightness of this world in order to attract the vision to the glory beyond." If therefore He makes a widow, it is that He might wean her from earth, and win her to Himself. But the point here is, that the widow in her needs might be an embarrassment to the Church. Hence the apostle commands that none should "be taken into the number under threescore years old," &c. (*vv.* 9, 10.) By this we understand, that only those who answer to the description here given were to be formally linked with the assembly; *i.e.* recognized as entitled to regular support. Others might of course be ministered to privately by the saints, or occasionally by the Church, but none but these were to be put down in the list of those who had undeniable claims upon the funds of the assembly. It would have saved the Church much perplexity if the wisdom of God, as here expressed, had governed in this particular. It will also be observed that age, in and by itself, does not give the needful qualification. She must not have been twice married, and she must be well reported of, both as to her home duties and as to her activities in the Lord's service. The character of her good works—works which are therefore according to the mind of God—might well be commended for consideration to many in a day like this of incessant and ever-increasing activity.

The younger widows are to be refused; *i.e.* we judge, not to "be taken into the number." The reason is given.

"For when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry: having damnation [or being guilty] because they have cast off their first faith." Their "first faith" would probably mean that in the time of their bereavement, when the Lord drew them through their grief near to Himself, they devoted themselves entirely to Him and His service. But, losing heart for Christ, "they will"—or rather, they wish to—"marry," finding themselves unable in such a state of soul to lean for all the support they need on Christ; and thus they turn with longing desire to the succour of human affections and a human arm. An unsatisfied heart is the source of much sin, as the next verse most surely reveals. "And withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not," fruitful source of unhappiness and sorrow in the Church of God in every age and in every clime. The antidote is supplied. "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." (*v.* 14.) The term "younger women" is perhaps general, though with special reference to widows. The home is the appointed sphere of service for all such, if they would be in subjection to the Lord, and in comparative shelter from the snares of Satan. One other word is given to define the responsibilities of believers towards the widows of their own families, and this in order that the Church may be free to "relieve them that are widows indeed."

We may, then, gather from the consideration of this scripture some useful lessons. First we learn, as already expressed, what a heart God has for those who are truly

widows. Evidences of this are found both in the Old and New Testament Scriptures. It follows therefore, secondly, that if we would be in fellowship with Him, they should ever be the objects of our loving care and ministry. Lastly, we may gather from these directions to Timothy what an important sphere of service a "widow indeed" occupies before God. Anna is an example of this among the little remnant that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. In her continual fastings and prayers she had been brought into communion with the mind of God, while waiting for the advent of the Messiah. She was therefore led into the temple at the moment when the infant Jesus was being presented to Jehovah, and her heart was filled with joy, and her lips with praise; and she went forth as the messenger of the glad tidings of the Christ to those who had with her looked and longed for this blessed time. Where, then, are the "widows indeed" of the present day? Morally we occupy the same position as that of the little band in Jerusalem. Like them, we are expecting our Lord; meanwhile God calls those who are truly widows to be occupied with fasting and prayers, that thereby they may bear up the whole Church with their intercessions, aud thus be the means of kindling anew in many hearts the blessed hope of the Lord's return. There are many to serve in labours of love, but there is even a greater need for the service of those who, like Epaphras, know how to labour fervently for the saints in prayers. It is this service to which the "widows indeed" are called, and for which they have been divinely qualified. May the Church increasingly reap the fruit of their blessed service in this dark and evil day!

E. D.

THE CHURCH AS WIDOW AND BRIDE.

"He is not here. I will come again."

MOURNING, she misses Him who is not here;
Joyous she waits until her Lord appear,
Watching through widowed hours till night be past,
Ready to raise the cry, "He comes at last."

Oh, blood-bought Church, unto thy Lord be true;
Wait for thine absent One the midnight through!
Glory awaits thee, glory all divine,
When thou shalt in His bright effulgence shine.

His constant care shall shield thy waiting hours,
His love thy solace be when tempest lowers;
Himself thine all—then that bright morning tide,
When He shall come to greet thee as His bride.

Mourn that so few His love, His beauty know;
Mourn o'er the many triumphs of the foe;
Mourn o'er each act that gives Him cause to chide;
Mourn when thou dost not in His love abide.

Rejoice, O Church! for perfect shalt thou be;
Rejoice, for 'tis *His* hand that mouldeth thee;
Rejoice in love as changeless as divine;
Rejoice that thou art His, that He is thine.

* * * * * *

Exultant Church, raise now thy song of praise,
And triumph with thy Lord in all His ways;
Absent or present, ever unto thee
His constant love, His deep desire, shall be.

Time hastens on, the midnight hour is past,
Even now the rays of coming morn are cast;
Thy widowed weeping shall be changed ere long
To morning praises and to bridal song.

Expectant Church, still wait, still watching be,
Until the joy be thine thy Lord to see;
His hours of absence soon shall all be o'er,
And thou with Him shalt be for evermore.

O'er night's dark sorrow broods the Dove of peace,
But wakening morn shall bid all sorrows cease;
And thy glad heart shall raise its joyous lay,
While Morning Star leads on to perfect day.

When not a cloud shall dim thy wondering sight,
Nor shall His glory be for thee too bright,
Made meet to share it with Him on His throne,
And claimed by Him as "His beloved," "His own."

M. A. B.

THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS BY THE CHURCH.

WHEN the forgiveness of sins by the Church is spoken of some get alarmed, and think it is Popery. They say, "Who can forgive sins, but God only?"

Now in a sense no doubt this is true. Eternal forgiveness belongs only to God. And in one very real sense all sins are against Him, and against Him only, as David said by the Spirit (Ps. li. 4); and who but He can forgive them? And here I would wish to say a word about the Christian doctrine of the forgiveness of sins. This is set forth in the epistle to the Hebrews, in the entire putting away from God's memory of all the believer's sins. Whether past, present, or future is not the question; all are gone. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. x. 17.) The judicial ground of this is the sacrifice of the cross, where all were expiated. The Jew knew forgiveness in a sense.

The sin he had committed was forgiven when the appointed victim was brought and offered. Not that the blood of bulls and goats could ever take away sin; but it was the picture of one whose conscience was cleansed up to a certain date, not purged for ever. Now Christians are apt to get a thought of forgiveness like this, and to run in their minds to the blood for fresh cleansing from fresh sins. The truth is, that the cross has already answered for that fresh sin. The moral character of the sin is aggravated by the fact that it is done against the Holy One, who has died that it might not be imputed. Now although sins are never imputed to the believer, yet sin interrupts communion with the Father, and the one who sins has to be restored in his soul. How is this done? Not by faith in the blood, but by his confession, as far as he is concerned. The confession is the fruit of Christ's advocacy on high, and the action of the Word on the conscience of the sinner. But the moral ground on which such a person is restored to communion is his repentance and confession, on which his sin is forgiven. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John i. 9.)

But besides divine forgiveness, Scripture distinctly recognizes a forgiveness which is vested in the hands of men while Christ is away in heaven. A Scripture which plainly shows this is John xx. 23: "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." All must admit, therefore, that there was once a company on earth who, having received the Holy Spirit, were empowered by the Lord Jesus to forgive or retain sins. But it is said, "That was apostolic." Let us admit it

for the moment, the fact remains that it was men who acted thus. No doubt they acted for God, but still men remitted sins. But if we look at the chapter we see that there is no ground for saying it was apostolic. It says the disciples were assembled, not apostles. And that disciples in these last chapters of John does not mean exclusively apostles John xxi. 2 shows; for there Nathanael is said to be one of the disciples, and we know he was not an apostle.

The only Scriptures I know for saying that the forgiveness of sins was apostolic are Matt. xvi. and 2 Cor. ii. In the first we find the Lord giving to Peter authority to bind and loose on earth, and stating that it would be ratified in heaven. But this authority is not given to the apostles as such, but to Peter in particular. Then in 2 Cor. ii. we find Paul saying that he has forgiven on behalf of the assembly at Corinth. It appears that he had anticipated the action of the Church towards the wicked person whom, in the first epistle, he had directed the assembly to put out. But this apostolic forgiveness was not independent of the assembly ("for your sakes forgive I it"), nor did it render Church forgiveness needless; for he says of this person, "Ye ought to forgive him." (*v.* 7.) We do not, I think, know of any other apostles binding or loosing sins.

But whatever the apostolic power was, it is not of practical importance to us now, for the apostles have gone. The Church however remains; and we have to see what scriptures authorize the Church or assembly to remit sins. The first is Matt. xviii. 18–20. At the time the Lord Jesus uttered these words the Church was a future thing; for in Matt. xvi. the Lord speaks of it