Articles by J. G. Bellett

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A Letter to a Bereaved Brother

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J. G. Bellett.

Christian Friend 1897 p. 207.

(The date of this letter is not known — probably it was 1865: it was found among the papers of the brother who received it, after his departure to be with Christ. The annexed lines were written by the bereaved parent.)

My dear John,

How much I charge myself for want of joy in God; and I have just come from looking at a scripture that may be able to fix this charge still more home upon the spirit; I mean the opening of Luke. What joy among the angels there; what joy on earth in the vessels filled by the Spirit there! The same illustration, indeed the one feature of the kingdom of God, "joy in the Holy Ghost." The angels appear together, or alone, as in the person of Gabriel. Witness that fervency of heart and openness of mouth which speaks eloquently the liberty and gladness of the soul. And the style of the filled vessels, whether it be Mary or Elizabeth, Zacharias or Simeon, or the company of shepherds who had been called into the fellowship of angels, equally tells us that all were satisfied; that if in heaven, so on earth, the presence of the power of "the kingdom of God" was expressing itself in "joy."

But let us come on to the fifth chapter, and there we shall find that not only angelic heavenly hosts and filled human vessels enter into this joy, but believing sinners likewise. They show it, and in their way they express it.

Look in this chapter at Peter and his companions, at the healed palsied man, at Levi, and then at all the children of the bride-chamber. Peter and his companions are at once able to rise up, leave all, and follow Jesus. The palsied man takes up his bed, and rising up before them all who stood around him goes home glorifying God. Levi at the word of power abandons what is everything to him in this world, and makes a feast, and such a feast as was exposing him to the rebuke of others; but though roughly, after the mind of his divine Master.

The children of the bride-chamber could not fast; they were afresh introduced to the Person in whom the fulness of joy dwells and reigns, and they could not fast; and the Bridegroom approves their joy.

Thus were poor believing sinners, as in Acts 13, "filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost." They take their place with angels and with filled vessels just to prove (it may be each in his different way) that the one feature of the kingdom of heaven is "joy in the Holy Ghost."

The poor cripple, carrying his bed with praises, is as sure and seasonable an expression of this as the angelic chorus over the fields of Bethlehem. Levi's feast tells this as distinctly as Mary's song or Simeon's oracle. All is joy after its own order and in its own way.

And this is the crowning, eternal thing: there is peace, there is entrance into grace or favour, there is hope, but the crowning experience in the praises of the soul is joy — "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans 5: 11.)

It is joy that must account for Peter leaving his nets and Levi his receipt of custom. It is joy in the Bridegroom's

presence that will give the feast in His absence. "The joy of the Lord is our strength."

You may have to watch against the tendency to mere sentiment in your soul. I have to do this very specially. Some others have a strong doctrinal tendency, if I may so speak; a rigid literal way of learning Christ. You and I and many others have to watch against the uneasiness and morbidness of mere feeling or sentiment. It may be a little of your human way or natural mind that may have expressed itself in the teaching to which you allude, and which in its measure was challenged. But surely we are entitled by the Word to speak of "delighting the divine mind." I have no doubt of it. Scripture is very bold in this way; for the apostle says, "Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God." And again, "He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God and approved of man."

The Father is revealed in the Epistle to the Ephesians as presenting the children to Himself, just as Christ, the Bridegroom, is revealed as presenting the Church to Himself (see Eph. 1 and Eph. 5), language which tells us the personal delight that the one takes in His family, and the other in His bride.

Surely I know the prevalency of sensible, creature influences, and how much the heart surrenders itself to their authority. But the sense of incapacity and the force of attraction will do much for the heart in binding it to Christ and detaching it from what would naturally be a great hindrance. How Bartimeus by reason of the first, and Zaccheus by reason of the second, clung to Jesus, though the multitudes were tempting them to yield. In the exercises of your spirit, dear brother, and in the

anxieties and cares of your heart and hand, may His comforts refresh your soul. It is a struggling scene. "Who shall roll us away the stone?" But the resurrection will anticipate or close all the trial and the difficulty, as it did in Mark 16.

My love in the Lord to the dear brethren and to your dear wife, if returned.

Ever, dear John, Your affectionate Brother, J. G. Bellett.

2, Upper Pembroke Street, August 27th.

* * *

"Our precious child, Lord Jesus,

We know is now with Thee;

Nor would we wish him present,

E'en though that wish could be.

There in Thine arms enfolded,

His happiness entire

For one we loved so dearly,

What more could we desire?

"There in Thy blissful presence,

Waiting with thousands more

The time by God appointed,

When time shall be no more,

When Thou shalt come to gather,

Thy chosen ones to Thee

That glorious time of meeting

We long, O Lord, to see."

A Meditation on Canticles

A Meditation on Canticles.

J. G. Bellett.

Christian Friend, vol. 13, 1886, p. 187.

The character of the soul's communion delineated in this little book is very elevated. It is something that we may say with sorrow we little reach. There is no question of sin at all here; it is no enquiry either into the fact or the nature or the ground of our acceptance with God. Such questions and enquiries are here settled beforehand. The communion here is upon the settlement of them all. It is joy in God, delight in Christ, occupation with Himself, that we get here. It is not the finding of Him out, but the enjoying of Him as found to be infinitely suited to the soul's blessing; nor is it the confession of sins. The communion is a sinner's communion most surely, but it is of a consciously pardoned, accepted, and loved sinner; and when any sorrow or repentance is felt or owned here, it is not for any blot or open transgression, but for some spiritual backsliding, some momentary coldness, some infirmity in maintaining or cultivating the soul's due fervour towards Christ. This last point I feel to be especially significant, and such as gets its illustration in this little portion of the book. There is in the believer here the detecting of something wrong; but what is the character of the wrong? Nothing gross or even open in conduct, nothing established as a habit, nothing that a soul that had not been already in simple and earnest fellowship with Jesus would have been apprehensive of; that is, a temporary slothfulness of heart. The very repentance and confession is of such a

nature as intimates the fine tone of the soul that could feel and make it; the contact is so tender that the very perception of it speaks the delicacy of the organ which met it and resented it. But what an element is this! Ah, how coarse are our sensibilities compared with all this! Our poor souls are rarely here. They are engaged ofttimes in doing first works again, in grieving over the advantage which our lusts have taken of us, the surprisals which the heat of wrong tempers have wrought, and such like things that keep us below this peace and spiritual joy in Christ. This sickness of love, this keeping of the garden of spices, here so blessedly presented, surely it is little of this we know. Is God thus our exceeding joy? Is it thus in the chambers of the King in thoughts of glory we walk? Is our spikenard thus greeting our Lord, and our souls thus able to call Him nothing less than our Beloved? It were well indeed if such affections as these were filling and commanding our hearts. Thus should we have weapons of sure victory wherewith to meet our enemies, and to beat down the intrusive desires and thoughts that defile us so often. They could not with any power come against a soul thus occupied. This joy of the Lord would indeed be our strength; but, indeed, we know it but poorly. It is not the love of pity in the Saviour which the sinner here enjoys, but the love of complacency which there is in Christ towards His elect. The soul here has tasted the pity and salvation of the Son of God, and is now occupying itself with thoughts of His delights in His saints. Oh, what communion is this! what a dwelling-place for faith opens here! what a banqueting-house for the soul! How far distant from fear and clouds of conscience such regions lie; the land of the turtle indeed, the garden of all pleasant fruits. But where is the precious faith to enter

it and walk there? We need to cry for largeness of heart in the bowels of Christ Jesus. J. G. B.

Absalom

Absalom.

2 Samuel 11: 12.

"The fool hath said in his heart, No God!"

J. G. Bellett.

BT vol. 14, p. 193 etc.

David is the principal object before the mind of the Spirit of God in both the 1st and the 2nd books of Samuel. In the 1st book we see him brought from obscurity into honour and praise, and there standing, by the good hand of God, in full righteousness amid the persecutions of the wicked. In the 2nd we see him descending from honour, through sin, into degradation and ruin, but there learning the rich and marvellous ways of the grace of God. It is thus the sorrow of righteousness, or "David the martyr," that we first see; and the shame of sin, or "David the penitent," that we next see.

And these things give us different characters in the Psalms. In some of them we hear the breathings of a convicted conscience, a heart exercised in thoughts of transgression, searching after God again, and from thence rising into a blessed sense of grace and salvation. In others we hear the sorrows of conscious righteousness suffering the reproach of the wicked, but knowing all the while its title to fulness of joy and strength in God.

These are the varied exercises known to David's soul; and in all this he is the type of God's remnant in the

latter time, who will have to pass through the shame and sorrows of afflicted and yet conscious integrity, and the shame also of convicted sin. For that remnant, though righteous in their own persons and conduct, will identify themselves with their nation in all its blood-guiltiness,* and look on Him who was pierced, and mourn as though they had pierced Him themselves.

*And as this unguilty remnant thus confess the sin of the nation, because they identify themselves with it, so does Jesus in the Psalms, though without sin, confess it, because He has consented to be "made sin for us."

And (wonderful, and yet blessed to tell it) David would not have known all that is in God, had he not passed through the sin of 2 Samuel, as well as the sorrow of 1 Samuel, for it is sin that manifests God.

And what a truth that is! I learn God in the darkness of mine own iniquity. For there was in God a deeper secret than all that His hand revealed in creation. There was the treasure of His bosom. There was grace in God, love for guilty ones; and Adam's sin drew that secret out; for "the Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head" at once came forth to tell him that God had something better than all the fruit of His six days' work of creation.

The direct history of Absalom may be considered as beginning with 2 Sam. 11. In the previous chapters of this book David had been advancing into power and the kingdom, approving himself to God and to the conscience of all men. In no scene in which he is called to take a part does he seek himself, or eye his own advantages. He considers the sorrows and dishonour of others rather than his own gains, and will be serving others though at his own expense. Thus he weeps over

Saul and over Abner (2 Sam. 1 - 4), and it is his first concern, after he comes to the throne, to bring home the ark of God to Israel, and prepare it a worthy habitation; for which end he would be base in his own sight, and despise the shame of others. He sought the greatness of God's house, and not his own wealth, and the Lord prospered him whithersoever he went. As David would be only a servant, the Lord would make him honourable and prosperous; and even his mistakes savour of his virtues. It is his impatience to be serving that leads to his errors touching both the carriage of the ark and the building of the house. No doubt he was to be blamed, for in those matters he had not waited on the counsel of the Lord, as he had been wont to do; but this came from his desire to be doing service for God. He thought, to be sure, that in these things he must be right. He trusted his heart in them, and therefore did foolishly (Prov. 28: 26); but still his errors savour of that which was characteristically "David," being connected in his mind with desire to be in service for the Lord and His people. (2 Sam. 5 - 10.)

All this indeed is excellent; but all this does not make out a well-fought fight, and a stainless victory for David. All is not over even yet; such holy beginnings as these are not every thing. The strength of the summer sun is still to try this promise of the spring. He that girdeth on his armour must not boast as he that putteth it off. "Ye have need of patience" is the word, and so we shall find it even here with David.

It was the time, we read, when kings went forth to battle. (2 Sam. 11: 1.) But David the king tarries at Jerusalem, and that sets him at once in the flesh. He was not where the Spirit could own him, but has chosen his

own way. It may seem to be a small thing, but it is enough for the enemy of his soul. It is only, one might say, a tarrying in the city when he should have been in the field of battle. But the little foxes spoil the vines, we read, "for the vines themselves are tender;" and this beginning may account for any result. Soft relaxing habits quickly come in, for the next moment we see him, instead of having girded the sword upon his thigh, lying on his bed at eventide. The outposts had been left unguarded, and the very citadel becomes an easy spoil for the enemy. Nothing could do for him now but to arise and shake himself, like Samson, in the strength of the Lord. But, like Samson, he appears as though he had already betrayed the secret of the Lord. And all because he got into the way of his own heart. He was drawn away by his own lusts and enticed; and lust was soon to conceive sin, and sin to bring forth death. Jerusalem, beloved, was David's place for himself, when the field of battle was God's place for him; and, little as that may seem, it is enough to lead to adultery. "Lord," may we all say, "it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

But it is not merely one lust that enters by this door and riots in David's veins, for love of his fair name in the world now proves just as much a lust in him as the desire of his eye. The one led him to adultery with Bath-sheba, the other goads him to the murder of Uriah. He had no thirst after Uriah's blood, but rather contrives expedients to preserve it, and to that end will do all but surrender his place and reputation among men. He sends to the field of battle to fetch him home to his wife, and thus to be a covert for his sin; and when that will not do, his subtle and uneasy heart devises to make Uriah drunk, that he may still accomplish his end, and

use him as a veil under which to hide his own iniquity. Nor is it till all these schemes were baffled, and righteousness in Uriah refuses to be so used in the service of sin in David, that David sacrifices him to his lust. To his love of the world he sacrifices Uriah now, as he had just before sacrificed Bath-sheba to the desire of his eye. And he will sacrifice even his nation to the same. He will so order it that the army of Israel may be defeated, as well as the blood of Uriah be shed before the walls of Rabbah, rather than that his good name should be made a scandal. All must go rather than David hazard that. Just as Pilate afterwards: — he was Caesar's friend, the world's friend; and, rather than hazard any breach in that friendship, Jesus must die. Sad thus to tell it, David and Pilate are found together. There was no more thirst for innocent blood in Pilate than there was in David; but there was the same love of his credit in the world in David as there was in Pilate. Pilate as well as David can try many devices to preserve the innocent blood and the world for himself at the same time; but David as well as Pilate will give up the one for the other if both cannot be retained together.

It is sad thus to class David and Pilate together. But flesh is flesh in whomsoever found. But David had now to prove that "sin, when it is perfected, bringeth forth death." And well is it for us when we prove that here through the Holy Ghost, and do not wait to prove it by the judgment of God by and by. So was it now with David. Adultery, murder, and falsehood had perfected the sin, and now came the bitterness of his soul. He takes the sentence of death in himself. "His bones wax old, and his moisture is turned into the drought of summer." (Psalm 32.) Death within was consuming him

as a moth fretting a garment. There was no strength of grace as yet to confess the sin; but the life within was sensitive of the wound it had received. The spirit felt the grief it had been put to, but David kept silence and did not tell out his shame as yet, for guile was still in the spirit. (Psalm 32.) The voice of a prophet must call forth confession; but when it does come forth, it is indeed of a divine quality; for it is not merely the trespass against Uriah that his soul is conscious of and his lips confess, but he sees his sin in the light of God's glory. And it is there, beloved, we always see it when we see it aright; it is there we divinely know what sin is. "I have sinned against the Lord," said David; and with this apprehension he utters, "against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." (Ps. 51.) Before this confession the spirit had its wound within, and it was intolerable. But this confession perfects his conversion; and then he was able to teach sinners the ways of the Lord, as Peter after he was converted could strengthen his brethren. When he had learnt the blessedness of grace abounding over sin, he could present himself to all other poor sinners as the warrant of their confidence in the Lord. "For this," says he, "shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found." (Ps. 32.) Like Paul he is set forth a pattern of all long-suffering, and like Peter he knows the restoring of a soul that had erred from the ways of righteousness.

In the striking style of Scripture, we now read, after David had accomplished his sin, "the thing that David had done displeased the Lord." There is no long account of God's anger, but this tells us of His mind towards the sin of His servant. But if we confess our sins, He is

faithful and just to forgive them; and so we find it here. "I have sinned against the Lord" says David. "The Lord has put away thy sin," answers the prophet. (2 Sam. 12.)

2 Samuel 13, 14.

But acceptance into God's favour always puts us into one interest with God's honour in the world; and, from the moment of our acceptance through His grace, we are to be the servants of His glory. The moment we rest as sinners, we begin our labour as saints. By faith we rest as sinners knowing the virtue of the blood of Jesus for the full repose of the conscience before God: but from thence we labour as only in the prospect of the rest that is ours as saints. We become the servants of God's glory when we are made free through God's grace. And so here: David had been just led to his rest as a sinner — "The Lord has put away thy sin;" but now he must serve God's glory as a sinner brought near. As the name of God had been reproached through David, David must now bear the reproach too: and God will show His entire separation from the sin of His servant, and before all men, He must measure his former work into his bosom. The child that Bathsheba had borne him must die; as his sword had slain, Uriah, the sword now shall not depart from his house; and that which he had done to the shame of others, and done it secretly, others should now do to his shame in the sight of the sun.

It is in connection with all this that Absalom is introduced to us. He is to be made the rod in the Lord's hand for the chastening of David — a rod, too, taken out of his own stem — his own child; as the Lord by Nathan had just said to him, "behold I will raise up evil against thee, out of thine own house." Absalom meant not so,

like the Assyrian afterwards (Isa. 10: 7). The Assyrian was to have a commission from the lord against the hypocritical nation, but in his heart he thinks only of the spoil and the prey. Absalom is now to serve his own lusts, but God will use him for the renewing of His servant in holiness.

We need not particularly consider the circumstance which is made to introduce Absalom to us. The sin of Amnon, and the sorrows of Tamar, had their purpose, and could well have been used in God's grace to keep poor David in lively recollection of his own sin and sorrow. It was a voice "in his own house" that must have spoken in thunder to him. Blood and uncleanness were staining his own children under his own eye. Tamar's virgin garment was now rent, a sore remembrance of the stain upon himself; and Amnon's blood was shed, awakening the voice of Uriah's blood in his ear from the earth. But we need not more particularly look at this. Absalom was Tamar's brother, and the son of David by a daughter of the king of Geshur (2 Sam. 3: 3) but we have nothing of him till now, when he appears at once before us its the subtle and wilful one, whose heart and eye were full only of their own devices and objects to reach which appears to be all his care. Amnon's wrong to his sister had raised a deadly fire in his heart, which two full years had no power to quench; but his crafty soul must find the happiest way to let out his rage on its victim. The fire buries as though it had been kindled but yesterday, and his subtlety devises a sure passage for it. It is all of Satan. The guile of the serpent ministers to the fury of the lion, and Absalom plots the matter of the sheep-shearing that he may get the blood of Amnon. David has some misgivings. How indeed could it be

otherwise? Must he not, after all that he had done and all that the prophet had said to him, have feared every stir in the house? For one of his own house was to bring the evil upon him. He does not like this sheep-shearing feast which Absalom proposes. But he is pressed about it, and Amnon then goes, and falls before the treachery and sword of his brother. (2 Sam. 13.)

Absalom by this had defiled the land, and forfeited his life. (Num. 35: 33.) All that he can now do is to fly to strangers, for the land had no city of refuge for such an one. The avenger of blood might claim him of Bezer or of Kedesh. He had shed his brother's blood, and this cried for vengeance. But David was a man of affection. He had a heart that sought its indulgence in the relations and sympathies of human life, and, being the man after God's own heart, he would have found his joy rather in the ministrations of grace than in the exactions of righteousness. But Absalom had fled, for he was now debtor to that law of which David was the guardian, for David held his throne on the terms of reading the law continually. (Deut. 17.) What then can now be done? David may mourn for the son slain, and for the son banished, but are not both equally lost to him?

Now Joab was, in modern language, a consummate politician. He was nephew to the king, and thus the king's honour was in some sense his honour, and that he knew and valued and sought to retain; and therefore he never seeks to disturb the throne as now settled in the house of Jesse, his grandfather. He was content to be the second in the kingdom, for that his worldly wisdom tell him he might be in safety, but more than that he knew he could not seek without hazard. He could get both Abner and Amasa out of his way, when he thought they

were intruding into that place, which he had eyed for himself; but the first place he would leave with David, and therefore never conspires against him, but is ever watchful of his interest, ever ready to let David take the principal post of honour (2 Sam. 12: 28), and is even quicker than David himself (2 Sam. 24) to discern and provide for the stability of the throne.

Such an one could not but be busy at such a moment as this. He knew the softness of David's heart, and easily calculated that any device to help him to bring back his banished child would be acceptable; and to do this acceptable service to the king, and thus to have a fresh claim to be the second round his throne, sets Joab in motion now. He did not much care for Absalom's exile, but in some sense "he carried the bag and bare what was put therein."

But the case was a very difficult one; for David, as I have said, might love his son and desire his return. But David was guardian of that law to which his son had exposed himself, and it was hard for Joab to contrive a way whereby David might let "mercy rejoice against judgment," and thus bring back his banished one.

"A wise woman" of Tekoah is, therefore provided, whom Joab instructs in this matter. Perhaps we may not know the proper sense of that description of her, but it will shortly appear that she was wise indeed, and that too in the secrets of God Himself. She feigns herself it mourner, and comes to the king with just such a title of sorrow as must at once have caught his affections, and brought his own sorrow fully to mind. She tells him of her two sons, how one had slain the other in a quarrel in a field, and that the kinsman was out against the

manslayer, threatening to leave her a withered stump in the earth. David is surprised. Such matters should lie with the proper judges to determine between the avenger and the manslayer. (Num. 35.) But David is surprised — nature speaks in him too quickly — the yearnings of nature move him, and he gives her a pledge three times assured that nothing shall befall her son. Then, armed with this pledge, she more distinctly assails the heart of the king. She is willing to let the pledge be to Absalom the, king's son, and not to her son, and would have it known that she had been all the while pleading for David's sorrow and not for her own.

But "wise woman" as she was, she had deeper resources than even these. She had reached David's heart, and got a pledge from the desire and heat of human affection; but she seeks now to reconcile his conscience to all this, and to let him learn that he had a title in God Himself to let "mercy rejoice against judgment" to the guilty, as his soul desired, and as his lips had pledged. For all would be imperfect without this; for the king, as we have seen, was debtor to the law, and none could set it aside but he who established it. Samson, it is true, may marry a Philistine harlot, though the law denied all such commerce with any Gentile, when he has a dispensation from the Lawgiver. Gideon or Manoah may sacrifice on to rock, though the ordained place is elsewhere, if the Angel-Jehovah will stand by; and David himself may forsake the altar at Gibeon even for the threshing-floor of a Jebusite, when the God of grace meets him there. Now it is this principle of truth which the "wise woman" now brings to bear on the conscience, as her tale of woe had lately borne on the heart, of the king. She pleads with David in behalf of Absalom the very mercy of God

in the gospel. She tells the king that he should fetch home his banished one; for says she, "we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground (i.e. good for nothing see: 1 Sam. 7: 6), which cannot be gathered up again, neither doth God respect any person, yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him." Here she brings God's own way before David. She pleads that law of liberty (James 2: 12) — which expresses even the heart of God Himself in His dealings with poor sinners, the gospel of God's grace in which He righteously refuses to hear the law, and is just while the justifier of the guilty, having devised a way by which His banished ones return to him. Thus she pleads with his conscience, as she had before pleaded with his affections, and what call David do? Must he not give an answer in peace? Is he not satisfied? If the light of the gospel be thus by this wise woman brought to shine on him, must he not walk, and act in the light of it? Can he refuse to reflect it? This seems to be the way of her wisdom, and indeed it is strange and blessed. What a testimony this is! What a telling of the wonders of grace! That which is no better than water spilt on the ground is gathered up to be brought home to God Himself. (2 Sam. 14.)

This that we are meditating on is somewhat a neglected scripture. But it shows us that we may ofttimes find some stray and rich kidneys of wheat in the distant corners of the Lord's granary. And this gospel in the mouth of this unknown widow, the "wise woman of Tekoah," further shows us that Israel, even in their infant dispensation, had sweet truths to feed upon. From the beginning indeed the joy has been but one. "'The woman's seed" was the king's highway cast up under the

eye of faith, the known and published good news, whereby God hath devised to fetch home His banished ones.

The king, however, seems not to be quite at ease. The pleading of our wise woman was as wise as it could have been. Nothing in its season could have been more perfect. But the king was the guardian of the law, and the softness of his heart had betrayed him into an act of grace by which he had undertaken to set the law aside, but the thought seems to be lurking there, that he was debtor to the law. However, according to the king's word, Absalom is brought home, but it is on terms of not seeing the king's face; and so he dwells two full years in Jerusalem apart from David.

But he is still Absalom; wherever or however we see him, he is himself. His taste remains in him, and his scent is not changed, even though he had now returned from captivity. (Jer. 48: 11.) He comes home the wilful Absalom still, the servant of his own passions and of them only. "Who is lord over us?" is the language of all his actings. His tongue was his own. "No God," says he, in his heart continually. All that can be said in any way of commendation is, like Saul before him, of his comeliness in the flesh. "In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty. From the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him:" we have no account of him beyond this of his beauty. His acts from first to last are enough to give him his right name and place before us; for in his own personal character, and in all in which it displays itself, Absalom is still the wilful one. He is the Saul of his day, or the apostate seed of the serpent, and the agent of the dragon, the usurper, the proud one who consults

only his own will, which most surely carries him forth into full and constant resistance of God and His people. Even favours have but little claim on him. He may send to Joab to whom he owed every thing a second time, but beyond that small courtesy his heart owns no debt to him.

2 Samuel 15 - 18.

But the heart that is thus dead to the claims of kindness finds it easy to entertain any thing that Satan would propose. Thus, having exercised the rude strength of the lion in the corn-fields of his friends, he is quite prepared to practise the guile of the serpent in the kingdom of his father. The one or the other must be the way of Absalom. The child of him that was a liar and a murderer from the beginning, he knows no other master. He is Absalom, "the father of peace." But it is the peace of a deceiver. He comes in peaceably and takes the kingdom by flatteries. By good words and fair speeches he deceives the simple. He steals the hearts of his father's subjects, the people of the Lord and of His anointed. Nothing can be more corrupt than all his ways, for he is the mere slave of his own evil desires, let them urge him as they may, or set his heart on work with whatever device they may. And he will use any means for his own ends. He pretends the payment of a vow at Hebron, and takes with him two hundred men out of Jerusalem, to furnish as it might seem the table at the sacrificial feast; but all this was only to further his design upon the throne of his father. His slanders of his father, and flatteries of the people, had already prepared the nation for his pretensions; and now he sends out spies from Hebron to declare him through the land, and all too well in readiness for him, and speedily, therefore, the

conspiracy was strong, and the people increased continually with him.

The Absaloms of every day have had their evil counsellors. This has been already noticed in the case of Saul, and some of these confederacies were then traced. Now we see it in the case of this apostate son of David. He gets Ahithophel to be with him, one who had stood among David's children. But the counsellor joins the child: one who had eaten of David's bread, and another with whom David had taken sweet counsel, none other or less than they, must now be found together against him.

But all this gives occasion to one of the most affecting scenes in the history of David as a penitent. We know not whether the more to admire the beautiful workmanship of the Spirit of God in David, when suffering for righteousness, or when suffering for transgression. Thus I have before touched upon. We see him the martyr in the days of Saul, but then as led by the Spirit reading a sweet lesson of instruction to us, showing all patience and all holy confidence in God; consenting to be hunted as a partridge in the mountains day after day, rather than take vengeance into his own hands, or lift himself up against the Lord's anointed. (1 Samuel.) And so now, though the scene be changed, and we have David the penitent rather than David the martyr, yet all is of equal interest and value to us, under the forming hand of the Spirit of God. (2 Samuel.)

Thus, when in 1 Samuel, the testimony of his conscience was for him, he would gird himself with all the gladness in God that he could get. He put on the ephod, he ate the bread of the sanctuary, he had the prophet and the

priest with him in exile, and he carried the sword of Goliath, sweet pledge as it was that no weapon formed against him could prosper. All this was his then, and he claimed it all with confidence, carrying within him his title to rejoice in spirit, though circumstances were against him, knowing full well that he might have all in God, though nothing in man. He ate the fruit of an unwounded conscience, the glad feast of the Lord's unclouded countenance. Indeed he dared not then to have eaten the bread of mourners. Could he surround the altar of God with tears? Could he fast while the bridegroom was with him?

But now in 2 Samuel it is otherwise, for the testimony of his conscience was against him. He is now a sinner. It is sin that has found him out, and has brought him into remembrance before God, and it is not for such an one to keep holy day. He must bow his head and accept his punishment. And so he does, and brings forth fruit that was as much in season, as his previous harvest of joy and confidence had been in season. And in the same spirit of true repentance, he would be alone in the trouble. He would have Ittai his friend go back, and leave him to meet the sorrow alone, for it was he alone that had sinned and drawn out the hand of the Lord; but what had those sheep done? And still in the same spirit he sends back the ark and its priests, as having a joy for him that it did not become him now to taste. The ark, the presence of God, was David's best joy; but he was not entitled now to have it, and therefore he sends it home. All this was just the sorrow that became him now. "Carry back the ark of God," says he, "into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, He will bring me again and show me both it and His habitation; but if

He thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good to Him."

Nothing of joy was his at present. Lot the ark go back to the city, to shed the gladness of its presence there, he will go forward to Mount Olivet with tears and barefooted. He will eat nothing but the bread of mourners, and know nothing but the sorrow of the Bridegroom's absence. Surely this was godly sorrow working repentance. And beside all this, he will allow even the wicked to reproach him. Another Benjamite comes out against him to plague him sorely; one too whom he had never wronged, or done despite to, any more than to his kinsman Saul of old. But Shimei comes out against him in this the day of his calamity, and reviles him, casting stones at him, and cursing him still as he goes. But David reviles not again. He hears the righteous rebukes of God in all this, and bows his head. God had given Shimei a commission to do this. What could David suffer more than David deserved? was the thought of the heart of our penitent. Therefore let Shimei, the unworthy Shimei, do or speak as he may, with David it. is not Shimei but the Lord. (2 Sam. 15, 16.)

All this was fruit meet for repentance. It was all perfect in season. But though thus silent as towards Shimei, David in spirit judges that he may plead against Ahithophel, and he says, "O Lord, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness." And this desire the Lord allows, for he answers it by speedily confounding that evil counsellor.

The counsel which this apostate friend, and companion of David, counselled in those days, was as if a man had

inquired at the oracle of God. But the Lord had now appointed to overthrow him. Absalom rejects his counsel, his word is passed by; and as his reputation for wisdom in the state was every thing to him, his household gods are thus now stolen from him, his "good thing" is gone, and he sinks down a defiled dishonoured ruin.

What a lesson to us all, beloved! What did any thing avail Haman, while Mordecai sat at the gate? What would not Saul give up, if he could but be honoured before the people? Oh the solemn lesson which all this reads to us. Have we, beloved, any thing that, if it were touched, our life would be touched, or is our life so bound up with Jesus, that we could stand the wreck of all beside? What treasures are they which we are laying up day by day? what vineyard is it that we are cultivating? Where is the ruling passion fixed, brethren? Where is the current of the heart flowing, what point is it hasting towards? Does Jesus draw its desires, and awaken its intelligence, or what of this world is its master-spring? It is well, beloved, to put these challenges to our poor hearts, and try them thus in the presence of our blessed Lord. "When Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died." (2 Sam. 17.)

And Absalom the king is soon to be like this counsellor of his kingdom, for the beast and his false prophet perish together. But there was no prayer in the month of David against Absalom, as there had been against Ahithophol. How very striking is this, as indeed is every expression that we get of his heart all through these

scenes. Nothing can be more perfect than this drawing by the divine hand. I have noticed this already in some features, and here again we trace it. He numbers the people, setting captains over hundreds and thousands of them, and making Joab, Abishai, and Ittai the chiefs. But he would fain go forth himself, for it was his sin which had brought all this mischief on the land, and David was of too noble a heart to let the mischief find any in the foreground but himself; and beside, he has his desire on Absalom still, and judges that his presence might help to shield him, for David was of too soft a heart to disown the feelings of a father even towards a rebel son.

But his people will not hear of this. What a loved man he was! and deservedly so, I am well assured: one, I judge, of the most attractive men that ever lived, who had qualities which could well command, and then detain beyond almost any other, the hearts and desires of all who know him. "Thou shalt not go forth," the people answered, "for if we flee away they will not care for us; but now thou art worth ten thousand of us therefore now it is better that thou succour us out of the city." As afterwards, when he was hazarding his life in battle with the Philistines, his men sware to him, saying "Thou shalt go no more out with us to battle, that thou quench not the light of Israel" (2 Sam. 21: 17). And indeed he was their light, their gladness, and their leader, the honoured and loved one of his day, in favour with God and man. But he now bows to the word of his people, and though his heart is still towards Absalom, he goes not out, but, "deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom," is the last command he gives his captains on sending them forth to the battle.

With a heart stored with such affections "he sits between the gates to wait the solemn issue," and the captains and their armies go to the battle of the wood of Ephraim. Victory or defeat would be much the same to David. No result but must tell him whence it came, and be armed with a sad remembrance of that other battle in which another had fallen, fallen too in the judgment of God, as one murdered by his hand, though he was all the while dallying in the city. But the Lord is but refining, and in no wise destroying him. His chastening, blessed be His name, is salvation. For though He is jealous for His holy name, He pities His people. The battle is hot for a moment in the wood of Ephraim, but the Lord is in it, as before at Gibeon; and as there the hailstones, so here the wood devours more than the sword. There was a great slaughter that day of more than twenty thousand men. All is confusion and utter destruction in the ranks of the apostate, and Absalom is caught in the boughs of a great oak, and is taken up between the heaven and the earth, a spectacle to both. He is made a show of openly; for "he that is hanged is accursed of God," "and cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (2 Sam. 18.)

2 Samuel 19 - 23.

Here was the end of another apostate, a more fearful one even than Saul. The paper on "Saul," to which this is in some sort kindred, has shown us that the evil king of Israel was a type of the wicked one in the latter day, who is to do according to his will, to magnify himself above God, and hold nothing in honour or desire but himself and his own way. Absalom in his day, as I have already observed, is type of the same wicked one. They are different samples of the same last great enemy of God and his people, who is to fill up the measure of human

iniquity, and then call down the penal fire of God on all the corruptions of the earth. But there are features of all this self-will and wickedness in Absalom, that exceed even what we saw in Saul. Thus, Saul had been produced by the desire of the revolted heart of the nation. He was the man after the nation's heart. But Absalom generated his own evil preeminence. It was not the nation's but his own desire that brings him forth. And there is more of the violation of all the laws of nature in Absalom than in Saul. Absalom is the profane as well as the wicked prince (Ezek. 21: 25). With him it is not simply unbridled wickedness, but that profane wickedness that could trample on all the claims even of nature. Heady, high-minded, disobedient to parents, unthankful, without natural affection, the very characteristics of the perilous times in the last days, are more awfully developed in Absalom, than perhaps in any other even of the same rank of persons in Scripture.

It is not merely a corrupted, but an usurped, kingdom we see in the hand of Absalom; and this is another advance in iniquity upon the times of Saul. And still further I may observe, that Absalom seems entirely to disclaim the Lord all through the day of his usurpation. There is not one thought of God in the kingdom then. Ahithophel's counsel but no counsel from the Lord, — the strength of his thousands but no strength in the Lord, appears then. And as there is not one thought of God to stir his conscience, neither is there one thought or softening movement of heart because of his father's sorrow. Even the counsel to smite David alone pleased Absalom well (2 Sam. 17). Even Saul could weep at times, and confess righteousness in David; but Absalom's soul has nothing like a gracious visitation

oven for a single moment. He never, if I may so say, even thinks of saying, "I have sinned," as Saul does. For what does Absalom care for sin? "Tush, God does not see," this is the language of his uncircumcised heart and lips from beginning to end.

Nor is there one Jonathan to relieve the entire darkness of the scene, as there had been in the court and camp of Saul. There was not one single point of relief with Absalom and all that was confederate with him. It is all the unmixed darkness of an evil and apostate hour. And the Lord can in no wise own him. He gives him no commission all through the days of his usurpation; He could not. He had entrusted Saul with the slaughter of the Amalekites, but Absalom is in no wise known to Him. He is his own, and none but his own, from beginning to end.

Such was Absalom, — one of the darkest pictures of human nature that we are given to look at in the word of God; and such is now his end. He hangs in the tree, — another Lot's wife to be had in constant remembrance. He had taken and reared up for himself a pillar in the king's dale, and called it after his own name, because he had no son to keep his memorial alive in the earth. But the Lord was now giving him another and a far different memorial — a memorial in shame and not in glory. His body was cast into a pit in the wood, and a great heap of stones was laid on him. All his glory was thus tarnished. He was hung by the hair of his head, which had been his boast in the flesh; and, instead of a, pillar to his own name, he is made a pillar to us — a witness of the shame and ruin of apostacy. — "The wise shall inherit glory, but shame shall be the promotion of fools."

This overthrow of Absalom was like the loss of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, or as the fall of Saul on Mount Gilboa, or as by and by, the ruin of that man who having planted the tabernacle of his palaces in the glorious holy mountain shall then come to his end, and none shall help him.

But here let us mark it, that Moses and the congregation of Israel may sing "the Lord has triumphed gloriously;" and Deborah and Barak in their turn may likewise sing, "so let all thine enemies perish, O Lord;" for songs belong to a merry heart, to those who have the testimony of their conscience with them. But there could be no music in David's heart now. That heart was no sanctuary of praise now. How could David at this time enter the gates, and praise the Lord? Those gates open only to the righteous nation that keep the truth. God had appointed salvation for walls and bulwarks, and praise for gates; but David must be silent there, because he had sinned against the Lord. O dear Brethren, that we may be faithful to our own joys; that we may so carry ourselves before the Lord our God, as to be able to run along with the saints in their prosperity, and with the chosen in their gladness, and know no check in our spirit, as poor David now knows in this feast-day of the Lord.

No: David has no music at this time. Absalom had fallen, and the blood of Uriah was crying from the ground afresh in David's ears. It was not meet that he should make merry and be glad. He could not eat of the sacrifices, for such and such things had befallen him (Lev. 10: 19). Victory was defeat, and life was death to David. His path is still the perfect path of the penitent; and thus he now goes to his chamber rather than to his

throne; and as he goes, he weeps. and says, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

Better is it to have our path ordered by the Spirit within, though it may be a path of heaviness, than allow it to be determined by mere circumstances around. Thus was it now with David. The Spirit of God was leading him along, and he shall find life and peace at the end, though his sin had made the way dark and dreary for the present. But his sorrow must be all his own. The people had earned a victory, and were entitled to their rewards, and the king's sorrow must not be allowed to tarnish their joy. Joab therefore recalls David to his people, and his people's claims upon him, and David is awakened and goes forth to take his place in the scene again. He arises and sits in the gate; all the people come before him, and the tide of their desires return to him, and all his enemies are put to shame (2 Sam. 19.)

Thus was the restoration in happy progress; but there arises even after this, a little delay and difficulty in setting all in order, for the mischief had been great. Hence the matter of Sheba, the son of Bichri, another Benjamite (2 Sam. 20.)

But the Lord returns to him in full reconciliation. He is again inquired of by him; and in a day of public calamity, David learns that no sin of his was then in remembrance, but the sin of Saul and his bloody house. And this was for the healing of David's wounded spirit. The goodness of God had led him to repentance; and no sting was to be left behind, no remembrance of all that had now passed was to remain; save where our sin, beloved, is ever to be remembered, in the increased care

and diligence and watchfulness of our own spirit (2 Sam. 21.)

This was very gracious. But even more than this is preparing to witness to David what God was; for in the same grace and tender-kindness, the good Lord, in due season, prepares a song for David, wherein the Spirit leads him to forget all but the divine mercies. "David spake the words of this song in the day that the Lord had delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul." It is Saul that is here called to mind and not Absalom. Nothing is remembered but the injuries of an evil and unoffended enemy, and all the tale of sin and shame that followed is forgotten. David sings like a "virgin soul." The Spirit recalls nothing that could have checked the song, and the flow of his heart in the joy of it; for when the Lord forgives He forgets also. At the end of the wilderness (though the Lord had disciplined and rebuked Israel by the way), it was only this: "He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel" (2 Sam. 22.)

There was something very gracious and exalted in the Lord putting this song into David's lips. But we are to see greater things than even these, for after this song which thus rehearses the goodness of God and his rich triumphant grace, we read "the last words of David." In them the Spirit leads him to trace the moral of his whole history. His commission as King of Israel had been to rule "in the fear of God," and thus be as "the light of the morning" to his people. But this had not been so, and therefore his house was for the present not to be established; but the Spirit leads him still onward to look above present failure to One who should thus rule and thus establish his house for ever, and in whom these

mercies of God to him should be sure and abiding mercies, when also the sons of the alien, the sons of Belial, the seed of all evil-doers, should be utterly consumed in the decreed place, thrust away as unprofitable thorns. To this, as to his rest, the Spirit of God leads David, and these are his "last words" (2 Sam. 23.)

Thus, in these three chapters, we get the full reconciliation between God and his servant, attested by three witnesses. The matter of the Gibeonites — the song — the last words of David — all tell us this. And thus we have seen the way of David, but also the end of the Lord. "The man who was raised up on high," "the anointed of the God of Jacob," "the sweet Psalmist of Israel," is set up to celebrate in his own person and history the shining ways of God. Sin had reigned unto death; but grace had also reigned, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

2 Samuel.

Here we end the path of David through the 1st and 2nd books of Samuel, or through the, times of "Saul" and "Absalom." It is grace which God has been exhibiting in this history; and exhibiting in it all its blessed fulness. — We see its early dawn in the election of David, when men were despising him (1 Sam. 16: 11). — We see its brighter and fuller shinings all through the days of the trial and sorrow of righteousness, for grace then was watching over its object, lest any fowler should hurt him, keeping him, though hunted like a bird in the mountains, night and day (1 Sam. 18 - 31). Then, grace established this elect and favoured one in honour and

peace above the malice and power of all his foes (2 Sam. 5). At the end grace shows its brightest glory, and does its noblest and holiest work, — it restores this elect and honoured one, when, in a dark and evil hour, he had turned from the ways of righteousness and peace (2 Sam. 11 - 23). Then did it rise to its noonday strength. Its early dawn had been sweet, the course which it then ran, as in the heavens, was bright and steady, but its full glory now broke out, when tainted David, like a "virgin soul," sings his joys and triumphs in God.

These were the treasures of grace; and God was making a show of them, to His praise and our comfort, in David. Glory comes forth to shine afterwards, in like manner, in Solomon; but grace thus beforehand, had told of herself in David. It was grace electing, grace refreshing, grace exalting, and grace restoring, that the lips of the sinner might be occupied with a theme of blissful and everlasting praise.

But there is one other thing that we have to notice still. — As grace was thus displayed towards David, so was it displayed in David. It was the great rule of his life, giving character to his dealings with others, as it had thus given character to God's dealings with Him. Being called to inherit blessing, he renders blessing. Thus, when reviled, he reviled not again (1 Sam. 17: 29). Afterwards when persecuted, he threatened not, but suffered it (1 Sam 18 - 31). In every scene in which he is called to take a part, either in action or in suffering (save where he is turned aside by Satan for awhile, as we have been seeing), it is not himself he is seeking or honouring, but others that he is serving in grace and kindness. The death of Saul and Jonathan make easy way for David to the throne; but his own advantage is

not the circumstance in that event which governs his thoughts about it, he sees only the dishonour of the Lords anointed in it, and therefore weeps, instead of triumphs, over the day of Mount Gilboa. So in the fall of Abner and Ishbosheth, which was the quenching of the last light of Saul in Israel, it is only the sorrow and fasting of David that we hear of. It was not his own honour or advantage, that even then determined the state of his mind. — And so when fully settled in the throne, he is the man of grace and kindness still, remembering in that hour of glory those who had been the friends of his affliction and exile, and making it his care and business to find out some of the house of Saul to whom he might show the "kindness of God" (2 Sam. 1 - 10). He would be an imitator or follower of God, as a dear child; for what a God-like desire was that, "Is there not yet any of the house of Saul that I might show the kindness of God unto him?" Saul's house had deserved evil, and not good, from David; but this made David's kindness to them God's kindness, for "God commendeth His love toward us, in that when we were yet sinners Christ died for us." — And, in the same grace afterwards, David refuses to judge Shimei (2 Sam. 16, 19). The thought of the sons of Zeruiah was loathsome to David's soul. "What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah?" says he to them, when they were for exacting righteousness. They understood not grace, but David understood nothing else. Mercy had rejoiced over judgment towards himself in the heart of the Lord, and nothing but the same can or must be found in the heart of David towards Shimei or the worst of his enemies.

Thus the history of David, through these 1st and 2nd books of Samuel, or through these times of "Saul" and

"Absalom," tells us, beloved, what God's ways are, and what our ways should be. As His ways to us are in grace, so should be our ways to one another and to all men. In "this present evil world" of sin and sorrow we are learning God's grace to perfection, in our own souls, daily, and should let others learn it in our walk and intercourse with them in like manner daily. By and by in the shining "world to come," we shall learn glory in the same perfection. For David was followed by Solomon, and the God of all grace has called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, that He Himself may be our boast and song, and satisfying praise for ever and ever.

Dearly beloved, in the joy and liberty of the precious and perfect love which is ours now, let us pray that we might abound in the hope of the kingdom that is to be ours also, and walk above a world in which our blessed Master could not rest. — Grant this to all thy saints, O Lord, for Jesus our Saviour's sake! Amen.

Afflictions and Consolations

Afflictions and Consolations

Notes of an Address on the First Epistle of Peter

By J. G. B. Aug., 1851.

(extracted from The Northern Witness, 1880)

There are three things in this epistle: 1st, the apostle contemplates the saint in times of various troubles; 2ndly, the mind with which the trouble should be passed through; and 3rdly, the consolations which God provides for such a time. There is nothing very remarkable in the bearing of it; but so much the more needed by the soul very often; — it is homely, practical. Godly power marks the whole of the epistle.

Observe he addresses it to "strangers scattered throughout Pontus," etc. (1 Peter 1: 1.) Now the very salutation intimates that things are not right with them here — "scattered strangers!" as though they had no certain dwelling-place, like their Master. It is not said, "an embodied church," with all its ceremonies and ordinances; but he addresses himself to "scattered strangers." This alone puts the saint into a place of suffering — they had no rest for the sole of their foot — they are "strangers," scattered to and fro.

Now the first trial that he contemplates in the first chapter, is the trial of faith (1 Peter 1: 5-13). The form of trial here is that dealing of God's hand with you, which has its direct business with your faith — whose office and property it is to exercise the soul in the principles of faith. He does not define what it may be — it may be a

circumstance or disappointment; but something, the direct character of which is, to link the heart with the objects of faith. And it is very beautiful, in the wisdom of the Spirit, to leave it undefined, the only thing that marks it being this — it is the trial of faith. And we all know it. If you meet with a disappointment or loss, what is the support under it? Why, this "looking forward." It may cause present heaviness; but the support which God provides for this trial of faith is, "the looking forward;" that in the day of the appearing of Christ, this faith, which has been burnished by the fire, shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory.

Now just look at those three things — here is the trial of faith — the exercise of heart, fitted to link it with eternity and heaven — the Lord comforting the heart under such a trial by directing it onward to the appearing of Jesus, and the Lord counselling the heart how to behave itself under the trial — "Gird up the loins" — don't be faint-hearted — don't yield — "be ye sober," and hope — hope still!

How simple is this! The character of the trial is undefined; and whatever cross or accident meets you in your path, you may put it down — happily put it down to the account of this — it is designed by your heavenly Father to try your faith. No matter how it may happen. The Spirit of God does not tell you to reason about it; but tells you to submit under it, and rejoice in the hope to which it is all leading.

In the 1 Peter 2, you find a very well defined trial. There is comfort provided, and duty prescribed in the midst of it. Now read with me from 1 Peter 1: 18 to 1 Peter 1: 21 — "Servants be subject," etc. Now here there is a very

well defined suffering or trial. It is not left unexpressed as in the previous chapter, but here is a suffering that is commonly known in human life, and the more we ought to value it. Here is a suffering brought from the ill usage and treatment of others — a servant suffering under the hand of a froward master. Well, it may be a neighbour suffering under the hand of an evil-minded neighbour or relative. You may put it in various forms — (the Spirit need not illustrate every case). But here we have a servant enduring the frowardness of an evil-minded master. Now here is a well-understood, and oft-experienced sorrow in this life. It is but the trial of faith — Oh, how one admires this! There is comfort in showing this, that the Spirit of God knows your little secret frettings, and that there are none of them, however small or ordinary, outside His sympathy. Well, how does He tell them to behave themselves? Beautifully. In the first place, for their great comfort, He says — "All this secret fretting foes on under the eye of God with deep acceptableness." Oh, what a comfort this is! Suppose a poor, silent, suffering servant, meeting the ill nature of his master, why there he is in such a condition; but all day long the eye of God is resting on his behaviour with delight and complacency. That is the ingredient in the scene which faith apprehends. Nature will feel the suffering; but faith apprehends the unseen eye of God waiting upon the patient endurance of the servant with complacency.

A servant, suffering all the day long from the frowardness of an evil master, was the life of Jesus. He was reviled, and ill-treated by an apostate world, yet He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him who judgeth righteously. Now does not the apostle speak

very sweetly to us there? He comes, and looks at them in the most common scene of human life, and he dignifies it; the most common material in human life he dignifies with the sympathies of Christ, and hen dignifies with the complacency of God Himself. Can anything be more precious than that? Again, I say, nothing more common-place, and that is what makes it so delightful.

Now look at the 3rd chapter. You get another suffering, but in a different form. In the 14th verse — "If ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye," etc. (1 Peter 3: 14-22). Now here is a new kind of suffering — "for righteousness sake;" that is, you go on in a path of integrity — a path of uprightness — maintaining that at all cost; you are faithful to the Lord, and this brings you into suffering. Now this is another kind of trial. And how does the Spirit of God comfort us under that? Why He tells us, beloved, to "sanctify the Lord God in our hearts" — to remember Christ just in the same condition; and He points us to the days of Noah. Noah for a long period (120 years) — what was he doing then? He was preparing the ark. He looked to be the fool of his generation — the very object of scorn — that he should occupy morning and evening, day after day, and year after year preparing an ark — preparing a ship for dry ground! It was utter folly. Well, it was the path that God had laid out for him, and, whatever it might have cost him, he had God with him. He "sanctified the Lord God in his heart;" and not only that, beloved; not only had he communion, but he had this, the answer of a good conscience towards God; not only was he upright, but he was making that ark which was every moment to him the witness of his eternal safety. He knew it — he knew that the waters were coming — that a day of judgment

was before him; but every stroke of his hammer went as a blessed witness to his soul, that he should be safe in that day of trial. Well, so the Spirit of God tells us, we are to pass through the trial, having "the answer of a good conscience towards God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

There is a beautiful link between Noah preparing the ark, and what ought to be the condition of your soul. You should have a good conscience — not a good moral conscience, but a freed conscience. The resurrection of Jesus Christ gives you a good conscience towards God — it discharges your conscience from all guilt, and delivers it from all fear of a coming judgment. Just as Noah, every stroke of his hammer told him he would be safe in the day of judgment; so you ought to go on in the trials of righteousness which the maintenance of a good conscience may bring, in the support of a good conscience towards God. You must not give up a good moral conscience; let the exercise of righteousness in the world cost you what suffering it may, you must not give up righteousness; but your support in this path is this, that between you and God, all is settled for eternity — the resurrection of Jesus Christ has sealed upon your conscience eternal peace.

Now what a beautiful picture is this of the suffering saint! If it be, as we have seen, the trial of his faith — if it be a servant, enduring all the day long the ill-treatment of a froward master — or here, if, at the cost of everything, he maintains the righteousness and uprightness of his walk, and thus maintains a good conscience — his comfort is this, that which poor Noah enjoyed — whenever judgment might come, he was as safe as if he were in heaven.

Well now in 1 Peter 4 you get another kind of sorrow, and that is in the very opening of it. You must count upon the trial, not of righteousness, but of holiness. The former was given in the 3rd chapter; the trial of holiness in given in the opening of the 4th. What is the difference? Righteousness is uprightness of conduct outside, in the world; holiness is the pure and chaste behaviour, in your own members within. Well that is put to trial in this world too — one without, and the other within. As you have to fight the battle of holiness within, so you have to fight the battle of righteousness without. You are to fight the fight of holiness in your own members, as you are to fight the fight of righteousness in the course of the world. And what is your comfort? Why this, that you shall soon give an account to Him that is ready to judge quick and dead; and remember, that while you are fighting this fight of holiness, you are living your time, not to the lusts of men, but to the will of God. There is your comfort. If we had any bit of heart at all, it would be a great support to us to know that God is with us.

In the progress of the 4th chapter, you find another form of suffering, and that is what we call "martyr suffering." Not suffering from the trial of faith, or from the frowardness of an evil master, from a relation, or nearest of kin, nor the suffering for righteousness, nor the trial of holiness in the members, but more characteristically what we call martyr-suffering. Well, how does he speak to us under that? "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial..... But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings," etc. (1 Peter 4: 12, 13).

Oh, with what a cheerful mind the Spirit of God speaks! Supposing we were this moment dragged off to the prison — to meet the stake, like hundreds before us — see with what a cheerful spirit the Holy Ghost would put us on the journey! "Think it not strange," says He; for when you are taking the journey to the prison or the stake, you are only on the journey with the Saviour to Calvary. You and I may not be prepared for it, but we must not measure the Spirit's thoughts by our attainments. It is but a little pain for a while, when His glory shall appear. "Ye may be glad," etc., 1 Peter 4: 13, 14. Now mark the current of the cheerful spirit here, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you," etc. 1 Peter 4: 13, 14. Happy thing it is, that when the martyr is on his way to death, you should see the Spirit of glory resting upon his head. His persecutions for Christ's sake are the very plattings of the crown upon his brow! It is the blessed Saviour coming and fitting the crown upon his brow. "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." And again I say, in this, which to nature is the gloomiest we have looked at yet — in the trial of faith, in enduring the ill-treatment of others, we may have human relief; but here, shut up to Christ, with nothing but the gloom of a prison around us, nothing but the fiery stake before the eye — here the glad spirit, the oil of gladness, comes to anoint the spirit richly. And, O beloved! To know that, while even in the dungeon, the hand of God is fitting a crown of glory to the brow! "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified." We know not what a day may bring forth, but Jesus knows, and He will provide.

Well then, in the last chapter, you find here, at the 6th verse, "Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." (1 Peter 5: 6). And here I believe we return very much to the first chapter. We can't tell in what form that "mighty hand" may humble. It may be by removing prop after prop, disappointing one expectation of the heart after another. It may be by terrible ways God may humble you; and what is worst of all, He may appear in the very act to be against you. He may seem to carry Himself so wilfully against your circumstances and your present joys, that the heart will begin to fear lest God should be against us. It is a "mighty hand;" but let that comfort you instead of frightening you. There is a great comfort in this word "mighty." It is not a "soothing hand;" it is a "mighty hand," that seems set on bruising. Well, what says the Spirit of God? "Humble yourselves" under it, for "He will exalt you." Oh how beautiful! See how roughly Joseph spoke to his brethren. He put them in prison — told the keepers to take charge of them — but in secret he wept; and, in due time, he "exalted" them.

"Casting all your care upon Him," etc. (1 Peter 5: 7). Oh, what comfort there is here! I don't believe that Joseph's tears in secret have a stronger voice in our ears than this, because it tells us, that while the hand is dealing roughly outside, the heart is feeling inside. Well, there it is; and as to the devil's temptation, resist him. Don't "humble yourselves" under that hand — "resist" him, just as did Jesus of old — "Get thee behind me, Satan" — and "the God of all grace, who hath called us," etc., "perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you," (1 Peter 5: 10). Thus the mighty energy of the Holy Ghost carries the apostle Peter, and you, and me, as well as those

"strangers," in the hearing of all saints, through every variety of human trial. Whether it is the undefined exercise and trial of faith; whether it is enduring suffering from the frowardness and ill-nature of those that are around us, or from the maintenance of righteousness and a good conscience, or from the struggles between flesh and Spirit, or martyr-suffering; or enduring under the hand of God, or the devil himself — the mighty energy of the Spirit of God carries Peter through them all, to provide strength and consolation. The Lord help our unbelief — take our hearts, and keep them in company with these eternal realities; and then, if it be the stake itself, let us meet it with a cheerful heart; deeply assured of this, that the hand of God is weaving a crown for the brows of His faithful people!

Babylon

Babylon.

Rev. 17, 18.

from Musings on Scripture, Volume 1.

J. G. Bellett.

"Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." This is a saying much to be remembered. It teaches us that we are not to make ourselves the judges of what sanctification or holiness is; Gods' word is to determine this, because holiness is that character or mind which is formed by God's word or truth.

We are apt to think that our own moral sense of things is the rule of holiness. But the word of God claims to be such a rule: "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth" (John 17: 17). An act may be unholy, though done with a good conscience, because "the truth," and not the conscience, is the rule of holiness.

If that rule were applied to many a thing which the moral sense or the religious sense of man approves, how it would change its character! And the Lord cannot change His standard of holiness, though He may be infinitely gracious to the shortcomings of His saints.

Those other words, "For their sakes I sanctify my. self, that they also might be sanctified through the truth," which stand in connection, have their own force and value also. Thus, in the whole of His utterance in John 17, the Lord strongly takes a place apart from the world, and puts His saints in the like place, praying that they may be kept there. In this sense, I believe, He speaks of

sanctifying Himself. Through all this church-age He is apart from the world and the earth; and sanctification depends on our communion with Him in that separated place. "The truth," testifying as it does of Him, links us with Him in that place; and sanctification is thus "through the truth," leading us to fellowship with an unworldly Jesus.

We may see instances of such sanctification from the beginning.

When the ground was cursed for man's sake, holiness was separation from it, as in the persons of the antediluvian saints; uncleanness was cleaving to it, as did the family of Cain.

When the earth again corrupted itself, and God judged it by the scattering of the nations, holiness was separation from it, as in Abraham; and apostasy was a clinging to it in spite of judgment; as Nimrod did.

When Canaan was judged, Achan's sin savoured of the apostate mind; but Israel became a holy people by separating from it, and from all people of the earth, by the ordinances of God and the sword of Joshua.

But Israel revolts. The circumcision becomes uncircumcision, and with them all on the face of the earth or in the world becomes defiled, and holiness is separation from it in companionship with a rejected and heavenly Christ.

The whole system, the world, is the judged or cursed thing now. It is the Jericho. While the camp lingers in the wilderness, we may be at charges or in labours on a mission to draw out the Rahabs; but we cannot seek the improvement of Jericho, or display the resources and

capabilities of the world. The world, as including other thoughts, is also any moral or religious system or undertaking which does not act in company with a rejected and heavenly Christ. Such doings would be unholy, not according to "the truth," however morally conducted or benevolently intentioned.

To glory without going on to "perfection" in a crucified Christ will not, if alone, be the "perfection" in this age; there must be companionship with a rejected Christ also. Babylon, I believe, the mystic Babylon of the Revelation, may be brought to boast in a crucified Christ, and be Babylon still. For what is it as delineated by the Spirit? Is it not a thing worldly in character, as well as abominable and idolatrous in doctrine and practice? Revelation 18 gives us a sight of Babylon in its worldliness, as, Rev. 17 more in its idolatries. Babylon of old, as in the land of Chaldea, was full of idols, and guilty of the blood or of the sorrows of the righteous. But it had also this mark: it displayed greatness in the world in the time of Jerusalem's depression. So with the mystic Babylon. She has her abominations in the midst of her, and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus stains her; but still more fully is she disclosed as great and splendid and joyous in the earth during the age of Christ's rejection. She is important in the world in that day when the judgment of God is preparing for the world; she can glorify herself and live deliciously in a defiled place.

It is not that she outwardly ignores the cross of Christ. She is not heathen. She may publish Christ crucified, but she refuses to know Christ rejected. She does not continue with Him in His temptations, nor consider the poor and needy Jesus (Luke 22; Psalm 40). The kings of

the earth and the merchants of the earth are her friends, and the inhabitants of the earth are her subjects.

Is not, then, the rejection of Christ the thing she practically scorns? Surely it is. And again, I say, the prevailing thought of the Spirit about her is this — she is that which is exalted in the world while God's Witness is depressed, and in defiance of that depression, for she knows of it. Babylon of old well knew of the desolation of Jerusalem; Christendom externally knows and publishes the cross of Jesus.

Babylon of old was very bold in her defiance of the grief of Zion. She made the captives of Zion to contribute to her greatness and her enjoyments. Nebuchadnezzar had done this with the captive youths, and Belshazzar with the captive vessels.

This was Babylon, and in spirit this is Christendom. Christendom is the thing which glorifies herself and lives deliciously in the earth, trading in all that is desirable and costly in the world's esteem, in the very face of the sorrow and rejection of that which is God's. Christendom practically forgets Christ rejected on the earth.

The, Medo-Persian power is another creature. He removes Babylon, but exalts himself Dan. 6). And this is the action of "the beast" and his ten kings. The woman, mystically Babylon, is removed by the ten kings; but then they give their power to the beast, who exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, as Darius the Mede did.

This is the closing crowning feature in the picture of the world's apostasy. But we have not reached it yet. Our conflict is with Babylon and not with the Mede, with that

which lives deliciously and in honour during the age of Jerusalem's ruins (i.e., of the rejection of Christ).

Belshazzar's Feast in its Application to the Great Exhibition

Belshazzar's Feast in its Application to the Great Exhibition.

from Musings on Scripture, Volume 2.

J. G. Bellett.

While Jeremiah was left at Jerusalem to witness the course of moral corruption there, and to warn of coming judgment, and while Ezekiel was among the remnant in the place of discipline or of righteousness on the river Chebar, Daniel is set among the Gentiles, even at Babylon, to learn the history and the ways of the Gentiles, or the world.

We may see this in his first six chapters, which constitute the first part of the book. In Daniel 1 we see the Gentiles, or the world, set up. Then in Daniel 2 we get the same system, the world, in its political career onward to the kingdom, figured in the great image, seen in all its parts, from its head of gold to its toes of iron-clay; and judged, in the appointed hour, by the stone which becomes a mountain, to occupy the scene of power all the world over, with an untransferable kingdom. Then in the four following chapters, the stories of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius give us the moral course of the world. In Nebuchadnezzar we get a persecuting power, connected with human religion or idolatry. The king sets up an image and demands the worship of it on pain of the fiery furnace. The righteous refuse and suffer. In Belshazzar we get the easy, worldly, self-indulgent thing, with contempt of religion. The king

makes a feast, worshipping all that which ministered to his pleasures. The righteous are utter strangers to it all. In Darius we get a persecuting power again, but it is in connection with self-exaltation. The king makes an interdict that none are to be treated as God but himself, for so many days on pain of the lion's den. The righteous again refuse and suffer.

These are plain and sure distinctions in the progress of Gentile iniquity. And it may strike us, I judge, very clearly, that we are present rather in the day of Belshazzar. Persecution and idol-service gave character to the preceding day, and persecution and deification of man to the day which followed; but all was easy indifference, with thorough satisfaction in the present things of the world, in the day of Belshazzar. Refusal and consequent suffering form the path or history of the righteous in the times of the idolatrous, persecuting Nebuchadnezzar, and of the self-exalting, persecuting Darius; but in the times of Belshazzar, perfect and thorough separation is the place of the saints of God.

There is a voice for us in all this. Daniel is not seen at the feast. And there is one, though not in his strength yet much in his spirit, who is absent also — the queen, the king's mother. The king is ignorant of the man of God who was then in his dominions. He is also unmindful of the doings of God which had been in the same dominions in the days of his father. But the queen has recollections and knowledge of these things, and she is a stranger to his feast.

Is not the question then with us to be this: Who is the separated one now? Who is going to the king's feast, or who, in the light of the Lord, is separated from it? The

present is in easy, self-indulgent, worldly moment. The gods of gold and of silver, of brass, of wood and of iron, are praised. All the capabilities in the world to make a feast are produced, and displayed, and gloried in. Social accommodation and social delights are the great object. Man's works, the fruit of his skill and the resources of his country, adorn and furnish the scene. and are the host of the feast, that which gathers and entertains. Man is providing the joy of this awful hour in the world's history — awful indeed, not in the judgments or sorrows which are upon it, but in the moral principles which are quickening it. The captivity of Zion was heedlessly forgotten by Belshazzar, and the vessels of God's temple were profaned. The operations of His hands were not considered, but the wine and the tabret were in his feast. So now; the rejection of Christ is by common consent forgotten, that man may meet his fellow, greet him with a common joy and with a common welcome, because they are all of one earth, of the same world, of kindred flesh and blood; and all God's claims on His elect and testimony against the world are thrown together as what for a season must be passed by, till the feast-day is kept.

Where then, again I ask, is the separated one? Where is Daniel? Where is the king's mother? The feast does not attract either of them, though they may be in different measures of strength. Daniel knew the character of it before the judgment of it was pronounced. He does not wait for the fingers of the man's hand to put him into his place in relation to it. He is not moved by the mysterious writing on the wall. Sudden destruction, as a thief in the night, does not come upon him. He and his companion, though "a weaker vessel," are, in the spirit of their

minds, in the place from whence these fingers were sent — they were "children of light as children of the day." The judgment upon the feast had no terror for them, for they were not at the feast. They had judged it already. Their separation was not sleep. "They that sleep sleep in the night, and they that are drunken are drunken in the night." But they were no more indifferent to it than taking their pleasure at it. Their separation therefore, as I said, was not sleep. In a divine sense they watched and were sober (1 Thess. 5: 3). In the separated place Daniel knew the judgment of God about it all, long before the writing on the wall announced it to the world. All this is full of meaning for us.

I am not going to say that the form of evil which Belshazzar's day presents is the worst. Nebuchadnezzar set up an idol before that day, and Darius set up himself after it. The fiery furnace was heated for the saints in the former reign, and the lion's den was open for them in the latter. The day of Belshazzar witnessed nothing of this. The abomination in the plain of Dura did not demand worship then, neither did the royal statute forbid worship toward Jerusalem then. But still there is something in Belshazzar himself, if not in his day, which especially provoked the Spirit of the Lord. Daniel can feel for Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar is brought to a right repentant mind, and the judgment of God is reversed. Daniel too, can feel for Darius, and Darius is seen in humbled gracious meltings of soul, and we can all pity him — pity him when we see him unwittingly involved in results which a moment's vanity and easiness of nature had led to. But from us Belshazzar gets no kindly movement of heart, from the Spirit of God in Daniel nothing but stern rebuke, and

from the hand of God nothing but swift destruction, the fingers on the wall announcing it, and the sword of the Median executing it; "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain."

He was the easy man of the world. He despised all religious fear. What he worshipped was his pleasures, the gods of silver, of brass, and of gold, the vessels which could fill out his entertainments and make provision for his lusts. He did not summon the world to either his idol or himself, but to his board and to his holyday. Nebuchadnezzar makes an image, Darius a royal decree, Belshazzar a feast. But Jerusalem and her sorrows are forgotten, the temple and its furniture despised. The wonders which the God of Jerusalem and of the temple had freshly wrought in the land were all a dream or a fiction with him, and the very spoils of His house he can use in making merry with his friends.

This was easy worldliness — the heartless way of man who can forget God's wonders, and the rejection and humiliation of Christ. And all this is terrible. The harp, and the pipe, and the tabret are in such feasts; but the operation of God's hands are forgotten. Till now the vessels of God's house had been held in some fear and honour. But now they are profaned and made to serve the lusts of the king. God had ordained them to witness the separation of His priestly nation, and His own worship in the midst of His people; but the king makes them the instruments of his sport.

And what, I ask, is the effect to deck out the world, to enjoy it, and to boast of it, while Jesus is rejected by its citizens? Is it not a thing in kindred spirit with this? The rejection of Christ is forgotten yea, despised; for that is

gloried in and displayed which continues the word, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Is not this somewhat of taking of the choice vessels of God's house, in the very day of their captivity, to make merry with them?

The present moment may surely thus remind us of Belshazzar's feast. God's of gold and of silver, of brass, of iron, and of wood are praised; the resources and capabilities of the world are displayed, thoughtless of its rejection of Christ. And are any of the captivity at the king's feast? Israel was captive together with the vessels of the temple. Would any of them be so thoughtless as to make merry with the king who was despising the spoils of that house? Would any of the servants of the rejected nobleman take part with the citizens in setting forth the wonders of their blood-stained land? (See Luke 19)

The mind turns with these thoughts to the present moment. It cannot refuse to give itself, in some sort and in some measure, to the subject of "The Great Exhibition." It would not be fit that it should be indifferent to it; for it is no common sign of the time and ought to be morally judged.

It will be pleaded for; no doubt of it. It will be said, that it is designed to encourage brotherhood among the nations, and to promote the great business of social comfort and happiness as wide as the human family. But, I ask, are these God's objects? God has scattered the nations, and never proposes to gather them till He gathers them to Shiloh. God would have us strangers here, "content with such things as we have," without making it our business to increase or improve them. God would have us testify against the world in its present

condition, and therefore neither flatter it, nor reconcile it to itself, nor glory in its capabilities. The Exhibition is therefore in full collision with the mind of God. Christ exposes the world; the Exhibition displays it. Christ would alarm it, and call it to a sense of judgment; the Exhibition makes it on better terms with itself than ever.

It is indeed a mighty advance in all the apostate reprobate principles of man. Efforts of a like kind we may be familiar with; but they are commonplace in comparison with this. As prophets speak, touching advance in the ways of evil, this is indeed "adding drunkenness to thirst."

I regard all admiration of it as a step in the way to "wonder after the beast." That will be but a further expression of the same mind; and how serious, if evangelical religion be sending its contributions to it or becoming one of the Exhibitors at it! Deep must be the infatuation. To tell the world one day what it is in God's esteem, and the next day to become one of the wonderers after its resources and capacities! Admiration like this savours of worship.

Like the old prophet at Bethel, when a saint is in a place or a position unwarranted by the call of God, the enemy will find easy occasion to use him. Still I own, when I think of it, it is to me wonderful that a Christian should find satisfaction in this thing. That it is an awful advance in the development of those evil principles which are to mark the day of Christendom's ripened iniquity, I have not the feast doubt.

The Lord of old scattered the nations. (See Gen. 11) This was judgment on a bold attempt of theirs, when they were of one speech and one language, to make

themselves independent of God. And has He reversed that judgment? There is indeed an appointed time when it shall be reversed. Jerusalem shall be a centre, and Shiloh a gathering object. The nations will flock to Zion, there to see the King in His beauty. And none of them there, we may say, shall appear before the Lord empty. The tributes of all the lands shall beautify the place of God's sanctuary. The fruits of Midian and of Ephah shall be there, — gold and incense from Sheba, the flock of Kedar and the rams of Nebaioth, the glory of Lebanon, the forces of all the Gentiles. All shall flock there, like doves to their windows and kings shall minister there. Gold too shall be for brass, silver for iron, brass for wood, and iron for stones. All shall be for glory and beauty in the earth then. But this is still future. This is for "the world to come," after the Redeemer has come out of Zion, and turned away ungodliness from Jacob. See Isaiah 59 and Romans 11.

The reversing of the judgment of scattering at Babel is left for the kingdom of God at Jerusalem. He that scattered must gather. He is Lord of the nations. "The powers that be are ordained of God." It is His pleasure that they should be scattered nations still; for one universal monarchy is appointed of God for Jesus only — as it is written, "every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." "His dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth."

The name of Jesus was, indeed, proposed as a gathering object in the day of Pentecost. Tongues were then cloven as they had been at Babel. But it was to reunite what had been already severed. But this proposal, like every other on God's part to man, was disappointed. The hard

unbelieving heart did this. And what is man now proposing? He who refused God's proposal to gather to Jesus, in the power and presence of the Holy Ghost, is proposing to gather to himself. He will exalt himself as at Babel. He will be independent of God. He will be like the Most High. The beast will issue his decree on pain of death, his mark will be received on the forehead, and all the world will wonder after him. (Rev. 13) This is in the prospect of the world's history. He who will not let Christ be exalted will surely seek to exalt himself. And such an one is man.

Isaiah, anticipating in the Spirit the last days, warns the people of God against saying "a confederacy," in common with the world around them. (Isa. 8) And I ask myself and others, do we in deed and in faith receive these notices from the prophets? Do we judge that man will thus exalt himself and confederate — thus gather round himself? And if we treat these warnings of the character of the last days as divine, can we doubt from all we see and hear, that man has already begun to practise his hand in kindred attempts, in efforts which shall issue in all this?

The facilities and the speed in linking the nations one with another is now well known. It is used and gloried in. And what is this "Great Exhibition" but another trying of his skill in forwarding the main leading purpose of man's heart? No doubt it suits the spirit which is moving all this, to have it under the sanction of religion. When he can use for his own ends, nothing suits the devil better. He would fain have had Christ exalt Himself under the sanction of Psalm 91. And again, and again, he would have acknowledged Christ, had He allowed it — as the spirit of divination would have witnessed to

Christ's servant, had he received it. (Acts 16) But this could not be. The beast, however, will have his false prophet. He will use religion for his own ends. But divine religions takes us only into God's ends. And it teaches us this (with the authority of the real intrinsic holiness of such a principle): we can have no fellowship with that against which we are called to testify. (Eph. 5: 11)

Nor can we say that the judgment we form on this matter is a small or an indifferent thing. It is not so. The subject is well fitted to exercise the judgment of a saint of God. It is eminently so, I believe. His mind generally will be much affected by his sense of this thing and his decision respecting it. The mind can become dull. The eye gets dim betimes. And if such a process as that be going on, the next attempt of the enemy finds us less prepared. And I ask, Is not all that dangerous, when delusions are multiplying as they are and as they will?

We are counselled to buy eye-salve of Christ, that we may see. That is something beyond or beside faith and confession of the gospel. Laodicea had the common faith, and in a sense boasted of it, but Laodicea wanted eye-salve. And sure I am that let this great shop of the world's ware expose what it may, that eye-salve is the very thing which will not, cannot be had there. It is the article which would detect the whole character of the place, and it could not therefore be bad there. It is a palace. Man is not enthroned there as God, it is true. Things among the children of men are not quite ripe for that yet. It is not a temple where man sits, showing himself as God. (2 Thess. 2) But man's works are displayed there. Man's art is enthroned there, and man expects to be admired and wondered at there, and

thousands enter it (as another has observed) in the spirit of doing homage to man. It is a mirror in which the world is reflected in a thousand attractive forms, and the unworldly humbled, earth-rejected Jesus is forgotten. Jesus may be named there, it is true, but an unworldly Jesus is practically forgotten there.

It is indeed as I surely judge, solemnly, awfully significant. It is full of the spirit of the last days. This palace for man's productions to be gazed at, is but a stage before the temple for man himself to sit in — and admiration of it is getting a generation ready, morally ready, to "wonder after the beast." One is amazed that any Christian can find the least satisfaction in it.

This Exhibition (for it calls itself by that significant name) in its way shows all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. It does not hide this. It professes to do this. Like John Bunyan's Vanity Fair, there is the Italian row, and the German row, and the English row. It has human skill and resources in all variety and from all lands. It presents the kingdoms of the world, and "the glory of them." And who, I ask, was it that did this before? The Spirit led the Son of God into "the wilderness," a place of strangership and pilgrimage — but the devil showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.

The world, according to the scriptures of God, is a lost and a judged thing, it is incapable of recovery. The word of God does not, in a single passage of it, warrant the thought that it can be advanced or cultivated for God. He has judged it — though in grace the judgment tarries, and the long-suffering of God is salvation. But the world is a system past all hope of recovery, till the

judgment be executed. But confederacy is an attempt to fix the world in its present condition, to settle it, though it be in departure from God and enmity against Christ. This was the thought at Babel of old.

Separation of His own out of the world is God's way now. And this separation is the deepest and most thorough judgment that could be passed upon the world. This is a more complete judgment of it than by the waters of the flood, or by the plagues of Egypt, or by the sword of Joshua. The withdrawal or separation of all that God owns bespeaks final thoughts about the world, and not merely a purifying of it from present corruptions, as by the waters of Noah, in order to put it on a fresh trial. The trial of it is over, the judgment of it is pronounced, and the delay is but for the salvation of the elect. The attitude of the Church, that is, separation from the earth, and heavenly calling, tells us of the full moral condemnation of the course of things here. And thus the Church judges the world. Her position and calling does so.

The "servants" of the departed "nobleman" very well know that the country of the "citizens" has very great resources, and very great capabilities; and they know that in due season such will be both used and displayed. But they cannot allow this thought while that country is as it is now — stained with the blood of their rejected master. The cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us," is ever in their ears. And with that cry from the land, can they, in company with the "citizens " who raised it and still keep it up (for the character of the world, as we have said from scripture, is unalterably fixed), be occupied in investigating and producing the

treasures of their country and the skill of its people, and glory in the thought of the common advancement?

They cannot, when alive to the character of the place where they are, and awake, as they should ever be, to the cry which followed the rejected Jesus as He left it — they cannot. The cup of the Lord's indignation is to go round the nations, and they must drink it. An awful reverse this will be from Belshazzar passing the wine among his courtiers and concubines in the cups of the Lord's house. And solemn it is in those nations feasting and praising the gods of gold, and of silver, of iron, of brass, and of wood while such an handwriting as that, is on the wall against them. If not on the walls of the palace, it is in the books of the prophets.. (Psalm 75; Jer. 25)

Incorruption, I can say, cannot inherit corruption, The spotless Jesus cannot hold an unpurged dominion. The woman of Revelation 17 glorifies herself, and lives deliciously in the earth during that very time in which the judgment of God is awaiting it; but the bride of Revelation 21 does not become manifested in the earth till it has been cleansed and is ready, not for the judgment of the Lord but for the presence of the glory.

There is infinite moral distance there. The world must be judged ere it can be adopted of God. The earth must be purified before it can be furnished and adorned for Him. This has been again and again transacted in the progress of the divine government. Noah, God's saint and representative, took the earth to rule and to enjoy it, but it had previously passed through the purifying of the flood. Israel, God's people and witnesses, took the land of Canaan to possess and enjoy it, but it had been

judged by the sword of Joshua. And according to these types the earth is to be cleansed; out of the kingdom is to be taken all that offends and does iniquity ere Jesus will take the power.

Ornament and furniture well becomes it, for it is the Lord's footstool. Eden had not only its plants, and trees, and fruits, and flowers; but its gold, its bdellium, and its onyx stones. Solomon, in typical days of glory, trafficked in all desirable riches. And the millennial Jerusalem will receive all the treasures of the provinces. (Isaiah 60) But the present age is not millennial, the earth is not yet an extended Eden. Corruption is not judged; the things that offend and do iniquity are not taken away, nor is there any divine commission to that end. The field of tares is not to be cleansed now — it waits for the angels and the time of harvest. The saint submits to "the powers that be," knowing that "God" will stand in the congregation of them for judgment in due season (compare Rom. 13: 1 with Psalm 82: 1).

It is despite of the holiness of God, we may therefore say, to be presenting this evil world in its ornaments and furniture, in its resources and capabilities, as this Exhibition is doing. And it is also despite of the wrongs and sorrows of Christ. The citizens who have cast outside their city and country the blessed Son of God, are exhibiting what their country can produce, and what their hands can skilfully weave and fashion. I ask, could a servant of such a rejected Master, aid and encourage such things? Could he be a servant a moment beyond the time that he thus practically forgot his Lord's rejection here? He could not. He might, indeed, be a useful member of society, and serve his generation in their generation well; but a servant of Christ (properly

speaking) he could not be if once he forgot the world's rejection of Christ; and acceptance of the invitation of the citizens (19) to come and seek to rejoice with them in the resources of their country and the skill of their people would at once be such forgetfulness.

The sorrow and the humbling of a saint is that he remembers the rejection of his Master so coldly and acts on that great fact so poorly. But to have it estranged from the soul so as to consent to take part with the citizens from one end of the world to the other, in a great confederated effort to display the world as a wealthy and desirable place — to do this in full and hearty fellowship with all, on the ground of the common humanity, is confounding light and darkness, Christ and Belial. The language of the whole thing is this — We will forget, at least for a season, the claims and the sorrows of Jesus, and have a holyday with the world that has rejected Him.

Has so little "eye-salve" been bought of Christ as to leave the saints in such a blinded condition of soul as this? "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." When Daniel and his companions entered the place of the Gentiles, they carried one purpose of heart with them, that they would not defile themselves with the king's meat (Dan. 1: 8). He knew not what this might cost him, but this was his purpose. He had bought this eye-salve of Christ, ere he stood among the uncircumcised. And in the strength of the Lord, he and his dear companions stood. The fiery furnace and the lion's den witness the victory of men strengthened by Christ. "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us." And so at Belshazzar's feast. Daniel entered it is a conqueror, as

afterwards he entered the lion's den. He had no affinity with the feast — not a bit. He was, in the day of it, as we have seen, a separated man. But he was called to it, and he entered the banqueting hall as a conqueror. The king who was there promised to make him "the third ruler in the kingdom." "Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another," said the servant of Christ. He was as much a conqueror in the day of the feast, as he was in the day of the lion's den.

Noble attitude of a saint of God! Could such a man have accepted an invitation to the feast? Morally impossible. And "the eye-salve" which Christ had supplied him with, disclosed its further virtues, as he stood in that palace of the world's enjoyments. There was nothing in the language of the writing on the wall beyond the astrologers of Babylon more than beyond Daniel. Not so much, I might say. At least the words were as familiar to a Chaldean as to a Hebrew. But the wise men of Babylon, the scribes of Belshazzar's court and kingdom were not equal to interpret them. They were morally incapacitated. A single eye to Christ alone can do so to this day — the "eye-salve." If we test a thing by any test but Christ, we shall misinterpret it. It will appear fair, and good, and desirable, if we try it by its relationship to the welfare of society, or to the advancement of man and the world; but if we look at it in the light of a rejected Jesus, its bloom will be found to be corruption. Standing in the festive hall, Daniel traces the whole scene in Babylon at that hour in relation to God. He rehearses before Belshazzar God's way with Nebuchadnezzar, and Nebuchadnezzar's way with God, and then Belshazzar's own hardness and infidel pride in defiance of Him who had wrought the wonders. This was Daniel's key to the

writing — of course, I know, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. But still this was the prophet's moral apprehension of the king's feast. He judged it in reference to God — and what could the end be, but awful and sudden destruction? The writing must speak of judgment, and though the lords and the captains, the wives and the concubines, sport themselves in the king's hall.

"Anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." It is blessed so to do, but it is hard. We judge of things in reference to ourselves, and not in reference to Christ. We think rather of the world's improvement than of His rejection. We talk of human capabilities rather than of human and incurable apostasy. We want the eye-salve, without which we cannot see — we cannot discover the feast, or read the writing on the wall.

The disciples wanted it on the Mount of Olives, as they looked on the Temple. They saw the building but not with the eye of Christ, not as anointed with the eye-salve. He had seen it, and all that surrounded it, with the eye of God; and costly as it was and beautiful beyond comparison, He had written the judgment of it; yea, on the very wall He had written the judgment of "that beautiful house." "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem — your house is left unto you desolate." This was writing with the same divine authority which had sentenced Belshazzar and his feast. But the disciples still eyed the beauty of the stones, and Jesus, in patient grace, but because of their demand, and unanointed eye, had to re-write the doom of that place: "Verily I say unto you, there shall not be left one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down."

Sad to tell of it then, sad to see it now, sad to know, in our own worldly hearts, the secret of all this darkness. We may be sorry to find it thus among disciples, though prepared to get it plentifully among the children of men. The kings of the earth, the merchants, and the mariners bewail the fall of Babylon, and we wonder not. They judged Babylon in reference to themselves — they had lived deliciouslywith her. How could they have eye-salve to know her, and to see her with the mind of heaven? God "remembered her iniquities," but they remembered her as one "wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness." They therefore bewail, when heaven rejoices. The lords at the feast tremble, when heaven traces its doom. But sad it is that saints should be admiring the "costliness" which the mind of heaven has already judged.

What words in our ears, beloved, are all these — what writings under our eyes! O for the anointing which Christ has for His saints! O for power in our souls to judge the king's feast, the Gentiles' greatness, the world's advancement, the jubilee of Babylon, in the light of the rejection of the Son of God, in the hearing of that cry, "We will not have this man to reign over us. Then let us ask ourselves, if we have a pulse of affection or allegiance to Jesus, can we glory in this present moment with all its costliness and pleasures?

Careless Choices

The command to the nation of Israel at the very beginning was to keep the way of the Lord very particularly as to marriage. They were by no means either to give their daughters to the sons of the Canaanites, or take the Canaanites' daughters of their sons. "Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto they son" (Deut. 7:3). If they did so, it would be on the pain of being no longer owned of the Lord. "...If ye do in any wise go back, and cleave unto the remnant of these nations....and shall make marriages with them, and go in unto them, and they to you; know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these nations from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perish from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you" (Josh. 23:12,13). According to this, the apostate days of Solomon are marked by disobedience to this very thing (1 Ki. 11); and afterwards, no real recovery to God could be admitted,without a return to the observance of this principle in their marriages (Ezra 10; Neh. 10:28-30).

Obedience, therefore, in this thing was a peculiar test of the state of the nation. And it is thus in the earliest book of Genesis. For though divine law was not then published, divine principles were then understood. It may be regarded as the witness of the state of family religion then, as it was of the state of national religion afterwards.

Abraham, in this matter, eminently keeps "the way of the Lord"; and so Eliezer, one of his "household"; and so Isaac, one of his "children". For Abraham sends a special embassy into a distant land, in order to get a wife "in the Lord" for his son - Eliezer goes on that embassy with a ready mind - and Isaac in patience waits for the fruit of it, not seeking any alliance with the nearer people; and, though sad and solitary, keeps himself for the Lord's appointed helpmeet. Like Adam, he waited for a helpmeet from the Lord's own hand, though it cost him patience and sore solitude.This his meditation in the field at eventide shows. He might have got a daughter of Canaan; but he endured. He will rather suffer the sickening of his heart from the deferring of his hope, than not marry "in the Lord", or take him a wife of any that he may choose. And all this was very beautiful in this first generation of this elect family. The father, the servant, and the child, each in his way, witnesses how Abraham had ordered his house according to God, teaching his children and his household the way of the Lord. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him" (Gen. 18:19).

But we notice a course of sad decline and departure from all this. Isaac, in his turn and generation, becomes the head of the family. But he is grievously careless in this matter, compared with his father. "And Esau….took to wife Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Bashemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite, which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah" (Gen. 26:34,35). He does not watch over his children's ways,

to anticipate mischief, as Abraham had done. Esau his son marries daughters of the Hittites. Isaac and Rebekah are grieved at this, it is true; for they had righteous souls which knew how to be "vexed" with this; but then, it was their carelessness which had brought this vexation upon them.

Jacob, however, declines still further. He neither anticipates the mischief, like Abraham, nor does he, like Isaac, grieve over it when it occurs. But with an unconcerned heart, as far as the history tells us, he allows his children to form what alliances they please, and to take them wives of all whom they choose. There is no joy for the heart here, as in the obedience of Abraham; there is no relief for the heart here, as in the sorrow of Isaac and Rebekah.

But Judah afterwards goes beyond even all this in a very fearful way. He represents the fourth generation of this elect family. But he not only does not anticipate mischief, like Abraham, in the ordering of his family, nor grieve over mischief when brought into it, like Isaac, nor is he simply indifferent about it,whether it be brought in or not, like Jacob, but he actually brings it in himself! For he does nothing less than take a daughter of the Canaanites to be the wife of his son Er (Gen. 38)!

This exceeded. This was sinning with a high hand. And thus, in all this, in this history of the four generations of Genesis-patriarchs, we notice declension, gradual but solemn declension, till it reached complete apostasy from the way of the Lord.

But if this be serious and sad, as it really is, is it not profitable and seasonable? Can we not readily own, that it is "written for our learning"? How does it warn us of a

tendency to decline from God’s principles! What took place in the same elect family, generation after generation, may take place in the same elect person, year after year. The principles of God may be deserted by easy gradations. They may first be relaxed, then forgotten, then despised. They may pass from a firm hand into an easy one, from thence to an indifferent one, and find themselves at last flung away by a rebellious one. Many have at first stood for God’s principles in the face of difficulties and fascinations, like Abraham - then, merely grieved over the loss of them, like Isaac - then, been careless about their loss or maintenance, like Jacob - and at last with a high hand, broken them, like Judah.

Christ Our Prophet

Christ Our Prophet.

J. G. Bellett.

from Miscellaneous Papers (R. L. Allan)

In John 3 the Lord speaks of earthly and heavenly things. (Ver. 12.) He puts the doctrine of the new birth among the earthly things, but quite owns that without it there is no entrance for any soul into God's kingdom at all, whether in its earthly or heavenly places. But still that doctrine was earthly, inasmuch as it was common, in this way, to all, and not needed only for the heavenly people.

There are, however, heavenly things in distinction from earthly, and He speaks of Himself as the prophet or revealer of such (ver. 13), in which character John also speaks of Him, contrasting Him with the former prophets of Israel.

He that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all, and what he hath seen and heard that he testifieth." (Ver. 31, 32.)

In this way, both the Lord and the Baptist, in this chapter, distinguish between things earthly and heavenly, and speak of Jesus as the great distinct prophet of the things heavenly. So that we are by this prepared for two conclusions, that in the old prophets we must expect to find earthly things, and in the teaching of Jesus to His apostles, heavenly things. There may be notices of the heavenly things scattered, or

shining, through the prophets — there may be also; notices of earthly or Jewish hopes and calling in the apostles — but the main purpose of the Spirit by the prophets is to tell of the earth's interests, and the main purpose of the same Spirit by the apostles is to tell of the Church's heavenly interests.

Moses was the type of our Lord as our prophet, or the prophet of heavenly things. (See Deut. 18: 15; Deut. 34: 10.) He was distinguished from the ordinary prophets. For God speaks to them by visions and dreams, but to Moses "face to face," or apparently. Moses had access to all God's house. His place was in the holiest, as well as in the courts of the tabernacle. (Num. 12)

So the Son. He has access to all that is of God, according to Moses who was His type. He has fellowship with God Himself, being the brightness of His glory, the express image of His person. And He has fellowship with Him in all His works and counsels, His ways which were before the world and His ways which will be after the world, His ways in all ages or dispensations or worlds, His ways in providence or in upholding of all things, and His thoughts and counsels at the two extreme points, the cross of Calvary, when He purged our sins, and the right hand of highest majesty, where He is now sitting down. (Heb. 1: 1-3.)

Thus as Moses had access to all God's house and was spoken to "face to face," so the Son is in the fullest and deepest intimacies with all of God, His glory, His person, His counsels, and ways, and works at all times and in all places.

And our interests flow from this, in contrast with the interests of the fathers. For the fathers were spoken to

by the prophets, by those who had but visions and dreams. We are now spoken to by the Son, by Him who sees face to face, who has access to all that is of God. And this lets us into heavenly things as well as earthly. This discloses the holiest to our view as well as the courts, because our prophet is there, while the prophets of the fathers were more in the distance, in the place of visions and dreams.

Confusion and Order

Confusion and Order.

J. G. Bellett.

from Miscellaneous Papers (R. L. Allan)

The Lord found a state of sad and humbling and various confusion in the land that He walked through day by day. But it only gave occasion to His path to shine the brighter — for it was light and only light undimmed by the darkness, and unbroken by the confusion, that was all around.

The state of politics and of religion in that day exhibited this confusion. The authority of the Roman was there where Jehovah should have been supreme; Caesar's image was circulating in Immanuel's land. And he had to do with Herodians, Sadducees, and Pharisees, with His own kinsfolk according to the flesh in their ignorance, with doctors and scribes in their pride and pretensions, with the multitudes in their self-seeking and fickleness, and with the low condition of His own disciples.

He had to walk through such regions as Galilee, Judea, and Samaria — diverse, I mean, not in place or situation, but in character. For Samaria was the defiled, Galilee the rational, Judea the religious. This we see in John 4, 5.

Galilee would receive Him, because they had seen the miracles which He had wrought; but without signs and wonders they would not believe. Like Christendom, and her walk every day, Galilee gave Him historical faith and acceptance. They believed on competent testimony; but

there was no exercise of soul, nor awakening of conscience.

Judea or Jerusalem was occupied with its temple and its sabbath. Religion, or the observance of ordinances, the maintenance of what honoured themselves in their own place as the house or centre of the nation's worship, was chief with them, and prevailed to blind them to the doings of the Son of God.*

*A great multitude of impotent folk were lingering over Bethesda, though the Son of God was going about healing all manner of diseases, doing the work of Bethesda in a far better way than Bethesda.

Samaria was unclean. It had no character to maintain, no religious honour to vindicate and uphold. But there, the conscience was stirred. No miracle had been witnessed there, but no miracle was sought for. Jesus was received there, because his words had reached their souls.

This was Galilee, and this was Judea, and this Samaria; Galilee the rational, Judea the religious, and Samaria the defiled. But all such various confusion only glorified the path of Him who knew how to answer every man. Herodians and Sadducees and Pharisees, His kinsfolk and His disciples, the doctors, the scribes, and the multitudes, Galilee, Judea, and Samaria, all in their way and season got their answer from Him. He would not resist, but yet He would escape the snare. His voice should not be heard in the streets, and yet He would leave them unable to answer Him a word. He did not cure the confusion, but He passed through it, only glorifying God the more by reason of it.

And it is our comfort to see this. It tells us that the scenes in which we find ourselves involved day by day are nothing new, and need not be a surprise to us. They may exercise us, and we may fail under them, and to our humbling, but they need neither amaze nor dishearten us. We need not hope to cure it; but, like the Master, we have to pass through it. Judgment will do its work in its season, and confusion shall cease. But the time of judgment is not yet fully come. Jesus was ever judging the sinner's enemy, but never His own. He contended for us against Satan, but never for His own rights against either the Roman or the Jew. Such was the combination of weakness and strength in Him; ever passing by His own wrongs, but judging all the power of the sinner's enemy, destroying the works of the devil.

And order shall succeed judgment, as judgment succeeds long-suffering. In its time, this shall surely be, as now confusion surely is. His hand will form and mould a scene of order in the days of the coming kingdom. And of this order He has already, by His Spirit, again and again, in the progress of His grace and wisdom, given pledges and samples. And as we look at this for a little, we shall have to say, How beautifully things take their, proper place, when the Spirit of God comes to regulate them! And this is done, as I may say, noiselessly - as creation of old assumed all its order under the same Spirit.

We see a sample of this in Gen. 18. The Lord had taken counsel with Himself, that He would reveal a matter to Abraham. Upon that, the two angels who had attended Him to Mamre, pass on, while Abraham, on the other hand, draws near. How simple, and yet how beautiful that was! The scene, as without noise or effort, takes its

due form. The objects which fill it fall into their right places — the angels leaving the place in the possession of those who had a secret between them, while they themselves, left alone, draw nearer to each other.

So Abraham again in Gen. 21. He had just been distinguished by divine favour. He had got Isaac, and his house was established by the Lord. The Gentile comes to seek his friendship. Abraham accords it to him heartily — but on the occasion he assumes the place of the better, while Abimelech, though a king, and Phichol his chief captain, who accompanied his master, without grudging, took the place of the less.

This was another witness of souls finding their right relationship to each other under the hand or Spirit of God, all between them being in the order and harmony of "a noiseless sphere."

The same is seen, and that, too, in a larger field of vision, in Ex. 18. The ransomed tribes of Israel meet Jethro at the mount of God. Aaron is there, and Moses is there, heads of Israel, priestly and royal heads. But Jethro, nevertheless, takes the place of the better. He was but a stranger, visiting, in company with Moses' Gentile bride, the Israel of God. But he was heavenly — his person and his place tell us that — and he assumes at once, without asking leave and yet without wrong, the rights of the heavenly; and Moses and Aaron as instinctively and at once yield the place of the better to him, both in the sanctuary and on the throne.

O, when the Spirit works, what an end of strife, and emulation, and self-seeking there is! and what relief to the heart such an anticipation brings with it!

The interview of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba shows the same. John and Peter, in the presence of the Lord, take their relations to each other in the same spirit in John 13.

Peter in the distance beckons to John, and John at that beckoning, being near, presses the bosom of his Lord afresh; and thus together they get out the secret of that bosom. There is no jealousy, no provoking here. One scarcely knows in which to delight the more, the beckoning of Peter to John, or the pressure of John upon the bosom of Jesus, Peter using his brother, or John using his Lord. It is an exquisite sight — lovely to behold, happy to anticipate — to think of communion after such a pattern, when no envyings or provokings will soil the interchanges of heart with heart when "which of them shall be the greatest" will be heard no more, the confusion which passions and tempers bring forth gone for ever.

And to these few instances of the beautiful, regulating power of the Spirit I must add that of our Lord and the two disciples going to Emmaus, in Luke 24.

Jesus, a stranger, had joined Himself to them on the road, and helped their thoughts, and in that way relieved their hearts. The road was common property. But when they reach their home, the stranger will not intrude. He may join them on the King's highway, but their house is their castle. They, however, cannot allow this. They are too much His debtors to let Him pass on so soon, and they constrain Him to enter. But upon this, when faith has its desires towards Him, if not as yet its knowledge of Him, He at once takes His proper place. He becomes the host rather than the guest, the Lord of

the feast dispensing its best provisions, while they, in the fulness of their hearts, awakened to know Him, thankful and happy, own His title.

All is in its due order. From the beginning to the end this was so. The scene on the common highway, the scene at the gate of the dwelling, and then the scene inside the house — all is order.

And surely I may say all these are passing shadows, whether in patriarchal or evangelical days, of happy days to come. when, again, in "a noiseless sphere," harmonies, not unisons, shall strike, and move the joys of thousands of hearts together. For at the end. as at the beginning, in the scene of redemption at last, as in that of creation at first, all shall be in order both in heaven and on. earth, under the power of the Word and Spirit of God. On earth Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the ass and the ox shall plough together. The nations shall delight to own the glories of Zion and minister to her, as best they may, Geba and Sheba, Nebaioth and Kedar. And in the heavens all shall be compacted and joined together, as in the mystery of one body; principalities and powers, and dominions and thrones may be diverse, but still consistent and harmonious, dignities.

Thus, in the places of the coming kingdom, whether earthly or heavenly, things will be in beauty and order — moral as well as natural order. The two sticks shall be one. Judah and Israel shall dwell together under the same vine and the same fig-tree, and the nations will take the second place, the place of "the less," and take it joyfully.

"There all the millions of His saints

Shall in one song unite,

And each the bliss of all shall view

With infinite delight."

The Queen of Sheba was too happy at the sight of Solomon's glory to envy him the possession of it. And Peter, on the holy mount, was so satisfied in the power of that place, that he would count it his happy business to serve those who were above him.

What a relief such a prospect gives! It is high time to be wearied and ashamed of all the vanity, the envying, and the strife, which we are sensible of within and around. The Syrophenician breathed the happier spirit of the coming kingdom, when she was so heartily willing to be second to Israel, thankful to receive the portion of dogs under the table where the children were feasted.

"Blessed are the people that are in such a case!" Blessed to anticipate a state of order, moral, holy, gracious order, kept in the power of the presence of God, such order as these Scriptures both pledge and foreshadow. And well it is for us, beloved, if we can, until this age of order come, pass on through the confusion which is now around us, in something of the light and purity of the mind of Christ.

Different Conversions

Different Conversions.

J. G. Bellett.

It is sweet to inspect the way in which the light of God approaches and enters the soul. Sometimes it is gentle, sometimes it is full of force and rapidity; sometimes it intimates a work more fully on the heart; and sometimes a work more on the conscience or understanding. But it is always God's work, that we know, though the material operated upon may be various, and the mode of operation various.

Look at Acts 8: 9, 10. The Eunuch was evidently in the hand of God ere Philip met him-he was under the drawings of the Father (John 6: 44). And that his heart was deeply engaged is evident, because he forgot the common order, as I may say, of the world, when he bid Philip come up to him in his chariot. He waited for no introduction. The stranger was no stranger, since he referred to that subject which at that moment was everything to his heart. He was another Zaccheus, who forgot his place in society, and pressed through the crowd after Jesus.

Look at Saul. He was full of religious zeal-the zeal of an inquisitor. Look at Cornelius. He was full of religious devotion-gentle, benevolent, disposed (instead of persecuting others) to judge that all others were better than himself.

Here were different materials, and the mode of operation on them was different. The work was carried on in Saul's soul with characteristic force-that in

Cornelius's with like gentleness and grace. But both of them equally needed Jesus. There was no life in either or for either, but through Jesus.

So the jailer and Lydia in Acts 16, Lydia was something of a female Cornelius. She was devout, and gentle, and gracious, and the Lord, by a very gentle operation, opened her heart. The jailer was a kind of Saul, at least in his apprenticeship; he was beginning to practise his hand in that work of persecution with which Saul had been long familiar. But as far as he had gone, he had learnt his art well, and the operation on him, like that on Saul of Tarsus, was in characteristic force. An earthquake accompanied the unlocking of the bars of his strong and iron heart, as "the still small voice" had done the business with Lydia's.

But again; neither the gentle Lydia nor the fiery jailer could do without Jesus. Till Lydia knew Jesus, Paul could teach her; but he did not worship with her, though she was a devout woman. (See vv. 13, 16).

May the souls of sinners be precious in our sight! and these witnesses of the grace of God, and of the power of the Spirit, be acceptable to our hearts.

Extracts from Correspondence

Extracts from Correspondence.

J. G. Bellett.

from Miscellaneous Papers (R. L. Allan)

1. The moral activities that are abroad are surely immense, and the pressure upon the social system of influences full of deceivableness, I suppose, is beyond all precedent. It is desirable to keep the soul increasingly alive to the fact that the path of the Church is a narrow and peculiar one. Even her virtues must have a peculiar material in them. Her common honesty, her good deeds, too, her secular labours, her fruitfulness, purity, and the like, are to be peculiar in their functions and their springs. Her discipline does not act after the pattern of the mere moral sense of man. Society, as another has observed, would disclaim the offence contemplated in 1 Cor. 5; but society would never deal with it as the Church is there called to deal with it. Society, for instance, would never put covetousness or extortion in company with it, but the saint is instructed to do so. The moral sense of man would there make distinctions, when the pure element of the house of God resents all alike as unworthy of it.

This is "fine gold" dear brother — gold refined again and again. Even the morals of the Church are to be of another quality from those of men. What sanctions are brought in in 1 Cor. 5, 6 as to the common matters of life. If the saint be to abstain from fornication, it is because his body is a temple: if he be to refuse the judgment of others in the affairs of this life, in their most

ordinary ways of right and wrong, of debit and credit, it is because he himself is destined to be a judge in the seat of the world to come, even from a throne of glory. Is not this "fine gold?" Does not such sanction make morals divine? What, in the world's morality, is like this? And I ask further, is not the need of this divine or peculiar agency to the effecting any moral results intimated in Luke 11: 21-27? If it be not the stronger man possessing himself of the house, is anything done for God? If it be merely the unclean spirit going out, the end of the history of the house is, that it becomes more fitted for deeper evil. The emptied state, even accompanied by sweeping and ornamenting, is only a preparation for a worse condition, and nothing is done for God but when the stronger enters the house. No instrument of garnishing according to God, but Christ. And in the remembrance of these verses, dear brother, ask yourself what is doing in and for the house of Christendom at this moment. Is not many a broom, many a brush sweeping it and painting it? Is this making it God's house, or getting it ready to be the house of the full energy — the sevenfold energy — of the enemy?

2 Plenty of error is abroad, I doubt not, and that of all sorts, doing all kinds of mischief. May our hearts be pained when we think of it. But it is not for all of us at least to meddle with it in the way of exposure. To separate "the good into vessels," the precious from the unclean mass, and nourish it with divine provisions may be a happier business.

I think we may learn that all forms of error will have something of full-grown representatives in these last days. The infidel leaven will (2 Peter 3: 3, &c.); the loose, the morally relaxed condition of evangelical

profession will (2 Peter 2, and Jude); religiousness, which leaves the soul exposed to the "deceivableness of unrighteousness," will (2 Thess. 2). These, and others, will be in full strength, in the last days, that the judgment of God may meet them, as has been the way of divine judgments, in their day of full-blown fruits. In a general way I would put brethren in Christ in mind of all this, that they may keep themselves pure. But it is endless to follow the mind of man, as it is in this day of its peculiar activity, filling the scene with its fruit.

Ranke's history of the Popes of the 16th and 17th centuries is a remarkable witness (though perhaps not fully so intended to be by its author) of the present movement. We are witnessing a second regeneration of Catholicism, as Ranke says the close of the 16th century did. And this revival is destined, I judge, to set the woman on the beast, till the beast and his kings dethrone her to perfect their own form of apostacy, which the just Lord who judgeth righteously will visit in His day.

Great principles such as these are to be put before the saints, that their minds may be delivered from the perverted expectations of this generation. But this is to be done rather incidentally, more for the sake of the kingdom that lies beyond, all this, than with the intent of acquainting the mind with these evils and apostate reprobate things themselves. A rejected Jesus is to be presented to the affections of the saints, and the coming glory is to be shown as that which suits Him as such a rejected One.

God's Call out of the Earth

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J. G. Bellett.

from Miscellaneous Papers (R. L. Allan)

In the midst of the increased and still growing corruption of the whole scene around us, and of the threatened dissolving of all things, it is much laid upon the mind to consider with simplicity and clearness the character of our calling.

The call of God out of the earth, and God's assertion of title to the earth, are things that greatly differ, and should be morally and practically distinguished by the saints.

The call of God proceeds on the principle that God Himself is outside the earth, and that He is not seeking it, but seeking a people to be His in His place outside and above it The earth, therefore, by this call, is left just as it was. For it is a stranger to the purpose of God.

This call of God out of the earth was exhibited in the family of Seth, before the flood. Cain's house was in possession of the earth, and Seth does not interfere with them. Not at all. All he and his generation have to do with the earth is to call on the name of the Lord while they are on it (not to engrave, like Cain, their own name there — (Gen. 4: 17), and then to lay their dead bodies in it.

So was it exhibited afterwards in Abraham. He is called of God. But such call leaves the Canaanites without a rival. He does not contend with the potsherds of the

earth. He does not dispute their right as lords of the soil. He desires only to pitch his wandering tent upon the face of it, or to lay his bones in the bowels of it.

And so the Church or heavenly family of this dispensation. Their call leaves the Gentiles in power. The Church has nothing to say to "the powers that be," but either to obey unreluctantly, or to suffer patiently, according as the demand made by the powers be such or not as involves their subjection to Christ.

This determines at once our duties. We render to the powers ordained of God their dues, without in any wise seeking to disturb them, knowing also that even if they behave themselves unrighteously, we are not constituted their judges.

But the character of our service is likewise determined by this call of God. Service to God is wanting in its true character, if it do not intimate that He is not now re-asserting His title to the earth; or, in other words, our service to Christ must be to Him as the rejected Christ. For He is such an One all the time He remains in the "far country." The, cry has followed Him there from the earth, "We will not have this man to reign over us." And is that cry to be answered by the servants who occupy their talents during His absence? (See Luke 19) Surely not. They serve Him in the patient sense of His rejection all the time, and "they are not ashamed of his chain."

In like manner, moreover, this determines what our habits should be. Our habits should tell that the earth is not our place, as our services should tell that it is not our Lord's place.

This affords a holy and serious admonition to our souls.

Our call does not connect us with the earth. Our necessities do so, it is true. We need the fruit of the ground, the toil of the hand, and the skill of the heart, to provide things needful for the body. Our necessities, thus, connect us with the earth, and we may attend to it for the supply of such necessities. But our call does not connect us with it, but rather separates us from it.

To link the Church and the earth is acting at once on apostate principles. To aim at changing the character or condition of Christ in the world, or to serve Him save as the rejected One, is not service rendered in spiritual discernment.

These things we may know well and admit easily. But if we refuse to link the Church with the world, are we daily watching to refuse to link the heart with it, the hopes with it, the calculation of the mind with it? If it be easy to see the Church now on the eve of losing the world, and to see this without regret, is it alike easy to see our interests losing it, our name and distinction losing it? Such an one was Paul. He would not reign as a king yet; but he had learnt how to have and how to want, how to abound and how to suffer need.

In God's dealing by Israel, there was an assertion of title to the earth. Joshua went into "the possession of the Gentiles" and took with him "the ark of the Lord of all the earth," that his sword might make it the possession of the Lord and His people. But Paul went into the possessions of Jews and Gentiles, not to disturb their tenure of anything there, but to take out of them a people unto God, to link souls with the disallowed Stone, and to teach them that their blessings were spiritual and heavenly.

So, according to the Lord's teaching. See the two parables in Luke 19, 20. In settling Israel, the Lord gave them a vineyard, a portion of the earth, and told them to till it for Him, rendering Him dues as the Lord of the soil. In settling the saints of this age, He gave them talents, such gifts and opportunities of service as were suited to the fact of His absence and rejection by the world, having no estate or kingdom here till He should return., Practically to forget such distinctions, or to act on the principle that the Church is God's instrument for asserting His claim to the earth, is apostacy from her calling of God.

In His ministry the Lord was judging Satan, but refusing to judge the sinner. And, according to this, at the end of His ministry, He tells Peter to put up the sword, and Pilate, that His servants could not fight.

The way of His saints is to be according to all this. They are to judge morally or spiritually (i.e., defilements within themselves), but not contend about the interests of the world. The apostle condemns them for not doing the one and for doing the other (see 1 Cor. 5, 6), with this difference however — their duty in the first matter is peremptory (1 Cor. 5), their way in the second is left more and more to their measure of grace (1 Cor. 6). And according to this also the apostle tells us that our weapons are not carnal but spiritual, our warfare not with flesh and blood, but with spiritual wickedness (2 Cor. 10, Eph. 6). We are really or spiritually defeated, when we fight carnally: for the devil has raised in us that temper which has sent us forth to the carnal fight.

GOD'S CLAIM OF THE EARTH.

GOD'S assertion of His title to the earth is one thing, as I have observed in the preceding paper, and God's call out of the earth is another. Both have been again and again exhibited in the progress of the divine dispensations.

Our history, I may say, began with the first of these. Adam in the garden was required to own the rights and sovereignty of God, by constant obedience, touching the Tree of Knowledge.

Again, this was exhibited, in Noah. In him the Lord was re-asserting His own rights and inheritance in the earth, and taking up the earth again, as He had done at creation, as the scene of blessing.

And, again, in further process of time, this was exhibited in Israel. The Lord was then becoming the sovereign of the soil again, and in His elect nation witnessing His claims to the earth.

And the same will He do by Israel the second time, when, in millennial days, as the prophet speaks, the king of Israel will be the God of the whole earth. "Then the earth recommences anew, under the authority of God delegated to Jesus," as another has strikingly expressed it.

In one sense, of course, God has ever asserted His sovereignty in the earth, because it is always true: "The powers that be are ordained of God." But at times, His assertion of His place and title in the earth forms the character of the dispensation, and at other times His call of His people out of it forms the character of the dispensation. This is what I mean: — the sword went to the Gentiles, when Israel lost themselves; but the glory did not go with it.

Now we may observe, that whenever God arises, as in a form of dispensational action. to assert title to the earth, He begins by judging the scene. This, of course; because the place of His purposed power and glory having corrupted itself, He must take the offence away and purify it. His presence could not brook iniquity. His call is not accompanied by such judgments; because all the connection which it takes with the earth, or the scene here, is to draw the elect out of it.

Noah's lordship of the earth was accordingly preceded by the flood, which carried away the world of the ungodly. — Israel's inheritance of Canaan was attended by the judgment of the Amorites, and the sword of Joshua executed the commission of the Lord. The coming kingdom of the Lord and His Christ will be prepared, as all Scripture verifies, with a like clearing out of all that offends.

Beside, however, this prefatory or cleansing judgment, there has a law been delivered, suited to this assertion of God's title to the earth and to the maintenance of His name and right in it.

When Noah was set up, like Adam, as the representative of God's claim and power on the earth a law was given to him, as to Adam, for his guidance in his place: more complex, necessarily; because the condition of things had become so. Sin had entered, and sin had to be restrained or punished; as redemption, which had become God's principle, or the principle of divine religion among men, had to be testified and celebrated. With Adam all that was needful was the one command, just sufficient to maintain the witness of God's supremacy in the midst of man's lordship and enjoyment

of the garden and the creatures, that all might be in right moral order. But in Noah, when God's rights in the earth come again to be asserted, sin having entered, other things were required, and laws for the government of such a place, as well as ordinances for the maintenance of religion in so changed a scene, have to be instituted. These we accordingly find in Genesis 9: 1-6.

The pursuit of this line of thought I feel has its interest for us.

In the progress of the ages, I will, therefore, go on to observe, when Israel becomes God's witness on the earth, as I have already noticed, an economy of laws, statutes, and ordinances, both civil and religious, is established. A nation had now been taken up. The legislator had to contemplate manifold relationships, and as manifold contingencies, with all the variety of private and public rights and injuries, together with the maintenance of divine religion and worship. It had been a much simpler thing, as Noah came forth from the ark with his family, and a much simpler thing still, when Adam was set alone in Eden, than now it could be, when the host of Israel (say 600,000 strong) crossed the Jordan into their inheritance.

Accordingly, the statute-book is longer. Fitting it is that we should find it so. And so we do. Exodus 21, 22, 23, gives us the statutes which, at the beginning, and before they entered on their possession, had been decreed for the ruling of this elect and redeemed nation, in their civil relationships, and in their national religion. Ordinances of divine service pointing to "good things to come" accompany this economy or covenant. But these

chapters are the statutebook, the book that was sprinkled with blood in the day of the covenant between the God of Israel and His people. (Exodus 24: 7.)

Between this day and the day of Deuteronomy, Moses had had all the experience of the wilderness. We may well expect him to give a parting word after such experience. He does so. But the book of Deuteronomy is not to be read, as a second or enlarged edition of the statute-book. It may rehearse, in its own style, many of the earlier provisions, and give new enactments and ordinances. But still it is not, merely or properly, an enlarged edition of the former book. It is rather a discourse by the legislator, in the assembly and audience of the nation, as well as upon their past history, such as their travels, fortunes, and conduct, as upon their laws, ordinances, and hopes — a word full of affectionate appeal, of earnest encouragement, and of holy, serious admonition; the father rather than the law-giver being heard to speak, soliciting as well as directing the people in the way of obedience and blessing.

Thus was it as with Moses and Israel.

Between the times of Moses and Solomon, many changes had passed. As to my present purpose, I may say that the principal of them was this that the nation had become a kingdom. The promised land had been gained — reached and conquered. The Lord had been found faithful to all His covenant engagements, and Israel rebellious again and again. Terrible evils had been committed, and sorrowful discipline endured under the judges and King Saul. But in season the Lord arose, in the riches of His grace and the might of His Spirit, and

in David righteousness prevails, and in Solomon peace follows it.

The book of the law goes up to the throne with Solomon, according to the ordinance (Deut. 17); and necessarily so. For the throne in Israel being for the Lord, the law of the Lord must be owned there. The sceptre rules in His name, and must, therefore, rule according to His mind. Solomon, therefore, is not a lawgiver. He is not a second Moses, though he is "king in Jeshurun." In the throne God is greater than he. God's law was to go up to the throne with him, that he, even there, might be God's liege subject. And the law with him on the throne was like the command to Adam in the garden. Each of these ordinances spake this word or uttered this voice, that there was One higher than the highest; and any attempt to give the law a lower place than the throne itself would have been, in its way, a taking again of that tree, of the which the Lord God had said, "Thou shalt not eat."

Solomon, therefore, was properly no law-giver like Moses in the book of Exodus. Neither does he discourse on the laws, enlarging them or their sanctions, like Moses in the book of Deuteronomy. He does not, after such manners, "sit in Moses' seat." But he may, like him, be the father of his people. He is their teacher in the rules of wisdom. He has them before him, that he may discourse to them on the conditions of the earth, where they had their citizenship or conversation. He tells them of human life, its duties, trials, labours. and vicissitudes in its manifold enjoyments and connections. He unfolds to them the springs of human action, the thoughts and tempers of men; and warns against the snares and principles of the world. After such an order as this, is the wisdom which King Solomon delivers to his people

who stand before him. The same Spirit, who, in Moses, dictated the, rules of civil life, and gave laws to a nation, with statutes, judgments, and ordinances, through Solomon, can comment on the whole scene around, that they who have their citizenship in the earth may be ordered there in righteousness, equity, and truth. The law of God is with him and over him on the throne, but he comes down from thence into the midst of his people and their ten thousand relationships on the footstool, and there, in the Spirit of God, reads lessons of righteousness and instructions of wisdom touching all that he surveys.*

*The warrantableness and even fitness of the saints acquainting themselves with botany and such things has been often insisted on the authority of Solomon's knowledge of the cedar and the hyssop. But this shows ignorance of the call and purpose of God. Would Paul, I ask, have acquainted himself with the cedar and the hyssop? Surely not. He had his knowledge of heavenly mysteries through that same Spirit which acquainted Solomon with the secrets of the earth; because the Spirit acted in company with the call or dispensation of God. Let saints, if they can with an approving mind, study botany and visit scenery; but do not let them vindicate such ways on the authority of Solomon's acquaintance with nature from the cedar and the hyssop.

Such I believe to be the book of Proverbs.

Jesus Christ Come in Flesh

Jesus Christ come in flesh.

J. G. Bellett.

BT vol. 6 p. 56.

The ark and the camp were, in some sense, necessary to each other during the journey through the wilderness. The ark, seated in the tabernacle on which the cloud rested, had to guide the camp; and the camp, in its order, had to accompany and guard the ark and all connected with it.

This was the business of the camp. There was to be subjection to the will of Him who dwelt in the cloud; dependence on Him who led them daily; conscious liberty because of having left Egypt behind them, and hope because of having Canaan before them. Such a mind as this was to be in the camp; but its business was to conduct the mystic house of God onward to its rest, "the possession of the Gentiles."

Then journeying through that desert would not have constituted divine pilgrimage. Many a one had travelled that road without being a stranger and pilgrim with God. In order to be such, the ark must be in their company.

The mind of the camp, of which I have spoken, might betray its weakness, or forget itself, and this might lead, as we know it did, to chastening again and again. But if its business, of which I have also spoken, were given up, there would be loss of everything. And this did come to pass. The tabernacle of Moloch was taken up, instead of the ark of Jehovah, and the camp, therefore, had its road

diverted to Damascus or Babylon, far away from the promised Canaan. (Amos 5: 25; Acts 7: 13.)

And thus it is with ourselves. We are to maintain those truths or mysteries which the tabernacle and its furniture represented: and the Apostle commits our entrance into Canaan to that. "If ye continue in the faith;" and again, "if ye keep in memory what I have written unto you." Our safety, our rest in the heavenly Canaan, depends on our keeping the truth.

This, however, is to be added — that not merely for our own safety sake, but for Christ's honour is the truth to be kept.

This is to be much considered. Supposing, for a moment, that our own safety were not concerned in it, Christ's honour is, and that is enough. Such a thing is contemplated in 2 John 10: the elect lady was inside the house, — she was in personal safety, but she has a duty to perform to "the doctrine of Christ;" so that if one come to her door, and bring not that doctrine, she must keep him outside, and refuse to have him where she is.

Title to entrance is confession to that doctrine, a confession of "Jesus Christ come in the flesh," a confession that involves or secures the glory of His person. A full confession to His work will not do. The one outside may bring with him a sound faith as to the atonement, sovereignty of grace, and like truths; but all this is not a warrant for letting him in. There must be confession to the person also. "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son; if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house,

neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds."

Surely this is clear and decided. I believe that this is much to be considered. The truth touching Christ's person is to be maintained by us, even though our souls safety were not involved in it. I grant that our salvation is involved. But that is not all. He who owns not that truth is to be kept outside. It imparts tenderness as well as strength to see that the name of Jesus in thus entrusted to the guardianship of the saints. This is what we owe Him if not ourselves.*

*The wall of partition is to be raised by the saints between them and Christ's dishonour.

Those journeying from Egypt to Canaan will not do. Let the journey be attended with all the trial of such an arid, unsheltered, and trackless road, still it is not divine pilgrimage. A mere toilsome, self-denying life, even though endured with that moral courage which becomes pilgrims, will not do. There must be the carriage of the ark of God, confession to the truth, and maintenance of the name of Jesus.

Now, in John's Epistles, the name "Jesus Christ" expresses or intimates, I believe, the deity of the Son. The Holy Ghost, or the Unction, so filled the mind of that apostle with the truth, that "the Word" which had been "made flesh" was God, that though he speaks of Him by a name which formally expresses the Son in manhood or in office, with John that is no matter. The name is nothing — at least nothing that can interfere with the full power of prevailing assurance, that He is "that which was from the beginning," the Son in the glory of the Godhead. This is seen and felt at the very opening of

the first epistle, and so, I believe, throughout. (1 John 1: 3, 7; 1 John 2: 1; 1 John 3: 23; 1 John 4: 2; 1 John 5: 20; 2 John 3-7.)

In the thoughts of this epistle, "Jesus Christ" is always this divine One, so to speak, the eternal Life manifested. With John, "Jesus Christ" is "the true God." Jesus is the "he" and the "him" in the argument of his first epistle; and this "he" and "him" ever keeps before us One who is God, though in assumed relations and covenant dealings.

The confession, therefore, which is demanded by them is this — that it was God who was manifested, or who came in the flesh. (See 1 John 4: 2; 2 John 7.) For in these epistles, as we have now seen, "Jesus Christ" is God. His name as God is Jesus Christ. And it is assumed or concluded that "the true God" is not known, if He who was in the flesh, Jesus Christ, be not understood as such; and all this simply because He is God. Any other received as such is an idol. (1 John 5: 20, 21.) The soul that abides not in this doctrine "has not God," but he who abides in it "has both the Father and the Son." (2 John 9.)

This, I judge, is the mind and import of the required confession that "Jesus Christ is come in the flesh." I here speak of God under the name of Jesus Christ, and it is, therefore, the demand of a confession to the great mystery of "God manifested in the flesh."

The very adjunct (as another Has written to me), "come in the flesh," throws strongly forward the deity of Christ; because if He were a man, or anything short of what He is, it would be no such wonder that He should come in the flesh. And verses 2 and 3 of chapter 1 guide us to

John's thoughts in the use of the name "Jesus Christ." That which was from the beginning, the eternal Life which was with the Father, was the Person he declared to them. The words "with the Father" are important, making it evident that the Son was the eternal One, the name of this eternal Son being Jesus Christ. And it is interesting to compare the close with the commencement of this epistle — "this is the true God and the [with the article] eternal life."

I desire to bless the Lord for giving my soul fresh assurance on such simple ground of Scripture, that this duty lies on us of maintaining the honour of the name of Jesus.*

*In the course of our Lord's journey on earth, we see Him in the following ways.

1. As the born One — holy, meeting God's mind in the nature or human material.

2. As the circumcised One — perfect under the law, meeting God's mind in it.

3. As the baptised One — meeting God's mind in dispensational order and righteousness.

4. As the anointed One — meeting God's mind as His image or representative.

5. As the devoted One — meeting God's mind in the covenant of grace to sinners.

6. As the risen One — sealed with God's approval in victory for sinners.

Thus does He meet all the mind of God while providing for us. All was magnified in Him and by Him, all made honourable. God's proposed delight in man, or glory by

Him, has been richly answered in the blessed Jesus. While in His person He was "God manifest in the flesh," in the succession of His stages through the earth He was accomplishing all the divine purpose, delight, and glory, in man. Nothing unworthy of God was in the man Christ Jesus, His person, experiences or ways.

No Fellowship with Dishonour to Christ

No Fellowship with Dishonour to Christ.

Section 5 of: Musings on Scripture Vol. 3

J. G. Bellett.

I refuse the language used by brethren from whom we have seceded, that we have "excommunicated them." This is not a just expression; and it produces indignation, and immediate determination in the mind to have nothing to do with people or with principles of such a bearing. It is not excommunication. It is standing at the door of the house of God, and, if certain persons come to the door seeking entrance, we act as the spirit of the apostle lets us know we ought to act, and we forbid them entrance.

We do not enquire if they are saints of God or not: this we may know elsewhere. The apostle does not tell us to make any such enquiry. But we refuse to receive them coming up to the door of the house of God from the temple of an idol (1 Cor. 10). They have declared or admitted the declaration, without judging it (and this makes them partakers with it), that they receive at their table one who comes from a place where Christ is dishonoured, if he himself is sound in faith and morals, and has not imbibed the heterodoxy. And I say no more but just ask, Is a place where Christ is dishonoured other in our eyes than an idol's temple, where the cups of demons are drunk? We have no such custom, neither the churches of God. But we say, Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons (or of those who

dishonour the Lord Jesus). Judge in yourselves, judge the principle in the light of the word. To me it seems, self-evidencing light, and power, and virtue, and holiness are in it.

But now that I am on this subject with you, I will linger a little over it, though it be very painful, and has been so to me for many years; for I dearly loved those personally from whom I am separated congregationally.

There are three distinct elements — to use a phrase in much present use:- formalism, socialism, and divine holiness.

Formalism obtains in all the aged systems of Romanism and the parish church.

Socialism has made great inroads on it in this day of ours. To a great extent it is the favourite principle of the present generation; whether in or out of the church, we see it in activity. The men of the world are combining, and form their joint-stock companies, their confederacies, for the advance of present accommodation and international brotherhood. Such is the day. The saints are always tempted by the spirit of the age, and are now very much acting on this principle. They receive one another in an abstract way, not under the condition the word of God prescribes, as in 1 Cor. 10. And the social atmosphere is very grateful: they breathe it freely and encourage one another by no means to disturb it.

Divine holiness pauses in the light of everything, and challenges it, however precise, amiable, respectable, and widely accredited, by the light of the Lord, and forces it to give an account of itself to the word of God. It has its peculiarities, which it can never surrender

either to socialism or to formalism. It is something more than the moral sense of man, or even than a "charity" that refuses to judge or distinguish things that differ. It is the mind of God dispensed in scripture in any given age, and walking in the light of His mind. This divine holiness is a separating principle, but not that of a Pharisee, all to the tradition of men, or assumed higher holiness in one's self, but that of obedience to God's peculiarities — the principles of His house revealed in His word.

It is easy nowadays to take the journey from formalism to socialism. There is much in the temper of the age to put a very large generation on that road, so that great countenance is given to those who are travelling there. But to travel from socialism to divine holiness is another thing altogether. I add, and this only, that to us it is plain, that among the peculiarities, or attributes, of divine holiness is found that principle which I have already noticed — that if one come from an idol's temple, where the cup of demons had been drunk (though he be a saint of God), he is not to be received in the house of God. He may say, It is my liberty, and I may go where I please. Divine holiness replies, I cannot combine with such liberty.

Yours affectionately in the Lord,

J G Bellett.

Nov. 18th, 1863.

P.S. — I should like with you to look at the Book of Nehemiah, as illustrating formalism, socialism, and divine holiness. We are now called "Exclusives." If this title belongs to us, it belongs to the apostle who tells us to act upon the principle which has given us the title.

The Birth of Jesus

The Birth of Jesus.

J. G. Bellett.

Christian Friend vol. 14, 1887, p. 216.

Look at one or two features with me in Luke 2; that exquisitely beautiful scripture has more in it, I well know. "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, goodwill toward men" (or good pleasure, or delight, in men). At the creation, God was providing for His own glory — for the blessing of the earth — for His peculiar joy and satisfaction in man. Now each of these great purposes is again answered in the new creation, which was laid in the Child of Bethlehem — answered too more abundantly and blessedly than in the old creation. God's "eternal power and Godhead" were to be seen in His works of old, He was glorified in them, as He sought to be, as Gen. 1 shows us. But all His glory is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. Nothing that can glorify Him in the full display of Himself is left unrevealed there. The display of God in creation was necessarily partial, but in the mystery of Jesus, the Child of Bethlehem, it is perfect and complete.*

So blessing was the earth's portion at the creation. The creatures of God's hand enjoyed themselves in the good things He had provided for them. (Gen. 2.) But it was a blessing that might be forfeited, a peace that might be broken; but now the blessing and the peace, and the life which Jesus imparts, are infallible and for ever. The wolf and the lamb of the garden of Eden fall out, but the wolf and the lamb of the kingdom of Christ shall feed

together. So the divine good pleasure in man at the creation was very blessed; the Lord God pondered with peculiar delight over His last, and chiefest, and crowning work, that image and likeness of Himself. But all this delight was changed; God repented that He had made man on the earth. (Gen. 6: 6.) But man recovered and set up in the Child of Bethlehem is man delighted in without possibility of such repentance, and delighted in so as no other object in all His creation (by its very nature) could awaken the same.

But still further on in this scripture, the shepherds are filled with fear in the presence of the glory, but the angel says to them, "Fear not." A multitude of the heavenly host then appear in the sight of the shepherds, but they do not fear, but rather go into the city with joy, repeat the tidings, and return with praise. So in the book of Revelation, John fears, but the voice of Christ restores him, and then through a series of most awful and terrific visions he never fears again. (See Rev. 1: 17, 18.) This is very happy — very happy for us — very happy to know that the presence of the glory need not alarm us. Nature fears, but the soul is emboldened by the voice that speaks from heaven; and thus are we taught that joy and praise, and not fear, become the presence of the glory, and the company of the heavenly multitudes, even if that glory and those hosts were to enshrine and surround us, as in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, with as full a surprise as they did that very night the Bethlehem shepherds.

J. G. B.

The Bride of the Lamb

The Bride of the Lamb.

J.G. Bellett.

Extracted from "Collectanea"

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The Lamb's bride is distinctly the heavenly Jerusalem, the heavenly companion of her Lord, quite distinct from Messiah's kingdom. Jerusalem is the earthly counterpart of the Lamb's bride. In our thoughts about these things, I feel that we do not keep the earthly Zion distinctly in her right place. In tracing her history as the centre of Messiah's kingdom on the earth, we see that she is to be lifted up in a very especial way, to catch the glory of the heavenly bride. The earthly Zion will be lifted up, as a royal diadem in the hand of her God; glory will be her covering, and the nations will be coming up to worship at Jerusalem. Thus a heavenly link will be established between them. It will not be then, "the gospel of the grace of God;" but, the gospel of the glory of God. We can trace the bride from Genesis to Revelation, till we get her as the heavenly thing in glory, and that closes the book of God. In the description of the heavenly city, we find everything is perfect, everything that can delight the hearts of the saints. To take a right view of you, beloved, I should come forth from the counsels of God, and this would be a Pisgah view. It is blessed to get a Pisgah view, or glimpse of the glory. It was such a view

as this that Paul had, when he exclaimed, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" etc. I judge, beloved, that the history of the family would not be a suitable conclusion to the whole book of God. I feel there are parts of God's Word that are passed over, and I do feel a sort of secret pride to vindicate the neglected parts of the Word of God, and to rescue them from the dishonour done to them. Often have I found that out of these parts have come especial sweetness; and that by being pressed upon, and bruised a little, have become the most precious grains in the granary of God. What we get in Rev. 22, is not the family taken home, but the manifestation in full of God's Work, — the law manifested man. The Lord Jesus Christ was the manifestation of the Father and the Son. But at the last, we shall have the manifestation of the Church's glory in connection with the earth. I see three pathways to glory. The first path of the Church, will be upward to meet her Lord in the air; her second, will be into the Father's house, there to be presented to the father, and there she will be married; her third path, will be to come forth with Jesus as her Lord and her husband, to enter with Him into the possession of His glory. The golden city, I judge to be the place of the kings and priests. It is the place out of which the light goeth forth; it is the dispensation of blessing. All that goes out of it will be blessing; all that comes into it will be blessing. The people walking it, will walk there with all the consciousness of their royal dignity, Now we never find God, when He brings out any new thing, sacrificing that which He had brought out before. We see Him taking with Him, as He travels on through each succeeding dispensation, carrying the light of that which is past into that which is to succeed it. And thus, beloved, will it be

with us, as we travel with our Lord into the different paths of glory, we shall not leave anything behind. When we enter with Him into the golden city, we shall not lose any of the home joys of the Father's house. I was much struck with what our brother said, of the beautiful picture that is given to us in the little story of the prodigal of the mind of our Lord. As when the father brought his son, and presented him in his house, he adorned him with his best things; so, when the Lamb presents His bride before the world, there is no ornament that He has that He will not adorn her with; there is not a bit of glory and beauty of His own that He has not put on her. And yet it is not her beauty that He loves, so much as herself. He cared not for her rags and her defilement when He loved her. He sanctified and cleansed her, with the washing of water by the Word, because He loved her. I do believe this to be the deepest thought, beloved, that you can have. He loves you, not because of the grace you may have, but it is yourself. He calls us mother, sister, brother. His love for us engrosses every form of affection, also the nearest ties of relationship. He loved the Church, because He had ever put a bit of beauty on it. The whole scene closes with the Lamb getting up on the throne. When the people are got ready, and the scene is made ready, then you have the kingdom. As to the Jewish remnant, I believe they will pass through a great deal of preparatory discipline, and a great mass of Scripture is taken up with describing this preparation, so careful is God in His discipline of the Jews. In Psalm 44 we read, "For thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter." In the first book of Samuel, we get Saul made the occasion of displacing David; in the second book, Absalom is used by God for the same purpose. In

the first instance, we see David as a martyr, suffering for righteousness; in the second, as a penitent. And so it is in this way, under the type of David, that the remnant will be so sweetly exercised. When David was suffering under Saul, there was no comfort that his soul did not lay hold of, everything that could link his soul with God, knowing that he had a right to it all. But when suffering under Absalom for his sins, he knew he had no title to consolation, and put it all beyond him for the present, till the Lord had restored him to favour. Let us then be prepared for all this variety in the Psalms in some pleading righteousness, in some confessing sins, in some expressing confidence in God. If then we have the character of the remnant, let us have the testimony of a good conscience, and there is no height or depth that we shall not fathom, because we have confidence in God. It was in the time of David's sin and sorrow, that we see more of his confidence in God. If, like David, we have sinned, we must, like David, return to our first works, and travel up the mount in sackcloth. I believe the establishment of the kingdom is in preparing the remnant. We find the people getting ready by a process of most blessed discipline, and then we find the scene closed by the destruction of the enemies. The eye of the gazing disciples followed their Lord up in the air, but could not pierce the cloud; but in Psalm 110 David did pierce the cloud, and saw the Lord on the throne. When the disciples asked our Lord about the time in which He would restore again the kingdom to Israel, He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." He instructed them in the character of His coming, though not about the time. "Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Now in this Psalm we find it written, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The structure of this little Psalm is quite perfect. The first verse carries Adam (man) up to the throne of God. Then we find God pledging Himself to Adonai, and telling him from 1-5 what is provided for him. In verse 5 it is written, "The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath," etc. "He shall drink of the brook in the way; therefore shall he lift up the head." He engages to remove every hindrance, and to bring Him into the inheritance. It is beautiful, the prophet looking up and seeing the Lord on the throne. Beloved, all we want in travelling up to these is unshod feet, and sure I am that there is no limit to the height we may get at. Get yourselves but unshod, and I say it is a base fear that would keep you from taking these journeys. We see that it is the Father who gives the title, and the Son takes the power. It is not that the Lord Jesus has now begun His judgment of His enemies. He has not yet put them under His feet; but He is waiting in grace, and the word now is, "The long-suffering of God is salvation."

As to the duration of Messiah's kingdom, those words in Psalm 72, "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun," — I think the Spirit defines here how long His kingdom will continue, "as long as the sun,." that is, till the heaven and earth shall pass away, and God will be all in all. We are here, beloved, to help one another's joy in the discovery of truth; and though there may exist little differences in our views, they need not cause a ruffle.

Will the standing of the saints differ? The earthly saints will, I judge, walk in all the power of the recovered

affections of human life; but this is not the character of joy that will be known by the Church. It is not that we undervalue natural affections now, — for it is a sin to be without them, - but we are not henceforth to know any man after the flesh; but with the earthly people in the kingdom, there will be an enjoyment of all these affections. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers. When the apostacy among the Jews came in, it was no longer, "Blessed art thou," etc., but rather, "Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." As to the fitting posture of the saints, I should say if we are children in the Father's house, let us encourage the affections and temper of children; if we are the bride, let us be waiting for the day of our espousals. The day of the wedded pair is not yet come; let us therefore be waiting for it; and, beloved, it is no pain to us in parting, to know that we may go forth and acquaint ourselves more with Jesus, and to show forth more of the attractive beauty of our Lord.

Joshua 3.

J. G. B.

THE Book of Genesis begins with man created in uprightness; then comes the fall; then God's remedy for that, in the promise of Jesus and in His election of a people. In Exodus, we see His actual deliverance of His elect out of Egypt. In Leviticus, there is the exhibition of the priestly character, and the institution of sacrifices to meet the daily need of His elect people. In Numbers, we get their trials and failure in the wilderness. In Deuteronomy, after the experience of Israel in the wilderness, we get God's relief for their failure in His

own grace. It is beautiful to me to see God's grace witnessed to; and the order of these books to my soul is most blessed, as setting forth Moses, Aaron, and Joshua, in their typical character and action. Moses is represented as the redeemer and kinsman of the heir, doing his redemption work; but we want Joshua to redeem the inheritance, and bring the heir into it. This we find in the Book of Joshua, which therefore closes the action of God. Between the time of the redemption of the heir out of Egypt, and the redemption of the inheritance out of the hand of the Amorite, we have the wilderness; and it is here that we have sympathy with Israel, not in Egypt, because the blood had delivered them actually out of it. We do not know Canaan fully yet, because we are not yet brought into the land, and this gives us sympathy with Israel in the wilderness. The more we act as redeemed ones, the more we shall know this to be the wilderness, and be like Israel, who were taught that all their resources lay in the hands of the blessed God, and that when they get into the land they might not forget the wilderness. They learned the grace of God there, just meeting them in their necessity; and wonderful to say, they learned their own glory there, there they became the priests of the Lord. We, like them, beloved, are learning our joy in the wilderness, and teach our glory in this apostate world. We learn our glory by the Holy Ghost, our oneness with Christ, the hope that takes us up to heaven. There are two lessons that the wilderness has to teach us, — grace and glory; and our happiness is to learn them. When Israel came to the banks of Jordan, there was a new thing. Joshua had now to deliver the inheritance out of the hands of the enemy, and God meets him, with the gracious expression, "As I have been with Moses, so will I be with thee." It is a blessed

thing for us that God only knows Himself as meeting our necessity. When Israel was in the furnace, God knew Himself in the burning bush; thus choosing the insignificant bush, which we might suppose would be easily trampled upon, or consumed, to prove His strength perfect in their weakness. It was unconsumed, and therefore they were unconsumed. When they wanted guidance, He knew Himself in the cloudy pillar going before, and directing them in their path. And when they came to Jericho, He knew Himself as the man of war. Thus we see God knowing Himself, and making Himself known, according to the circumstances of their need; and under whatever circumstances of danger or difficulty we may find ourselves, let us take for our especial comfort the assurance, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee;" so that we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me." And whatever our necessity may be, we shall find Him in all His anxiousness proving that He has never exhausted His resources, or the faithfulness of His love. Now I see that the waters of Jordan must be parted, and this could not be done till the feet of the priests had touched the waters. The Red Sea was parted by the simple shepherd's rod of Moses; but another power must act on Jordan. It waits for the holy priesthood. And we, beloved, are just waiting for our own fulness, till the holy priesthood of the Son is completed, then shall the waters part hither and thither to let the Church of God go up into the Father's house. We do not know exactly what was Joshua's purpose in sending the spies into Canaan, but doubtless the Lord and Joshua were in co-operation here, though undoubtedly the Lord's thoughts overpassed Joshua's. It is the Lord's thoughts we have to do with. There was a little circumstance to be transacted

before Israel could enter the land, before Jericho could be destroyed, and this was the saving of a poor sinner, the harlot Rahab. And it is for such work as this, the testifying of God's grace to sinners, that we are left here. Our proper joy is, waiting to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air; but if He tarries, to rejoice that the delay of our joy is to bring the grace of God to poor lost sinners, accounting that the long-suffering of God is salvation. Such should be the position of the saints, either looking for the approach of glory, or else for the outward path of testimony to sinners through the blood. It is written, that they came to a harlot's house named Rahab and lodged there. She had heard that the Lord was with Joshua; upon this her faith rested; so she received the men, disobeyed her king, and sent his messengers back with a lie. Rahab, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of her house. Surely fear may be a base root, but the Lord will not despise it. She confessed their hearts did melt with fear, when they heard of the Lord's dealings with Israel; wherefore she says, "I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: and that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee." There was another reason for faith, she had faith in the word of the men, and she wished to save her family as well as herself. I know not what made Joshua choose these men, but certainly they were beautiful men; they were firm representatives of the camp of God; they

needed not to go back to Joshua to know his mind; they carried the thoughts of Joshua with them, they knew his willingness to save. And we, like them, carry the thoughts of our Joshua with us, and are not afraid to pledge the grace of God to the poor sinner. Indeed, beloved, these were fine men, their graces were as large as their desires. "Our lives for yours," they answered. She binds the scarlet line on her window, and was just as safe in the devoted city of Jericho as she could have been in the heart of the camp, or under the banner of Joshua. The scarlet line to her was as the blood-sprinkled door, or the city of refuge; and as the blood of Jesus puts us to rest, and enables us to sit and sing of redemption, so it was with her, she knew no fear. Like Noah in the ark, she was now above the billows that were round her, and could think of the grace that had saved her. When the grace of God had just brought in the one that had faith, they entered the land. Now, beloved, these are the paths in which we should move; either waiting to be taken up, or going here and there seeking poor Rahabs, to tell them that there is salvation in Israel, pledging the mercy of God on His own eternal faithfulness. Oh may we in spirit know more of the upward path to glory, and of those outward paths of mercy and blessing to poor sinners.

The Knowledge of Our Present Standing.

J. G. B.

MANY of you here, beloved, have not perhaps been travelling up with us, into the knowledge of our present standing, and therefore up to the present time have perhaps been strangers to the conclusions we have been brought to. But being brought into a blessed oneness in

the knowledge of the Father, and oneness with the Son, — one with Him who is on the throne, one with Him when He comes to be glorified in His saints, - we have been led on in further discoveries of truth. If we have felt one time more a moment of interest than another, it is now that our minds are directed to the question, Whether we have a right to expect to be taken up into our glory without any intervening contingencies? The Word of God in this, as in everything else, is the only abiding rule for all our hearts and judgments; and here I would add a word, which is one of much comfort to my own soul, that we carry within us "the seed of God," and the wicked one toucheth it not. We carry also another character of glory with us, and that is, "the mind of Christ." Yet this is hindered by the flesh, and with the darkness that remaineth in us, therefore we have need to stir up one another. Still, through our want of perfect intelligence, we must expect to find differences of judgment. If I hear anything from the mouth of my brother which shakes my judgment, I must try it by the Word.

The whole dispensation may be said to be one great day, — "Knowing that it is high time to awake out of sleep, for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." We do not understand our position in Christ aright, if we do not see that the presence of the Holy Ghost in us gives us the character of those who have entered on "the day." "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." Only look out, beloved, and you will see the light breaking through us, in the chamber windows, and it becomes us to arouse one another, knowing that the day draweth nigh. The Scriptures tell us that we are in the last times, and this gives us an identity with our brethren, though

they lived hundreds of years ago. We find in 2 Tim. 2: 18, etc., that the error of "the resurrection" being "passed already," brought out that great house. The Church was getting down from her high standing, and acting as if she were entitled to use all the things around her, and to be kings already; and I believe the Lord will find the great house, with all its impure furniture, when He comes. The Book of the Revelation I judge to be a book of judgment. In this book we learn about God. In John we learn the Father. I do confess I love the atmosphere of my Father's house; I love to dwell on the Father's character: yet I believe we have also to learn God. The lesson given us now to learn, is the patience of Jesus Christ in God, and this is to be learned in communion with the Father; and what we have to do, beloved, is to look into such a revelation of Jesus Christ as God has given us. We find in what different ways the energy. of the Spirit led Jeremiah and Ezekiel. While Jeremiah was weeping among the ruins, we see Ezekiel standing above them; and when Jerusalem was no longer fit for the glory of God to rest on it, he sees with joy the cherubim departing from it, and ascending up to the throne in the temple above. In the Book of Revelation I judge, beloved, that we get not the weeping Jeremiah, but the triumphs of Ezekiel. In Rev. 1 we get our Lord as the Priest in the sanctuary, walking among the candlesticks, not with the golden oil, but with the snuffers, to see if they will burn, and if not, to judge them. Having put the candlesticks on their responsibility, He comes and says to them, "Give me an account of your stewardship;" or as when God said, "Adam, where art thou?" So I believe the candlesticks have been tried; they could not answer the challenge, and therefore were judged unworthy of their place.

What should we do in such a position? We should humble ourselves, and not rejoice as if all were right. And though we may see here and there a little to be thankful for, yet to feel that the Church is a broken thing. Revelation 4 and 5 form a preface to the second scene of judgment. In chapter 4 I judge we get the throne of Him to whom all, by right of creation, belongs. We see the rainbow, which was the sign of God's covenant with the earth, round about the throne. "Out of the throne proceeded lightnings, and thunderings, and voices." - In Revelation 6, 7, and 8 we have the power by which this is to be effected. Let us now turn for a little to Psalms 23 and 24, which, I believe, bear the same relation to each other as the Gospel of John does to the Book of Revelation. Psalm 23 beautifully harmonises with the Gospel by John, and describes the Shepherd by the way of goodness and mercy leading up the Church into the Father's house. Psalm 24 is altogether of another character, and represents the Church as led up into the holy hill, or the golden city. The question is, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place?" Who shall be found worthy to take the place of dominion on the earth that Adam forfeited? It was God's good pleasure to set up an image of Himself in Adam, and He has set it up again in Christ. We find a question very similar to this in Rev. 5: 2, "Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?" Who shall stand as the image of the blessed Creator on the earth? just as John's Gospel leads us up to the Father's house, so I judge that the Book of Revelation prepares the way of the Church from the Father's house into the golden city. It is that which I believe governs the whole of the actions of this book, the inheritance got out of the hand of the enemy, and made

ready for the Church to enter upon and shine forth in all the glory of the golden city. In chapter 4, in the elders, we get ourselves. Then the cherubims, these we always see attendant upon the pleasure of God, always fulfilling His mind and will. We see them executors of His wrath in the Garden of Eden, standing with the flaming sword. Again we see them shadowing the mercy-seat. These cherubims were made out of the matter of the mercy-seat, showing their reflection of the mind of Him who sat between the cherubims, as it were delighting and searching into the secrets of the mercy-seat. We get them again in Ezekiel. The temple was now become a defiled place, where the Spirit of God could find no rest, and what do we find the cherubims doing? Not, as before, delighting in the mercy-seat, but doing His holy pleasure, and stretching out their wings to throw over the devoted city. The Lord has two thoughts of glory for His saints, — the first is, that they should be co-heirs with the Son; the second is their entering into the place of true joy and glory; and then we shall see the angels opening their ranks to let once defiled sinners go in, and they must surround us, as they now surround the Lamb. The Lord's title to the kingdom we see in chapter 5 is settled in heaven, and. the next thing is, the action of the Lord. He takes the book. We find two voices owning the power as lodged in Jesus, and saying that all power is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. But the moment that God owns it, all will be compelled to own it too. And this is the way that God settles everything in righteousness. The Church is now made the witness for the displaying of this truth, as we find Paul writing to the Ephesian Church in Eph. 3: 10, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the Church the manifold

wisdom of God." In Revelation 5 I see the angels having learned the lesson, and following in. the train of the Church. When the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders, sing the new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, and hast made them unto our God kings and priests," etc., then the angels join, saying, with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." I believe the Church to be taken up at some undefined moment between Revelation 3 and 4. When we perceive the truth of the martyred remnant among the Jews, we get a key to much that would be otherwise unintelligible to us. The Church, I believe, to be taken out of all the transactions in judgment of this book after the third chapter. The Church of God, beloved, is a very tender and delicate plant, and we should take care how we mix her up with the political revolutions of this world. When we speak of her, it should be in a very gentle, delicate way. We never find the elders stepping down to the earth, but always surrounding the throne; though we see them at times coming forth in peculiar expressions of their joy, as in Revelation 7, when they beheld the multitude redeemed with the blood of the Lamb. We get them again in Revelation 11 coming forward to express their joy when the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, saying, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned." And again, in Revelation 19, was heard the voice as of a great multitude, coming out of

the throne, saying, "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." Thus we find that while the elders are always happy, yet there are times when they know particular elevations of joy; and this, beloved, is very sweet, they are always round the throne engaged in this joy, and in that intelligence. I judge the Revelation to be like the Book of Joshua, — taking the inheritance out of the hand of the enemy, and this goes on from chapter 6 to 19. The Lord will not take up Israel till the fulness of the Gentiles is come in. Then we get the judgment of the earth. I do not believe that the Church will have anything to do with this judgment on the earth, but the Jews, as it is written, "In Judah were the instruments of his power." I believe we get in Enoch and Noah types of the Church and Israel; while Noah was preserved through the judgment, I find Enoch was taken out of it. In the opening of chapter 6, I believe we are standing much in the same position as the disciples were in Acts 1, for signs to Jerusalem. The seals govern the action of the whole book, and I believe an answer to the disciples' question in Matt. 24: 3, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the age?" This chapter of Matthew, I believe, the Church has nothing to do with. We do not find the mercy of God exhausted till the end of the Book of Joshua, and so it is not till we get to the Revelation that we see the Church as the heir, the bride of the Lamb, taken up into the golden city. I believe this book to be just the Joshua of the New Testament. In chapter 19 we have the marriage of the Lamb. I judge the marriage takes place in the Father's house. No doubt He will by and by come down to the earth, but that is not what we have to do with, beloved. We look for His touching the air, and for our being

caught up to meet Him; the trumpet will sound, not for our meeting Him in Jerusalem, but in the air. "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 maybe also" (John 14: 2-3). And do not we know that He went to the Father's house? I see that there are two pathways to glory, — first, when the Lord comes to meet us to receive us to Himself; the second, when we travel with Him from the Father's house into the golden city. Thus, in the same way, we see our Lord Himself making a pause after His resurrection, before he ascended to the Father. In Revelation 19 we first get the marriage, and then the Church preparing to take her stand in the glory. In Revelation 20 we find her in the kingdom, as it is written, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." They shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. When the kingdom comes, the ladder will take its proper place, the top will be set in heaven, the bottom of it on the earth, then will be seen the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man. Do you not delight, beloved, in the thought of all submitting to the sceptre of righteousness in the hands of "the Beloved?" It is not only the throne of God, as in chapter 4, but here it is the throne of God and the Lamb. All is now contributing to prepare the throne, not for Him who created all things, but also for the Lamb. Then it will be universally declared who is the worthy one; then will be sung that song of triumph and of joy, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors, and the

King of glory shall come in." Above everything, beloved, let our hearts be right with the promises of God. Let it be our joy to be for ever and ever by the side of Him, who gave up everything for the love that he had to the Church. It is to such a one that we are betrothed. The time of the marriage is not yet come; this is the time of our betrothal, the season in which we may be occupied in learning one another, in learning all the devoted ways of that love to get us for Himself. It is not that we are the bride of a glorious King, but we are nothing less than this, "The Lamb's bride;" and may our hearts, beloved, be unceasingly breaking out, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Deuteronomy 26 - 34.

J. G. B.

THERE is one thing we must remember in God's dealings with His people, that is, that we have reached God. We are far gone, and upon the ground of this the gospel comes in to tell us what God is, beloved; and on our part, the thing to be proved by us is, that we have reached God. We find that, having God, we have everything, a fulness to supply every emergency. What thought had a Sadducee of God? No right thought at all, beloved. So the Grecians at Corinth (1 Cor. 15), "Some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame." When the Apostle was expressing the state of the Gentiles in Ephesus, it was "without God and without hope in the world;" and in 2 Thess, 1, "them that know not God." There, again, he charges them with simple abstract atheism; and why so? Because the gospel is such a provision for all man's necessities, that it brings in God; and where does His glory shine, but in

the face of Jesus Christ? so that whosoever does not believe the gospel, rejects God. And these two are so intimately connected, that He cannot reveal Himself without revealing the ground of our hope. God is love, and it must be so. The gospel comes, not to bring ourselves to our view, but to bring God; and faith, whether it be weak or strong, gets this blessing. God forbid that anything should be said that could check the poorest and weakest saint! What does faith do? Why, it just presents God to Himself, just presents to God His own remedy, nothing of ours. Christ crucified and Christ risen was preached to Adam, and Abel believed it; and all religion in the family of God has been the same from that day to this; and God will own no principle of religion but this, from that day to the endless ages of eternity. But Cain would not take God's remedy, but chose his own; Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness; and when Abraham in Gen. 16 had fallen into Cain's state, the Lord reveals Himself to him in chapter 18, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." And what do we find? He falls upon his face and worships God. And what can we do, beloved, but fall down before God, and tell Him what He is Himself; and nothing will give the soul a graceful ease in its movements towards God, but this simplicity of faith. In delivering Israel, the Lord only knew Himself, and in His own grace delivered them; but at Mount Sinai we find Cain-work again, but still God rises above it; and however the people throw themselves into the fires of Sinai, He cannot but act in grace. In connection with these things, in Deut. 26: 1-11, we see the covenant that put God and the people together. Now, beloved, nothing can exceed the blessedness of that; there is not a religion of grace under the sun but this. The principle of

every religion of human nature is, "Thou art a hard and austere master;" but here are the people worshipping God, by bringing the full basket to present to Him of what He had given them. And on the same principle, beloved, we come presenting Jesus to God; it is not the first-fruits of the land, it is only to come acknowledging "a Syrian, ready to perish, was my father," in the simple consciousness of His love, and that is worship. Beloved, I know no other principle of worship than this, to bring the full basket, to say "a Syrian, ready to perish, was my father;" but Thou hast brought me to Jesus, Thou hast brought me to a land flowing with milk and honey, Thou hast given me Jesus. And now as to the verses following this, — Deut. 26: 12-15, — we must come, as Israel did, with clean hands to compass His altar, we must not regard iniquity in our hearts — (Pilate washed his hands, but there was iniquity in his heart); we must be able to say, as Israel did then, "Look down from Thy holy habitation," Deut. 27. From henceforth to the close of the book, we have a beautiful exhibition of what God is; and oh! beloved, how blessed it is to know that we have reached God, and done with ourselves. Well now, we have the ten words inscribed upon the tables of stone; but where are they put, beloved? They are put at once, without trial, upon the mount of curse, and it comes as a warning that the result of the trial must be a curse; as the Apostle says, "All that are under the law are under the curse." But the Lord has taken His stand (in principle, I mean, of course) upon Mount Gerizim. He speaks of nothing but grace, of nothing but blessing. In Heb. 2, while the law was the thing ministered, let the angels take it, let Moses take it; but when it is grace, the Son takes it, the Spirit bears witness to it. Where does the law come from? from His hand; but the gospel

comes from the depth of the heart of God. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath declared it; and while my conscience stands in company with the throne of God, my heart, my affections, stand in company with the bosom of the Father. Deut. 28 was just Gerizim and Ebal in another style. In Deut. 29, and onward to 32, there is a great transition. It is the thoughts of God, as it were, passing from the law unto grace, and it gleams forth here and there, but not distinctly. It was an awkward thing to get grace into the hands of the Legislator, but we do here and there get faint traces of it. The pillar of the cloud was one of the expressions of the grace of Him who was carrying them through the desert; it stood in company with the manna, the ark of the testimony, and all that was the expression of grace. In the song of Moses, mercy rejoices against judgment; but there is another note to be heard, beloved. In verses 42 and 43, the Lord shows what His plan is. Let Moses and the law go to Mount Ebal, He takes His place upon Mount Gerizim with the pillar of cloud for His companion. The gospel, beloved, is God dispensing Himself, giving Himself In Deut. 33, the earthly people are brought into the inheritance and blessed. If you travel through this 33rd of Deuteronomy, it is all blessing. Compare this with Genesis 49; Dan has recovered his place, so to speak, he has leaped back from Mount Ebal to Mount Gerizim; the fruit of this song, mercy rejoicing, against judgment. Did you ever mark in that lovely song of Hannah, beloved, it is the Lord that is the theme of her song? So here, so Samuel, it is Ebenezer, it is a witness to the Lord; and so it will be to eternity, beloved. You may enjoy the glory you are brought into, but you will celebrate nothing but the blood that brings you there. In the last chapter, we get

Moses, who lost the land, who died on the other side Jordan, brought up to an elevation beyond all that passed the banks of Jordan. He is taken up as the representative of the heavenly calling of the Church. It was his own want of faith that kept him back, but out of the eater we find meat brought forth. He lost the earth, it is true, but he got the heavenly glory. May the breathing of our hearts be, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee." Then, though flesh and heart fail, we may still say, "God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

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The Church at Thessalonica

The Church at Thessalonica.

J. G. Bellett.

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We easily perceive different measures of attainment, both in knowledge and grace, in the churches of old. The elevation, for instance, of that at Ephesus was much above that at Corinth. At Corinth the apostle had to occupy himself with the corruption of various errors and abuses, and was thus hindered from bringing out to the disciples the strong and rich meat of the word. He kept from them that "hidden wisdom" which he had in store for the "perfect," because they were "carnal... babes in Christ." (1 Cor. 3: l.) But at Ephesus his course was free; he had not to stop in order to correct abuses and errors, but could go on to feed the church with wisdom and knowledge, and reveal to them "the mystery" or "hidden wisdom," which he had to keep back from the saints at Corinth. (Eph. 3) At Corinth the Holy Ghost, by the apostle, had to take care of their own things, and show them to them for correction; but at Ephesus He could do His more blessed work of taking of the things of Christ and showing them to them for edification and comfort.

So that, in distinguishing the condition of these two churches, I might say that the priest was trimming the lamp at Corinth, using the golden snuffers there for correction of evil; while at Ephesus he was feeding the lamp, pouring in fresh oil for the filling and brightening of it with increase of light and grace.

The other churches under the care of Paul occupied, as I judge, certain standings between Corinth and Ephesus; that is, they did not call for the same measure of rebuke as Corinth ' nor did they stand so much beyond the necessity of all personal notice as Ephesus. But in the epistles to them we discern a mixed action of feeding and trimming the lamps. Indeed, I might class the churches in Galatia with that at Corinth, for there such error had entered that the apostle had little to do but to correct and rebuke it, and thus, as it might be, restore the minds of the disciples. But whether it be at Rome, Philippi, Colosse, or Thessalonica, we see the apostle applying himself both to the evil and the good that was among the saints there; and I would shortly look at each of them.

Thus at ROME he has in view to bind Jewish and Gentile believers together, as among the disciples in that city there appears to have been the retaining of their several prejudices, which were threatening to divide. A great deal of blessed truth is brought out in the epistle, but the present practical end of it all seems to be to secure the union and forbearance of the saints one towards another. But there is not any great amount of evil or mischief recognised by him.

At PHILIPPI the church was beautiful for much grace, and for grace, too, that was peculiar to herself. Yet the apostle, in his epistle to that church, evidently alludes to symptoms of disunion which had appeared among them; but because of the other grace that was there, he alludes to this evil with marked tenderness and reserve, often expressing the comfort wherewith he was comforted in them. And this tender style of the apostle, while noticing the evil among the Philippians, should tell

us, when we see much of the grace of Christ in a brother, we should remember that when dealing with evil that may be in him also. It is not that the apostle overlooked the evil at Philippi, but he remembered the grace that was there; and this imparted a chastened and affectionate tone while addressing himself to the evil.

At COLOSSE the apostle, it is true, feeds the saints with most precious knowledge, with the richest thoughts of Christ and His fulness. But this evidently was because he feared the entrance of Judaising principles among them, for which fear he gives us clearly to see that he had good reason; and the only divine corrective of that evil is the knowledge of the sufficiency of Christ for all the necessity both of the sinner and of the saint.

At THESSALONICA the coming and kingdom of the Lord Jesus had been especially received through the apostle's ministry; and in the epistles to the church there he still feeds them with further light upon that great doctrine. But while he does that, he has also to correct a certain practical error which was peculiar to them.

Thus we clearly discern different conditions in the grace and knowledge of the different churches. And all these things happened unto them for ensamples, as much as the things that happened to Israel in the wilderness; and they are here in the same way written for our learning. (1 Cor. 10) And we may bless God that we have this His own inspired answer to so many anxieties and questions that might arise in our hearts while walking one with another.

In what I have said I may not have altogether rightly discerned the standings of the several churches; but I have no doubt of the fact that they were different. I

speak of the churches as known by the epistles addressed to them severally. Into some of these lamps of the sanctuary more oil had been poured than into others.

The fact which I have already noticed so clearly shows us this — that the apostle withheld from the Corinthians the revelation of the mystery which he so fully makes known to the Ephesians. And this at once shows how impotent and unwarranted the requisition is, that the minds of all the disciples should be found exactly according to one measure and standing before the fellowship of the church can be allowed or administered. Nay, so far from this, I am free to believe that if a member of the church at Ephesus had visited Corinth, he would have found them so concerned with questions and strifes which had never troubled him or his brethren at home, as might have left him in doubt respecting them. And so one going from Corinth to Ephesus would have found them so occupied with such truth which he had never heard of at home, that he might have suspected, in modern language, that they were all in the clouds at Ephesus. I can thus suppose, from their different measures of light and attainment in Christ, that they might not well have known what to do.

Now, I believe we see among the saints at present what we thus might have seen among the churches of old; we have our Ephesian and Corinthian difficulties still. The truths received by some disciples are treated as mere speculation by others, and the condition of some is low and doubtful. The large and blessed mind of God, which filled the apostle, could of old survey them all, and provide for them all, and feed them at Ephesus and trim them at Corinth. But we are weak and narrow-hearted;

and the only result commonly is, to walk in mutual distance and suspicion. Thus we do not understand one another's speech, and we are scattered. But better is it to be scattered than to be brought together on the terms of any bond short of God's own bond in the Holy Ghost. Whereto we have already attained, in that let us walk by the same rule, hoping for more. But let us not force beyond that by any fleshly compacts. The fear of God must not be taught by the commandment of men.

And in connection with this, I would notice the state of Job and his three friends; for I believe that it illustrates the same thing which this state of the churches does. Job could not understand the truth which was in their thoughts, nor could they allow that which he had of God's mind in his; they were but partially in the light, and, through the remainder of darkness that was in them, they mistook the way and jostled each other. And the correction lay only in God, and in the end He applied it. They were all accepted — God proved Himself the adequate Healer of all their divisions, as He will, by-and-by, join the whole of the heavenly family in one body in the mansions on high, and unite the two sticks of Ephraim and Judah in the earth below.

The largeness of the mind of God contains the remedy, but nothing else does. That mind may express itself forth from the whirlwind, or by the ministry of an apostle; but, however that, be, it bears the remedy with it,. The Lord who can with one hand separate the chaff from the wheat, with the other can gather up all the scattered grains that are now strewing His field in shameful disorder, and find room in His garner for them all.

And this comforts, while it admonishes. It is not that we are to confound the chaff with the wheat. It is as much of the Spirit of God to say, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema," as to say, "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." It is as much of the testimony of God to say, "He that hath not the Son of God hath not life," as to say, "He that hath the Son hath life" — "If any man preach any other gospel... let him be accursed."

But still let us know there have been different measures of attainments among the saints, and let our personal and individual care be so to walk in light and grace ourselves as not to give occasion either to the enemy to speak reproachfully or to our brethren to speak doubtfully of us. And let us have our hearts and consciences in lively exercise before God with a purpose to follow our light, lead us where it may, in the grace and fear of the Lord. But when these are the springs of the personal movement and course of each of us, we have, though in many things differently minded, the materials of both safe and blessed communion.

Among the several churches of which we read in the New Testament I have lately been led specially to meditate on the character and standing of that at Thessalonica. To understand it rightly we must look first to the nature of St. Paul's preaching at Thessalonica, and then to the purpose and bearing of his epistles.

He visited the place immediately after his sufferings at Philippi; but it was only to renew his sufferings. (Acts 17) However, a people were gathered out, and in this place gathered out not only to the knowledge of God's

salvation, but eminently to the hope of His "Son from heaven." (1 Thess. 1: 10)

On visiting the synagogue at Thessalonica, the apostle sought to prove to the Jews that their promised Messiah was both to die and to rise again; and upon this he asserts, in the first place, that Jesus was the promised Messiah. And having thus claimed for Jesus identity with the Messiah, he asserts, in the second place, that this Jesus, the Messiah, was also King. This we gather from the challenge of his accusers. (Acts 17: 7) And the scriptures of the prophets had already testified this, as well as the former: "the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

But these things did not contain the full mystery of Christ. He felt there was something lacking in their faith which he desired to supply (1 Thess. 3: 10), for his ministry among them had been interrupted. The enmity of the Jews had forced him suddenly out. (Acts 17: 10) This, with many other reasons, gave him special concern for them. The grace that was among them was so abundant; they were so excellent for work of faith, for labour of love, and for patience of hope; the tone of their faith was so honest and decisive, also the purpose of heart with which they had come forth to own, as far as they had learnt it, the hope of the gospel: all this drew out his pastoral anxiety for them. And he had spent so much labour and care upon them, and they themselves were so exposed to such trial of faith and to so much that might naturally tempt them to give up Christ, and yet withal they had made so fair a promise of being his joy and crown in the day of our Lord Jesus, that the apostle was specially jealous over them; and under all this anxiety he had already sent Timothy to them,

consenting to be left at Athens alone, desiring greatly to see them himself, and attributing the hindrance to Satan.

Now out of all this care for them the epistles flow. All this is not merely the apostle's but the Spirit's care. The Spirit, who had wrought among them by the apostle, now yearns over them in the apostle.

In their present state of knowledge their minds were tried and troubled. They had fallen, as I judge, under the power of two distinct apprehensions which were very painful to them, one of which concerned the sleeping saints, and the other the living saints.

(1) They feared that their brethren who had died would come short of the kingdom on the Lord's return to the earth. (1 Thess. 4)

(2) They feared that those who were alive would meet the terror of the day that was to accompany that return and usher in the kingdom. (2 Thess. 2)

This, I believe, was their present condition; and to comfort their hearts respecting these two fears and apprehensions appears to me to be the chief purpose of his two epistles to them.

His first epistle was soon after Timothy's return from Thessalonica. Timothy had brought back (1 Thess. 3) most comfortable intelligence about them; but it is likely that he had also told the apostle of their anxiety touching their sleeping or dead brethren. To remove this he at once writes to them that they might no longer be ignorant of this, that the saints, whether sleeping or alive, should be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air at His coming. (1 Thess. 4: 13-18)

His second epistle was drawn from him on hearing of their other anxiety touching the living saints. It matters not how that had arisen, whether from the false suggestions of others, or from an imperfect interpretation of his own first epistle; but to remove it he writes to them, as I judge, his second epistle that they might know that "the day of the Lord," in which they feared the living saints would be involved, could not come till "the man of sin" was revealed, and that man of sin, and all departed from the truth with him, would be the due objects to meet the terror of that day, and that therefore they might put away their fear. (2 Thess. 2: 1-9.)

These I judge to be the occasion and the principal purpose of each of these epistles, the apostle by them meeting the apprehensions of the Thessalonian disciples; teaching them that by the power of Him who raised Jesus from the grave, the sleeping saints were as sure of the kingdom as the living ones, and by the gathering together of all to the Lord in the air, the living saints were as free of the terrors of the day that was coming on the earth as the sleeping ones. Neither life nor death, things present nor things to come, could separate them, for that they were to ascend with equal certainty from the grave or from the earth as the Lord should descend from heaven, and thus all of them meet Him before He reaches the earth in the terror and judgment of His day.

This I receive as the divine instruction of these epistles: it is important to the standing and hope of the saints. I say not that I have surely discerned aright, but I have had this long in my thoughts and heard nothing that leads to a questioning of it. But we know nothing but in

part, and as the Lord may give to others, so may I, and each of us, beloved, receive either for confirmation or correcting. It is more as suggestion and calling other souls into holy exercise that I would now give forth this. But the Lord meeting His saints without any necessary cause of delay, without their being subject necessarily to wait for any of the troubles that usher in the glory, I do judge has been from the beginning the promise and hope of the dispensation, and to present that is my desire here.

The descent to saints is to be "with a shout," the voice of gladness; the descent to the earth, or world, is to be in "flaming fire," the minister of righteous wrath. (Cp. 1 Thess. 4: 16 and 2 Thess. 1: 7.) There would thus be two stages in the Lord's descent, as there had been before in His ascent. For as He went up from the grave to the highest heavens, He stopped on the earth by the way there, to meet His remnant and talk with them of the kingdom (Acts 1: 3); so, as He comes down from heaven to the earth He will stop in the air by the way, there to meet His church, or heavenly household, fashioned like unto His own glorious body, to conduct them to the Father's house.

But this day, or descent to the earth in flaming fire, shall find out its object. This will be the spirit of the Lord's mouth consuming, the brightness of His coming destroying the wicked — the sword out of the mouth of Him whose name is called "The Word of God." The Lord shall then meet the lawless one. The brightness of Him who comes in the glory of God shall meet him that comes according to the lying working of Satan, and set him aside for ever. But those in whom the truth dwells shall shine from above in that day. They shall be to the

glory and admiration of the Lord in that day. (2 Thess. 1: 10) They are to be brought with Jesus in that day. (1 Thess. 4: 14) It is the day of the Lord, the day that brings Him forth to the judgment of darkness. It will be as the surprise of daylight upon night. The place of the Lord will be the day then; the world, the place of night and of darkness; and what communion can they have?

The contact must be in judgment, and not in concord. But the saints, who even. now are the spirit of the day, must be then in the place of the day. They are "children of the day." (1 Thess. 5: 5), and will be in the sphere out of which the day is to rise, and not in the sphere upon which it is to fall. The full power of the day will not be poured down without their presence.

They belong already to the truth, having believed the testimony (2 Thess. 1: 10 and 2: 13), and thus will appear in the train of Him who is called "Faithful and True," when He comes forth for the judgment of those who received not the love of the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (Rev. 19)

Thus the separation of the saints from the scene of judgment, or the place which the day of the Lord is to surprise, will be like that of Enoch's from the flood, and that was different from Noah's. Noah was carried through it, so that not a hair of his head was wet; but Enoch before it came had been translated to a place which the waters could not reach, or rather out of which the waters came. The Lord, accordingly, when speaking to the Jewish election, takes Noah for his text (Matt. 24); for the remnant, like Noah, are to be carried through the judgment. But our apostle in addressing the church takes his language rather from the translation of Enoch.

(1 Thess. 4: 17; 2 Thess. 2: I.) And this was what the anxiety of the Thessalonian saints, touching themselves as the living saints, craved.

The apostle after this proceeds to describe the object of the righteous wrath of the day. He speaks of "the man of sin." "the son of perdition" — titles expressive of the character and the doom of the great enemy of God in the latter day — and I would shortly now consider that object.

This form of evil has been in some sense under the nurture of every age of corrupted Christendom; for from the beginning "the mystery of iniquity," as we here learn, has been at work. But he has not yet been manifested. Wickedness is in the ephah still, with the talent of lead upon it. (Zech. 5: 8) But ere the day of the Lord shall visit the earth the wicked one shall be revealed in the full form of Satan's creature. (2 Thess. 2: 9, 10) For Satan's beauty shall be upon him, his power in him, his seat given to him, and his captives shall serve him. He will thus, in a special and awful sense, be the workmanship of Satan, and he will exalt himself above every god (Dan. 11: 36), be like the Most High (Isa. 14: 14), set his heart as the heart of God (Ezek. 28: 6), and sit in the temple of God, as the apostle describes him, showing himself that he is God. He will say in his heart, "There is no God" (Ps. 14), and being such an one as this, it remains for the spirit of independency of God to bring him forth to perfection. A mere dark and superstitious system could not do this; there must be more than that, for he is to be king of all the children of pride. And there is nothing more signalises this present day of ours than this spirit in man which affects independency of God. There is abroad at present much

that is like the getting ready of a temple wherein man may show himself to be God.

"See what manner of stones and what buildings are here!" is the language of every day, as man is now displaying to his fellow the art and workmanship of this busy age, the report of which now rapidly flies all the world over, promising, as men hope, to form all into one great confederate body.

Indeed, I do believe that Satan has now many and many a hand employed in erecting a suitable temple for the man of sin. I speak, of course, only of the spirit of it, and one knows not how long the building may continue, or how long the infant, who in spirit is now preparing to sit in it, may be in attaining his manhood, or (to which the heart turns from all this in sweet relief) how long the forbearance of God may wait on the repentance of sinners. For both the longsuffering of God is to have its blessed measure, and the tower which the children of men are building must again rise to its due elevation. The longsuffering of God, which is salvation, will lead all known to God to repentance (2 Peter 3), and the iniquity of the wicked be as a breach swelling out in a high wall.

The triumph over the wicked must be displayed in the moment of his fullest pride. The invitation to the banquet was given, not only for the first day, but for the second also, ere Esther made her request, to let Haman's heart be filled with thoughts of his greatness, so that he should fall before the righteous in the height of it all. But when the building shall be completed, and Satan's creature seated in it; when Satan, after his own manner, shall have fulfilled his own promise, "Ye shall be as gods" (Gen. 3: 5), then, upon his consummation, this

full-grown form of evil, this manhood of iniquity, the doom of God will come, and the man of sin shall become the son of perdition. It will be the due and righteous mark for God's vengeance, the creature that shall draw down the lightning from the throne, and call forth "the brightness of his coming." (2 Thess. 2: 8), as the apostle here speaks, raising up the Lord again out of His holy habitation, to see and to confound the tower which the children of men have builded.

But it is not our immediate concern to know how long all this will go on. We have to do immediately with the Lord's descent from heaven to the air. And Paul frequently presents His appearing as the immediate object before the hope of the saints (Rom. 8: 23, 30; Rom. 13: 12; Rom. 16: 20; 1 Cor. 1: 7; 1 Cor. 11: 26; 1 Cor. 15: 23, 58; Phil. 1: 10; Phil. 3: 20; Phil. 4: 5; Col. 3: 4; 1 Tim. 6: 14; Titus 2: 13; 1 Thess. 1: 10); and in like manner the other apostles. (James 5: 7; 1 Peter 1: 5; 2 Peter 3: 12; Jude 21.) And so the apostle speaks of himself and of those to whom he was writing as remaining alive for the coming of the Lord, for we are drawn forth to that hope. We wait every moment, as it were, for redemption, having the earnest of it already. (Rom. 8: 23; Eph. 1: 14; Eph. 4: 30.) We wait for the coming, as the coming waits for our fulness. But nothing but that fulness, which is God's salvation (2 Peter 3: 15), do the apostles appear to me ever to contemplate as necessarily delaying it.

Thus (1) as to sufferings and persecutions: it is true they were to be, but they always address the saints as ever being more or less in them. (2) As to death: they speak of it as that through which the saints have already, in some sense, passed (Col. 3: 3), but never present it as

the hope of the saint. (3) As to corruptions within the church: they certainly anticipate them, but still they guard that generation against them, speaking of corruptions even of the last days as having already appeared. (4) As to revival of the church: they never, I believe, promise it, or offer it as the hope of the saints. And (5) as to revolutions and political changes in the world: they never allude to them or instruct us about them. If in any sense Paul makes us acquainted with politics, it is with millennial politics; for, while he says nothing to us about the affairs of the present kingdoms of this world, he does tell us of the affairs of the kingdom of the Son of man, how all things are to be subdued to it, and then how it is itself to be delivered up. (1 Cor. 15: 24-26.) But till that kingdom come, he gives us no place in, or dependence upon, the changes in the nations. He would have us be subject to the powers of them, and to pray for their peace; but our heavenly hopes he does not suspend on any such earthly circumstances. In the exhortations even to patience, there is still the drawing nigh of the Lord. (James 5: 8; Heb. 10: 37.) In the old dispensation there was necessarily a delay, because they without us could not be made perfect. But now in our dispensation that needful perfection is come. (Heb. 10: 37; Heb. 11: 40.)

I therefore judge that our immediate hope, that of meeting the Lord in the air, does not necessarily wait for anything. His coming to the earth, I surely know, must wait for much. But that is not our first prospect. I do not say when the rapture will be. It may be more distant than our hope would have it, and hope deferred should make the heart sick. But the delay is not for the purpose of sickening the hearts of saints, but for saving the souls

of sinners. "The longsuffering of God is salvation." We should remember that every moment of the delay, be it long or short. And our patience should be unmurmuring, as God's patience is saving and gracious. But I do not judge that the apostles teach us that there is a necessity for some events taking place before that patience ends in the rapture of the saints. There will be strange and awful events, trials and distress of nations such as never have been. And how soon we know not.

The saints, too, may be left here for much of all this (I say not otherwise); but their eye is not to be towards such things as their due object. Revolutions in the earth may go on without further delay, and help to show that the Lord is beginning to think of Israel, to pluck His hand out of His bosom, and to break His long silence towards His ancient people. But I do not judge that the saints necessarily wait on earth for any stage in that great and interesting action. Their rising into the air to meet their descending Lord is independent of it; an event, too, which is not, as I further judge, the subject of signs and tokens. The hour of it rests in the accomplishing of the number of the elect, and that is the Father's secret, of which no movements among the nations are the sign, or the harbinger. It waits for nothing necessarily, I believe, but the Father's pleasure touching His heavenly family, not even for the manifestation, much less for the destruction of that last and full form of evil, which is to bring the Lord, as we have already seen, in judgment down to the earth.

Something is to hinder this manifestation. (2 Thess. 2: 17) It has been an inquiry among the saints what this let or hindrance is, and no doubt it belongs to such a department of the revelation of God as must have us

prepared to find a difference of judgment upon it. But such differences never touch, nor can they touch, "the unity of the Spirit." And it should be our desire, in the love of the Spirit, both to bear with one another in full peace, and to help one another's joy in the further knowledge of these, and all the ways of our blessed Lord.

Were I to speak particularly on this, I should say that it appears to me that we have to judge of the nature of that which hinders by the nature of that which is hindered. It was the presence of "the accursed thing" which in old time let or hindered the manifestation of the power of God, and, till it was removed, that holy power could not display itself. I refer to Achan in the camp of Israel. (Joshua 7) So the presence of the traitor hindered the Lord's expression of His own glory (John 13), but "when he was gone out," that glory was declared.

Now according to this it must be the presence of something good, something that is of God, that is now hindering the manifestation of the full power of Satan, and till that is "taken away" the wicked one cannot be displayed. It is not the way of evil to restrain evil, or of good to restrain good; each rather nourishes its own likeness, while it hinders the full operation of its opposite. It must therefore, I judge, be something good, something that God can own, which is to; katevcon, the letting thing here. But I say no more; for it may be more according to the mind of the Spirit to leave this alone as a secret. The Spirit of God leaves this letting thing, perhaps advisedly, undefined. But even that is enough to show us that the saints are not necessarily delayed here on earth. If that which hinders the revelation of the man

of sin is not now to be known by the saints, they may know, even from that, that they do not necessarily wait here for such revelation; and that is all that I am pressing. It may be, I grant, that the letting thing is thus advisedly, in the wisdom of the Spirit, left as a secret.

But this I again say (having slightly noticed it before), that the heavenly people are a people not left like Noah but taken away like Enoch - taken away, too, not by the day of the Lord or by judgment, as the antediluvian generation, but before that day or judgment like that heavenly man who "walked with God." For Enoch was a heavenly man; a man, I mean, of a heavenly destiny. And he was not on the earth when the judgment of the Lord visited it: he knew of it and prophesied of it (Jude 14), but he was not in it. Ere it came he had gone to heaven. And all this, I believe, savours of us and of our calling. We are a people destined to be taken away from the earth at some undefined moment, though instructed in its subsequent judgment. And when that judgment comes, we shall be in the train, and not before the face, of Him who executes it.

Enoch, as one taken away, is surely our pattern, and not the sinners in the days of Noah. For Enoch was taken away to heaven because "he pleased God"; they were taken away by judgment because "all flesh had corrupted his way" before Him.

Simple, happy, and yet serious lessons!

And surely we can have no doubt that the saints are not to wait on the earth for the coming of the Son of man. They wait for the "Son from heaven" (1 Thess. 1), that is, for the Son of God's descent from heaven to the air, and not for the Son of man's descent to the earth. All this

persuades me more and more of the saints being removed before the day of the Lord visits the earth at all. It is not only that they shall be saved out of it, or taken away during it, but taken away before it surprises all them that are on the earth in the day of the coming of the Son of man, who is then to come as a thief.

Such are the great matters taught, I believe, in these epistles, the fear of the Thessalonian saints, as I have noticed, calling for the special comfort of these truths. And as connected with these truths, they show us also the path of the saints into the kingdom. And in that path there is something that is truly blessed. But it is a wondrous and divine subject, and we should remember, as with unshod feet, on whose paths we are treading. May the Lord ever keep and guide our thoughts!

The first stage in the glorious journey is the ascent of the saints, as we have seen, whether dead or alive, in their bodies of glory, to meet the Lord as He reaches the air in His descent from heaven. (1 Thess. 4) This is the coming which the saints now look for, and of which their Lord has said to them, "Behold, I come quickly." It is at this meeting with Him "in the air" that we shall (1 Thess. 2: 19) be presented to Himself, His own glorious and ransomed saints. This will be the redemption of the body. (Rom. 8) The vile body will be fashioned like unto His own glorious body. (Phil. 3) And this meeting will be in the gladness of a jubilee, for the Lord shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the church shall ascend with a responsive song: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15)

And after thus meeting the Lord, and being thus presented to Himself, the next stage in the blissful way

will conduct us to the Father. (1 Thess. 3: 13) The path of life will then be ours, beloved, as it has already been His, the path that leads to the Father, and thus to fulness of joy and everlasting pleasures. (Ps. 16) And this will be the full owning of the saints as children, as the next scene into which they are to pass, and which we will look at presently, will be the full owning of them as heirs. For the divine order is, "if children, then heirs." (Rom. 8)

But before I pass to the next stage in these paths of glory, I would observe that these stages in the way of Himself and the saints, the Lord in His own teaching had already presented to the faith of His disciples. For He had told them, that though they could not follow Him at that time (and He was then going to the Father), yet that they should follow Him afterwards, when He had prepared mansions in the same house of the Father for them. But before they should follow Him into that house, He told them also that He would come again, and receive them unto Himself — as the apostle speaks, meet them alone in the air. (John 13: 36; John 14: 3.)

So that in these words and promises the Lord in John's gospel had already opened these paths to the eye of faith: His own path to the Father, His coming back again to meet His saints, and then their all going together into the Father's house. They were to see Himself before they went into the prepared mansions of the Father's house, as here our apostle presents them meeting the Lord immediately on their, ascent into the air, and then, when thus joined with Him, but not till then, going into the Father's presence. (1 Thess. 3: 13) And I know not what language can more clearly express this than our Lord's own words, in the place I have referred to.

Speaking of the Father's house, He says, "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." He would first receive them to Himself, or meet them alone, and then conduct them into the Father's house. And these are the ascending paths of the saints. We shall have to trace a descending one presently; but in either direction they are still glorious, and the Lord is with them for ever.

And it is now, after the saints are at home with the Lord in the Father's house, I believe that, according to the language of the Jewish prophet, the Son of man comes to the Ancient of days and gets dominion (Dan. 7); or, according to the vision in the Apocalypse, the Lamb takes the book out of the right hand of Him that sits on the throne, and the church rejoices at the prospect of their speedy reign on the earth. (Rev. 5)

Then, in due season, the third stage in the path of glory will be trodden. Jesus, thus in power, will come down with His mighty angels in flaming fire to put away the wicked from the presence of His glory, and to be glorified in His saints. This we have also in our epistles. (2 Thess. 1: 7-10) This will be His coming in clouds — the clouds of heaven — not alone as when He met the church in the air, not yet with His saints in the character of the children of the Father, when He took them to their mansions, but with them as the "armies of heaven." He now comes with ten thousand of His saints, as the rider on the white horse, the heaven opening to let down the descending hosts of the Lord to execute judgment on the corrupters of the earth, and then to vindicate His title to the kingdoms of the world. (Matt. 24: 30; Matt. 26: 64; Jude 14; Rev. 1: 7; Rev. 19: 14.) And this will be the

redemption of the inheritance. For the glory of the Lord shall survive all the scene of judgment, and the lovers of the truth shall have their place in it when the last lie and darkness of Satan and the world shall be set aside (2 Thess. 2: 14) for ever.

Then shall Jesus be seen as the king in His beauty. Every knee shall bow to Him. He shall sit on the throne of His glory, and His saints receive power with Him, according to their service. (Matt. 25: 31; Luke 19: 17.) This shall be the promised appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, which He shall show "who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords." (1 Tim. 6) And then shall one enemy after another be subdued to Him, till all close in the delivery up of the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. 15: 28.)

Thus, beloved, our happy feet will first tread the heavenward way to meet the Lord Himself, and then by His own hand we shall be guided first to the home of love, and then to the throne of glory — the house of the Father, and the kingdom of the Son of man. And like these were the ways of Joseph and his brethren after their reconciliation; for Joseph first revealed himself to them in the secret of his own presence, commanding every one to go out from him but themselves; then he brought them in and presented them as his brethren to Pharaoh, seated in the seat that was higher than his; and finally he led them forth into the scene of his power and glory, and gave them the richest portion in the inheritance, above the people of the land. (See Gen. 16-47) And let me add that nothing will be lost as we go onward. The joy of the Lord's own presence and the fulness of the Father's house will still be ours after we

have entered upon the rule of the kingdom, and ours, beloved, for ever.

Surely we may say, in a deeper sense than even David, our God has spoken to us of our house for a great while to come, even for ever. And again, in a deeper sense than even he, may we not also say: What are we, that we should be brought hitherto? (2 Sam. 7: 18, 19) For His word's sake, and according to His own heart, He has done all these things. (2 Sam. 7: 21) His own love must account for it all; nothing else can. The lowest are exalted the highest. Angels are passed by, and the seed of Abraham taken up. (Heb. 2) The separated Jew is passed by, and sinners of the Gentiles taken up; the tattered prodigal gets the best robe, and he that ate swine's husks, the fatted calf; for grace, the riches and glory of the grace must be displayed, and these are its ways, its blissful ways. It is only for us, beloved, to tread softly here where all is defiled, till our feet travel these paths of joy and glory without fear of thorn or stain for ever.

These great things of God's counsels are thus noticed in these epistles to the Thessalonian saints. They had come forth from an idolatrous world to own the living God in the midst of it, and to wait for His Son from heaven, and the Holy Ghost here feeds their enlarging desires.

But the apostle had to notice also some evil that was among them. He had to admonish as well as comfort, and to pray not only that their hearts might be comforted, but established in every good word and work. (2 Thess. 2: 17) For some of them had ceased "to labour with their hands." It may be that this had been the fruit of some corrupt view of their great

distinguishing doctrine, the coming of the Lord. For it is Satan's way, if he cannot rob us of truth, to corrupt it while it is still in our hand. The Thessalonians were zealous, they had come to meet the Lord with purpose of heart, but this had become connected with a desertion of their quiet, industrious, private walk. But he does not condemn this zeal, or seek to correct the evil by withdrawing the Lord's coming from their view. We have seen that it is rather his great subject; but he desires for them that they might be in patient, and not disorderly, waiting for it, and urges this duty upon them by reminding them of his example and his precepts while he was among them. For he had been a labourer for his own support at Thessalonica, this having been so ordered in the provisional wisdom of God, who now by His Spirit uses that fact for the admonition and guidance of the saints there.

Such, I judge, was the standing and character of the church at Thessalonica, with their peculiar doctrines and anxieties, and the apostle's teaching upon them. Eminent they were for simplicity of faith, brotherly love, and desire for the return of the Lord; but withal, as we have seen, needing further light on the ways of the Lord, and also rebuke and admonition for some of their own ways. But above all that, I would again, in closing, press on the thoughts of my brethren, as it was that which was the chief point of attraction to my own mind, this — that we have here the doctrine of the rapture of the saints, whether "sleeping" or "alive," to meet their Lord "in the air" before He touches the earth.

This rapture into the air may be called resurrection, but it is ascension as well as resurrection, and the church's history is included between the resurrection or

ascension of the Lord, and this her own resurrection or ascension. The one gave her life and sent her on her wilderness journey, a stranger on the earth, the other will close her wilderness journey, and take her to her home in heaven.

But these resurrections of the Lord and the church are peculiar. They are resurrections from the dead. It was Sadducean pravity to deny resurrection of the dead, and that doctrine is numbered among Jewish principles in Hebrews 6. But a resurrection from the dead was something quite beyond a Jewish measure of faith. The disciples questioned what it could mean when the Lord spake of it (Mark 9: 10), and an allusion to it quite crossed and passed by all Martha's thoughts, though she presented a fair standard of the nation's faith. (John 11: 24-26) When she spoke of a resurrection at the last day, the Lord told her of a power of resurrection in Himself which would not wait for the last day, but would act in a manner that should gloriously forestall all other resurrections, by a resurrection worthy of Him who is "the resurrection and the life." And this alone is a resurrection in the power of the presence of the Spirit of God. (Rom. 8: 11) This was the resurrection of the Lord Himself, a resurrection from the dead, and this will be the resurrection of those that are His not "at the last day," as Martha or the Jew might once have spoken, but "at his coming," as the Spirit in the church now speaks. (1 Cor. 15: 23)

The patriarchs of the Jewish family all put special value on their dead bodies; they were religiously laid up in Machpelah, and this care and zeal of theirs was the confession of their sure and certain hope of resurrection. But they connected resurrection with the

land of Canaan. And therefore Jacob and Joseph, who died in Egypt, provided that their bones should be carried over and laid in Canaan, thus telling us that their hope of resurrection was the same as their hope of final possession of the promised land. All this, it is true, was perfect in those who had but earthly resurrection hopes.

But the church has a higher hope. Heaven and ascension into the air are now before her; Canaan and resurrection from the grave of Machpelah were before the patriarchs. She has already in spirit gone on high with Christ, and is looking for the day when she shall ascend after Him to meet Him in a glorified body. And this alone is perfect in her as her former hope was perfect in them; for each is in season with the enlarging mind and grace of God towards us. The patriarchs were to die, and they looked for resurrection and the land under God. (Gen. 1: 24, 25) The church is risen, and looks for ascension and heaven with the glorified Lord. (Phil. 3: 20, 21)

And this resurrection or ascension of the saints is, as I have already observed, that which is to close the dispensation of the church, as the resurrection or ascension of the Lord opened it; like the two passages which opened and closed the wilderness to Israel.

And we stand, beloved, on the banks of Jordan. It is the wilderness still, and the Manna and the Rock are wanted still. But it is also the skirts of the glory; our salvation is nearer than when we believed. "The night is far spent, the day is at hand." The Holy Ghost, sent down already from heaven, is in us (1 Cor. 6: 19), the harbinger of approaching daylight. He makes us already "children of light, and the children of the day." (1 Thess. 5: 5) "It is

high time to awake." Let us only rise and look out, and we may see the streaks of the morning. The spirit of the day is in us, the pledge that it will itself soon break in glory on our heads.

But there was, it is true, a lingering on the banks of the Jordan. The host of God waited till a certain mission into the defiled land of the Amorites was over. Certain spies went into the land of judgment. (Joshua 2) The sin of the Amorites was then full, and Joshua's sword might have entered at once. But there was a moment of respite, and it proved salvation. It was a standing at the very door of the doomed house, and knocking, if haply any one would even then open the door. And so it was, a, poor defiled sinner of the place arose at the bidding, and moved with fear prepared an ark for the saving of her house. She was in the place of death and judgment; but mercy was made to rejoice. there, and her house with the scarlet thread hanging from the window became another blood-sprinkled lintel, and the angel of destruction again passed on.

And so do we now wait. The glory has not yet broken, but waits for the appointed mission of grace to go and do its work. The longsuffering of God is salvation, He being not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3) We wait till the body be completed in all its holy and appointed measure, till all have come in the knowledge of the Son of God to a perfect man. Then the power of death shall give way before the feet of the priests again. (Joshua 3) "For if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." (Rom. 8: 11) If we thus, as sons

and priests of God, carry the ark of the Lord, the waters shall not withstand our passage. We have the hidden life, and that is above the power of death.

These, and richer and better than these, or than heart can conceive, are the ways of Him who hath loved us. They are telling, and will still tell us, that God is love, and that in blessing He is doing His work, and in manifesting grace to the unworthy, showing Himself. We now learn what grace is in all its varied resources, and our feet shall by-and-by tread one path after another, that we may learn what glory is. Since Jesus rose we have found every path in the desert a path of grace; but glory is still before us. Its paths we do not yet tread, as Joshua said to the people on the banks of Jordan, anticipating their speedy passage through it: "Ye have not passed this way heretofore." (Joshua 3: 45)

But, surely, we need not fear the dazzling paths. The hand that divided the Red Sea will, with equal ease, divide the Jordan. He that raised up Christ from the dead, will also quicken our mortal bodies to the same glory. It is as yet an untrod way, it is true; but the hand of the Lord is the same. It is not the glory of Christ that is the great thing. It is the cross of Christ that is the great thing, and that is ours already. If God has given us His suffering Son, it will be found a small and easy thing (to speak after the manner of men) to give us His glorious Son. If we know that Jesus, bowing His head on the tree, is ours, we may well know that Jesus, exalted in highest glory, will be ours; the pledge is sure, and then as there was the pillar of twelve stones, a stone for every tribe, so will there be the abiding praise of all His saints to speak the riches of grace and glory for evermore.

"Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

The Claims of God's Sovereignty and Holiness

The Claims of God's Sovereignty and Holiness.

Numbers 1 - 4.

Christian Friend 1895 p. 260.

These chapters have been just awakening in my mind some meditations of interest, at least, in connection with other scriptures. I perceive in them an expression of God's jealousy of His sovereignty, and of His holiness, of His rights as Lord of the people, and as the God of their Sanctuary.

They open with His commandment to Moses to take the number of the tribes, and this is done with great exactness and care. The number of each tribe, except Levi, is again and again set down in Numbers 1 and Numbers 2, and that of Levi in like manner in Numbers 3 and Numbers 4. This was an expression of His rights as Lord of Israel. He had title to take their number, for they were all His own. Had He not had a right to them, had He not prospects in them, He would not have counted their sum, as is said of His divine title in another part of His dominions, "He telleth the number of the stars; He calleth them all by their names." This is the expression of His sovereignty amid the heavenly hosts. (Psalm 147: 4.) So the Lord says of His saints, "They shall be Mine... in that day when I make up My jewels." (Mal. 3) He may make up; i.e., number, and hide, and secure them, because they are His own.

He was careful thus to assert His title, and survey His possessions. He would have the number of Israel exactly brought to Him, for they were all His own. He called them by their names, and knew their numbers.

It was an offence against this peculiar right of the Lord that David was guilty of. He affected something of the divine glory, when he sought to number Israel, as though they had been his own people. It savoured of the old attempt of Adam, and was done under the influence of the same spirit. It was a trespass on the divine rights, and an affront to the majesty of Him who was Lord and King of Israel, who might number Israel because they were His peculiar treasure. But this care and jealousy respecting His rights as Sovereign of Israel, is accompanied in those chapters with the same jealousy respecting His holiness in the sanctuary of Israel.

The Levites are separated from the midst of the people, to be the peculiar servants of the sanctuary, and from their midst the house of Aaron is, in like manner, separated, to be the only priesthood of that sanctuary. Israel was not to affect the services of the Levites, nor were the Levites to affect the priesthood of the family of Aaron. God was to be sanctified in them that drew near to Him, and to be approached in His holiness in the due and ordained order.

But even more than this. Aaron himself had not to trespass, or to advance too far, even in his own appointed place. He was not to eye the sanctuary anxiously. When the camp moved onward, the sacred vessels of the house of God were to be duly and reverently hid from the eyes of even the bearers of them, and the Ark itself from the eye of even Aaron. All

this order of the house, in its servants and priesthood, and the deep reverence to be paid to those mysteries which it contained, tell out the sensitiveness of the holiness of Him, whose house, and servants, and priesthood, it all was. The nearest possible place He would take to His people, dwelling in their very midst, and going before them, as long as they continued their journey in the chariot of the cloudy, fiery pillar, by night and by day, whether their way lay right onward, or whether it were back again by the sea and the mountain, being the willing and serviceable Companion of their travels. But still, He was God. He was the Sanctifier, and they but the sanctified. And this could never be foregone, nor allowed to want its abiding and most jealous witness, for a single hour. Whether moving, or at rest, this must be had in remembrance. He will declare both His sovereign power, and His unapproachable holiness; He will testify His rights both as Lord, and as God of Israel, though His blessing and His service, and His land of desire, shall be theirs.

Such are the truths brightly reflected in these chapters — in the commandment to take the number of the people, and in the watchfulness to guard all the avenues of the sanctuary. As the vengeance taken upon David, for the intrusion upon the rights of the King of Israel, is a witness to us of the divine jealousy over those rights, not allowing, for a moment, another to assume them, so the vengeance upon the men of Beth-shemesh, for looking into the ark, is a kindred witness of the same divine jealousy, touching the place and holiness of the God of Israel.

How all this commends itself to our souls! We bow with delight to these claims of the Lord. We rejoice to know

that He dwells in light, that no man can approach unto, and that Him no man has seen, though He, who is in His bosom, has declared Him. All that is just as our souls would have it, and as this scripture displays before us! J. G. B.

The Confederacies of Men and the Judgments of God

The Confederacies of Men and the Judgments of God.

J. G. Bellett.

Scripture contemplates hostile associations of men and of nations. Isaiah 7, 8, was the era of one, and the prophecy of another. Joel 3 tells of "multitudes, multitudes," gathered together in the day of Jerusalem's final sorrow. Psalm 83 anticipates a confederacy against the Israel of God; and "Gog" is the witness of a host of nations leagued in infidel defiance of the Lord.

But Scripture also contemplates civil or worldly associations — and it is our business to watch their spirit, their purpose, and their working, awful indeed as they are in forming the character and history of the world, and in urging it on its way to meet the judgment of God.

It was confederacy of this sort which was among the descendants of Noah. The one speech and the one language of the children of men in that day led them to judge that they were strong, and that by a little skill and effort they might wax still stronger, even to independency of God. The material under their hand in the plain of Shinar, promised very fair. They were all of one language, and were journeying in one direction. They were invited by favourable circumstances (providences, as they might say), and they would make a common effort, and try the industrial resources of nature. Things looked well for progress. With a little skill and diligence of their own, the fruitful plain would

yield them brick and mortar, and they might accomplish much. And why should they not use the resources of nature, and exercise their own capabilities? Why should they not try what "the raw material," by man's "art and manufacture," would lead to, and do for them?

This was the language of the children of men in Genesis 11. Whether God would have it thus or not, they never thought of waiting to consider. He was not before them. They did their own pleasure. They built a city and a tower, that both name and security, glory and strength might be theirs.

Thus was it in these early days. in other and very distant days, in the days of the Saviour, it was the same — with this aggravating circumstance — that confederacies then formed themselves of strange, discordant elements, because of the working of the natural enmity of the heart to God — let that heart be disciplined or trained as it may be, whether in a Jewish or Gentile school. In that enmity, the Jew and the Gentile are found together; and so are the Pharisee and the Sadducee — the men of different politics and of different sects. The world combined these diverse materials against an unworldly Jesus. This was the secret of their confederacy. The Pharisee and the Sadducee were men of different thoughts altogether, considered simply in themselves; but the world can be their common object in resistance of Christ. This is seen in Matthew 16:1-5: "Show us a sign from heaven," they come together and say to Him. That is, they challenge the Lord to accredit Himself in some way that. the world could appreciate, or that, otherwise, they would reject Him by common consent.

This is to be laid to heart. The world has power to combine very different elements when an unworldly Christ stands out as a common enemy. Herod and Pilate were made friends together. There may be the secular and the ecclesiastical, even the infidel and the superstitious; but let an unworldly Christ appear, and He will be challenged as the object of common enmity. A heavenly stranger sojourning on earth for a time, is resented as a trespasser by both; and however else they may differ, they can confederate and act together against Him. God, such as man's heart or man's religion gives him, man will accept; but the true God, whose image Jesus is, will never do for him.

All this is for the present consideration of our souls. For the world is becoming a common object in these days of ours. All are aiding its advancement, and the development of its capabilities, and the multiplying of its desirable and delectable things — and such a generation as this may easily become the material of a confederacy, or common association against the unworldly Jesus and the church of God.

Strange coalition of this kind is presented to us by the Lord Himself in Luke 11. It is a solemn word of warning; and I may add, a seasonable word, just in this present day.

The unclean spirit had been the original tenant of this leprous house. In due time he left it, seeking other scenes of action. But after a while he returns, and finds his old house in a new condition. His absence, the absence of an unclean spirit, his left it open to other influences; and, accordingly, on his return he finds it "swept and garnished." This, however, does not

disappoint him. He rather deems it to be more suited to his purpose than ever. And it is in this fact — this solemn, awful fact — that I judge there is something for our careful and special observation at this time, and for this generation.

This leprous house changed its style or condition, but not its owner, nor its fitness to answer the purposes of its owner. If the unclean spirit had been disappointed in his wanderings, he is not so on his return to his old dwelling. So far otherwise is it, that he goes to gather seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and they all make entrance into the house, more thoroughly than ever to accomplish its ruin. And they succeed. The last state of it is worse than the first.

This is a picture, indeed, of strange, unexpected confederacies. An unclean spirit enters a swept house, associating with himself seven other spirits. This is a strange coalition. Things are found together in this house which naturally suited neither the house itself, nor each other. But still, there they are in company, and dwell and work together. An unclean spirit, with seven other spirits, in a swept and garnished house!

Is this Christendom in her last state? Is it to come to this? Is it not, I rather ask, on its way to this already? Are there not symptoms, somewhat too plain to be mistaken, of such strange, unnatural alliances, all around us? Are not elements in themselves repulsive, beginning to try their capability of combining? Is not "alliance" the favourite watchword of the day? Is not the unclean spirit of darker, earlier days making fresh entrance into a reformed, and swept, and ornamented house? Is not, this the Christendom of the present hour?

Are not the premonitions of the Divine Prophet realizing before us and around us at this moment?

There are many spirits abroad at present, "gone out into the world." The old "unclean spirit" is abroad in growing vigour, the spirit of idolatry or superstition. The infidel spirit is abroad. The worldly spirit is abroad — that energy which, with its ten thousand arts, is embellishing and furnishing its native place, using refinement of all sorts, morals, religion, intellectual culture and intellectual delights, science and music, books and pictures, everything that can set off and recommend the world, and linking "the million" with nobles in the enjoyment of it.

Thus is it in the history of this present hour. The affecting truth that Jesus is the rejected Jesus in this world, is practically forgotten in all this. That mystery is scorned by some, denied by others, slighted by others, and but coldly, carelessly, and feebly acted on by us who thoroughly and entirely own it among the deep and precious things of God. For we say, How could God meet anything in this world but rejection? The world had already departed from Him, ere He came into it. It had set up for itself long before, even from the days of Cain and the city of Enoch. But how deep-seated its enmity must be, when it refused to know such an one as Jesus! This enmity of the world was as the enmity of the Jews, who could forget all their hatred of the Gentile, settled and rooted as that hatred was in the very heart of the nation, and say, in the desire to rid themselves of Him, "We have no king but Caesar" They refused the waters of Shiloh that flowed softly, and rejoiced in Rezin and Remaliah's son.

But confederacy has not closed its history, or spent all its energy yet. Far otherwise. It must be witnessed in full action at the end, as it was at the beginning. We have seen it in the early days of Babel, and in the matured meridian days of the Lord Jesus, and are still to see it in the declining days of the Apocalypse. And the "old Serpent" will be the life and instigator of confederacies at the end, as he was at the beginning, and hitherto. The book of the Apocalypse witnesses this, specially in the mysteries or symbols of the "Woman" and the "Beast."

The Woman sits on many waters. Multitudes, tongues, nations, and peoples, all receive the cup of fornication at her hand. Kings of the earth, merchants of the earth, every shipmaster and sailor, and such as trade in the sea, are subject to her. The Beast has the whole world wondering after him. In himself he combines the lion and the bear and the leopard, and he has ten horns and seven heads. The False Prophet ministers to him, and the kings, by one consent, give their power to him. All that dwell on the earth worship him. Small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, receive his mark In their forehead.

These are awful tokens of confederated energies of evil. And in them we see the beginning reproduced at the end. For confederacy is the mode or form in which man makes display of his natural pride and apostacy.

And in that form of confederation God will judge the revolted children of men speedily, as He has already done In early days. At the beginning, it was the alliance between the Woman and the Serpent that He broke, saying to the Serpent, "I will put enmity between thee

and the woman." It was those who were gathered in the rebel plain of Shinar that He scattered over the face of the whole earth. And so it is the body of the Apocalyptic Woman in her pride, He will give to the burning flame; and His supper, "the supper of the Great God," shall celebrate the doom and ruin of the Beast and his associates.

Our present victory, beloved, is by separation. Separation is holiness — if it be separation to the place and character which the calling of God suggests.

The purpose of the serpent in the garden was to withdraw Eve from the condition in which the Lord God had put her. She was to sacrifice that, and get advancement from him. She consented; and at once as a "chaste virgin" she was ruined. Her purity was lost. Whatever she gained, she lost that. She lost what God had made her.

The church, like the Eve of Genesis 2, should be what the hand of God has made her, taking, as it has done in this age, the cross of Christ as its instrument or material. And that cross has brought her nigh to God, but estranged her from the world, and when the principles of the world propose to cultivate and advance the church, and such proposal is listened to, we see again, what, of old we saw in Genesis 3, the mystic Eve has lost her virgin purity.

The proposal to advance the church by such means is attractive. But so was the proposal of the Serpent at the beginning, "Ye shall be as gods." This was an angel of light, a minister of righteousness, in the judgment of flesh and blood. But It worked corruption and utter

moral ruin, for it beguiled her from the state in which God had left her.

And this generation is doing its best to commend the world to the church, the tree to the woman again. it speaks as though the world were now a very different thing from what the cross of Christ has declared it and proved it to be. It speaks as if Christ were no longer a rejected Christ. But if the saint listen, as of old Eve did, he is so far corrupted — for he is surrendering the place, the condition, and the character, which the cross of Christ has given him and made him.

The serpent would fain give man a garden again. And a happier garden it shall be than God once gave them. He shall have every tree in it. The world shall be a wise world, a religious world, a cultivated world, a delightful place, and still advancing. The man of benevolence, the man of morals, the religious and the intellectual man, the man of refined pleasures, all will find their home in it. And this shall be the world's oneness. And all who desire their fellow-creatures' happiness, and the common rest after so many centuries of confusion and trouble, will surely not refuse to join this honourable and happy confederacy.

Nothing will withstand all this but "the love of the truth" - nothing but faith in that word which gathers a sinner to Jesus and His blood, and the hopes of a poor world-wearied believer to Jesus and His kingdom. Come what may to you, beloved, though it be moral and refined, or religious in its bearing, it is unrighteousness, if it be not of "the truth." (2 Thess. 2).

The world is "to wonder after the beast" before "every tongue confesses Jesus to be Lord." Each will be in its

day - but the Beast will have his day, his day of the rule of evil, ere Jesus has His day of the dominion of light and righteousness. The saint has to walk apart from those schemes or confederations which are undertaking to make the world what God can accept, till the rejection of Christ be answered from heaven. Little do many who favour the system of religious ordinances, and assert the rights and dignities of office, think that they are combining with those who are cultivating the masses and the people by liberal institutions. But it is so — for all are cultivating man instead of renewing him. All are doing something against the truth, and not for the truth. (See 2 Cor. 13:8.) The attempt is very specious. The system of the Beast and his kings will, in its day, be very fair. They have all "one mind" — and from the attractiveness of such unity nothing will preserve the soul but the faith that knows the principles of God, and that anything or everything that proposes to set the world in order till judgments have cleared it, is of the god of this world and not of heaven. The thing that is to have this "one mind," is the very thing that withstands the Lamb, and is judged of God In the day of the Lord. (Rev. 17: 14; Rev. 19: 19, 20.)

Easy to write this, beloved — but I know that it is the power of separation that is to be cherished by us. It was so In the soul of the dear apostle, as we have seen him in 2 Timothy. In that affecting epistle, he breathes a spirit. which was strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ, and consciously treading the borders of the glory. And with this he had ardent love for the prosperity of the church, and of his beloved Timothy. Here was the hidden virtue of his beautiful and distinct separation from the world, or the corrupted "great house," which

was then rising up before him and around him. His separation was in the power of this faith and hope and charity. And to like grace the Spirit calls us in this day, when the "great house" of that epistle has become the Christendom of this day.

The scenery of the prophets (and that scenery is as real as what at this moment is under our eyes), and I may say, very specially that of the Apocalypse, is acquiring increased distinctness in the thoughts of many of the saints of God in these days. In other days it was looked on as dim and clouded. And is not this, I ask, some symptom that we are approaching those regions — that we are conscious of increasing distinctness because of nearness?

And besides: there is something of an instinctive turning to thoughts of judgment and of glory among us. There is something of a sense of this solemn fact, that God is about to interfere in some way or another with the course of things around us. The energies of evil are seen to be very active, and the world to be very haughty and self-sufficient. The present day is the manhood of the world. The world is playing the man now. It speaks of other days as one would remember his childhood. It is boasting itself beyond all former pretensions, and promising to do greater things still. And so will it proceed, till in the moment of its loftiest pride the judgment of God overtakes it.

The people of God should wait with the girdle and the lamp, which are the beautiful standing symbols of their calling till the Lord appears — that is, with minds girt up unto holy separation from present things, and with

hearts brightened up with the desire and expectation of coming things.

These thoughts of judgments may profitably move our hearts at this hour. But let me add, for it is a comfort to remember it, that the judgments of God are always only by the way, and never close the scene, or terminate His action and purpose. He does indeed pass through them, but He only passes through them, or rather with them, onward to glory and the kingdom, which is His calling. The Deluge, one of His judgments, led to the new world under the government of Noah. The judgment of the cities of the plain was survived, and Abraham is seen on high, the next morning, above it all, and Lot is delivered. The judgment of Egypt was the redemption of Israel destined for the inheritance.

And for still further strength and comfort I may add, that if the mind could be delivered from the blinding and prejudicing power of self-love, it would speak the judgment of righteousness, and justify God in His judgments. Look at Adam. His hiding behind the trees of the garden gave judgment against himself with God. Look at the camp in Numbers 14. Their utter silence the moment the Glory appeared did the same. It was like Adam's hiding of himself. Look at David. Nathan catches his conscience when he appealed simply to his moral sense, his estimate of right and wrong, his measure of iniquity and its retribution. He got from David such a sentence as justified the judgment of God against himself. He little suspected that he was pronouncing sentence in his own cause. But it was so — and self-love being dismissed or set aside for a moment, and the moral sense being left alone in company with the

offence, David out of his own mouth is judged, and God's judgment is justified.

So the husbandmen of Matthew 21. Like Nathan with David, the Lord catches the conscience of the Jews. and makes them pronounce their own condemnation. And all this, because self-love was again, as it were, sent out of court, and the mere moral sense, the sense of good and evil, right and wrong, is alone on the judgment-seat. The decree of God against them is there anticipated by themselves.

And so with the man without the wedding-garment In Matthew 22. He got into the marriage-feast with a careless heart, just thinking of himself in the power of some form or other of mere nature. But again, in his case, when the sense that judged what was fitting and necessary was called into exercise, and there was nothing to interfere with its action in the conscience — when the simple, unmixed thought is presented to him, whether any person in such a dress should be in such a place, he is "speechless," he is convicted, he has nothing to say, and his own judgment tells him that such an one as he has no business In such a place as that.

These may be used by the soul as illustrations of the great truth, that the Judge of all the earth will do right, that He will be justified when He speaks and clear when He judges. Out of our own mouth will He condemn. When Eve pleaded the serpent's guile, and Adam pleaded Eve's gift to him, the Lord God did not condescend to answer the pleas. And who of us at this hour does not justify Him in pronouncing that sentence without replying to those excuses?

All this is for us and our comfort, when we think of Him with whom we have to do; and we may sing of Him and of His praise when the subject is either "mercy" or "judgment." (Ps. 101) But judgment, again I say, never closes the scene. It is never "the end of the Lord." The things of Job were all set right, and much more than that, ere "the end of the Lord" in his history was reached. His things in the world, in his own person, both mind and body, in the family, and in the church, were all in confusion. His cattle were stolen, his houses were in ruins, his children were dead, and his brethren were set against him, he misunderstanding and reviling them, and they injuriously reproaching and condemning him. All was thus out of order; within and around him, as to the world, the family and the church.

How could there be more confusion! But God's "end" lay beyond all this — for we never reach God's end in either discipline or judgment, the discipline of an individual saint,, or the judgment of a people or a world.

So does the Holy Jesus alone close and crown the book which details the coming judgments of God. (Rev. 22.)

How little does the soul rise up in the power of these things, which are so easily discerned, and so freely spoken of and written about.

The Early Days of the "Brethren" Movement - Extract from a Letter

(extract from a Letter to James McAllister)

J. G. Bellett

June 7, 1858.

When I call to mind some of the early facts connected with the history of "Brethren" (as for distinction I will call them) I am impressed with a sense of there having been at that time a very independent and original teaching of the Spirit of God simultaneously in various places.

I do not doubt that however they may have aided one another afterwards, or grown together, in the understanding and enjoyment of much common truth, earlier impressions had been abroad upon the hearts of many without conference or suggestion, which, however, led them readily, and necessarily to run together when once they did confer. I believe the earliest times of our history both in England and Ireland might exhibit this.

I may fail in accuracy of recollection, and of course I may mistake when I was not personally engaged, but I will follow on just as my memory suggests to me, bethinking myself, of course, as I proceed, and praying the Lord to guide in all simplicity and truth.

It was in the year 1827 that the late Archbishop of Dublin, in a charge delivered to the clergy of his diocese, recommended that a petition should go up to the legislature seeking for increased protection for them in the discharge of their ministerial duties as the

teachers of religion in these lands. John N. Darby was then a curate in County Wicklow, and often did I visit him in his mountain parish. This charge of his diocesan greatly moved him; he could not understand the common Christianity of such a principle, as it assumed that ministers of Christ in doing their business as witnesses against the world for a rejected Jesus, should on meeting the resistance of the enemy, turn round and seek security from the world. This greatly offended him. He printed his objections to such a principle in a pretty large pamphlet, and without publishing it or putting it on sale, sent copies of it to all the clergy in the Diocese. All this had a very decided influence on his mind for I remember him at one time as a very exact Churchman, as I may speak, but it was evident that his mind had now received a shock, and his attachment to the Church was never again what it had been. However, he continued in his mountain curacy, at times as a clergyman visiting the distant parts of the County, either to preach sermons or to speak at some of the meetings of the religious societies.

In the beginning of 1828 I had occasion to go to London and there I met in private and heard in public those who were warm and alive on prophetic truth, having had their minds freshly illuminated by it. In my letters to J. N. D. at that time, I told him that I had been hearing things that he and I had never yet talked about, and I further told him on my return to Dublin what they were. Full of this subject, as I then was, I found him quite prepared for it also, and his mind and soul traveled rapidly in the direction which had thus been given to it.

I continued, however, in Dublin and he more generally in County Wicklow, but he had introduced me to F.

Hutchinson, whose memory is very dear to me and much honoured by me. He and I found that we had much in common. Dissatisfied as I then was, we went occasionally together to the dissenting chapels, but we had not much sympathy with the tone prevalent. The sermons we heard had generally, perhaps, less of the simplicity of Christ in them than what might be heard in the pulpits of the Established Church, and the things of God were dealt with more for the intellect and by the intellect than, as we judged, suited the proper cravings of the renewed and spiritual mind. I believe I may say this for him as well as for myself. So we held on (loosely though it was) to the Established Church still.

Anthony N. Groves, who was a dentist in Devonshire, some short time before this had offered himself to the Church Missionary Society, and in order to fit himself for its service had entered our College (Dublin). I knew him soon after his first reaching Dublin, and he occasionally stayed with us on coming here to pass his quarterly examinations. In a way perfectly independent of all that had been passing in the minds of others, he had been taught to see that College education for the work of the ministry was not the thing and that he was wasting time in Dublin attending the examinations. By the entrance of these thoughts the whole question was raised in his mind, so that he not only abandoned his connection with the College, but viewed, as he had never done before, the whole matter of the Established Church and the claims of the Dissenting bodies. In the close of 1828 he visited Dublin though he had seceded from the College, and preached at Poolbeg Street, at the request of dear Mr. Egan, then in connection with the little company formed there, of whom Richard Pope (well known in

Ireland at that time) was one. Walking with him, one day, as we were passing down Lower Pembroke Street, he said to me, "This, I doubt not, is the mind of God concerning us, that we should come together in all simplicity as disciples, not waiting on any pulpit or minister, but trusting that the Lord would edify us together by ministering as He pleased and saw good, from the midst of ourselves". At the moment he spoke these words I was assured that my soul had got the right idea and that moment – I remember it as if it were but yesterday, and could point you out the place where we stood – it was the birthplace of my mind, dear James, if I may so speak as a brother.

Edward Cronin had been by profession an Independent, and a member of York Street, but his mind was at the same time under a like influence, I may say, with us all. In a private room he had the Lord's Supper, with I believe, three others, while I was still going to Stamford Chapel and J. N. Darby was still in County Wicklow as a clergyman.

In the summer of 1829 our family was at Kingstown and dear F. Hutchinson was at Bray. We saw each other occasionally and spoke of the things of the Lord, but where he went on Sunday at that time I cannot tell. I attended the Scotch Church at Kingstown where all who were understood to be new-born were welcome. But on returning to Dublin in the November of that year, F. H. was quite prepared for communion in the name of the Lord with all, whoever they might be, who loved Him in sincerity, and proposed to lend a room in his house in Fitzwilliam Square for that purpose. He did so, designing, however, so to have it that if any were disposed to attend the services in the Parish Church or

Dissenting Chapels, they might not be hindered. We also prescribed a certain line of things as to the services of prayer, singing and teaching that should be found among us each day. E. Cronin was fully prepared for this. I joined but not at all with the same liberty and decision of mind. Several others also were ready and just at this time we first knew William Stokes.

Thus we continued from November, 1829. Some time before this I had become acquainted with J. Parnell (now Lord Congleton) and in that month, November, 1829, and through the Spring of 1830, he was occasionally in Dublin and frequently among us. He became very familiar with E. Cronin, and in the month of May, purposing to let the Lord's Table in the midst of us become somewhat more of a witness, he took a large room in Aungier Street belonging to a Cabinet Maker. There the meeting was transferred during that month. This tried me still more, the publicity of it was too much for me. I instinctively shrank, F. Hutchinson, as I remember, would also rather have continued in the private house, so that I believe I did not join them for one or two Sundays, and I am not sure that he did, but J. Parnell, W. Stokes, E. Cronin, and a few sisters were there at once, and several others were added shortly.

In the Summer of 1830 the Mission party to Bagdad was formed. Mr. A. N. Groves had been there for some months previously and E. Cronin and his sister and J. Parnell with two or three more were desirous of joining him. It was in the month of September they left on, sailing to France, and purposing to reach Bagdad across the desert from Syria. John Hamilton, whom some of us had known for two or three years, was also of the party. He had, with many others, become dissatisfied with the

existing order of things and was very much of one mind with us all, and giving up other occupation was ready to join the mission party to the East. I rather think he was another witness of the independent energy of the Spirit of God that was abroad, as I have said, at that time. They sailed and we continued in our room in Aungier Street. It was poor material we bad, dear James, and we had one or two solemn and awful cases of backsliding. There was but little spiritual energy, and much that was poor treasure for a living temple, but we held together in the Lord's mercy and care, I believe advancing in the knowledge of His mind. The settled order of worship which we had in Fitzwilliam Square, gave way gradually. Teaching and exhortation just became common duties and services, while prayer was restricted to two or three who were regarded as Elders, but gradually all this yielded. In a little time no appointed or recognised eldership was understood to be in the midst of us and all service was of a free character, the presence of God through the Spirit being more simply believed in and trusted in.

In the year 1831 many more were added and in that year J. N. D. being in Dublin, it was a question with him whether he should come and help us at Aungier Street as God might give him grace, or preach as he had been invited to do at the Asylum in Lemon Street. He was all but detached from the Church of England. He visited different places either in that year or the next, among them Oxford, Plymouth, Cork, and Limerick, ministering wherever he might the truth that God had given him from His word, and I doubt not, from what I remember, that he found in all these places evidences of the same independent work of the Spirit of God in the hearts and

consciences of the saints. In Limerick and Cork he occasionally preached in the pulpits of the Established Church. He also met Christians in private houses and his ministry was greatly blessed. Light and refreshment visited many a soul and that too of an order to which they had before been strangers, and by invitation going from Oxford to Plymouth he found the same thing there; so that in those distant places which had, perhaps, never been combined before in any one kindred influence, this grace was magnified, and little groups of saints, who sought relief from their heaviness, were formed in these places.

Just about the same time dear Lady Powerscourt had begun some prophetic meetings in her house. Her mind had also take us the same direction as that which was among us all. Some of us were invited by her, some also from England, and these occasions greatly helped us. It was there I first knew George V. Wigram, Percy Hall and others. The meetings were truly precious to the soul, and night after night did I retire to my room at Powerscourt House in the deep sense of how little a one I was in the presence of so much grace and devotedness as I judged I had been seeing around me through the day.

Thus it was in those days, dear James, and in Aungier Street we were pursuing our way, many being added to us, some who are to this hour in Brunswick Street among the many to be loved and cherished there. We were occasionally hearing good news from the party that went to Bagdad, and were sometimes visited by brethren from Cork, Limerick, and other places, where the same influence had by this time become known.

But I should mention dear and honoured J. Mahon as another instance of the independent action of the Spirit of God of which I have spoken. I remember E. Cronin visiting him at Ennis, it might I think be in 1828, and on his return to Dublin, telling us about him. And I have reason to believe that even before we had any table in F. H.'s house there had been one in his, somewhere in the town of Ennis, by means of one of his family, if not by himself. This was altogether independent of any doings amongst us, and so, I may add, was it in England, as I might prove to you.

Having occasion to visit Somerset in 1831 or 1832, and being at Sir Edward Denny's he asked me to give him an idea of the principles of "The Brethren". We were sitting round the fire, and a daughter of a clergyman was present. As I stated our thoughts she said that they had been hers for the last 12 months and that she had no idea that anyone held them but herself. In another place, shortly afterwards, a dear brother, now with the Lord, told me that he, his wife, and his wife's mother were meeting in the simplicity of the way of the "brethren" for some time before he ever heard of such people. This brother and lady I mentioned at Sir E. Denny's, as soon as occasion allowed, were in full communion with us and she continues so to this day in County Down.

I like to trace these circumstances, for they assure us that the Lord's hand was independently at work designing to raise another testimony in the midst of His saints. I feel that I have great evidence at command for the existence of this independent work of the Spirit. Among other witnesses nearer home, I may mention that dear A. N. Groves re-visited Ireland after an absence of two or three years and I remember well his telling me of

a very remarkable movement in the Southern part of the Indian Peninsula which indicated a mind quite in harmony with that which had been leading us in our position in both England and Ireland. The English brethren year after year visited Ireland, and not only Dublin but the country places. John Harris, once a clergyman near Plymouth, was among them. G. V. Wigram was for a long continued time in Cork and all this time J. N. D. was in the two countries by turns, occasionally with us in Dublin but more frequently either in Plymouth or in Cork, and the gathering, multiplying in England to a very great number, became known by the name of "Plymouth Brethren" and in this country (Ireland) were called "Darbyites".

I do not know that I need follow the History beyond this, dear James, as your enquiry was rather about our beginnings. I would not doubt but that a fresh purpose of God, and a fresh work of the Spirit were put forth in the call-out of the "Brethren". Such things have been from time to time under various characters, though with a kindred spirit during this dispensation. The dispensation almost suggests such a thing, or makes it necessary, for it is not the ordered system of things linked with the earth or with flesh and blood, as was the former thing in Israel.

The call of the Church is apart from the world, to do service in the light and strength of the Holy Ghost, and to maintain in living spiritual grace testimony to a rejected and heavenly Jesus. All current within us and around us is contrary to this. Such a call can be upheld, such a dispensation maintained, only in the direct grace of the Holy Spirit ministering to elect vessels and filling them with the freshness and apprehension of the truth.

No ordered service or course of fleshly ordinances could at all answer this end: no transmitted or successional office could at all fill out or discharge its duties; no such authority is owned by it. In man there is ever a tendency to the mere ways of nature and a course of this world. In order to sustain a thing spiritual and living like the Church, the natural way, yea necessary way (save that God is sovereign) is by a fresh putting forth of light and power to revive it again and again, that there may be still a testimony to the power of God and to the ways and services of the living House, so that the coal may not be quenched. Such revivals may each of them have its own peculiarities, while partaking of the kindred spirit or of the common witness that the same Holy Ghost is working.

The Reformation, it is always acknowledged, was marked by a clear and fervent witness of justification by faith _ the very truth then needed for the deliverance of souls, long held in deep captivity. Other revivals and energies had their character in like manner, and whether or not they have ever become the subject of history, faith knew of them, and the souls of the elect were edified and thankful. I do not doubt that the work of God by and with "Brethren" had its special purpose also. It seemed with certainty to present the separatedness of the Church from the world, and a distinct witness to its heavenly calling and high peculiar dignity; so also to assert the precious truth that nothing else is worthy of the House of God, though the House be in ruins, as it was surely known and felt to be in a dispensational sense (consider 1 Timothy 3:15 and 2 Timothy 2:20-21 – editor). And further, the "Brethren" aided the testimony, which was just rising again, to the

coming and kingdom of the Lord, with some heavenly apprehensions connected with that great mystery, which were consistent with this separate and heavenly position and with that only; for there are prophetic truths which must ever be felt to be more or less at variance with any "church system" which links itself with the world.

Thus in simplicity, as my mind led me, I have done as you wished, dear James. I will not speak as to the result of this call of the "Brethren"; it would be painful and it is needless. Each heart among us knows many a secret cause of humiliation which the present distracted condition in which we are found tells of itself.

"When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble". May such experience be more deeply and richly felt by us and ours.

Believe me, dear James,

Ever your affectionate brother, (signed) J. G. Bellett.

The Form of a Servant

"Christ Jesus: who, being in THE FORM OF GOD, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him THE FORM OF A SERVANT, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:5-7).

In His life, Christ hides His glory "the form of God," under the "form of a servant" as illustrated in the gospels. When asked for tribute, He pays the custom for Peter and Himself by commanding a fish from the sea to bring Him that very piece of money needed. On another occasion, He was the unnoticed guest at a marriage feast, yet as the very Creator of all He furnished it. Observe Him again in the vessel on the lake during a storm. He was there as a tired laboring man whose sleep was sweet. Such was His manifested form. But underneath lay "the form of God." He arose and rebuked the sea into a calm. Who was He? None less than He of whom it had been written "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof."

The Heavenly Calling Foreshown

The Heavenly Calling Foreshown.

J. G. Bellett.

from Musings on Scripture, Vol. 1.

The apostle addresses his brethren in Christ as "partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3: 1). This calling, in another scripture, is styled "the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3: 14). And again, it is spoken of as the calling of the Father of glory (Eph. 1: 17, 18). In those who are the subjects of it God is to show in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace (Eph. 2: 17); and in them also the Lord is to be chiefly admired in the day of the presence of His power, though that is to be a day in which all His works shall praise Him, a day of clouds of witnesses to His glory both in heaven and earth (2 Thess. 1: 10, 11).

This participation of the heavenly calling, thus bestowed on the saints, was not made known in other ages as it is now revealed. For it is only to the church that God has abounded in "all wisdom and prudence;" unto the saints only it is that "he hath made known the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself" (Eph. 1: 8, 9). In a wondrous manner it is for them to testify, "We have the mind of Christ." His deep things God has revealed to them by His Spirit (1 Cor. 2: 10). The mystery of God [and of the Father, and of Christ]. it is for them, with full assurance of understanding, to acknowledge (Col. 2: 2). And their title to all this high endowment stands in this — the Son is their prophet. They have been spoken to by the Son,

who is "the brightness of God's glory, and the express image of his person;" and "All things," says the Son, "that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you" (John 15: 15). Israel never stood in such privilege as this, God, in sundry measures and in diverse manners, spake to them by His prophets; but their prophets were not the Son, they came not from the bosom of the Father. They were of the earth, and spake of the earth (John 3: 31); for Israel were God's earthly people, having their citizenship and their place here. But the saints, or the church,* are the heavenly family, and their Prophet is therefore He who has come from heaven, and testified what He has seen and heard there. He who was "full of truth" dwelt among us — the Son from the bosom declared the Father, and gave us an understanding to know Him (1 John 5: 20). In Him and by Him the blessed God is revealed, for we get "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 6).

*The distinction between Israel and the church, the one being the earthly people, the other the heavenly, is here rather assumed than proved. [The writer a little confounds "the mystery" with the heavenly calling. — ED.]

The prophets, who spoke of the earth, have given us many a notice of the earthly glory of the Lord, and sweet and gracious and wondrous is the intelligence. Isaiah speaks of Jehovah's reign in Mount Zion, and before His ancients gloriously (Isa. 24: 23). Ezekiel, who first saw the Son of man in the glory above the firmament, afterwards saw the same glory returned to the earthly city of the great King (Ezek. 43: 1, 2). And Daniel is very especially the witness of the glory of Christ in the earth,

taking a kingdom and dominion here. Indeed the prophets generally could speak of Christ as the King of Israel, and as such the God of the whole earth also, the heathen being given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. But all this, though to the glory of the Son, was of the earth still. The circumstances in which all this glory is to be revealed must be earthly. But the Gentiles, being "fellow-heirs, and of the same body," was a mystery of which it was not given to the prophets to speak particularly. Co-heirship of God with Jesus the Lord — spiritual blessings in the heavenlies — the sanctified and Sanctifier being all of one — the church as the body of Christ and the fulness of Him that filleth all in all — these are "the heavenly things" which the Son of man alone has revealed, for He alone came down from heaven, and alone has thus ascended into heaven (John 3: 13).

It is not that there is any new purpose with God; no; but there are due seasons and appointed ministries for the manifestation of His purposes. The church is nothing new as to purpose, but new as to manifestation. Jesus, the Messiah on the earth, was the proper expectation of Israel; and therefore the songs which either ushered in, or accompanied the birth of the Lord, welcoming Him to the earth, were all in celebration of good things to Israel, and announced nothing heavenly. Neither indeed did the resurrection of the Lord, any more than His birth, necessarily take Him beyond earthly glory and Jewish hopes. For the earthly people have their interest in Messiah's resurrection as well as the church. Their prophets foretold it, and the promise, grounded on resurrection, was that to which the twelve tribes,

instantly serving God day and night, hoped to come (Acts 26: 6-9). The hopes of David's throne are identified with the resurrection (Acts 2: 30). It is the resurrection that makes David's mercies sure mercies (Acts 13: 34). And therefore, when the death and resurrection of the Lord were accomplished at Jerusalem, it was to Israel that the testimony was first sent. And even more than this: the ascension did not at once take the Lord out of Jewish connection, for it put Him into possession of the gifts which He was to receive for the rebellious, that is, Israel, and which under the new covenant He is to give to Israel. And we are taught that it is from His ascension-place that He is to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins (Acts 5: 31). But the ascending into heaven after Him, and not waiting here on earth for His return, is beyond all Jewish hopes — that is, the now, or the heavenly, calling. Mansions in the Father's house, and the special joys and honours of the saints, as the brethren of the Son of God, were before left in a mystery. But such is the high calling to which the church is called, and it is made known to the saints by the Spirit sent down from the Son, thus ascended into heavenly glory, and when He had been rejected in His resurrection by His earthly people Israel. Till then the time had not come, the ministry had not been prepared, for the revelation of this calling.

But though it were thus, as to express revelation, kept secret, yet from the beginning God had been pleased to signify and shadow it, and the saints are now able, in the light of the full revelation of it, — to trace out and read such signs and shadows. They see themselves thus as the heavenly family kept in remembrance, even in the

midst of the Lord's dealings with the earth and the earthly people.

And I will not refrain from stating here what has lately impressed my own soul with some fresh comfort — that, amid the increasing anxiety of these times, and the deepening of the world's darkness around us, the light of our God shines pure and steady as ever. This is comfort. The pillar was the same to Israel through whatever part of the desert they passed: that land of the shadow of death might have been gloomier to them in some stages of their wondrous march than in others; but the pillar of God was the same. On it went, the same steady, sure, unvarying guide. It gathered none of the gloom of the desert around it; and I can believe that the more lonely the wilderness became to them, the more steadily did Israel eye it as their abiding companion and friend. And so now with us, beloved. The way to the saint may become lonely, very lonely, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever. There is no darkness there, no uncertainty there. This would be our sorrow indeed, if any of the present darkness of which we complain were in Jesus; but it cannot be there. The candle shines on the candlestick; God has not put it. under a bushel; it gives light as ever, to all that come in. The darkness is only in the world that surrounds us, and in the evil eye of our own body (Luke 11: 33-36). And therefore, though the night be dark and lonely, there is light to guide us and to cheer us, and the simple obedient saint finds it so (2 Peter 1: 19), The foundations may be destroyed, but the righteous still know what to do, for the light of God remains undimmed (Luke 11: 36). This, brethren, is our comfort — the word of our God endureth for ever; and

may the gracious hand that gave it to us ever control and guide us in using it!

It needs not to be observed, that the different typical persons in scripture set forth the Lord only in certain features of His glory. No one stands out as a full exhibition of Him. Indeed the limited sphere in which they severally moved, under the hand of God, would allow of nothing more than this. In each of them we may get traces of Jesus, but that is all; one after another takes up the wondrous tale, but the half is not told us (1 Kings 10: 7). But still we learn, and learn much from them; and something, as I would now show of the deep things of God, which the Spirit alone searches out, and which God has revealed to us by the Spirit, are made known, as in figure, by them.

In the union of Adam and Eve, and in the law of marriage, in Eden, the oneness of Christ, and the church was from the beginning declared. In the dominion of all things there, Eve being the associate of Adam in his lordship, the joint inheritance of all things on earth by the Lord and His saints was set forth. In the structure and combination of the parts of the tabernacle, much of the same purpose of God was exhibited. The holy places, with the outer courts, were all according to heavenly patterns, presenting the union, and yet distinctness, of the heavens and the earth; as that same union and distinctness had been previously revealed in the vision of the exiled patriarch of the ladder set up on the earth, but. whose top reached to heaven? And much like this will be seen in the structure and combination of certain typical persons: for in the laying of them together, the one after the other, as the parts of the tabernacle, it will be found that that order of heavenly and earthly things,

which in the end is to be displayed, has from the beginning been foreshown. Of this I have lately been strongly assured. And indeed it is the duty of the saints, as it should be their delight (ever looking to God for wisdom) to discern the ways of God under His works — to see His mind and purpose under the mouldings and fashionings of His hand — to speak of "the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world" (1 Cor. 2: 7).

I would notice this combination of typical persons first in Enoch and Noah.

The earth at the first was given to Adam; "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the face of the earth" (Gen. 1: 28). But in his hand the earth became corrupt, and thus corrupted it passed into the. possession of Cain and his family, as will be seen in Genesis 4. They buy, they sell, they plant, they build, they marry and are given in marriage. They stamp their own. name upon the earth, and furnish it with all that was good and pleasant in the judgment of the flesh. They were "the world" of that day, and "the things that are in the world" they loved and cultivated. But in the midst of this Cain-earth there was gathered from Seth (appointed to Eve instead of Abel, whom Cain slew) a household of faith, who "call upon the name of the Lord" (Gen. 4: 26). This is their only record. The world knew them not, for they were not of it. They died, generation after generation (Gen. 5). They had no inheritance here; they toiled at the cursed ground, as submitting to God's righteous ordinance, and only

looked for a new earth, and a future rest (Gen. 5: 29). They lived by faith, and they died in hope; of whom it may be said, "the world was not worthy." They were the heavenly family — they acknowledged God in the midst of that world which had willingly estranged itself from His presence to seek out its own inventions.

But in process of time they also corrupted themselves, and the Lord had to testify of their apostasy and loss of heavenly character, and to say of them (as giving them up), "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." "Then did it repent him that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart, for he saw that the wickedness of man was great, and that all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6: 18).

But ere this Enoch had been found among them faithful to his high calling. In the power of the heavenly hope of this Seth-household, "he walked with God," and, according to the end of that hope, "God took him." "By faith Enoch was translated, that he should not see death, and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." This is a simple record of this holy and honoured patriarch; but it is large enough to warrant us to say that in His day Enoch was the witness of ascension glory and of the heavenly calling: in him death was abolished, and life and immortality were for a passing moment brought to light; he was not found on earth, for God had taken him. The mansions in the Father's house, as it were, were already prepared, and he was seated in them; and the saints were seen in him as caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

And, in perfect character with all this, Enoch prophesied of the coming of the Lord with His saints to the judgment of the earth. Delivered in spirit out of the evil of the world, he was delivered afterwards in person out of the judgment of it; and he beheld from his elevation — like Abraham in such a case (Gen. 19: 23) the smoke of the country going up as the smoke of a furnace. "Behold the Lord cometh," said Enoch, "with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment" (Jude 14, 15).

But Noah, on the other hand, is not taken away from the judgment, but carried safely through it. The same hand which had raised Enoch out of it conducts Noah through it (Heb. 11: 6, 7). He prepared an ark to the saving of his house; the waters rose around him, wave upon wave; the end of all flesh was shown, to him, but he lived to rise up the inheritor of a new earth, and with him a covenant that to this day establishes the earth was made, and God set His bow in the cloud as a token of it.

But this was not Enoch glory. Noah was left on the earth still. God remembered Noah assuredly, but it was only to open the door of the ark, and lot him forth upon the earth again. He was found here again; for God had not translated but only preserved him. His faith carried him through the flood into a new world, while Enoch was carried above it up to God.

And such are the divers glories of the church and of Israel; such, the several callings of the heavenly and the earthly families; such, the children of the resurrection and the children of the circumcision; and such, too, are the several seasons ordained for the revelation of these glories. Enoch came before Noah. Enoch was translated to heaven before Noah condemned the old world, and

inherited the new. So will the saints be caught up to meet the Lord in the air first, and then will come the judgment of the nations and the manifestation of the Lord in His Noah character, in His glory of earthly rule and inheritance.*

*I would here observe that our blessed Lord speaks of Noah and not of Enoch, in His prophecy in Matthew 24, and this He does because He was the minister of the circumcision, the prophet of Israel. And Noah being thus His theme, we have at once the right interpretation of the prophecy, and we see that the taking, which the Lord speaks of in it, is a taking to judgment, as of the antediluvian apostates, and the leaving means a leaving for blessing, as of Noah and his household; and indeed the Lord tells us so Himself (see ver. 39). But had He in this prophecy been speaking of the church, He would have taken Enoch as His theme, and not Noah; and then the leaving would have been a leaving for judgment, as of the corrupters of the earth who survived Enoch, and the taking would have been a taking to glory as of Enoch himself.

But this Noah-earth quickly became corrupt, as the Adam-earth had before it; and within a little while "the children of men" became again vain in their imaginations, following the pride and naughtiness of their hearts to the very full. Flesh again proved itself to be flesh. Man was the same still, the waters of the flood had not cleansed him, but, big with the old desire to be as God, "the children of men" were now for making themselves a name, and building themselves a city and a tower, whose top should reach unto heaven" (Gen. 11)

But, as before in the person of Seth, the Lord had raised up a heavenly man in the midst of the Cain-world, so now did the God of glory raise up, in the person of Abraham, another heavenly man in the midst of this Noah-world. Government of the earth had been given to Noah, but Abraham is called away from the earth, away from his country, his kindred, and his father's house to walk with God; like Seth or Enoch, a stranger and sojourner here. Abraham, like them before him, got no part in this corrupted earth. God gave him none inheritance in it, "no, not so much as to set his foot on." His tent and his altar accompanied him wherever he went, and marked him as a stranger on the earth with God. He had, in the character of his calling, done with the world. He dwelt here with his children in tabernacles, and died in faith, desiring a heavenly country. He took no part "with the children of men" in their building of cities, and getting themselves a name; but he looked for a city whose builder was God, and waited, according to promise, to have his name made great by Jehovah. But God was eminently with him; his candle, as Job speaks, shined upon his head, and wondrously and blessedly indeed may it be said, the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. This was all his present glory, but it was holy glory. The Lord told him of His ways, and promised him everything. By the hand of Melchizedek heavenly and earthly treasures were pledged to him, and by the word of the Lord heavenly as well as earthly mysteries were made known to him. He was to be the heir of the world, and the father of many nations. He was admitted to the divine presence, and walked on earth as "the friend of God." The judgment of the world was made to pass before him, but it did not come nigh unto him, only with his eyes did he behold

and see the reward of the wicked. The smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace, while Abraham looked down from on high upon it, and that too from the very place where he had "stood before the Lord," that is, where he had been in intercession with the Lord (Gen. 19: 27), and which ever is, in principle and character, heaven itself.

He was thus, like Enoch, the elect one — drawn out from the world before the judgment came. In the crisis of the earth he had nothing to do. But Lot, his kinsman, his inferior and younger kinsman, is left as a remnant in the world after the judgment. He was sent, with sure purpose of love, out of the midst of the overthrow, when God overthrew the city of destruction, in the which he dwelt; but he did not stand on Abraham's elevation. He and Abraham never met afterwards; for he was found, as it were, on the earth still, the remnant that survived the judgment, like Noah before him, while Abraham was above it and out of it altogether, like Enoch.*

*I have been struck by this, that it is never by the communications of angels that Abraham is instructed or helped, but immediately by the Lord Himself, or, which is as the same, by the angel of the Lord, whereas the communication with Lot is only through angels. Thus, in the matter of the destruction of Sodom, we read that it was the Lord who appeared to Abraham (Gen. 18: 11-17), and it was the Lord who spake unto Abraham. but it was only two angels that visited Lot. This, to me, clearly marks the heavens and the earth, as distinguished in the persons of Abraham and Lot.

Such knowledge of the mystery of God's will, purposed in Himself from the beginning, and to be manifested in

the dispensation of the fulness of times, by the gathering of all things, whether in heaven or on earth, in one, even in Christ, was thus in types foreshown to, and left among, the patriarchs, whether before or after the flood. And just at the beginning of the Lord's subsequent dealings with that, nation which He had chosen for His own out of the earth, we may find the same purpose again foreshown — I mean in the combined types of Moses and Joshua.

Moses came from Egypt through the wilderness; as it is written of him, "This was he that was in the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7: 38). He stood on the borders of the land of promise, which was destined soon to be God's world, or that part of the earth which God was about to separate to Himself. But Moses was to go no further. There was to be nothing in this world for Moses but the wilderness land a sight of Canaan. The earth to him was to be no Canaan. His foot was never to tread a land flowing with milk and honey. "Die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people," said the Lord to him (Deut. 32: 50). And Moses did so. He went up from the plain of Moab unto the mount of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, and died there. But did he die the death of all men? Died Moses as a fool dieth? No, it was the Lord Himself who put him asleep; the dead may bury the dead, but the Lord buried Moses. "He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor, but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day" (Deut. 34: 6). Though He showed His care in another way, yet it was equal care for the body of Moses as had been shown, for that of Enoch, and because they were to be equally children of the resurrection. Some sleep, but they which are alive and

remain shall not prevent them which are asleep, but all shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4: 15-17). The earth does not, to this day, own the body of Moses. Like others, it is true, it has returned dust to dust, but the Lord Himself buried it with sure and certain purpose of giving it a resurrection unto glory. It was not the power of death that had oppressed Moses. Though a hundred and twenty years old, his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. The Lord could have said of him (as of all the children of the resurrection), "If I will that he tarry till I come;" for death is abolished to them all. But He was otherwise minded, and graciously so; for in Moses He has given to all those who may be called to "sleep in Jesus" a sure pledge that their bodies are not forgotten in the grave, but though sown in corruption, they shall be raised in glory; though once in the image of the earthly, they shall be found in the image of the Heavenly.

But there is in Moses much more of a church or heavenly aspect, if I may so express myself, than even all this — as indeed it is only while they were travelling in the wilderness that Israel bears analogy to the church of God on the earth. The stricter analogy ends when Israel gets into Canaan, and is there organised and settled as God's nation; and therefore all things that happened to them as examples, and which are written for the church's admonition, happened to them when in the wilderness, and are found written, all of them, In the book of Numbers, which the Jews called, and properly so, "the book of the wilderness" (see 1 Cor. 10: 1-10). And Moses was their leader, and the companion of their joys and sorrows, only while they continued in the wilderness; and thus in the very character of his position

while on the earth, his course, as we thus see, ending in the wilderness, and he himself never taking his place among the people of Israel, when organised and manifested as God's nation, we clearly discern in Moses much more of the heavenly than of the earthly calling — more of the church character than of Israel.

Besides, Moses was constantly with the Lord Jesus in the heavens, dwelling unveiled, like the church, in the presence of Christ beyond the region of the lightning and thunder, from whence the law was delivered (Ex. 34: 34; 2 Cor. 3: 18), and in the presence of which Israel stood (Ex. 24: 17). He was in the peaceful sunshine on the top of the hill of God; there he walked amid the fulness of Christ, receiving token after token of His grace and salvation. He saw face to face, he beheld the similitude of the Lord, and was spoken with mouth to mouth, and he shone with the heavenly glory of Jesus in the heights. And according to all this, he is afterwards seen in the holy mount, in company with Elijah, occupying the place which is characteristically the church's place (Matt. 17: 3).

And I would add this, that Moses got a wife and children when he was, through their unbelief and rejection of him, separated from his brethren, the children of Israel, and when, consequently, as he says himself, he was an "alien in a strange land" (Ex. 2: 22; Ex. 18: 3). And so has the Lord been brought in among the Gentiles through the unbelief and rejection of Israel, and is gathering a church, a wife and children, out from among them. And thus, in all this, Moses is strikingly in character with the Lord in the present dispensation and calling of the church, bearing upon him much more of the heavenly than of the earthly calling, exhibiting the

Lord in connection with the church rather than with Israel. "This is he that was in the church in the wilderness."*

*I refrain for the present from stating what I apprehend to be the typical import of the names of Moses' children, though I believe them to be very significant, But Joshua, who comes after Moses, presents another thing altogether. He stood in the land, the good land, which the Lord gave for an inheritance to Israel. The heathen were given to him, and the kings and rulers of the earth he broke in pieces like a potter's vessel. He divided the land by lot among the tribes, the children of the circumcision, and their reproach he rolled away. Joshua raised the altar of the Lord in the land, taking possession of it in His name, and the earth smiled around them, the garden of the Lord, again. Joshua was thus the man of victory, and the heir of the inheritance here; Moses had been but the man of Egypt and the wilderness, who died on the other side of Jordan. But Moses was laid up by the hand of the Lord for resurrection, while Joshua still stood upon the earth. Like Enoch and Noah of old among the patriarchs, Moses and Joshua now in Israel tell out the same wonderful tale, the purpose of God concerning the heaven and the earth, and in the same order of time also. For as Enoch was translated to heaven before Noah inherited the earth, so Moses was buried by the Lord in Mount Pisgah before Joshua crossed the Jordan, and took possession of the land of promise. But in their turn, under the guiding hand of God, they each take up the same mystery, and foreshow the dispensation of the fulness of times, and of the gathering of all things in Christ, whether things in earth, or things in heaven. The

glories are two, but the same Lord is the centre and sustainer of both. In a glass darkly we see the heavenly family, whether alive or asleep at the coming of the Lord, in Enoch and Moses, and we see the earth restored and inherited again in Noah and Joshua.*

*And as to Moses and Joshua, I would further observe this — that they performed very different services for Israel, and they set forth the Lord in very different characters. Moses was the mediator between God and the people while travelling through the wilderness; Joshua was the saviour of the people out of the wilderness, and their leader into the land of rest and promise. Moses, therefore, presents the Lord in His Priesthood, or Mediatorship, as in this dispensation, or, as with the church. Joshua presents Him to us in His character as Saviour of Israel in the latter day, when He shall lead His ransomed tribes into their promised rest. Jesus is Saviour and Jesus and Joshua are one — the former being the Greek, the latter the Hebrew, form of the very same name.

Again, in the combined histories of Elijah and Elisha we shall find the same testimony among the prophets, another foreshowing of the same mystery; every age being thus made to witness this purpose of God. Elijah, like Enoch before him, stands in an evil day. He is called forth in a day of deep apostasy in Israel, and, in the spirit of a righteous reprover, he suddenly breaks in upon Ahab and all his iniquity with a voice of judgment. "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be, dew nor rain these years but according to my word" (1 Kings 17: 1). The Baptist's voice in another day, "Repent ye, O generation of vipers," was, as it were, but the echo of this voice of

God's prophet before Ahab. The same spirit and power were in both. And their course on the earth was of one character also. The prophet suffers for his testimony; this was his only portion here. There was, it is true, a rejoicing in his light for a season, as afterwards with the Jews in the light of the Baptist. The people fell on their faces, acknowledging the Lord God of Elijah, saying, "Jehovah he is the God, Jehovah he is the God;" and the prophets of Baal were taken down and slain at the brook Kishon (1 Kings 18: 39, 40). But the burning and shining light of God's prophet was quickly disowned, as afterwards was John, his companion in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ. Another Herod and Herodias are confederate against Elijah, and he is exiled, afflicted, and destitute; the world hates him, the hand of man is against him. The Lord acknowledges His suffering witness, and comforts Him, — but it is the comforting of one who is cast down, cast down by the enmity of man. The still small voice of love meets his ear, but it is in that wilderness out to which the hand of a prosecutor had driven him. His enemies are strong and many, and from the beginning to the end he continues to be the suffering and exiled one, the righteous witness of God cast out by an evil generation. This was his course on earth; till at last, when the suffering was all accomplished, and he had fought his fight, and finished his course, and kept the faith, he is made to enter into glory. Having believed, he lives; having suffered, he reigns. Earth disowns, but heaven receives him. Another cloud takes him out of our sight (Acts 1: 9). The chariot and horses of Israel seat him as a child of the resurrection among the angels (Luke 20: 36), and the world, which had troubled him for his righteousness' sake, now only knows that his reward is great in heaven (Matt. 5: 12).

I need not say how all this is characteristic of the Lord and the church. The rejected One walking by faith on earth, there knowing the enmity of man, and the consolations of God, is at length glorified among the angels in heaven. All this tells us of that heavenly family who walk here in faith unvindicated and disowned; but who, believing, are to live, and who, suffering, are to reign. And as in the case of Moses, Elijah is seen in the holy mount, the companion of the glory, as he had been of the sufferings of Christ, occupying that which is to be the place of the church, or the heavenly glory.

But in Elisha we have something altogether different. No suffering for him after his master was taken from him. He stands before kings, and is not ashamed. It is not with him as it had been with his master; the wrath of the king prevailing to exile and to trouble him, but chief captains wait at his gates, and kings send presents to him; he discloses the secrets of one of them, disappoints the purposes of another, gives pledges of victory to a third, and grants supplies to combined armies of them. Chariots of salvation fill the mountain as attendants on the prophet. Every path on which he treads wears after him some trace of the greatness of him who had been travelling there; famine, disease, and death seem to own him; mercies and judgments are dispensed through his hand. He stands above all difficulty, going onward still in the Lord from strength to strength. Nature changes its course at his bidding; and at length even his dead body puts forth strange and surprising virtue (2 Kings 13: 21). It sends forth the prisoners out of the pit, that they might not die, but live, and walk on earth again, as before the Lord, in the land of the living.

All this was a travelling in greatness of strength; but it was a travelling in greatness only upon the earth. The things that Elisha did were great things (as it is said of them, 2 Kings 8: 4), but still they were only things of the earth. It was the earth that witnessed the power of God in the prophet; his was not, with Elijah, glory among the angels in heaven, but glory in the earth, power amid the resources and over the circumstances of the world. And thus again, in these two prophets, the same wondrous tale is told out, the same purpose of God concerning the heavens and the earth in the world to come. And the very same seasons may be observed here as we have observed above. Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind into heaven before Elisha received the double portion of his spirit, and went through the earth in the greatness of the strength of it. All this being to foreshow the heavens receiving the church; and then, but not till then, Israel and the earth receiving blessing again in the restitution of all things.*

*The same order of time seems matter of express revelation; for Paul says, "blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in, and so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11: 25, 26).

Such are, to me, very distinct and significant foreshowings of the heavenly calling, and of the purpose of God, which in the dispensation of the fulness of times is to be manifested. But it must not be understood that in this comparative view of Enoch, Abraham, Moses, and Elijah, with Noah, Lot, Joshua, and Elisha — I mean to present the first rank as individually and personally belonging to the heavenly family, and the second rank of them to the earthly. Surely not. I speak of them only in their typical bearing.

They stand, when thus combined, as foreshowing the two departments of the coming kingdom of our Lord — the church called up to heaven and the throne — Israel settled in honour and in blessing, with the attending nations on the earth or the footstool. But as Enoch will be found among the children of the resurrection, so will Noah; and Joshua will appear with Moses, and Elisha with Elijah, in the true mount of transfiguration.

And this is just what we may observe upon that typical mount itself. There Peter, James, and John, in type, presented the place which the earthly family is to hold in the kingdom; for still, in bodies of flesh and blood, they stood merely before the heavenly glory, and not in it. But we know that in the antitype, or the kingdom, they will hold the other place, and be where they then saw Moses and Elijah, in the glory on the heavenly mount with the Lord Himself; this St. Peter clearly declares (2 Peter 1: 16). The inheritance of all the saints is in heaven (1 Peter 1: 4). The patriarchs looked for a "heavenly" country (Heb. 11: 19). The Lord is to come, and all His saints with Him, as Zechariah prophesies (Zech. 14: 5). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets are to be seen hereafter in the kingdom of God (Luke 13: 28). I do judge that scripture instructs us that all the elect, as well those who came before the Son was revealed, as well as those who are now under the ministry of the Spirit of the Son glorified, will be found together in the heavenly glory of the kingdom — for all are of one body. Until the Son was sent forth, they were as children under tutors and governors, under the rudiments of the world, but still they were of the Father, as we are. No better than servants, but still lords of all, as we are.

In their measure, too, they continued with the Lord in His temptations, standing each in his day faithful, like Jesus among the faithless; and therefore their place must be that of the children, and their reward that of the faithful witnesses. They lived by faith, and they died in faith, and are laid up surely as children of the resurrection: no longer of the earth, earthy, but to bear the image of the Heavenly, in the day when death is to be swallowed up of victory.

And now, in closing, let me, while having thus sought to know the deeper parts of God's ways and purposes concerning us, call to your remembrance, brethren, the ever fresh and blessed truth of the love of God our Saviour. The command to you is, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind, with all your soul, and with all your strength." and again, the command is, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." Now, never would He have thus commanded us, if He had not forgiven us, and would have us to know this forgiveness. For it were but a thankless task to try to love Him thus, and to rejoice in Him thus, while we know not that He is ours in the full joy of forgiveness. It were a commandment beyond obedience altogether, if we were not to know Him in the reconciliation. He who commands us to love and rejoice in Him, commands us to know Him to be at peace with us. He never would have said to us "Give me thy heart," if He had not addressed us with "My son" (Prov. 23: 25). The call tells us of the relationship; the demand made upon us implies the grace which has been brought to us; and in this way we may use the sweet words of our Lord, "I know that his commandment is life everlasting." It is His command that we believe in His forgiving love. God is disobeyed if

we receive not the blessing with joy. Our obedience to God, therefore, thus depends on our receiving the reconciliation.

But not only this, our godly use and apprehension of the things around us depends, in like manner, on knowing the reconciliation through the death and rising again of Jesus. It is this which the new creature in Christ apprehends in them all, as the apostle speaks, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new, and all things are of God, who hath reconciled us unto himself by Jesus Christ." And not only so, all that which as saints is our service to others depends on this likewise. For instance, our ministry flows from it: for it is to us, as the apostle further speaks, who are reconciled that the ministry of reconciliation is given (2 Cor. 5: 18). "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus." Our intercessions flow from it, for it is only in the consciousness of our own acceptance that we can intercede for others. Abraham drew near to the Lord when he prayed for Sodom. The high priest under the law went into the holiest of all. The altar of incense stood close to the second veil. And therefore, when the church is exhorted to make prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks for all men, she is, doubtless, by that very exhortation commanded to know her own full acceptance, and thus to pray without doubting (1 Tim. 2). So blessedly thus, dear brethren, does everything help to assure our hearts before God our Saviour, and keep us in the sense of His forgiving

and accepting love. The very commands He has delivered, the spirit in which He calls us to walk, the services He requires, all are made to witness to us the reconciliation. The full abiding sense of the reconciliation we should bear about with us everywhere; as Adam, though sent out to a world which his own sin had defiled, and which was thus a constant witness against him, bore on his shoulder the coat of skin, the pledge and witness of grace and forgiveness towards him from the hand of God Himself.

And I would add one other thing, which has touched my own soul with comfort while writing these pages — that if we even now rejoice (as surely we do daily), and that in a world of such offence and trespass as "this present evil world" is — if the sunshine and fruitful seasons, and a thousand other springs of constant, ever flowing joy be such as they are to us here, what must be the joy when the offence is for ever removed, and all is subjection and service! when God again rejoices in His works! when in the dispensation of the fulness of times He has gathered together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in Him! May the brightness of that day be much before us, and our hearts know more and more what it is to long for His appearing.

The Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus Christ - Part 1

INTRODUCTION.

It is the Moral

Glory, or, as we speak, the character of the Lord Jesus, on which I meditate in these pages. All went up to God as a sacrifice of sweet savour. Every expression of Himself in every measure, however small, and in whatever relationship it was rendered, was incense. In His Person (but surely there only) man was reconciled to God. In Him God recovered His complacency in man, and that too with unspeakable gain; for in Jesus, man is more to God than He would have been in an eternity of Adam innocency.

But in this

Meditation on the Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus, it is most surely but a small part of that wondrous subject I affect to have reached. I may give occasion to fruitful thoughts in the souls of others, and that will be good.

The Lord's Person I assume-God and man in one Christ. His Work I also assume; that suffering service, or blood-shedding, accomplished on the Cross, whereby reconciliation is perfected, and wherein it is preached for the acceptance and joy of faith.

A SHORT MEDITATION on the MORAL GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.

"And when any will offer a meat-offering, his offering shall be of fine flour, and he shall pour oil upon it, and put frankincense thereon; and he shall bring it to

Aaron's sons the priests; and he shall take thereout his handful of the flour thereof, and of the oil thereof, with all the frankincense thereof; and the priest shall burn the memorial of it upon the altar, to be an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." -Lev. 2: 1, 2.

The glories of the

Lord Jesus are threefold-personal, official, and moral. His personal glory He veiled, save where faith discovered it, or an occasion demanded it. His official glory He veiled likewise; He did not walk through the land as either the Divine Son from the bosom of the Father, or as the authoritative Son of David. Such glories were commonly hid, as He passed on in the circumstances of life day by day. But His moral glory could not be hid. He could not be less than perfect in every thing- it belonged to Him, it was Himself. From its intense excellency, it was too bright for the eye of man; and man was under constant exposure and rebuke from it. But there it shone, whether man could bear it or not. It now illuminates every page of the four evangelists, as it once did every path which the Lord himself trod on this path of ours.

It has been said of the Lord-"His humanity was perfectly natural in its development." This is very beautiful and true. Luke 2: 52 would verify this. There was nothing of unnatural progress in Him: all was orderly increase. His wisdom kept pace with His stature, or age. He was the child first, then the man. By-and-by, as a man (God's Man in the world), He will testify of the world that its works are evil, and be hated by it; but as a child (a child after God's heart, as 1 may say), He will be subject to

His parents, and under the law, and as one perfect. In such conditions He grew in favour with God and man.

But though there was progress in Him, as we thus see, there was no cloud, or perversion, or mistake; in this he distinguished Himself from all. His mother pondered things in her heart; but cloud and indistinctness, nay, darkness itself, beset her mind, and the Lord had to say to her, "How is it that ye sought Me?" But with Him, progress was but one form of moral beauty-His growth was orderly and was seasonable; and, I may add, that as "His humanity was perfectly natural in its development," so was His character entirely human in its expressions: all that displayed it was common to man, as I may say.

He was the tree planted by the rivers of waters that bringeth forth his fruit in his season (Psalm 1.); and all things are only beautiful in their season The moral glory of the child Jesus "shines in its season and generation; and when He becomes a man, the same glory only gets other seasonable expressions. He knew when to own the claims of His mother, when she made them; when to resist them, though she made them; when to recognize them unsought (Luke 2: 51; Luke 8: 21; John 19: 27). And, as we afterwards track Him, He knew Gethsemane in season, or according to its character; and the Holy Mount in its season, winter and summer, to His spirit. He knew the well of Sychar, and the road which led Him to Jerusalem for the last time. He trod each path, or filled each spot, in that mind that was according to the character it bore under God's eye. And so on occasions which called for still more energy. If it be the defilement of His Father's house, He will let zeal consume Him; if it be His own wrong at the hand of some Samaritan villagers, He will suffer it, and pass on.

And all was perfect in its combinations, as well as in its season. He wept as He was reaching the grave of Lazarus, though He knew that He carried life for the dead. He who had just said, "I am the resurrection and the life," wept. Divine power would leave human sympathies free to take their full course.

And it is assemblage, or combination of virtues, which forms moral glory. He knew, as the apostle speaks, "how to abound and how to be abased;" how to use moments of prosperity, so to call them, and also times of depression. For, in His passage through life, He was introduced to each of these.

Thus, He was introduced for a moment to His glory; and a very bright moment it was. I allude to the transfiguration. He was high in His honours there. As the sun, the source of all brightness, there He shone; and such eminent ones as Moses and Elias are there, taking of His glory from Him, and in it shining with Him. But as He descended the hill, He charged those who had been with Him, "the eye-witnesses of His majesty," not to speak of it. And when the people, on His reaching the foot of the hill, ran to salute Him (Mark 9: 15),- His person still reflecting, I believe, though faintly, the glory which it had lately borne,-He does not linger among them to receive their homage, but at once addresses Himself to His common service; for He knew "how to abound." He was not exalted by His prosperity. He sought not a place among men, but emptied Himself, made Himself of no reputation, quickly veiled the glory that He might be the servant; the girded, not the arrayed one.

And it was thus with Him a second time, after He had become the risen Jesus, as we may see in John 20. He is there in the midst of His disciples, in such a glorious character as man had never borne or witnessed, and never could. He is there as the Conqueror of death, and the Spoiler of the grave. But He is not there-though in such glories-to receive the congratulations of His people, as we speak, and as one naturally would, who was finding Himself returned to the bosom of friends and kinsfolk, after toil, and danger, and victory. Not that He was indifferent to sympathy: He sought it in season, and felt the want of it when He did not get it. But He is now, risen from the dead, in the midst of His disciples, rather as a visitor for a day, than as in a triumph. He is rather teaching them their interest, and not displaying His own, in the great things which had just been accomplished.

This was using a victory indeed, as Abraham knew how to use His victory over the confederate kings a harder thing, as some have said, than to gain it. This, again, was knowing "how to abound," how "to be full."

But He knew "how to be abased," also. Look at Him with the Samaritan villagers in Luke 9. At the outset of that action, in the sense of His personal glory, He anticipated His being "raised up," as He actually was afterwards (Mark 16: 19; 1 Tim. 3: 16; the Greek word is the same); and in the common, well-known style of one who would have it known that a person of distinction was coming that way, He sends messengers before His face. But the unbelief of the Samaritans changes the scene. They would not receive Him. They refused to cast up a highway for the feet of this glorious one, but forced Him to find out for Himself the best path He could, as the

rejected One. But He accepts this place at once, without a murmur in His heart. He becomes again (borrowing the word from Matt. 2.) the Nazarene, seeing He was refused as the Bethlehemite, and He fills this new character on this side of the Samaritan village, as perfectly as He had filled the other character on the other side of it.

Thus He knew "how to be abased," and just so do we again see Him in Matt. 21. He enters the city as Son of David. All that could set Him off in that dignity surrounds and accompanies Him. He is in His earthly honour now, as He had been in His heavenly glory on the holy hill It was His without robbery; and when the moment demanded it, He can wear it. But the unbelief of Jerusalem now, as the unbelief of Samaria before, changes the scene, and He who had entered the city as her king has to leave it, to seek a night's lodging, so to speak, where best He could find it. But there He is, outside Jerusalem, as before He had been outside the Samaritan village, knowing "how to be abased."

What perfection! If the darkness comprehend not the light of His personal or official glory, His moral glory shall only find occasion to shine the brighter. For there is nothing in morals or in human character finer than this combination of willing degradation in the midst of men, and the consciousness of intrinsic glory before God. We see it in some of the saints beautifully. Abraham was a willing stranger in the midst of the Canaanites all his days, not having a foot of land, nor seeking to have it; but when occasion served, he would take headship even of kings, conscious of his dignity in God's sight, according to God's own counsel. Jacob would speak of his pilgrimage, of his few and evil days, making himself

nothing in the reckoning of the world; but he would at the same moment bless him who at that time was the greatest man on the earth, conscious that, under God, and before him, he was "the better," the greater man of the two.

David would ask for a loaf of bread, and ask for it without shame. But, with all that, he would accept the homage due to a king, receiving the tribute of his subjects, as in the person of Abigail. Paul was bound with a chain, a prisoner in the palace, and would speak of his bonds; but at that same moment he would let the whole court and high estate of the Roman world know, that he knew himself to be the blest man, the only blest man, in the midst of them.

It is this combination of willing degradation before man, and conscious glory before God, that gets its highest, brightest, nay (when I consider who he was), its infinite illustration in our Lord.

And there is still further moral beauty in this knowing how to abound, and how to be abased, how to be full, and how to suffer need; for it tells us that the heart of him who has learnt that lesson is upon the end of the journey, rather upon the journey itself. If the heart be on the journey, we shall not like these accidents and difficulties, the rough places and the hilly places; but if it be on the end, it will in proportion overlook such things. It is surely a secret rebuke to some of us to trace all this.

But there are other combinations in the Lord's character that we must look at. Another has said of Him, "He was the most generous and accessible of men." We observe in His ways a tenderness and a kindness never seen in

man, yet we always feel that He "was a stranger." How true this is! He was "a stranger here"-a stranger as far as revolted man was filling the place, but intimately near as far as misery or need demanded Him. The distance He took, and the intimacy He expressed, were perfect. He did more than look on the misery that was around Him, He entered into it with a sympathy that was all His own; and He did more than refuse the pollution that was around Him,-He kept the very distance of holiness itself from every touch or stain of it. See Him as exhibiting this combination of distance and intimacy in Mark 6. It is an affecting scene. The disciples return to Him after a long day's service. He cares for them. He brings their weariness very near to Him. He takes account of it, and provides for it at once, saying to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." But, the multitude following Him, He turns with the same readiness to them, acquainting Himself with their condition; and having taken knowledge of them, as sheep that had no shepherd, He began to teach them. In all this we see Him very near to the rising, varied need of the scene around him, whether that need be the fatigue of the disciples, or the hunger and ignorance of the multitude. But the disciples soon resent His attention to the multitude, and move Him to send them away. This, however, will in no wise do for Him. There is immediate estrangement between Him and them, which shortly afterwards expresses itself by His telling them to get into the ship while He sent the multitude away. But this separation from Him only works fresh trouble for them. Winds and waves are against them on the lake; and then in their distress He is again near at hand to succour and secure them!

How consistent in the combination of holiness and grace is all this. He is near in our weariness, our hunger, or our danger. He is apart from our tempers and our selfishness. His holiness made Him an utter stranger in such a polluted world; His grace kept Him ever active in such a needy and afflicted world. And this sets off His life, I may say, in great moral glory; that though forced, by the quality of the scene around Him, to be a lonely One, yet was He drawn forth by the need and sorrow of it to be the active One. And these activities were spent on all kinds of persons, and had therefore to assume all kinds of forms. Adversaries,-the people, a company of disciples who followed Him (the twelve), and individuals; these kept Him not only in constant, but in very various activity; and He had to know, as surely He did to perfection, how to answer every man. And beside all this, we see Him at times at the table of others; but it is only that we may still notice further various perfection. At the table of the Pharisees, as we see Him occasionally, He is not adopting or sanctioning the family scene, but being invited in the character which He had already acquired and sustained outside, He is there to act in that character. He is not a guest simply, under the courtesy and hospitality of the master, and therefore He can rebuke or teach. He is still the Light, and will act as the Light; and thus He exposes darkness within doors as He did abroad. (Luke 7: 11).

But if He thus entered the house of the Pharisee again and again, in the character of a teacher, and would then, acting as such, rebuke the moral condition of things which He found there, He entered the house of the publican as a Saviour. Levi made Him a feast in his own house, and set publicans and sinners in His company.

That is, of course, objected to The religious rulers find fault, and then the Lord reveals Himself as a Saviour, saying to them, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; but go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Very simple, but very striking, and full of meaning, this is. Simon the Pharisee objected that a sinner should enter his house and approach the Lord Jesus; Levi the publican provided such as these to be the fellow-guests of the Lord Jesus. And accordingly, the Lord in one house acts as a reprover, in the other, discloses Himself in the rich grace of a Saviour.

But we are to see

Him at other tables still. We may visit Him in Jericho and Emmaus. (See Luke 19 and Luke 24) It was desire that received Him on each of these occasions; but desire differently awakened-awakened, I mean, under different influences. Zaccheus had been but a sinner, a child of nature, which is, as we know, corrupt in its springs and its activities. But he had been just at that moment under the drawings of the Father, and his soul was making Jesus its object. He wished to see Him, and that desire being commanding, he had pressed his way through the crowd, and climbed up into a sycamore tree, if he might but just see Him as He passed by, The Lord looked up, and at once invited Himself into his house. This is very peculiar,-Jesus is an uninvited, self-invited guest in the house of that publican at Jericho !

The earliest strivings of life in a poor sinner, the desire which had been awakened by the drawings of the Father, were there in that house ready to welcome Him;

but sweetly and significantly He anticipates the welcome, and goes in-goes in, in full, consistent, responsive character, to kindle and strengthen the freshly-quickened life, till it break forth in some of its precious virtue, and yield some of its own good fruit. "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold." At Emmaus, desire had been again quickened, but under different conditions. It was not the desire of a freshly-drawn soul, but of restored saints. These two disciples had been unbelieving. They were returning home under a sorrow that Jesus had disappointed them. The Lord rebukes them shortly after He joined them on the road, but so orders His words as to kindle their hearts. When their walk together ends at the gate of their dwelling, the Lord makes as though He would go further. He would not invite Himself as He had done at Jericho. They were not in the moral state which suggested this, as Zaccheus had been; but, when invited, He goes in-goes in just to kindle further the desire which had here invited Him-to gratify it to the full. And so He does; and they are constrained by their joy to return to the city that night, late as it was, to communicate it to their fellows.

How full of various beauty all these cases are! The guest in the house of Pharisees, the guest in the house of publicans, the guest in the house of disciples,-the invited and the uninvited guest in the person of Jesus, sits in His place, in all perfection and beauty. I might instance Him as a guest at other tables; but, I will now look only at one more. At Bethany, we see Him adopting a family scene. Had Jesus disallowed the idea of a Christian family, He could not have been at Bethany, as we see He

was. And yet, when we get Him there, it is only some new phase of moral beauty that we trace in Him. He is a friend of the family, finding, as we find to this day among ourselves, a home in the midst of them. "Now Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus," are words which bespeak this. His love to them was not that of a Saviour, or a Shepherd, though we know well He was each of these to them. It was the love of a family friend. But though a friend, an intimate friend, who might whenever He pleased find a welcome there; yet He did not interfere with the arrangements of the house. Martha was the housekeeper, the busy one of the family, useful and important in her place; and Jesus will surely leave her where He finds her. It was not for Him to alter or settle such matters. Lazarus may sit by the side of the guests at the family table, Mary may be abstracted and withdrawn as in her own kingdom, or into the kingdom of God within her, and Martha be busy and serving. Be it so. Jesus leaves all this just as He finds it. He who would not enter the house of another unbidden, when entered into the house of those sisters and brother will not meddle with its order and arrangements and in full moral comeliness this is. But if one of the family, instead of carrying herself in her family place, step out of it to be a teacher in His presence, He must and will resume His higher character, and set things right divinely, though He would not interfere with or touch them domestically. (Luke 10: 38-42)

What various and exquisite beauty! Who can trace all His paths? The vulture will have to say, it is beyond even the reach of his eye. And if no human eye can fully see the whole of this one object, where is the human character that does not aid in setting off its light by its

own shadows and imperfections ? We none of us think of John, or of Peter, or of the rest of them, as hard-hearted or unkind. Quite otherwise. We feel that we could have entrusted them with our griefs or our necessities. But this little narrative in Mark 6, to which I referred, shows us that they are all at fault, all in the distance, when the hunger of the multitude appealed to them, threatening to break up their ease; but, on the contrary, that was the very moment, the very occasion, when Jesus drew near. All this tells us of Him, beloved. "I know no one," says another, "so kind, so condescending, who is come down to poor sinners, as He. I trust His love more than I do Mary's, or any saint's; not merely His power as God, but the tenderness of His heart as man. No one ever showed such, or had such, or proved it so well-none has inspired one with such confidence. Let others go to saints or angels, if they will; I trust Jesus' kindness more." Surely, again I say, this is so-and this occasion in Mark 6, betraying the narrow-heartedness of the best of us, such as Peter and John, but manifesting the full, unwearied, saving grace of Jesus, verifies it. But further: there are in Him combinations of characters, as well as of virtues or graces. His relationship to the world, when He was there, exhibits this. He was at once a Conqueror, a Sufferer, and a Benefactor. What moral glories shine in such an assemblage! He overcame the world, refusing all its attractions and offers; He suffered from it, witnessing for God against its whole course and spirit; He blessed it, dispensing His love and power continually, returning good for evil. Its temptations only made Him a conqueror; its pollutions and enmities only a sufferer; its miseries only a benefactor. What a combination? What moral glories shine in each other's company there!

The Lord illustrated that word that is among us, "in the world, but not of the world"-a form of words which, I suppose, has been derived from what He Himself says in John 17: 15: "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." He illustrates this condition all through His life; for He was ever in the world, active in the midst of its ignorance and misery, but never of it, as one that shared its hopes or projects, or breathed its spirit. But in John 7. I believe He is eminently seen in this character. It was the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, the crowning joyous time in Israel, the antepast of the coming kingdom, the season of ingathering, when the people had only to remember that they had been in other days wanderers in a wilderness, and dwellers in camp. His brethren propose to Him to take advantage of such a moment, when "all the world," as we speak, was at Jerusalem. They would have Him make Himself important, make Himself, as we again speak, "a man of the world." "If thou do these things," they say, "show thyself to the world." He refused. His time had not then come to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. He will have His kingdom in the world, and be great to the end of the earth, when His day comes; but as yet He was on His way to the altar, and not to the throne. He will not go to the feast to be of the feast, though He will be in it; therefore, when He reaches the city at this time, we see Him in service there, not in honour, not working miracles as His brethren would have had Him, that He might gain the notice of men; but teaching others, and then hiding Himself under this, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me."

Very peculiar and characteristic indeed all this in And all this was some of the moral glory of the Man, the perfect Man, Jesus, in His relation to the world. He was a conqueror, a sufferer, and a benefactor-in the world, but not of it. But with equal perfectness do we see Him at times distinguishing things, as well as exhibiting these beautiful combinations. Thus, in dealing with sorrow, which lay outside, as I may express it, we see tenderness, the power that relieved; but in dealing with the power of disciples, we see faithfulness as well as tenderness. The leper in Matt. 7 is a stranger. He brings his sorrow to Christ, and gets healing at once. Disciples, in the same chapter, bring their sorrow also, their fears in the storm; but they get rebuke as well as relief. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" He says to them. And yet the leper had but little faith, as well as the disciples. If they said, "Lord, save us, we perish;" he said, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean." But they are rebuked, while he is not, just because there was a different thing before the mind of the Lord, and justly so. It was simply sorrow in the one case; it was the soul as well as the sorrow in the other. Tenderness, unmixed tenderness, was therefore His answer to the one; faithfulness must form part of the other. The different relationship to Him, of disciples and strangers, at once accounts for this, and may show how perfectly He distinguished things that came very near each other, but still were not the same. But further, as to this perfection. Though He Himself rebuke, He will not allow others lightly to do it. As in earlier days, Moses may be humbled by the Lord, but the Lord will not allow Miriam and Aaron to reproach him. (Num. 11, 12.) Israel in the wilderness will be chastened again and again by the hand of God, but in the face of Balaam, or any other

adversary, He will be as one that has not seen iniquity in His people, and will not suffer any enchantment to prevail against them. So the Lord Jesus will beautifully and strikingly step in between the two disciples and the rebuking ten (Matt. 20.), and though He sent a word of warning and admonition to John the Baptist, as in secret (such a word as John's conscience alone might understand), He turns to the multitude to speak of John only with commendation and delight. And still further, as to this grace in distinguishing things that differ. Even in dealing with His disciples, there did come a moment when faithfulness can be observed no longer, and tenderness alone is to be exercised. I mean in the hour of parting, as we see in John 14: 16. It was then "too late to be faithful." The moment would not have admitted it. It was a time which the heart claimed as entirely belonging to itself. The education of the soul could not go on then. He opens fresh Secrets to them, it is true, secrets of the dearest and most intimate relationships, as between them and the Father; but there is nothing that is to be called rebuke. There is no such word as, "O ye of little faith!" or "How is it that ye do not understand A word that may sound somewhat like that, is only the discharging of a wound which the heart had suffered, that they might know the love He had for them. This was the sacredness of the sorrow of a moment of parting, in the perfect mind and affection of Jesus; and we practise it ourselves in some poor manner, so that we are at least able to enjoy and admire the full expression of it in Him. "There is a time to embrace," says the preacher, "and there is a time to refrain from embracing." This is a law in the statute-book of love, and Jesus observed it.

But again. He was not to be drawn into softness, when the occasion demanded faithfulness, and yet He passed by many circumstances which human sensibilities would have resented, and which the human moral sense would have judged it well to resent. He would not gain His disciples after the poor way of amiable nature. Honey was excluded from the offering made by fire, as well as leaven. The meat offering had none of it (Lev. 2: 11); neither had Jesus, the true meat offering. It was not the merely civil, amiable thing, that the disciples got from their Master. It was not the courtesy that consults for the ease of another. He did not gratify, and yet He bound them to Him very closely; and this is power. There is always moral power when the confidence of another is gained without its being sought; for the heart has then become conscious of the reality of love. "We all know," writes one, "how to distinguish between love and attention, and that there may be a great deal of the latter without any of the former. Some might say, attention must win our confidence; but we know ourselves that nothing but love does." This is so true. Attention, if it be mere attention, is honey, and how much of this poor material is found with us! and we are disposed to think that it is all well, and perhaps we aim no higher than to purge out leaven, and fill the lump with honey. Let us be amiable, perform our part well in the courteous, well-ordered social scene, pleasing others, and doing what we can to keep people on good terms with themselves, then we are satisfied with ourselves and others with us also. But is this service to God? Is this a meat offering? Is this found as part of the moral glory of perfect man? Indeed, indeed it is not. We may naturally judge, I grant, that nothing could do it better or more effectually; but still it is one of the

secrets of the sanctuary, that honey was not used to give a sweet savour to the offering Thus, in progress, in reasonableness, in combinations, and in distinctions, how perfect in moral glory and beauty were all the ways of this Son of Man!

The life of Jesus was the bright shining of a candle. It was such a lamp in the house of God as needed no golden tongs or snuff-dishes. It was ordered before the Lord continually, burning as from pure beaten oil. It was making manifest all that was around, exposing and reproving; but it ever held its own place uncondemned.

Whether challenged by disciples or adversaries, as the Lord was again and again, there is never an excusing of Himself. On one occasion disciples complain, "Master, carest thou not that we perish ?" But He does not think of vindicating the sleep out of which this challenge awakes Him. On another occasion they object to Him, "The multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" But He does not need this inquiry, but acts upon the satisfaction of it. At another time Martha says to Him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here my brother had not died." But He does not excuse His not having been there, nor His delaying for two days in the place where He was; but instructs Martha in the wondrous character which His delay had given to that hour.

What a glorious vindication of His delay that was! And thus it was on every like occasion; whether challenged or rebuked, there is never the recalling of a word, nor the retracing of a step. Every tongue that rises in judgement against Him, He condemns. The mother rebukes Him in Luke 2; but instead of making good her

charge, she has to listen to Him convicting the darkness and error of her thoughts. Peter takes upon him to admonish Him: "This be far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Peter has to learn, that it was Satan himself that in Peter prompted the admonition. The officer in the palace of the High Priest goes still further, correcting Him, and smiting Him on the cheek. But he is convicted of breaking the rules of judgement, in the very face and place of judgement.

All this tells us of the way of the perfect Master. Appearances might have been against Him at times. Why did He sleep in the boat when winds and waves were raging? Why did He loiter on the road when Jairus's daughter was dying? or why did He tarry where He was when His friend Lazarus was sick in the distant village of Bethany? But all this is but appearance, and that for a moment. We have heard of these ways of Jesus, this sleep, this loitering, and this tarrying, but we also see the end of Jesus, that all is perfect. Appearances were against the God of Job in patriarchal days. Messenger after messenger seemed too much, unrelenting, and inexorable; but the God of Job had not to excuse Himself, nor has the Jesus of the evangelists.

Therefore, when we look at the Lord Jesus as the lamp of the sanctuary, the light in the house of God, we find at once that the tongs and snuff- dishes cannot be used. They are discovered to have no counterpart in Him. Consequently, they who undertook to challenge or rebuke Him when He was here, had to go back rebuked and put to shame themselves. They were using the tongs or snuffers with a lamp which did not need them, and they only betrayed their folly; and the light of the lamp shone the brighter, not because the tongs had been

used, but because it was able to give forth some fresh witness (which it did on every occasion) that it did not need them.

And from all these instances we have the happy lesson, that we had better stand by, and let Jesus go on with His business. We may look and worship, but not meddle or interrupt, as all these were wrong in their day-enemies, kinsfolk, and even disciples. They could not improve the light that was shining; they had only to be gladdened by it, and walk in it, and not attempt to trim or order it. Let our eye be single, and we may be sure the candle of the Lord, set on the candlestick, will make the whole body full of light.

But I pass on. And

I may further observe, that as He did not excuse Himself to the judgement of man in the course of His ministry, as we have now seen, so in the hour of His weakness, when the powers of darkness were all against Him. He did not cast Himself on the pity of man. When He became the prisoner of the Jews and of the Gentiles, He did not entreat them or sue to them. No appeal to compassion, no pleading for life is heard. He had prayed to the Father in Gethsemane, but there is no seeking to move the Jewish high priest or the Roman governor. All that He says to man in that hour, is to expose the sin with which man, whether Jew or Gentile, was going through that hour.

What a picture! Who could have conceived such an object! It must have been exhibited ere it was described, as has been long since observed by others. It was the perfect Man, who once walked here in the fulness of moral glory, and whose reflections have been left by the

Holy Ghost on the pages of the evangelists. And next to the simple, happy, earnest assurance of His personal love to ourselves (the Lord increase it in our hearts!) nothing more helps us to desire to be with Him, than this discovery of Himself. I have heard of one who, observing His bright and blessed ways in the Four Gospels, was filled with tears and affections, and was heard to cry out, "O that I were with Him! "

If one may speak for others, beloved, it is this we want, and it is this we covet. We know our need, but we can say, the Lord knows our desire.

The same preacher whom we quoted before, says, "There is a time to keep, and a time to cast away." (Ecc. 3: 6.) The Lord Jesus both kept and cast away, in the due season.

There is no waste in the services of the heart or the hand that worships God, be they as prodigal as they may. "All things come of thee," says David to the Lord, "and of thine own have we given thee."

The cattle on a thousand hills are His, and the fulness of the earth. But Pharaoh treated Israel's proposal to worship God as "idleness," and the disciples challenge the spending of three hundred pence on the body of Jesus as "waste." But to give the Lord His own, the honour or the sacrifice, the love of the heart, the labour of the hands, or the substance of the house, is neither idleness nor waste. It is chief work to render to God.

But here I would linger for a moment or two.

Renouncing Egypt is not idleness, nor is the breaking of a box of ointment on the head of Christ waste; though we thus see, that a certain kind of reckoning among the

children of men, and even at times (and that too frequent) among the saints of God, would charge these things as such. Advantages in life are surrendered, opportunities of worldly promise are not used, because the heart has understood the path of companionship with a rejected Lord.

But this is

"idleness" and "waste," many will say: the advantages might have been retained by the possessor, or the opportunities might have been sought and reached, and then used for the Lord. But such persons know not. Station, and the human, earthly influence that attaches to it, is commended by them, and treated almost as "a gift to be used for profit, and edification and blessing." But a rejected Christ, a Christ cast out by men, if known spiritually by the soul, would teach another lesson.

This station in life, these worldly advantages, these opportunities so commended, are the very Egypt which Moses renounced. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

The treasures of

Egypt were not riches in his esteem, because he could not use them for the Lord. And he went outside of them, and the Lord met him there, and used him afterwards, not to accredit Egypt and its treasures, but to deliver His people out of it.

I follow this a little here, for it is, I feel, important to us.

All this renunciation, however, must be made in the understanding and faith of a rejected Lord; it will otherwise want all its fine, and genuine, and proper character. If it be made on a mere religious principle, as

that of working out a righteousness or a title for ourselves, it may well be said to be something worse than idleness or waste. It then betrays an advantage which Satan has got over us, rather than any advantage we have got over the world. But if it be indeed made in the faith and love of a rejected Master, and in the sense and intelligence of His relation to this present evil world, it is worship.

To serve man at the expense of God's truth and principles is not Christianity, though persons who do so will be called "benefactors." Christianity considers the glory of God, as well as the blessing of man; but as far as we lose sight of this, so far shall we be tempted to call many things waste and idleness which are really holy, intelligent, consistent, and devoted service to Jesus. Indeed, it is so. The Lord's vindication of the woman who poured her treasure on the head of Jesus tells me so (Matt. 26.). We are to own God's glory in what we do, though men may refuse to sanction what does not advance the good order of the world, or provide for the good of our neighbour. But Jesus would know God's claims in this self-seeking world, while He recognized (very surely, as we may know), His neighbour's claim upon Himself.

He knew when to cast away, and when to keep. "Let her alone," He said of the woman who had been upbraided for breaking the box of spikenard on Him; "she hath wrought a good work on me." But after feeding the multitudes He would say, "Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

This was observing the Divine rule, "There is a time to keep, and a time to cast away." If the prodigal service of

the heart or hand in worship be no waste, the very crumbs of human food are sacred, and must not be cast away. He who vindicated the spending of 300 pence on one of these occasions, on the other would not let the fragments of three loaves be left on the ground. In His eyes, such fragments were sacred. They were the food of life, the herb of the field, which God had given to man for his life. And life is a sacred thing. God is the God of the living. "To you it shall be for meat," God has said of it, and therefore Jesus would hallow it. "The tree of the field is man's life," the law had said, and accordingly had thus prescribed to them that were under the law-"When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down to employ them in the siege: only the trees that thou knowest are not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down" (Deut. 20). It would have been waste, it would have been profaneness, to have thus abused the food of life, which was God's gift. And Jesus in like purity, in the perfectness of God's living ordinance, would not let the fragments lie on the ground. "Gather up the fragments that remain," He said, "that nothing be lost."

These are but small incidents; but all the circumstances of human life, as He passes through them, change as they may, or be they as minute as they may, are thus adorned by something of the moral glory that was ever brightening the path of His sacred, wearied feet. The eye of man was incapable of tracking it; but to God it was all incense, a sacrifice of sweet savour, a sacrifice of rest, the meat offering of the sanctuary.

But again. The Lord did not judge of persons in relation to Himself,-a common fault with us all. We naturally judge of others according as they treat ourselves, and we make our interest in them the measure of their character and worth. But this was not the Lord. God is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed. He understands every action fully. In all its moral meaning He understands it, and according to that He weighs it. And, as the image of the God of knowledge, we see our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of His ministry here, again and again. I may refer to Luke 11. There was the air of courtesy and good feeling towards Him in the Pharisee that invited Him to dine. But the Lord was " the God of knowledge" and as such He weighed this action in its full moral character.

The honey of courtesy, which is the best ingredient in social life in this world, should not pervert His taste or judgement. He approved things that are excellent. The civility which invited Him to dinner was not to determine the judgement of Him who carried the weights and measures of the sanctuary of God. It is the God of knowledge that this civility has on this occasion to confront, and it does not stand, it will not do. O how the tracing of this may rebuke us! The invitation covered a purpose. As soon as the Lord entered the house, the host acts the Pharisee, and not the host. He marvels that his guest had not washed before dinner. And the character he thus assumes at the beginning shows itself in full force at the end. And the Lord deals with the whole scene accordingly; for He weighed it as the God of knowledge. Some may say, that the courtesy He had received might have kept Him silent. But He could not look on this man simply as in relation to Himself. He was

not to be flattered out of a just judgement. He exposes and rebukes, and the end of the scene justifies Him. "And as He said these things unto them, the scribes and Pharisees began to urge Him vehemently, and to provoke Him to speak of many things, laying wait for Him, and seeking to catch something out of His mouth, that they might accuse Him."

Very different, however, was His way in the house of another Pharisee, who in like manner had asked Him to dine. (Luke 7) For Simon had no covered purpose in the invitation. Quite otherwise. He seemed to act the Pharisee too, silently accusing the poor sinner of the city. and his guest for admitting her approach. But appearances are not the ground of righteous judgements. Often the very same words, on different lips, have a different mind in them. And therefore the Lord, the perfect Weighmaster according to God, though He may rebuke Simon, and expose him to himself, knows him by name, and leaves his house as a guest should leave it. He distinguishes the Pharisee of Luke 7 from the Pharisee of Luke 11, though He dined with both of them. So we may look at the Lord with Peter in Matthew 16. Peter expresses fond and considerate attachment to his Master: "This be far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." But Jesus judged Peter's word's only in their moral place. Hard indeed we find it to do this when we are personally gratified. "Get thee behind me, Satan," was not the answer which a merely amiable nature would have suggested to such words. But again, I say, our Lord did not listen to Peter's words simply as they expressed personal kindness and goodwill to Himself. He judged them, he weighed them, as in the presence of God, and at once found that the enemy had moved them;

for He that can transform Himself into an angel of light is very often lurking in words of courtesy and kindness. And in the same way the Lord dealt with Thomas in John 20. Thomas had just worshipped Him. "My Lord and my God," he had said. But Jesus was not to be drawn from the high moral elevation that He filled, and from whence He heard and saw everything, even by words like these. They were genuine words, words of a mind which, enlightened of God, had repented toward the risen Saviour, and, instead of doubting any longer, worshipped. But Thomas had stood out as long as he could. He had exceeded. They had all been unbelieving as to the resurrection, but he had insisted that he would be still in unbelief till sense and sight came to deliver him. All this had been his moral condition; and Jesus has this before Him, and puts Thomas in his right moral place, as He had put Peter. "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Our hearts in such cases as these would have been taken by surprise. They could not have kept their ground in the face of these assaults, which the good will of Peter and the worship of Thomas would have made upon them. But our perfect Master stood for God and His truth, and not for Himself. The ark of old was not to be flattered. Israel may honour it, and bring it down to the battle, telling it, as it were, that now in its presence all must be well with them. But this will not do for the God of Israel. Israel falls before the Philistines, though the ark be thus in the battle; and Peter and Thomas shall be rebuked, though Jesus, still the God of Israel, be honoured by them.

Angels have their joy over the repentance of sinners. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over

one sinner that repenteth." It is happy to have this secret of heaven disclosed to us, and to read one illustration of it after another, as we do in Luke 15.

But there is something beyond this. The joy there, though in heaven, is public. It utters itself, and has companionship. Very proper that it should be so; very proper that the whole house should share it, and find it a common joy. But there is something beyond this. There is the joy of the Divine bosom, as well as this joy of heaven. John 4: 27-32 gives it to us, as Luke 15 gives us the public joy of heaven. And this joy of the Divine bosom, I need not say, is the deeper thing. It is full, silent, and personal. It asks not to be raised or sustained by others. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," is the language of the heart of Christ, as He tasted this joy. The glory was filling the house, so that the ministers of the house must stand by for a time. The Shepherd had but just brought home the stray one of the flock, having laid it on His shoulders rejoicing, and as yet the joy was all His own. The household had not been called to rejoice with Him, when the woman left Him a saved and happy sinner. Disciples felt the character of the moment. They would not trespass. The fat reserved for the altar, the richest portion of the feast, "the food of God," was spread, and the disciples were silent, and stood apart. This was a wondrous moment- not many like it. The deep, unuttered joy of the Divine bosom is known here, as the public ecstatic joy of heaven is known in Luke 15.

But He that could be thus feasted was weary betimes, and hungry, and thirsting. This is seen in the same chapter, John 4; as again in Mark 4. But there is this difference in the two cases: He finds sleep for His relief and restoration in Mark 4. He is independent of it in

John 4. And why was this? In Mark 4. He had gone through a day of toil, and in the evening He was weary, as nature will be after labour. " Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." (Ps. 106) Sleep is then provided for him, to restore him to his service when morning returns. Jesus proved all this. He was asleep on the pillow in the boat. In John 4 He is weary again, hungry and thirsty too He sits at the well, like a tired traveller, waiting till the disciples came from the neighbouring village with food. But when they come, they find Him feasted and rested, and that too without food, or drink, or sleep. His weariness had had another refreshment than what sleep had brought Him. He had been made happy by fruit to His labour in the soul of a poor sinner. The woman had been sent away in the liberty of the salvation of God. But there had been no woman of Samaria in Mark 4, and He has therefore to use the pillow in His weariness.

But how true all this is to the sensibilities of our common humanity! We all understand it. The Lord's heart was merry, as I may say, in John 4; but there was nothing to make it merry in Mark 4. And we are taught to know (and our experience sets to its seal that the word is true) "that a merry heart doeth good like medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones." (Prov. 17: 22.) So that the Master can say in the one case, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of," while in the other, He will use the pillow which care for His weariness had provided.

How perfect in all its sympathies was the humanity the Son had assumed! Surely, indeed, it was the common humanity, apart from sin.

"Touched with a sympathy within,

He knows our feeble frame."

But again. There is a temptation in the time of confusion to cast up all as hopeless and gone; and to say, it is endless and needless to be still distinguishing. All is in disorder and apostacy; why then attempt to distinguish?

But this was not the Lord. He was in the confusion, but not of it, as He was in the world, but not of it, as we said before of Him. He met all sorts of people, in all sorts of conditions, heaps upon heaps, where all should have been compact together; but He held His even, narrow, unsoiled and undistracted way through it all. The pretensions of the Pharisee, the worldliness of the Herodian, the philosophy of the Sadducee, the fickleness of the multitude, the attempts of adversaries. and the ignorance and infirmities of disciples, were moral materials which He had to meet and answer every day.

And then the condition of things, as well as the characters of persons, exercised Him; the coin Of Caesar circulating in Immanuel's land; partition walls all but in ruins; Jew and Gentile, clean and unclean, confounded, save as religious arrogance might still retain them after its own manner. But His one golden rule expressed the perfectness Of His passage through all- "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." The remnant in the day of captivity, a like day of confusion, carried themselves beautifully, distinguishing things that differed, and not hopelessly casting all up. Daniel would advise the king, but not eat his meat: Nehemiah would serve in the palace, but not suffer the Moabite Or the Ammonite in the house of the Lord: Mordecai would

guard the king's life, but would not bow to the Amalekite: Ezra and Zerubbabel would accept favours from the Persian, but not Samaritan help nor Gentile marriages: and the captives would pray for the peace of Babylon, but would not sing Zion's songs there. All this was beautiful; and the Lord, in His day, was perfect in this remnant character. And all this has a voice for us; for ours is a day, in its character of confusion, not inferior to these days of the captives, or of Jesus. And we, like them, are not to act on the hopelessness of the scene, but know still how to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.

All His moral beauty becomes a pattern to us. But then we see Him stand in God's relationship to evil also, and that is a place which, of course, we never could fill. He touched the leper, and He touched the bier, and yet He was undefiled. He had God's relationship to sin. He knew good and evil, but was in Divine supremacy over it; knowing such things as God knows them. Had He been Other than He was, these touches of the bier and of the leper would have defiled Him. He must have been put outside the camp, and gone through the cleansing which the law prescribed. But nothing of this kind do we see in Him. He was not an unclean Jew; He was not merely undefiled, He was undefileable; and yet, such was the mystery of His person, such the perfection of the Manhood in company with the Godhead in Him, that the temptation was as real in Him as was the undefileableness.

But we pause. Our place towards much of this needed, though mysterious and deeply precious truth, is to receive it and worship, rather than to discuss and analyse it. [His death, I may here take occasion to say,

was the perfecting of His moral glory, of which I speak. (Phil. 2.) Of coarse, I know it Divas a great deal more than that also. But, among other things, it was that.] It is happy, however, to one's own spirit, to mark the Yearnings of some souls, who give you the impression that it is Himself that is before them. We ofttimes traffic with truths in such wise as in the end leaves with us a rebuking conviction that we did not reach Himself, though so occupied. We find out that we had been loitering in the avenue.

The Lord was "poor, yet making rich,"-"having nothing, and yet possessing all things." These high and wondrous conditions were exhibited in Him, in ways that were and must have been peculiar-altogether His own. He would receive ministry from some godly women out of their substance, and yet minister to the need of all around Him out of the treasures of the fulness of the earth. He would feed thousands in desert places, and yet be Himself an hungered, waiting for the return of His disciples with victuals from a neighbouring village. This is "having nothing, and yet possessing all things." But while thus poor, both needy and exposed nothing that in the least savoured of meanness is ever seen attaching to His condition. He never begs, though He have not a penny; for when He wanted to see one (not to use it for Himself) He had to ask to be shown it. He never runs away, though exposed, and His life jeoparded, as we speak, in the place where He was. He withdraws Himself, or passes by as hidden. And thus, again, I may say. nothing mean, nothing unbecoming, full personal dignity attaches to Him, though poverty and exposure were His lot every day.

Blessed and beautiful! Who could preserve under our eye such an Object, so perfect, so unblemished so exquisitely, delicately pure, in all the minute and most ordinary details of human life! Paul does not give us this. None could give it to us but Jesus, the God-Man. The peculiarities of His virtues in the midst of the ordinariness of His circumstances tell us of His Person. It must be a peculiar Person, it must be the divine Man, if I may so express Him, that could give us such peculiarities in such common-place conditions. Paul does not give us anything like it, again I say. There was great dignity and moral elevation about him, I know. If any one may be received as exhibiting that, let us agree that it was he. But his path is not that of Jesus. He is in danger of his life, and he uses his nephew to protect him. Again, his friends let him down the wall of the town in a basket. I do not say he begs or asks for it, but he acknowledges money sent to him. I say not how Paul avowed himself a Pharisee in the mixed assembly, in order to shelter himself; or how he spake evil of the high priest that was judging him. Such conduct was morally wrong; and I am speaking here only of such cases as were, though not morally wrong, below the full personal and moral dignity that marks the way of Christ. Nor is the flight into Egypt, as it is called, an exception in this characteristic of the Lord; for that journey was taken to fulfil prophecy, and under the authority of a Divine oracle.

But all this is really, not only moral glory, but it is a moral wonder- marvellous how the pen that was held by a human hand could ever have delineated such beauties. We are to account for it, as has been observed before and by others, only by its being a truth, a living reality. We are shut up to that blessed necessity. Still further, as

we go on with this blessed truth, it is written: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Our words should prove themselves as thus, always with grace, by ministering good to others, "grace to the hearers." This, however, will often be in the pungency of admonition or rebuke; and at times with decision or severity, even with indignation and zeal; and thus they will be "seasoned with salt," as the Scripture speaks. And having these fine qualities, being gracious and yet salted, they will bear witness that we know how to answer every man.

Among all other forms of it, the Lord Jesus illustrated this form of moral perfectness. He knew how to answer every man, as with words which were always to his soul's profit, whether men would hear, or whether they would forbear, but at times seasoned, nay, seasoned highly with salt.

Thus, in answering inquiries, He did not so much purpose to satisfy them, as to reach the conscience or the condition of the inquirer.

In His silence, or refusal to answer at all, when He stood before the Jew or the Gentile at the end, before either the priests, or Pilate, or Herod, we can trace the same perfect fitness as we do in His words or answers; witnessing to God, that at least One among the sons of men knew "a time to keep silence, and a time to speak."

Great variety in

His very tone and manner also presents itself in all this; and all this variety, minute as it was as well as great, was part of this fragrance before God. Sometimes His word was gentle, sometimes peremptory; sometimes He

reasons; sometimes He rebukes at once; and sometimes conducts calm reasoning up to the heated point of solemn condemnation; for it is the moral of the occasion He always weighs.

Matthew 15 has struck me as a chapter in which this perfection, in much of its various beauty and excellency may be seen. In the course of it, the Lord is called to answer the Pharisees, the multitude, the poor afflicted stranger from the coasts of Tyre, and His own disciples, again and again, in their different exposure of either their stupidity or their selfishness; and we may notice His different style of rebuke and of reasoning, of calm, patient teaching, and of faithful, wise, and gracious training of the soul: and we cannot but feel how fitting all this variety was to the place or occasion that called it forth. And such was the beauty and the fitness of His neither teaching nor learning, in Luke 2, but only hearing and asking questions. To have taught then would not have been in season, a child as He was in the midst of His elders. To have learnt would not have been in full fidelity to the light, the eminent and bright light, which He knew He carried in Himself; for we may surely say of Him, "He was wiser than the ancients, and had more understanding than His teachers." I do not mean as God, but as One "filled with wisdom," as was then said of Him. But He knew in the perfection of grace how to use this fulness of wisdom, and He is, therefore, not presented to us by the evangelist in the midst of the doctors in the temple at the age of twelve, either teaching or learning; but it is simply said of Him, that He was "hearing and asking questions." "Strong in spirit, filled with wisdom, and the grace of God upon Him," is the description of Him then, as He grew up in

tender years; and when a Man, conversing in the world, His speech was always with grace, seasoned with salt, as of one who knew how to answer every man. What perfection and beauty suited to the different seasons of childhood and manhood!

And further. We find Him, besides this, also in various other conditions. At times He is slighted and scorned, watched and hated by adversaries, retiring, as it were, to save His life from their attempts and purposes. At times He is weak, followed only by the poorest of the people; wearied, too, and hungry and athirst, debtor to the service of some loving women, who felt as though they owed Him everything. At times He is compassionating the multitude in all gentleness, or companying with His disciples in their repasts or in their journeying, conversing with them as a man would with his friends. At times He is in strength and honour before us, doing wonders, letting out some rays of glory; and though in His person and circumstances nothing and nobody in the world, a carpenter's son, without learning or fortune, yet making a greater stir among men, and that, too, at times in the thoughts of the ruling ones on earth, than man ever made.

Childhood, and manhood, and human life in all its variousness, thus gives Him to us. Would that the heart could hold Him! There is a perfection in some of the minute features that tell of the Divine hand that was delineating them. Awkward work would any penman, unkept, unguided by the Spirit, have made of certain occasions where these strokes and touches are seen. As when the Lord wanted to comment on the current money of the land, He asked to be shown it, and does not find it about Himself. Indeed, we may be sure He

carried none of it. Thus, the moral beauties of the action, flowed from the moral perfection of His condition within.

He asked His disciples in the hour of Gethsemane, to watch with Him; but He did not ask them to pray for Him. He would claim sympathy. He prized it in the hour of weakness and pressure, and would have the hearts of His companions bound to Him then. Such a desire was of the moral glory that formed the human perfection that was in Him; but while He felt this and did this, He could not ask them to stand as in the Divine presence on His behalf. He would have them give themselves to Him, but He could not seek them to give themselves to God for Him. Thus, He asked them again, I say, to watch with Him, but He did not ask them to pray for Him. When shortly or immediately afterwards, He linked praying and watching together, it was of themselves and for themselves He spoke, saying, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Paul could say to his fellow-saints, "Ye also helping together by prayer to God for us: pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience." But such was not the language of Jesus. I need not say, it could not have been; but the pen that writes for us such a life, and delineates for us such a character, is held by the Spirit of God. None other than the Spirit could write thus.

He did good, and lent, hoping for nothing again. He gave, and His left hand did not know what His right hand was doing. Never in one single instance, as I believe, did He claim either the person or the service of those whom He restored and delivered. He never made the deliverance He wrought, a title to service. Jesus loved, and healed, and saved, looking for nothing again.

He would not let Legion, the Gadarene, be with Him. The child at the foot of the mount, He delivered back to his father. The daughter of Jairus He left in the bosom of her family. The widow's son at Nain He restores to his mother. He claims none of them. Does Christ give, in order that He may receive again? Does He not (perfect Master!) illustrate His own principle-"Do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again"? The nature of grace is to impart to others, not to enrich itself: and He came, that in Him and His ways, it might shine in all the exceeding riches and glory that belong to it. He found servants in this world; but He did not first heal them, and then claim them. He called them, and endowed them. They were the fruit of the energy of His Spirit, and of affections kindled in hearts constrained by His love. And sending them forth, He said to them, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Surely there is something beyond human conception in the delineation of such a character. One repeats that thought again and again. And very happy it is to add, that it is- in the very simplest forms this moral glory of the Lord shines forth at times-such forms as are at once intelligible to all the perceptions and sympathies of the heart. Thus He never refused the feeblest faith, though He accepted and answered, and that too with delight, the approaches and demands of the boldest.

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The Nearness of the Glory

The Nearness of the Glory.

Six papers by J. G. Bellett.

The thought of the nearness of the glory should be deeply cherished by the heart. And we need be at no effort to persuade ourselves of it. It is taught us richly in the Word. The place of the glory is near us, and the path by which it can either come to us or we go to it is short and simple, and the moment for the taking of the journey may be present in the twinkling of an eye.

"Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies," is a sentence which tells us of the path or title to the glory. We need nothing but the justifying faith of Jesus. When by faith we stand washed and sanctified through the blood, we are at once made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Our persons need no further adorning. We are clean every whit, presentable without fault before the presence of the glory, whether that glory be still hid within its veil, or to be manifested tomorrow.

Nor can we say when it may please the Lord of the glory to appear. But this we know that He is ever near and can show Himself in His high and bright estate in a moment.

The congregation was set at the door of the tabernacle to acquaint themselves with their High Priest. They did so. They took knowledge of the consecration and services of Aaron, and on the accomplishing of these services, the glory appeared. It was waiting at the door, within its proper veil, to do this, and show itself. All it needed was title to take its little journey, in finding an object worthy of its visitation. And as soon as the

congregation stand in the value of the blood of Christ, or appear in the character which the priestly services and sacrifices of Jesus impart to it, then the glory, reading its title to appear in finding an object worthy of its visitation makes it short journey, and shines around the camp. And it shines around to gladden them; not to alarm but to gladden. They were entitled and prepared to be gladdened by it, for they stood in the value and cleansing of Jesus. Its place was theirs; and the atmosphere it brought with it their native air.

But there are other witnesses to the nearness of the glory. A light surprised the persecutor as he journeyed from Jerusalem to Damascus. It was above the brightness of the sun at noonday. And well it might have been, for it was a beam from the land of the glory, and it bore the Lord of glory upon it (see Isa. 24: 23).

Happy to know from such a witness, how near that place of glory is to us. For as in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye that glory was here! Jesus' power present, and it came. He commanded and it was here.

But it did not come to display itself. It came for other business, on another errand altogether. It came to make the persecutor of the unoffending flock of Christ a native of that very land where this glory of Christ dwelt.

It begins therefore, by laying the persecutor himself in ruins. It shines around him, and he falls to the earth. It is the light of Gideon's pitchers confounding the armies of the uncircumcised. Saul takes the sentence of death into himself. With a vengeance he knows that he has been kicking against the pricks; madly destroying himself in all his enmity against Jesus, for that Jesus was the Lord of the glory. But the One that wounded can

heal, the One that kills can make alive. "Rise and stand upon thy feet," says the Lord of this glory. Life comes from Him who could wield the power of death — life infallible, and indestructible — life with inheritance of this very glory. And he is made the witness of the same life and inheritance to all kinds of sinners, kings, Gentiles, and people of Israel.

What a business is this! The glory, and the Lord of the glory come to do it. Never had such points in the furthest distance met before. The persecutor of the flock and the Saviour of the flock are beside each other. The Lord of the glory and the sinner whom the glory was consuming are here.

Can we trust all this and be glad in it? Is it pleasant to us to think that the glory is thus near us; that at the bidding of its Lord, or to carry, like a chariot, its Lord, it could be here in a moment? Stephen saw it thus, as by an upward glance of his closing eye. And when the voice of the Archangel heralds it, and the trump of God summons it, it will be here again to enfold us and bear us up to its native land (1 Thess. 4, 1 Cor. 15).

It visited Saul, but left him as its heir and expectant, to travel and to toil down here for his appointed day. But when it visits us, it will not leave us here any longer as its expectants, for awhile strangers and foreigners in the earth, but takes us home with itself ever to be with the Lord — the Lord of the glory (1 Cor. 2: 8; James 2: 1).

Till then like Paul, we may "obtain help of the Lord," and testify of what we are, and of what we shall be. But it is all service in a foreign land, with this cherishing gladdening thought, that the native land is near us, and our translation asks but for a moment, for the twinkling

of an eye. The title is simple, the path is short, and the journey soon taken. "Whom He justifies, them He also glorifies."

Bethany.

God is the living God and as such He is acting in this scene of death. He came into the midst of it as the living God. He could not have come otherwise. We may say He has not been here, if He has not been here as the living God. And His victory is in resurrection. If resurrection be denied, then, that the living God has been here, that God has interfered with the condition of this ruined death-stricken world is denied also.

It is blessed to see this, very sure and simple as a truth, and the secret or principle of the divine way in this fallen creation from the beginning. Into Himself as the living God, into Himself or the resources which His own glory or nature provided, God has retreated, apart from the world that has involved itself in death. Again I say, this truth, this mystery, is sure and simple, full of blessedness, and that which, of necessity, has marked His way in this world. If His creature has been untrue, His creature of highest dignity, set by Him over the works of His hand, if Adam had disappointed Him, revolted and brought in death, surely God has to look to Himself, to draw from Himself, and there in His own resources, in the provision which He Himself supplies, He finds the remedy. And this is, in His victory as the living God, which victory is resurrection, His own resource of life in despite of the conquest of sin and death, let those conquests take what form they may.

I am looking only at one, but as I judge, a very vivid sample of this. Bethany in the neighbourhood of

Jerusalem, a village on the other side of Mount Olivet, in the Scriptures of the Evangelists, shows itself to us as a happy, sacred, and mystic spot. It was happy, for there the Lord Jesus found, if anywhere, a home on the earth. It was sacred, for there He had some of the most intimate communion with His elect, which His spirit ever enjoyed. It was mystic, for there He exhibited this truth or mystery which I am speaking of, His victory as the living God.

Lazarus, His friend in Judea, Lazarus of Bethany, had died. They had buried him — all they could do — the service of a fallen creature. The dead can bury the dead — right it is in them to do so — but that is all they can do.

The Lord was then absent. But He comes, in due season, to awaken His friend out of sleep, to raise Him whom His friends buried. He reveals Himself in full suited character, the character suited to that moment, and in which He had come into this world. "I am the resurrection and the life," He says. Bethany at that moment afforded Him His proper material to work upon. Sin had there reigned unto death. Man had there just reaped the wages of sin. Lazarus had died. The sentence, "in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," had not been cancelled. That could not be. And now it had been afresh executed in this elect one of God in the land of Judea. But the Son of God, the living God Himself, comes to do His work, as sin and death had just done theirs.

Bethany thus became a mystic spot. It was now not only a happy place, and a sacred place, it was also a mystic place. It had now exhibited God's great principle, the

victory of the living God in this death-stricken world. This is the character it acquires, under John's Gospel: and in this character the Lord enjoys it in the same Gospel — I mean, in the next chapter. There the Lord sits as in the midst of the risen family. He is at Bethany after it has acquired its mystic character. It has been constituted the expression of God's way in this world where sin is reigning; and now the Lord enjoys it. He is there as with the risen family. In spirit He is in the millennial world, and as the King sitting at the table, the spikenard of His worshippers sendeth forth its goodly smell.

This was the first use to be made of Bethany, or of God's own great and ruling principle, His victory over death, or His glory as the living God. He enjoys it in the bosom of His elect (see John 11: 12).

He has, however, more to do with Bethany than this. If He first enjoys it in the midst of His own, He must also resort to it as His relief from the disappointments which He was suffering from all that He had been trusting, so that He may get an answer as from Himself, and find satisfaction there, let all beside disappoint Him as they may.

This is seen in Matthew 21. Jerusalem had, at that moment disappointed Him. He had sought her as His chosen seat of royalty in the earth, and had offered Himself in all solemnity to her as her King; but Israel would not, and He retires to Bethany. An action simple in itself, but full of significance, telling us that He has in Himself, in His doings and victories as the living God, resources that will never fail Him and never disappoint Him.

This is very full of meaning and of interest. But this is what He has been doing in this world from the beginning. Let death appear, let the judgment of sin be ready to be executed, whether in the garden of Eden, in the earth before the Flood, in the land of Egypt or of Canaan, in the midst of Israel, or wider still, in the whole world itself. We ever see Him acting as the living God, providing atonement for sin, the principle of death, and bringing forth a living people from the midst of the scene of righteous doom and judgment of death. Bethany had already been constituted this to Him, the witness of this; and now when need arises, when fresh disappointment from the creature whom He had trusted, comes, He uses Bethany in this character. And I may say, when He retired to Bethany, He retreated to Himself and His own resources.

Boldness in the Day of Judgment.

1 John 4: 7.

John says, teaching us under the Holy Ghost, "Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so are we in this world." A most wondrous and very blessed Scripture (1 John 4: 17).

John himself afterwards experienced the boldness, of which this Scripture speaks, in a very remarkable way. He had his own doctrine made good to his spirit by the same hand that taught him the doctrine.

In the Isle of Patmos he was introduced to a day of judgment. The revelation he got there of the Lord Jesus Christ, was a revelation of Him in judicial glory. He saw the Son of Man standing among the golden candlesticks with white garments, eyes of flame of fire, a voice as of

many waters, a countenance as of the sun in his strength, and with feet as though they burnt in a furnace. A solemn, terrible exhibition of Christ in the place of judgment, all this was. John falls to the earth as one dead. But the Lord tells him not to fear, speaking to him as the One who had been dead and was alive again, having the keys of hell and of death. That is, He imparts to the spirit of His saint, then in the presence of judicial glory, all the virtue of His own condition. Jesus was there, through death and resurrection, holding in His grasp all the power of the enemy, for He had the keys of hell and of death. Such an One speaks comfortably to John. He imparts, as I said, the virtue of His own condition to His saint, though in a day of judgment. As He Himself was, so would He have John to be, even in the place of victory, the other side of judgment (Rev. 1).

This was surely wonderful and full of blessing. And John at once feels the power of it, and acquires "boldness" in that "day of judgment." For, though the Son of Man is still before him in the same attire and character as he had already seen Him, in judicial glory, with eyes of flame and feet as though they burnt in a furnace, and a countenance like as the sun shineth in his strength, John has boldness and then he listens to the voice challenging the churches again and again, but he remains unmoved from beginning to end.

This is very beautiful, and has a great character in it. But still more. Another scene of judgment succeeds this of the Son of Man walking among the candlesticks, and John is set in the presence of it. He is carried or summoned by the sound of a trumpet to heaven, preparing itself for the execution of judgment. The thrones were there, thrones of judgment — for the

elders are seen clothed in white raiment, befitting those seated in judgment. Voices, lightnings, and thunders, instruments of wrath or witnesses that the Lord was rising up out of His holy place for judgment, proceeded out of the throne. And from thence, as we proceed through the Book, all that succeeds is in character; trumpets, vials, fire, smoke, earthquakes, and other terrible sights and symbols, enough to make another Moses quake, as in the day of Sinai. But John maintains the "boldness" he had already acquired, and all through is as unmoved as the living creatures and the crowned elders themselves. They were on high, he was still "in this world"; they were glorified, but he still in the body, yet he is as calm as they. As they were so was he. And when the terrible sealed book is seen in the right hand of Him that sat on the throne, and a loud voice as of a mighty angel challenges all to loose it, instead of dreading the moment when such an awful volume should be opened, he weeps because no one was found equal to do so. He longs to have the secret of the throne disclosed. The day of judgment has no terror for him. He is "as" Christ, and has "boldness."

But this security — God's own calmness and assurance in the day of judgment — has had its witness or expression in different forms, again and again, in the course of God's dealing with His elect. As in the time of the flood, in the day of the overthrow of Sodom, at the time of the exodus, and also at the time of the passage of the Jordan.

These were days of judgment; but the security thrown round the elect, on each of them, was divine; it was God's own safety which He then imparted to His people. They were in the world when its judgment was

executing; but we may say, as he was then, so were they. His safety was theirs.

The Lord God shut Noah in the ark, with His own hand, ere the waters began to rise. The waters were then the instruments of divine wrath. but the divine hand had shut the door upon Noah. And surely those waters of judgment could no more prevail against the hand of God than they could against his throne. And therefore, as the Lord was, so was Noah. This safety was a common one, wondrous to tell it.

So even such an one as Lot in another day of judgment. He was saved so as by fire — out of the fire. A salvation in no wise glorious to himself. He suffered loss, for his works were all burnt up. But the angel said, he could do nothing till Lot was fully and clean delivered out of all possible danger from the judgment. The angel could do nothing till then. And I ask, was not this divine security?

In the night of Egypt, He who carried the sword had already appointed the blood. He to whom the vengeance belonged, the Judge who was conducting the judgment, had ordained and pledged the deliverance. "When I see the blood, I will pass over." Was not this imparting His own security to His people again? The Lord must deny Himself — and this He cannot do — or Israel must be safe. Israel may have the same "boldness" in that "day of judgment," as the Lord Himself, though Israel was in the land through which the sword was going.

And so in the passage of the Jordan. The waters were there as in the day of Noah, ready to overflow their banks, as in the time of barley harvest. But the priests were in the midst of them, and the ark or presence of God. And there they stood, the ministers of God and the

presence of God, till all the people had crossed the river. Jesus was in the vessel, and He must sink, if the disciples did. The safety of the ark was the safety of the camp. As it was, so were they. Nothing less than divine security was that of Israel amid the swelling of the Jordan. The judgment of Canaan was about to begin, but lsrael was in God's sanctuary.

All this surely witnesses how the Lord imparts Himself, or shares His condition with His elect — and that too in the day of their most solemn necessity, so to speak. He is beyond judgment, above it, the Executor of it, but the value of His own place He communicated to these elect ones of old in days of judgment.

But this boldness of ours has a new character in it. It flows from "perfect love." God has put the value of the Son of the bosom upon us; and it is not possible for love to take any higher counsels or do any more wondrous work than that. The love that has set the value of the Son upon us is a perfect love. And our boldness, therefore, is confirmed not merely by the hand or by the ordinance of God, but by His heart. Noah or Israel or even Lot, in their several days of judgment, might have said "as He is, so are we." God's safety was theirs. But we resolve our security now into the love of God, as they did into the hand or ordinance of God. The security is equal but ours is the witness of a nearer, more affecting title. Ours is personal. Noah was in the ark, we are in God. "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God." And in a new sense we say, "as He is, so are we." We are loved as He is, not merely secured as He is. We have an element of full personal affection investing our spirits as well as an element of boldness.

Jacob.

Genesis 28: 10 - 20: 32.

Jacob had offended the Lord, having taken the way of nature, listening to the counsel of unbelief and thus departing from his path and his call as a saint of God. He is therefore put under discipline — for he has to learn the bitterness of his own way.

His place, that very night on which he left his father's house, witnessed, therefore, the hand of the Lord who still loved him. It was, no doubt, the fruit and ways of his own transgression, but it told also that God was his God, for that He was visiting him in fatherly chastening. It is, accordingly, such a place as God may own. It was not sin but discipline that marked it. Had it been the tent where he and his mother had dressed the kids for Isaac's feast, God could not have owned it — for deceit and fraud were practised there. But at Luz, where Jacob is under chastening, the Lord can be — and He does come and manifest Himself there.

He comes to make glory a great reality to this poor solitary, disciplined saint. He does not come to soften his pillow, or to change his condition, or to send him back to the home of his father and the care of his mother. He leaves the present fruit of Jacob's naughtiness just as bitter as he found it. But He does come to make glory and heaven a great reality to him.

Onwards, therefore, Jacob goes, and as the story tells us, he served twenty years under a certain hard taskmaster in Padan-aram. But the Lord blesses him there, and he conducts himself in the fear of the Lord there, and all is well.

In due time he is on his way back to Canaan. But indeed it is a different Jacob as well as a different journey. He was an empty Jacob at Bethel, he is a full Jacob at Peniel. He has become two bands. Flocks and herds and servants and wives and children tell of his prosperity. He had been on that road twenty years before, unfriended and alone, with a staff in his hand, but now we see him thus accompanied and surrounded. He has become a rich man. He has a stake in the world. He has something to lose, and may be a prey to others, as he surely must be an object with them.

He hears of Esau coming and four hundred men with him. He trembles. He fears for his cattle, his people and his life. He manages as well as he can, and religiously commits all to the Lord — but unbelief has mastered his heart and he is in fear of Esau.

The Lord comes to him, therefore, His second time — now on his journey homeward, as He had been with him on his journey out. But it is in a new character. He was only under discipline then, he is in the power of unbelief now: and the Lord comes, not to comfort, but to rebuke and restore him.

"There wrestled a man with him till the breaking of the day." This was the Lord in controversy with Jacob. His unbelieving fears touching Esau and his four hundred men had provoked the Lord to jealously and He withstands him.

But what is the issue of all this? Grace is made a great reality to Jacob here, as glory had been at Bethel. The wrestling Stranger, in abounding grace, allows Himself to be prevailed over by the weak and timid Jacob, and the Spirit works revival of faith in his soul. "I will not let

thee go, except Thou bless me" says he. He comes "boldly to the throne of grace." Faith is decided, and a blessing must be imparted. And Jacob becomes Israel. Grace is now made a great reality to him as before glory had been. It is now the unbelieving Jacob restored, as then it had been the chastened Jacob comforted. The Gospel is pressed on his soul here, heaved had been opened to his eye there. There he walked as at the gate of heaven and in the house of God, here he walks under the shinings of the presence of God. There Christ was making him promises, here Christ is giving him fresh embraces of love.

Such was "Bethel" on his way out, such is "Peniel on his way home. Such is God to him according to his need and condition. Heaven in its bright enriching glory was shown to him in the day of his sorrow, Christ in His precious restoring grace is given to him in the day of his failure. And these things are what we want — to have both grace and glory realized to our souls — to walk along by Bethel and by Peniel. They sweetly vary the journey, but it is the one unchanging God that opens His house to us, and sheds the light of His face upon us.

"Then gladly sing, and sound abroad

The great Redeemer's praise,

The glories of the living God,

The riches of His grace."

Notices of Coming Glories.

Were we, if I may so speak, to go in upon the fields of the New Testament scriptures, and gather up fragments of the glories of coming days, we should find them, I do not say, lying there profusely, but still we should find

them there, and we should at least have a handful to feed upon.

There is no one writing that digests this subject but coming glories shine out here and there in the midst of other thoughts, when different subjects of present interest to the saints are under consideration.

We know that in the coming days of the Kingdom, there will be both the earthly and the heavenly departments, and also connection and intercourse between them. We see notices of each of these in different parts of the four Gospels. Thus the Lord entered the city of the daughter of Zion, as her King. All that was needed to set Him forth in that glory, for a moment waited on Him. The ass and its owner, the whole material and mind of the scene, aided in giving us a sample of the days of the King of Israel.

The Greeks are presented as coming up to this King of Israel then in His beauty. And in this we get another sight of His further glories.

All this, however, was simply and entirely earthly. No glimpse of heaven appears. It is Messiah in His place on earth, King of Zion accepting the homage of the nations.

On the holy mount glories shine again. But it is another glory — not earthly, but heavenly. It is the light of bodies of glory that shines there, samples of the transfigured, translated, saints of God, in company with their Lord in heavenly places.

But, as I may say, on either side of them another place is seen; the earth In the persons of Peter, James and John, the higher heavens or, as it is called, "the exalted glory," in the voice that breaks forth upon the scene.

This is something very fine and very comprehensive. We have coming Millennial days finely and largely anticipated here. We have notices of the heavens and of the earth in their separate places; and their connections and mediums and intercourse which is to be established between them; that, while there will be a higher heaven, an excellent glory, a Father's house, unrevealed to sight there will be also a people in flesh and blood on the earth. A display of heavenly glory in the sight of the earthly people and intercourse maintained between the translated saints and them. The throne and the footstool shall be but different parts of one great system. This is a fine anticipation of coming days. The Lord again intimates "the excellent glory" under the title of "the Father's house," in John 14, letting us know that it is a wealthy place, a many-mansioned house, the dwelling of the family, the homestead in the realms of highest glory.

Thus we are gathering fragments. But further. There are distant scenes. There are nearer scenes also thrown open to our sight in these same scriptures of the New Testament.

We have the spirit of the Lord Himself before resurrection taken to and by the Father in Luke 23 — and then we have the glorified body of the Lord, after resurrection, translated to heaven, in Luke 24.

We have instruction as to ourselves in each of these things. We are taught to know, that should we die, as Jesus did, before the day of resurrection, our spirits will be received of Him in paradise or heaven. Luke 23, Acts 7; 2 Cor. 5, Philippians 1, teach us this. And should we live till the day of resurrection, we. are taught to know that we shall then be glorified and translated in

company with those saints who have already died and gone, in spirit, to Jesus. 1 Corinthians 15, witnesses this, as also 1 Thessalonians 4.

But further still. After this translation, certain and divers scenes are disclosed to us. The heaven that is set for the execution of judgment in this present evil, revolted world is opened to our sight in Revelation 4. And actions which take their course, while the heavens continue, are presented to us in the progress of the same book. But in time, judgment is all executed, and there succeeds the heavens set for the ministration of government of the world to come, or the millennial earth. This is opened to our sight in Revelation 20, 21, 22.

But even further still. The world that is to be the scene of righteousness under the heavenly sceptre of the glorified Lord and His saints, will have its end. The heaven set for the ministration of government will have fulfilled its course, as well as the heaven set for the execution of judgment. And then we get another scene of glory opened to our view. There is the Great White Throne trying everything. And then the new heavens and the new earth introduced by the judgment of this Great White Throne — as the Millennial heavens and earth have been introduced by the judgment executed under the heavens, of Revelation 4.

Here the series of glories end. Various scenes and regions have thus unfolded themselves to us in their different characters. But we are to see them, and learn what they severally are by taking up notices of them here and there throughout the New Testament scriptures, from beginning to end — to glean in that fruitful field to gather up fragments which lie there —

left by the hand of Him who is preparing for the feast days of eternity.

And had we but a heart for the feast itself, we should occupy ourselves more diligently and joyfully, in this gathering up, a kind of gleaning that goes before the harvest. But we fail in affection. We are wanting in desire. Present pleasures and interests divert the heart — and do not allow the eye and the thought and the hope to tarry where notices of coming glories shine.

Jeremiah and the Times.

Feel very much the character of this present time through which we are passing. The great powers that are destined to fill out the actions of Christendom's closing day are practising themselves, each in its several sphere, with great earnestness and skill. These powers are the civil and ecclesiastical.

I do not doubt but that, for a season, the ecclesiastical will prevail. The woman is to ride for awhile — and that is the symbol, as I surely judge, which signifies the supremacy of that which takes the place of the Church. And this present moment is marked by her efforts to mount the saddle.. And she is so adroitly directing these efforts that I doubt not success will soon attend them: and then the blood of the saints may flow afresh.

The civil power, however, is not idle. The wondrous advance that is making every day in the cultivation of the world is the proof of great skill and activity on its part. It is largely boasting and showing what it can do, and pledging what further it means to do.

At this moment each of these powers is abroad in the scene of action, and men's minds are divided between

them. They are in some sense, rivals and opposed. There is the commercial energy, and there is the religious energy — the one erecting its railroads and exhibitions and such like, the other its bishoprics, churches, ordinances, etc. The attention of the children of man is divided between them — but the saints, who know the Cross of Christ as the relief of their conscience and the ground of their separation from the world are apart from both equally.

I doubt not but the civil power will have to yield the supremacy for a time; and the woman will ride again; though her state and greatness will be but short for the civil power will take offence and remove her.

For between these powers there is at times confederacy, and then at times there is enmity.

If we, in God's grace, keep a good conscience toward Christ and the truth, we may count upon it that no inheritance or portion on the earth is worth us, as men speak, many years purchase. If we will consent to become whatever the times would make us, of course we shall go on. But I speak this in the recollection that at any moment we maybe carried up to meet the Lord. I follow simply what I judge the progress of things on the earth is to be.

I have been sensible lately how much the language and spirit of Jeremiah suit these times. He lived in the daily observation of evil and iniquity abounding and advancing in the scene around him, though it was called by God's name and was indeed His place on the earth. The house of prayer had become a den of thieves. He knew likewise that the judgment of God was awaiting it all; but withal, he looked for sure and happy days in the

distance which lay beyond the present corruption and the coming judgment.

He mourned about it, but he also testified against it. And like his Master, he was hated for his testimony (John 7: 7).

He was, however, full of faith and hope touching the future; and therefore he laid out his money in the purchase of Hanameel's field (Jer. 32). All this was beautiful — the present sorrow, the certainty of approaching judgment, and the hope of closing, crowning glory. This is a pattern for our spirit.

And I observe another feature of character or of power in the prophet. He was not to be seduced from the conclusions of faith by occasional circumstances, or fair promising appearances. This is seen in chapter 32. The Chaldean army had broken up their camp at the walls of Jerusalem, because of the arrival of the Egyptian allies. But Jeremiah left the city, for he could not but hold the conclusions of faith, that Jerusalem was doomed of God by the flattering appearances of a moment like that.

This is a fine exhibition of a soul walking by the light of God not only through darkness, but through darkness that seemed to be light. And with all this he was a suffering witness.

All seems quiet around us at present, and even more than that, things are advancing and progressing as far as the accommodations of social life go. But the moral of the scene in the eye of faith is more serious than ever. The apostate powers of man are ripening themselves into their most abundant exhibition. There is somewhat of rivalry between them just for the present. The secular and the religious are apart as yet. Each has its

respective votaries and worshippers. But confederacy is to succeed to rivalry ere long I believe. The world must, even for its own ends, for a season adopt religion, and then for that season the woman will ride the beast again, that man's system may grow solid as well as extended, and propose itself as the thing that has earned for itself a title to conform all and everything to itself.

Separation is the Christian's place and calling, church separation, separation because of heavenly citizenship and oneness with an already risen Christ. Abraham's was a very complete separation. It was twofold: he was separated from the natural associations of Mesopotamia, "country, kindred, and father's house," and from the moral associations of Canaan, or its iniquities and idols.

May the Lord in the thought of these solemn truths, be more real and near to us! May the prospect of His presence be more familiarly before us, and the hope of His glory be found lying more surely and certainly in the very midst of the affections and stirrings of our hearts!

The Parable of the Cedar and the Two Eagles

The Parable of the Cedar and the Two Eagles.

Ezekiel 17.

J. G. Bellett.

from Miscellaneous Papers (R. L. Allan)

Discipline preserves us for future blessing, but it does not exalt us in this present world.

Connected with this thought, let us read this parable.

This cedar is Judah, or the house of David; the two eagles are the king of Babylon and the king of Egypt.

This cedar had incurred the discipline of the Lord, and the Lord used the king of Babylon, one of the eagles, as the rod of His hand, for correction. Under this rod, the house of David would be humbled, but preserved — for correction is for purifying, not for destruction. Discipline plants us in "a fruitful field," and by "great waters;" but we grow there, for the present, only as "a willow tree," as "a spreading vine of low stature," as this parable has it; "base," but kept and sheltered. (Ver. 5, 6, 14.)

Jehoiachin, who was of this cedar, found this to be so. He humbled himself under this eagle, the king of Babylon, the Lord's rod for correction, and he was preserved, though "base," for a season. For thirty-six years he was hid in Babylon; but he was then exalted, proving that he had been planted in "a fruitful field," though, for so long a season, he was but "a willow tree." (See 2 Kings 24, 25)

But another eagle comes near this cedar; and this cedar, the house of David, in the person of Zedekiah, who succeeded Jehoiachin, solicits him, "bends her roots towards him, and shoots forth her branches towards him, that he might water it by the furrows of her plantation." (See verse 7.)

Zedekiah seeks the king of Egypt, "that he might give him horses and much people," (verse 15) might flourish again under his shadow, refusing to be any longer "a willow tree." But this was rebellion against the Lord's rod, and the Lord revisits it as rebellion against Himself; and He enquires, shall such a cedar prosper? and He answers, he shall not prosper. Zedekiah shall know not merely the discipline but the judgment of the Lord. (Ver. 19, 20.) What a picture this is! what a moral may be read in it!

Happy is it when the soul bows to the hand of God, accepting the punishment of our sins. It is the place of blessing. Israel's blessing began there. When they stripped off their ornaments, and sought the Lord outside the camp, they were in the way to a blessing. (Ex. 33) And so, after they had failed in the kingdom, as they had failed in the wilderness, their blessing lay in Babylon as before it lay outside the camp. They must accept the punishment of their sins and go there.

It is thus with us individually. We must be broken in order to be blest. Discipline will keep us for future exaltation, but leave us "base" in this world. It is a "fruitful field" to the soul. But these are terms we do not particularly like. We would rather "bend our roots" towards that which may help us in the world. But that way, which is our own way, will end, as with Zedekiah, in

shame and ruin. (See 2 Kings 25) Accepting the judgment of God, submitting under His mighty hand, will end, as with Jehoiachin, in blessing and exaltation.

Such is the parable of the cedar and the two eagles in Ezek. 17. But the close of that chapter, after the parable, must also be looked at. (See Ezek. 17: 22, 24.)

The prophet here looks forward to the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the cedar of this parable in his day, the heir of the house of David; and this passage presents Him as taking His place as humbled and broken with the nation of Israel or the throne of David, and from thence, according to God, receiving His exaltation and kingdom.

But though broken, this was neither in conscience nor in relationship. He could not have been humbled, or broken, or convicted in conscience (as we are to be), for He was stainless and spotless, with neither corruption within, nor blemish without. He could not have been broken in relationship, as the house of David was, because he was no more federally represented by that fallen house, than as Son of man He was federally represented or headed in Adam. But He was broken in circumstances — for the ends of the glory of God, and the blessing of His people, the Lord Jesus was, by His own will, broken in circumstances. The heir of the throne was a carpenter. The Lord of the earth and its fulness had not where to lay His head. He was "a tender twig," a "low tree," a "dry tree." This is the Jesus of Isaiah 53 of whom it is said, "He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, as a root out of a dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." But this "tender twig" shall, in due season, be planted, as this

passage tells us, "upon an high mountain and eminent." It shall "bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar, and under it shall dwell all fowls of every wing, in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell."

And this is the millennial Jesus, as the other was the Nazarene Jesus. The "tender twig" of our prophet is the Nazarene Jesus; the "goodly cedar" with its boughs and fruit is the millennial Jesus. But it is the same Jesus who thus vindicates, and illustrates, and glorifies all the thoughts and principles, and truth of God. As the prophet closes this chapter, giving us the moral of the whole action: "And all the trees of the field shall know that I the Lord have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I the Lord have spoken and have done it."

And surely this is very much the common moral of all God's dealings with us in this scene of proud revolt. And I may say again, as at the beginning, His discipline preserves us for future blessing and exaltation, but it does not make us great in this present world.

"Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." But in contrast with this, just for another moment look at the history of another famous tree that was once set in the soil of this world. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, whom we have seen in this parable as one of the two eagles, was also a celebrated tree. His branch spread in its day, as the branch of this millennial Jesus will do by-and-by in "the world to come." (See Dan. 4) But Nebuchadnezzar had not previously been "a tender twig," a "low tree," a "dry

tree." Accordingly, he exalts himself and meets the judgment of God. His leaves are scattered, his fruit shaken off, his branches cut down. He is left as "a stump in the earth." And then, being broken and humbled under God's mighty hand, God blesses, and exalts him, in His own way, at the latter end — that we may again learn God's way, to make us "tender twigs" ere we become "goodly cedars."

The Two Rich Men - Luke 18, 19

The Two Rich Men.

Luke 18, 19.

J. G. Bellett.

BT vol. 9 p. 327.

How beautifully the incidents recorded in the Evangelists exhibit the workings of nature and of grace. They are short and familiar, but full of matter for the meditation of our hearts that we may be either warned or comforted.

Uneasiness of conscience was goading the rich young ruler of Luke 18 to seek relief wherever it might be found. He loved the world and could not give it up; and yet he had religious apprehensions of a day of judgment, and owned the fact that there was a kingdom of God still to come. This is a common case. A calculating worldly heart with serious religious sentiments, all together working uneasiness in the soul. He was a sample of the thorny ground hearer. He would fain have both worlds, and yet was not so sure that he had the future world. And how could be? How could such a double-minded man be stable? How could a body, the eye of which was thus evil, be full of light? His uneasiness was goading him hither and thither, and in his waverings he seeks Jesus.

Can anything be more natural? He was not a reckless man of pleasure, but a religious calculating man of the world, who could deliberately weigh his own interests in

time and eternity, and make them supreme in all his reckonings.

He was, with all this, of course nothing but an old bottle. The new wine is therefore spilt; The doctrine of Christ is lost upon him. He goes away a lover of the world as he had come, for the love of money keeps him apart from Jesus and thus outside the kingdom of God.

The Lord draws the simplest moral from this incident. "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." The disciples however are amazed at this and say, "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus answers, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God." These last words are much to be noted.

It is the way of the Spirit in Luke to group together matters for moral instruction, making that much rather his end than mere accuracy of historic time and place. After a short interval from the time of the case of the rich ruler, according to this his usual method, as I have said, Luke gives us the case of the rich publican, Zaccheus of Jericho, They were both rich. This is a common characteristic. And up to this moment they may have had much more in common; but from this out, as far as we learn of them, they are separated for ever.

Solemn thought! but a thought suggested by every day's experience.

Zaccheus is not under the goading of a natural conscience. Nothing of this appears in his present movement. His path was under the drawings of the Father, for he seeks Jesus. (John 6.) It was the secret effectual drawing and teaching of the Father, and not the goad of an uneasy conscience, that was determining

his present path. This was so, as we have said, because it lay toward Jesus; as He says Himself, "every one that hath heard and hath learnt of the Father cometh unto me." And that path really leading to Jesus as really led away from the world. For Zaccheus was now travelling a road which nature and the spirit of the world would never have taken. He forgets himself on this journey. He was no longer the rich publican of Jericho. The young ruler, on the contrary, had never forgotten his riches. But wealthy and important as Zaccheus was, all that is now forgotten, and through the crowd he passes, and up the tree he makes his way, careless of every cost if he may but see the Lord.

Very beautiful this. Here is an incident, as I said, exhibiting the working of grace: so the former had done the working of nature.

And the end of these workings is as different as the path itself. He lays his wealth at the feet of the Lord, while the ruler had gone away, full-handed as he came.*

*It was the exercise of soul in this young man, I believe, which made the Lord love him. (Mark 10: 21.) For He hoped it was genuine and would end in life and fruitfulness. (See 1 Cor. 13: 7.) But this shows how the Lord values the exercises of the soul.

For Zaccheus was "a new bottle." He keeps the new wine. Both are preserved. The wine is not spilt, the bottle is not burst. The drawing of the Father had led the soul, and the doctrine of the Son fills it.

Here was a living witness of what the Lord had said, "the things which are impossible with man are possible with God." For here was a rich man entering the kingdom, because he was not under the mere impulse of

the conscience — that could never have done it — but under the conduct of God Himself; the teachings and drawings of the Father.

What a volume of holy instruction opens to us here!

And I doubt not that the case of these two rich men suggests some principal features in the parable that follows, "the nobleman that goes into the far country." The parable itself is suggested by another circumstance, as we learn (Luke 19), but some of the features of it arise hence, as I have said.

For in the unprofitable servant we see a picture of the young ruler, and in the other servants we see Zaccheus. The moral difference between them is this: the unprofitable servant religiously owns the seriousness of a day of judgment and of reckoning, and is careful for his own sake, to provide, as he judges, against it. He lays up his Lord's pound in a napkin, dreading the account he may hereafter have to make of it. But this is all. He has no heart for Christ or His service at all — but having saved himself, as he hoped, against the results of a day of reckoning, he goes forth and spends his activities on himself, or for his own interests. And such an one was the young ruler — he feared judgment, but had no heart for Christ, serving himself in the world.

The other servants had no calculations about judgment at all, but they thought about their Lord and His kingdom. It was their Lord who gave impulse to their activities. They set His service before them when they went forth to do business, they took His talent with them, and not their own. That is, they traded in the world for Him and not for themselves. Altogether the opposite of the unprofitable servant this was. The Lord's

talent was not left at home, but carried abroad. Whatever was done by these servants was done for Christ, and not for themselves, whether it was more or less. And such an one was Zaccheus. He looked on his goods and with full purpose of heart used them for his Lord, either by restitution or by alms-deeds serving His glory in the world.

The Two Tribes and a Half

The Two Tribes and a Half.

J. G. Bellett.

Christian Friend vol. 18, 1891, p. 59.

The history of the two tribes and a half has its own instruction for us, and illustrates a peculiar character of mind and walk among the saints of God. They do not stand exactly with Lot of the days of Abraham, though in some respects they remind us of him.

It is wonderful what a variety of mind, character, and of Christian experience, the soul finds before itself in the histories of Scripture. The soul reads itself there very fully; the workings of nature not only in man, but in the renewed man, its conflicts and its strength, giving us to see so much that we know in ourselves; and at times the lights and shades, as well as the distinctive features, are to be traced.

This strikes one here. The two tribes and a half are not Lot, but there is that in them which tells us of him. Like him, their own distinct independent history begins with their seeing the well-watered plains — the plains good for their cattle on the wilderness side of the Jordan. They think of their cattle rather than of the call of God, and the pilgrimage of their brethren. Had their hearts been full of Christ, they would not have seen anything till they had crossed the river. Abraham, their father, had not remained on that side the river; nor did their expectation, when called out from Egypt, stop short of the other side. Neither had Moses said anything to them about these plains in the land of Gilead. But they had

cattle, and those plains were suitable to their cattle, and they sue for an inheritance ere they reach the land, which had been their expectation when they set out. This was all. They had no thought whatever of revolting, of sacrificing the portion of true Israelites; but their cattle drew their eyes to the goodly plains of Gilead, and they were for possessing them, though they would do so as Israelites.

How natural! how common! In moral power they came short of the call of God, though they held to the hope of that calling, and claimed fellowship only with those who were the objects of it. They were not in power a risen people, though in faith one with such. They were careful to declare and hold their alliance with the tribes who were to pass the Jordan, though they were led to remain on the wilderness side of it themselves. I do not regard them like Lot, a people of mixed principles, who had deliberately formed their lives by something inconsistent with the call of God; but rather as a generation who, owning that call, and prizing it, and refusing the thought of having any other, are not found in the full moral power of it.

Again I say, How common! This is a large generation. We know ourselves too well to ask, Is there such a people?

Moses at once is made uneasy by this movement on the part of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He expresses this uneasiness with much force. He tells them that they bring to his remembrance the conduct of the spies, whom he had sent out years before from Kadesh-barnea, and whose way had discouraged their brethren, and occasioned the forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness. There was something so unlike the call

of Israel from Egypt in the hope of Canaan, in all this suggestion on the part of these tribes, that Moses at once thus resents it. And it is bad when this is produced in the soul of a Moses; when the first instinctive feelings and thoughts of a saint, walking in the power of the resurrection of Christ, are alarmed and wounded by what is seen in a brother; but yet how common! Many a Moses nowadays is called in spirit to challenge what offends, as being out of company with the calling of the saints; for many a thing gets its sanction, or its excuse, from the heart of a saint, that cannot stand before the judgment of faith.

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh have to explain themselves, and to give fresh pledges to Moses that they by no means separate themselves from the fellowship and interests of their brethren. And they do this with zeal, and with integrity too. In this they are not with Lot. Lot's conduct separated him for the rest of the journey from Abraham. But not so these tribes. With zeal they assert their purpose to be still with their brethren. Nay, they would by no means have taken the eastern Gilead, had this produced a forfeiture of their identity with those who were to be on the western Canaan. They are ready to give pledges too, that they will be foremost in the actions which still remain, on behalf of their brethren's inheritance. By no means do they contemplate anything like loss of fellowship with them. In this they are above Lot; but still they have stopped short of Canaan. They are not in the full power of the Canaan calling, not in the thoughts of the man of God, a dead and risen people; for they are pausing, ere their promised inheritance be reached, for the sake of their cattle in the wilderness.

Moses, however, does not let them go, as Abraham let Lot go; they are not to be treated in that way. Neither does the judgment of God light on them, as on the unbelieving spies who bring up an evil report of the land. They do not belong to such generations, though their way may savour of such. Moses cannot lose sight of them because they purpose to feed their cattle in the plains of Gilead, while they thus with zeal assert their purposed fellowship with their brethren. They are his, and he is theirs still, I may say, and they hold on together, unlike Lot and Abraham, who never met after Lot became a citizen with the people of the land — practically forgetful, so far, of the call of God.

This is so; but still Moses has to eye them, and remember them, and keep his thoughts somewhat anxiously and uneasily occupied about them; and this is not the best witness for a saint. Happy when the Holy Ghost can leave us and our state alone, to lead us still onwards, and feed us still in the knowledge and with the things of Jesus!

Lot and Abraham never met after the way of the world had drawn Lot into it. Jonathan and David met now and again, and their affection, true and warm, there is communion between them. Obadiah and Elijah met only once, and it is but a poor meeting, reserve marking the way of Elijah and effort that of Obadiah; for they were not kindred spirits, the leathern girdle of the prophet but ill assorting with the livery of Ahab. But the two tribes and a half are above these. They are still the companions of their brethren, and will not think of anything else; and Moses admits their title without reserve. Their desire to have their portion in Gilead makes no difference as to this. But still, they do not go

through and through, they do not measure the whole of the wilderness, but they linger, and the thought of their cattle being suited in the fields of Gilead attracts them, and there they find an object, though they still accompany the camp.

What shades of difference there are in these different illustrations! What different classes of the people of God! yea, and what differences in the same class do we meet here! Lot and Jonathan and Obadiah are of one class, men of mixed principles, as the expression is, men whose lives are formed by such every-day habits as cannot combine with the pilgrim-character, or the suffering, witnessing-character, to which the call of God leads. Sodom was Lot's place, Saul's court was Jonathan's, and the palace of Ahab, king of Israel, at Jezreel was Obadiah's, while Abraham dwelt in a tent, David in a den or cave of the earth, and Elijah with the provisions of the Lord at Cherith or Sarepta. And yet Jonathan was not either Lot or Obadiah personally, though we have to set them all in one class. Neither was Obadiah Lot exactly. And so between them as a class, and such dead and risen men as Moses and Joshua, we have to bring in the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh — a generation who will by no means admit the thought of their separating themselves from full companionship with the call of God, but who, nevertheless, exhibit in several actions that which is not according to the full measure of that call. And this is indeed a common case, nay, this is the common case, among the saints. One knows it oneself. We own the call, we witness it, even speak of Canaan, of death and resurrection, of hopes and inheritance beyond the river; but nature, and present sense, and present desires, the

bleating of the flocks, the lowing of the oxen, as they feed on the plains of Gilead lead to much which makes the more single eye of a Moses, and the more fixed and simple purpose of a Caleb or of a Joshua, to wonder and enquire. (See Num. 32.)

Joshua, who has the spirit of Moses, has them in some anxious and uneasy remembrance like Moses, and he addresses a word of special admonition to them when he takes the conduct of affairs under the Lord and for Israel. For they are still — being the tribes on the wilderness side of Jordan — the occasion of this fear and uneasiness to the more simple and devoted mind of a full-hearted and single-eyed servant of Christ. (See Joshua 1.)

There remains, however, another sight of them still in the progress of the history, and one which has its very striking moral features. I mean in Joshua 22. The ark had gone over. The feet of the priests bearing it had divided the waters of Jordan, and the ark had gone over, conducting and shielding the Israel of God. And it is true that our tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had gone over with them. But the ark and Israel had remained there; that's the difference. The two tribes and a half return, but the ark remains. The place that becomes a ransomed people, a dead and risen people, is left, and they return to settle where Israel had but wandered.

Joshua, like Moses, instinctively feels all this, and warns and exhorts them on their departure; and as soon as they reach the place they had chosen, they begin to feel it also. They are not fully at ease; and there is something specially significant in that. They raise an altar. The heart of an Israelite in the land of Gilead would just do

the same at this day. They are uneasy. Jehoshaphat was uneasy when he found himself in the court of Ahab, and asked for a prophet of the Lord. The renewed mind speaks that language in a foreign land. They raise the altar and call it "Ed," as a witness, a witness that Israel's God was their God. But why all this? Had they remained in Canaan, where the ark and tabernacle of God were, they would not have needed this. But they were not there. Shiloh was not in view, nor could their souls carry the sense of it, that Shiloh was their common centre with all their brethren. They had to give themselves some artificial help, to give their souls a crutch, if I may so speak, to aid the confidence and joy of their hearts, that as Israelites they had fellowship and common interests and calling with their brethren.

All this is very full of meaning, and is constantly experienced to this day. Some witness of our belonging to the Israel of God is needed, and craved by the soul, when we get into a position in the earth which the call of Israel does not fully warrant. The countenance of others, the restless examination of our own state — reasonings with ourselves — remembrances, it may be, of better days with the soul — something that is as artificial of our own device as the altar of "Ed," and which would have been as unneeded too as that, had the soul been more simple and faithful.

All this is still known, and all this is figured here: it is the writing on this pillar on the eastern side of Jordan. And a wonderful pillar it thus is. Lot's wife, the pillar of salt, has a writing upon it which the divine Master Himself has made for us, and, I doubt not, so has this pillar of "Ed," which the Holy Ghost would fain teach us to read, that we may be warned to know what

uneasiness and doubt accompany the soul that has retreated to find a settlement there, where the Church is, and has been, a stranger. This altar witnessed both for and against these Israelites. It was just what Jehoshaphat's uneasiness was when he found himself with Ahab and the prophets of Baal. It is just what a saint's uneasiness here is when he finds himself involved in a world that he ought to have left. For all this bespeaks the saintly or renewed mind; but in such exercises and experiences, as want of simplicity and the grace of God has caused it.

Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh are challenged a second time — by Joshua now, as by Moses before — because of their pillar now, because of their seeking the plains of Gilead before. This is all natural, as common as Christian fellowship is, but all more or less painful and troublesome nowadays as it was then. A great stir is made among the tribes, and a great ambassage is formed to enquire into this matter. Something appeared in the ways of those who were on the other side of the river, which alarmed them as Israelites, as worshippers of Jehovah. It looked to be something which the common call of God could not allow for a moment. It must at least be explained.

What a living picture this is! Are we not at home here? Do we not know this spot well?

The calling and election of these eastern borderers was not made sure to their brethren, who were living in the place of the ark of God. They have to enquire and inspect their condition; and whatever the result of such inspection may be, the need of such a process is but a poor thing at least. I believe the First Epistle to the

Corinthians is very much a Phinehas crossing the river to look after a pillar. There were things at Corinth which alarmed Paul. They seemed to be reigning as kings on the earth. His ministry in the meekness and gentleness of Christ was getting despised. The world was fashioning the hearts of saints there, and people were valued because of their place in the world. "The princes of this world," the men of the schools or the ways of the schools, were regaining their place, and saints were returning to settle where they ought to be unknown and strangers. Paul, in the zeal of Joshua 22, has to cross the river; and whatever the discovery may be, the action is a painful one, and the need of it a sad one in the history of the Church.

The tribes may satisfy Phinehas more than the Corinthians did Paul. All these varieties are known at this hour; but there is this common sorrow and humbling, that the call and election is not made sure; and we have either to take journeys or to occasion journeys, to have our own ways and altars as brethren read, instead of reading together the secrets of God's altar and tabernacle at Shiloh. J. G. B.

Thoughts on 2 Corinthians from Miscellaneous Papers

from Miscellaneous Papers

J. G. Bellett.

(R. L. Allan)

In the midst of the fears and warnings of the Spirit concerning the churches, we may observe that He is alarmed for them on several and different grounds, as expressed in different epistles and by different apostles.

1. He specially warns them respecting Judaizing, i.e., religiousness, or the observance of rites and ordinances. This fear is expressed in the letters to Galatia, Colosse, and Philippi.

2. He fears for them respecting the working of an infidel mind, the mind which, corrupted by reasoning, denies mysteries. This is seen in 1 John 4: 1; 2 Peter 3: 3, 4.

3. He fears for them also on the ground of abusing grace, or licentiousness, the practical denial of godliness while boasting in grace and liberty. This is seen in 2 Peter 2 and in Jude.

4. He fears also worldliness.

It is this last feature of fear filling the mind of the Spirit about the saints or churches, and shaping apostolic ministry, which has just struck me in connection with 2 Corinthians.

This is a distinct character of fear. It is not an apprehension of religiousness, or infidelity, or licentiousness corrupting the churches; it is formally

distinct from each of these. The Grecian style may have exposed the Corinthians specially to a simple worldly attraction, to the pretensions of a man of refinement and station and independence, — who had much in the flesh; that is, from nature and from circumstances, that was attractive and showy. This was worldliness.

The fear about Corinth was not respecting religious or Judaizing influence. Neither was it (at least in the second epistle) from the working of an infidel mind, or from the sports of an unclean and lustful nature, but "the god of this world " was feared by the apostle.

A certain man appears to have gained attention, who had much more both from nature and from circumstances than the apostle; and the saints at Corinth were moved by this. He was, I believe, as modern language speaks, a gentleman. He had a fine person and an independent fortune. He had many advantages of that kind; and the Corinthians were under that evil influence — to some extent they had been beguiled. They were looking on things after the outward appearance. They were suffering a man vaunting of himself, and lording it over them, and taking occasion by some low and worldly advantages he possessed from nature and from circumstances to be somebody.

Such a bad condition the apostle has to contend with. Affection and confidence toward himself had been withdrawn in measure, because he had no such advantages to boast. And surely he was fully purposed not to affect such things at all. If is true, he would be independent as well as the other, but it should arise from his working with his own hand, not from advantages of fortune, as we say. And though he had

certain things of which he might boast in the flesh, he would glory rather in his infirmities. He would be "weak in Christ," i.e., in fellowship with Him who was "crucified in weakness," that all his strength might be spiritual, or resurrection-strength.

The natural advantages which this man had he used, taking to himself the importance and value which attach to such things in the world. And some of the saints were corrupted. But against such association he protests in 2 Cor. 6, "Be ye not unequally yoked," he says. And the manner of this man he exposes more fully, setting big own way forth as contrary to it, in 2 Cor. 10 - 12.

And in doing this, in offering himself as a practical witness of a way different from this man of the world, we may notice these particulars:

1. The apostle refuses to know himself, or to be known by the saints, save according to his measure in the Spirit, and not as he was by nature or in the flesh.

2. He glories only in either his infirmities or in such dignities as separated him from all worldly estimation, as his, rapture into paradise; for the world would not understand such honour.

Such an one does the apostle present himself in contradiction of the man who gloried in the flesh. We may know how hard it is to follow him in such a path, in a willingness to be weak — that we may be strong; in his decision to know Christ in the weakness of His cross, so that whatever strength he knew might be as of resurrection. (2 Cor. 13: 4)

I dare say some were tempted to undervalue the office or apostleship of Paul, because he had not the advantage

in the flesh of other apostles. He had not companied with the Lord in the days of His flesh; and in his own flesh he had a thorn. This may further have exposed him to observation by those who judged after the flesh. But the apostle was willing that his ministry or office should remain unrecommended by anything the world could appreciate. He valued only that power of God, that power in the Spirit which accompanied his ministry, and which was fitted to tell on hearts and consciences, power which linked him with the Lord in life or resurrection.*

*These features in Paul's ministry show how the flesh is now excluded, and all its advantages, from the divine idea of ministry.

Every symptom of weakness in man's account gathered round the blessed Lord in the day of His crucifixion: desertion and denial by those who should have stood with Him, the enmity of man in every form in which it could have expressed itself, the forsaking of God, all the malice and purpose of Satan. This was the full exhibition of all that was weak, miserable, and despised in the world's account. None were for Jesus, all was against Him, and even nature seemed to join. But Paul was willing that his ministry should be in moral sympathy with His.

Generally, as to this epistle, I would say, it might distribute itself as follows:

2 Cor. 1 - 2: 13. In this portion the apostle speaks of his trials in the gospel, and answers Objections made to him because of his not having visited Corinth a second time.

2 Cor. 2: 14 - 7: 4. This is a parenthesis. The apostle presents his ministry in several characteristics of it.

2 Cor. 7: 5-16. Here the apostle resumes and pursues the point from which he had departed at chapter 2: 13. He expresses his joy in the Corinthians, and in the grace that was in them.

2 Cor. 8, 9. This is quite incidental.

2 Cor. 10 - 13. The great and leading purpose of the epistle occupies these chapters. The apostle contemplates the way of a certain injurious teacher who had acquired influence at Corinth, and he intimates the fruit of that influence; largely, also, exhibiting his own way as a teacher in contradiction of him who was then corrupting the saints.

This may be read as a general analysis of the epistle, I believe.

I might observe, that the apostle's commendation of the Corinthians in chapter 7, previous to his large and fervent rebuke of them in chapters 10 - 13, may remind us of the way of the Spirit in His addresses to the seven churches in the Revelation; for in each of them there is a beginning with a commendation, and then (when called for) an enlarging in the way of rebuke and condemnation.

Three Things

Three Things.

J. G. Bellett.

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1. We may so walk as to have ourselves in the presence of or in company with the Lord.

2. We may act so as to bring our fellow-saints or fellow-sinners into His presence or into His company.

3. We may be living so as to be keeping ourselves before our fellows and companions.

The first is the way of the worshipper.

The second is the activity of a true servant.

The third is the fruit of vanity, and want of single-heartedness, and will surely keep us uncertain, without joy or strength, and prove a snare as well as bitterness in the latter end.

Woollen and Linen

"Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together", Deuteronomy 22:11 KJV.

The path of the church of God is a narrow path, such a one that the mere moral sense will continually mistake it. But this should be welcome to us, because it tells us that the Lord looks that His saints be exercised in His truth and ways, unlearning the mere right and wrong of human thoughts that they may be filled with the mind of Christ.

Elijah (Luke 9:52-56)

The case of Elijah judging the captains of the king of Israel, referred to as it is in the course of the gospels, brings these thoughts to mind. The Lord had steadily set His face toward Jerusalem under the sense of this, that "he should be received up". Something of the thought of glory and of the kingdom was stirring in His soul.

I believe the consciousness of His personal dignity and of His high destiny, as we speak among men, was filling Him as He began His journey toward Jerusalem. "It came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face".

The expression of conscious dignity breaks forth from this and gives character to the moment, and the disciples feel it. They appear to catch the tone of His mind, and therefore, when the very first village, through which the path of their ascending Lord lay, refused Him

entrance they resent it, and would fain, like Elijah in other days, destroy these insulting captains of Israel.

This was nature, the natural sense also of right and wrong. Why then did the Lord rebuke it? It was not wanting in either righteousness or affection. The day will come when the enemies of Christ, who would not that He should reign over them, shall be slain before Him. There was nothing unrighteous in the demand, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?", if we but think for a moment of the person and rights of Him who was thus wronged and insulted.

Nor was there a wrong affection in this motion of the heart. Jealousy for their divine Master stirred it; this motion may be honoured, the moral sense may justify it fully; but Christ rebukes it: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of", said the Lord to them.

But why, again I ask, this rebuke? Was it because they were exacting beyond the claims of Him whom they sought to avenge?No, as we have said, for such claims will have their day; but the disciples were not in the spiritual intelligence of the moment through which they were passing.

They had not "the mind of Christ"; they did not discern the time so as to know what Israel ought to do, 1 Chronicles 12:32; they were not distinguishing things that differ; they were not rightly dividing the word of truth.

This was their error: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, for the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them". It was not a wrong principle of moral action which the Lord discovers in

their souls, but ignorance of the real or divine character of the moment through which they were passing.

They did not perceive - what thousands (disciples of this day, as they were of that day) do not yet perceive - that the path of Christ to glory does not lie through the judgment of the world, but through the surrender of it; not through self-vindication, but through self-renunciation.

This was their mistake, and this is what the Lord rebuked.

They naturally thought that this indignity must be recognised; that, if the prospect of glory was filling the mind of their Master, and if they themselves, in the spirit of such a moment, had gone before His face to prepare His way, whatever stands in the way must surely be set aside. Nature judged thus; and nature thus judging would be justified by the moral sense of man.

But the mind of Christ has its peculiar way, and nothing guides the saint fully but that: analogy will not do, there must be the spiritual mind to try and challenge even analogies.

Certain correspondences were remarkable here: Elijah was but a stage or two from the glory, just going onward to be "received up", when he smote again and again the captains and their fifties.

He was on a hill, full of great anticipations, we may say, and the chariots and horsemen of Israel and his heavenly journey were lying but a little before him in vision.

The soul of their Master appeared to the disciples on this occasion to be much in company with that of Elijah.

But analogies will not do, and the use of them here was confounding everything, taking the Lord Jesus out of His day of grace into the time of His judgments; inviting Him or urging Him to act in the spirit of the times of Revelation 11 when He was in the hour of Luke 4.

The witnesses of Revelation 11 may go to heaven through the destruction of their enemies, fire going out of their mouth to consume them that hurt them, as after the pattern of Elijah; but analogies are not the rule.

They must be challenged by that "mind of Christ" which distinguishes things that differ, and which teaches in the light of the word that Jesus goes to heaven through a path which procures the salvation and not the destruction of men; through His renunciation of the world and not His judgment of it.

Elijah avenged himself on the insulting captains and then went to heaven; the witnesses will ascend to heaven, and their enemies shall behold them, Revelation 11:3-11. But Jesus takes the form of a servant, and is obedient unto death, and then God highly exalts Him. And so the saint: so the church. "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed me".

Here was the mistake: here was the not knowing what manner of spirit they were of. Analogy strongly favoured the motion of their minds. The moral sense, which judges according to man's thoughts and not in the light of God's mysteries, justified it. But He who divinely distinguishes things that differ rebuked it: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of". The way of the disciples here would have disturbed everything, counteracting all the purpose of God.

The Parable of the Tares: Matthew 13

They remind me of the servants in the parable of the tare-field. The disciples were right according to man, and so were those servants.

Is it not fitting to weed the wheat? Are not tares a hindrance, sharing the strength of the soil with the good seed, while they themselves are good for nothing? The common sense of man, the right moral judgment, would say all this, but the mind of Christ says the very contrary: "Let both grow together until the harvest".

Christ judged only according to divine mysteries. That is what formed the mind in the Master, perfect as it was; and that is what must form the like mind in the saint. God had purposes respecting the field. A harvest was to come and angels were to be sent to reap it, and then a fire was to be kindled for the bundled and separated tares; but as yet, in the hour of Matthew 13, there were no angels at their harvest-work in the field, nor fire kindled for the weeds, but all was the patient grace of the Master.

The

Lord will have the field uncleared for the present. The mysteries of God, the counselled thoughts and purposes of heaven, precious and glorious beyond all measure, demand this;and nothing is right but the path that is taken in the light of the Lord, in the knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.

Nor is the church to go to heaven through a purified or regulated or adorned world, any more than Christ would have gone to heaven through a judged world. This is to be well weighed; for what is Christendom about? Just

practically gainsaying all this. Christendom affects to regulate the world, to keep the field clean, to make the path to heaven and glory lie through a well ordered and ornamented world.

It has put the sword into the hand of the followers of Christ. It will not wait for the harvest, nor will it go into "another village". It avenges wrongs instead of suffering them. It orders the church on the principles of a well regulated nation and not on the pattern of an earth-rejected Jesus. It is full of the falsest thoughts, judging according to the moral sense of man and not in the light of the mysteries of God. It is wise in its own conceits.

I know full well there beat in the midst of it a thousand hearts true in their love to Christ; but they know not what manner of spirit they are of.

I know that zeal, if it be for Christ, though misdirected, is better than a chill at the heart or indifference as to His rights or His wrongs. But still, the only perfect path is that which is taken in the sight of the Lord in the understanding of the mysteries of God, and the call of God, and the directions of the energy of the Spirit, and not merely after the fashion or dictates of the morals and thoughts of men.

And the call of God now demands that the tare-field be left unpurged, that the indignity of the Samaritans be left unavenged, that the resources and strength of the flesh and of the world be refused rather than used, and that the church should reach the heavens, not through the judgment of the world by her hands,but through the renunciation of it by her heart, and separation from it in company with a rejected Master.

"He that gathereth not with me scattereth", Luke 11:23; that is, he that does not work according to Christ's purpose is really making bad worse. It is not enough to work with the name of Christ: no saint would consent to work without that; but if he do not work according to the purpose of Christ he is scattering abroad.

Many a saint is now engaged in rectifying and adorning the world - getting Christendom as a swept and garnished house; but, this not being Christ's purpose, it is aiding and furthering the advance of evil. Christ has not expelled the unclean spirit out of the world. He has no such present purpose.

The enemy may change his way, but he is as much "the god" and "prince of this world" as ever he was. The house is his still, as in the parable (Luke 11:24-26). The unclean spirit had gone out, that was all; he had not been sent out by the stronger Man so that his title to it is clear; and he returns, and all that he finds there had only made it more an object with him. He finds it clean and ornamented; so that he returns with many a kindred spirit and thus makes its last state worse than its first.

David and Peter

Mistakes of this kind are very old mistakes. David was erring this way when he purposed to build a house for the Lord; but it was an error, though committed with a right desire of the heart.

The time had not come for building the Lord a house, because the Lord had not yet built David a house. The land was still defiled with blood; and till it was cleansed there was no place for the rest and kingdom of the Lord.

David therefore greatly erred, yet not through double-mindedness but through ignorance. David's error was this - that the Lord could take His throne in the earth before the earth was purged.

The servants in the parable erred on the other hand in this, that the church was made the instrument of purging the earth or the world.

I might say, in the language of the Levitical ordinance, that David was about to put on a garment of "divers sorts", but the Lord prevented it. The motion of his heart - as far as it was expressive of himself - was acceptable with the Lord, but still it was hindered and disappointed.

Something to tell us how jealous the Lord is that His own principles be observed and the position in which He has set His servants and witnesses be maintained; nay, that even the most affectionate and jealous desire of the saint, though it be valued by the Lord and get its personal reward or acceptance, can never reconcile the mind of the Lord to an abandonment of His thoughts and purposes.

All would be confusion. David's thoughts, however innocent and in some sense to be approved of God, would have confused everything, bringing about this strange result - the Lord taking His throne in an uncleansed kingdom and allowing His servant to give Him rest before He had given His servant rest!

What confusion this would have been! What an evil testimony these mixed principles would have produced! Who could have read in the result, had it been allowed, either the grace or the glory of the God of Israel?

The rebuke of Peter at Antioch was more peremptory; for Peter erred, not like David, through ignorance, but through the occasional fear of man, which, as we are taught and as we experience, "bringeth a snare"; and it was something worse than confusion, it was perversion - in Deuteronomy 20:19-20 we have an ordinance against perversion, or turning things to a wrong use.

But still, even if it amount only to confusion, and that by the hand of the dearest and most loved servant, it is not to be allowed, as this case of David shews; as also in his other act of bearing the ark from Kirjath-jearim.

The confusion there was not made excusable by all the true-heartedness and religious joy that attended it, 1 Chronicles 13: it could not be. Place by subjection was not to be given to it for an hour, and, however acceptable with God the motion of David's heart was, these ways must be withstood, because the way, and purpose, and counsel, and thoughts of the Lord are precious in His sight and are to stand for ever.

It is not that David and Peter were men of mixed principles, as the word is, or were wearing, as the ordinance speaks, garments of woollen and linen, but these instances in their history illustrate a serious truth, which is much to be remembered, that the Lord will vindicate His own principles in the face of even His dearest servants, that He will and He must withstand the motions of their hearts if they go to obscure or disturb His purpose and His testimony, even though such motions have much of a personal, moral character in them which He can accept and delight in.

Double-Mindedness

But, beside these cases of David and of Peter, and of the disciples in Luke 9, who, in mistaken, misapplied zeal for the Lord whom they loved, would have avenged His wrongs with a true and righteous affection, there is a generation who are seen apart from the way of God through double-mindedness.

Such a generation may be tracked all through Scripture, a people of mixed principles, as we say, who wear garments of woollen and linen contrary to the call of God and the pure ordinances of His house. It may be humbling to oneself more than to most others to look at such a generation, but it has its profit for the soul and its seasonableness in this hour.

Lot

Lot was associated with the call of

God. Like Abram, his uncle, he left Mesopotamia, and then after the death of Terah, his grandfather, he came with Abram into Canaan, and he was a righteous man, there was no palpable blot upon him.

Abram betrayed the way of nature, again and again recovering himself, with shame too, from the snare of Egypt and of Abimelech. But Lot was not so rebuked all the time he sojourned in Sodom. We only read of him that his righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked. But withal, he was sadly of the generation I am now speaking of.

If

Abram's garment was soiled now and again it was not "a garment of divers sorts", but Lot's garment was "woollen

and linen". He was untrue to the call of God; he became a citizen when he ought to have been only a sojourner, choosing well-watered plains and taking a house in a city, when God's witness was going over the face of the country from tent to tent, and from one tabernacle to another.

Fewer mistakes are recorded of him; but what then? He was a man of mixed principles all his days, while Abraham all his days was true to the call of God. And his life of false principles leads him into sorrows that are his shame, and that is the real misery of sorrow. He was taken captive while he lived in the plains of Sodom, and was nigh unto destruction after he had removed to the city of Sodom; and he is still, and ever has been in the church, the witness of one, saved it is true, but "so as by fire".

He had no comfort in his soul; his righteous soul was vexed day by day. This is told of him, but no brightness is there: no joy, no strength, no triumph of spirit is told of him. The angels held much reserve towards him, while the Lord of angels was in nearness and intimacy with Abraham.

He had to escape with his life as a prey when Abraham was on high beholding the judgment afar off. And, what is full of meaning, we observe that after he had taken his own course and become a man of mixed principles, departing from the track where the call of God would have kept him, he and Abraham had no communion.

Abraham will run to his help in the day when his principles were bringing him into jeopardy; but there is no communion between them. They could not meet in spirit. The saint of God will own him as his kinsman, and

do him the kinsman's service; but there is no present communion between them. And this is no uncommon case to this day.

Such was Lot. Instead of making his calling and election sure, he is one whom the people of God receive on the extraordinary testimony of the Holy Ghost, rather than on the necessary and blessed credit of his assured call of God, or as one of that people of whom Paul could say, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God".

Jonathan

Nature prevails sadly and variously in all the recorded saints of God; in some more, in some less, just as the fruitfulness of the Spirit is seen in them in affections and services; in some thirtyfold, in some sixty, and in some an hundred.

But this is a different thing from being men of mixed principles. It was so with David. Nature prevailed in him at times, but he was never a man of mixed principles.

He never deliberately sat down in a connection which was untrue to the call of God under which he had to act. His character was formed by that call and his ways were according to it: but it was not so with his friend Jonathan; his life was not formed by the call of God, and the energy of the Spirit working in the rule of that call. He acted nobly and graciously at times, but still he was not the separated man. He was not true to the pure principles of God made manifest in that day. He was a man of faith, and of many endearing spiritual affections, such as give him, without reserve, a place in the recollections of the saints. But withal he was not where

the call of God would have had him. Saul's court was a defiled, even an apostate, place then.

God was with David then. The glory was in the wilderness with him; the dens and caves of the earth hid it in that day. The ephod was with David, the priest, the sword of God's strength, the witness of victory. The flower and promise of the land were with him also, those who gain a name in the cave of Adullam, or in the day of vengeance at Ziklag. Such sons of Israel as these, such as shine afterwards in the court and camp of the kingdom, were all with David then.

The call of God was then to the caves and dens of the earth with the son of Jesse, and the energy of the Spirit worked there; but Jonathan was not there. That is the sad story. Jonathan was not where the glory was, where the priest with the ephod was, where the rejected man after God's own heart was, where all the promise of the coming kingdom was. That is the sad story.

Jonathan was lovely individually, he had done some noble deeds and was breathing some heavenly affections; and to the end we may be sure David lived in his heart; and many misgivings about his own father, we may be equally sure, that same heart was troubled with. He never personally gave David anything but joy; while we know those who companied with him, even in his afflictions, were betimes both a shame and a sorrow to him. But still his position was not true to the call of God in that day. It kept him apart from all that was of God then, though he had the Lord with himself personally. Till he falls on Mount Gilboa, he is with the camp and the court that fall with him there, dishonoured and

defeated as they were, having ere then lost the glory, and all that was of God nationally departed from them.

A common case he illustrates. Was it ignorance of the call of God, or double-mindedness? We will not say; but still in this our day there is, like Jonathan, many a saint dear to one's heart, and outshining in personal graces the larger number of the day, who is found apart from the place where the energy of the Spirit, according to the rule of the dispensation, works.

Noble and generous deeds are done by them individually, but their connection is their dishonour, as it was Jonathan's - linked with a world which is speedily to meet the judgment, and in courts and camps which are to lie in the midst of the uncircumcised, with them that be slain with the sword. "Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in the streets of Askelon". Jonathan illustrates this, and this is known abundantly to this hour. But Jonathan cannot sanction the place; Jonathan's presence did not make Saul's camp or court other than it was.

The only impression the soul has of Lot in Sodom is that of a tainted Lot and not of a sanctified, purified Sodom. According to the word in Haggai, "If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No". But "If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean".

There are, however, "things that differ", and the soul exercised of God is to distinguish them. There is a soiled garment which is, however, at the same time not a

mixed garment, a garment of "divers sorts", of "woollen and linen".

Our way under the Spirit is to keep our garments undefiled; and anything other or less than that is not the way of communion with the Lord. But still, a soiled garment is not a mixed garment; nor is a garment with a thread now and again of another sort to be mistaken for one whose texture is wrought on the very principle of "woollen and linen".

Scripture, ever fruitful and perfect, exhibits characters formed by what has been termed "mixed principles" and characters which occasionally become tainted by such, but are not throughout formed by them.

The life of Lot, as we have been seeing, was formed of mixed principles throughout. There was double-mindedness in Lot; I say not the same with the same clearness of Jonathan; but still the life of each of them from the outset to the close, when the scene of temptation set in, was tainted by connection with evil.

Lot, though associated with the call of God, was a man of the earth; Jonathan, though witnessing the sorrows and the wrongs of David, continued in the interests of the persecutor unto the end.

Their life was thus formed by connections which were untrue to the way of God and the presence of the glory all through. The garment upon each of them was made of divers sorts, of woollen and linen.

But look at Jacob in contrast, and in him we find one of another generation; he was a cautious man who had his worldly fears and schemes and calculations; and they greatly disfigure several passages of his life. His

building of a house at Succoth, his buying of a piece of ground at Shechem, were things untrue to the pilgrim life, the tent life, which a son of Abraham was called to know.

But Jacob is not to be put with Lot; his life was not formed by Succoth and Shechem, though we thus see him there, and out of character there, but he was a stranger with God in the earth. And in the closing days of his pilgrimage, when he was in Egypt, though with many a circumstance around him there to tempt him to have it otherwise, we have many a beautiful witness of the healthful and recovered state of his soul.

The Days of Ahab

The days, for instance, of Ahab king of Israel, king of the ten tribes, were fruitful in illustrations of this kind. There were in those days an Elijah and a Micaiah, a Jehoshaphat and an Obadiah, beside seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal; and all these in the midst of the foulest departure from the ways of God, the times of Jezebel and her abominations.

But all these are not to be classed together. To use the language of "woollen and linen", or "garments of divers sorts", I might say there was no mistaking the cloth of Elijah and Micaiah. The leathern girdle of the one and the prison bands of the other tell us what men they were and bespeak their complete separation.

The seven thousand we cannot speak of particularly; we know them only under the hand of God as "a remnant according to the election of grace", and that in an evil day they "had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal".

But Obadiah was not Elijah, and again, as between him and Jehoshaphat, we are still to distinguish; such was the moral variety illustrated for our admonition in these days.

Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, of the house and lineage of David, was a separate man, but a man who at times, and that too pretty largely, is found in defiling connection. He was of Jacob's generation, though it may be more faulty than Jacob in that generation. Vanity betrayed him again and again, as worldly policy betrayed the patriarch.

Jehoshaphat joined affinity with Ahab. In the day of the battle he put on the royal apparel, a garment sadly and shamefully of "divers sorts"; and it was near costing him his life, as the same clothing nearly cost Lot his life in the city of Sodom.

He acted there in terrible inconsistency with the sanctity and separateness of the house of David. But, though all this is so, I am not disposed to put Jehoshaphat in company with Lot. His life was not one of mixed principles; his garment was not advisedly wrought of "woollen and linen" together, though sadly and shamefully untrue to the testimony which became a son of David and a king in Jerusalem. Very noble deeds were done by his hands, and very dear affections were breathed by his spirit, and the God of his father owned him; but, like Jacob, and to a more painful extent, he was betrayed; he was betrayed into connections which make his testimony a very mixed, imperfect thing.

It was not merely nature prevailing at times - that may be seen in all, in those of the best generation, in Abraham, and in David.It was not merely a soiled garment whose blot is palpable, but a garment the texture of which is scarcely discernible, whether indeed it be of one sort or a condemned garment of "woollen and linen"; so shamefully do the "divers sorts" appear in it at times, but not throughout.

Obadiah

But the garment which Obadiah wore in those days cannot be mistaken. It needs no close inspection to make out what it is. The "divers sorts" of woollen and linen are to be seen in it from head to foot. His life was of that texture. It was not that he was betrayed at times merely, nor was it that his way was stained at times, but his whole life evinces a man of mixed principles.

He was a godly man, but his ways were not according to the energy of the Spirit in that day. He had respect to the afflictions of the prophets, hiding them in caves from the persecution and feeding them there; but all the while he was the adviser, the companion, and the minister of king Ahab, in whose kingdom the iniquity was practised. The "linen and woollen" thus formed the garment that he wore all his days. It was not the leathern girdle of Elijah; and when they come together this difference is preserved and expressed most strikingly.

Obadiah is at some effort to conciliate the mind of Elijah. He reminds him of what he had done for the persecuted prophets of God in the day of their trouble and tells him that he feared the Lord; but Elijah moves but slowly and coldly towards him. Painful all this between two saints of

God, but it is far from being rarely experienced; it is a common thing, I would say, but much more commonly felt than owned. 1 Kings 18.

There could have been no blending of the spirits of Abraham and Lot after Lot took the way of his eye and of his heart and continued in that direction - a citizen of Sodom. We are not told this, it is true, in the history; but we find from the history, as I observed before, that they never meet after that, and we may easily know why. Because such things are real and living things still. The Abrahams and the Lots of this day do not meet; or if they meet it is not communion. They do not enjoy refreshment in the bowels of Christ.

Abraham rescued Lot from the hands of the king Chedorlaomer, but this was no meeting of saints; they could not blend. And if the people of God cannot come together in character they had better be asunder. In spirit they are already severed.

So was it in a far more vivid expression of it in Elijah and Obadiah. The man with the leathern girdle - God's stranger in the land in the days of Ahab - could not be found much in company with the governor of Ahab's house. But they meet in an evil day, a day which may remind us of the day of the valley of the slime pits, the day of Lot's captivity.

Ahab his master had divided the land with Obadiah to search for water in the day of drought. The Lord his God had put the sword of His servant Elijah over the land to give it neither rain nor dew; and in an hour of Obadiah's perplexity and of Elijah's commission under God they meet. The occasion is one of interest and meaning and has lessons for our souls. There is effort on the part of

Obadiah and reserve with Elijah. This is naturally and necessarily so. Obadiah seeks to combine with Elijah, but Elijah resents the effort. Obadiah calls Elijah his lord, but Elijah reminds him that Ahab is his lord.

For this will not do. We are not to be serving the world and going on in the course of it behind each other's backs and then, when we come together, assume that we meet as saints. This will not do; but the attempt to have it so is very natural, nay, it is very common to this hour.

But Elijah acted in character, faithful to his brother now as he had been to his Lord before; and beautiful this is, and precious it ought to be whenever we get it. Obadiah had been walking with the world in Elijah's absence, and Elijah cannot let him now assume that he was one with him though in his presence.

Obadiah pleads: "What have I sinned that.". But why this? Elijah had not accused him of sinning. Why this alarm and perturbation of spirit? Elijah was not hazarding his life or safety, or any of his interests; he was disturbing nothing that belonged to him.

Why this alarm and taking refuge in the thought of finding his plea in the fact that he had not sinned? It is a poor, low state of soul when a saint has only the consciousness of this, that he has not sinned. Is that enough to enjoy the communion or understand the mind of an Elijah?

Had not Obadiah been in Ahab's palace when Elijah was by the brook Cherith? That is the question, and not the question whether he had sinned or not. Had Obadiah been with him over the barrel of meal or the cruse of oil?

Elijah had not told him that he had been sinning; he need not shelter himself or commend himself thus. But Elijah cannot but let him know that their spirits were not blending; for they had met from different quarters.

"Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets?" What was all this to the point? Elijah had not been going over his past history; it was better to leave the most of it untold; and it is a miserable thing for a saint of God to be trading after this manner on his character or his past ways. This is no title, no sufficient title, for the present communion of the saints, nor competency for it either.

And these are Obadiah's thoughts and refuges and pleadings now that he is in the presence of a faithful witness of Christ. He had not sinned, and in days past he had done service.

What a low sense of the common calling of the people of God the soul must have that can think it can be maintained and that saints can go on together on such a title and competency as this!

If the world be served when we are behind each other's back, though we may not have sinned, as people speak, and though we may have had character and done services in past days, we are not fit for each other's presence as saints of God.

Have we been in the heavenlies or in Ahab's court? Have we been making provision for the flesh or desiring the things of Christ? There are other things than pleading "we have not sinned", or trading on established character and past services. These are what alone fit us for the true communion of saints.

Obadiah was governor over Ahab's house; how could such a one as Elijah be comfortable or at ease with him? He felt reserve, and he expressed it in manner if not in words. Obadiah is the man of words on the occasion - that was natural also, and is the ordinary style of such occasions or of such intercourses between Elijahs and Obadiahs to this hour. For indeed it is not communion when there is effort on the one side and reserve on the other. This is surely not the communion of saints.

But it all has a voice in it, and is common enough now-a-days. They were not in company with each other; that was the fact. Their spirits could not blend. The garment of divers sorts, of woollen and of linen, which a saint of God could not but wear in Ahab's court, ill-matched the leathern girdle of a separated, suffering witness of Christ. We see this saint of God thus in his party-coloured dress but once; but this voice is thus full of holy, serious meaning to us.

The poor widow of Zarephath, whom Elijah had lately left, enjoyed the full flow of Elijah's sympathies; and that humble, distant homestead, with its barrel of meal and its cruse of oil, had witnessed living communion between kindred spirits, and presented a scene which had its spring and its reward with God.

But

Elijah and Obadiah were not thus in company with each other. Elijah is too true to let Obadiah come near to him in spirit or to answer the effort he was making to conciliate him.

There is character in all this I am fully sure. Abraham and Lot never met, as we have said, after they parted on Lot's lifting up his eyes on the well-watered plains of

Sodom. There was moral distance quite sufficient to keep them asunder, though a sabbath day's journey might have brought them together. Very significant evidence that is!

And so Elijah and Obadiah:

their meeting was no meeting. As well might Abraham's rescue of Lot out of the hands of Chedorloamer be called a meeting. This was not "the communion of saints". This was not refreshment of bowels in the Lord. But all this repeats for the heart an oft-told tale.

Ebed-Melech

Ebed-melech, in the days of another Elijah, was a man of this Obadiah generation, not, however, so strongly marked as his elder brother.

Like him he loved the prophet of God, and in the face of an injurious and insulting court, and hindered by the timid policy of the king, pleaded for Jeremiah and served him with gracious personal service.

But he was not a witness as the prophet was. He was afraid of the Chaldean - Jeremiah 39:17 - the sword of the Lord's anger, and such was not the condition of the Lord's witness. But his weakness was not despised in the rich grace of God. His measure received its measure again, and in the day of the judgment of the Lord Ebed-melech got his life for a prey when Jeremiah was had in honour. Ebed-melech was saved then, but that was all; the prophet was rewarded.

Thus have we seen a generation in other days who, though the people of the Lord, shew themselves sadly apart from the place to which the call of God would have led them. Such was Lot and such was Jonathan, and

such were Obadiah and Ebed-melech. It was more or less double-mindedness in them or love of the world in greater or smaller power in their souls.

But such a generation is abundant to this hour. Saints are seen in situations and connections from which the call of God would separate them just as surely as it would have kept Lot out of Sodom.

But this may be added with equal sureness in a multitude of cases: this impure connection arises from ignorance or want of hearts instructed in the kingdom of God. They have not listened to the voice of the mysteries of the kingdom but conferred with flesh and blood. They have not heard the Shepherd's voice calling them outside.

They have not understood the church as a heavenly stranger on the earth, and that connection - religious connection - with the world is Lot in Sodom, or an Israelite with a garment of "divers sorts, as of woollen and linen". The world is marked for judgment even more surely than Sodom was; ten righteous would have spared the cities of the plain, but nothing can cancel the judgment of "this present evil world".

Here let me add, however, that the distinction of Lot and of Jonathan may be seen in many a soul now a days. Lot had nothing to sanction Sodom to him; all that he knew to be of God was outside; and even nature had no plea to plead for Sodom.

Abraham and Sarah were outside, the witnesses of the call and presence of God, and his kindred in the flesh. All that was sacred in religion or nature were outside; and providences pleaded with him to the same end, for the plains of Sodom had already brought him into

jeopardy of life and liberty, and warned him to dread the city.

It was the world and nothing else that was heard in Lot's heart in favour of Sodom. But with Jonathan nature had a plea. All that was of God, it is true, was in that day outside Saul's court and camp; but the claims of kindred, the voice of nature, nay, the authority of nature, were known and felt from within. The father and the family were there though David and God were not.

And so now-a-days. There is many a thing that pleads from within. Nature, things moral and religious, plead there; opportunities of service and testimony, obedience to authority, maintenance of order, the dangers and evils threatened to the social well-being, the peace of families, and example to children and servants: these things are pleaded, and they all come from within, and put in various claims for the course of the world. But these, and all such put together, can never speak to the saint or plead with him with the authority of the call of God.

If the church be a heavenly stranger on the earth, alliance with the world defiles her, nay, ruins her as a witness for God; and to defile after this manner, to seduce from the place of testimony, is the enemy's purpose and has been so from the beginning.

Was not the serpent in the garden seducing

Adam from the place the Lord God had set him in? Nay, earlier even than that, are we not told about the angels that sinned that they kept not their first estate?

So afterwards with Israel, "Ye are my witnesses", says the Lord of them; but the enemy prevailed till the

testimony was gone. "His house shall be called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves". Here were successful attempts of the enemy to drag from the place in which God had set His witness.

It is not merely that there was a soil, or a blemish, or a rupture, but a revolt, a departure, a yielding up to the enemy the great purpose or thought of God.

The contrary effect precisely, in the precisely like attempt, as has been observed by another, is seen in Jesus. "If thou be the Son of God", said the tempter. His design was to lead Him to the abandonment of His place, His place of perfect and entire subjection which knows only God's will.

But all was perfection and victory in Jesus, but in Jesus only, whether before Him or after Him; for the witness of this dispensation has been as corrupted as others. That which was set to be a heavenly stranger on earth, the companion of the rejected Christ, has faithlessly allied herself with the rejecting world; and what ruin can be more complete than this?

The Man of God from Judah

The "man of God" who was deceived by the old prophet would have had security in the divine principles had his soul been alive to them. The word received, it is most sure, would have secured him; for it expressly forbade his eating and drinking in that place.

But divine principles would have been his shelter also. The word he had received when he set out on his journey was founded upon them, as we may easily perceive. For how, I ask, could the Lord employ an unclean vessel? The old prophet had been clearly laid

aside as unfit for the Master's use. He was dwelling in the very city where the Lord had a business to be done, but he was passed by. The Lord had gone down to Judah to get a witness against the altar at Bethel, though a saint of His own was living on the very spot. How could "the man of God" think that the Lord could employ the prophet of Bethel as His vessel? He had already passed him by. He had already after this manner treated him as unfit for His use, according to the principles of His own house that an unpurged vessel is not fit for service, 2 Timothy 2. How could the man from Judah be careless about all this?

The word he had received was enough to tell him how this principle of God's honour was at that moment, so to speak, alive in God's thoughts, because he was enjoined neither to eat not to drink in that unclean place, nor was he to return by the way that he came: so particular was the commandment in keeping him apart from all fellowship with that against which He was employing him to testify.

And yet "the man of God" is beguiled to receive a message as from the Lord by the hand of one who was in contact and communion with the unclean thing, against which he has been brought all the way from Judah to testify! Strange forgetfulness! Sad and shameful carelessness about the principles of the house of God. A saint as he was, and servant as he was, faithful too in the face of the offers of a king - his carcase is not to come to the sepulchre of his fathers. 1 Kings 13.

Micaiah versus Jehoshaphat

When the eye is single the whole body is full of light. There is consistency and harmony in the action when the moving principle is maintained single and unmixed.

Micaiah's action in 2 Chronicles 18 was of such a nature, but Jehoshaphat's body was then anything but "full of light". In the hour when he left Micaiah to go to the prison of king Ahab while he himself accompanied that same king of Israel to the battle, who would have known him to be a saint of God?

Where was the body "full of light" then? It was the clouding and overcasting of all the illumination which he really partook of. There was no harmony, there was no pure and cloudless noonday marking the pathway of Jehoshaphat then; no making of "his calling and election sure", as the apostle speaks.

It is happy to follow that dear man a stage farther, 2 Chronicles 20. For in the days of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, Jehoshaphat's body is again "full of light". He acts as a son of David ought to act; he seeks the Lord and the Lord only; and all is faith and victory and joy.

But when in the earlier day Micaiah was sent to the prison of Ahab and he himself went to the battle of Ahab, where was the son of David then? The whole body was full of darkness.

The Returned Captives

The captives, returned from Babylon to the land and city of their fathers, in like manner read us an instructive lesson on this subject of the garment of "divers sorts"; and their history affords both encouragement and warning.

They do not refuse to accept the punishment of the nation's sin, and therefore they take their place in subjection to the Gentile power whom God had set over them for their sins. They accept the favour of Cyrus, of Darius, and of Artaxerxes, in the spirit of the injunction "honour to whom honour, fear to whom fear". They speak of a Gentile power as "the great and noble Asnapper", and evidently feel grateful for the kindness shewn to them by one after another of these powers, blessing God because of them, and ready-hearted, I am sure, to pray for the life of the king and of his sons.

But with all this they were a separated people. Their refusal of Samaritan connection was as earnest as their acceptance of the favours of the Gentiles. The zeal and revenge, and clearing of themselves of the mixed principle and of the abomination of bringing Greeks into the temple to pollute that holy place, was as simple and firm as it would have been in the days of Joshua or of David.

They refused the garments of divers sorts. If they would have worn that livery, it might have saved them much trouble in the progress of the work of their hands, which was also the work of the Lord; but they could not and would not. The thing was not according to the ordinance; and they would not.

Paul might have saved himself a prison if he had accepted the testimony of the damsel at Philippi; but it was Samaritan help again, or something worse, and he could not; and the man who on that occasion refused the garment of woollen and linen must therefore for his faithfulness have his feet made fast in the stocks and wear prison bands. But all is right in the end whether

with Paul or the returned captives. Their God pleads their cause.

Here, however, some new and serious points of instruction on the matter of mixed principles occur. I feel I can pursue this with a sense of personal need and application.

The further history of the captives from Babylon warns us as well as instructs us. They refuse the strange alliance, they will not wear the garment of divers sorts, but then they wear their own garments without a girdle; that is the moral of the story.

They go to build their own houses when the Samaritan enmity stops their building of the Lord's. This is warning to us, as it was shame to them, and the Spirit of the Lord has to awaken them as from sleep and intoxication. They served themselves when the service of the Lord was interrupted. Ease and indulgence and self-pleasing take the place which had now been left vacant.

Haggai and Zechariah have to call them to the girding of their loins and the trimming of their lamps. By no means do they send them back to make terms with the Samaritans. They do not tell them that they erred in refusing the garment of divers sorts, they only call on them to gird up the pure garments they were wearing - to do the Lord's work in the Lord's way though Samaritans might again withstand them.

All this is full of meaning for us. The Spirit of God, let the exigency be what it may, will never have the saint in "woollen and linen"; but at the same time He would have the pure garment girded. An ungirded garment though pure is not after His mind; and often does He find that wanting, as in the days of Haggai and Zechariah, and

this is our deep rebuke - a pure position kept with little spiritual grace.

The returned captives were in the right position. Their place was a better place than that of their brethren who dwelt still in the distant cities of the uncircumcised, and they did well, as I have been saying, when they refused alliance with the Samaritans; such alliance would be but the wearing of garments of divers sorts, of "woollen and linen".

This they did not do; but those who stand such a trial fail under another. Though they thus refuse to wear mixed clothing their garments, as we have seen, were not girded, and even worse than that, they were sadly soiled and spotted. These returned Jews were doing much worse than their brethren who were off in the distant lands of the heathen. Their ways in the Holy Land were deeply rebuked by the ways of their brethren among the Gentiles. The Jews abroad had redeemed their brethren from the heathen to whom they had been sold, while the Jews at home or the captives returned to Jerusalem were selling their brethren for debt. Nehemiah 5.

What a sad sight! What a humbling and searching fact! Is there not much that is miserably kindred with this to be known still? This is something like "form without power". "The kingdom of God is not in word but in power".

Position may be quite according to God, but the practical godly grace with which it is filled and occupied may be scanty and poor. And how should this warn us not to count on the virtue of a merely pure and separated position! If it be trusted in, or held with an unjudged and unwatched heart, even they among the

uncircumcised may rebuke us. Much love and service is often to be found within, as I have been speaking, while little of the power of holiness and of the mind of heaven accompanies those who go outside.

What

I mean is this - that there is often less grace and moral power in the purer position than there is in the defiled connection. As with Jonathan, David loved him dearly and yet he was not David's companion. But the companions of David's temptations were at times a trial to him, talking on one occasion of even stoning him, while Jonathan personally was always pleasant to him.

What an outside and an inside was this! And yet David's outside place was the place of the glory then, and his companions were in the right position. But what exhibitions are all these!

And yet we see the same around us at this hour. There is no lesson I would more press on the attention of my own soul than this - and I think I can say I value it:

• Position without power,

• principles beyond practice,

• jealousy about orthodoxy, and truth and mysteries

• with little personal communion with the Lord - all these the soul stands in constant fear of and in equal judgment and refusal.

The earnestness about many, and many a right thing that was found at Ephesus, the stir and activity even of a religious nature that prevailed in Sardis, and the orthodoxy of Laodicea, were all challenged by the Lord, and we deeply justify the challenge. Revelation 2, 3.

The tithing of mint and anise when judgment and mercy were passed by, was exposed by the divine mind of Christ; and in the Spirit the saint joins in the exposure, "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree corrupt and its fruit corrupt".

We refuse position without power as we would principles without practice; or truth and mysteries and knowledge without Christ Himself and personal communion with Him. But in the stainless, perfect page of the word we find all honoured, and nothing thoroughly according to God but where each and all is in its place and measure honoured. As He says Himself, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone".

But here I will turn aside for a moment to what is sweet relief to the soul: that to know Him in grace is His praise and our joy. We instinctively think of Him as One that exacts obedience and looks for service. But faith owns Him as the One that communicates; that speaks to us of the privileges rather than of the duties; of the love, and the liberty, and the blessings of our relationship to Him rather than of the corresponding returns from us.

This is truth, beloved, we need also now-a-days, though it may be a little beside my leading thought just now. The call of God separates us, but we need the Spirit of God to occupy the place according to God, and the loving devoted mind. "Salt is good", the divine principle is the good thing. But salt may lose its saltiness. The right position or the divine principle may be understood and avowed, but there may be no power of life in it.

What variety of moral instruction is thus provided for the soul in the words of the Lord! But let us still listen and we shall still learn, for the mine is never exhausted.

The Two Tribes and a Half

The history of the two tribes and a half has its peculiar instruction for us. They do not stand in company with the Lot of the days of Abraham, though in some respects they may remind us of him. For, as I have just said, it is wonderful what a variety of moral character and of christian experience puts itself before the soul in the histories of Scripture; the lights and shades are to be traced as well as the leading features. This strikes us forcibly in the history of this people.

They are not Lot but they remind us of him. Like him their history begins by their eyeing well-watered plains good for cattle. While yet on the wilderness side of the Jordan they think of their cattle: Abraham their father had never been on that side of the river. Moses had said nothing to them respecting those plains of Gilead. Nor did their expectations when called out from Egypt stop short of the land of Canaan. But Reuben, Gad and Manasseh had cattle, and they ask for an inheritance there on the eastern or wilderness borders of the river, for there cattle might graze to advantage.

They had no thought whatever of revolting, of sacrificing the portion of Israel, or of separating themselves or their interests from the call of God. But their cattle would be nicely provided for in Gilead and there they desired to tarry, though, of course, only as Israelites under the call of God. How natural! How common!

They hold to the hope of the people of God though not walking in the suited place of that hope. In power of character and conduct they were not a dead and risen people but they are one in faith with such. They would declare their alliance with the tribes which were to pass

the Jordan though they would remain on the wilderness side of it themselves.

They were not, like Lot, a people of mixed principles who deliberately form their lives by something inconsistent with the call of God; but they were a generation who, owning that call and prizing it, and resenting the thought of any hope but what was connected with it, are not in the power of it. Again I say, how common! This is a large generation. We know ourselves too well to wonder at this.

Moses is made uneasy by this movement and he expresses his uneasiness with much decision. He tells this people that they bring to his remembrance the conduct of the spies whom he had sent out years before from Kadesh-barnea, and whose way had discouraged their brethren and occasioned forty years' pilgrimage in the wilderness. There was something so unlike the call of God out of Egypt, in the hope of Canaan, thus to linger in any part of the road, and Moses resents it.

And it is bad when this is produced, when the first instinctive thought of a saint walking in the power of the resurrection of Christ is that of alarm at what he sees in, or hears from, a brother: and yet how common!

Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh have to explain themselves and to give fresh pledges that they by no means separate themselves from the fellowship and interests of their brethren; and they do this with zeal, and with integrity too.

In this they are not like Lot. They would not have taken the eastern Gilead had this been the forfeiture of their identity with those who were going to the western - the Canaan inheritance.

But

Moses cannot let them go as Abraham parts with Lot; they are not to be treated in that way.

Neither does the judgment of God visit them as it did the unbelieving spies who brought up an evil report of the land. But Moses eyes them and fears for them and has his thoughts anxiously and uneasily occupied about them.

What shades of difference do we find in these different illustrations of character! What various textures may we inspect in these woollens and linens! Different classes among the people of God and shades of difference in the same class.

We have Abraham and Moses and David; we have Lot and Jonathan and the tribes in Gilead; we have Jehoshaphat and Obadiah - and yet these are the people of God.

Sodom was Lot's place, Saul's court was Jonathan's place, and the palace of Ahab was Obadiah's; while Abraham dwelt in a tent, David in a cave of the earth, and Elijah with the provisions of God at the brook Cherith or in the Gentile Sarepta. Here were distances!

And so as between Jonathan and others, for Jonathan was - strictly speaking or distinguishing - neither Lot nor Obadiah, though we generally set them together as a class. Neither was Obadiah Lot exactly.

And as between

Lot, Jonathan and Obadiah on the one side, and Moses, Abraham and Elijah and such like on the other, we see the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh - a generation who will not admit the thought of their

separation from the call and the people of God, but who betray in moral action that which is inconsistent with that call. And this is indeed a common class; nay, this is the common class, Numbers 32. One's own heart knows it full well.

Joshua, who had the spirit of Moses, holds this same people in some fear and suspicion, just as Moses had done before. He calls them to him and he addresses to them a special word of exhortation and warning when the time of action in the camp of God begins. Little things of Scripture are at times very symptomatic. It is so, I doubt not, in Joshua 1. As to the tribes generally, Joshua has but to say, "Prepare you victuals, for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it". They were free; they were in travelling order; they had but to know the hour of departure. Like Noah all was ready for the voyage into another world and he needed only time to put himself and his family into the vessel.

The two tribes and a half were not so equipped in travelling order. They were encumbered, and instinctively, as it were, Joshua acted towards them as towards a heavy baggage in the hour of decamping. He had to challenge them - at least he felt he had - to remind them of their pledges to Israel, for they were not under his eye as if they had been altogether Israel themselves. In measure he is to them what the angel who came to Sodom was to Lot.

So mark this same people again in Joshua 22. The ark had gone over, the feet of the priests bearing it had divided the waters of the Jordan, and the ark had gone

over conducting and sheltering the Israel of God; and it is true that Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had gone over too.

But

Israel and the ark remained there and the two tribes and a half return - return to settle where their brethren had but wandered; return to present this questionable and strange sight - Israelites finding their place and their interests outside the natural boundary of their promised inheritance, finding a home where the ark had never rested.

Ere they set out on the return Joshua seems to feel this and specially warns and exhorts them; and as soon as they make the passage and but touch the place which they had chosen they begin to feel it also. They are not quite at ease in their souls, and they raise an altar. This is full of language in our ears. An Israelite in the land of Gilead at this living day of ours understands it.

Jehoshaphat was after this manner uneasy when he found himself on the throne with Ahab, and under the pressure of that uneasiness - which attends on the heart of a true Israelite in an uncircumcised place - he asks for a prophet of the Lord. This is the language of the renewed mind in a foreign land.

The two tribes and a half raise an altar and call it "Ed". It was a witness, as they purposed, of this: that Israel's God was their God; that they had part in the hopes and calling of the Israel of God.

But why all this?

Had they taken up their portion in Canaan they would not have needed this; they would have had the original

and not a reflection. Their souls would have had the witness within, and "Ed" would not have been needed without. But they were not in Canaan, but in Gilead. Shiloh was not in view and they had to give themselves some artificial, some secondary help, to prop up their confidence by some crutch of their own devising, that it might be known that they and the Israel of God were one.

All this is full of meaning and is much experienced to this day. Some witness of what we are and who we are as saints is craved by the soul, and called for by others, when we get into a position in the world with which the call of God does not fully combine.

Some artificial or secondary testimony is felt desirable; the countenance or acceptance of others, the examination of our own personal condition, with many a restless action of the soul, reasonings with ourselves about it all, remembrances of better days invoked now and again.

Something of this secondary character like the altar at Ed is needed where the soul is not fully simple and faithful: all this is still known, and all this I judge is the writing on this pillar in the land of Gilead.

Lot's wife, the pillar of salt, has a writing upon it which the divine Master Himself has deciphered for us; and I doubt not the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, would have us under His anointing read and learn the writing on this pillar which Israelites outside the natural bounds of the promised inheritance once reared.

It may warn our souls, if we love quietness and assurance of heart and deep peace of soul, not to return

and find a settlement where the church of God has duly found a pilgrimage. Does my soul read this writing?

Every heart knows its own humiliation.

These disturbances of spirit, this demand of Jehoshaphat for a prophet of Jehovah, this altar of Ed, witness both for and against us. They bespeak the saintly or renewed mind, but they bespeak it in such conditions, such exercises and experiences, as a more single-eyed and full-hearted love to Christ would have spared it.

Reuben,

Gad, and Manasseh are challenged a second time. Joshua and the tribes in Canaan have to challenge them now as Moses had to do before. Their altar in Gilead awakens suspicions now as their desire to settle in Gilead had awakened suspicions then. This is all natural and common, and all symptomatic.

Saints in Gilead are not such as "make their calling and election sure" to the hearts of their brethren, at least without some inquiry. A great stir is made among the tribes who were now in Canaan and within the conscious possession of Shiloh and of God's tabernacle there, and an embassage is formed to inquire into this matter.

Something, they know not what, struck their eye which appeared to be at variance with the common call of Israel; and it must at least be explained. What a living picture this is. We are surely at home in such a spot as this and know the customs of the place.

I believe the apostle in the epistles to the Corinthians is very much, in the New Testament form, a Phinehas, a son of Eleazar the priest, crossing the river to inquire after the pillar in the land of Gilead.

There were things at Corinth which alarmed Paul, symptoms of sad departure from the common call of the heavenly saints. They seemed to be "among the princes of this world", to be "reigning as kings on the earth". His ministry in the meekness and gentleness of Christ was getting to be despised and others were getting to be valued because of their place and advantages in the world. The way of the schools, the way of wisdom of men, was regaining its authority, and saints seemed as though they were returning to settle where the church was to be but an unknown stranger.

In the zeal of Joshua 22, Paul crosses the river, and whatever the discovery may be the action is a painful one and the need of it a scandal in the history of the church.

The tribes of Gilead may satisfy Phinehas and his brethren more than the Corinthian saints satisfy the apostle; all such differences and varieties in the conditions of the people of God are known at this hour, but there is this common sorrow and humbling, that the calling and election is not made sure, and we have either to take journeys or to occasion journeys that our ways, our Ed, our altars, our pillars, the bleating of our flocks in the plains of Gilead, may be inspected and inquired after instead of our resting and feeding together, and together gathering around and learning the secrets of the tabernacle and altar at Shiloh.

Corinth

In the New Testament the church at Corinth was the Israelite on the wilderness side of the river.

The apostle's fears respecting the saints there were not respecting Judaising influences; nor were they on account of the working of liberty of thought and infidel speculations, at least at the time of the second epistle; nor were they respecting the turning of grace into lasciviousness.

These fears occupy the mind of the Spirit in addressing other saints and churches: but at Corinth it was worldliness that was dreaded. A certain man appears to have gained attention from the saints there; he was one who had, both from nature and from circumstances, something to attract the mere worldly heart of man. He was, I believe, as modern language speaks, a gentleman. He had a fine person and an independent fortune, and the Corinthian saints had evidently to a great extent got under his influence. To some extent they were beguiled.

They had begun to look on things after the outward appearance; they were suffering a man to vaunt himself and to take occasion to be somebody among them, simply from the advantage he had from nature and from circumstances. Such a bad condition of things the apostle had to withstand. Affection and confidence towards himself had been withdrawn in measure because he had no such advantages to boast which they were thus beginning to prize. And surely he was purposed not to affect such things at all. And though he had certain things "in the flesh" of which he might glory, still he would glory rather in his infirmities. He would be "weak in Christ".

The natural or worldly advantages which this man had and used among the saints, our apostle exposed as Moses would expose the woollen and linen garment or

other mixtures. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers", says he to the saints now, as Moses had said of old to Israel, "Thou shalt not plough with an ox and an ass together. Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together". But Paul himself was not thus yoked and clothed; indeed he was not. He was among the foremost of the tribe of Judah in crossing the river.

Surely I may say all these things illustrate profitable lessons for us. We are not to be mixed up with that from which the call of God separates us; we are not to wear the garment of divers sorts. But if we refuse it and put on only the pure clothing, take the place and be found in the connection to which the call of God leads, we are to be there with a girded as well as with an unmixed garment, and to watch, too, that it be unspotted.

The world is that, not to the improvement of which Christ calls us, but to separation from which He calls us. But if, beloved, in form we take the separated place, let us seek the grace and the power which alone can adorn and furnish that place for the Lord!

And such is the character of the hour we are now passing through. The god and prince of this world is allowing the citizens to sweep and garnish his house, and they are led to admire it afresh in its adorned condition, and to flatter themselves that it is by no means the same house that it once was. But this delusion is solemn; it is as much the home of the unclean spirit as ever it was, and only the more suitable for him because it is swept and garnished, and ere long he will use all these operations of the citizens for his final and most awful purposes.

"He that gathereth not with me scattereth". Is our labour according to the purpose of Christ? Is it by the rule of His weights and measures? If it be not, though we may labour in His name we are but doing what the enemy will soon turn to his own account.

In the parable the sweeping and the garnishing turn out at the last to have been all for the unclean spirit, to whom the house as much belonged as ever it did, though it be true he had left it for a season. Whatever is done for the improvement of the house is done for the master of the house, and Satan is the god of the world as much as ever he was, and will be till the judgment of it by the Rider on the white horse takes place.

The lengthened peace of the nations which Europe so long and till lately enjoyed gave abundant occasion to the sweeping and garnishing of the house. In man's way the sword was turned into a ploughshare.

The earth and its resources, man and his skill, have been produced and cultivated beyond all that ever was known, and the house looks different from what it was now that it is under these cleansing and ornamenting labours of its servants. Advancement in letters, morals, refinement, and religion is immense; peace societies, temperance societies, literature for the million, and music for the million, with the general confederacy of the nations, loudly tell all this, as do the boasts in the age which are heard every hour.

But this diligence is according to the mind of the real master of the house, or the god of this world. This is serious truth: "He that gathereth not with me scattereth". This is a serious word: "Be ye not unequally

yoked together with unbelievers". It is confusion. It is the illicit weaving of woollen and linen together.

But, beloved, while one says this, the heart owns it and would be humbled by the confession of it, that many a dear, honest-hearted servant of Christ who is labouring with a mistaken purpose, and working - not by the weights and measures that are according to the standard of the sanctuary - with a true affection and zeal, and singleness, and diligence and fervour, may be far before others of us who have clearly discerned their mistake.

I dread indifference more than mixture. I would shun Laodicea more than Sardis. May we learn the lesson in both its features

• Sardis, with its religious bustle which gave it a name to live, will not do;

• Laodicea, with its selfish, cold-hearted ease and satisfaction, will not do.

Let us be diligent but in pure service; occupying talents, but occupying them for a rejected Master; looking for nothing from the world that has cast Him out, but counting on everything in His own presence by and by.

J G Bellett